

THE PATH FOR THE IDENTITY OF A MUSLIM



IV

MUHAMMAD SA'IDU JIMADA

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Muhammad Sa'idu Jimada

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In the name of Allah, the First, the Responsive.

This is to confess that I have been encouraged to pursue the writing and production of this series by a number of positive factors which different people represent.

My very first sincere appreciation goes to Zulaihatu Lawal who personally reproduced the verses of the entire Qur'an, the foundation for the seven books writing.

Intellectually, Justice Muhammad Bashir Sambo suggested that the quotations should also appear in their original Arabic. However he quickly appreciated not only the cost but also the risk of errors; given the wealth of the quotations involved – over half of the verses of the Qur'an.

Ambassador Nuhu Mohammed specifically indicated the need to work on the status of a woman like Rabi'at Adawiyya.

Ambassador Abdur-Rahman Mora drew attention to use of 'Messenger' to identify Muhammad (S.A.W) rather than 'Apostle'. He also advised on the preference of using 'Allah (S.W.T)' to 'God'.

Justice Na'ibi Sulayman Wali recommended that the very material he read be considered for parts or chapters to enable the reader take some breath before completing it.

Dr. Ibrahim Sulayman was the first to suggest that the materials be serialised to give them some order. He added that a work on the Hadith as a form of appreciating the Qur'an will be necessary. I indicated interest but did not promise anything.

Justice Abdul-Qadir Orire was warmly receptive of the sixth book.

Ustaz Abdul-Qadir Aliyu Ladan who was invited to dot the i's and cross the t's suggested an order for the materials as earlier advised by Ibrahim. He specifically restrained me from giving a similar status to those in the first generation of Muhammad with those after Isa (A.S) but before him.

Muhammad Turi advised on considering a material addressing the Muslim community. I noted this but with no definite promise.

Technically, all these people noted typographical errors which necessitated a re-work. I commend the efforts of the secretaries and computer men who did the typesetting. Yusuf Gambo Ibrahim and Suleiman Sani were always ready to work on the project. Nuhu Musa Muhammad always handled it as his own. He did most of the entries. Muhammad Yunusa and Muhammad Imran finished putting the materials together after Dr. Usman Bokari had gone through them.

Personally, I remain grateful and accept full responsibility for the form in which the materials are now presented.

May His guidance always determine the path we follow. AMEN.

M. S. Jimada

FOREWORD

Man created, from soul and body, or from mud and spirit has different and contradictory characters that lead him to some time act as corrupt and lustful as animals or as wicked as devil; or, if he is lucky, to be as good as an angel. These contradictions are based in his very nature, as to place him always on trial, to either be good or bad, that he will receive his reward in this world and hereafter, that is after death. Allah (S.W.T) says:

Lo! We created man from a drop of thickened fluid to test him; so we make him hearing, knowing. Lo! We have shown him the way whether he will be grateful or disbelieving."

Qur'an 76: 2 – 3

To work on the right path, man has to be fully enlightened and directed by His Creator, Who knows him best, as stated by the Almighty Allah.

Lo! This Qur'an guideth unto that which is straightest...

Qur'an 17: 9

After going through this book "THE PATH FOR THE IDENTITY OF A MUSLIM", I found it very useful and as a guideline encouraging Muslim believers to moderate their behaviour and actions in accordance with Allah's injunctions. By studying the book one can find himself going as close as possible to the "straight path", the path that we repeatedly recite in our daily prayers.

In order to achieve his goal, the writer decided to light his candles from the verses of the Holy Qur'an. I am convinced that he has achieved his goal in making a Muslim reader to mould his identity on the Qur'anic Model: dedication, perseverance, humbleness, commitment to God's instructions and all other good virtues.

The book tried to identify to Muslims the points that give the body what are relevant to it, and the soul its way of perfection, the things that finally lead them to good life in this temporal world and get best reward in the life hereafter. Allah (S.W.T) says:

Whosoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do.

Qur'an 16:97

I therefore call upon fellow Muslims to read and comprehend what this valuable booklet contains. May Allah reward the author abundantly, Amen.

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INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this book is not intended and does not attempt to outline the detailed DO'S that define the jurisdiction and distinctive identity of Islam and by extension, of a Muslim. The reader will simply find what can be said to be the principle which serves as the basis for conscious DO'S and should inform a practicing Muslim, against the characteristics of one who does not believe.

What I have discovered is that, the principle is of universal relevance and captures historical reality. The difference or the point from which Islam takes up its identity is that, the commandments of Allah is the determinant of what to do. Let me also quickly add that the chapter does not claim to be a direct practical guide as such. However, it will hopefully strengthen the commitment of a believer. It will make him a truly - conscious practitioner, the basic requirement for changing one's condition and that of the world and in Islam, a foundation for future hope and success.

I have found and hope that the reader will equally find that the essence of worldly livelihood to be defined as Islamic can be termed TRIAL - STRUGGLE in the track of what Allah and His Messenger have commanded, against what is prohibited and the detail options that do not contradict either of these.

The second chapter attempts to simply draw out experiences and phases of straying from the path of Islam, as highlighted in the Qur'an. The value is based on the fact that an informed mind will be cautious and avoid the characteristics that define what is close to these experience(s). Believers should therefore not be shocked at the refined forms in which these characteristics appear today.

My prayer is that, by this reading, a believer will be able to improve further the identification of what is outside the identity or personality of a Muslim. This is because Don'ts get strengthened by these, particularly in respect of faith.

The object of the book and by implication, what the Qur'an has provided the conscious reader with is the distinction between the mode of a Muslim's livelihood in the face of historical difficulties and the characteristics of those who are off the track based on the wrong perception of an outlook that is free of hurdles as the only alternative proof of correctness.

Islam does not promise any license against struggles. The standard for testing one's level and quality of identity is thus defined by a consistent struggle in accordance with the commandments of Allah and the example of Muhammad (S.A.W). It does not permit for a historical, superstitious, miraculous mode of living in this real world. Consequently, going forth and back, reluctance or complete avoidance of the necessary difficulties of livelihood which are not insurmountable, not irrational and not foolish (if committed in the name of Allah) must not be avoided.

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THE PATH OF ISLAM

THE PATH OF ISLAM FOR MUSLIMS

Islam provides for Muslims a world outlook, a total or complete way of life, a culture, a civilisation, which definitely goes beyond a simple collection of rituals and rites that may often appear to constitute just the things that define a religion.

Given its comprehensive nature, it also consists of principles that support the continuous, effortful and confident practice of its tenets, the result of which is that the believer finds satisfaction, contentment and fulfilment in the practices. These principles provide the essential or needed basis, guidance and therefore characterise the path that a Muslim should consciously thread.

In the first place, a Muslim needs to note and accept that belief and striving in the course of Allah do not commence and terminate with a claim and the actual acting out of such. Thus, the bliss that is provided for in Islam, for those who believe and strive hard is not and must not be conceived as an expectation that will immediately follow the struggle. Bliss in Islam is a permanent experience that is eventually or will ultimately be enjoyed – but not from this world. Those who are in haste to start that experience have the wrong understanding of Islam. In other words, godliness does not exempt the believer from the difficulties of this world.

Did ye think that ye
Would enter Heaven
Without Allah testing
Those of you who fought hard
(In His Cause) and
Remained steadfast?

Qur'an 3:142

Thus, the overcoming of one problem is not a license for exclusion or freedom from a further problematic experience, as long as one is living. This applies not only to the past exemplary generation of Muslims but to all generation of believers. Being with Allah is therefore not to be mistaken for exemption from facing problems, be they political, economic, social, intellectual, military, within or without.

By implication, Islam is not merely the verbal utterance of belief or the claim of submission. The sheer utterance of submission and the struggle in the defined practical path are no guarantee, collateral security or whatever forms of safety against the future experience of hardship, of the need to still overcome some difficulty.

Do men think that
They will be left alone
On saying: "We believe,"
And that they will not
Be tested?

Qur'an 29:2

Indeed, the principle that success or victory in this world is only temporary and needs to be followed with the readiness to succeed again and again by struggle no matter its scope and level, should not delude a believer. This is particularly so, in consideration of material success, which is the major characteristic of this world. In Islam, the more valuable track of success is the spiritual, because it is more permanent and the path of godliness. This means that any believer, who is materially buoyant, must not consider it as the beginning for Allah's grant of his spiritual upliftment automatically. Thus, material prosperity is not the rule of evidence for generating or getting the spiritual blessing of Allah or attaining closeness to Him. That is not the promise of Allah, not what Muslims should expect.

Do they think that because
We have granted them abundance
Of wealth and sons,
We will hasten them
On in every good? Nay,
They do not understand

Qur'an 23:55 – 56

In general, the attributive principles/practice, direction or orientation of a Muslim's livelihood should be that of consistent strive, in the course of Allah, with all trust placed in Allah, to succeed, with the help of Allah. It requires the constant renewal of energy informed by objective purpose.

