

their life: one for their personal life — religious, ethical and moral aspects as well as rituals of worship — based on God's revelations, and another for economic, social, political and international matters taken from different sources or based purely on human thought. The duty of such thought is nothing more than to derive and deduce from the Qur'an detailed rules and principles applicable to life's practical and ever-changing situations and developments, as outlined in the last passage of this surah. Otherwise, all claims of true belief in Islam are meaningless. Those who adopt such double standards have not fully absorbed the faith and spirit of Islam or appreciated its fundamental principles. The first among these is the belief that "there is no deity except God". This is the basis that lays down the principles that God is the only and the ultimate ruling and legislating authority in the world. Here, one sees the Qur'an outlining part of the battle plan for the Muslims, appropriate for the prevailing situation when they were surrounded not only by countless external threats but also by the hypocrites and their Jewish allies inside Madinah. It first cautions them: "Believers, be fully prepared against danger." You should be on the alert, watch all your enemies, especially those within your ranks who discourage you. These will presently be identified. "And go to war either in small groups or all together..." The advice here is either to fight in small contingents or as a full fighting force, as the battle dictates. Solo fighters are easily targeted and taken by an enemy that is widely deployed, especially within the Muslim community itself, as was the case with the hypocrites and the Jews of Madinah.

72-73 An Eye for Gain

There are indeed among you such as would lag behind, and then, if a calamity befalls you, say, "God has bestowed His favours upon me in that I was not present with them!" (72) But if good fortune comes to you from God, he is sure to say — just as if there had never been any question of love between you and him — "Oh, would that I had been with them; I would surely have had a [share in a] mighty triumph." (73) The Muslims are advised to mobilise themselves into either small parties or as a fully-fledged fighting force, and not to allow any of their numbers to dither or lag behind, as often happened in practice. They must be vigilant, not only with respect to their external enemy, but also towards those among them who stayed behind and who discouraged others from joining this jihad. The Arabic term chosen here to denote the laggards' position is particularly potent and appropriate. It is a word that gives the impression of slowness, as if one stumbles when it is pronounced. Its sound gives a strong hint of the meaning it conveys. That, itself, is characteristic of the Qur'an's powerful and stylistic prose. The emphatic structure of the sentence also suggests that these foot draggers, and they were only a handful, were persistent and ardent in their pursuit. This indicates the serious effect their actions had had on the community. Hence, the Qur'an focuses its attention on

disdain at victory or reward; indeed they are urged to implore God specifically for them. Nor do believers wish for a hard test. On the contrary, they are encouraged to pray to God to save them from it. But a believer's overall view of such matters is different from that of a hypocrite's as depicted in these verses. As already explained, believers do not wish for hardship. On the contrary, they appeal to be spared such hardship. But when called upon to fight for God's cause, they respond without hesitation, appealing to God to grant them either victory or martyrdom. Either eventuality is a Divine blessing and a great triumph. If granted martyrdom, a believer accepts God's choice and rejoices in that privilege, and if granted victory and spoils of war, he thanks God for His blessings and rejoices in the victory granted by God, not merely for his being spared. This is the level to which God wishes to raise the Muslims when He cites to them the example of indecisive elements living in their midst aiming only to save themselves, so that they, the Muslims, may beware. From the warning and the motivation provided to the Muslim community, a human model of true Muslims emerges. This model is ever recurring in all communities and all generations. This model is painted in a true to life image, using only a few words. Furthermore, this model is seen in all stages of human history. Therefore, the enduring moral that Muslims have to contemplate is that the existence of such half-hearted people in the community should not lead to despair but should rather make the community more vigilant. With more guidance, education and enlightenment, the community should seek to remedy the deficiency, Al-Nisa' (Women) | FIGHTING FOR A NOBLE PURPOSE 189 overcome the weakness and harmonise and integrate its progress and temper.

