

spend all his energies and monetary sources for this cause.

As a matter of fact, if Muslims rejuvenate their relationship with the Quran on these lives, it will weld them into one Ummah with utmost mental and emotional unity and unique singularity of purpose and objective. All sorts of dissension, strife and antagonism among them will automatically vanish, and they will become united like a solid commented structure (in Quranic expression, *bunyan marsus*). And this will indeed be a concrete exemplification of the Holy Prophet's saying according to which God will give dignity and respect to those people who hold fast to the Quran and degrade and disgrace those who turn a deaf ear to it and do not discharge their obligations towards it. Allama Iqbal has expressed these very ideas in beautiful Persian verses thus:

خوار از مجبوری قرآن شدی شکوہ سنج گردشِ دوراں شدی  
اے چو شبنم بر زمیں افتد در بعل داری کتاب زندہ

To sum up: there are the two practical steps through which a man personally becomes a true believer and the collectivity of believers takes the form of a strong ideological group. Now the question that crops up is: what methodology is to be pursued by this ideological group for its global struggle? This indeed is the subject matter of the next Quranic verse to be explained in the sequel. It is a happy coincidence that this methodology too consists of three points and we will dwell upon them at some length.

(To be continued)

قرآن حکیم کی مقدس آیات اور احادیث نبوی آپ کی دینی معلومات میں اضافے اور تبلیغ کے لئے اشاعت کی جاتی ہیں۔ ان کا احترام آپ پر فرض ہے۔ لہذا جن صفحات پر یہ آیات درج ہیں ان کو صحیح اسلامی طریقے کے مطابق بے حرمتی سے محفوظ رکھیں۔

commandments of Allah (vide verse 80 of Surah Nisa: He who obeys the Prophet, obeys God.) The second practical step is with regard to the Quran: *i'tisam bil-Quran*—holding fast and 'sticking' to the Quran firmly. And this obligation is to be discharged in a united manner. Division and dissension among Muslims is thoroughly disapproved by Allah (SWT).

Now the question is : What does 'holding fast together the cord of Allah' mean and imply in practical terms. In the booklet 'The Obligations Muslims Owe To the Quran' I have made an impassioned call to the Muslims 'to return to the Quran', to rededicate themselves to its study, and make it the sole guide for their lives. Instead of making purely academic attempts at describing the unique merits and magnificence of Quran, the most pertinent thing for us to do is that we should clearly understand our duties and responsibilities towards the Quran and then assess for ourselves whether or not we are conscientiously fulfilling these duties and responsibilities. Paying pompous tributes to the Quran will not be enough and it cannot be a substitute for actually discharging our obligations towards the Holy Book. Now what are these obligations? Or, in other words, what does the Quran demand from us? An objective study of the Book makes it amply clear that it makes five demands from every Muslim. Put in a simple language, these demands or obligations are as follows.

1. A Muslim is required to truly believe in the Quran.
2. He is required to read it properly.
3. He is required to understand it.
4. He is required to act upon its teachings both in his private and public life. He is required to struggle for the implementation of Sharia Law and social justice at the state level.
5. He is required to disseminate its teachings to others and operationalize Islam at the global level. He must

objective of Pakistan, divine punishment could whip us again any time and would whip us more severely. Indeed Pakistan has to prepare herself to face all the threats posed by the new world order. If, on the contrary, Pakistanis do not come out of their deep slumber and do not give up their materialistic pursuits, the anti-Islamic designs of the sole, supreme world power will subjugate it to the point of virtual nonexistence. An ostrich-like attitude will not at all save us from perilous dangers and it is imperative that we at the earliest and in the right earnest read the writing on the wall.