O ye who believe! Seek help
With patient perseverance
And prayer: for Allah is with those
Who patiently persevere.

Qur'an 2:153

The attitude and identity of turning to Allah that will have the relevance of patience and perseverance is to be located or cultured by asking for His forgiveness of one's sins, obeying His commandments, submitting in every sense, with every sense, everywhere and at all times and in every form. This amounts to remaining strictly within the bounds provided by Allah, alone and along with others. It's to such practitioners, such believers, such Muslims that Muhammad (S.A.W) is to convey good news of Allah's promise of eventual bliss. Not, to ad-hoc practitioners, immediate expectants, part-time or partial members or those who restrict such practices to when they are home, are abroad, in good health or while they are ill. It rather applies to those who make it their way of life, those who carry it about in all their businesses.

Those that turn (to Allah)
In repentance; that serve Him,
And praise Him, that wander
In devotion to the Cause of Allah;
That bow down and prostrate themselves
In prayer; that enjoin good

And forbid evil; and observe
The limits set by Allah –
(These do rejoice). So proclaim
The glad tidings to the Believers.

Qur'an 9:112

The underlying principle and justification for all of the above is the fact that there will be life after death for all mankind which is a settled matter for a believing Muslim. That is when and where all issues shall be perfectly and completely settled by Allah. Thus, the duration of struggle in patience and perseverance with trust in Allah and His help through prayer shall last throughout the life span of a believer.

For those whose hopes are
In the meeting with Allah
(In the Hereafter, let them strive),
For the Term (appointed)
By Allah is surely coming;
And He hears and knows
(All things).

Qur'an 29:5

Moreover, it should be noted that, for any believer, submitting to Allah is for the eventual benefit of the individual. In the same vein, struggle is the exclusive preserve of mankind whether they believe or not since they are needy.

And if any strive (with might
And main), they do so
For their own souls;
For Allah is free of all
Needs from all creation.

Qur'an 29:6

These principles, without exception are to be strictly adhered to by all believers as well as the Messengers of Allah or their heirs (i.e. the knowledgeable and learned in the community) who similarly play the role of conveying the message of Allah to fellow men.

Therefore stand firm (in the straight
Path) as thou art commanded
Thou and those who with thee
Turn (unto Allah); and transgress not
(From the path): for He seeth
Well all that ye do.

Qur'an 11:112

The unity of Allah or submitting to Him is not only universal but has not changed or was not and will not be different from the standard provided for us.

We did test those
Before them, and Allah will
Certainly know those who are
True from those who are false.

Qur'an 29:3

It ought to be noted that not even the personal company of Allah's Apostle is sufficient as guarantee in this world against the experiences of trials to be faced by believers. Both parties are to expect and will actually be confronted with the need to strive in defence of their faith. Also, it should not to be mistaken that the degree will always be less.

Or do ye think
That ye shall enter
The Garden (of Bliss)
Without such (trials)
As came to those
Who passed away
Before you?
They encountered
Suffering and adversity
And were so shaken in spirit
That even the Apostle
And those of faith
Who were with him
Cried: "When (will come)
The help of Allah?"
Ah! Verily the help of Allah
Is (always) near!

Qur'an 2:214

What is however certain is that, while the believers need not be contented with temporary or immediate success or victory, those who choose for themselves the path that is not ordained by Allah will have themselves to blame in the end.

Do those who practice
Evil think that they
Will get the better of Us?
Evil is their judgement!

Qur'an 29:4

Thus, the guiding principle in essence is that believers comply or submit totally to Allah. When He commands or whatever He commands is simply obeyed. It is not for believers to do otherwise. Furthermore, there is no contradiction whatsoever, when He commands for this generation something different from what He did earlier.

For fools among the people
Will say: "What hath turned
Them from the *Qibla* to which
They were used?" Say:
"To Allah belong both East and West:
He guideth whom He will
To a Way that is straight."

Qur'an 2:142

Hence, while charting Allah's path, nothing is too great for the believer to sacrifice – including his life, for Allah is the Creator of mankind, He is the only one that taketh life and to Him shall be our return when He raises us up again.

And say not of those
Who are slain in the way
Of Allah: "They are dead."
Nay, they are living,
Though ye perceive (it) not.

Qur'an 2:154

Think not of those
Who are slain in Allah's way
As dead. Nay, they live,
Finding their sustenance
In the presence of their Lord.

Qur'an 3:169

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HURDLES TO BE CROSSED WHILE A BELIEVER THREADS THE PATH OF ISLAM

The Islamic concept of history, combining the passing of time and the process of livelihood, is not to be lived neutrally or carelessly. On the contrary, there must be a constant deliberate effort, on the part of the believers to confront, deal with and overcome the difficulties in making a living as part of the requirements for godliness. This concept of reality defines submission to the unity of Allah, the serious and conscious homeliness with day to day difficulties as the graceful beginning for one's discriminatory obedience to Allah's commandments or otherwise. It is interesting to note that, generally, what distinguishes the believer is not that he simply utters the words of submission to Allah, but that his attitude or response to the common difficulties of life is oriented by the conscious and deliberate courage of continuing.

Be sure We shall test you
With something of fear
And hunger, some loss
In goods or lives or the fruits

(Of your toil), but give
Glad tidings to those
Who patiently persevere;
Who say, when afflicted
With calamity: "To Allah
We belong, and to Him
Is our return."

Qur'an 2:155 – 156

Thus, finding oneself in unfavourable circumstance like fear, insufficiency or the temporary lacking of a need as basic as physiological after some effort to provide oneself with such a need, the loss of companions or relations etc. must not justify disbelief, disappointment or hopelessness in life. Any or a combination of such experience(s) need to be patiently accepted and followed with further deliberate effort to reproduce life. That is the game of life in Islamic perspective. This should be with the consciousness or conviction that Allah is not unaware, absent, refusing or failing to come to the aid of the believer.

The source of such trials of a believer's livelihood could in fact come from a closer physical source, one that a person would have easily considered as free from problems, regardless of what may happen – the family.

O ye who believe!
Truly, among your wives
And your children are (some
That are) enemies to
Yourselves: so beware
Of them! But if ye
Forgive and overlook,
And cover up (their faults),
Verily Allah is
Oft - Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Qur'an 64:14

Indeed, it will be appreciated that trials being Allah's graceful mode of rewarding believers if they firmly submit to Him, is always an opportunity for either party. It is like natural resource or what economists loosely refer to as the free gift of nature, for whoever has the ability to exploit. Thus, if one finds faults with a family member(s), Allah's standard for submission, is to patiently persevere and forgive and not commit suicide or break the family. But if and when one fails to do this, the opportunity becomes open to the defaulting member(s) in a double sense. First, he is required to change, apologise or stop such commission and learn to be thoughtful of others. In fact, the leader of the family makes himself vulnerable to being considered as uncompassionate, if not oppressive. For, if Allah were to be strict with us, no one will deserve His reward.

In the same vein, Allah restrains us openly in certain respects. It is open because, in addition to what He has permanently or absolutely prohibited, He suspends permissibility in certain cases. For example, this is applicable when performing annual pilgrimage.

O ye who believe!
Allah doth but make a trial of you
In a little matter
Of game well within reach
Of your hands and your lances,
That He may test
Who feareth Him unseen:
And who transgress
Thereafter, will have
A grievous penalty.

Qur'an 5:94

Allah ranks us (in this world) differently, which serves as a platform for inviting us to humbleness. This is because proper ranking does not belong to this passing world. But, if we lose our patience, we are likely to fail the test as the Arab leaders did by assuming their own standard for what is entirely Allah's choice and decision.

Thus did We try
Some of them by comparison
With others, that they
Should say: "Is it these
Then that Allah hath
Favoured from amongst us?"
Doth not Allah know best
Those who are grateful?

Qur'an 6:53

Still on the plane of group dynamics, Allah has made it a source of trial, by not making belief and submission to Him compulsory. The implication is that the difference between believers, unbelievers and disbelievers serves as a source of testing our faith. Indeed, closely related to the belief and submission to the unity of Allah, which has been and will remain the same, is the distortive variation that is found in what is claimed for Isa (A.S), contrary to what is outlined in the Qur'an as Allah actually revealed and commanded Isa (A.S) and those who choose to follow. This generational form of trial took off with completion, perfection and offer of Islam as the religion acceptable to Allah, throughout the universe.

Ye shall certainly
Be tried and tested
In your possessions
And in your personal selves;
And ye shall certainly
Hear much that will grieve you
From those who received

The Book before you
And from those who
Worship many gods.
But if ye persevere
Patiently, and guard
Against evil – then
That will be
A determining factor
In all affairs.

Qur'an 3:186

In effect, all that men are able to bring into reality by exerting their capacities and the resulting implications that may either be positive or negative, are essentially sources of trial – a means, a path to meeting Allah Himself, defining Allah's method of submitting to Him.

It is He who hath made
You (His) agents, inheritors
Of the earth: He hath raised
You in ranks, some above
Others: that He may try you
In the gifts He hath given you:
For thy Lord is quick
In punishment: yet He
Is indeed Oft-Forgiving
Most merciful.

