

# CHAPTER 1

## Shuruh

COMMENTARIES AND EXPLANATIONS  
OF  
SAYYID QUTUB'S  
MILESTONES

# THE UNIQUE QURANIC GENERATION

SH. MUSTAFA KAMEL MUHAMMAD

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# The Unique Quranic Generation

## Introduction

When we speak about the first chapter of the Milestones, "The Unique Quranic Generation," we receive the inspiration from the words and expressions, as we are accustomed to move with this book. We try to live with this inspiration and derive the milestones that will clarify the facts and guide us in our journey to establish Islam once again.

No doubt that the title, "**The Unique Quranic Generation**" has a special rhythm, and it stimulates a unique feeling, motivating the people who want to once again recommence that unique and admirable experience lead by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, the Seal, and most noble of the Messengers (sas).

This unique Quranic generation was raised by Allah as this luminous group was privileged to directly experience Allah's Revelation and the Messenger of Allah (sas). They were the most fortunate of generations as they lived in a momentous period in which the earth encountered the sky and there was continuous contact between men and their Creator. They lived a period in which Divine feelings guarded and surrounded them, and this was not to be repeated in the history of humanity ever again.

When we contemplate the title; "**The Unique Quranic Generation**," we certainly find that it is a very admirable, effective and inspiring expression, with which the author begins his milestones. We will discover that this chapter is the most important chapter of the book, although the facts mentioned in other chapters may appear more urgent for an Islamic movement. This chapter should be considered the basis by which all the principles in this book emanate, and which explain and clarify all of the other facts the author presented.

Indeed, when he spoke about the "**Quranic generation**," he spoke about the Quran represented in a generation of people. This is a serious issue, and that is why it is considered the most important chapter in the book since each group of Believers who wants to please Allah and follow His Messenger has always aimed to form a Quranic generation.

Verily, this chapter, if we truly attained it, understood it properly, and if we were able to apply it in our lives in a complete way, then we will have accomplished half of our mission and we will have overcome half of obstacles. Afterward, all the other facts which come afterwards in subsequent chapters would naturally follow and build upon the base established in this chapter.

## A historical phenomenon

The author says at the beginning of the chapter:

**"The callers to Islam in every country and in every period must give thought to one particular aspect of the history of Islam, and they must ponder over it deeply. This is related to the method of inviting people to Islam and its ways of training."**

As we have lived with the writings of the author and his way of expression, we have always admired how his words contain this certainty and that feeling of superiority in what he believes in, and the principles he applies in life. His expressions do not leave the reader alone, hesitant, or

passing by the Truth presented to him, he is pushed until he takes a firm decision and clear attitude regarding these facts-whether to accept or refuse them.

This beginning directs us to the historical phenomenon which the author wants to speak about, declaring that it needs to be understood by Islamic advocates:

**“At one time this Message created a generation - the generation of the Companions of the Messenger- may Allah be pleased with them - without comparison in the history of Islam, even in the entire history of man. After this, no other generation of this caliber was ever again to be found.”**

Indeed, at one time in history this Message created a generation; they were not angels, they were not creatures from the sky, nor from a far away planet; they were a generation from humans – like any other generation at any other time or any other place: They were just a generation of mankind. Even then, they managed by the grace of Allah (swt), the help of His Messenger (sas), and other reasons we will talk about later, to become the most spectacular group of people among mankind. They managed and deserved to be a unique generation and to be a superior generation, a generation that deserved to be praised by Allah (swt) and praised by His Messenger (sas) who said: “The best generation of this Umma (nation) is the generation to which I have been sent, then the next one...”<sup>1</sup>

So in spite of their greatness, we should never forget that they were still a generation of mankind. This means that if other people wanted to be likewise, they could theoretically succeed- at least individually or partially - if they met all the conditions and traced the footsteps of that great group, which had emulated the Qur’an and followed the Messenger (sas). This is how that special group managed to accomplish what no one else has or ever will accomplish since Allah created mankind till the end of the world. This is why Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

﴿ كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١١٠]

“Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind...” (Surah Al-i-Imran 3:110)

Just like that - with no exception - “the best of peoples, evolved for mankind...” - no other nation, past present or future, would come up to be likewise.

Why?!... This is a great, enormous and most critical question that callers to Islam in every country and in every period should give thought to and ask themselves in order to find out that secret or that reason which made this generation so special and spectacular.

There is no doubt that it is a stunning image which makes the true person very passionate in living the same way that that special generation had lived before, where he would wish to be an individual from that generation, wishing to succeed in some of what that generation had succeeded in, and of course realizing that they could never quite be at their level! This is because what this generation had accomplished was something extraordinary, something gigantic, in a way that had never happened before, and will never happen again.

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<sup>1</sup> This hadith has been narrated on the authority of 'Imran b. Husain through another chain of transmitters (hadith found in 'The Book Pertaining to the Merits of the Companions (Allah Be Pleased With Them) of the Holy Messenger (May Peace Be Upon Him) (Kitab Al-Fadail Al-Sahabah)' of Sahih Muslim).

## **Even the enemies of Islam admit to the uniqueness of that generation**

The enemies of Islam see the greatness of that generation; they were indeed a magnificent generation, no matter how the orientalist and enemies of Islam try to conspire against Islam. They stand still at the history of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah in recognition of their superiority and greatness. All that these orientalist have managed to say, as a detractor, is that this generation had ascended to that magnificent horizon only by the genius and charismatic character of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (sas). To support their claim, they contend that when the Messenger of Allah had passed away, it merely took them a quarter of a century to get back to their first jahilliya, where they fought each other, and turned against each other. Indeed, in the Islamic political history there was unfortunate bloodshed, clashes and conflicts for power, similar to conflicts known to mankind in every time and place throughout history. In fact, the enemies of Islam proclaim that the 13 or 14 centuries of Islamic nation's history and Islamic Caliphate were all a period of conflict. Thus, Islam itself, supposedly, did not produce anything; it was solely the charisma characterized by the Messenger of Allah (sas) that produced such a generation.

Indeed, when they write about the world's greatest individuals in history they state Muhammad (sas) as the greatest and the most influential. So, they try to suggest that the greatness of the Companions was not a result from the greatness of Islam as a Religion in itself, but instead it was because of earthly reasons, human reasons that were embodied in the personality of Muhammad (sas). They then also try to degrade the position of Muhammad (sas) from being a Messenger of Allah to merely being a charismatic individual and a great person among other great persons in history. Of course, he was the greatest, and the most influential of them all, which enabled him to have the most effect on that generation, but was it the real reason for the uniqueness of the generation of the Companions?

Furthermore, the orientalist proclaim that this unique generation was uneducated, illiterate, and was not exposed to any sophisticated means of life. Therefore, they were obedient to the Messenger of Allah (sas), and they were greatly affected by him since he surpassed them. They assert that if the Messenger (sas) had shown-up in the Persian, or Roman Empire, or in Egypt, he would not have had that much influence, nor would he have been able to produce the same generation because these empires were supposedly civilized, and cultured.

Thus, the enemies of Islam ignore all the other facts and characteristics which have distinguished Islam among the history of mankind although some of them-the fair individuals- are obliged to acknowledge this distinction. These shallow arguments are the most of what they have managed to say as a way of detraction, but notice that they had to admit that the Companions were a distinguished and unique generation. They made deep marks in the history of mankind; marks that no one would ever be able to erase or deny.

## **The hope of ascending the peak**

This is a historical phenomenon that we need to deeply contemplate; a phenomenon of the "unique generation" composed of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (sas). This is, in fact, of great interest to us-that they are humans- since we are requested to follow their footsteps. We feel that reaching the same horizon is somehow possible.

Of course, there is a reality that Qutub points out: "After this, no other generation of this caliber was ever again to be found." This fact makes that generation shine as well as it triggers sorrow in

the souls of the generations that are to come after because it informs them that no other generation would ever be able to catch up with that great first generation.

He says: “It is true that we do find some individuals of this caliber here and there in history, but never again did a great number of such people exist in one region as was the case during the first period of Islam...”

So, what seems impossible to achieve is having a whole generation with such great numbers in one period at that same rank, but that does not prevent some people or even tens of people to reach that unique rank! This gives hope for those with high motivation and great souls to try and follow their footsteps in an attempt to become as an individual from that previous generation. Allah (swt) indicates this possibility:

﴿ وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴾ [التوبة: ١٠٠]

“The vanguard (of Islam), the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds, well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them has He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the supreme Felicity.” (Surah Al-Tawbah, 9:100)

Thus, we notice that there are “the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid”, and then there are “those who follow them in (all) good deeds.”

So, it is possible then for individuals and exceptional people who are able to reach to what “the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid” have reached. Thus, the door of hope, competition, and seeking that level is not yet closed – only if we have high ambitions, a relentless will, and the desire to reach that high marvelous horizon which the Companions of the Messenger have reached.

Qutub also says “This is an obvious and open truth,” so it is neither fiction nor wishful thinking; it is a true reality which happened at a point of history, and its effects are still existing in humanity until today. There is no doubt that there is a lot of goodness found in humanity today- whether in the west, east, north, or south- that is a result from that special elite. They left their fingerprints on human history from that time till today- in all aspects of life- in the fields of Faith, ethics, manners, science, and creativity.

It is a true astonishing fact, not fiction, therefore it can happen again. This would be a proof for the Messenger’s prophecy where he said: “Islam initiated as something strange, and it would revert to its (old position) of being strange; so good tidings for the strangers.”<sup>2</sup>

## **A generation raised by the Quran**

Qutub continues:

**“This is an obvious and open truth of history, and we ought to ponder over it deeply so that we may reach its secrets. The Quran of this Message is still in our hands, and the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (sas), i.e. his guidance in practical affairs, and the history of his sacred life**

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<sup>2</sup> It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira (hadith found in ‘The Book of Faith (Kitab Al-Iman)’ of Sahih Muslim)

**are also in our hands, as they were in the hands of the first Muslim community whose equal history could not produce again. The only difference is the person of the Messenger of Allah (sas); but is this the secret? Had the person of the Messenger (sas) been absolutely essential for the establishment and fruition of this Message, Allah would not have made Islam a universal Message, ordained it as the Religion for the whole of mankind, given it the status of the last Divine Message for humanity, and made it to be a guide for all the inhabitants of this planet in all their affairs until the end of time."**

We need to try to recognize the secret which made the Companions reach that level which had never been reached before in the history of mankind.

There is no doubt that the Quran was the first factor which had that effect on that generation. We can even say that it was the only factor; since we are aware that the Messenger (sas) himself was a result of the Quran, and his personality was a reflection of the Quran. When the Messenger's wife Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was asked about the Messenger's (sas) manners she said "His morals were the Quran,"<sup>3</sup> asserting what the Quran asserts and rejecting what the Quran rejects. Furthermore, the life example of the Messenger, embodied in his actions and sayings (the Sunnah) is also a result of the Quran.

So there is no doubt that through these facts we can be assured that the Quran was in fact what had produced that generation, and that generation was raised purely by the Revelation of Allah. Perhaps this unique generation was the only nation that had been graduated by a single book, because they truly lived with and solely obtained from the Quran throughout their lives.

The generations before were never on the same form nor at the same level. No other book had ever been preserved for a nation to be its form of support and its luminous source as Allah had preserved the Quran. Allah- the Almighty- kept the Quran to be the eternal religious reference, beacon, and resort for people till the Day of Reckoning.

### **Is it then a matter of how much we know of the Quran and Sunnah?**

We should observe that the Quran is between our hands now, just as it had been for that first generation, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah. We even know things about the Quran that some of the Companions did not know. Some of the Companions- for example- did not know the reasons and circumstances of Revelation for some of the verses of the Quran, and some of them were unaware of the Messenger's (sas) explanations for some of the verses. In contrast, nowadays, after our virtuous scholars had collected all that knowledge, all the information about the Quran is between our hands and all what was in the minds of the Companions collectively is made known to us. Every one of us can know what the Companions had known if we review the books that were written by our devoted scholars. On the other hand, the Companion only had the opportunity to know what he had heard by his ears from the Messenger (sas) or what had reached him from other close Companions whom he had contacted. Only a few Companions knew mostly all what had been originated by the Messenger of Allah. Sometimes, even Abu Bakr and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them, the first and second Caliphs respectively, leading the Muslims after the Messenger of Allah, and also among the most prominent Companions) would ask the Companions: "Do you have any knowledge about issue so and so?" They would

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<sup>3</sup> Narrated in Ahmad, Muslim and Abu Dawud.

reply: "Yes, we heard the Messenger (sas) say so and so," so they would take what the Companions said.

The Quran is between our hands now as it was before, and maybe our knowledge about Quran is much more than any of the Companions knowledge about the Quran or the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (Hadith)! Nevertheless, will our level in the sight of Allah (swt) be determined by how much we know about the Quran or how much knowledge we have about the Messenger's hadith?

