

## Chapter 80

### *An-Nazi'at (Those Who Yearn)*

This chapter was revealed in the early Makkan period. We were told in chapter 78, *An-Naba'* (The Announcement) that all actions have their reward.

In chapter 79, *An-Nazi'at* (Those Who Yearn), we were advised on how to strive and carry our actions to the ultimate limit of perfection.

Now, we are informed in this chapter that the spiritual excellences achieved as a result of our actions are equally attainable by all and sundry – rich or poor, king or subject, blind or seeing, deaf or hearing – neither does any defect in one's personal make-up nor poverty stand in the way: the road to the Royal Court of Allah, the road to spiritual perfection and excellence is open equally to all. Further, the deeds of every one of us will bring forth their consequences according to a universal principle applicable to all. There is no exclusiveness in this and no special privilege enjoyed by the progeny of a ruler, a governor, a prophet or a saint. If anyone of them should indulge in evil deeds he cannot escape the consequences of his deeds, neither will the poor be deprived of the same high quality of rewards for their deeds as the rich or the elite may receive. All are equal in the sight of Allah. Nay, it is quite possible that the poor may excel the rich because of the former's sincerity of faith and good deeds and superior manners and morals. Allah, Most High, likes faith, sincerity, good deeds and good manners and high morals, even though the person who displays these traits may be very poor or insignificant by worldly standards.

Thus, when preaching Allah's message to others, one should not be worried about whether the person addressed is rich or poor. Ordinarily, the proselytiser's ambition is to make some personage of high social position accept Islam or to join his organisation, although this policy is wrong for none can fathom another's heart and measure his inner eagerness for truth-seeking, God-consciousness and sincerity. Only the man who has come with sincerity of purpose to look for truth will benefit from the proselytiser's preaching. Whether low or high, such a person has the right to be paid more attention, and that Allah's message be conveyed to him.

Consequently, Allah, Most High, has dealt with this subject and given directions about it in this chapter.

Ibn-e Maktoom was a noble companion of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). He was blind. Once, he happened to enter the Holy Prophet's presence at a time when the latter was conveying the message to the elite of the Quraish. Not realising what was going on, probably because of his blindness, he started interrupting the conversation by asking questions. The Holy Prophet was engrossed in his preaching and was somewhat displeased by this interruption in the middle of a serious conversation and did not pay any attention to Ibn-e Maktoom. This incident is described by Allah, Most High, thus:

*He frowned and turned away. Because the blind man came to him.*

'*Abasa* means to frown or to take it ill. This shows how closely Allah, Most High, observed the manners of the Holy Prophet. No doubt the Holy Prophet's manners and morals were so sublime and excellent that Allah, Most High, has praised his excellent morals in the Holy Quran itself by saying:

“*And verily thou hast sublime morals*” (68:4).

Yet, even that seemingly insignificant action by the possessor of such grand morals and etiquette was not acceptable to Allah.

Even today, the convention is the same for it is considered incorrect to cut into other people's conversation and interrupt it, and a person who does that is considered impolite. So if this unjustified interruption caused annoyance to the Holy Prophet (pbuh), it was fully in accord with civilised behaviour. However, since it was a poor, blind person who committed this breach of good manners, Allah, Most High, did not consider it desirable that the Holy Prophet should completely ignore such a person and keep on talking to the elite. In order to console and encourage the poor, it was important that there should be no discrimination in the court of the Holy Prophet; rather, the poor should be given preference over the rich, for Islam had come to teach people those high principles of humane behaviour by virtue of which these very small people were going to attain very lofty ranks.

Ibn-e Maktoom spoke a few times, but seeing the Holy Prophet busy in his mission of conveying the message, he got up and went home. Thereupon, the above revelation came down: a revelation that shook the Holy Prophet! There and then he went to Ibn-e Maktoom's house, invited him to his home and spread out his sheet for him to sit on it. Ibn-e Maktoom did not want to sit down out of deference for the Holy Prophet, but the Holy Prophet (pbuh) insisted and made him sit down, and then said: "Now, ask me what you want to know."