Qur'an 6:165

By Allah's All Merciful attribute, believers should note and be cautious of the fact that, making trials a source of believers' blessing is open to all, the difference only being that, for non-believers, it is the commencement of Allah's displeasure with them. This distinction must be in focus, not be lost sight of, when both believers and unbelievers are in trouble or similar experience of difficulty. In other words, when men are facing a common difficulty, believers ought to accept that it is a trial for them and therefore requires their responding to it in the way of Allah as a sure means to reaching Allah Himself. For unbelievers, this does not arise and could in fact blind them further by way of tempting them that Muslims' belief does not save them or make any difference. On the contrary, it does not only make a lot of difference, it is indeed the basis for differentiating themselves, with the immediate result not being of any significance, whether they successfully overcome it or not for the next world.

And fear tumult or oppression,
Which affecteth not in particular
(Only) those of you who do wrong:
And know that Allah
Is strict in punishment.

Qur'an 8:25

Hence, we must understand that Allah has a purpose for and by not making known to us immediately, the eventual future in which reality lies and for choosing those He pleases as His Apostles.

Allah will not leave
The Believers in the state
In which ye are now,
Until He separates
What is evil
From what is good.
Nor will He disclose
To you the secrets
Of the Unseen
But He chooses
Of His Apostles
(For the purpose)
Whom He pleases.
So believe in Allah
And His Apostles;
And if ye believe
And do right,
Ye have a reward
Without measure.

Qur'an 3:179

THIS LIFE AND WORLD IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PATH OF ISLAM

In simple terms, given the Islamic path defined by the requirement for constant struggle through trials, the question that will logically be asked is: What is the world? What is its meaning? In the first place, believers must understand that, without exception men who are the centre of worldly activities or life will all return to Allah through the means of death.

Every soul shall have
A taste of death;
And We test you
By evil and by good
By way of trial;
To Us must ye return.

Qur'an 21:35

The very requirement of believers' livelihood in this world is struggle, struggle and struggle – all through. This is to be in our utmost ability in all cases. That is why, the level and quality of struggle is of great importance, as a starting point for distinguishing those of us who just struggle, do better and those who are best. The means of death, which we must believe, constantly witness and will some day inevitably experience is consequently not to be considered as a scare. On the contrary, it is to positively motivate believers to struggle to their utmost. For, although man is not perfect, is weak, he will often find Allah's forgiveness making up for what is left – AFTER HIS

BEST.

He Who created Death
And Life, that He
May try which of you
Is best in deed:
And He is the Exalted
In Might, Oft-Forgiving.

Qur'an 67:2

Thus, the easy goodies of this life and world have to be accepted as they are – temporary. For this reason, believers should not allow themselves to be carried away by what men generally acquire or achieve. The beautiful, the good, the reliable is with Allah, who will provide the permanent against the temporary that He now provides.

That which is on earth
We have made but as
A glittering show for the earth,
In order that We may test
Them - as to which of them
Are best in conduct.

Qur'an 18:7

Believers are not and will not be Muslims in this world by mere declarations by word of mouth, by empty claims of submission to the unity of Allah. These all require to be acted out to the utmost, to the best of one's ability. That is the life in the path of Islam. Except this is applicable to a believer he is not on the right path.

And We shall try you
Until We test those
Among you who strive
Their utmost and persevere
In patience: and We shall
Try your reported (mettle).

Qur'an 47:31

The essence of struggles in the face of trials in this world, in this life, which characterises the path of Islam for believers, is the basis for discriminating, for distinguishing those that are true to their belief and declaration and the level of this, against those who are not.

In order that Allah may separate
The impure from the pure,
Put the impure one on another,
Heap them together, and cast them
Into Hell. They will be
The ones to have lost.

Qur'an 8:37

THE UNIVERSALITY AND UNITY OF THE ISLAMIC PATH

Muhammad (S.A.W) though the seal of Prophets, with the benefit of receiving the message and guidance of Islam in a completed and perfected form was not the first, nor is Islam a new package or a changed form of complying with the unity of Allah. In other words, it has always remained the same thing. The previous messengers had similarly received the essence of the same message and the concept and requirement of men in respect of this life, this world and the definition of their actions have remained the same, in principle.

We sent aforetime
Our Apostles with Clear Signs
And sent down with them
The Book and the Balance
(Of Right and Wrong), that men
May stand forth in justice:
And We sent down Iron,
In which is (material for)
Mighty war, as well as
Many benefits for mankind,
That Allah may test who
It is that will help,
Unseen, Him and His Apostles
For Allah is Full of Strength
Exalted in Might
(And able to enforce His will).

Qur'an 57:25

Discomfort or difficulties are therefore not, were not and must not be mistaken as out of the sight or reach of Allah. Rather, they are informed by the logic of the essence of men's requirement for living this life, if they believe or to confirm their disbelief. This is because the Islamic concept of this world and the definition of its path do not commence and end with this world. We are only in transit.

Before thee We sent
(Apostles) to many nations,
And We afflicted the nations
With suffering and adversity,
That they might learn humility.

Qur'an 6:42

Indeed not even the presence of Allah's Apostle among a people guarantees a change in Allah's path to Himself. Trials usually serve the initial effect of keeping the spirit of men within the bounds of humility – a ground for modesty and restrain against arrogance.

Whenever We sent a Prophet
To a town, We took up

Its people in suffering
And adversity, in order
That they might learn humility.

Qur'an 7:94

Allah's gateway to trying men is through the leaders of a given community who are blessed with the goodies of this world – the source of trial. Such leaders are those in positions of power, the wealthy, the knowledgeable, those with followership, and so on. Thus, those who have are shown the way of restraint, the way of sharing, the way of modesty. If and when such a club resists Allah, deny His message and Apostle, they confirm against themselves the refusal and failure to accept and submit to the path of guidance. It is only then that the leaders and the followers taste the wrath of Allah.

When We decide to destroy
A population, We (first) send
A definite order to those
Among them who are given
The good things of this life
And yet transgress; so that
The word is proved true
Against them: then (it is)
We destroy them utterly.

Qur'an 17:16

But, Allah may not immediately physically destroy them. Rather, He may allow them to transgress further, which equally means threading the unfavourable path, deaf, blind and dumb to the right path.

Thus have We placed
Leaders in every town,
Its wicked men, to plot
(And burrow) therein:
But they only plot
Against their own souls,
And they perceive it not.

Qur'an 6:123

THE PATH OF ISLAM AS EXPERIENCED BY BELOVED SERVANTS OF ALLAH

Allah in His mercy does not only provide voluntary believers with the principles that define the path to Him. He has not only narrated to us the experience that we were not available to have, but this generation can also benefit and confirm the truism of this standard by reflecting on what the model of Islam, Muhammad (S.A.W) went through.

The essential message has remained that the world and all that happens in it are trials. No believer is therefore exempted from the need to struggle in keeping on the path of Allah by compliance with His commandments. This consists of taking full advantage of the permissible and in another form involves avoidance or ignoring those that are out of bound. This applies to all

believers including Apostles, without exception. Thus, Muhammad (S.A.W) was reminded that it is not the will of Allah to exclude or free worldliness from evil. Rather, it is to be faced and fought or ignored, the beginning of the test of our faithfulness which requires a combination of our declaration and actions.

Likewise did We make
For every Messenger
Among men and Jinns
An enemy, evil ones
Inspiring each other
With flowery discourses
By way of deception.
If thy Lord had so planned
They would not have
Done it; so leave them
And their inventions alone.

Qur'an 6:112

An important guide is that, it is in relation to wrong- doing and wrong-doers that Allah discriminates for those who avoid. These are in general classified as sinners whether among men or Jinns. The difference lies in following the path of Allah.

Thus have We made
For every Prophet an enemy
Among the sinners: but enough
Is thy Lord to guide
And help.

Qur'an 25:31

For example, with Yusuf (A.S) by Allah's will we find that his beloved and loving father Yaqub (A.S), his fellow brothers and himself were faced with the trial of 'abandonment' and 'loss' of Yusuf in the immediate eyes of the world. But, Yaqub (A.S), turned to Allah with patience. The brothers had attempted to twist the will of Allah which was hinted by the interpretation of the dream Yusuf (A.S) relayed to them. Yusuf (A.S) was to forgive them at a later time. As we know, the dream of an ordinary mortal that becomes true and gets confirmed is in terms of the certainty of reliability one-fortieth of prophethood.

They said: "O our father!
We went racing with one another
And left Yusuf with our things;
And the wolf devoured him
But thou wilt not believe us
Even though we tell the truth."

Qur'an 12:17

Also, Yusuf (A.S) was faced with the plots of women folk which made the men folk naturally uncomfortable even though they were not in doubt of his righteousness. The conclusion

was a trial of Yusuf (A.S) although in reality it immediately relieved the men folk from the collective plot and complaint against Yusuf (A.S) by the womenfolk but did not satisfy the real desire of the womenfolk.

