

A Critique of Iman (faith): The Quranic Perspective

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Abstract

The present treatise discusses the synthesis of faith within the Qur'anic paradigm and the Qur'anic mode of reasoning for recognizing the existence of God and the role of the human intellect in this pursuit. The treatise is aimed at paving the way in stimulating the hearts and minds of the modern Muslims towards the Book of Allah (SWT). It will help them in turning their attention to the real remedy of our malady – the acquisition of conscious faith and reasoned commitment as outlined in the Qur'an.

Keywords: *Faith, Islam, Quran, Iman*

Introduction

One of the most prominent factors leading to the continuing decline of the Muslim *Ummah* is the shift of emphasis among the Muslims from metaphysico-moral pursuits to material concerns. The modern Muslim intellectuals – spellbound by the material progress and dazzling exterior of the western civilization and dismayed by the inability, indeed the sheer refusal, of the *ulama* to counter the western philosophical onslaught – sought to uplift the Muslims from their woeful predicament and prescribed the medicine of modernization and de-Islamization. The process of modernization is rooted in scientism – the belief that the Truth can only be arrived at via the scientific method of investigation. The scientific method is limited to the sensorial, material realm and denies, or at least is skeptical of; the spiritual, moral and metaphysical dimensions

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of life. The belief in scientism and practical negation of a supra-sensible realm is part and parcel of all modern western thought and civilization.

This syndrome inevitably affected the thought-pattern of modern Muslim thinkers especially those who were mesmerized by Western thinking. Come the present age, the syndrome of modernization, coupled with the ubiquitous presence of everything western in Muslim countries, has unconsciously and subliminally invaded and contaminated the minds of the masses as well. This has resulted in either a form of disbelief, skepticism or an irrational, blind belief in the metaphysical truths asserted by Islam. The rise and fall of the Muslim *Ummah* is tied to its relationship with and adherence to the injunctions of Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The focus of the Muslim intellectual pursuits must once again gravitate towards these two fountains of true knowledge. For this, it is essential that the Muslim masses and their intelligentsia in particular, must acquire a conscious conviction regarding these metaphysico-moral truths. This is because the foundation of Islam rests upon the belief in certain transcendental, unseen, intangible truths. Hence, unless and until the Muslims, especially their intelligentsia, undergo the prescribed shift of emphasis from the material to the metaphysical, the dream of redeeming the woes of Muslim *Ummah* cannot be realized.

The Quranic Mode of Reasoning about Faith (Iman)

One of the most significant passages dealing with synthesis of Faith (Iman) spans following *Aayahs of the Holy Quran*:

“Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting and lying on their sides and contemplate on the creation of the heavens and the earth, then say: “Our Rabb! You have not created this in vain. Glory to you! Save us from the punishment of fire.

Our Rabb! Those whom You cast into the Fire will be in eternal shame: and there shall be no helper for such wrongdoers. Our Rabb! We have heard someone calling to the faith saying; 'Believe in your Rabb,' so we have believed. Our Rabb! Forgive us our sins, remove from us our evil deeds and make us die with the righteous. Our Rabb! Grant us what You have promised through Your Rasools and from the shame on the Day of Resurrection; Surely, You never break Your promise." So their Rabb answers their prayers, saying: "I will not let the good deed of any worker among you, whether a male or a female, be wasted. You are the offspring of one another. Those who had to leave their homes or were expelled there from and who suffered persecutions for My sake and fought and were killed; I will forgive them their sins and admit them into gardens beneath which the rivers flow; a prize from Allah and Allah holds the finest prize."¹

This passage is of particular significance for it outlines the Qur'anic mode of reasoning as it relates to the synthesis of *Iman* (faith). The excellence of this passage is indicated by the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had an especial fondness for these *ayahs*. It would suffice to quote two *Hadiths* (sayings of the Prophet) to convey the excellence of this passage:

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

kept weeping so much so that the place of prostration became drenched with tears. Then he lied down (after prayer) but his weeping continued until it was dawn. At this time Bilal (RAA) came to inform him (SAW) of the Morning Prayer and upon seeing the Prophet's condition, tried to cajole him: 'O Prophet (SAW) for what reason do you weep? Even if you have committed a mistake then Allah (SWT) has already forgiven all your mistakes.' To this the Prophet (SAW) replied, 'O Bilal! Why would I not weep when my Lord has revealed tonight these ayahs upon me?' After this the Prophet (SAW) recited: 'Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding...'”²

In another Hadith Ali (RAA) relates: *It was a routine of the Prophet (SAW) that whenever he (SAW) woke up for night prayers he (SAW) would recite these (same) verses.*³

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

The Theme of the Passage: Synthesis of Faith

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

Some Basic Points Regarding Faith

Faith is essentially to believe in certain metaphysical, unseen but intelligible realities. It lends itself to two levels: verbal attestation and heartfelt conviction or attestation. The first level of faith – legal faith or *iman al-fiqhi*⁴ – is simply the verbal affirmation in the unity of God, the messengership of Muhammad (SAW), the Hereafter, the Hellfire, the Paradise, the Resurrection, the Day of Judgment, the Prophets, the Angels, the Divine Books, the Revelation, etc. Anyone who simply professes to believe in these realities is considered a Muslim. The vast majority of Muslims today have inherited this type of faith from their parents or the surrounding environment. The second level of faith – true faith or *iman al-haqeeqi*⁵ – deals with the heartfelt conviction – a conviction that translates itself into action.

This is the level of faith at which the believer consciously asserts and affirms his belief, beyond any shadow of doubt, in the aforementioned metaphysical realities. It is this type of faith which is actually required of a believer for it becomes the basis on which he will be judged in the Hereafter. Thus, it is this true faith (which is inclined to manifest itself into action) is the subject of the passage under discussion.

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

contemplation. In these *ayahs*, people of such faith are termed *ulul albaab* – people of intellect, deep discernment and contemplation.

The Stages of Intellectual Maturity

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

The last *ayah*⁶ of this passage portrays the personality traits of the *ulul albaab*: such people are not cowardly or weak; they stand up for the Truths that they have come to believe in and put everything at stake for upholding these Truths. They are always ready to spend their wealth, part with their families and, in the final analysis, lay down their lives for the truths they have come to believe in.

Piecemeal Analysis of the Passage

Who are the Ulul Albaab?

The passage we are trying to explain deals with the subject matter of *iman* in reference to a particular type of human individuals viz, the *ulul albaab*. Naturally, the question arises as to what is meant by *ulul albaab*? In Arabic, *albaab* is the plural of *lubb* which means “core”, “essence”, and “innermost”.⁷ This means that the real essence of something is called its *lubb*. The *lubb* of the human being is consciousness, intellect, and intelligence. For this reason the philosophers have defined man as an “intelligent and rational being”⁸ (Haiwan-e-aqil), pointing to the fact that the essence of man is his intellect and reasoning capacity. *Ulul albaab*, therefore, are the people of deep reflection and contemplation who follow their intellect and not their vain desires or the carnal promptings of their baser self.

A golden rule of Qur'anic comprehension is that one part of the Qur'an is supported or explained by other parts. Examining the Qur'an, we find a similar discourse in the following verse:

*“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise (qaumun ya`qiloon).”*⁹

It may be noted that the above *ayah* ends with the term “qaumun ya`qiloon” (the people of intelligence), whereas the passage of *Surah Al-e-Imran* under discussion used the term *ulul albaab*. Consequently, *qaumun ya`qiloon* and *ulul albab* are one and the same; that is, they are the people of intellect, deep thought and reasoning whose vision of

reality has not been beclouded by prejudices and pursuit of purely carnal desires.