If a true Muslim reflects on the conditions of Pakistan diligently and thoughtfully, he realize that the situation of Pakistanis totally resembles that of the Arabs before the advent of Islam depicted in the words of the Quran—'you stood on the brink of a pit of fire'. And the only way out of this pit of fire is the one delineated by these verses of surah Al-i-Imran. As the Quran is the eternal divine message for all humanity, its teachings too have abiding efficacy and applicability. No matter how degenerate our conditions and circumstances may be, the Quran offers a sure panacea for all our ills. In the Khatm-i-Quran prayer we most humbly pray to Almighty Allah that Quran may be made our leader, guide and beacon of light. But surely we cannot get it all merely for the asking. We have to struggle hard to achieve our solicited desires. Holding fast together to the cable of Allah (i.e., the Holy Quran) is the second practical point of the strategy laid down by the divine Book.

To summarize the action-agenda so far covered in these pages: the first practical step of the three-point Quranic strategy is with regard to *taqwa* and Islam. That is to say, a true Muslim should remain steadfast in his obedience and loyalty to God. He should avoid everything which is not pleasing to Him and live his entire life in total submission to His commandments. As a corollary, acting on the injunctions of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) is also included in it, as the commandments of the Prophet are in fact the

- (4) The banking system on which all our industry and trade, in fact our entire economy is based, is contaminated to this day the filth of interest. As a result the entire nation and the country is, in the words of the Quran at war with Allah and His Messenger (S.A.W.S).
- (5) Accursed evils of gambling, speculation and lottery declared by Quran as "an abomination of Satan's handiwork" (رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ) are rampant.
- (6) The system of feudalism and absentee landlordism, the worst and most abominable form of oppression and usurpation and which has basically not changed at all in spite of the so-called land reforms introduced twice.
- (7) Mixed (non-segregated) social living that debased the West as far as modesty, chastity and purity are concerned. It destroyed the domestic peace and confounded the family structure. And this thing is such that it did not take roots in our society even during the British rule to the extent it is now in vogue and is increasing by leaps and bounds every day.
- (8) The distinction between the 'tribal' and 'settled' areas in the N.W.F.P. is still continuing.

The current scenario of Pakistan calls for a total change in the entire body politic and soci-economic system of the homeland. Unity in the people of Pakistan and the establishment of Islamic social justice is the need of the day. This in fact was the real purpose of establishing Pakistan and only this can ensure her continued existence, stability and progress. It is on account of deviation from this very cause that the Muslim nation of Pakistan got divided into different regional, ethnic and linguistic nationalities. This breaking of our vow with Allah and disloyalty to His *deen* has led to tremendous plunder and bloodshed among the people of various regions. Divine punishment whipped us in 1971 and even now if we do not make headway towards the real

now turn the disarrayed and conflicting provinces of Pakistan into a strong unity provided the people of Pakistan earnestly act upon the three-point action strategy explained in these three verses.

It is an undeniable historical fact that the Indian sub-continent was partitioned on the basis of two nation theory and Pakistan was established on the basis of Muslim nationhood and in the name of Islam. Muslims living in the widely separated areas of India were united by the bond of Islamic faith and demanded a separate homeland with the objective that Muslims of India, by removing all the taints of decadent and monarchical Islam, get an opportunity to re-establish the pristine Islamic system of political, economic and social justice which is the most important manifestation of the Holy Prophet's universal mercy and blessing. We regret to say, however, that in spite of the fact that forty seven years have passed since Pakistan was established, no real progress has as yet been made towards achieving the envisaged goal. The political and economic system inherited from the British Raj has throughout been kept intact; not only in the over all system, but in matters of social and communal values also we are strictly maintaining *status quo*. Both in practice and thought we exhibit the same old slavish mentality. The system to which we are sticking in the political governance of our homeland has the following important features:-

- (1) Territorial Nationalism i.e. the concept of nationalism that was born of Western secularism and on whose absolute negation Pakistan movement was launched.
- (2) Parliamentary Democracy, the initial training of which was imparted to us by our English rulers.
- (3) The names and boundaries of the provinces demarcated by the British for their administrative expediency and which we consider not only permanent and everlasting but also sacrosanct.