Then it occurred to them,
After they had seen the Signs
(That it was best)
To imprison him
For a time.

Qur'an 12:35

But with steadfastness, nothing of the trials stopped Yusuf (A.S) from becoming a king. That is Allah. In addition, the trial of Allah does not come only in negative form(s). Indeed, apart from applying to positive circumstances where men are endowed, it also applies to relieving men from suffering – either before they believe or after they have submitted to Allah. For example the believers among the people of Egypt at Pharaoh's time were reminded:

And remember, We delivered you
From the people of Pharaoh: they set you
Hard tasks and punishments, slaughtered
Your sons and let your womenfolk live,
Therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord.
And remember We divided
The Sea for you and saved you
And drowned Pharaoh's people
Within your very sight.

Qur'an 2:49 – 50

Muhammad (S.A.W) was no exception in his life experience. As the model of Islam, he was the foremost in guidance yet the most tried. From the very beginning, with the message of Allah, he and his immediate associates/followers who believed and submitted were tried. But with steadfastness, they overcame it and were required to show gratitude to Allah instead of forgetting Him and falling into arrogance. Thus, Muhammad (S.A.W) was tried with the difficulty of safety.

Call to mind when ye
Were a small (band),
Despised through the land,
And afraid that men might
Despoil and kidnap you;
But He provided a safe asylum
For you, strengthened you
With His aid, and gave you
Good things for sustenance:
That ye might be grateful.

Qur'an 8:26

Trial could also be in the form of an instruction by Allah even though another logical and similar option may be open. In that case, compliance with the unity of Allah involves going by Allah's instruction, since that is His desire, to fulfill His will. Thus, before *Badr* and in the face of the determined will of the Meccan *Quraish* to compel Muhammad (S.A.W) and his followers to drop submission to Allah, the 300 believers could have bounced on the few Meccan caravans led by Abu Sufyan who were unarmed and with a lot of wealth from Syria.

But Allah chose to direct the believers to face the better armed 1000 *Quraish* army from Mecca, at *Badr*. In such a case, the sacrifice of anything including life is safe with Allah; and the victory went to the believers with the help of Allah – fulfilling His will of proving that strength and success lie with Him. It is therefore not this world, number, variety or even facilities as such that matter. What is most important is that any or a combination of these must be with Allah, before success can be certain.

Behold! Allah promised you
One of the two (enemy) parties,
That it should be yours:
Ye wished that the one
Unarmed should be yours,
But Allah willed
To justify the Truth
According to His words,
And to cut off the roots
Of the Unbelievers;
That He might justify Truth
And prove Falsehood false,
Distasteful though it be
To those in guilt.

Qur'an 8:7 – 8

Even with the Model of Islam – Muhammad (S.A.W), it was not enough to believe, he and his followers had to strive with steadfastness and in addition actually asked for Allah's help by prayer. This is because they were sure that Allah is always forthcoming, He is near, and He sees and is able to do all things.

Remember ye implored
The assistance of your Lord,
And He answered you:
"I will assist you
With a thousand of the angels,
Ranks on ranks."

Qur'an 8:9

The scope of trial and the requirement of steadfastness were not limited to Muhammad (S.A.W) or against unbelievers alone. The constancy of this and the need to respond appropriately is in fact what sieves the weak from the strong in the submission of even believers to Allah. This was clearly revealed during the *Tabuk* expedition. Some believers ignorantly feared the trial,

forgetting that the trial and need for struggle do not commence with the physical battle but from the moment the call was made. Thus, both the submission by accepting and the actual physical participation are on the same continuum.

Among them is (many) a man
Who says: "Grant me exemption
And draw me not
Into trial." Have they not
Fallen into trial already?
And indeed Hell surrounds
The Unbelievers (on all sides).

Qur'an 9:49

For such weak faithfuls, they do not understand and submit completely. On the contrary, they should have known that everything belongs to Allah; and in the service of Allah nothing is lost. For this reason, there should not be the mistake or misconception that this world and everything it contains is real. The struggle should therefore be in the course of submission, totally to Allah and not retaining something of this world. It is the latter that will explain avoidance of trial. For, all things return to Allah. The inconsistency of such weak faith lies in the fact that if the fear gets unfounded, it is followed by a nursing or expression of regret.

If good befalls thee,
It grieves them; but if
A misfortune befalls thee,
They say, "We took indeed
Our precautions beforehand,"
And they turn away rejoicing.

Qur'an 9:50

Steadfastness or firmness and consistency are what are required to support the struggles in response to trials. This is based on the single essence of the path that all are from Allah and everything will return to Him. And because He is able, nothing can happen without His knowledge and permission. Thus, if He commands, it is simply not only good but good for us.

Say: "Nothing will happen to us
Except what Allah had decreed
For us: He is our Protector."
And on Allah let the Believers
Put their trust.

Qur'an 9:51

In consequence, the believer will never be the loser since Allah will not be the loser. Whichever way one looks at it, victory will be that of the believer as he is with Allah.

Say: "Can you expect for us
(Any fate) other than one

Of two glorious things -
(Martyrdom or victory)?
But we can expect for you
Either that Allah will send
His punishment from Himself,
Or by our hands. So wait,
(Expectant); we too
Will wait with you."

Qur'an 9:52

During the Battle of the Trench, the trial was equally tremendous. But Allah did come to the aid of Muhammad (S.A.W) and the believers eventually. The advantaged position of the enemies of Allah against His apostle, His religion and followers exposed those of weak resolve, and saved those who Allah willed to keep in His mercy, based on their steadfastness.

Behold! They came to you
From above you and from
Below you, and behold,
The eyes became dim
And the hearts gaped
Up to the throats,
And ye imagined various
(Vain) thoughts about Allah!
In that situation
Were the Believers tried:
They were shaken as by
A tremendous shaking.

Qur'an 33:10 – 11

In this circumstance, the hypocrites interpreted the trial as a deceit by Allah and His Apostle, because they were historically exposed to danger – the loss of the world. They saw the circumstances as foolish and avoidable. On the contrary, the firm believers did not only face death, they accepted it with every effort to save themselves. Some died and others were still ready to die.

Among the believers are men
Who have been true to
Their covenant with Allah:
Of them some have completed
Their vow (to the extreme),
And some (still) wait:
But they have never changed
(Their determination) in the least.

Qur'an 33:23

Thus, the world and all its benefits melt away in the face of needed obedience to Allah. This cannot be compromised as the standard of the path. This explains Allah's words on the desert Arabs

who lagged behind to avoid any possible danger the Prophet and believers could have faced when they went to Mecca and ended in *Hudaibiyya* armless.

Say to the desert Arabs
Who lagged behind: "Ye
Shall be summoned (to fight)
Against a people given to
Vehement war: then shall ye
Fight or they shall submit.
Then if ye show obedience,
Allah will grant you
A goodly reward, but if
Ye turn back as ye
Did before, He will punish
You with a grievous penalty."

Qur'an 48:16

The ground (of complaint)
Is against such as claim
Exemption while they are rich.
They prefer to stay
With the (women) who remain
Behind: Allah hath sealed
Their hearts; so they know not
(What they miss).

Qur'an 9:93

NOTES ON ALLAH'S COMPANIONSHIP IN A BELIEVER'S STRUGGLE

The opportunities of reaching Allah through the path of Islam characterised by trials or loss, restraints, prohibitions, suffering, difficulties are positively connected to Allah's companionship. So, it is foreign to Islam, to abandon a believer due to his weaknesses.

Firstly, in His grace He provides all mankind with advice and warning, detailing the meaning of things, the direction of the world, the requirements of man, etc. that will lead to bliss. These are contained in the Qur'an and the historical example lived by Muhammad (S.A.W).

We have not sent down
The Qur'an to thee to be
(An occasion) for thy distress.
But only as an admonition
To those who fear (Allah).

Qur'an 20:2 – 3

In furtherance, the historical nature of the concept that is charted out for mankind is both dynamic and flexible. This non-mechanical nature of the path of Islam is essentially by laying out general rules or guidelines from which variations are open to join standard rules that are absolute.

These provisions hence leave the believer to strive in the path of Islam, singly and collectively; to distinguish him from those who choose to differ. It is only then that the believer will be able to pursue the permanent reality and guard against the illusions of the present which are temporary; because, this is Allah's will and we shall ultimately return to Him.

To thee We sent the Scripture
In truth, confirming
The scripture that came
Before it, and guarding it
In safety: so judge
Between them by what
Allah hath revealed,
And follow not their vain
Desires, diverging
From the truth that hath come
To thee. To each among you
Have We prescribed a law
And an Open Way.
If Allah had so willed
He would have made you
A single people, but (His
Plan is) to test you in what
He hath given you: so strive
As in a race in all virtues.
The goal of you all is to Allah;
It is He that will show you
The truth of the matters
In which ye dispute.