It is a known fact that the vast majority of mankind does not comprise people who utilize their intellect and reasoning faculty. It would not be too far fetched to term such people as “two legged animals”.¹⁰ They follow their society’s conventional trends and simply mimic the behavior of those around them. They swim in the direction of the social current and tide of their time and only change their direction as the current changes. They never question as to who they are, where have they come from or where they are going?

Contrary to such a character, there always exists, in each society, a minority (group) who is never satisfied with the practices and beliefs prevalent in their society. They demand rational arguments and logical proofs for the validity of all beliefs and practices. They want to discover for themselves the realities of life via their own intellect and reasoning. This group comprises a society’s intelligentsia (the intellectual elite or the brain trust). These are the people whom the Qur’an calls *qaumun ya`qiloon* or *ulul albaab*. When these people study the universal, natural phenomena, they find them laden with the signs of the Creator-Lord (SWT) – His Creativity, Wisdom and Power. Hence, the universal, natural phenomena lead them to the gnosis of Allah (SWT). [In fact the Quran identifies three major sources of wisdom for a reflective mind. These sources are: reflect on your own self; reflect on the Nature that surround you; and reflect on the pages of History. For a perceptive and responsive mind, reflections on these sources, can serve as pointers to something beyond themselves and are likely to enable us to have communion with God Almighty. We can feel his presence in and through

these sources. We can, so to say, transcend from natural to the non-natural and metaphysical realm.]

Meaning of “ayah”

Both quoted passages (of Al-Baqarah and Al-e-`Imran) use the word “*ayaat*”. What exactly is meant by this term? *Ayaat* is plural of *ayah* which literally means: “sign”, “signpost”, and “memento.” An *ayah* then is something that reminds you of something else. For example, a handkerchief of an old friend, whom you have forgotten, may serve as a memento to remind you of him. This implies that the memory of the friend had always been in your subconscious mind; the memento simply helped to activate it and bring it to the plain of your consciousness. In this way, the objective of an *ayah* is thus identified – to remind one of a forgotten truth or reality. From the Qur'anic perspective, the two universes – the outer universe of nature and the inner universe of the self – are replete with the signs (*ayaat*) that serve as mementos and reminders of the Creator (SWT). Qur'an distinctly points to this reality: “*Soon shall We show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this Qur'an is indeed the truth.*”¹¹

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

The Qur'anic Mode of Argument

The Qur'an does not employ the method of logical reasoning or rational arguments to prove the existence of Allah (SWT). All the rational arguments put forth to prove the existence of God have been rejected by philosophers. This is because logical arguments making a case for the existence of God are negated by other, equally sound, logical arguments.

Contrary to this approach, the Qur'an asserts that the cognition of Allah (SWT) is inherently present in the inner denizen of human psyche. Therefore, when a reflective observer, a person of sound intellect, whose human nature has not been perverted, studies the universal phenomena realizes that the grand design of the universe is so coherent, integrated, organized and purposeful to be the work of blind, material and accidental forces. Instead, there is an intelligent, creative, artistic, and Powerful Being who brought the universe into existence with a definite purpose in mind. Such inquiries into the universe activate, in a person, the inherent, dormant cognition of Allah (SWT), which leaps from the depths of his sub-conscious mind and illumines the plain of his consciousness. The arousal of such an idea dawns upon the person the forgotten truth that the powerful and creative force working behind the universe could be none other than Allah (SWT) Himself. In fact, the method of the Quran is to shake you or to shock you to recall that God Almighty is your Creator as well as the Creator of the entire Universe.