The true determination is not so, as the Messenger(sas) said: "if any one of you spent gold equal to Uhud (a prominent mountain flanking Madina) in Allah's Cause it would not be equal to a Mudd (two-thirds of a kilogram) or even a half Mudd spent by one of them<sup>4</sup>". This means that the type of knowledge and cognition that the generation of the Companions had was of a very special type, and was with a special concentration and density which made it, despite its scarcity, exceed the mountains of Uhud in comparison with other people.

There is no doubt that this issue needs time and effort to be understood. Indeed, what the Companions had of knowledge- though sometimes perhaps little in quantity- was very effective in terms of its value, and the effect it produced in their souls.

So, if we were to try to attain that superiority, and seek the level of the Companions, then we have to know that secret the Companions lived with, recognized, practiced, and tasted. It is not an easy job because emotional matters are very hard to express because they are tasted and felt more than they can be described and touched.

### **Examples of the uniqueness of the first Islamic generation**

A hint to this essence is reflected in the description the Messenger of Allah (sas) gave of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him): "Abu Bakr was not preferred among you by the quantity of fasting followed by prayer, but for something that resided in his heart."<sup>5</sup> What was the secret that was dignified in the heart of Abu Bakr; where he became better than all of the Companions, and if his Belief was to be compared with the Belief of the nation it would outweigh? Thus, where do we stand on this scale, in the generation we live in? There is no doubt that it needs research and deep contemplation.

So if that was for Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), it is also the same for the rest of the Companions. There is no doubt that what one of them would spend or do for the sake of Allah- no matter how little it is- weighs in the scale of Allah like mountains of what we do. Therefore, there must be a secret that must be identified and understood, and hopefully implemented in our lives although it will take a lot of effort and hard work.

It will not be easy to recognize that secret, nevertheless we will try to shed light on that secret through paying close attention to their manners, emotions, and behaviors. Thus, we could find out some of that secret even though we may not be able to attain it entirely.

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<sup>4</sup> Narrated Abu Said in Sahih al Bukhari.

<sup>5</sup> TBC

When the Messenger of Allah (sas) says about Umar: “If there was going to be a Messenger after me, it would have been Umar.” We stand in awe facing this fact. The Messenger (sas) is basically saying about Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), “that he deserves to be a Messenger!”

That means that the heart of Umar is full of certainty, Belief, pureness, and generosity that makes him deserve this amazing honor: “if there would be a Messenger after me it would be Umar...”<sup>6</sup>

This is the most astonishing thing! How did Umar manage to reach this esteemed level? We know that the Messenger of Allah (sas) would never say this by his own accord, as Allah (swt) reveals:

﴿ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴾ [النجم: ٤-٣]

“Nor does he speak out of desire. It is not but Revelation that is revealed.”

(Surah An-Najm 53:3-4)

So, how did Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) manage to stand hearing such praise? More importantly, what did Umar do to deserve this honor?

In another narration, the Messenger of Allah (sas) tells Umar (may Allah be pleased with him): “By Him in Whose Hands my life is, whenever Satan sees you taking a path, he follows a path other than yours” ...

We should pause and try to remember, where was Umar before his Islam? He had remained six years in jahilliya after the Messenger’s initial call to Islam, drinking wine, playing aimlessly, and torturing Muslims in a very ugly manner and not getting tired. He would leave torturing only because he got bored or tired, not out of mercy or sympathy. He once told two of Banni Mo’amel’s maids whom he was torturing: “I didn’t leave you except that I got bored!” so he did not leave them because of sympathy, remorse or to even react to their moans! This hard heart didn’t move!

How then did this heart transform into the heart where the Messenger said: “If there is going to be a Messenger after me, it would be Umar,” and “whenever Satan sees you taking a path, he follows a path other than yours.”

He must have had a long life with Allah, with his heart full of Truth, certainty, purity, strength, and insistence on the Truth that no one else had!

Take a second example: The Messenger of Allah (sas) told Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her, the first wife of the Messenger (sas)) that the Angel Gabriel (peace be on him) came to him saying: “This is Khadijah coming to you with a dish having meat soup (or some food or drink). When she reaches you, greet her on behalf of her Lord (Allah the Almighty) and on my behalf, and give her the glad tidings of having a palace made of hollow-pearl in Paradise wherein there will be neither any noise nor any fatigue...”<sup>8</sup> An angel sent for Khadijah! And not just an angel but the best of them all and the carrier of the Revelation came to Khadijah to tell her that Allah (swt) greets her! How could this be?! What did Khadijah do to deserve this?! She must have reached a level of certainty, Belief, and love for Allah (swt). She must have reached a level of cleanness and purity which made the best of the angels- the Messenger of Quran from Allah

<sup>6</sup> TBC

<sup>7</sup> Narrated Sad bin Abi Waqqas in Sahih al Bukhari

<sup>8</sup> Narrated Abu Huraira in Sahih al Bukhari

above the seven skies- to come and tell her that Allah greets and gives her good tidings! How did Khadijah – except that her heart is full of certainty and strength – manage to bear that declaration that came from her Lord? How come she did not melt in devoutness, in passion, in shyness, and in excitement when she got this amazing news? There is no doubt that the Belief in the hearts of these people – which only Allah knows about – was huge and magnificent in a way where they deserved to be like that.

There is no doubt that this was clearly obvious in the personality of Khadijah from the first moment of the Messenger's (sas) mission, and even before that moment. Actually, what drove Khadijah to marry the Messenger (sas) in the first place was her expectations that he would be the Messenger for this nation. She knew it was the time for a Messenger to arise and if it was to happen then it would be Muhammad (sas) because of the great things she had heard about him. She also heard from her slave Maysara describing the manners he saw during his trip with Muhammad (sas) and how he would see the glow in his face, and the glory and pureness in his life. In fact, all the Quraishi disbelievers had seen these special qualities in the Messenger Muhammad (sas) even before his Messengership. She managed by her distant perception and her accurate sensations to see it forthcoming to the point that she had no embarrassment in asking him for marriage.

Afterwards, when the Messenger reached her trembling and afraid- after his first experience with the Revelation- she did not tremble; instead she was steady and standing still. She exclaimed, "Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you! You keep good relations with your kith and kin, speak the truth, help the poor and the needy, welcome your guests in generosity, and assist those who are stricken with calamities."

It was furthermore mentioned in the history books, that she even tested Gabriel (peace be on him) -the Angel of Revelation; she asked the Messenger of Allah (sas) to inform her when the Angel visits him. On one occasion, when Gabriel visited, Khadijah asked the Messenger of Allah to sit next to her; then asked him "do you see the Angel?" When he replied in the affirmative, she asked the Messenger of Allah to sit on her other side and again asked, "and now do you see the Angel?" The answer was still "yes," so she asked the Messenger of Allah this time to sit in front of her, and again asked the same question and she got the same reply. Finally, she put off her veil and asked again "and now do you see him?" When the Messenger of Allah replied "no" Khadijah exclaimed "Rejoice! I swear by Allah that he is the Angel and not Satan!"

For all of this, she deserved to be the first Believer of the Messenger of Allah (sas), the first to stand by his side, the first to emotionally support him, which allowed him to discharge his noble duty in the way he did. She deserved that Allah sent her the greetings from above the seven skies.

Take another example, when the Messenger (sas) informed Abu Bakr: "O Abu Bakr, Gabriel came to me with the message: "Your Lord is asking Abu Bakr, are you pleased with your Lord?" "Are you pleased with your Lord?!" This is an extraordinary matter! No man can imagine or even manage to bear this question being asked of him. One just trembles at the fact that this question was even asked at one point in the history of the universe! "Are you pleased with your Lord ?!" Abu Bakr exclaimed in excitement "Me... Me?!!" But in fact Allah (swt) chose him and acknowledged that he deserved to be asked this question, because he is the one that never denied the Messenger (sas) and never hesitated in his belief and never even did anything to be ashamed of in his jahilliya, not to mention in his Islam.

When we read the Messenger's life (Seerah) and Companion's history, we can also see the events and attitudes of common Companions; not just the giants like Abu Bakr, Umar, and Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her). For example, the woman who came to the Messenger (sas) to complain about her husband, and in response, Quran was revealed from the Lord of all creation:

﴿ قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ فِي زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا ﴾ [المجادلة: ١]

“Allah has indeed heard the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint in prayer to Allah: and Allah always hears the arguments between both sides among you...” (Surah Al-Mujadila 55:1)

Quran was not only revealed to solve the problem of this woman, but also to establish a constant rule for all times. Allah, the most Merciful, sent Revelation specially to calm this woman, to relieve her of anxiety, and to return back her right. A solution was established for her problem, and all similar problems that were going to come until the Day of Judgment.

In fact, Allah (swt) did not say: “Say to this woman so and so...” Instead, Allah (swt) addressed this woman personally so that she could feel that Allah (swt) is so close to her, how she is close to Allah, and that Allah –the Almighty- has great concern for even one of the common Muslims:

﴿ قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ فِي زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا ﴾ [المجادلة: ١]

“Allah has indeed heard the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint...” (Surah Al-Mujadila 55:1)

Allah was with her, was listening, and was more concerned with the issue than any other. Allah revealed Quran from above the seven skies to solve the problem of this weak woman who suffered from her husband's inflexibility and rigidity after she became old and bore his children. When the husband had rejected her and said: “you are like the back of my mother,” (a harsh jahili expression meant to separate oneself from his wife), she came complaining to the Messenger (sas) seeking the Divine solution.

How did she feel when Quran was specifically revealed to address her? What was the taste of tranquility in her heart? How did she feel about this special relationship with Allah? While her own husband was unjust with her, the Creator of the Heavens and the Universe took special care of her and solved her problem. How could a heart sustain these heavy feelings? Verily, no one can express the feelings of this woman.

In another example consider the story of a certain companion who was known to always pray in the first row behind the Messenger (sas) and would sit to listen to him, and then all of a sudden, he disappeared for unknown reasons and was no longer seen praying in the first row. The Messenger (sas) asked about him. The companions answered: “he now comes at the last moment to prayer and prays in the last row and goes back home immediately.” Some of the companions thought badly about his faith. The Messenger (sas) requested him to come and asked about the reason of not being seen as before. The companion answered that both he and his wife now had only one dress to wear. He would wear it to pray and then return home quickly so that his wife could also wear it to pray. The Messenger gave him another dress. The companion returned back happy to his wife because he would now be able to pray in the first row as before and no one would think ill of him.

Now, what do you think his wife said to him when he came back with the new dress? She said: "do you complain about your Lord to His Messenger?!" This woman is from the common companions, however, she lived a special life with Allah Almighty, and was full of certainty that Allah possesses everything in His hands, therefore she was satisfied with the measure of Allah. She also thought that it was not allowed, according to her evaluation and her level of belief, to ask anyone for something out of material need from among the human beings, even a Messenger of Allah. "Do you complain about your Lord to His Messenger?!" She was certainly aware that He is Allah and this is His Messenger, however she did not like that any one know about her situation. Instead, she preferred to accept with satisfaction what Allah had determined for them, and not to complain about their situation to any one even if he is Allah's Messenger, and this was why she scolded her husband: "do you complain about your Lord to His Messenger?" For sure, her husband had no doubt about this fact, but he was asked by the Messenger (sas) about his disappearance and he was obliged to answer. Our aim here is to think about the feeling experienced by this woman. She was living a satisfied and wealthy life with Allah (swt) in spite of the material difficulty she was suffering together with her husband. She did not want anyone to know about their destitution and she considered this as a complaint which did not suit the first generation of Believers. These feelings experienced by this woman and similar examples of her in the history of Islam enables us to explore part of the secret that enabled those companions to be in that magnificent state:

﴿ كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس ﴾ [آل عمران: ١١٠]

"Ye are the best community that has been raised up for mankind." (Surah Aa'li Imran 3:110)

Another example is the story of Um Sulaim whose son got sick and died. When her husband arrived from abroad and asked about his son, she answered: "he is in the best state of rest." Then she prepared herself for her husband till he got his satisfaction and his needs from her. She then said: "Oh Abu Talha, what do you think of the family who borrowed something from others and later they are not happy when asked to return it back?" He replied: "they, the ones who borrowed, are not just." She then said: "Your son is the one whom we borrowed from Allah (swt) and Allah has asked for him and got him back." Realizing that his son had passed away, Abu Talha felt angry; not so much that his son passed away but because she let him enjoy her in such case without telling him first. Why did Um Sulaim do this? We should keep in mind that Um Sulaim has a great place in Islamic history. If contemporary psychologist would analyze this event, they would say that she is a brute and she has neither feelings nor humanity and so and so... That is all what could be expected by those who are the so-called humanist scholars. They cannot approach that great horizon to which this woman had reached. This woman had positioned herself in ultimate servitude to Allah- the Almighty. Allah had decreed a certain order and implemented a certain fate- the death of her son- and Allah's measure was accepted with love over and beyond that love for herself and her son! She felt that she was not in a position to choose or to complain about His decision, or from any Judgment decreed by Allah- the Almighty. She knew well that she was a slave to Allah and she had no right to protest or to complain from any affair decreed by Allah Almighty. She wanted to elevate herself to that level, and to elevate her husband to that horizon by practicing her life as if she was in a wedding. There is no doubt that she had striven and lived with the Quran and with this Religion, and had deep relationship with Allah so that she could reach that wonderful summit which enabled her to rise over her desires, reforming it to such a wonderful level. Thus, when the Messenger (sas) asked Abu Talah: "did you spend your night as a groom and bride and he-their son- was beside you both?" He

answered: "Yes Oh Allah's Messenger;" then the Messenger (sas) said: "May Allah bless your night." Afterwards, seven children were born for him; all of whom memorized the whole Quran as a blessing of that night in which they had elevated both to that lofty level of Faith, certainty, and satisfaction about all the predestination of Allah- the Almighty. They did not feel that they had the right to complain or even feel like a calamity had occurred, simply because they deeply believed what Allah had chosen for them was much better for them in this life and the Hereafter.