Qur'an 5:48

This way, Allah has provided mankind the double shelter for our bodies and our spirit. These are the taking of the advantages that are permissible in this world for our good and working for Allah's forgiveness and reward with bliss in the life after death, in the hereafter. But the only way is defined as righteousness.

O ye children of Adam!
We have bestowed raiment
Upon you to cover
Your shame, as well as
To be an adornment to you
But the raiment of righteousness,
That is the best.
Such are among the Signs
Of Allah, that they
May receive admonition!

Qur'an 7:26

Secondly, the believer is not forsaken. Allah who is All-Knowing, All-Seeing, All-Aware and All-Able is not only watching His worshipping/obedient servants, He listens and answers. But this must not be mistaken for a one-way relation where the one is totally helpless and the other the saviour. On the contrary, man is already endowed with capacities and the exertion of this transforms into abilities. Reaching Allah, the path of Islam is therefore not by waiting but by striving on the defined path. Efforts are to be complemented with prayers, asking Allah for support. Prayers alone or efforts alone are not enough.

When My servants
Ask thee concerning Me,
I am indeed
Close (to them): I listen
To the prayer of every
Suppliant when he calls on Me:
Let them also, with a will,
Listen to My call,
And believe in Me:
That they may walk
In the right way.

Qur'an 2:186

With the combination of efforts and prayers, the believer can be sure to benefit by Allah's help through guidance in the distinction between good and evil and threading the right path. In addition, he is being saved from evil and this will be further topped with Allah's forgiveness of his lapses. It is only Allah who can provide all these.

O ye who believe!
If ye fear Allah,
He will grant you Criterion
(To judge between right and wrong),
Remove from you (all) evil
(That may afflict) you,
And forgive you;
For Allah is the Lord
Of grace unbounded.

Qur'an 8:29

The grace of Allah combines with His mercy, which He covers His striving servant who calls upon Him. This is because He does not just stop at safe-guarding the caller from evil; He further rewards the believer abundantly, more than he ordinarily deserves, to serve as an investment in his favour for life after death.

Those who believe and work
Righteous deeds; from them
Shall We blot out all evil
That they have committed,

And We shall reward
Them according to
The best of their deeds.

Qur'an 29:7

An insight into this is that, for a righteous deed in the fear and trust of Allah a believer's reward is ten, one hundred or seven hundred or even more, as Allah may please. So, believers have the assurance of Allah's companionship, grace and mercy in their struggle, as against those who deny, reject and transgress.

Or think ye that ye
Shall be abandoned,
As though Allah did not know
Those among you who strive
With might and main, and take
None for friends and protectors
Except Allah, His Apostle,
And the (community of) Believers?
But Allah is well acquainted
With (all) that ye do

Qur'an 9:16

Hence, trials ought not to scare the believers and they need not be tired of struggling, or lose hope in Allah. Allah is with the believers and in their aid, by His grace and mercy.

Be not weary and
Faint-hearted, crying for peace,
When ye should be
Uppermost: for Allah is
With you, and will never
Put you in loss
For your (good) deeds.

Qur'an 47:35

WARNINGS

After the outline of what consists of the path of Islam, believers are individually and collectively warned against transgressing on their own or in collaboration. The consequence of such is the loss of this world, which is temporary and the next, which is permanent. Such a transgressor will find himself naked with regards to both worldly and spiritual benefits. Indeed, this warning essentially entails non-association of anything with the unity of Allah; and this has no respect for familial relation, less that of neighbours or friends.

O ye children of Adam!
Let not Satan seduce you,
In the same manner as

He got your parents out
Of the Garden, stripping them
Of their raiment, to expose
Their shame: for he
And his tribe watch you
From a position where ye
Cannot see them: We made
The Evil ones friends
(Only) to those without Faith.

Qur'an 7:27

It is not fitting
For the Prophet and those
Who believe, that they should
Pray for forgiveness
For pagans, even though
They be of kin, after it is
Clear to them that they
Are companions of the Fire.

Qur'an 9:113

THE WAY OF THOSE WHO GO ASTRAY

THE IDENTITY OF HYPOCRITES

In Islam, submission to the unity of Allah, to be a believer, to join the vanguard of Islam, requires that a Muslim as an individual or Muslims as a group, a community, nation or generation is consistently straight. The appearance needs to agree with the non-appearing. It is not the identity of a Muslim to say one thing and be nursing another thing that is inconsistent and distant - regardless of how appealing what is made manifest may be, to the self or to others.

There is the type of man
Whose speech
About this world's life
May dazzle thee,
And he calls Allah to witness
About what is in his heart;
Yet is he most contentious
Of enemies.

Qur'an 2:204

Such insincerity of a Muslim or one who claims to embrace Islam will be a minus to his submission considering the Message brought and the example the community of believers has inherited from Muhammad (S.A.W). Thus, the community needs to be cautious of such people whenever and wherever they are identified, even though they may APPEAR likeable.

When thou lookest
At them, their exteriors
Please thee; and when
They speak, thou listenest
To their words. They are
As (worthless as hollow)
Pieces of timber propped up,
(Unable to stand on their own),
They think that every
Cry is against them.
They are the enemies;
So beware of them...

Qur'an 63:4

The hypocrites are always in regrets. One form of this is their insincere declaration of faith when they meet believers, whereas their real intent is to protect themselves against falling out. But, the moment they regain security, they wish they were the ones opportune to disgrace, to arrest or force the believers to the way of denial.

...Though ye believe
In the whole of the Book,
When they meet you,

They say, "We believe";
But when they are alone,
They bite off the very tips
Of their fingers at you
In their rage...

Qur'an 3:119

In reality, they rejoice at the trials that may befall the believers they appear to side with, seem to identify with. In the same vein, they actually get disturbed with whatever success the believers may achieve.

If aught that is good
Befalls you, it grieves them;
But if some misfortune
Overtakes you, they rejoice
At it...

Qur'an 3:120

The genuine associates, friends, partners and companions of the hypocrites are those who have openly denied the unity of Allah and are resisters of faith. The interaction between these two is more 'sincere', more 'consistent' because they confess their togetherness with them, just as they appear to be with the believers.

When it is said to them:
"Believe as the others believe."
They say: "Shall we believe
As the fools believe?" ...
When they meet those who believe,
They say: "We believe,"
But when they are alone
With their evil ones
They say: "We are really with you
We (were) only jesting."

Qur'an 2:13 – 14

In the event of their being confronted with their inconsistency, they shamelessly but dangerously present the evidence as a matter to be ignored – expecting that the unbelievers should be dissociated with them on account of that finding.

If thou dost question them,
They declare (with emphasis):
"We were only talking idly
And in play". Say: "Was it
At Allah, and His Signs
And His Apostle, that ye
Were mocking?"

Qur'an 9:65

The drawing of hypocrites' attention to the effect that they are by their attitude straying, that they are missing the major goal of belief does not help matters. On being advised regarding the consequence of their behaviour in leading to the confusion of identity, they respond by claiming that they only intend to settle things.

When it is said to them:
"Make not mischief on the earth,"
They say: "Why, we only
Want to make peace!"

Qur'an 2:11

The hypocrites also evade a consistent identity with the believers when they are confronted by the unbelievers. Being of neither identity, they urge the unbelievers to ignore their confession to identify with believers.

Behold! When they meet
The men of Faith, they say:
"We believe:" but when
They meet each other in private,
They say: "Shall you tell them
What Allah hath revealed to you,
That they may engage you
In argument about it
Before your Lord?"
Do you not understand (their aim)?

Qur'an 2:76

The unbelievers have every cause to be concerned too. This is because they consistently witness the mockery of the believers and the Messenger of Allah, as he conveys the message or offers explanations for the guidance of mankind. The unbelievers cannot genuinely trust the hypocrites, just as the believers need not trust them. They are a people that say one thing now and later say another.

Among them are men
Who molest the Prophet
And say, "He is (all) ear."
Say, "He listens to what is
Best for you: he believes
In Allah, has faith
In the Believers, and is a mercy,
To those of you who believe." ...

Qur'an 9:61

Thus, because of their sitting on the fence, not sincere with either the believers or the unbelievers, they tremble, get demoralised and are always ashamed of being put to trial.

There are among men
Some who serve Allah,
As it were, on the verge:
If good befalls them, they are,
Therewith, well content; but
If a trial comes to them,
They turn on their faces...

Qur'an 22:11

Since the hypocrites are only interested in the good of the believers and the 'good' of the unbelievers, their loyalty to the Law of Allah and the leadership of Muhammad (S.A.W) is the same and therefore discriminative. Their submission depends only on the benefit they can get but will not make themselves available when they consider it against their own interest.

When they are summoned
To Allah and His Apostle,
In order that he may judge
Between them, behold, some
Of them decline (to come).
But if the right is
On their side, they come
To him with all submission.

Qur'an 24:48 – 49

Then there are among men
Such as say, "We believe
In Allah;" but when they suffer
Affliction in (the cause of Allah),
They treat men's oppression
As if it were the Wrath
Of Allah! And if help
Comes (to thee) from thy Lord,
They are sure to say,
"We have (always) been
With you!" ...