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

Outcome of Contemplation: Gnosis of Allah (SWT)

A vital issue in the field of theology is: how do we come to know God? What are the means via which we can gain recognition of and knowledge about God? The Islamic view on this issue is that there is only one way to gain knowledge about Allah (SWT) and that is via pondering over His attributes. This raises another question: how do we come to realize the attributes of Allah (SWT)? The passage of *Surah Al-e-`Imran* under discussion provides the answer. The investigation of the universal phenomena reveals a few basic attributes of Allah (SWT) and reflection upon these attributes leads one on the path of knowledge about Him (SWT). The investigator of universal phenomena first of all realizes that the Creator of the universe is an All-Powerful Being who has control and power over everything. His Power is Absolute and there is nothing which falls outside His Jurisdiction. Secondly, the Creator must also be All-Knowing for the one who designed and created the universe must have complete and total knowledge of all that occurs throughout the expanse of the universe; that is, His Knowledge must be Absolute. The Qur'an points to this reality in the following words:

“Should He not know, He who created? And He is the One who is subtle (understands the finest mysteries and) is well-acquainted (with them).”¹²

Thirdly, even a cursory glance upon the universe unfolds Allah's (SWT) attribute of Wisdom. For all that has been created seems to have a definite purpose behind it. Hence, the Creator of this universe must be an All-Wise Creator whose Wisdom is manifested in all the workings of the universe. Once the *ulul albaab* grasp Allah's (SWT) basic attributes, these become the basis of further contemplation into the finer mysteries of the universe. Charged with the conscious cognition of Allah (SWT),

they now constantly remember their Lord (SWT) and continuously praise Him at all times and continue their quest for further comprehension:

“Men who celebrate the praises of Allah standing sitting and lying down on their sides and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought): “Our Lord! Not for naught have You created (all) this! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire.”¹³

Remembrance and Contemplation: Commonalities

The passage quoted above mentions remembrance and contemplation in close proximity. It is necessary to understand the relationship between these two processes. The term, in Arabic, for the remembrance of Allah (SWT) is *zikr* and the term for contemplation is *fikr*.¹⁴ It is apparent from the *ayah* that these two processes should be carried on hand in hand, in parallel. The functioning relationship of the two processes is similar to the two wheels of an automobile; to move forward, both wheels must move forward together and with the same velocity. It is a sad and unfortunate fact of our history that these two processes have been separated and consequently, estranged from each other. The separation and estrangement resulted in the unfortunate fact that each process took on a distinct identity, far apart from the prescribed practices of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions (RAA): one group concerns itself only with *zikr* and pays no heed to the dimension of *fikr*. While the group involved in *fikr* is bereft of *zikr*. This is why the envisioned results have not been achieved. In reality, the correlation between the two is that *zikr* provides the impetus and the motivation for *fikr*.

It is worth noting that *zikr* should not be taken in its conventional, limited understanding as the verbal chanting of some prescribed words. Rather, it should be taken in its widest sense. *Zikr* embodies verbal remembrance and silent contemplation of Allah (SWT),

His Omnipresence, His Omnipotence, and so forth. The true implication of *zikr* is to keep the remembrance of Allah (SWT) alive in one's heart in all places and at all times, whether through contemplation, verbal chanting or any other act which reminds one of his Lord (SWT). A true Muslim is supposed to be a God-intoxicated man.

Recompense of Deeds: Consequence of Intellectual Insight

The convergence of parallel processes of *zikr* and *fikr* results in the awareness of an afterlife, mentioned next in the passage in the following words: “...our Lord! You have not created this (universe) in vain! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the penalty of the fire.”¹⁵

A thoughtful reader will notice that there is a gap in the logical chain of arguments from *zikr* and *fikr* to the seeking of refuge from Hellfire. For how do the *zikr* of Allah (SWT) and the contemplation over the universe yield the conception of an afterlife and Hellfire? The argument goes as follows:

The contemplation over the universe reveals the truth that everything in the universe, macroscopic and microscopic, has a purpose. Therefore the question naturally arises: how is it possible that the universe as whole and its most fantastic, superb and highest evolved life-form – the human being – may have been created in vain, without a purpose. And if the human being has a purpose in this life then his deeds must be accounted for. For according to a Persian proverb – “planting of wheat should yield wheat and barley that of barley” – the plantation of good deeds should be harvested as reward and the plantation of evil deeds should be harvested as punishment. The Qur’an points to these arguments in its own mode of expression:

“Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal”.¹⁶ “Shall We then treat the People of Faith like the People of Sin?”