Also, let us listen to what the Companion Umair bin al Hammam heard as the Messenger of Allah addressed everyone at the Battle of Badr: "By Him in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, no man willingly fights today until he is killed, being patient and satisfied with whatever fate Allah decrees, except that Allah grants him Paradise." Hearing this, Umair immediately threw the few dates he had in his hand that he was just about eat to satisfy his overwhelming hunger just before battle. As he threw them, he exclaimed "great, great! There is nothing stopping me from entering paradise except to die by their hands." He drew his sword and fought until he was killed, entering Paradise.

This is the sincerity and logic when one has firm Belief and Faith, for Umair believed in the Messenger of Allah and in every word he said, knowing it was verily the Truth. The Messenger gave Umair the glad tidings of Paradise if he was killed, and thereupon he believed. This is how sincere and assured he was of the Truth, thus advancing on the spot. Umair truly longed for Paradise, so its doors were opened, and all he needed was to fight and die. So why delay himself by eating some dates? "Indeed life is very long then" Umair had remarked in another narration. Amazing how these men were! Indeed they based their lives solely on the Quran and on the words of the Messenger of Allah (sas). This degree of Faith and submission to Allah (swt) is what completely changed them from being ruthless Arabs to those who purified their hearts.

Omar ibn Khattab, before he became the great Muslim known by all, actually had tortured the early Muslims in Makkah. Such acts had earned Omar an evil reputation, for one of the Companions commented on the hopelessness of his case. When immigrating with others to Abyssinia, the Companion's wife was approached by Omar who asked, "Where are you going?" She replied, "immigrating from here because of you people who persecute us." As though feeling sympathy for them, Omar said "may peace be with you O mother of so-and-so." When her husband returned and heard of Omar's sympathy, he scornfully said, "you actually hoped he would become a Muslim?! By Allah, Omar would never believe until Al-Khattab's donkey believes." This kind of impression the Muslims had of Omar in his jahilliya was due to his evil actions towards them and the Messenger of Allah (sas). Feeling ill towards the Messenger, Omar even attempted one day to kill him, yet in vain. He was heading to a wine shop to drink, though wine ran out. Disappointed, he looked for something else to occupy himself. Then an idea occurred to him: "I should then go and assassinate Muhammad. He brought disunity to our people and insulted our gods." This burst of anger actually led him to a different and much better fate. On the way to implement his evil design, Omar encountered a Companion who had concealed his Muslim identity up to that time. The Companion said, "where are you going Omar?" Fearless without deception, Omar plainly said, "I am going to kill Muhammad." Thinking quickly to divert Omar, the Companion exclaimed, "Woe to you Omar, you delude yourself! Go to your brother-in-law and sister first, for they have apostated and followed Muhammad!" This Companion risked these two Muslims in order to misdirect Omar from hurting the Messenger of Allah (sas). Omar proceeded to his relatives and the rest of the story is known – in a surprising twist of events, witnessing his sister's courage and passion for Islam in face of his ruthless attack, his heart actually melted and opened to Islam and he believed and

asked, “what should one do to enter this Religion?” Astonished, she replied, “cleanse yourself and bear witness to the testimony of Truth.” He did so and went to the Messenger of Allah (sas) a new man. This was Omar’s personality at the end of his jahilliya! Later in that holy place (Makkah), he earned such a great honor to the extent that the Messenger of Allah (sas) said, “if there were a Messenger after me it would be Omar.”

Perhaps through these examples, we may understand why the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were elevated to such a high status, so as to be called the best of nations and best of generations introduced to mankind.

### **Admiring these examples of perfection is not enough; we need to strive to emulate them**

The truth is that they were living with Allah, with all their hearts throughout their lives; they were living their lives under the greatness of Divine Existence. They were full of Truth, purity, highness, will, and strength such that they could be transformed by a word from Allah (swt). They lived days and nights with Allah transforming and changing their lives and emotions to be totally aligned with what Allah (swt), His Messenger, and Islam wanted from them. They would not just stand there in admiration when they knew these facts; their reaction was much deeper than that in magnificence and truthfulness. They changed their attitudes and perspectives from one to another (from jahilliya to Islam), on the spot, based on what they heard from the Quran, and from what they observed through the Messenger’s (sas) life.

Indeed, admiration, observation, and having knowledge is not enough though it might be the beginning where the individual admires the Truth, likes it, and feels its greatness. In fact, a person can not be honest nor reasonable with himself if he admires something, and believes it to be the Truth with all its greatness, then does not change towards that Truth, nor motivates himself towards the necessities of that Truth.

This is precisely the difference between that unique Quranic generation and those that came after them! The Companion would tell the followers that came afterward: “you are doing things that you consider more insignificant than a hair, and we would have seen it as a grave sin at the time of the Messenger (sas).” Indeed, there is a very large gap between the behaviors of the Companions and of those who came afterward, and the difference may be barely noticeable to us. When we read in history about some who came in later generations like Hassan Al Basry, Nakhiey, Shaa’by, Umar Bin AbdulAziz and others, we observe them as enormous peaks. We may not feel that there might be any difference between them and the Companions, but surely the Companions would have seen that difference, and they would have seen a huge difference. Therefore, what would that difference be then between the successors of the successors, and so forth up to our generation? Undoubtedly the gap is enormous, where we would be placed at the very bottom of the staircase.

There is no doubt that this requires that we regain consciousness, perception and feelings, and then try to understand how the Companions reached such pinnacles of worshiping Allah. Moreover, we should know where we stand exactly, and why are we like that? The situation is more severe and critical than we can imagine.

If we want to be a generation on the same path as the Companions, and furthermore, we want to be the generation that brings up Islam in these days of estrangement, and re-establishes Islam once again, then we have to know that secret, live with it and live up to it. We must not be content

with merely admiring and observing the beautiful example of the Companions and their most dedicated struggle and devotion; we must not stay handcuffed without even trying to pass that vast gap between us and them. It really needs a huge effort, a lot of struggle, purified and cleaned souls, and more Belief and strength - much more than what we have now... so the matter is vast, very vast..!!

## **The fresh Revelations of Quran deeply connect the Companions with Allah**

We want to read the history of the Companions again, and observe how each one of them would lead his life. They gained a lot from the Quran, and lived the most elevated period in humanity where no other nation would ever live. They would live with Allah (swt), through His Revelation for nearly twenty three years. They lived with the skies open: there was a hot-line between the skies and the earth below. The Companion would sleep in eagerness, waiting impatiently for the sunrise so that he could know what had been revealed that night from the skies. They would be looking- with shivering hearts- to the Messenger (sas) while Revelation was being sent thinking "what would Allah tell them now?" What would be revealed in that moment? Would it be commandments, directions, comments, reprehension, or praise? They would wait for that moment with trembling hearts, full of fear but also desire and anticipation for what might come from Allah (swt). There were daily meetings between them and Allah (swt), a hot-line between the heavens and the earth, informing them of what Allah (swt) wanted from them.

These are the emotions that they lived with, day and night, for twenty three years. That is how that generation was produced where these delicate hearts were filled with Belief and certainty. If we aspire to follow the footprints of those Companions, everyone has to revise himself, strive day and night, and think "how would I manage to reach that level, or even near that level?"

It is of no use to compare ourselves to the jahilliya surrounding us and think ourselves so high. If we compare ourselves with that dirty swamp in which the jahilliya lives, we would be totally fooled, and we would observe ourselves as the most purified and greatest people. However, if we measure ourselves on the scale of that special generation, then we would see the truth and discover that we are at the bottom and have a very long way to climb before we can ever approach the peaks that the Companions were living.

Saad Bin Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) was blind in his last days, and he had a lot of visitors asking him for prayers, because his prayer was known to be accepted by Allah. Aforetime, the Messenger of Allah had beseeched Allah (swt): "O Allah whenever he (Saad) throws an arrow let it never fail the target, and whenever he makes a supplication let it be accepted..." Knowing that, a young Companion asked him: "Uncle, why do I see you making supplications for all the people but you never made a supplication to gain your own eyesight once again?" Saad Bin Abi Waqqas answered him: "Son, the decree of Allah is more delightful to me than gaining back my eyesight."

It is such a high peak that Saad (may Allah be pleased with him) was living; if one of us had lost his eyesight, and was granted the fulfillment of one request, he would surely make the request of having his eyesight back. However, Saad was making supplications for other people willingly, satisfied, and happy to live the fate Allah chose for him even if that choice seemed painful and distressful.

Omran Bin Hussain's supplications were also accepted. One day he fell very ill with ascities, yet when people visited him, they found him happy, satisfied, and enlightened. They were astonished and asked him "why don't you make supplication to Allah to heal you from this disease", he replied: "you don't know what I have been experiencing... the angels come in and greet me!" So this man had reached such a level of Belief, satisfaction, and confidence that he deserved this privilege: the layer between him and the angels had been removed that they would visit and greet him! Why? Is it just because he memorized the Quran, memorized the Messenger's sayings, or just because he made some prayers? The issue is much much bigger than all of this!

In another incident, while the Messenger (sas) was sitting with his Companions, he suddenly announced to those around: "now comes a man from the people who will be in Paradise." Indeed at that moment a man entered - he was a man from the common Muslims; a man with ragged clothes, ablution water dropping from his beard, and holding his slippers in his hand. Once again, the next day the Messenger announced: "now comes a man from the people who will be in Paradise," and the same man entered! Then the third day, the same incident was repeated. Thus, all the Companions observing all of this were astonished. Being very eager to learn the secret behind this man, who had deserved such praise from the Messenger of Allah, Abdullah bin Amro bin Al'aas, who was still young at the time, approached the man and told him that he had an argument with his father and his father kicked him out of the house. He asked the man if he could stay with him for three days; his real intention- of course- was to observe this special man closely, hoping that he could understand the reason for such praise from the Messenger of Allah (sas). So, he remained with him for three days, yet he did not find the man doing anything significant or extraordinary. He found that he prayed the nightly prayer then would go to sleep, and when the call for morning prayer was made, he would wake up, and would repeat the same each day. Therefore, he was astonished; what was this man doing that was so special that he received the glad tidings of Paradise during his life on earth?! What did he do that made him surpass most of the Companions? In fact, Abdullah bin Amr was one of the utmost among Muslims in praying after midnight, worship, devotion, and fasting. So, finally he revealed his actual story, and said: "uncle, there was actually no argument between me and my father, but I heard the Messenger repeatedly say for the past three days so and so and so... so how did you reach that level?" The man solemnly replied, "nothing except what you see," so being puzzled, Abdullah left him. Then the man called him back and told him, "I have nothing to say except what I just told you, except perhaps, that I never sleep at night without first cleansing my heart of anything negative towards any of the Muslims." Right then, Abdullah instantly appreciated the reason for this humble man's great distinction, and replied "that is what made you deserve this position, and that is what we cannot make ourselves bear (i.e. bearing, struggling and putting the effort to clean the heart of all hatred and ill-feelings.)"

So, it is not the matter of how much we pray or fast or even work; rather it is the matter of how clean and pure our heart is; the key factor is in the heart and not on the surface. In other words, it is not "how much do you work" but "how you do it". Therefore, we have to search in our hearts; what resides therein from Faith, purity, clarity, and Belief?

That is what made the Companions deserve that quality, that outstanding position, and that praise from Allah (swt) which elevated each one to a level over and beyond compared to the generations that came after.

So, the factor is not how much we read, how much we memorize from the Quran, nor how much we pray. That is all good and necessary, but it is not the crucial factor; what is important is what

resides in our hearts, the magnitude of our Belief, how clear and pure, and how deep it is. How do we live in connection with Allah? What are our feelings towards Allah? How do we sense the Divinity of Allah (swt)? How do we sense that Allah is watching us in every moment. That is what we should search for.

We need to search for and develop those deep feelings in our hearts so that we can have that close connection with Allah (swt), and become like that woman who said to her husband “are you complaining about Allah to His Messenger!??” These are indeed the sensitive feelings that we want to achieve and taste.