74 A Good Price for Life

The surah moves on, trying to shake these laggards and stimulate in them an ambition to gain the better and longer lasting rewards of the hereafter. It spurs them on to trade-in this life for the life to come, promising them God's grace and blessings in both worlds and a final outcome of either victory or martyrdom. "Let them fight in God's cause — all who are willing to barter the life of this world for the life to come. To him who fights in God's cause, whether he be slain or be victorious, We shall grant a rich reward." (74) Islam recognises no legitimate fighting other than what is taken in support of God's cause. It does not accept fighting merely for material gain, dominance or glory, whether personal or national. Islam does not advocate fighting for the occupation of land or the domination of other communities. It does not approve of fighting which aims at the acquisition or control of industrial raw materials, or consumer markets or for capital and investment. Islam does not promote fighting for the glory of a particular individual, dynasty, class, state, nation or race. The only fighting it approves of is that undertaken for God's cause, to establish His order and way of life in the world,

Part 5 Surah 4 Al-Nisa' Verse 71 – 76

Fighting for a Noble Purpose

Believers, be fully prepared against danger, and go to war either in small groups or all together. (71) There are indeed among you such as would lag behind, and then, if a calamity befalls you, say, "God has bestowed His favours upon me in that I was not present with them!" (72) But if good fortune comes to you from God, he is sure to say — just as if there had never been any question of love between you and him — "Oh, would that I had been with them; I would surely have had a [share in a] mighty triumph." (73) Let them fight in God's cause — all who are willing to barter the life of this world for the life to come. To him who fights in God's cause, whether he be slain or be victorious, We shall grant a rich reward. (74) And why should you not fight in the cause of God and the utterly helpless men, women and children who are crying, "Our Lord! Deliver us from this land whose people are oppressors, and send forth to us, out of Your grace, a protector, and send us one that will help us." (75) Those who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who reject the faith fight in the cause of evil. Fight, then, against the friends of Satan. Feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan. (76)

71 Taking Proper Precautions

"Believers, be fully prepared against danger, and go to war either in small groups or all together. (71) There are indeed among you such as would lag behind, and then, if a calamity befalls you, say, "God has bestowed His favours upon me in that I was not present with them!" (72) But if good fortune comes to you from God, he is sure to say — just as if there had never been any question of love between you and him — "Oh, would that I had been with them; I would surely have had a [share in a] mighty triumph." (73)"

This piece of advice is given to the believers by the "high command", God Almighty, who sets out the plan and points the way for believers to go. One is always amazed at how often the Qur'an actually outlines for the Muslims, albeit in a general form, the blueprint, or order of battle, for the task they are about to undertake. Elsewhere, we find the Qur'an offering the Muslims a general plan, saying: "Believers, fight those unbelievers who are near to you and let them find you adamant." (9: 123) Here it gives advice on the "tactics" to be employed: "...Be fully prepared against danger, and go to war either in small groups or all together..." In Surah 10, The Spoils of War, there are many instances of this kind (verses 57 ff.). Thus, the Qur'an not only teaches the Muslims the rules of worship and religious rites, or moral and ethical principles, as the pathetic view of religion suggests, but it also deals with their life as a whole, covering all the developments and ramifications of life in the real world. On this basis, Islam rightfully demands full hegemony over human life. It accepts from Muslims, individuals as well as societies, nothing less than total submission and compliance with its way of life and teachings. It specifically rejects the idea that Muslims should, individually or collectively, seek several sources for organising