Qur'an 29:10

Due to their double standard of belief, instead of submitting wholly to Allah and His messenger, the hypocrites actually rely and call upon other than Allah to intervene in their affairs, because they don't really believe.

They call on such deities,
Beside Allah, as can neither
Hurt nor profit them...

Qur'an 22:12

(They are) distracted in mind
Even in the midst of it,
Being (sincerely) for neither
One group nor for another....

Qur'an 4:143

The hypocrites do not believe in this way for nothing. They seek for the good in the guidance of Allah and the 'good' that evil provides them. By so doing, they consider themselves on the course of out-smarting Allah. They think that half-submission is enough to qualify them as Muslims.

The hypocrites – they think
They are over-reaching Allah,
But He will over-reach them;
When they stand up to prayer,
They stand without earnestness,
To be seen of men,
But little do they hold
Allah in remembrance.

Qur'an 4:142

In the course of Allah and His messenger, the hypocrites are not ready to sacrifice and will discourage others from doing so, all in their selfish and egoistic interest – even when it contradicts the command of Allah. In this respect, they are together. This is one of their essential and consistent identity.

The Hypocrites, men and women,
(Have an understanding) with each other,
They enjoin evil, and forbid
What is just, and are close
With their hands...

Qur'an 9:67

Thus, they will neither join nor encourage others to join believers to fight when Allah explicitly commands.

(They are) the ones that say,
(Of their brethren slain),
While they themselves
Sit (at ease): "If only
They had listened to us,
They would not have been slain."
Say: "Avert death
From your own selves,
If ye speak the truth."

Qur'an 3:168

As for their fate, they hold unto the opinion that, at worst, they will only suffer a restrictive sanction from Allah, because of their half service, their coloured, selective service, even though they don't practice the religion as is required by the Way of Allah.

And they say: "The fire
Shall not touch us
But for a few numbered days..."
Qur'an 2:80

Their similitude is that of a man
Who kindled a fire;
When it lighted all around them,
Allah took away their light
And left them in utter darkness.
So they could not see.

Qur'an 2:17

But, unfortunately, the hypocrites can neither explain why they enjoin others to do good while they refuse to do so themselves, nor can they offer any evidence to the effect that the restricted punishment they will accept or expect is based on a promise Allah has made to them. The People of the Book who are knowledgeable, the Jews and half-hearted Muslims easily fit into this first level of straying from the Path of Allah and His Messenger.

THE DISTINCTION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE

Those who are in doubt and do not believe in Allah, His Messenger and His Message lack the cause to give ear to anything relating to any or all of these. In consequence, they find it to be something to keep away from or avoid.

But never did a single
One of the Signs
Of their Lord reach them,
But they turned
Away therefrom.

Qur'an 6:4

To the unbelievers, their livelihood and the results of such 'achievement' is the only criteria for assessing and accepting the message of Allah. Thus, the leaders from among them are logically the only ones that would have benefitted from such message, if it is true. In other words, Allah wouldn't have sent other than their recognised leaders. Thus they find it inconsistent with their ways.

The unbelievers say
Of those who believe!
"If (this message) were
A good thing, (such men)
Would not have gone

To it first, before us!" ...

Qur'an 46:11

At times, unbelievers inform Apostles of Allah and their followers that they will believe, only if they receive similar message from Allah.

When there comes to them
A Sign (from Allah),
They say: "We shall not
Believe until we receive
One (exactly) like those
Received by Allah's Apostle." ...

Qur'an 6:124

The veil or covering against the unbelievers' recognition and acceptance of faith is the mere fact that the Messenger of Allah shares the same physiological nature and basic needs with them. That he is a human being.

... He is no more than a man
Like yourselves: he eats
Of that which ye eat,
And drinks of what ye drink.
If ye obey a man
Like yourselves, behold,
It is certain ye will be lost.

Qur'an 23:33 – 34

Hence, they do not only assert but feel contented with their evil ways and are consistently hurt and disturbed by the mention or explanation of the Way of Allah and His Apostle.

When Allah, the One and Only,
Is mentioned, the hearts
Of those who believe not
In the Hereafter are filled
With disgust and horror;
But when (gods) other than He
Are mentioned, behold,
They are filled with joy!

Qur'an 39:45

It will be noted that unbelievers are absolute empiricists, not going beyond the immediate. Everything begins and ends with them, their traditions.

They know but the outer
(Things) in the life
Of this world; but

Of the End of things (Hereafter)
They are heedless.

Qur'an 30:7

The unbelievers do not stop at doubt and unbelief; they make a mockery of the truth of the unity of Allah. They could (as did the Arabs) abuse, by expressing the due of Allah, to be what they hate.

They attribute to Allah
What they hate (for themselves),
And their tongues assert
The falsehood that all good things
Are for themselves...

Qur'an 16:62

Thus, in the custom of the Arabs who ignorantly preferred sons to daughters, they declare the unwanted for Allah and bury them alive, then keep the sons for themselves. This attitude was both in spirit, disposition and action.

When news is brought
To one of them, of (the birth
Of) a female (child), his face
Darkens, and he is filled
With inward grief!

Qur'an 16:58

And they assign daughters
For Allah! Glory be to Him!
And for themselves (sons -
The issue) they desire!

Qur'an 16:57

Due to the unbelief rooted in their dependence on the immediate, neither knowing of the past nor of the future, they express doubt, whether there will be life after death.

The unbelievers say: "What!
When we become dust,
We and our fathers – shall we
Really be raised (from the dead)?"

Qur'an 27:67

They say: "What!
When we are reduced
To bones and dust,
Should we really be raised-up
(To be) a new creation?"

Qur'an 17:49

And they say: "What!
When we lie, hidden
And lost, in the earth
Shall we indeed be
In a creation renewed?" ...

Qur'an 32:10

This doubt which is embedded in their knowledge of the immediate based on empirical experience of the moment, they simply contend themselves with the present life and submit that anything outside their framework is not acceptable. This explains their demand that the promised experience of recreation be displayed.

"There is nothing beyond
Our first death,
And we shall not
Be raised again.
Then bring (back)
Our fore-fathers if what
Ye say is true!"

Qur'an 44:35 – 36

This insistence is not based on the total strangeness of the message of Allah. The unbelievers very well know and do not deny that Allah had in His Mercy sent Apostle(s) to men, to earlier generations. But, they maintain this assertion because they limit themselves to the immediate and are oblivious of the future.

Such things have been promised
To us and to our fathers
Before! They are nothing
But tales of the ancients!

Qur'an 23:83

For unbelievers therefore, the traditions they inherited from their fore-fathers is the correct guidance. The leaders and the followership are the same in this respect as they express satisfaction in their ways, regardless of whatever light may be presented to them by Messengers of Allah.

...The wealthy ones among them
Said: "We found our fathers
Following a certain religion,
And we will certainly
Follow in their footsteps."

Qur'an 43:23

..."Nay, we shall follow
The ways that we found
Our fathers (following)." ...

Qur'an 31:21

The unbelievers indeed resist even acts that will cement collective survival. They will as a result not support or assist believers, as fellow human beings.

And when they are told,
"Spend ye of (the bounties)
With which Allah
Has provided you," the Unbelievers
Say to those who believe:
"Shall we then feed those
Whom, if Allah had so willed,
He would have fed, (Himself)?
Ye are in nothing
But manifest error."

Qur'an 36:47

For the unbelievers, they will not stop associating created things with the unity of Allah. They mistake the gift(s) of Allah that are to be utilised for the benefit of man, for what will either be worshipped in itself or transformed before worship.

And they (even) assign,
To things they do not know,
A portion out of that
Which We have bestowed
For their sustenance! ...

Qur'an 16:56

Furthermore, when the unbelievers are cautioned against what they practice, as against the Way of Allah, they allege that, it is the right thing because it was inherited from their fathers of old and that, that is what is in accordance with Allah's command.

When they do aught
That is shameful, they say:
"We found our fathers
Doing so;" and "Allah
Commanded us thus."

Qur'an 7:28

Certainly, they keep onto their wrong doing and are so convinced that, they will give their last word, to the effect that they bear witness to the correctness of what they do and that this life is the beginning and the end of all things.

They swear their strongest oaths
By Allah, that Allah will not
Raise up those who die...

Qur'an 16:38

But the unbelievers are only misusing the respite given to us by Allah's Mercy, in order that we may invest for peace in our lives after death. If Allah had not by His Mercy sent us any message as a guidance for our own good, the unbelievers could have been considered innocent an excuse for living an unguided livelihood. But, with Allah's message brought by His Apostle Muhammad (S.A.W) and conveyed to us in complete and perfect forms of instructions and practices, where shall an unbeliever stand?

And if We had inflicted
On them a penalty before this,
They would have said:
"Our Lord! If only Thou
Hadst sent us an Apostle,
We should certainly have followed
Thy Signs before we were
Humbled and put to shame."