We will never achieve these great feelings except through devoted effort and life with the holy Quran and Allah (swt), and through constant awareness that Allah (swt) is observing us, and watching every move we take:

﴿ يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ ﴾ [غافر: ١٩]

“Allah knows the fraud of the eyes, and all that the breasts conceal.” (Surah Gafir 40:19)

﴿ وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُو مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ وَمَا يَعُزُّبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴾

[يونس: ٦١]

“Neither do you do any deed nor recite any portion of the Quran, - nor do you do any work (good or evil) but We are Witness thereof. And nothing is hidden from your Lord, so much as the weight of an atom on the earth or in the heaven. Not what is less than that or what is greater than that but is written in a Clear Record.” (Surah Yunus 10:61)

So that is what we want - we want to know that Allah is very close:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ ﴾ [ق: ١٦]

“And indeed We have created man, and We know what his own self whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.” (Surah Qa’af 50:16)

That is the reality which we need to pause and ponder over, to perceive that secret; then we will come closer to understanding what made that generation so great and how the Quran shaped them.

Indeed, it was the Quran that the Companions exclusively lived with, throughout the time it was revealed – verse by verse:

﴿ وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْتَبٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴾ [الإسراء: ١٠٦]

“And it is a Quran which We have divided into parts, in order that you might recite it to men at intervals. And We have revealed it by stages (in 23 years).” (Surah Israa 17:106)

They lived with the Quran moment by moment, breath by breath; their hearts, feelings, and whole inner-being was changed by the harmony and Revelation of the Quran. This is how they totally transformed into an entirely new existence, having no relation what so ever to their old selves, before they had heard the Quran.

## **The factors that led to the excellence of the first generation**

We want to sense parts of that secret, that made the Companions live with the Quran in such a way that produced these close feelings towards Allah (swt). Likewise, they led to new actions and behaviors that shine with the glamour and glow of Belief to an extent where they deserved that sweet praise from Allah, His Messenger, the angels and the whole world.

We want to contemplate the Quran- deeply- to see the high levels the Companions lived within, and then we will observe other factors that affected the origination of that spectacular generation.

In addition to the Quran - the most important factor - there was the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (sas) – that is his statements, actions and example- which played a very important role in shaping that unique and spectacular generation. In fact, the personality of the Messenger (sas), his interactions, and movement between the Companions- their observation of the Messenger, had a great effect on the Companions and an important role in elevating them to those high peaks of life with Allah (swt).

We should, also, consider the factor of uniqueness of Islam and its novelty in their life. This had the effect of keeping their Belief glowing, flourishing, fresh and effective.

When we try to understand these factors, the most important question to answer for ourselves is: are these factors still capable of producing what was made before? What were the reasons for that profound effect which took place in the souls of the Companions?

### **The first factor: the holy Quran**

The Quran is Allah's (swt) words revealed to His Messenger Muhammad (sas) through the angel Gabriel (peace be on him). Starting with the chapter (surah) Al-Fatiha and ending with An-Nas, it is challenging all of humankind. It is the first and most prominent miracle bestowed upon the Messenger Muhammad (sas), and indeed it is a miracle for all the nations, to all of humankind, for all times. It is the Book that Allah (swt) made for all time, and saved it from any modifications and corruption, as Allah (swt) says:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾ [الحجر: ٩]

“Verily! We have sent down the reminder, and it We will surely preserve.” (Surah A-Hijr 15:9)

There is no doubt that this book is the speech of Allah, and it should make the individual- who has sensitive feelings, and radiant Belief- feel the heaviness, sanctity and loftiness of His words. There is no doubt that the Companions lived these meanings in the deepest manner, and they were dealing with the Quran- Allah's words- with delicacy and sensitivity.

It seems that being so familiar with the Quran without feeling its greatness, and loftiness is the main reason for the lack of the impact of its words; such as the impact that changed the Companions' lives. The Companions were living with the Quran second by second- from its very inception- as it was revealed among them. They were walking step by step with the Quran, and waiting for the Quran to change their lives according to Allah's instructions. Indeed, the relationship the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) had with the Quran is like the relationship an infant has with his mother, even before he is born: he is nurtured, and brought up solely by his mother.

## The main topics of the Quran

### The first topic: the great Divinity of Allah - the Almighty (Uluhiya)

There is no doubt that the main subject the Quran deals with is the Divinity (Uluhiya) of Allah (swt). As a concept, it can be roughly be described as the total Belief in the Absolute Supremacy and Greatness of Allah and His Names, Descriptions, and Authority, with all their Perfection, Dignity and Mercy. The Quran presents this subject in many ways: by talking directly about the creation of the earth, sky and the whole universe, and talking about the detailed creation of the plants, and animals. Also, by talking about the total authority of Allah in making things work in the universe, or Allah's complete knowledge of every small or big thing within the whole universe.

The Quran, also, informs us about the struggle and discussion between the Messengers (peace be on them all) and their nations - and it was all about the issue of the Divinity of Allah (swt).

There is also the description of the Day of Judgment, heaven, and hell in the context of the Divinity of Allah, His Supremacy, and Authority. The Quran tells that all creatures will one day stand in front of Allah- the Almighty- to be judged on what they have done in this life with absolute justice, and knowledge.

Moreover, the laws, regulations, and directions in the Quran all point out the Divinity of Allah (swt). In fact, this subject is the main theme in Quran, and every verse of Quran discusses the Divinity in a different manner. The Companions were living completely immersed in the Divinity of Allah (swt). They strove to understand all its meanings, and realize its implications on their lives. They took each chapter of the Quran, one by one, absorbing everything, in order to know Allah, and to live with His descriptions and thus behaving accordingly, so that their whole life would be changed according to what Allah (swt) wanted.

There is no doubt that believing in Allah (swt) and recognizing Allah with these descriptions of Supremacy had a strong influence on how the Companions lived. They were living as near as possible to Allah (swt) knowing that He was their only support and master. He is the only One Who could provide sustenance, punish, give and take life, and everyone will be going back to Him. This is how the Companions were living this fact of Divinity with all its aspects, and changing their life accordingly.

Dealing with the Quran in this way, with such liveliness, certainty, and sincerity made the first generation what it was – that spectacular and unique generation. Their lives were filled with the clear fact of the great Divinity of Allah, and they saw nothing in life except this great fact, reflected in the central testimony of Islam: “La ilaha ila Allah.” We translate this testimony as: “there is no ilah (lord, deity, one worthy of worship and total surrender and obedience, one given total authority and more...) except Allah.” In short, we can say “there is no deity except Allah.” The Companions nearly forgot about everything in life other than Allah's light – the light that filled the universe, and is a reflection of the Divinity of Allah (swt), and its description could be used for non other. This is what was filling the Companions' life - they were living with that light, as Allah (swt) mentioned:

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾ [النور: ٣٥]

“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth...” (Surah Al-Noor 24:35)

Indeed, they were living intimately with this light, as it drove them through their lives - every aspect of their lives: eating, sleeping, walking, and being awake; and way on the other side, were those people who did not know Allah (swt), and did not see that light:

﴿ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ ﴾ [النور: ٤٠]

“And for whom Allah did not give light, for him there is no light.” (Surah Al-Noor 24:40)

This is how the Companions lived: clinging to the Quran, living their life according to what the Quran wants, receiving the verses that are revealed daily, and spreading its words and meanings, because this was the news of the hour. That happy state continued until the Messenger of Allah (sas) passed away; they cried sadly for losing him but they were even more sad for losing that connection between the earth and heavens.

### **The Second topic: the Day of Judgment**

In fact, the Quran frequently mentions the Day of Judgment which deeply affected how the Companions lived. The Quran always talks about the Day of Judgment, directly connecting it to the Belief or disbelief in Allah (swt). Thus, the verses discuss the people who believe in Allah- the Almighty- and believe in the Day of Judgment, and discuss the people who do not believe in Allah (swt) and do not believe in the Last Day. Indeed, believing in the Day of Judgment is one of the main criteria of believing in Allah (swt) because if the Belief in the Day of Judgment did not exist, then Belief in Allah would be pointless. If people were to believe that there will not be any judgment, and consequent reward and punishment, then no one would discipline their life to follow the rules of the permissible and prohibited, thinking that everyone would end up the same anyway! That is why the existence of the Day of Judgment and believing in it is something a Muslim cannot live without, because it gives life seriousness and meaning and keeps the people honest:

﴿ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ﴿١١٥﴾ [المؤمنون: ١١٦-١١٥]

“Did you really think that We created you for mere idle play and you would not be brought back to us? (115) Therefore, exalted be Allah, the King, The Truth, there is no deity but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honor! (116)” (Surah Al Muminun (23: 115-116)

Thus, Allah (swt) states that He is far above creating a life that is “mere idle play,” with no final accountability, and Day of Judgment. This would be just playing, and Allah (swt) is far Exalted, and Supreme.

So, the Belief in the Day of Judgment is one of the most important facts of the Islamic Belief that without it, it would have no meaning at all. Indeed, the Belief in the Day of Judgment is what gives life true meaning, gives the Belief in Allah true meaning, and gives humanity true value.

If the human being was not created to worship Allah, and there was not a Day of Judgment for him to be evaluated, then life on earth would be meaningless. It would be full of gloominess, misery, injustice, strife and suffering, and the creation of the human being would be something defective!

This is how the Companions lived with the Truth of the Day of Judgment; seeing it with their hearts. When the Messenger of Allah asked a Companion: “What has become of you O Haretha?” Haretha replied: “I became a true Believer!” So the Messenger challenged him: “there must be a

proof behind each statement and what is the proof behind your Belief?" Haretha said: "My soul abandoned the life in this world, and I am fasting the days and praying through the nights, observing the throne of my Lord Most Prominent... as if I'm looking at the people of Paradise visiting; and the people of Hell grudging against each other." So the Messenger replied: "Surely you now know - stick to it!" That is how they lived!

There is no doubt that what distinguished that first generation- in their lives, and relationships with each other- was their true realization of the Truth of the Day of Judgment. They put it into practice hence it was not a mere theory that had no impact on their lives. They dealt with this fact with great awareness, attentiveness, and persistence.

In fact, most of the people, and most of us too, seem to live life as if we are immortal; as if death is not threatening us anytime, and anywhere. Nevertheless, the reality is as the Messenger of Allah (sas) said: "Paradise is closer to any one of you than his shoe lace, and the Hell-fire is just as close." This is a fact that people forget while chasing their desires, engrossed in search for wealth, distracted by the trivialities of life, and getting into battles and fights for the sake of their moods. They forget that when death comes, they might stand in front of Allah at any moment finding what they had sent forth for themselves in terms of reward or punishment on the Day of Judgment.

That was not the Companions' approach to life for they lived constantly with Allah (swt) as if they were observing Him, and viewing Paradise and Hell right before their eyes. This, indeed, reformed their tastes in life, reshaped their feelings, and stopped them from acting, saying, or even thinking of anything unless it conformed with the required direction they were living. Thus, they, literally, lived according to the Quran, their lives were shaped by the Quran, and were immersed in the core of the Quran.

Furthermore, when they failed to live with such great sensitivity and consciousness with the Quran, even for a moment, they would cry and consider themselves hypocrites. For example, Hanzalah once exclaimed to Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with them) in a state of anxiety: "Hanzalah is destroyed!" And why? This was because he felt that the feelings he had sitting with the Messenger (sas) were totally different from the ones he would have with his family. Abu Bakr searched within himself and found that he felt the same way, thus he too began to panic. They both felt that being with their wives, living with their kids, eating, and drinking took them a little bit away from that high and glowing peak that they felt in the presence of Messenger Muhammad (sas). So, they were very concerned and even thought that they had become dishonest hypocrites, and they went to the Messenger of Allah (sas) to ask him about that. The Messenger of Allah (sas) comforted them: "if your state of mind would remain the same as it is in my presence and you are always busy in the remembrance of Allah, then the angels would have been shaking hands with you in your beds and in your paths but, Hanzala, time should be devoted to the worldly affairs and time should be devoted to prayer and meditation."

When they were in the company of Allah's Messenger (sas), they rose above the earth and above the level of humanity to an exceptional level that they could not withstand. This was a level that would hinder building and settling upon earth. In fact, the human being needs to live his life: eating, drinking, enjoying his pleasures and instincts. The human will naturally have moments of inattentiveness and forgetfulness, and commit small sins as well as huge ones. The Companions clearly appreciated that difference, and they were sad for the discontinuation of life at such a pinnacle even for a moment. Thus, the Companions lived the Truth of the Day of

Judgment with such luminosity, reaction, and liveliness, and this is precisely how anyone desiring to track in their footsteps should live.

No doubt that believing in the Day of Judgment has a massive effect on the life of the person and on his social life in addition to its great effects on his heart and Belief. Certainly, believing in the Last Day is what enables the human being to stand the sufferings and difficulties of life that he is created to go through:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ ﴾ [الانشقاق: ٦]

“O man! Verily, you are returning towards your Lord with your deeds and actions (good or bad), a sure returning, so you will meet (the results of your deeds which you did).”