and the pivot of Islam. Before the advent of Islam, there were animosities among the tribes which regularly broke out into fighting and devastation; every now and then there was much bloodshed. Things had reached a point that the entire Arabian nation seemed to be on the verge of destroying itself. It was due to the blessings of Islam alone that it was saved from being consumed by the fire to which this verse alludes. The people of yathrib (which later came to be known as Medina) had embraced Islam some three or four years before this verses were revealed. They had witnessed the blessing of Islam as it unified into one brotherhood the Aws and Khazraj, two tribes which had long been sworn enemies. Moreover, both tribes treated the migrants from Makkah in a spirit of sacrifice and love seldom seen even among members of the same family. The verse under consideration ends with the words: 'Thus Allah makes his signs clear to you that you may be guided to the right way'. That is to say, if people had eyes to see they could conclude for themselves whether their salvation lay in adhering firmly to the teachings of the Quran or in abandoning them and reverting to their former state. They could decide very easily whether their true well-wishers were God and His Messenger or those Jews, Polytheists and hypocrites who strove to plunge them back into their former despicable state.

Before we proceed further, it is quite appropriate to see if the historical evidence alluded to in this verse has any special bearing on the current political scenario of Pakistan. As Muslims we believe that the teachings of the Quran have eternal and ever-lasting validity and that, as a source of guidance, the Quranic principles have applicability for all places and for all times to come. Seen in this perspective, we can better appreciate the gravity of the conditions prevailing today in Pakistan and, at the same time, see a ray of hope offered to all believers in the Quranic verse under discussion. Just as Allah welded the warring Arab factions into a strong brotherhood fourteen centuries ago, He can

The reason for the use of the word 'cord' (*habl*) is that the Quran both establishes a bond between man and God and joins all believers together in the religious fraternity. To take a firm hold on this cord means that the believers should attach utmost importance to their religion : this should always be the centre of their concerns; they should continually strive to establish it; and the common desire to serve it should make them cooperate with each other. As soon as Muslims turn their attention away from the fundamental teachings of their faith and lose sight of establishing its hegemony in life they begin to concern themselves with matters of secondary importance. And, just as they rent the communities of the former Prophets, enticing people away from their true objective in life, so schisms and dissensions are bound to plague their lives. If Muslims do this they are bound to suffer indignity and disgrace both in this world and the Next as happened with the followers of the previous Prophets. So a true Muslim is only one whose whole being is permeated with Islam; it is not a mere veneer or outward show. The simile of 'cord' or 'rope' is very significant indeed. It is that of people struggling in deep water, to whom a benevolent Providence stretches out a strong and unbreakable rope or cord of rescue. If all hold fast to it together, their mutual support adds to the chance of their safety.

After this, an historical evidence from the period in which the Quran was being revealed was presented and the believers were addressed thus :

And remember with gratitude Gods favour on you, for you were enemies and he joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became brethren.

Yathrib, and indeed the whole of Arabia, was torn with civil and tribal feuds and dissensions before the Prophet of Islam set his sacred feet on its soil. After that, it, became the city of the Prophet, Medina, an unmatched brotherhood,

Clinging or holding fast to somebody for security is 'itesam'. So Allah Almighty enjoins upon all Muslim to hold fast to the Divine cord—the Holy Quran. The Arabic expression '*Jamee-an*' used in the verse can be interpreted in two ways, and I think both meanings are to be taken here. Firstly it may mean that all Muslims should jointly hold fast and cling to the Quran. Secondly it may also signify that the whole, and not a few parts, of the Quran is to be taken as guide for life. If only some fragmentary injunctions of the Divine writ are put into practice and others are simply ignored, this will resemble the attitude of the Israelites who were reproached very strongly by Allah in these words:

Do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the other? What else, then, could be the retribution of those among you who do this, then they should live in degradation in the present life, and that on the Day of Resurrection they should be sent to the severest chastisement. (Al-Baqarah 2 : 85)

Belief in the Quran remains imperfect until the code of life it lays down is accepted in its entirety. It is ironic to see that the majority of Westernized and secularized Muslims take a partial view of Islamic life and do not at all see the need to extend, strengthen and complete its Quranic foundations, with the result that the door to the highest stages of *taqwa* and *ihsan* are supposed to be open for a judge of court who may make decisions in violation of the Quran, for a lawyer who may argue on the basis of laws contrary to the Shariah, for the administrator who may manage the affairs of life in accordance with a system based on *kufir*, for the political leaders and his/her followers who may work for founding and building of life on the social and political principles of disbelievers—in short, for everyone, provided he fashions his outward style of life after a certain pattern and observes a few rituals and ceremonies of worship rites.