Qur'an 20:134

Or lest ye should say:
"Our fathers before us
May have taken false gods,
But we are (their) descendents
After them: wilt Thou then
Destroy us because of the deeds
Of men who were futile?"

Qur'an 7:173

In the perspective of Islam, those who do not believe, those in doubt, those who have chosen the association of other than Allah with His unity, those who have degenerated from hypocrisy to unbelief or have not even considered believing, are at loss.

The parable of those
Who reject faith is
As if one were to shout
Like a goat-herd, to things
That listen to nothing
But calls and cries:
Deaf, dumb, and blind,
They are void of wisdom.

Qur'an 2:171

... Their deeds are like a mirage
In sandy deserts, which
The man parched with thirst
Mistakes for water; until
When he comes to it,
He finds it to be nothing...

Or (the Unbelievers' state)
Is like the depths of darkness
In a vast deep ocean,
Overwhelmed with billow
Topped by billow,
Topped by (dark) clouds;
Depths of darkness, one
Above another: if a man
Stretches out his hand,
He can hardly see it! ...

Qur'an 24:39 – 40

...Their works are as ashes,
On which the wind blows
Furiously on a tempestuous day:
No power have they over
Aught that they have earned:
That is the straying
Far, far (from the goal).

Qur'an 14:18

What they spend
In the life
Of this (material) world
May be likened to a Wind
Which brings a nipping frost:
It strikes and destroys the harvest
Of men who have wronged
Their own souls: It's not Allah
That hath wronged them, but
They wronged themselves.

Qur'an 3:117

SUBMISSIONS OF THOSE WHO STRAY FAR, FAR, AWAY

Islam has experienced sufficiently, 'rich' responses to its tenets. The submissions of unbelievers across numerous generations have been regular, to meet the consistency of the message of Allah through His messengers to numerous past generations. This goes to confirm not only the universality, the unity and uniformity of the message but the gradual guidance of mankind to the way of Allah, which finds its completion and protection with the revelation of the Qur'an and the exemplary life, lived by Muhammad (S.A.W). It also goes to confirm straying from the straight path as only in line with Iblis. By the respite of Allah to our generation, in allowing us to do whatever we choose to do, until we return to Him, as against the recorded experiences of the punishment of some of the past generations that denied the existence and unity of Allah, the Way of Allah has continued to over-reach unbelief, unbelievers and wrongdoing.

IN RESPECT OF SATAN (IBLIS)

We are all aware that no creation can deny the favours of Allah, whenever He desires. This is what can be deduced from the disobedience of Allah's command that all angels should pay respect to Adam (A.S) when he was created. If Allah had willed, He could have made Satan to necessarily comply. But He granted him the choice to obey or not to. Thus, he refused to comply and gave an 'excuse' by what he knew. So, if any logical excuse was excusable, Allah's unity would have been 'difficult' to understand because He has not defined it in a manner that could differ or vary from His unity. Thus, Satan explained his disobedience (out of the Mercy of Allah, in granting him a fair hearing):

... "I am better
Than he: Thou didst create
Me from fire, and him from clay."
Qur'an 7:12

... "I am not one
To prostrate myself to man,
Whom Thou didst create
From sounding clay, from mud
Moulded into shape."
Qur'an 15:33

IN THE CASE OF ABRAHAM (A.S)

The unbelievers of his generation were so enraged in their response to the Light brought by Prophet Abraham (A.S) that they resolved on doing away with him who symbolised the message of Allah, hopping that, by so doing, they would have buried the Light.

... "Slay him
Or burn him." ...
Qur'an 29:24

THE RESPONSE TO NOAH (A.S)

When Prophet Noah (A.S) conveyed the Message of the unity of Allah to his people, they expressed their understanding of his position, which contradicted their ungodly ways of living.

... "Ah! We see thee
Evidently wandering (in mind)."
Qur'an 7:60

The unbelievers did not fail to point out the reason for dismissing the message and instruction brought by Noah (A.S). In their understanding, the Apostle and his followers were unfit to guide them, because they were fellow human beings and not of high status in their community.

... "We see (in) thee nothing
But a man like ourselves;
Nor do we see that any
Follow thee but the meanest
Among us, in judgement immature:
Nor do we see in you (all)
Any merit about us:
In fact we think ye are liars!"
Qur'an 11:27

Those who denied the unity of Allah closed their minds to the Message, regardless of efforts the Apostle put in, in conveying Allah's message. They identified with attempts (like in the past) to keep people away from their traditions. Indeed, they asserted that, the punishment of Allah that is contained in the Message for that generation would not apply to them.

... "It is the same
To us whether thou
Admonish us or be not
Among (our) admonishers!
This is no other than
A customary device
Of the ancients.
And we are not the ones
To receive Pains and Penalties."
Qur'an 26:136 – 138

Out of the ignorance of the people, the leaders expressed their fears by 'explaining' the ultimate objective of Prophet Noah (A.S) and his followers to be political. They took cover under the traditions inherited from their ancestors.

The chiefs of the Unbelievers
Among his people said:
"He is no more than a man

Like yourselves: his wish is
To assert his superiority
Over you: if Allah had wished
(To send messengers),
He could have sent down
Angels: never did we hear
Such a thing (as he says),
Among our ancestors of old."

Qur'an 23:24

In followership and company of the leaders, the unbelievers were not merely disputing with the Apostle. They urged each other to ensure that their worshipping of other than Allah is consistently upheld.

And they have said
(To each other).
"Abandon not your gods:
Abandon neither *Wadd*
Nor *Suwa*, neither
Yaguth nor *Ya'uq*
Nor *Nasr*."

Qur'an 71:23

May be to demoralise the followers of Noah (A.S) and to further deceive their fellow unbelievers, the latter challenged their Apostle to punish them, as contained in his warning:

"O Noah!
Thou hast disputed with us,
And (much) has thou prolonged
The dispute with us: now
Bring upon us what thou
Threatenest us with, if thou
Speakest the truth!"

Qur'an 11:32

When all of these did not dissuade the Apostle and the very few that submitted, they threatened to do away with him altogether.

"If thou
Desist not, O Noah!
Thou shalt be stoned (to death)."

Qur'an 26:116

TO SHU'AIB (A.S)

When Shu'aib (A.S) presented himself as an Apostle of Allah, his people expressed their reservation towards him, which by extension was their opinion regarding the message he was

conveying.

“Thou art only
One of those bewitched!
Thou art no more than
A mortal like us,
And indeed we think
Thou art a liar!”

Qur'an 26:185 – 186

This Apostle was instructed to inform his people to give and take measures and weigh in balance. This is the foundation of justice. The unbelievers in response, questioned the Apostle for directing them to do so.

"O Shu'aib!
Does thy (religion of) prayer
Command thee that we
Leave off the worship which
Our fathers practised, or
That we leave off doing
What we like with our property?
Truly, thou art the one
That forbearth with faults
And is right-minded!"

Qur'an 11:87

The unbelievers further confessed their refusal or failure to understand the message, supported by what they considered to be the weakness of his following; their sympathy for his background; and a threat.

"O Shu'aib!
Much of what thou sayest
We do not understand!
In fact among us we see
That thou hast no strength!
Were it not for thy family,
We should certainly
Have stoned thee!
For thou hast among us
No great position!"

Qur'an 11:91

Then, in the same manner other generations had invited their Apostles to immediately punish them, Shu'aib was equally challenged.

"Now cause a piece
Of the sky to fall on us

If thou art truthful!"

Qur'an 26:187

So when that did not work, his people assured him that he had to make a choice between being thrown out and his returning to their way of life.

"O Shu'aib! We shall
Certainly drive thee out
Of our city (thee) and those
Who believe with thee;
Or else ye (thou and they)
Shall have to return
To our ways and religion." ...

Qur'an 7:88

OF THE NATION OF SALIH (A.S.)

The disbelievers among the people of Salih (A.S) considered him and his followers odd and harmful to the entire community.

... "Ill omen
Do we augur from thee
And those that are with thee" ...

Qur'an 27:47

They did not stop there, but proceeded to make mockery of the Apostle and his followers. This they did by challenging him to make real and immediate the punishment he warned them against.

... "Know ye
Indeed that Salih is
An Apostle from his Lord? ...

... For our part, we reject
What ye believe in.

... O Salih! Bring about
Thy threats, if thou art
An Apostle (of Allah)!"

Qur'an 7:75 – 77

Like the people of Shu'aib, the people of Salih also expressed their intention of luring him back to their evil ways, coupled with their disappointment over his role as one who calls to the worship of Allah alone.

"O Salih!
Thou hast been of us

A centre of our hopes
Hitherto! Dost thou (now)
Forbid us the worship
Of what our fathers worshipped?
But we are really
In suspicious (disquieting)
Doubt as to that to which
Thou invitest us."

Qur'an 11:62

As for his life, the Qur'an informs us of the plot by unbelievers to murder him along with his followers – but for the protection of Allah, who is All-Seeing, All-Hearing and All-Powerful.