(Surah Al-Inshiqaq 84:6)

Indeed, the human being lives in weariness throughout his life. For example, he moves his body against gravity, and has to withstand people hurting each other, being unjust, as well as suffering through diseases, poverty, and gloominess. Thus, he is always in a struggle, so what can make him bear all that stress?!

What makes the human being adhere to Allah’s commands and postpone a lot of his desires until the afterlife? If there was no afterlife, people would never stand to all the toils of earth, and would never be able to apply Allah’s law, bear against miseries, or to resist one’s own desires and instincts. Nevertheless, when they believe in the afterlife, they can postpone all these things, and believe that they would find many times over, as compensation, the things they had to abstain from in this life. They would even be compensated for what they never had been able to gain because of their poverty, diseases, exhaustion, or misfortune.

On the other hand, if people do not believe in the Day of Judgment, they would not be believing in Allah as He should be, and this would make them resent their fate in life which inevitably is full of trials. On the other hand, the Belief in the afterlife for Muslims would make them accept all misfortunes, and even make them happy like the Companions were, because they believed that compensation and final justice was kept for them until the afterlife. So, there is no doubt that the Belief in the afterlife is what makes the Muslim resist all troubles, difficulties, desires, and seductions of life as he postpones a lot these issues to the afterlife. The Believer is certain that Allah’s promises, and what He- the Almighty- says must happen. Therefore, if he gives up something for the sake of Allah, whether a prohibited glimpse, or ill-gotten money, or... or... or... he would find the reward many times more in Paradise.

That is what makes him bear hardships; just like the student who bears fifteen or twenty years of study to gain a certificate and be in a high position. Also, the employee who bears a whole month of exhaustion to get his salary at the end of the month. Thus, it is the same for any Believer who bears all the difficulties and roughness of life because he knows that the pleasures of life are little and worthless compared to the reward at the end which is enormous:

﴿ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ [السجدة: ١٧]

“No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.”

(Surah Al-Sajda 32:17)

Certainly, the Belief in the Day of Judgment and afterlife is one of the things that helps us face all problems and ill desires. It helps the person to live with beautiful feelings when he closes his eyes

and starts imagining the life to come in Paradise with the Messengers and Companions. The person will not truly know these great treasures and reward until he is really there. Whenever he remembers that houses in Paradise are built with bricks of gold and silver, he realizes the worthlessness of seeking wealth in this world. Whenever he remembers that he is going to meet Allah (swt), be in His hospitality, and talk to Him directly, this makes the whole earth mean nothing to him with all its troubles, stress, torture, and vain desires. There is no doubt that the Companions were living with such feelings. This is the only way we can understand the Companion who threw away the dates that he was offered to replenish himself before getting into a battle for the sake of Allah. He was so eager to go to Paradise that he forgot about his hunger in this world. Also, the Companion who said to Messenger Muhammad (sas), "go ahead, you and your Lord and fight, and we are fighting with you!" unlike the Jews who said to their Messenger Musa (peace be on him), "go ahead, you and your Lord and fight, we are staying here!" Likewise, Saad ibn Muath (may Allah be pleased with him) said to the Messenger of Allah (sas): "if you would invade the ocean, we are with you." This was not because they were overwhelmingly courageous, but rather because they knew the Truth of the Day of Judgment very well and they believed that it was merely a hit of a sword that prevented them from seeing their Lord. That is why in the battle of Mu'ta, Abdullah ibn Rawaha (may Allah be pleased with him) admonished himself when he hesitated in taking the Muslims' flag, an act which would draw the full fury of the enemy upon himself. The Companions were not afraid from war or hardship, because they were sure about the results: if they die, they will be in Paradise.

Moreover, believing in the Day of Judgment creates a balance in the Muslim community and in all aspects of human life. The rich Muslim- believing in the Day of Judgment- gives charity to the poor, therefore the poor people will wish the rich to get richer because they would benefit from their continued charity. In contrast, the non-Muslim's life turns into selfishness, hatred, and detestable class conflicts because everyone wants his wealth to be as big as possible. For example, Othman bin Afan (may Allah be pleased with him) gave a big caravan of camels loaded with goods for charity and said to the merchants of Madinah who had come to bargain for the goods: "I've been paid more than that in return!" They were astonished because there was no merchant other than them, so they asked "who gave you?" and he replied: "Allah (swt) gave me ten times over, can anyone pay more??!!"

We see such mercy and solidarity throughout the Islamic history. We find in our history that someone devoted money for the lost donkeys, and another devoted money for pots broken by children or servants so they would not be punished by their masters or parents. These feelings cannot be found except in the hearts of Believers because their Faith in the Day of Judgment initiates love and mercy, and prevents struggle and jealousy. On the other hand, Karl Marks had once contrived: "the history of humanity is a struggle between the rich and poor; the human life is a series of hatred and selfishness." This only becomes true when people are in a state of disbelief in Allah (kufr) and jahilliya. This struggle which Marks claimed underlies human existence, is not found among believers. Instead, love and cooperation prevail. In fact, in Islamic jurisprudence the family covers for the person who cannot pay an obligatory payment, or compensate for an accidental killing, owed to the relatives of the deceased. Thus, the Muslim nation cooperates in order to make its members safe. When a very poor lady from Egypt sent a message to the Caliph Umar Bin Abdelaziz admonishing him: "Why are you neglecting your people! The wall of my chicken coop broke and I lost my hens! You are responsible for this!" he responded immediately and sent the governor of Egypt to rebuild her chicken coop to protect her hens. How does this compare to current dictators and governors of jahilliya who steal the food of people, and keep

them in continuous poverty and humiliation? Look at the concern of the caliph Umar bin Alkhattab who said: "if a mule was hurt on an unpaved road in Iraq, Umar will be questioned why he hadn't paved the road for the people." Indeed, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was the one who carried the food on his back and went with his wife to a lady in labor. His wife entered to help her, and Umar took a nap outside although he was the mighty Caliph who's mere name frightened the emperors of Rome and Persia.

Thus, Faith was creating a unique generation never found in human history, and will never be found again, except if humanity returned to Islam and dealt with its facts in the proper way. So, believing in the Day of Judgment, the second factor which created that unique generation, filled the life of Muslims, and elevated them to such astonishing and most beautiful pinnacles.

### **The third topic: the human being and how Allah (swt) honors him**

The next Quranic subject which received great care and attention from Allah (swt) in His Book is man himself. We find that Allah (swt) directly addresses mankind, praising him and teaching him his affairs. Allah (swt) also informs man about his creation and even before, what will happen of his existence, how he must live, and where he is going. He- the Almighty- shows him examples of all kinds of life: poverty and wealth, illness and health, loneliness or multitude, and his struggle in life; hence Allah (swt) takes great care of man. The Companions understood this and knew that they are greatly cared for by Allah (swt). They knew that they have Almighty Allah who loves them, understands their sufferings, and rewards them.

Indeed, Allah (swt) informed the angels:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴾ [الحجر: ٢٨]

"And remember when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am going to create a man from dried, sounding clay of altered mud.'" (Surah Al-Hijr 15:28)

The angels initially thought that this man was not capable of being the representative (caliph/khalifa) of Allah (swt) on earth:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۗ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ [البقرة: ٣٠]

"And when your Lord said to the angels:" Verily I am going to place a Khalifa (representative, vicegerent) on the earth." They said: "Will you place therein those who will make mischief and spill blood, while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You?" Allah said: "I know that which you know not." (Surah Al-Baqara 2:30)

Satan became arrogant and refused to prostrate to Adam (peace be on him) when ordered to do so by Allah (swt), and thought himself too high to accept this humility. The Companions understood this order to Satan as a gesture of love and respect from Allah (swt) toward mankind. Allah (swt) mentions frequently those verses in which He says: "He likes them and they like Him"; or "He is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him." This is the way in which Allah-the Almighty- deals with man; He promotes him to be His representative on earth, His beloved, and He is very happy when men return to Him and when they become happy. Allah (swt) does not hurt them or make them tired; He (swt) says: "if my slave approaches me an inch, I will come nearer to him by an arm's length, if he approaches me by an arm's length, I will draw

nearer to him four arms more, and if he comes to me walking, I will go to him running.” (Hadeeth Qudsi) When one listens to these wonderful words, his heart tremble. How could he imagine that his Lord is telling him that if he were to walk to Him, He (swt) would be running! If a person’s father or an elder individual said this to him, he would find this to be beyond what he himself deserves, so how about hearing it from Allah (swt)! The Companions lived with these feelings and it inspired them deeply; they lived in love, respect, eagerness, and felt the ultimate greatness of Allah (swt). They also lived in fear, extreme cautiousness from the anger of Allah (swt), and also from His planning against them. This interaction created that generation; the generation of the most honored and respected men, the men who refused to downgrade themselves to the animal level, or even to the level of common people. They wanted for themselves only the highest levels, illuminated by honor and generosity, so that they would deserve to be chosen and honored by Allah (swt) over all His creatures.

Indeed, it is a great loss for a human being to downgrade himself to the level of animals though he was created to be chosen and honored by Allah (swt) over all creatures. The Companions refused to down-grade themselves and chose to continuously rise and elevate themselves. They achieved this by struggling against themselves and against Satan’s plots. Some of them were choosing the hottest days to fast, and they were cautious from any doubtful deed that might be illicit and displease Allah (swt). They were looking for honor on the Day of Judgment, and were not interested in this life. If blessings came, that was welcomed; if not, then they were still thankful to Allah (swt). After the death of the Messenger, when they received the wide blessings of life after having opened many non-believing countries to Islam, they mentioned that Allah (swt) had honored their brothers who had died previously. They felt unsafe from being enchanted by the life of this world. They lived with the values of human beings, but they knew that what gives them their real worth was their servitude to Allah (swt). They understood that their Belief made them the most honorable, and the greatest of people. We find in the Hadeeth: “One who has been given the Quran, and then thinks someone is richer than him has in fact downgraded the Quran.” Their true sustenance was the Quran, their richness was from the Quran and Islam, and they understood the reality of Allah’s words:

﴿ وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزِنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٣٩]

“So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For you will be superior if you are true in Faith.”  
(Surah Ali-Imran 3:139)

﴿ وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾ [المنافقون: ٨]

“The honour belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers.”  
(Surah Al-Munafiqeen 63:8)

The Companions understood the meaning of glory and the meaning that Allah (swt) honors a certain kind of people, and others have no value:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ ﴾ [المائدة: ٥٤-٥٦]

“O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust (54) Those in whose hearts is a disease--thou seest how eagerly they run about amongst them, saying: "We do fear lest a change of fortune bring us disaster." Ah! Perhaps Allah will give (thee) victory, or a decision according to His Will. Then will they repent of the thoughts, which they secretly harbored in their hearts.

(55) And those who believe will say: "Are these the men who swore their strongest oaths by Allah, that they were with you?" All that they do will be in vain, and they will fall into (nothing but) ruin. (56)" (Surah Al-Maidah 5:54-56)

Thus, the Quran speaks greatly about mankind, and the Companions lived with the Quran which constantly reminded them of their elevated position and the honor bestowed on them by Allah (swt).

### **The fourth topic: morals, and its connection with Faith**

Actually, morals is an issue which has occupied a prominent position and interest in the Quran since it is the basis of the Believer's entire life. Hence, morals are connected in the Quran to Faith - just like the Belief in the Day of Judgment.

﴿ أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالذِّينِ ﴿١﴾ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَا يُحِضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ ﴿٣﴾ [الماعون: ١-٣] ﴾

“Seest thou one who denies the Judgment (to come)? Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness). And encourages not the feeding of the indigent”  
(Surah Al-Maun 107:1-3)

So, Allah (swt) considered such a man to be a disbeliever in the Religion just because of these bad manners. Without Religion, there is no ethics, and no solid foundation to shape behavior, as the only reference of what is good or bad is the Religion of Allah, Islam.

There are several aspects to this close relationship between one's manners and the Religion. For example, why would people be concerned about ethics if they do not fear Allah (swt) in darkness or in broad day-light? Muslims know that Allah (swt) observes them in the deepest darkness of the night and in the day, thus they are motivated to follow His Religion to receive His blessings and avoid His punishment. On the other hand, in jahilliya, ethics are only an issue of benefit to the individual, financial interests, or avoiding trouble with the authorities. However, as soon as people think they can get away with some illegal deed, or will not be held to account, many will not hesitate to throw ethical principles behind their backs. However the true reality is that Allah (swt) knows everything and will hold everyone to account:

﴿ يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ ﴿١٩﴾ [غافر: ١٩] ﴾

“(Allah) knows of the betrayal of the eyes, and all that the hearts conceal.” (Surah Ghafir 40:19)

﴿ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾ [طه: ٧] ﴾

“He (Allah) knoweth what is secret and what is yet more hidden.” (Surah Ta-Ha 20:7)

The Muslim knows he is dealing with Allah (swt), so he would never be disloyal in broad daylight, or betray in seclusion; thus ethics is very important in the Muslim's life.