What is the matter with you? How foolishly do you judge!”¹⁷

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

Self-Conscious Faith and Its Requirements

According to *Shaikh al-Hind*, Mahmood Hassan (RA),¹⁸ *ayahs* 190-192 of *surah* Al-e-`Imran are concerned with “*iman-e-`aqli*” (intellectual faith) – the process of attaining faith in Allah (SWT) and an awareness of the Hereafter via the intellectual reasoning as outlined in the previous section. The subject of next three *ayahs* (193-195) is labeled as “*iman-e-sam`ee*” (audition based faith) by *Shaikh al-Hind*. That is, when the *ulul albaab*, having successfully traversed the process of *iman-e-`aqli*, hear the call of a prophet, they instantly answer his call. This is so because the call of the prophet is based on truths and realities that *ulul albaab* have already grasped intuitively by their intellects. Hence, the call of the prophet seems to them as nothing more than the echoes of truths reverberating in their own hearts. Upon accepting the call of a prophet,

their emotions and feelings are spontaneously articulated in the form of a supplication:

“Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling (us) to faith ‘Believe in the Lord’ and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities and take to Yourself our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord! Grant us what You promised unto us through Your prophets and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: for You never break Your promise.”¹⁹

We should pause at this juncture to reflect upon the significance of *du’a* (supplication) in Islam. According to two sayings of the Prophet (SAW): *du’a* is the essence of *‘ibadah* (worship); and *du’a* is itself (a form of *‘ibadah*).²⁰ This is due to the fact that *du’a* is the link between the Lord (SWT) and His slaves by which the slaves communicate to their Lord (SWT), call upon Him and converse with Him (SWT). In addition, *du’a* is a manifestation of faith for it proves that the believer recognizes the Lord (SWT) as All-Hearing and All-Seeing, that He (SWT) alone can answer his call for He (SWT) is All-Powerful and has Absolute Authority over all matters.

Condition of the Faith of True Believers

Within the Qur'anic discourse, the person whose faith in Islam is the result of intellectual and audition based faiths are termed *siddiqeen* (singular *siddeeq*). The major characteristic of *siddiqeen*, which distinguishes them from other believers, is that they leap forward to accept a prophet’s call without a moment’s hesitation. They are likened to the believer who, after performing *wudu’* (ritual purity), impatiently waits for the prayer-call and the moment the call is sounded scurries to the *masjid*. Among the *siddiqeen*, the personality of Abu Bakr (RAA) is prominent about whom the Prophet (SAW) said:

Whosoever I invited to Islam took some time to accept it except Abu Bakr (RAA), who did not hesitate even for a moment. It is for this reason that Abu Bakr (RAA) is called “*al-siddeeq al-akbar*” (The *Greatest siddeeq* i.e. testifier).

We must ponder why this was so? It was because Abu Bakr (RAA) had no difficulty in accepting the Prophet’s (SAW) call for the call was nothing more than a reverberation of Abu Bakr’s (RAA) own thoughts and beliefs that he had come to accept having traversed the process of *iman-e-`aqli*.

Abu Bakr (RAA) was not the lone case however. In that land of vulgar paganism and polytheism, a land sunk deep in the darkness of ignorance and backwardness, there were individuals whose hearts were illumined with the light of *tauheed* (Unity of God) and whose inner nature was pure and pristine. Among them, as stated above, was Abu Bakr (RAA) who had never associated gods with Allah (SWT); just as the Prophet (SAW), Abu Bakr (RAA) was also a follower of *tauheed* from day one. Same was the case with Uthman bin `Affan (RAA) and Sa`eed bin Zaid (RAA), both of whom were among the ten companions given the glad-tidings of Paradise in their lifetime.

