

# **Two Human Faces**

## **A Quranic Sketch**

**Perseverance and Steadfastness -  
Confusion and Hesitation**

**By**

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**(Original Version)**

**Do Insaani Chehre – Qurani Muraqqa Me**

**By Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi (1913-1999)**

**(Translated Version)**

**Two Human Faces - A Quranic Sketch**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We are extremely grateful to Allah that He made it possible for us to publish this book to convey the noble message of Islam to English readers.

This is the English translation of a speech delivered in Urdu by Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1972 in the Jame Masjid of Banda, Uttar Pradesh in India. The Urdu speech was published by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications. Thanks to Allah that its English translation is now ready to go to press. We are hopeful that English readers will be able to benefit from it especially due to its striking relevance to our time.

The translator of this book Dr. Aejaz Mohammed Sheikh is currently a

professor of linguistics at the University of Kashmir. Formerly he has also taught English at King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. We sincerely appreciate his contribution and pray that Allah may richly reward him for it.

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*Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All praises is due to Allah and peace and blessings on Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam):

﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ  
وَرَدَّاهُمْ هَدَىٰ ۖ وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ  
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا  
شَطَطًا ۖ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمُ  
بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا﴾

“We narrate unto you (O Muhammad SAW) their story with truth: Truly, they were young men who believed in their Lord (Allah), and We increased them in guidance. And We made their hearts firm and strong when they stood up and said: ‘Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, never shall we call upon any ilah

*(God) other than Him; if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity in disbelief. These our people have taken for worship alihah (gods) other than Him (Allah).’ Why do they not bring for them a clear authority? And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against Allah.”* (V.18: 13-15)

**Gentlemen!**

**I have recited before you the first three verses of Chapter 18 of the Quran entitled *Al-Kahf* (the Cave), the recitation of which has been highly recommended on every Friday. It has been narrated in the authentic *Hadiths* (sayings) of the Prophet <sup>SAW</sup> that the person who recites the first ten verses of this chapter on Friday (some sayings mention the last ten verses and some the whole chapter) will remain safe from the mischief of the antichrist (the *Dajjal*). Prophet Muhammad <sup>SAW</sup> often**

sought Allah's refuge from him and warned his *ummah* (the Muslim community) about the *Dajjal*, the most seditious and mischievous character to appear around the Doomsday. Today being Friday, it seems quite appropriate and pertinent to recite these verses and reflect upon their meaning. Let us take some time now to deliberate upon the meaning of these verses and try to find out the correspondence between the contents of this chapter and the mischief of the *Dajjal* and the ways and means to secure oneself from his mischief.

*The Dajjal* has two distinct qualities. First, he will be the chief missionary of subservience to power and pelf and will become their prominent symbol during his time and second, he will present things in a totally disguised form, in contradiction to what they would be in reality. There will be a sea of difference in

their appearance and reality. The words *dajjal* and *tadjeel* mean gilding and enticement: when pewter tin is coated to look like silver and copper appears like gold after gold plating, it is called as *tadjeel*. In the chapter *Al-Kahf*, there is a story about the people who denied surrendering before the power, wealth, splendour and grandeur of the time. They remained steadfast in their faith till the end and preferred principles over self-interest, conscience over self-desire, inner voice over the temptations of the surrounding environment and safety of Faith over the safety of life. That is the story of “the dwellers of the cave.” The second incident narrated in the chapter relates to Prophet Moses and *Al-Khidr* where a huge difference exists in the hidden and manifest aspects of things and the beginning and end of the events. The explicit is in total contrast to the



concealed. The events start in one way and culminate in a totally different manner. By means of its important contents and events, the chapter strikes very hard at the base and core of the theory of the *Dajjal*. Let us reflect upon the story of the dwellers of cave and try to understand its message for the present time.