Jahilliya, on the other hand, excludes ethics and morals from all aspects of life. They say: “what does economics have to do with manners? Economy is a pure commercial process and has no connection with ethics.” However in reality, the entire economy could not stand unless there are moral principles that are applied. For example, in order to maintain successful business, there must be honesty in work, otherwise the business will lose customers and fail. This honesty cannot be found without morals so that the employers and employees do their work and seek perfection out of fear of displeasing Allah (swt) and not from customers. Honesty is clearly demanded in Islam and an economy cannot succeed with cheating:

“He who cheats us, does not belong to us” (Hadeeth: reported in Sahih Muslim)

Also, monopolies destroy the economy, and the monopolist is cursed in Islam because he unfairly exploits the needs of people. In fact, hiding goods from the market for the sake of profits interrupts and hinders the economical process and likewise, it is forbidden in Islam. Moreover, Islam forbids taking interests on money because it is a crime which enslaves the weak:

“Allah's mercy is upon the one with easy character when selling and buying.” (Hadeeth: from Sahih Bukhari)

Thus, manners are of fundamental importance in relationships between people. Islam considers the economical process as an ethical process in its very essence; it is neither a mere financial nor a commercial process. Politics likewise, as well as everything else in life is connected to the Faith and its ethics. However, jahilliya insists on separating the concept of good character and manners from politics. For example, they say: “aims justify the means” and separate ethics from sexual relationships, by saying “why should ethics interfere with sex? Sex is just a biological process like eating and drinking. As we don't feel shame by eating and drinking why should we feel shame from sex in any circumstance or manner as we please?” They want to deprive the human being from all means which honor him, in order to transfer him into a satan, or an easy target to manipulate, and thus to destroy him and destroy the Religion of Allah (swt).

Ethics has occupied a huge part in the Quran because it is a foundation of this Religion. Allah (swt) has spoken the Truth when He said to His Messenger (sas):

﴿وَأَنْتَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾ [القلم: ٤]

“And thou standest on an exalted standard of character.” (Surah Al-Qalam 68:4)

And the Messenger (sas) says: “My Lord has raised me and He raised me in the best way.” (Hadeeth related by Ibn 'Asakr, with a weak chain) and the Messenger (sas) says: “Allah has sent me (with the mission) to establish ethics upon the up-most of standards.” (Hadeeth: Sahih Bukhari).

Among the topics which have occupied a great part of the Quran are verses of legislation. There is no doubt that when the Companions received legislation, they considered it as a gift from Allah, as a blessing from Allah, and as an honor from Allah (swt). They saw it as a facilitation from Allah, to make life easy and simple, and to relieve them from the burden of trying to figure out how to behave, judge, benefit, and avoid evil and harm.

Thus, Allah (swt) had bestowed His mercy through His Law (the Shariah), as He was the best to determine these laws and they were not acquainted with the characteristics of human beings. Allah had honored them and bestowed on them His legislation in order to organize their lives, comfort them, facilitate their affairs, conserve their unity, and protect their progress by means of

these Quranic verses of legislation. Therefore, they did not see or consider the legislation from Allah (swt) as restrictions, and they did not feel in them any burden. On the contrary, they deeply felt in these commands the mercy, facilitation, and honor from Allah (swt). Therefore, they loved the laws of Allah (swt) and lived accordingly, and did not see in them any burden that may lead them to search for any permission as to relieve themselves of the commands. They had absolutely no desire for opposing or getting around the legislation. The Companions were happy with Allah's (swt) verses which determined for them the right and wrong, and which comforted them and helped them to avoid falling in the wrong. Therefore, it is often stated in the Quran: "they ask you" and "they ask you for a legal decision," because the Companions were quite confident that they had a Wise and All-Knowing source Who was capable of guiding them to the best decision. Thus, they did not need to suffer in determining the best course of action or best decision on any matter.

﴿ يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ ﴾ [النساء: ١٧٦]

"They ask thee for a legal decision. Say: Allah directs thus..." (Surah Al-Nisa 4:176)

Hence, when Allah (swt) directed them through an answer to any question, the issue was settled and over, completely satisfying the hearts.

The Companions lived the legislation, with happiness and satisfaction, feeling happy with all the laws of Allah. They knew that the mercy and honor is inherent in these commands and laws. In addition, they felt that the Revelation of legislation was a natural consequence of His sovereignty and Greatness, and His natural right to create them and govern them at the same time.

These are the essential topics and issues discussed in the Quran that had been practiced by the Companions. The Companions had implemented them in a special, deep, whole-hearted way, and thus, that made them the greatest, and most distinguished generation of humankind. If we want to follow their way, we must live with the Quran and the subjects of the Quran in the same way that they had lived and died for. Then, we may hope to be deserving of Allah's praise just as the beloved Companions of the Messenger of Allah.

## **The second factor: the Sunnah (The Messenger of Allah's teachings, sayings, and actions)**

While the Quran is the first factor that produced that shining first generation, the Sunnah is the second factor. The Sunnah includes the deeds of the Messenger of Allah (sas), his sayings, and what he has approved. Actually, the Sunnah is also a Revelation from Allah as the Messenger of Allah has said "I was given the Quran and one similar" and Allah has said:

﴿ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴾ [النجم: ٤-٣]

"Nor does he speak out of desire. It is not but Revelation that is revealed."

(Surah An-Najm 53:3-4)

We can say that the Messenger (sas) also covered the same subjects that the Quran dealt with and moreover, he explained them in detail. These subjects varied from the Divinity of Allah and servitude to Him alone, the Day of Judgment, nature of mankind, morals, and legislation. Indeed, the Messenger of Allah played an enormous role in defining the final concept of Islam in the Faith, rituals, legislation, and morals since he was sent by Allah to explain and clarify what was been revealed to people as is clearly stated in the Quran:

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ ﴾ [النحل: ٤٤]

“...and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them.” (Surah An-Nahl 16:64)

Therefore, the duty of the Messenger of Allah was that clarification with his sayings and deeds. He delivered to us with his sayings what Allah commands us, and what Allah wants from us, and he represented these commands in his practices, which is the reason that Allah sent him, to be an example and a role model for the people.

Our great scholars have verified and clarified the Sunnah, telling us what is acceptable and trustworthy. They have done so through carefully verifying the narrators of the sayings and traditions of the Messenger of Allah (sas). There is no doubt that they have rendered for us and the whole of humanity what people cannot reward them except to make supplication to Allah for them and to ask Allah to reward them with His great privileges.

### **The blessing of the presence of The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (sas), and its great effect in real life**

There is no doubt that the presence of the Messenger of Allah is one of the most crucial factors that had a great impact in elevating the level of the Companions, and in delivering the Truth alive and clear into their hearts. Indeed, the representation of this Truth in the personality and behavior of the Messenger (sas) and his presence among them, had an enormous impact. It is most likely that this could not be understood except by those who had experienced it directly. Any sincere person among us, if he experiences the companionship of an effective, truthful and pious caller to Islam, or scholar, undoubtedly will feel that his companionship with such a person had a great impact in moving his steps towards the Truth, shaping his manners and helping him in adherence to the Truth. What he would experience is completely different from just hearing the same Truth from a normal person who does not have the same degree of sincerity and piety, or reading it from books with his own point of view. There is no doubt that the difference would be huge.

The martyr, Sayyid Qutub, tasted these meanings himself; I felt that when I accompanied him for a short period of three months- not twenty three years as in the Companions' case. I felt in these three months as if I was living somewhere beyond this earth; I felt that I was above the clouds, and that I was a different person. My energies and comprehension were so enhanced to the degree that I used to sleep only three hours a day during these three months and at the same time I was very active, very excited, very attentive and, very happy too. Moreover, for a long time after this encounter anyone who hears me would be astonished that I still quote the same words, take the same positions, and use the same expressions as Qutub. Therefore, remembering this personal emotional experience helped me imagine how the Companions felt when they were with the Messenger of Allah (sas). Of course the difference in the depth and the effect of these feelings between companions of Qutub and Companions of the Messenger of Allah is the same as the difference between Qutub and the Messenger of Allah; there is no doubt that this difference is tremendous. In fact, you will not be able to imagine how I felt when I was with Qutub, or what this companionship has left in me. Likewise, we will not be able- even if we use all of our energy to imagine- what the state of the Companions was with the honored Messenger of Allah (sas), and how they lived with him and how they were affected by him.

The presence of the Messenger of Allah had a significant impact, as it was greater than anything in this world. It was the impact of the Messengerhood, the Light of Allah, and the source of

absolute Truth. There is no doubt that the Messenger of Allah (sas) actively represented and transferred Islam into real life. He represented the peak of all humanity and the peak of mankind in every aspect. Anyone who lives with him through the tradition he has left behind, or reads his biography, will be able to find in him a good example for himself regardless of the reader's position, profession, background or frame of mind. This is a Divine miracle that Allah created Messenger Muhammad (sas) to become an effective example for everyone in every aspect, time, and age. The presence of the Messenger of Allah among the Companions had no doubt an enormous impact on them, and had moved them in every possible aspect. His influence is similar to a magnet that reorganizes the composition of iron fillings which would not be affected, and moved by other elements. There is no doubt that the power of the Messenger of Allah and his effect were something different than magnetic power; it was a spiritual power from Allah and from the Light of Allah. That was such a force that shaped the Companions into that magnificent level. Whenever we read their history, their attitudes, and their feelings, we realize our inability to comprehend how this had happened.

Nowadays, I read the history of the Companions in order to live with this generation. For example, "The Character of the Chosen," which has a lot about the Companions of the Messenger of Allah and those who came afterward among the great followers. I have, also, read the the book about the Companions by Rafat Basha, "Portraits from the Lives of the Companions." I have recently lived with these books to live with the Companions but I am not able until now to comprehend how this spectacular change occurred in their souls. This change was amazing and unique in the history of mankind; something so wonderful that it seems like a miracle. It is even something that makes you feel ashamed of your own reality, when you compare it to theirs - not the material reality but their frame of mind and souls. The Companion's feelings in different issues are something inconceivable to us and it will remain difficult for us to understand unless we rise to the peak where our lives become a testimony to the Quran and the Sunnah. Only then we can achieve this summit, taste it and live with it, and that requires an enormous effort and a special kind of truthfulness. It is amazing what the Messenger of Allah said to Khalid ibn Al-Waleed who is one of the greatest Companions- except that he did not convert to Islam until the eighth year of the hijrah. When Khalid quarreled with Abdurahman ibn Awf, Abdurahman ibn Awf complained to the Messenger of Allah who called Khalid, and warned him and said "Will you leave alone my Companions for me, O Khalid, by Allah if you were to give charity as big as the mountain of Uhud in gold you will never reach a handful of charity or half of it given by them." This is the difference between Khalid and Abdurahman who were in the same generation, and furthermore, this is Khalid whom the Messenger of Allah called him the "sword of Allah." Khalid was indeed one of the greatest Companions, but even then, he could not be compared to Abdurahman ibn Awf who converted to Islam, and accompanied the Messenger twenty years before Khalid. Now then, what is our case, when we are separated from our beloved Messenger for about twenty centuries? Thus, if the difference between two generations of Companions is that big, then how big will be the difference between the Companions and the followers who came after them and those after them, and so forth. Hence, we can understand when a Companion said to a follower, who come after: "You do deeds that you consider more insignificant than a hair, but we used to consider them during the time of the Messenger of Allah among the gravest sins." This might help us understand the words of the Companions, how they lived, and the feelings that filled their lives. Indeed, no matter how hard we try to understand how the Companions were transformed, it will remain incomprehensible. That being said, we still must struggle with all of our power and energy so perhaps we can understand the things the way they used to do in their private and public lives.

## The third factor: the phenomena of Revelation and the presence of one single interpreter

In essence, there were two unique phenomena that accompanied the presence of the Messenger of Allah (sas), which were not repeated in any generation and will not be repeated until we meet Allah (swt).

### The phenomenon of Revelation

The first phenomenon is the Revelation itself, and the Revelation was completed and sealed with the death of the Messenger of Allah (sas). This Divine Revelation, without any doubt, had a very critical impact on the life of the Companions, not only on their life with the Messenger of Allah, but also with Allah (swt) Himself. The Companions were living with Allah through the Revelation, dealing directly with Him, and anxiously waiting for the Revelation that brought them news from above the sky, words of Allah, and guidance of Allah. Whether the news was good or bad, they were anxiously awaiting with eagerness and yearning, waiting for what Allah would say to them. They were awaiting the decisions that would be decreed by Allah, whether instructions on how to manage their affairs, demands or legislation. This life, full of anticipation, certainly had an impact on shaping these people in a specific way that was rarely repeated in human history, since its creation until now, and until the end of the time.