In this very land lived the father of Sa`eed bin Zaid (RAA), named Zaid bin`Amr bin Nufail – who died before the revelation descended upon Prophet Muhammad (SAW) – about whom it is known that he used to supplicate while clinging to the drapes of Ka`bah: “My Lord! I want to worship You alone. I proclaim my disassociation with all these false-gods that the people of Makkah worship. I want to worship none except You, but do not know how!” In this very land once roamed a man by the name of Waraqah bin Naufil who renounced paganism and sought to discover the True Reality of life. His search took him to Syria

where he learned the Hebrew language and converted to Christianity. At the time when the first revelation descended upon the Prophet (SAW), his (SAW) wife Khadijah (RAA) took the Prophet (SAW) to Waraqah. Waraqah confirmed that the man who appeared to the Prophet (SAW) was the same angel who had descended upon Musa (AS) and Isa (AS). He further informed the Prophet (SAW) that he wished to live to see the day when the people of Makkah would force him (SAW) out of the city so that he can help him (SAW). However, he died soon thereafter. In summation, the *siddiqeen* are characterized by sound intellect and pristine pure nature; people whose *iman* is the result of both *iman-e-a`qli* and *iman-e-sam`ee*. The Qur'an mentions them in another place:

“And when they listen to the revelation received by the prophet you will see their eyes overflowing with tears for they recognize the truth: they pray: ‘Our Lord! We believe! Write us down among the witnesses.’”²¹

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

“And their Lord has accepted of them and answered them (their prayers): ‘Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you be he male or female: You are members one of another (equal to one another).’”²²

Spiritual Equality: Men and Women

Ayah quoted above states the view of Islam in relation to the equality of men and women. The *Ayah* refers to the fact that men and women enjoy an equal status in the domains of spirituality, morality and seeking of religious stature. The apparent differences in disposition and bodily make up of the two genders are only for sociological reasons. Whereas, in reality, when it comes to virtuous deeds, charitable works, and working for the cause of Islam, there are absolutely no differences in the status of

two genders. The field is wide open for both genders to outdo each other in these arenas. No efforts of anyone shall be lost, whether male or female. This is evident from the fact that due to their spirituality, morality and purity, many great and exalted women – for example, Maryam (RAA), Khadijah (RAA), `Aisha (RAA) and Fatimah (RAA) – will outdo, surpass and be elevated much higher above the ranks of a great number of men in the Hereafter.

A Glimpse of Siddiqeen’s Character

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

*“...those who have left their homes or been driven out or suffered harm in My cause and killed and were killed. Surely I will blot out from them their iniquities and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a reward from the presence of Allah and with Him is the best of rewards.”*²³

The above *Ayah* mentions *hijrah* which is usually understood in a limited sense of migration. However, it may be taken here in its widest sense. The literal meaning of *hijrah* is: “to part”, “to leave”, and “to abandon”.²⁴ This abandoning admits of various stages and levels during the course of a person’s life. The Prophet (SAW) was questioned: “Which *hijrah* is the *greatest*?” To this he (SAW) replied, “*That you abandon all that is disliked by your Lord*”. This defines the first stage of *hijrah*: that of abandoning all *haram* (unlawful) practices.²⁵ The final stage is the one mentioned in the passage under discussion: to leave one’s homeland where it becomes impossible to adhere to one’s religion and migrate elsewhere for the sake of Islam. Hence, *siddiqeen* are people who give up all actions disliked by their Lord (SWT); they even part from their families if they insist on disobeying Allah (SWT) and, in the final

analysis, if it is so required, they leave their homelands and migrate to another place to uphold their faith and to act on Islamic injunctions in their totality.

The next portion of the *Ayah* refers to those who were “driven out.” One may object to this assertion and instead say that the Makkans did not ask the Muslims to leave Makkah. In fact they wanted to keep them there. However, the fact of matter was that the persecution meted out to the Muslims had become so severe that it became impossible for them to stay in Makkah. Hence, the Muslims were forced to leave their houses in Makkah and migrate elsewhere to freely practice their faith in peace and security. The severity and extent of the persecution dished out to Muslims is mentioned in the next portion as” *suffered* harm in My cause”. The physical torture of Bilal (RAA) and Khabbaab (RAA) and the murders of Sumiyyah (RAA) and Yasir (RAA) are only few examples of oppression and tyranny suffered by the Muslims at the hands of the pagan Makkans. One may ask: what was the crime of these individuals? It was nothing more than that they renounced the pagan ideology and practices of their godless society and proclaimed their belief in the Unity of God (SWT) and divine messenger-ship of Muhammad (SAW).