It was the period of the great Roman Empire which extended from the heart of Europe to Asia Minor and the extreme boundaries of Syria. Idolatry and polytheism were at their peak in this great kingdom, and no sphere of life was free from their influence. Everything including culture, literature, architecture and fine arts were deeply affected by it. History stands witness to the fact that the industry of sculpture and statue making flourished in it. The Romans became very famous for it and produced great

sculptors in human history. They made such sculptures which appeared like living creatures. People visiting Rome get stunned on seeing them. Their abundance is nauseating for a man of uncorrupted taste. I underwent the same feeling during my visit to the one or two thousand old historical sites of Texla, dug by archaeologists, where idols of Gautam Buddha are found in plenty.

There existed a city by the name of Ephesus, situated at a distance of 60 kilometers from Turkey's famous city Shehraz in the eastern part of this great kingdom which forms present-day Turkey. The city was known for the temple of goddess Diana, still considered as one of the seven monuments of the world. Sensuality and idol worship had crossed all limits in that city. It is a historical fact that the two - sensuality and idol worship - always thrive and go

hand in glove with each other. Sensuality and lust have often grown under the shadow of idolatry since it releases humans from every sort of binding and subservience to Allah <sup>Subhanahu Wa T'ala</sup>.

The same scenario can be witnessed in ancient India as well as ancient Greece, the great centre of learning. During the same period, Jesus Christ was born in Syria, an eastern province of the Roman Empire. He invited people towards pure monotheism and earnest subservience to Allah. His message got wide acceptance and his companions reached up to Europe with his message. Wherever they went, people received them warmly and underwent a complete transformation. Seven young men, belonging to Ephesus city, also accepted the message. The youth, who were the scions of the kingdom, shunned sensuality and instead adopted monotheism. They abhorred idol

worship and licentiousness and felt disgusted with them. The holy Quran says:

﴿إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاَهُمْ هُدًى وَوَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ﴾

*“Truly, they were young men who believed in their Lord (Allah), and We increased them in guidance. And we made their hearts firm and strong.”*

(V.18: 13-14)

It is the rule of Allah that His help follows when man takes a decision with complete dedication and determination. Man has to take the initiative which often involves risk to his life. It is a test of courage, determination and will power and the person overcoming the test finds the future tests easier.

Now these youth had to face the same situation which every person who accepts such message (message of the Prophets) has to face. Their elders, friends and

patrons portrayed to them the ups and downs of time and tried to convince them to desist from their new belief. Like the other scholars of the world they adopted the stick and carrot method to motivate them. They warned them about the risky play they had started and reminded them about the bright future - the ministerial berths, high profile posts, prestige, etc. - awaiting them. The youth were told that they were spoiling their bright future and destroying their own house. They were advised, "You dears! Why are you making your future dark and why are you destroying your fate?"

Here, the conversation between the Prophet Saleh and his people (*Thamud*) comes instantly to mind. There exists a great similarity between the past and the present, given the fact that human disposition has been the same throughout. When Prophet Saleh started his mission

and invited people to monotheism and performing righteous deeds, elderly and wise men from his nation passionately advised him and compassionately and earnestly told him:

﴿قَالُوا يَا صَاحِبُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا﴾

*“O Saleh! You have been among us as a figure of good hope till this thing which you have brought.” (V.11: 62)*

They told him that they had firmly believed that he would transform his family and bring glory and honour to it. “What an affair is this; what a dispute have you started? This is monotheism and that is polytheism; this is belief and that is unbelief; this is chaste and that is wicked; this is lawful and that is unlawful; this is legal and that is illegal. Why are you bothered about our belief and deeds?” The Quran states:

﴿أَتَنْهَأُونَ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّنَا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ﴾

*“Do you forbid us the worship of what our fathers have worshipped? But we are really in grave doubt as that to which you invite us.” (V.11: 62)*

When these Unitarian youth, seven in number as it seems from the Quranic description, did not take heed of this advice and counselling, the counsellors tried another method. They told the young men to choose between the two: their Faith or their life. If the life was dear then they were to give up the Faith, but if Faith was dear then they should be ready for death. The youth responded by saying that they were ready to sacrifice their life a hundred times but could not renounce their Faith a single time. The words they used at this time had very profound and broad meanings. The counsellors reminded them of the necessities of life, future expectations, potential success, ranks, posts, livelihood

and sustenance. The youth were warned that if they did not give up their Faith and flow with the tide, they were destined to get spoiled and remain jobless and without any means of survival, as if the whole issue was merely of sustenance and sustainer. The youth settled this question by their pronouncement:

﴿إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾

*“When they stood up and said: Our Lord is the Lord of the Heavens and the earth.”*  
(V.18: 14)

In other words they announced that they had recognized and found their Sustainer and Cherisher and did not need to bother about their earthly provisions. Also, they argued that since He was the Lord of the earth and the skies and the provisions of sustenance were fully in His control, how come there would be dearth of provisions with Him? Is the Authority which



**controls the skies and the earth incapable of providing sustenance to seven persons?**

***Gentlemen!***

**The whole issue is about providence and not about divinity. Everybody, including the great polytheists and atheists, has accepted the divinity of God:**

﴿وَلَمَّا سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ﴾

***“When they are asked as to who created the skies and the earth, they say Allah.”***

**(V.31: 25)**

**The whole struggle, the battle for selection and the test of priority and discretion, is about the concept of Lordship. It concerns every stage of life and once a person takes a right decision in recognizing his cherisher, he gets absolved of further trials. That is why the Quran says:**

هُنَالِكَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا  
تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ﴿

*“Verily, those who say: ‘Our lord is Allah (Alone),’ and then they stand firm, on them the angels will descend (saying): ‘Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of paradise which you have been promised!’”*

*(V. 41: 30)*

Perhaps that is why the belief in this Lordship is mentioned first while introducing the seven youth in the chapter. It is said, ‘who believed in their Lord (*Aamanu bi Rabbihim*)’ and ‘not in their godhead (*Aamanu bi Ilahihim*)’.

Now when the counsellors failed on this account too, they tried yet another logic arguing that there always exists some standard or touchstone to gauge the veracity of an issue. The chief standard,

they said, is the opinion of the fortunate ones, who rule, hold the keys of government and are capable of changing the fortune of the masses. They are the lucky ones whose mere touch turns soil into gold. The counsellors exhorted the youth to see what religion the great Roman emperor, his ministers and the rulers professed. They told them that these people worshipped the same gods and goddesses that they [the seven monotheists] denied. Should people then follow these well off and successful humans or the monotheists - a small group of senseless, immature and sentimental persons devoid of power and honour, they asked. This is the same old logic which has been used time and again by ancient nations in confronting their Messengers. The people of Noah said to him:

﴿قَالُوا اتُّؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ﴾

*“Shall we believe in you, when the meanest (of the people) follow you?”*

(V. 26: 111)

In other words, they said:

﴿وَمَا تَرَكَ أَتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا بِإِدْبَارِ الرَّأْيِ﴾

*“Nor do we see any follow you but the meanest among us and they (too) followed you without thinking.”*

(V. 11: 27)

One of the yardsticks for determining the goodness of a thing for these wise men was that it should be first seen in the houses of the dignitaries of the state. They said:

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ

وَإِذْ لَهُمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَيَسْبِقُونَهُ لَوْلَا أَنَّا لَكُنَّا قَدِيمًا﴾

*“And those who disbelieve say of those who believe: ‘Had it been a good thing, they (the weak and poor) would*

*not have preceded us thereto!" And when they have not let themselves be guided by it, they say: This is an ancient lie!"* (V. 46: 11)

Their argument was that the first fruit of the season, the best fruits in the market, modern designs of clothes and the new inventions and appliances first reached this class of society. And sometimes they would exclaim in amazement:

﴿أَهْؤُلَاءِ مَنِ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ بَيْنِنَا﴾

*"Is it these (poor people) whom Allah has favoured from amongst us?"*

(V 6: 53)

The Unitarian youth of Ephesus could not digest this logic. They said that the elite could serve as standard but in what respect? In respect to food, dress, fine arts and the like, their selection of something as good or bad could not be