Incidentally, does this not demonstrate the absolute certainty the Holy Prophet had in the revelation received by him? How wrong and mistaken is the notion entertained by the late Sir Syed Ahmad Khan that revelation is an idea which first emanates from man's inner self and then falls upon his conscious mind. Had it been so, at least such verses would not be in the Holy Quran.

It was the Holy Prophet's inner self that decided not to respond to Ibn-e Maktoom's untimely interruption, so how could an idea contradicting this notion emanate from the same inner self that had conceived the idea in the first place? Secondly, no person likes the thought that a report censuring his behaviour should be constantly repeated by people. But despite this consideration, this reproof has always remained a part of the Holy Quran and will continue to be so. It also forms a part of the daily recitation by people. This shows that this reproof did not emanate from the Holy Prophet's own heart. Nay, it was a revelation from Allah that contained an element of disapprobation and, since a prophet cannot keep divine revelation confidential, it had to be inscribed in the Holy Quran and it will remain there perpetually as a means of guidance for the *Ummah* of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

If one were to look at it closely, one would realise that this act of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) was not one that should be given so much importance. In fact, the intention behind giving so much emphasis to this incident was to give guidance to the *Ummah*, otherwise Allah would have given the same message to the Holy Prophet (pbuh) through confidential and informal revelation (a revelation that is not recorded in the Holy Quran as part of the revealed scripture).

Thus, in reality, the intention behind including this censure in the formal revelation (which is a part of the Holy Quran) was to make the *Ummah* understand that we should not give precedence to the aristocratic over the ordinary people when preaching and conveying the message. Rather, we should give equal appreciation and recognition to all seekers after truth and not consider the poor as insignificant. We should know that it is the sincerity of a person's heart that counts in Allah's

Court.

*And what would make thee know that he might purify himself,  
Or be mindful, so the Reminder might benefit him?*

Allah tells the Holy Prophet (pbuh) that the purpose of his advent as well as the sending down of the Holy Quran is to purify the people. That is, that their inner spiritual faculties should grow and develop and their hearts should be cleansed and be purified of all impurities.

Only two types of benefits can be derived from a prophet's exhortation and preaching: one is that a person should learn how to tread the lofty paths of spiritual development and perfection from the Prophet, paths by which he may attain self-purification and proximity to Allah. This indeed is a very elevated station. The other is that a person should abandon his bad ways by benefiting from the pure preachings of the Prophet. This status, though lower than the first one, is also greatly beneficial to a person. Hence, Allah, Most High, says: It is quite possible, O Prophet, that the blind man may attain a high state of self-purification, or failing that he may at least be able to benefit to the extent that he may avoid the ways of error and walk along the straight path.

But at this point a misgiving arises in one's mind: was it not also possible for those aristocrats of the Quraish to derive benefit from the Holy Prophet's preaching? To this Allah says:

*And as for him who considers himself free from need. To him thou dost attend.*

Here Allah says to the Holy Prophet (pbuh) that these prominent people to whom he is paying so much attention do not even care for his message, yet, to these he is intent on conveying it.

*And no blame is on thee, if he purify himself not.*

That is, despite the fact that they do not care about your message, even then you keep on preaching to them.

The meaning of this policy clearly was that it was a passionate desire of the Holy Prophet for those notables to adopt the means of self-purification after accepting his message. To this, Allah says: You need not take on such headaches. If they do not believe and do not want to purify themselves, leave them alone. No blame will attach to thee.

*And as to him who comes to thee striving hard.  
And he fears -  
To him thou payest no regard.*

This is a point worth pondering over. What a golden principle of *tabligh* (conveying the message) has been taught to us in these verses. Allah, Most High, says: You concentrate on those who, intoxicated with their high status, do not even care for what you tell them. You may say that your only purpose is that somehow they should be purified, but the answer to this is, that should they choose not to purify themselves, no blame attaches to you, O Prophet. Thus giving them so much attention is not right for it may turn you away from ministering unto others who come to you due to fear of Allah.

Another point worth noting here is that the doctrine of transmigration of souls, as propounded by the Arya Samajists to account for the disparity of status in this world, has been refuted by these verses. (The Arya Samajists ascribe our present high or low status to our deeds in a previous

life.)