them and their intentions outlining, in its own uniquely graphic style, their abhorrent characteristics. Their character, intentions, and all their exploits and claims are exposed for all to see, as if being scrutinised under a microscope, revealing their secrets, aims and motives. They are shown then, during the Prophet's time, as they are shown today to be hypocritical, weak, two-faced and small-minded. They perceive nothing other than their own immediate self-interests, nor do they ever look farther than their own limited and personal interests. They wish that life should revolve around a single focal point: themselves, which they never overlook. They dither and prevaricate, but never speak in the open, trying, as it were, to play a balancing game. Their concept of gain and loss has more in common with that of the hypocrites and the small-minded. They stay behind so that when Muslim fighters suffer a setback, which sometimes occurs, they rejoice and consider the fact that they were able to run away from the battlefield and dodge the test of faith. This is, then, their valuable prize. "If calamity befalls you, [be would] say, 'God has bestowed His favours upon me in that I was not present with them!'" (72) As they assess their position, they consider their evading the battle to be a blessing, and they feel no shame in attributing their decision to God whose commands they have neglected. Evading the obligation to fight, in such circumstances, can never be by the grace of God. This is never gained by disobeying Him, even if the eventual outcome is positive. It can only be considered a prize by those who do not deal directly with God and who do not appreciate why God has created them. Such people do not translate their submission to God into practical obedience or into striving to serve His cause and to establish His order in human life. It is a prize in the eyes of those who do not aspire to higher levels than what is known to them on this earth; those who do not appreciate that sacrifice and striving for the establishment of God's order is a Al-Nisa' (Women) | FIGHTING FOR A NOBLE PURPOSE 188 privilege and an honour God bestows upon a select few. He, thus, elevates them in this life and liberates them from the shackles of their own weaknesses and the limitations of their world. He raises their sights to a higher life in which they are in, not under, control. Thus, God Almighty helps them to qualify for an abode closer to Him, one which is preserved for martyrs. All human beings die, but martyrs who give their lives in God's cause are called upon to testify for God's faith. This is a great privilege bestowed by the grace of God. If the situation is reversed and the Muslims, who are happy to fight and accept everything God gives them, are blessed with victory and the spoils of war, those who have stayed behind regret their action. They look at it, from their narrow, worldly perspective, as a refusal to join a winning battle, according to their narrow and short-term understanding of victory and success. "But if good fortune comes to you from God, he is sure to say — just as if there had never been any question of love between you and him — "Oh, would that I had been with them; I would surely have had a [share in a] mighty triumph." (73) They describe their wish for trivial loot as a "mighty triumph". Believers do not look with

defend their beliefs. These images alone are powerful enough to spur believers into action, and so the Qur'an, profoundly and effectively, denounces the inclination to ignore such calls for help. It is appropriate here to comment on the concept of homeland and nationality in Islam. The land "whose people are oppressors" which, in this context, would be considered hostile and from which Muslims are obliged to rescue their oppressed fellow-Muslims, was Makkah, the land of the Muhajirin (those who had immigrated to Madinah). The urgency of the call to go and fight the unbelievers is addressed to these Makkah immigrants who had settled in Madinah. The fact that Makkah was their original homeland did not make any difference, since it was not ruled by the laws of Islam and since the Muslims therein were being persecuted for their beliefs and religious convictions. On the contrary, it had become a "land of hostility" which they should not defend but should, in fact, attack in order to rescue their fellow-Muslims. Muslims fight to defend the faith. The homeland they fight for is where the laws of Islam are upheld, and the land they protect is the "land of Islam" which adopts Islam as its way of life. All other concepts of nationality or citizenship are alien to Islam and emanate from ignorant, non-Islamic beliefs.

76 Satan's Feeble Cunning

Then follows another psychological touch to inspire enthusiasm and vigour, and to define the values and objectives for which each side is fighting. "Those who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who reject the faith fight in the cause of evil. Fight, then, against the friends of Satan. Feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan." (76) In one stroke, people are set apart, lines are drawn and objectives are clearly identified, as mankind are divided into two distinct and separate camps. "Those who believe fight in the cause of God..." and "... those who reject the faith fight in the cause of evil..." (76) Believers fight in order to uphold God's order and establish His laws and justice "among people" in the name of God Almighty, rather than under any other banner. They acknowledge and attest that God alone is the Lord and, therefore, He is the Ruler. Unbelievers, however, fight in the cause of evil, advocating various ideologies and legal systems, other than that of God Almighty. They uphold various values and standards that are different from those laid down by God. In this contest, the believers stand supported and protected by God. The unbelievers, with their various beliefs, ideologies, values, and methods, rely on Satan's protection and support. Collectively, they are his followers and supporters. God instructs the believers to confront Satan's supporters and not be afraid of their power or cunning: "Fight, then, against the friends of Satan. Feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan." (76) Thus, Muslims stand on solid ground with their backs well protected. They are confident that they are fighting God's battle, from which they expect no personal, national, racial or ethnic gain or favour. It is a fight that is purely