There were in the city
Nine men of a family,
Who made mischief in the land,
And would not reform.
They said: "Swear
A mutual oath by Allah
That we shall make
A secret night attack
On him and his people,
And that we shall then
Say to his heir (when he
Seeks vengeance): 'We were not
Present at the slaughter
Of his people, and we are
Positively telling the truth.' "

Qur'an 27:48 – 49

IN THE CASE OF LUT (A.S)

This Apostle was sent to warn and dissuade his people from the practice of homosexual relations. His activity was seen as 'embarrassing' which led to the decision to banish him.

"Drive them out
Of your city: these are
Indeed men who want
To be clean and pure!"

Qur'an 7:82

His people did not however fail to challenge him to bring them the wrath of Allah, since he was displeased with their ways.

"Bring us the Wrath of Allah
If thou tellest the truth."

Qur'an 29:29

Their level of wrong-doing came to a peak when they mistook Angels of Allah who visited Lut (A.S) in the form of men as human beings. The unbelievers trailed them to the Apostle's residence and in response to his offering them his daughters, they declared:

"Well dost thou
Know we have no need
Of thy daughters: indeed
Thou knowest quite well
What we want!"

Qur'an 11:79

When Lut (A.S) reminded them that homosexuality is an abomination and against decent living, they queried:

"Did we not
Forbid thee (to speak)
For all and sundry?"

Qur'an 15:70

"If thou desist not,
O Lut! Thou wilt assuredly
Be cast out!"

Qur'an 26:167

THE PEOPLE OF HUD (A.S)

His people denied the truth of his bearing the Message of Allah, assured him that they will not abandon their worship of idols; and that in fact they thought, the Apostle had fallen a victim of the wrath of their idols.

"Ah! We see thou art
An imbecile! We think
Thou art a liar!"

Qur'an 7:66

"O Hud!
No clear (Sign) hast thou
Brought us, and we are not
The ones to desert our gods
On thy word! Nor shall we
Believe in thee!
We say nothing but that
(Perhaps) some of our gods
May have seized thee
With imbecility"...

Qur'an 11:53 – 54

MOSES (A.S) AND THE PHARAOH OF HIS TIME

The Pharaoh that Moses (A.S) faced was a very powerful king and was neither given to simple open-mindedness nor was he given to restraint in the display of his power over his subjects or whoever might challenge the system he was heading. Thus, when Moses and his brother met him to convey the message of Allah, he was shocked by realising that another Lord will be identified and recognised even before the instructions to that effect are given. He therefore cautioned:

"If thou
Dost put forward any god
Other than me, I will
Certainly put thee in prison!

Qur'an 26:29

The information or response by way of highlighting the Lordship of Allah over the heavens and the earth by the Apostles remained strange but then attracted the curiosity of Pharaoh.

"Who, then,
O Moses, is the Lord
Of you two?"

Qur'an 20:49

That Allah is the Creator, Owner and Controller of all creations and that all shall return to Him for Judgement was a thing strange to Pharaoh and his people. The implication of this was a challenge to the powers claimed by Pharaoh. He turned to his people only to make jest of the Apostles.

"And what
Is the Lord and Cherisher
Of the Worlds?"

Qur'an 26:23

"Do ye not listen
(To what he says)?"

Qur'an 26:25

"Truly
Your Apostle who has been
Sent to you is
A veritable madman!"

Qur'an 26:27

As with most other Messengers of Allah, Musa and his brother were challenged by Pharaoh and his chiefs to prove their Apostleship by showing them signs or evidences from the Lord they claim sent them.

"Why speaketh not Allah
Unto us? Or why cometh not

Unto us a Sign?"...

Qur'an 2:118

"Why is not
A Sign sent down
To him from his Lord?"...

Qur'an 6:37

But when he presented the signs given to him by Allah, they were not satisfied. They arrogantly asked Moses to invite Allah Himself.

"O Moses!
We shall never believe in thee
Until we see Allah manifestly".

Qur'an 2:55

..."Show us Allah in Public"...

Qur'an 4:153

..."This is indeed
A sorcerer well-versed."

Qur'an 26:34

The interpretation of Pharaoh was that Moses had returned in order to usurp power from him and his people. But the trick of the 'magic' was not enough, because Pharaoh had notable magicians in his land. He therefore proposed a competitive show.

"Hast thou come
To drive us out
Of our land with thy magic,
O Moses?"
"But we can surely produce
Magic to match thine!
So make a tryst
Between us and thee,
Which we shall not fail
To keep neither we nor thou.
In a place where both
Shall have even chances."

Qur'an 20:57 – 58

Pharaoh then certified to his magicians that he will reward them handsomely if they win: "For ye shall in that case be raised to posts nearest to my person" (Qur'an 26:42). As for his people, they did believe that Pharaoh was their Lord as he claimed. They therefore responded: "By the might of Pharaoh, it is we who will certainly win" (Qur'an 26:44).

However, when at the end, Moses won, those who still did not believe saw Moses, his brother and their followers as same people belonging to the tribes that were enslaved by them. For Pharaoh, he was shocked when his magicians submitted to Moses (A.S).

“Believe ye
In Him before I give
You permission? Surely he
Is your leader, who has
Taught you sorcery!
But soon shall ye know!
Be sure I will cut off
Your hands and your feet
On opposite sides, and I
Will cause you all
To die on the cross!”

Qur'an 26:49 – 50

Pharaoh never failed to re-assert himself as the only lord of Egyptians. This he did by questioning his people and challenging/accusing Moses (A.S) of being ungrateful to him and escaping from the charge of murder.

"O my people! Does not
The dominion of Egypt
Belong to me, (witness)
These streams flowing
Underneath my (palace)? What!
See you not then?

"Am I not better
Than this (Moses), who
Is a contemptible wretch
And can scarcely
Express himself clearly?

Then why are not
Gold bracelets bestowed
On him, or (why)
Come (not) with him
Angels accompanying him
In procession?"

Qur'an 43:51 – 53

(Pharaoh) said (to Moses): "Did we not
Cherish thee as a child
Among us, and didst thou not
Stay in our midst
Many years of thy life?"

And thou didst a deed
Of thine which (thou knowest)
Thou didst, and thou art
An ungrateful (wretch)!"

Qur'an 26:18 – 19

Those who did not believe re-affirmed their disbelief by submitting to the straying Pharaoh.

"This is nothing but sorcery
Faked up: never did we
Hear the like among our fathers
Of old!"

Qur'an 28:36

Pharaoh then re-assured them of his lordship and sought to meet the Lord of Moses; and in fact to deal with Moses, in order to protect his people and their religion.

"O Chiefs!
No god do I know for you
But myself: therefore
O *Haman*! Light me a (Kiln
To bake bricks) out of clay,
And build me a lofty
Palace that I may mount up
To the god of Moses:
But as far as I am concerned,
I think (Moses) is a liar!"

Qur'an 28:38

... "I but
Point out to you that
Which I see (myself):
Nor do I guide you
But to the Path of Right!"

Qur'an 40:29

Said Pharaoh: "Leave me
To slay Moses; and let him
Call on his Lord!
What I fear is lest
He should change your religion,
Or lest he should cause
Mischief to appear
In the Land!"

Qur'an 40:26

THE EXPERIENCE OF JESUS (A.S)

In the case of Jesus (A.S), the pattern of his relationship with the unbelievers was the same. They denied that he was an Apostle of Allah, challenged him and threatened his life. At best, what they did was to request him for a sign that will satisfy their immediate needs. But, like all unbelievers, they were not convinced even when a sign was brought to them.

"O Jesus the son of Mary!
Can thy Lord send down to us
A table set (with viands)
From heaven?
We only wish
To eat thereof and satisfy
Our hearts, and to know
That thou hast indeed
Told us the truth; and
That we ourselves may be
Witnesses to the miracle!"

Qur'an 5:112 – 113

It is to be noted therefore that the framework that defines or have to define straying far, far, away from the straight Way include:

- (i) Questioning the logic and justification for a fellow man and member of the community, rather than known leaders, as the chosen Apostle of Allah (Qur'an 2:90; 46:11 and 43:31).
- (ii) Questioning the genuineness of revelation. For them, the Apostle either receives dictations or the message is a system that can equally be produced by them, if indeed, it is not a collection of ancient tales or the product of a confused mind (Qur'an 8:31; 25:4; and 25:5).
- (iii) Questioning the ability of Allah to provide good things of life, when in fact they experience the control of economy, politics and society (Qur'an 5:64; 3:181; 28:57 and 19:73).
- (iv) Questioning the truth in the warning against not submitting to Allah and his Apostle(s) by asking that the threat be meted out to them immediately and that Allah and His angels meet them (Qur'an 17:90 – 93; 11:12; 7:70; 8:32 and 38:16).
- (v) Absolute confidence and satisfaction with their ways of doing things, to the extent of being ready to carry whoever is interested along with them.

And the unbelievers say
To those who believe:
"Follow our path, and we
Will bear (the consequences)
Of your faults."

Qur'an 29:12

Allah Forbid!