Here, the Holy Quran has plainly declared that neither congenital defect nor poverty and destitution can stand in the way of a person's spiritual progress. The disparity in people's station in life in this world exists by divine providence because without such diversity good deeds cannot come into play. This disparity in the society is essential otherwise the society cannot function.

However, a man's action will be judged keeping in view the environment in which he lived. In other words, this world is a stage on which everyone is playing a separate and different role. Anyone who acts out his part well and in accordance with the intention of his Lord will be the one who will inherit ease and progress in the next life, which is the real life. There is no distinction in this matter between the rich and the poor, nor the blind and the seeing.

Instead, let us observe the abundant praise that has been heaped upon the sincerity and faith of a blind man in these verses, and how the mighty and the high have been rejected in his favour. Hence, it is quite possible that the poor and the blind may excel the high and the mighty in the next world and may become inheritors of paradise whilst the high and the mighty may become the fodder of hell. Thus, these disparities in status that we see in this world are temporary and serve merely as a prologue to the real drama in the next life. In addition, they exist so that worldly society may function effectively by virtue of these differences and so that a person may have the opportunity to do good deeds. In other words, worldly dissimilarity in status acts like a foundation for this worldly life.

Hence, our actions are the result of these disparities and not, as the Arya Samajists think, that these differences in our status are the result of our earlier deeds in a former life.

*Nay, surely it is a Reminder.*

*Tadhkirah* is derived from the root *dhikr* which means a thing through which a person may attain nobility and eminence. Allah says: This Quran is a means for mankind to achieve spiritual eminence. It is a book that will make its followers spiritually eminent, be they high or low, blind or seeing. Anyone who makes the Quran his guide and restrains himself from lust and low desires and bows his head in obedience to the dictates of the Holy Quran, will rise to great heights in the world.

These words of the text convey the glad tidings that the Holy Quran will take these very lowly persons to the greatest heights. Accordingly, the annals of history bear witness to the truth of the words of the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran took its followers to great eminence and when the humble people of Arabia acted upon its commands, the news of their fame and eminence reverberated throughout the four corners of the world and they became inheritors of diverse bounties of this world and the Hereafter. Indeed, when the envoy of the Muslims arrived at the court of the Chosroes of Persia with the message of Islam, the king disdainfully commented:

"These Arabs, drinkers of camel's milk and devourers of lizards have become so audacious as to aspire to the crown of the Kayanis. Fie on you! O revolving heavens. Fie on you!"

The ultimatum from a downtrodden people like the Arabs – who stood so much in awe of the Persians that a couple of Persian foot-soldiers would suffice to go and arrest the highest Arab dignitary and bring him to Persia – delivered to the Chosroes of Persia with such majesty, that is,

"Your safety and security now lie only in accepting Islam," was such a bold one that it was enough to shock the Persians beyond belief.

But eventually the same thing that was stated in this message came to pass and the empire of the Chosroes was totally destroyed. Not only Persia, but many bigger empires were overthrown and fell at the feet of those poor Arabs who had been uplifted by the Holy Quran to nobility and honour. Even the haughty chieftains and elite of the Arab tribes had to bow before these humble Muslims.

*So let him, who will, mind it*

That is, the road to attainment of nobility and greatness by acting on the Quran is open to all equally, there being no discrimination between the rich and the poor, nor the blind and the seeing, nor between the Arab and the non-Arab. Whosoever wants can mind it and act upon it, and acquire eminence and dignity in the world, both spiritual as well as temporal, for the Holy Quran is meant to be remembered and to be acted upon by all, so that they may achieve honour and distinction.

Now, there are two possible ways in which the injunction to remember the Holy Quran can be implemented. The first is to memorise the Quran. Consequently, thousands of *huffaz* (memorisers of the Holy Quran) were trained in every Muslim community to commit the whole of the Quran to memory, and it is the Quran alone that enjoys this distinction. There is no other book in the whole world that has ever been so extensively memorised from cover to cover as the Holy Quran. All the revealed scriptures are known to us and none of them has ever been learnt by heart from cover to cover with such frequency and in such an organised manner. This distinction belongs to the Quran alone.