and to ensure that humanity gains from its benefits, blessings and universal justice. Beyond that, everyone is free to choose one's beliefs, according to one's convictions, under the universal, humane and Divine system Islam advocates. When a Muslim, fighting for such a purpose, is killed, he is a martyr and will be rewarded accordingly by God. If he fought for any other objective, he would not be considered a "martyr" and no reward will be stored for him with God. His reward, instead, will come from whatever other benefactor he chose to fight for. To call such people "martyrs" is false and constitutes an affront to God Almighty. The verse is very specific that those seeking the hereafter in preference to material and immediate reward, should fight in the cause of God, and only then will they receive God's grace, whether they are killed or achieve victory. "To him who fights in God's cause, whether he be slain or be victorious, We shall grant a rich reward." Thus, the Qur'an uplifts the souls and characters of Muslims and fills them with hope in God's grace, whatever the outcome. It alleviates fear of death and temptation for booty, because life and booty mean nothing in comparison with God's grace. It seeks to dissuade Muslims from going for the losing transaction of trading-in the rewards of the life to come for those of the present life. Such a deal incurs inevitable loss, regardless of their victory or defeat on the battlefield. No comparison can be made between these two types of reward.

75 Taking up the Cause of the Oppressed

Having portrayed the position of wavering Muslims, the surah goes on to address the whole Muslim community. It appeals to Muslims who are presumably sensitive to the cause of weaker men, women and children who suffered at the hands of the Makkah unbelievers. Had such weaker elements been able to migrate to Madinah, the land of Islam, they would have enjoyed protection and safety. These victims were seeking salvation and praying to God to rescue them from the clutches of oppression and aggression. The surah emphasises the nobility, honour and dignity of the purpose for which Muslims are called upon to fight without hesitation or vacillation. "And why should you not fight in the cause of God and the utterly helpless men, women and children who are crying, 'Our Lord! Deliver us from this land whose people are oppressors, and send forth to us, out of Your grace, a protector, and send us one that will help us.'" (75) The surah enquires: How can believers hesitate to fight for God's cause and rescue helpless men, women and children whose poignant conditions stir believer's enthusiasm, dignity and emotion? These were hapless people, suffering the worst type of persecution because of their beliefs and religious convictions. Religious persecution is far more terrible than making away with material or personal possessions, because it strikes at the essence of human life to which all material considerations are secondary. The image of vulnerable and heart-broken women and children is heart-rending, and so is that of the defenceless elderly who are unable to

dedicated to God and His way of life. They are also convinced that they are facing enemies who are in the wrong and who are fighting to replace truth with falsehood. Enemies who are seeking to impose non-Islamic laws and systems — and all human systems are non-Islamic — instead of those of God Almighty. They advocate human injustice — and all human dominance is unjust — in place of God's justice which they are instructed to establish in society. Muslims go into battle with the confidence that God is supporting them and that their enemies are feeble because they are supported by Satan, and Satan's powers are weak. Thus, the outcome of the battle becomes clear in the believer's mind. Its conclusion is settled before it even starts. If, subsequently, a believer is martyred, he is happy with the outcome, or if he triumphs and lives to see victory with his own eyes, he is likewise assured of a great reward. Such understanding of the reality of the situation, in both cases of victory or defeat, has been the source of many miraculous experiences on the battlefield both by the first Muslim generation and throughout Islam's history. There is no need to cite any specific incidents here, for they are noted and well documented elsewhere. Nonetheless, such understanding was in part responsible for the Muslim successes over their enemies, already referred to in this volume, brought about by upholding the Divine order. The establishment of this concept represents some of the effort the Qur'an devotes to the education and enlightenment of the early Muslims as it guides them through their confrontations with their more powerful enemies. Those possessed material and arms superiority but were weak and backward in their understanding and concepts, and so were overcome. This task, as we can see, was not easy and was certainly not achieved by mere words. It was a persistent, relentless effort aimed at defeating selfishness and love of life, regardless of the price. Furthermore, it aimed at correcting people's misconceptions of gain and loss.