(May Allah bless us and enable us also to attest sincerely and with heart-felt certitude the fundamental metaphysical beliefs of Islam. Although we all verbally attest these credal beliefs, what is required is inner conviction and faith of the heart.) On this the Prophet said, "Rejoice at what you have got with yourselves because one end of the Quran is in Allah's hand and the other end is with you. So hold it fast. If you do that, you will never perish or go astray".

Despite these three authentic historical traditions of the Prophet, if someone maintains that *habl Allah* means something else than the Quran, his opinion cannot be taken seriously. Indeed he has no justification whatsoever for that. Allama Iqbal has expressed this very truth in a moving Persian couplet thus:

از یک آئینی مسلمان زندہ است پیکر ملت ز قرآن زندہ است  
ماہرہ خاک و دلی آگاہ اوست اعتصامش کن کہ جبل اللہ اوست

That is to say, the collective life and ummatic existence of the Muslims is due to the Quran that provides them with a legal framework and a code of life. The multitudes of Muslims have no significance; all significance rests with the Quran that functions like a throbbing heart in the socio political body of the Muslims. Iqbal, therefore, advises all of them to hold fast to the Quran as it is the cord of Allah.

The second imperative that is laid down by verse 103 is therefore, that all Muslims are commanded by Allah to hold fast to the Divine cord, the Quran. The Arabic verb '*itesam*' used in this verse is also very significant. The root of the verb—'*ismat*'—means security and protection; and the meaning of the verb '*itesam*' is to hold fast to something or some body for security and safety in the face of danger or threat. Its real sense comes out clearly when we see a child who in all his innocence clings to his mother and thinks that she can protect him from all sorts of dangers and odds.

writing commentary on Quran. But recourse to semantic and linguistic analysis or personal opinion should not in any way overrule the primary importance of the Prophet's sayings and explications. Following this paramount principle of Quranic exegesis, I shall mention here very briefly three ahadith of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) which explicate without an iota of doubt the real import and meaning of *habl Allah*.

- (i) A rather lengthy historical tradition on the Quran has been narrated by the fourth Caliph Ali in which the Prophet is reported to have said about the Quran: It is this very Quran that is the cord of Allah (Tirmidhi and Darimi).
- (ii) In another hadith, reported on the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said: 'This Quran is the cord of Allah which He has stretched from the heavens to the earth.'
- (iii) The third hadith has been reported by Jubair bin Mutim and included in Tibrani Kabir. This hadith so graphically gives the details of an episode in the lifetime of the Prophet that the reader begins to feel for a few moments as if he himself is sitting in the company of the Prophet. Once the Holy Prophet came out of his closet and saw a few of the Companions studying and discussing the Quran in a corner of the mosque. The Prophet, very much pleased with this, approached them and asked them a strange question. This question we should also put to ourselves and see if we can sincerely give the same affirmative answer that was given by the Companions. The Prophet asked them, "Do you not attest to the truths that there is no god but Allah who alone should be worshipped, that he is one and without partner, that I am his messenger, and that this Quran has come from him?" All the companions firmly replied in the affirmative.

revelations called the 'occasions of revelation'. They were recorded by the Companions of the Prophet as a necessary aid for fixing the correct meaning of the Word of God. And linked with this is the belief with regard to Prophet Muahmmad (Peace be upon him) *Vis-a-vis* the Quran, for the clarified and elaborated the Quran, supplementing its broad general principles by giving them precise and detailed forms, and incorporating them into practical life, his own as well as those of his followers. Thus the Quran affirms this role of the Prophet in these words:

And we sent down the Book to you for the express purpose that you should make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe. (Nahl 16 : 64)

In the light of these principles, for an understanding of the expression 'cord of Allah', we should turn to the traditions of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him). Despite the presence of authentic historical traditions of the Prophet about a particular issue or point, it is wrong to resort to free play of reason or fancy. Indeed such interpretation of arbitrary opinion (tafsir bil-ray) has never found favour with orthodox Muslims. Many Urdu translators and exegesists of Quran have not bothered to study more than one available authentic (i.e., sound in terms of transmissional chain) historical statements of the Prophet himself which elucidate the expression. For one renowned scholar, the expression generally refers to the 'religion of God'. I see no reason why one should deal with it so cavalierly and ignore a genuine, trustworthy and *marfu* (in which the saying of the Prophet itself is reported) hadith. As a matter of principle, knowledge of Arabic language, grammar, lexicography, Arabic literature and familiarity with Arabic idiom of the times of the Prophet are all important as instruments for

divinely ordained mission. In other words, each Muslim must first himself become a sincere, whole-hearted and authentic believer in order to play his role in the discharge of ummatic obligations. The consolidation and invigoration of *iman* or *taghwa* in the individual person is the subject which has been dealt with most fully yet succinctly in the preceding verse of the Holy Quran. Now we move on to the second step.

We have seen that it is of utmost urgency for Muslims to join hands together for the realization of ummah's destiny as the standard-bearer of truth: the establishment of Divine order of social justice and equity on earth—bringing God's earth under God's rule. The most important question that arises here is : What is that bond or cementing material which would bind the Muslims into a strongly united group or collectivity? The Quranic verse under discussion provides answer to this very question:

And hold fast, all together, the cord of Allah  
(that he stretched out for you), and be not divided  
among yourselves ....

The simile used here is that of people struggling in deep water, to whom a benevolent Providence stretches out a strong and unbreakable cord or rope of rescue. If all hold fast to it together, their mutual support adds to the chance of their safety. One may wonder here as to what '*habl-Allah*'—the cord of Allah—really means. Mention of a few methodological points with regard to the commentary on, and understanding of, the Quran are in order here. The first principle to be kept in mind in the interpretation and understanding of the Quran is that its one verse or portion is sometimes explained and elaborated by another verse or portion of the Quran. In case one does not find such explanation within the Quran, then the second recognized principle is to explore the backgrounds of the Quranic

# HOLDING FAST TO THE CORD OF ALLAH

(Three-Point Action-Agenda For The Muslim Ummah-Part II)

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The next verse (verse 103) of *Surah Al-i-Imran* explains the second practical step that the Muslim Ummah is urged to undertake. All those who have accomplished to the maximum possible degree the requirement of the preceding verse and attained the driving force of *taqwa* (i.e., God-consciousness) in their lives—are called upon to unite and join together for the cause of Islam. Until and unless they join together and become like a solid steel-ribbed structure, they cannot achieve the supremacy and ascendancy of Islam at the global level. It is a well-established truth that an influential and wide-ranging mission, be it a moral or an immoral one, requires the joint efforts of a group of people.

The noblest and loftiest end—to make humanity surrender to one God—that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) achieved in his life time was also achieved with the selfless and dedicated cooperative efforts of his Companions. But the Prophet himself could achieve this within the boundaries of Arabian Peninsula and the task of disseminating Islam and making it dominant in the entire world was put on the shoulders of Muslim ummah. This gigantic task obviously calls for united and organizational struggle. Now just as a strong and solid wall requires strong blocks or bricks, the individual members of the Islamic *Jihad* movement should also be men of deep inner conviction and noblest character who strive together to bring all power and all powers under God. If the individual Muslim suffers from lack of commitment to the Islamic cause and is not a dedicated worker, the Islamic ummah cannot accomplish its