Here, there is one point that appeals to our poetic sense. In this chapter, in which much divine approbation has been showered upon a blind man, there occurs the injunction about memorising the Quran so the blindness and memorising of the Quran seem to go together due to the blessing of their joint mention in this chapter. Hence, the good fortune of becoming a *hafiz* has fallen to the lot of blind persons with great frequency. We must bear in mind also that a blind person's memory is usually extremely sharp. In any case, there is no doubt about it that a blind man not only received showers of divine gifts due to his faith and sincerity but also because of him, the blessing of learning the Holy Quran by heart also fell to the lot of other blind men.

The other way to keep the Quran in mind is to preserve it in the form of a book so that those who cannot memorise it can benefit from it.

*In honoured books.*

There is a very great and powerful prophecy in the word *mukarramah* (honoured). Allah says that this Quran will always be honoured. The honour that it received in Asia and Africa, that is, in the East, is evident, but now it is the turn of Europe and America. Here, at the present time, people still cannot read and understand the original text of the Holy Quran. However, Western scholars, by perusing the translations of the Quran done by Orientalists, have come to the conclusion that with the exception of the Bible, the Holy Quran is the greatest book in the world. But when, if Allah please, they read the translation done by our community (that is, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman), or when they develop the capability to understand the actual text, it is a foregone conclusion that the Holy Quran will assume the number one position in the ranking. Already its superiority over all the religious, moral, philosophical, social and cultural books of the world has been accepted,

so to overtake the Bible in the ratings is just a matter of time. Those who are acquainted with both the Holy Quran and the Bible know that the Bible stands nowhere in comparison with the Quran.

In short, it is a bold prophecy about the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Quran to proclaim that however much secular knowledge and science may progress in this world, yet the honour and the prestige of the Holy Quran will always increase because the new science-oriented world will find it a fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom.

So, as we can see for ourselves, the more science and knowledge advanced, the more the revealed scriptures of various world religions and nations lost their lustre, but the light of the Holy Quran is becoming more and more resplendent with each passing day. Every new scientific discovery that is made attests to the truth of the Quran and bows in respect to the honour and glory of the Holy Book.

*Exalted, purified.*

Today, Muslims consider that the term *marfu'ah* (exalted) merely demands of them that they should place their copy of the Holy Quran in high niches or platforms, where they keep gathering dust. If they do sometimes take it down to read, which is seldom, they do not bother to understand its meaning, let alone act upon it. This in a way is tantamount to throwing the Holy Quran behind their backs. No doubt, the respect for the Holy Quran requires us to keep it in an elevated place, but the meaning of the word *marfu'ah* is not merely limited to this. In fact, the real meaning is that it has come to elevate all things.

Its teachings are more exalted than all the religious books and all the logic and philosophy of the world and so is its vantage point as well as its status. Why then should its laws and its commandments not take precedence over and be considered higher than all national customs and rituals and over all our low desires? But alas, today we make the Quranic commandments subservient to our customs and rituals and selfish desires. In keeping with this verse, the status of the Quran should be higher than all other things and its commandments should take precedence over everything else, so much so that the rank of the Quran should be higher and override even the *Hadith* and *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

But unfortunately, the Muslim jurists have given superiority and higher status to their jurisprudence (*fiqh*) over the Quran and the *Hadith*, and the Ahl-e Hadith exalt the status of the *Hadith* over the Quran, although the rank of the Quran surpasses all these and takes precedence over them. In short, the real connotation of the word *marfu'ah* (exalted) should be that the position of the Quran is the most exalted of all and its commandments should predominate over everything else.

Further, not only is the Holy Quran sublime but it is also pure and sacred and its contents are also such that they lead one to self-purification and cleansing. On the other hand, in the Bible, there are verses that can cause great embarrassment to modest girls if they read them. Some very obscene and indecent words and expressions have also been employed in some places. The Vedas also contain passages that make one blush out of shame and modesty on reading them. But, however delicate the subject matter may be, the Holy Quran has adopted an extremely chaste and decent way to convey it.