Thus far the conditions mentioned were those of Makkan life. Now the *Ayah* mentions the struggle experienced in the life of Madinah as: “killed and were killed.” In Makkah, the Muslims were commanded to refrain from retaliation, however, this restriction was lifted in Madinah and they took to the battle field. In this endeavor they fought, killed, and were killed themselves. The martyrdom on the battle field for the sake of Truth, justice and peace is the highest good, the epitome of virtuous conduct in Islam. Hence, the *siddiqeen* are not just the people of spiritual

pursuits alone; rather, they fully partake of the struggles and hardships of life, without seeking escape to jungles and mountains. They are so dynamic and full of religious conviction that they do not hesitate to move forward in the battlefield and lay down their lives for the cause of their faith. For this service and loyalty, they are promised by their Lord (SWT): “Surely I will blot out from them their iniquities”; that is, all mistakes and sins (major and minor) committed by them will be washed away in return for their struggle for Islam and hardships suffered in this cause. More than this, they will be admitted “*into gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a special reward from Allah*”.

The mention of “*special reward from Allah*” is of particular importance. These rewards shall be bestowed upon them from special treasures of Allah (SWT) possessed only by Him. The final words of the passage, “with Him is the best of *rewards*”, should be heeded.

Conclusion

Our whole life is defined by struggles and hardships. It is the Faith (Iman) which sets a goal that covers both the Worlds. We struggle, toil and labor for the sake of our children, our careers, for other worldly benefits, but none of these objects of fancy provide us any certainty of due payback. Often all such worldly efforts fail and in the end we are left with nothing but sorrow and loss. However, every deed, every investment and every moment spent for the sake of Allah (SWT), for His cause; for His *deen* is saved and earns blissful eternal life for the rewards of such endeavors are everlasting. Consequently, only Allah (SWT) has the Power and the Authority to fully recompense all our deeds in due proportion.

End Notes:

- ¹ Surah Al-e- Imran: 190 - 195
- ² Imam Al Fakhr ud Deen Ar Razi, At Tafseer-ul-Kabeer, Pages. 133, 134
- ³ Ibid;
- ⁴ Surat-ul-Hujurat: 14
- ⁵ Ibid;
- ⁶ Surah Al-e- Imran: 195
- ⁷ Al munjid Fil lugha, page. 709
- ⁸ Dr. Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari, The Qur'anic Foundations & Structure of Muslim Society, Vol.2, Page.39
- ⁹ Suratul Baqarah: 164
- ¹⁰ Surah Al Araf: 179
- ¹¹ Surah Ha Meem As Sajdah: 53
- ¹² Suratul Mulk: 14
- ¹³ Surah Ale Imran: 191
- ¹⁴ F. Steingass, English-Arabic Dictionary, Pages 77, 328
- ¹⁵ Surah Ale Imran: 191
- ¹⁶ Surah Ha Meem As Sajdah : 34
- ¹⁷ Suratul Qalam: 35-36
- ¹⁸ Maulana Mahmood-ul-Hassan, Tafseer-e-Usmani, King Fahd Quran Complex, Page. 97.
- ¹⁹ Surah Ale Imran: 193-194
- ²⁰ Maulana Muhammad Manzoor Nomani, Marif-ul-Hadth, Vol.5, Page. 116, 117.
- ²¹ Suratul Maidah: 83
- ²² Surah Ale Imran: 195
- ²³ Ibid;
- ²⁴ Sunnan An Nasai , Babul Biah, Hadith No 12.
- ²⁵ Ibid;