**disputed. However, they could not accept the elite as a role model with regard to religion, ethics and vice or virtue. In these matters they rank among the lowest. They had ravaged innumerable habitations for petty interests and mere carnal desires. They did not feel ashamed in snatching the bread of orphans and the poor and the head scarf of a widow.**

**Besides, the monotheists could never be subdued by the elite's repeated allusion to the throne of power as the monotheists had many a time witnessed its transience. Such transient thing could never serve as a yardstick with regard to the eternal truth. It was the Omnipotent God who bestowed somebody with power and took it away whenever He wished. It was just like a toy given to a baby by an elder which could be taken back whenever the elder wanted. The baby should not be under the illusion that the toy could not**

be given to somebody else and would remain always with him. The same fact has been portrayed in the Quran in the following verse:

﴿قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكِ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ  
مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى  
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

*“Say: O Allah! Possessor of the kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You will, and You take the kingdom from whom You will, and You endue with honour whom You will, and You humiliate whom You will. In Your Hand is the good. Verily, You are able to do all things.”*

(V. 3: 26)

In a nutshell, the arguments of these sagacious people could not work and the youth remained steadfast in their faith. In the meantime the Roman emperor, on a

visit to the area, learnt about the seven “fanatic” youth who did not obey the elders, although they were the sons of his own servants and courtiers. He ordered that the youth should be forced to offer oblations at the altar of so and so temple and, in case of denial, should be prosecuted. The youth rejected the order and, after deliberations, took refuge in a cave of a nearby mountain to safeguard their faith. When the king came to know about it, he sealed the mouth of the cave to choke the youth to death.

However, God lulled them into a sweet sleep which overtook them for three hundred and nine years. In the meantime a great revolution occurred in the Roman Empire. The Roman emperor embraced Christianity and became its patron and an exuberant preacher. During the same period God, with His power, woke up the youth from their sleep. One of them came



to the city and found the world totally changed. Christianity was now the official religion, and the offence, formerly punishable with death, had become a thing of pride and honour. Yesterday's criminals were today's favourite heroes. Hence the sagacity of the youth prevailed and the intelligence of those 'intellectuals', who saw only the superficial side of the picture proved to be a failure.

**Gentlemen!**

The Holy Quran has not narrated the incident as a mere historical event or an entertaining fable. Rather, it has found place in the Quran as the incident has repeatedly taken place in history and can occur any time at any place. The Muslims of Makkah had to undergo the same experience. Similarly, the Muslims belonging to different parts of the world may also have to face a similar situation,

if they possess faith, forbearance, steadfastness, selflessness and will to sacrifice:

﴿إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

*“Verily, he who fears Allah with obedience to Him, and is patient, then surely, Allah makes not the reward of the Muhsinun (good-doers) to be lost.”* (V. 12: 90)

Quran is an eternal and a universal book with guidance for every era, generation and time. One of the specimens of human nature and psyche has been described above. Look at the second model described in the Quran which stands in total contrast to the first. Listen to the words of the Quran:

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ

فِتْنَةٌ اِنْقَلَبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

*“And among mankind is he who worships Allah as it were upon the edge (i.e. in doubt): if good befalls him, he is content therewith; but if a trial befalls him, he turns back on his face (i.e. reverts to disbelief after embracing Islam). He loses both this world and the hereafter. That is the evident loss.” (V.22: 11)*

This is a supreme model of the picturization and marvels of the Quran. Look at the verse. Truly an eternal miracle - it involves the portrayal of individuals as well as organizations, nations and groups. In Arabic, ‘*man*’ (he/who) applies to the individual as well as the group. There are such people also who worship Allah upon the edge. ‘Worship’ does not merely mean praying and other acts of devotion. It also means that they obey God and follow the Islamic injunctions while standing on the

borderline, drawn between Islam and infidelity. Consider the eloquence of the Arabic word '*ala*' (upon). Neither a genius artist nor a powerful camera can draw such a vivid and lively picture.