*In the hands of scribes.*

*Noble and virtuous.*

The word *safarah* means both an envoy and a writer or scribe.

Allah, Most High, says that all the scribes of the Holy Quran are respectable, honourable, eminent and pious. Nay, even the rest of the holy Companions, who acted as intermediaries and as envoys between the Holy Prophet and the *Ummah* (since it was these through whose hands the Holy Quran reached the *Ummah*), were all respectable and pious. The result was that since the Quran was put in written form by the hands of a party of elders and conveyed to the *Ummah* by these very personages who were all respectable, pious, righteous and virtuous, the Holy Quran remained entirely safe and intact.

Here, there is a point over which the Shi'ites and the Khwarijites should ponder. That is, Allah, Most High, Himself, is bearing witness to the fact that the people who wrote down the Quran and preached it to others (among whom were Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat 'Umar, Hazrat Ali and Hazrat 'Uthman, and they are especially included) were all respectable, trustworthy, pious and righteous servants of Allah. So, anyone who questions the integrity of the Quranic text and the righteousness of the Holy Companions is in fact rejecting the clear testimony of Allah, Himself.

It is true that since the Quran itself is an honourable and sacred book, why should the scribes who wrote it down and those who conveyed it to others not be pure and holy accordingly? Thus, what could be the purpose behind having this book written down so carefully and arrangements made for its conveyance to the *Ummah* except that every Muslim should benefit from it and should consider its commandments exalted and pre-eminent above everything else?

*Woe to man! How ungrateful is he!*

Who could be more ungrateful than a person who, having inherited or found a bounty like the Holy Quran, does not act upon it and abandons such a great guidance, a guidance on which depends the nobility and greatness of all mankind? Such a person becomes spiritually dead. The expression *qutilal insanu* means "woe to man." It can also mean "may such a man die" but it does not sound proper to attribute such a malediction to the Almighty.

Allah, Most High, now produces evidence from the physical world to demonstrate man's fall from a position of honour and nobility to one of deprivation because of his ingratitude.

*Of what did He create him?*

*Of a small life-germ; He creates him, then proportions him.*

*Then makes the way easy for him*

This is the style of the Holy Quran: it deduces arguments by drawing an analogy between the material world and the spiritual realm or from the outer life to the inner life. It is an accepted concept among scientists and psychologists that the visible world and the inner world bear an intense resemblance and similarity to each other and are parallel to each other. Therefore, there is no better way of adducing an analogy and an argument than to show a similarity between the outer world and the inner spiritual world. Here, Allah has drawn man's attention to his birth by saying, see from what stuff you have been created – from a sperm cell!

*Nutfah* literally means a very insignificant thing. In short, Allah, Most High, has drawn man's attention to the fact that he has been created from a very insignificant thing, the *nutfah* (sperm cell) which even when it establishes itself in the mother's womb, is so small and insignificant that it cannot even be seen except by the help of a microscope. Yet, Allah, Most High, in all His

knowledge and sense of proportion has endowed this small cell with such inherent and superb powers and capabilities that when these start to grow after establishing a connection with the womb, man develops astounding physical and mental powers, by using which he begins to reign over the seas, the winds, the lightning, in short, over all the created things in this universe.

So, if it is true that Allah has provided means for the growth and development of man's physical body and by making these organs grow He makes him turn into a powerful being, then He must also have provided for the spiritual growth and development of man, and has set down a path for him by travelling on which man can make his spiritual faculties grow and develop. This path is none other than this very Quran. If someone rejects this book and denies its guidance he is doomed to perish. By his destruction is meant that his spiritual faculties do not grow and develop and he remains deprived of spiritual nobility and grandeur, a status for the attainment of which he was created.