### The one and only interpreter

The second phenomenon that had a great impact which focused the efforts and attention of the Companions into one direction was the presence of a single interpreter. The Messenger of Allah (sas) was the sole interpreter of this Religion, and he would resolve any complication or problem, any issue or legislation, or any difference among the Companions. Hence, any issue could be taken directly to the Messenger of Allah, and instantly there would be the satisfying answer, without having any right to argue, discuss, hesitate, or to doubt its validity. It was definitely the ultimate Truth, as Allah (swt) stated in the Quran:

﴿ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ﴾ [الحشر: ٧]

“And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from.” (Surah Al-Hashr 59:7)

﴿ وَمَا يَنْطَلِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴾ [النجم: ٣]

“Nor does he speak out of desire, It is not but Revelation that is revealed.” (Surah An-Najm 53:3)

﴿ مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ ﴾ [النساء: ٨٠]

“Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah.” (Surah An-Nisa 4:80)

Thus, the life of the Companions was focused in one direction, as they were sincerely confident of the accuracy of their implementation of what they had heard. They were never scattered or divided, searching for the Truth or searching for the correct decision.

As for the generations that came after the Messenger of Allah, there have always been multiple interpreters. As the generations passed, the number of interpreters naturally increased, and

accordingly the chances for mistakes and inaccuracies have also increased. Anyone who came after the Messenger of Allah needed time to get to the right decision, and even after he settled on an opinion, he would continue to be unsure that this was the ultimate Truth – after all, the best anyone could do in certain issues, even the most knowledgeable scholars, was to give an opinion. Even the Companions disagreed on few issues, so which one of them was purely right? Naturally, those who came after the Companions have disagreed as well, as those who followed them throughout history. Sometimes, there were many opinions on a single issue, and sometimes these opinions were completely opposing each another. One opinion could label something as permissible while another prohibited, and recommended or discouraged. Scholars do their sincere efforts, however the people still get confused in determining which one of them is right and which one is wrong. There is no doubt that these discrepancies, and being forced to choose among opinions, have led to a lot of tension and a sense of dissatisfaction. Even when you are sincerely trying to follow the best judgment, this makes you feel uncomfortable due to the natural element of doubt, while the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were always comfortable because they had no reason to doubt. If a Companion felt uneasy about anything, he would get the answer through Revelation or from the Messenger of Allah, and he would be sure that this is the ultimate Truth.

I was in awe when recalling an incident involving a Companion named Khuzaima, which occurred during the time of the Messenger (sas). The nick-name given to this Companion is known by all: “equal to two witness.” The following narration explains why he earned this title: The uncle of Umarah ibn Khuzaima narrated, “the Messenger (sas) wanted to buy a horse from a Bedouin, and an agreement was settled. However, the Messenger had no money on him at the time, so he strode back home to pay the Bedouin as due. While the Bedouin followed the Messenger, a couple of men showed up and negotiated with the Bedouin upon the horse’s price without realizing a deal had already been made. The Bedouin called the Messenger saying, ‘if you want to buy this horse, do so. Otherwise I shall sell it now to these men.’ Upon hearing this, the Messenger stopped and replied, ‘didn’t we agree that the horse was mine once I pay you?’ The Bedouin denied, ‘by Allah, no such agreement was made and I never sold it to you.’ ‘No, I bought it from you,’ the Messenger asserted. As the Bedouin rudely ordered the Messenger to bring a witness, Khuzaima ibn Thabit happened to pass by, overhearing this argument. Khuzaima intervened and exclaimed, ‘I bear witness that the Messenger bought the horse.’ The Messenger turned to Khuzaima asking, ‘on what basis do you bear witness?’ With confidence, Khuzaima replied, ‘Because you tell the truth, for you are verily a honest man above all.’ Hence, the Messenger regarded him as equal to two witnesses. In other words, where two witnesses are required in Islamic law, Khuzaima’s testimony would always do, and be equivalent to two.”

Thus, Khuzaima gained this great reputation from this incident. Scholars say that Khuzaima held such a title not only for testifying that Muhammad was truthful, but also because he simply believed in him as the Messenger of Allah (sas). What concerns us is the very feelings that bloomed in Khuzaima’s heart (may Allah be pleased with him) towards the Messenger (sas). Unlike Khuzaima, some of the Companions around were hesitant to decide whether who was saying the truth at the moment! The only reason for their hesitancy was because they had looked into the situation superficially, without taking into account the true nature of these two men. This gives us insight as to how the Companions, like Khuzaima, dealt with the Messenger of Allah (sas) in their lives, and how they confidently based their lives on the Truth.

When issues arose, all it took to settle them was to refer back to the Messenger. That saved the Companions the trouble of looking for an authentic answer in thick books and scripts. However,

we are obliged to do so when facing some major or even minor issues, struggling to providing the correct rulings, and presenting the best view concerning an affair, since the Messenger passed away and the revelations stopped. Therefore, we are left with scholars struggling to reach the right opinion based on the Quran and the tradition of the Messenger of Allah (the Sunnah). Even though they are rewarded any way, even for making wrong interpretations, yet at the end of the day, we constantly feel puzzled and unsettled in some areas due to inherent uncertainty the scholars must face when interpreting the Quran and Sunnah.

So there is no doubt that the presence of the Messenger (sas) had a great impact on the lives of his Companions – whether by his fine character, or the fact that he received Revelation from Allah and was therefore, the absolute guidance to the Truth. This factor is what primarily established the first Islamic generation, ultimately making them that unique generation among mankind.

### **The fourth factor: the novelty of the Message and the distinctiveness of Islam**

The fourth factor that may have contributed to producing this unique Quranic generation is the novelty of the Message and the distinctiveness of Islam.

There is no doubt that new things have a special delight, and stimulate a sort of glow which is absent in conventional and old things. Even the Companions felt that the people who recently became Muslims often had much warmer and softer feelings compared with those who had preceded. For example, Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) once found one of those who had recently become Muslim weeping as he listened to the Quran. Abu Bakr sighed and remarked: “we used to be as such, but our hearts have become hard.” Although it is well known that Abu Bakr had such delicate sensitivity and deep Faith that he would often weep while reading the Quran. However, familiarity in itself, even if it did not annihilate the sweetness of novelty, it would diminish it remarkably.

There is no doubt that Islam that was initially received by the Arabs of the time was extremely novel for them since they had been living in complete ignorance. They were in fact at the bottom of humanity, the deepest level of being astray, and deviation from the Truth. When the Truth came to them, it led them out of the darkness of polytheism to the light of Islam, where they established a system of life based on the central pillar of Islam: there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah. They were delivered from the depths of darkness to the brightness of knowledge, and from the bottom-level of manners to the greatness of this Religion. There is no doubt that they experienced an awesome and magnificent transition. Therefore, their care and concern for Islam was very high, and their response to Islam was very strong, as a result of the giant spark and huge difference between their previous reality and where they had ascended. This difference elevated the Companions and elevated them up to that pinnacle that could not be achieved by successive generations who were admonished: “you are doing things which you consider more insignificant than a hair, yet in the era of Messenger Muhammad (sas) they were considered as grave sins.” This huge difference explains why the Companions were so much affected by Islam. This is because they had lived in both jahilliya and Islam, and they had lived and experienced the bottom level as well as the high. They had a taste of the bitter darkness as well as the sweetness of light, therefore, they really understood the great value of Islam and embraced it with such enthusiasm. There is no doubt that the Companion was living with this Religion as if it was new birth for him and indeed, for humanity as well. When he compared how he had been before Islam and then what he had become, he realized the huge dramatic change in his life due to his conversion to Islam.

Through this we can clearly see how the Companions of the Messenger lived, becoming great teachers and role-models after converting to Islam. Above all was Omar ibn Khattab, one of the greatest Muslims ever known. Omar had been any regular person worshipping idols, drinking wine, and persecuting the early Muslims. He would not leave any Muslim uninjured, only relenting when he became tired or bored, and not out of sympathy. Despite all of this however, Omar remarkably changed into a new person after embracing Islam. Previously, he had been a ruthless, cruel man, finally rushing towards the Messenger of Allah (sas) with his sword with the intent of murder, saying: “the Messenger was the one who disunited our people, accused our fathers and forefathers of disbelief, and insulted our idols.” Then a Companion, concealing his Muslim identity, turned Omar away from killing the Messenger (sas) and led him instead to Fatimah bint Al-Khattab, Omar’s sister, who had secretly embraced Islam. He went to her, and in a turn of events, Omar believed in Islam and significantly changed his personality. How did this change and turn in personality happen? The Messenger once prayed to Allah saying, “O Allah, strengthen Islam through either of the two men more beloved to you: Omar ibn al-Khattab or Amr ibn Hisham.” The conversion of Omar ibn Khattab was a Divine sign that the Messenger’s (sas) supplication had been accepted. Both men were equivalent in their stature, strength, and nobility, yet only one was guided and not the other.

For example, Omair Bin Wahab who went to take revenge and kill the Messenger of Allah (sas) because his son Wahab was captured in the battle of Badr, had an astonishing story. The plan all started in a private conversation with Safwan Bin Omayyah in Makkah (while the Messenger of Allah was in Madinah). Omair lamented that although he wanted to kill Muhammad (sas) (especially for revenge after the battle of Badr), he could not because he had children to take care of and he had some debts. Safwan guaranteed him that he would pay his debts and take care of his children for life, only if he could take revenge for the whole of Quraish. Emboldened, Omair went to Madinah and when Umar ibn Khattab saw him, he immediately detained him, remarking “this is one of the Qurashi dogs!” The Messenger, however, commanded Omair to be released, and then the Messenger of Allah (sas) asked smiling: “Oh Omair, why have you come?” knowing perfectly why he had come because this had just been revealed to him by Allah (swt)! Omair replied, covering his intentions: “I have come to negotiate for the prisoners.” The Messenger of Allah (sas) then asked: “and what about that sword?” Omair replied, trying to be clever: “and what good did these swords do us in the battle of Badr?” The Messenger of Allah (swt) then revealed the Truth: “No, you sat with Safwan and said to him so and so... (about his intention to kill the Messenger of Allah, and how Safwan agreed to take care of his affairs afterward).” Omair was astonished and immediately surrendered himself to Islam, saying “There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah!” and thus he became a Believer. He swore that no mortal soul could have ever heard that conversation between Safwan and himself.

This dramatic change was under the direct influence of the Messenger of Allah (sas), because the disbelievers were already defeated before coming to him. Certainly, they knew that Messenger Muhammad was telling the Truth, and they never dared to call him a liar. So they were not denying his truthfulness, rather it was something else as Allah revealed in the Quran:

﴿ فَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴾ [الأنعام: ٣٣]

“...they are not denying you, but it is the verses of Allah that the wrongdoers reject.”

(Surah Al- An’am 6: 33)

Furthermore, the disbelievers were certain that they were in fact the liars following falsehood. They even confessed that they preferred a liar from their own tribe, over the truthful of another tribe. Hence, when they were overwhelmed by the Truth, they converted instantly and it had a dramatic effect on their hearts and lives. Actually, we do not really know how this change took place; it is, indeed, Allah's (swt) touch which wanted the good Faith for these people.

Such incidents were frequent among the Companions, and whenever you read the history of a Companion you become astonished; what was he thinking? Amro Bin Al Jamouh was once taking care of his idol statue, dressing it, and putting perfume. His three sons, Khaled, Moawaz, and Moaz were youths who had converted to Islam. They- along with Moaz Bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him)- took this idol and threw it in the trash. When Amro found it, he cleaned it up. However, the same was repeated and this time, Amro hung a sword around his idol's neck so that it may defend himself! Next thing, he found his idol in the garbage once again, tied to a dead dog! Amro then said: "a god? And you can not even defend yourself!" Thus, Amro converted to Islam. Where was the mind and wisdom of this man before Islam? We know how circumstances can influence the human mind such that when one numbs his mind, and surrenders himself to the status-quo, and to his surroundings, he may end up accepting any absurd concept, and will reject clear facts. The Quran even quotes the idolaters:

﴿ إِنَّ كَاذِبًا لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ آلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَا أَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا ﴾ [الفرقان: ٤٢]

"He was about to mislead us about our lords, if we had not held on to them!"  
(Surah Al- Furqan 25: 42)

These idolaters were holding on to their illogical beliefs with such stubbornness that they felt that they had passed a test when they had almost been swayed by the clear Truth that the Messenger of Allah Ibraheem had brought them.

No doubt that the novelty of Islam had a great influence on the life of the Companions that it changed them completely. When they saw and realized the light of Islam, they had very deep feelings of love that enabled them to remove any obstacles in their hearts. Islam actually cleansed their hearts of all misdeeds and superficiality so there is no doubt that this factor- the novelty of Islam- had a huge influence on the life of the Companions.

### **The presence of these factors in our lives**

Most of these four factors are actually present in our lives. The Quranic factor is present, furthermore we know more information about the Quran than some of the Companions knew. Nowadays, we have in our hands what all the Companions said and understood about the Quran, thus we actually know all that the Companions knew about the Quran and the traditions of the Messenger of Allah (the Sunnah). There is no doubt that individually, the Companions were not acquainted with each and every thing that the Messenger of Allah said or performed. Even Abu Bakr and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) used to ask the other Companions about what they have heard from the Messenger of Allah (sas) when they were faced with certain problems. Sometimes the answer could only be found with one Companion, and they would accept that.