A comprehensive picture of the utmost cautious approach followed by these persons has been drawn in this small sentence. They stand at a place wherefrom they can easily change and shift their positions and cross over from one region to the other with utmost ease and without a second's delay. They do not even fix their feet firmly so that, if need arises, they can lift them without any difficulty. They plant their feet lightly like flowers so that they can easily get drifted with a slight breeze of air, and a slight change in the situation would find them taking shelter at a safer place. They closely monitor pulse of the time and, keeping a watchful eye on the signs

emanating from the corridors of power, their mind is continuously engrossed in calculations of loss and gain. With the wind blowing in favour, they will be at the forefront, working with heartfelt dedication and satisfaction for the propagation of their cause. “If good befalls him, he is content therewith.” And given a slightly unfavourable environment and a minor shift in the policies of the people and the government, they never hesitate to alter their stand (faith) and save themselves from the ‘ignominy’ of their erstwhile faith. It takes them no time to change their outlook, ideology, culture, language and even nationality.

Even a vast exegesis fails to explain the eloquence of this verse the way it becomes clear when one sees this time server group. The ‘precautions’ of safety undertaken by the group are worth seeing. When

following the Islamic tenets can provide material gains and worldly grandeur, the group would be the first to own these tenets. But if their expression entails slightest danger or sacrifice, then not only the tenets but even the basic principles of faith get divorced from their life.

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً  
 النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ وَلَئِن جَاء نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا  
 مَعَكُمْ أَوْلَىٰ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

*“Among mankind are some who say: ‘We believe in Allah.’ But if they are made to suffer for sake of Allah, they consider the trial of mankind as Allah’s punishment; and if victory comes from your Lord, they say: ‘Verily, we were with you (helping you).’ Does not Allah know best all that is in the hearts of all Creation!”*

(V. 29: 10)

If genealogy is a source of pride and honour, then they are quick to recall their past and their grandfathers, and somehow, trace the relation:

﴿لَئِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ﴾

*“And if victory comes from your Lord, they say: ‘Verily, we were with you (helping you).’”*

However, Allah is in complete know of the reality.

﴿أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

*“Does not Allah know best all that is in the hearts of all Creation!”*

Usually these turncoats meet a bad end and lose prestige everywhere. That is why it is said:

﴿خَيْرٌ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

*“He loses both this world and the hereafter. That is the evident loss.”*

Perhaps a poet has written the following couplet to try to portray the same situation:

*Na Khuda hi mila na wisaale sanam,  
Na idhar ke rahe na udher ke rahe.*

[He] could neither get God nor communion with the beloved; Neither remained of this camp nor of that.

I personally know that many Muslims changed their Islamic look and style in 1947 due to the fear of getting killed on being identified as Muslims. In contrast, listen to an ancient story of the integrity and strength of faith. During a war between the Sikh government of the Punjab and a Muslim ruler Nasir Khan Balochi, Nasir got injured and fell down from his horse. Two Sikh soldiers passed by; one of them wanted to kill him. In



those days the Balochis used to grow very long hair. Nasir also had long locks of hair on his head. The other Sikh did not allow his companion to kill Nasir thinking that he was a Sikh. When Nasir reached his capital after the war, he not only cut his hair short but also ordered his nation to follow suit as, according to him, his inauspicious hair had deprived him of martyrdom by creating suspicion about his being a Muslim. Look at the huge difference that exists between the two mentalities.

### **Gentlemen!**

It is no bravery to follow a faith when the wind is blowing favorably, the situation is conducive, and people adhering to it are respected and showered with flowers. It is not bravery to express faith of a group if it stands on the pedestal of dignity and joining that group is considered a point of prestige. However, when the situation is

unfavorable and the wind blows in the opposite direction, when brave men cannot stand upright on their feet, when a nation loses its glory and fortune runs away from it, following certain principles and faith amounts to hugging death, it is real valour and fidelity to keep steadfast on faith in such dark circumstances. Every government values the soldier who remains steadfast in the battlefield when defeat stares in the face and when everyone runs for his life.