Another point worthy of consideration here is that in these verses Allah has said: *fa qaddarahu* (he made him grow according to a measure) after mentioning *khalaqahu* (He created him). The letter *fa* has been interjected between these two words, which signifies that the thing whose creation is mentioned in *khalaqahu* is the same thing to which reference is made in the expression *fa-qaddara-hu*, that is, to gain power and strength. But later on, when mention is made of making the way easy for him, there Allah has used the word *thumma* instead of *fa*, that is, He says: "*Then makes the way easy for him.*"

The reason for this is that in the word *thumma* (then) there is also an implication of a change of state. Thus, by the use of the word *thumma*, the intention is to make us know that the path that is mentioned next, that is, "*Then makes the way easy for him,*" is a different one from the one spoken of in the previous verse, "*He creates him, then makes him strong according to a measure.*" That is to say, this second way is spiritual and not physical.

Prior to the word *thumma*, the verse was speaking about a physical growth and development. After this word, Allah wants to draw our attention to another matter, that is, that if Allah has made the sperm cell grow and develop into a strong person who rules over the entire creation in this universe, then why would He not make provision for the other aspect, namely the spiritual growth and nourishment of man? For this also He has provided a path, and has made it easy. That is to say, though Allah has endowed man with faculties that enable him to distinguish between good and evil, yet if man had been left to rely only on his intellect, perception and understanding, this path would have become very difficult for him, for the guidance provided by intellect alone would not be sufficient and free of pitfalls and errors. Therefore, this path was made easy through divine revelation.

In other words, Allah, Most High, in His comprehensive knowledge, came to the assistance of man and the Holy Quran took this chain of divine revelation to perfection.

Hence, just as the life-sperm, when it comes under the established plan of Allah's laws, despite being so insignificant and small, develops into a glorious and powerful human being, similarly, if the human self walks along the path that Allah's revelation has pointed out to it, and obeys His commandments and laws, there is no reason why it also would not attain perfection.

How beautifully has the *Mujaddid* (Reformer) of the times, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, put into Persian verse the point under discussion:

He it is Who makes a man out of a droplet

And turns a few handfuls of seed into a garden.

Who gives the life-sperm a radiant face.  
And Who turns stone into the ruby of Badakhshan.

*Then He causes him to die, then assigns him to a grave.*

*Then, when He will, He raises him to life.*

Allah says: In this world there is provision for the growth and development of the physical body on the one hand, on the other hand, a way has been established and opened to man for his spiritual development.

Now, ponder over the fact that this corporeal body, for whose growth and development so many provisions have been made and about nourishing which a man strives day and night, would one day become dust unto dust. However, the spiritual development and growth of the human self or soul is something that will endure and which after death will appear in the form of a new life, by Allah's will.

In other words, the death of the human body is, in fact, like a prologue to man's rising up again in the form of a new life. Hence, wise is the man who understands the fact that if Allah, Most High, has made so many provisions for the growth and development of this ephemeral physical body, how much more abundant would be the provisions He has made for the spiritual growth, development and perfection of this enduring human soul. If man strives so hard for the growth and development of this impermanent body, how much more effort and striving should be put towards the growth and development of the human self. Furthermore, if the progress made by this temporary body appears so astoundingly exalted to us, how much higher and greater would be the achievements and progress of the human soul which will last forever?

Thus, it is obligatory for us to appreciate and value the bounty given to us in the form of the Holy Quran, and by travelling on the paths pointed out by it become heirs to perfection and progress, achievements on which depend the excellence in honour and eminence of mankind.

*Nay, but he does not what He commands him.*

That is, the reason for man's spiritual decline and moral degradation is that he does not act in accordance with Allah's word. Otherwise, the Holy Quran has been revealed to ensure the progress and everlasting growth and development of human beings. If man were to obey the Holy Quran, then, despite coming from an insignificant thing like the sperm cell, even then he will achieve power and honour in this life and the next, and will become heir to outer and inner progress and perfection. In this there is a lesson for the Muslims of the present age. The very reason for their material and spiritual decline is that they do not render true obedience to the injunctions of the Holy Quran. No matter how much they may carry around copies of the Holy Book, unless and until they act upon it, it will not benefit them. If a sick man does not take the prescribed medicine, what effect can the medicine have on him? A disease is not cured by carrying around a prescription in one's hand.

The Muslims of today may be insignificant like a sperm cell but if they start to act upon the Quran, they can soon become a strong and mighty nation. After all, look at how the Muslims of the initial

period of Islam rose to the ultimate height of power from a state of utter weakness. However, if the teachings of the Holy Quran are not followed, then we must remember that a weak and insignificant nation runs the risk of being marginalised by the world at large, just as a sperm cell, if it does not grow, becomes wasted.

*Then let man look at his food –  
How we pour down abundant water.  
Then cleave the earth, cleaving (it) asunder.  
Then cause the grain to grow therein.  
And grapes and clover,  
And the olive and the palm.  
And thick gardens.  
And fruits and herbage –  
A provision for you and your cattle.*

Food is an essential ingredient for the physical growth and development of creatures. Consider how Allah has put the heavens and the earth to work to achieve this end, that is, to produce food.

Firstly, heavenly and earthly factors are brought together to produce rain from the clouds. Then the earth is split open to grow grain and by making it grow and develop, diverse provisions are produced for man's food: there is grain, and there is grape (that provides sugar); there are vegetables and there is olive whose oil is very good for nutrition; there are date palms and thick orchards of fruits; then there is herbage for the cattle to sustain their life and so that man may have butter, butter oil, curd and meat. He not only made provision for his food but He created different things as food for man so that all the various nutrients that man needs for the growth and development of his body might be made available. By drawing attention to all these matters, Allah is telling man that he should ponder over the arrangements He has made for the provision of his food and then he should draw an analogy from this concerning his spiritual growth and nourishment and the provisions made to achieve that purpose,

The heavenly rain that comes in the form of divine revelation combines with the "earth" of the Prophet's heart to produce and provide that spiritual food which is essential for the spiritual nourishment and advancement of man. Since Allah, Most High, knows every spiritual need of man, therefore, whatever "spiritual food" He provides in the form of a revealed book contains all the necessary means to meet the needs and requirements for his spiritual growth and development.

Just as the varied types of grain, fruits, vegetables, oil, sugar etc are needed for the life and sustenance of all the bodily faculties and organs of man, so, too, diverse types of spiritual foods are needed for the growth and development of spiritual faculties. It is Allah alone Who, having full knowledge of man's natural needs, can and does provide every kind of spiritual food in His revelation, by following which various powers may be developed to the fullest.

By concluding with the verse, "*A provision for you and your cattle,*" Allah has also hinted that man ought to ponder over his food in order to realise that if the purpose of life ends with mere physical growth and development, then man's status is reduced to nothing more than that of a quadruped, for quadrupeds are also partners with man in all these elaborate provisions for physical food. Filling the stomach and nourishing the body are common to both. In this matter there is no difference or distinction between man and the quadrupeds. Hence, the humanity of man demands that his life should have a higher purpose than this, and that is his spiritual life, a life that is eternal.

Thus, it is in the fitness of things that provision should be made for spiritual food from Allah, Most High, also, to match the physical food – spiritual food that would provide nourishment to his inner self and faculties, making them grow and develop and achieve the excellences of an eternal life.

Thus, fortunate is he who develops and nurtures his spiritual faculties and powers by partaking of the heavenly manna, the Holy Quran, and thus fulfils the purpose of human life. And deprived is he, nay, spiritually dead, is he who does not benefit from this spiritual food. The cause of this deprivation is the negligence of people and the slavery to their lower desires and lusts, habits that do not allow them to listen to advice or beneficial counsel. Allah, Most High, goes on to say: Today they pretend to be dumb but a rime is coming when they will hear.

*But when the deafening cry comes.*

*Sakh-khah* means a calamity that deafens one with its accompanying explosion. Here it means the Day of Resurrection. It has previously been stated that the Holy Quran has given many names to the Last Day, and wherever it gives a new name, that name is always very appropriate to and fitting for the context in which it is used, and it signifies a peculiar kind of reality. Here, mention is made of people's neglect and carelessness, people who do not pay attention to a bounty like the Holy Quran and who spurn its spiritual benefits. No matter how much you admonish them, with numerous reasonable arguments, and try to make them understand, they do not listen despite having ears, and they behave as if they are deaf.

Allah, Most High, says: A time is coming when the result of this negligence and carelessness will confront them. On that they will hear; and why will they not hear, because that calamity will strike the ears like a bang and will penetrate deep into their hearts and minds.