Every noble and rich person values the servant who remains faithful to him in adverse situations when the people he bred and patronized avoid him. An elderly rich person used to take extreme care of a person and preferred him over many companions and yes men. When asked about it he replied that the person did not leave him alone when his region was ravaged. In fact the love and

faithfulness are tried in times of adversity and decline and not when one enjoys power and fortune. Loyalty and adherence to a person are proved when he is helpless and receives indifferent treatment and not during his proximity to power.

The same thing explains the true and sincere relationship of Hazrat Ka'ab bin Malik with the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him. Ka'ab receives an invitation from the Ghassani king at a time, when Prophet Muhammad <sup>SAW</sup> had ordered Muslims not to meet and talk with him and, following the orders, everybody had boycotted him. Even his wife was ordered to stay away from him. In Ka'ab's own words, the world looked dark in his eyes and the city seemed to be a graveyard. In Quranic terms, in spite of its vastness, the world had straitened for him and his throat was choked. The

invitation of the Ghassani king (whose grandeur and bestowal were famous throughout the Arab world) reaches at this juncture inviting him to his kingdom, saying that he need not live in such an abject condition and, on accepting his invitation, he would be made prosperous and bestowed with an exalted position. Instead of embracing the opportunity, Ka'ab throws the letter in a burning furnace in front of the envoy and continues to endure the test of his beloved Prophet till the troubled times are over and the period required for his reformation and perfection gets completed.

The city of Madinah witnessed a similar situation when the Quraish laid a siege around it in the month of Shawwal in the fifth year after migration (5 Hijri). The Muslims got so miserably besieged in the city that there was nothing to eat and no

hope of help from any quarter. They had to face every type of affliction –hunger, fear, cold. No one can portray it better than the Quran:

﴿إِذْ جَاءُواكُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ  
وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظَّنُونَا﴾

*“When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harbouring doubts about Allah.”*

*(V.33: 10)*

When the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached the throats, the belief of the people, who had confidence in the promise of Allah and had been bestowed with firm faith by Him, grew stronger. They deduced a totally different conclusion from this grim situation and

turned the destitution and helplessness into a source of inspiration and success:

﴿وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ  
وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا﴾

*“And when the believers saw Al-Ahzab (the confederates), they said: This is what Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad <sup>SAW</sup>) had promised us; and Allah and His Messenger had spoken the truth. And it only added to their Faith and to their submissiveness (to Allah).” (V.33: 22)*

They reasoned that extraordinary events arise in extraordinary circumstances: the sun rises after darkness of the night and the bountiful rain descends to quench the earth when it is extremely thirsty. Prophet Jacob (Yaqub), may Allah be pleased with him, offered and drew satisfaction from the same theory when,

after the separation of Joseph (Yusuf), he had to face the separation of Benjamin (Binyamin) also. He remarked:

﴿عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

*“Maybe Allah will bring them (back) all to me. Truly He, Only He is the All-Knowing and the All-Wise.”*

(V.12:83)

And he said to his sons:

﴿يَا بَنِي إِدْرِيْسَ اتَّبِعُوا أَمْرًا قَسِيْرًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ رِوْجِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْئَسُ مِنْ رِوْجِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

*“O my sons! Go and enquire about Joseph (Yusuf) and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah’s Mercy. Certainly, no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy, except the people who disbelieve.”*

(V.12: 87)

**Gentlemen!**

It is a matter of pride and prestige to remain steadfast in Islam, to express

**one's relationship with Islam and publicly display its rites at a time when circumstances are favorable, with Islam being dominant throughout the world and Muslims enjoying success all around without facing defeat in any field. However, the relish in being faithful and devoted in testing times is not found in anything else. It is the time when the steadfast persons and the preachers of truth, willing to sacrifice their awards and interests in lieu of their faith and conscience, enjoy the sweetness of paradise in this world itself and every part of their body loudly sings hymns of praise and thankfulness to God. Iqbal has perhaps said for the same time:**

*Paradise is for righteous believers of Haram,  
Paradise is also for courageous people,  
Give glad tidings to Muslims of India,  
That paradise is for the people who strive  
in the way of Allah.*