After all, that is how we make the deaf hear, by shouting. Similarly, the calamity of the Last Day will fall upon the ears of these spiritually deaf people with a loud explosion and on that day they will listen with wholehearted attention to things they did not like to hear in this worldly life. But of what use will their listening be on that day for it will be the Day of Judgement when it will be too late. A description of the condition of man on that day is given in the following verses:

*The day when a man shall flee from his brother,*

*And his mother and his father,*

*And his spouse and his sons.*

That is to say, man will be so overcome with nervousness and anxiety and it will be such a state with each man for himself, that man will have no care for his brother, nor his parents nor his wife and children. Instead, he will flee from them and will try to be free of their burden. Allah has displayed marvellous eloquence and elegance in language when He mentioned various human relationships, in that He has mentioned them in the order in which these loving relationships become deeper and more intense.

First, He has mentioned the brother, from whom a man will flee. Usually, one does not have a lot of love for the brother, so it is possible that a man may flee from his brother but not his parents, because the relationship of love with them is more intense than with the brother. Hence, Allah says: “*He shall (even) flee from his parents.*” But it is possible that he may run from his parents, but not from his wife and children because at times the ties of love for the spouse can be very strong and passionate; and as for the children, there can be no greater bonds than those that a man has with his

children. Therefore, Allah says: “*He will also flee from his wife and children.*” That is to say, he will not stand by and support anyone; he will escape from all these. The reason for this is given by Allah in the next verse:

*Every man of them, that day, will have concern enough to make him indifferent to others.*

That is to say, everyone will be in a state that will make him oblivious to others. The terror of accountability for one's deeds will make man forgetful of ties of love and relationship; each man will fend for himself and will be frightened about his fate. We witness this scene even in this life. When a man is afflicted by a serious disease, or falls into trouble or is affected by adversity, he tends to lose his liking for his wife and children and his relatives.

These verses also indicate that each man will be answerable for his own actions and the wrong notion currently held by people, that any progeny of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) or the son of a particular saint will escape the punishment on the Day of Judgement due to his worthy ancestors, who will intercede on his behalf and save him, is rejected here. How right and true was the Holy Prophet (pbuh) when he said to his daughter, Lady Fatima (ra): "The fact that I am your father will not help you. It is only your deeds that will save you."

Similarly, some elevate the son of a *Mujaddid* or an *Imam* to an all-powerful position and entrust all their religious and spiritual concerns to him. Every man must answer for his own actions and will be questioned about them. When he, himself, will be beating a hasty retreat from his own wife and children, his parents and relatives, how could he possibly intercede and give a helping hand to his simple-minded, trusting disciples? It is only Allah's grace that can give a helping hand to man, and only his own deeds that can stand him in good stead.

*Faces that day will be bright. Laughing, joyous.*

These are those who benefited from Allah's revelation and His guidance and emerged successful from the trial by deeds.

*And faces on that day will have dust on them.*

*Darkness covering them.*

These are those who did not care for the revelation and guidance from Allah and kept on doing evil deeds and failed in the trial through actions. Even the examinations held in this worldly life present a similar scene with great clarity. The successful students display happy, laughing faces which reflect their heartfelt joy. Their mouths are drawn into a smile and happiness and laughter seem to radiate from their faces. In contrast, the faces of the unsuccessful students are covered with the dust of sadness, anxiety and disgrace and their faces take on a dark hue. Similar will be the condition of the unsuccessful people on the Day of Judgement, but remember that this failure and disgrace will be infinitely greater. Referring to these people who have failed miserably, Allah describes the reason for their failure thus:

*These are the unbelievers, the wicked.*

They are called *kafirs* (unbelievers) because they refused to believe the truth and showed ungratefulness towards Allah's bounty. That is, they did not accept the spiritual food and the bounty of Allah in the form of the Holy Quran, and persisted in their evil ways. Included in this category are those who believe in the Holy Quran as the word of God yet do not act upon it. In

short, the root-cause of failure is giving the lie to the word of Allah and His guidance and not acting in accordance with them.