On the other hand, we have thousands of verified sayings of the Messenger of Allah gathered for us and the Quran is exclusively preserved, exactly as it was in the days of the Companions. Indeed these are the greatest blessings of Allah upon us.

## **Is the presence of the Messenger of Allah Muhammad (sas) necessary for the establishment of Islamic life?**

The only factor that is missing for us today is the physical presence of the Messenger himself, as a living person. If Allah (swt) knew that resuming the Islamic life requires the Messenger's presence, He- the Almighty- would not have obliged us to be Muslims, and if it was required, then He would have extended the Messenger's life till the end of life on earth. The fact that Allah (swt) did not do this means that this factor- the Messenger's presence- is not essential for the re-establishment of Islamic life although it was essential in its establishment for the very first time. The Companions were establishing a totally new Religion, and were confronting the world with a new Faith. They needed a giant power to transfer them from the bottom to the summit, and that power was the presence of the Messenger of Allah (sas) himself. The next generations found the matter much easier for they came after the Arabian Peninsula was cleaned from the non-Muslims, and the two most powerful empires in history were destroyed and opened by the Companions within 25 years. Hence, the successors found Islam easily - right between their hands and most of them did not have to live both of the two periods: Islam and jahilliya. Even if some lived in both periods, nevertheless, they took in Islam smoothly: they were never tortured, and when they decided to accept Islam, it was offered to them on a golden plate.

Also, those who came afterwards found Islam to be the greatest power on the earth where all states on the earth were afraid of the Caliph, and would do anything to please him. So, those who came after the Companions did not need that giant power to raise them up from their situation because their immediate surroundings and situation was already Islam. On the other hand, the Companions needed that initial momentum to raise them up, and then to apply Islam in front of them perfectly so as to keep the ideal and original model of Islam present throughout human history. Thus, Islam would not be according to the opinions of people- whoever they may be- but would be the heritage of the Messenger of Allah (sas) and a practical application of Islam in front of all human generations afterwards to assist them and enlighten their ways.

This is why the presence of the Messenger of Allah (sas) was essential for the first generation, and not for the subsequent generations. Thus, losing this factor should not affect the re-establishment of Islam, especially since we have some things to partially compensate for the absence of the Messenger of Allah (sas). For instance, we have Islamic history with all its glorious incidents which persisted for almost 13 centuries, and is still influencing human life. So, history, or the vast reserve of human experience is with us, and that is what influences people since it was once applied before, and can be applied again. This is quite different from the situation of the Companions who did not have any example to follow or former experience to lead them in the right way, except the presence Messenger of Allah (sas).

Moreover, we have our innate nature that is created to worship Allah; Messenger Muhammad (sas) said: "no child is born except on sound innate nature (fitrah) and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian, or Magian."

We also have the Messenger's (sas) life, all the books of his morals and behaviors which, without doubt, convey for us the glory of the life of the Messenger and his Companions. If we live the way that the Messenger (sas) lived, and taught them, then we will actually live a life that is close to that the Companions had lived with the Messenger (sas). In fact, this should be sufficient for our attempt to practice and reestablish Islam and satisfy our present needs.

The last factor that was mentioned above- the novelty of Islam- exists in our contemporary generation as it was in the first generation, as The Messenger of Allah (sas) had informed us: "that Islam began as a novel and strange thing and will return back to being a novel and strange thing as it had once started, and Paradise is the reward for the strangers." This factor is very present in our life, and could be as effective as it was with the Companions of the Messenger (sas). Actually today, we feel that we are strangers in the sea of jahilliya and Islam is novel, as we have suffered and lived the life of jahilliya with all of its darkness and corruption, and then Allah has saved us by Islam. In fact this novelty factor was not prominent in the generations that directly followed the Companions of the Messenger of Allah since they were born into the luxurious state of Islam and never experienced the depravity of jahilliya. Perhaps this may have even led to a looseness in preserving the Religion since subsequent generations never had to suffer the great tribulations of establishing Islam from the ruins of jahilliya. This is why Allah (swt) always commands us to be vigilant:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا﴾ [آل عمران: ١٠٣]

“And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it.” (Surah Ali-Imran3:103)

We live with these feelings, and every one among us has experienced the life of jahilliya in one way or another, and then Allah (swt) has bestowed His blessings by giving us Islam. No doubt that we feel the huge difference, and we feel that Allah (swt) has saved us from a calamity as we were on the brink of the fire and He saved us.

## **The difference between the Companion's generation and the generations that came after**

Thus, if all of the factors which have established the first generation still exist presently, why then has it not manifested itself as it had in the first generation?

That is what we are going to discuss; Qutub says:

“Had the person of the Messenger been absolutely essential for the establishment and fruition of this Message, Allah Almighty would not have made Islam a universal Message, ordained it as the Religion for the whole of mankind, given it the status of the last Divine Message for humanity, and made it to be a guide for all the inhab-itants of this planet in all their affairs until the end of time. Allah Almighty has taken the responsibility for preserving the Holy Quran on Himself because He knows that Islam can be established and can benefit mankind even after the time of the Messenger. Hence He called His Messenger back to His mercy after twenty three years of Messengership and declared this Religion to be valid until the end of time. Therefore the absence of the Messenger of Allah is not the real cause for nor does it explain this phenomenon.

We look, therefore, for some other reasons, and for this purpose we look at that clear spring from which the first generation of Muslims quenched their thirst. Perhaps something has been mixed with that clear spring. We should look at the manner in which they received their training. Perhaps some changes have found their way into it.

The spring from which the Companions of the Messenger drank was the Holy Quran; only the Quran, as the Hadith of the Messenger and his teachings were off-spring of this fountainhead. When someone asked the Mother of the Believers, Ai-sha - may Allah be pleased with her, about the character of the Messenger, she answered, 'His character was the Qur'an.'

The Holy Quran was the only source from which they quenched their thirst, and this was the only mold in which they formed their lives. This was the only guidance for them, not because there was no civilization or culture or science or books or schools. Indeed, there was the Roman culture, its civilization, its books and its laws which even today are considered to be the foundation of European culture. There was the heritage of Greek culture, its logic, its philosophy and its arts, which are still a source of inspiration for Western thought. There was the Persian civilization, its art, its poetry and its legends, and its religion and system of government.

There were many other civilizations, near or far, such as the Indian and Chinese cultures, and so on. The Roman and Persian cultures were established to the north and to the south of the Arabian Peninsula, while the Jews and Christians were settled in the heart of Arabia. Thus we believe that this generation did not place sole reliance on the Book of Allah for the understanding of their Religion because of any ignorance of civilization and culture, but it was all according to a well thought out plan and method. An example of this purpose is found in the displeasure expressed by the Messenger of Allah when Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, brought some pages from the Torah. The Messenger of Allah said, 'By Allah, if even Moses had been alive among you today, he would have no recourse except to follow me.' [Reported by al-Hafidh Abu Yala from Himad, from al-Shubi, from Jabir.]"

### **The first difference - the pure source**

It is clear from this incident that the Messenger of Allah (sas) deliberately limited the first generation's source of guidance to only one source which is the Book of Allah because they were undergoing the initial stages of training. His intention was that this group should dedicate themselves purely to the Book of Allah and arrange their lives solely according to its teachings. To re-emphasize, when we say Quran, this also includes the tradition of the Messenger, since it is explaining the Quran. That is why the Messenger of Allah (sas) was distressed when Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) turned to a source different from the Quran.

**"In fact, the Messenger of Allah (sas) intended to prepare a generation pure in heart, pure in mind, pure in understanding. Their training was to be based on the method prescribed by Allah Who gave the Quran, purified from the influence of all other sources."**

Indeed, that is an enormous difference between the Companions and other generations where the Companions were taught solely by the teachings and commands of that one and only Divine source - the Quran. On the other hand, the generations that came afterwards were taking from the Quran but also mixed with other sources including other nations' cultures, history, and literature. Thus, the Islamic culture was contaminated with other sources besides the Quran, and thus was not as pure and clear as in the time of the Companions.

### **The contamination of Islamic thought with other sources**

Stories of the Israelites, Roman culture, Greek philosophies, Persian and Egyptian legends and much more - all these have affected the new generations in one way or another; and each new generation is getting further and further away compared to the previous generation.

Whoever studies the ideological history in Islamic communities, will see how deviated cultures have entered the Islamic stream soon after Islam had opened Persia, the greater Syrian region including Palestine, and Egypt. Many people entered Islam either from fear or desire while they were still holding to their old beliefs and thoughts, or entered with hatred in order to destroy Islam from inside by pretending to be Muslims and spreading their poisonous thoughts in the Islamic community.

For example, the Jew Abdullah Bin Sabaa initiated his destructive ideology early during the rule of Caliph Othman Bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him)- to worship Ali bin Abi Talib (may Allah also be pleased with him), and be a fanatic of the relatives of Messenger Muhammad (sas). He was preparing for a sect, the Shia, who called for Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) to be the rightful ruler after Messenger Muhammad (sas). Later on, this sect disbelieved in all the Companions except seventeen of them, who they considered the supporters and followers of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him); but the rest, starting with Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), were disbelieved and discredited. They did not just stop at this, but they made Al-Walayah, or succession in the Shia sect, a higher class of authority than Messengership. They said that Al-Walayah is more important for humanity than Messengership, since they deviantly argued that Messengership was temporary whereas Al-Walayah is permanent. Thus, they gave the Awliyah, the twelve imams, absolute authority (something that should only be reserved for Allah and His Messenger). They declared these twelve imams, or leaders, to be infallible, just as the Messengers of Allah (peace be on them all), and even more, they said that they knew more than the Messengers! So, this deviant ideology had been injected into the Islamic stream with the intentions of corrupting Islam in this most astonishing way. Unfortunately, whenever we read the history of Islam, we find how some corrupt thoughts were made to creep in and mix with our firm Beliefs (akeeda).

When we read about the Saffa Brothers, we find that their thoughts are full of intentional disbelief. They were a secret organization, and they came to whomever had some intelligence and insight in order to spoil their thoughts with some strange beliefs.

Also, those who called themselves philosophers, starting with Bin Sina, Farabi, Kandi and others, tried to force Greek philosophy into an Islamic shape. So, they contaminated the pure Beliefs of Islam with Greek ideology, and thus severe damage was done to the life of Muslims by contaminating the core principle of Belief - that authority and obedience is only attributable to Allah (tawheed).

No doubt that all this had a huge effect on the Islamic communities' core pillars of Faith; (their aqeedah.) Unfortunately, Ahl-Al Sunnah, or those who were trying to preserve the way of the Messenger of Allah, could not manage to control and straighten up themselves on the correct Islamic vision, especially since some of the later rulers (caliphs) helped much in this corruption - as was the case for Al -Ma'moun, Al-Watheq, Al-Mootasem and Al-Moutawakal. The forged issue of the nature of the Quran - "was it a creation?"- was contrived, and they tried to pass Al-Mutazella's deviant thoughts. So, no doubt that a lot of unfortunate things happened, like what happened during the Fatimiah rule and others. All these things spoiled the first generation's pure source with a lot of contaminants from other cultures and civilizations which entered the Islamic world. Even the explanations of the Quran were affected by this, like the so-called "Science of Speech" which was a kind of discipline considered by many Islamic scholars as an intruder to Islam. It is not allowed for a Muslim to base his Belief on these kind of sources since it is based on deviant rationale and philosophies. This kind of mix up affected the pureness of Islam and

how its Truth (the Haqq) was received. So, no doubt that this mixing and contamination of the original source which was available for the first generation was a major factor leading to the deviance of all subsequent generations.

If we wanted to analyze Islamic history and judge its rulers and scholars, we would ask the question: how could all of this come to happen? How could they allow these kinds of thoughts to be injected and spread in the Islamic communities? And at the same time, how is it that these deviant thoughts had such power to affect the Islamic community? For sure, this could not have happened unless the rulers and scholars were unconscious.

It is true that there are some explanations, such as: large new communities had all at once joined the Islamic world and converted to Islam, but this still does not give them any excuse for leaving them illiterate, uneducated and without follow-up. Perhaps, the large numbers of new, uneducated, uncultured Muslims, combined with the priority being given to expanding the frontiers of Islam through opening and delivering Islam to new societies (fath), made the Islamic world vulnerable. Thus, deviant thoughts sneaked into the corner stones of Islam affecting its soul and heart, although this does not make them innocent from blame for their unconsciousness; instead they bear full responsibility.

Actually, the Muslim scholars and rulers should have exerted great efforts and insisted on keeping the pure Islamic Belief. No doubt that if they had made great effort, Allah(swt) would have helped them. Unfortunately, the rulers- except few- were seduced by the power and the luxurious life, and people followed them, and got busy with life; indeed, Islam and the Islamic thought were not applied as it once had been in the time of the first four righteous Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali, may Allah be pleased with them all.)

Not only were the later Caliphs responsible, but also the scholars, although there were some special circumstances that obliged them to overlook some incidents. Nevertheless, the Caliphs, scholars and common people were responsible for the emergence of those deviated groups which reached the degree of removing the Black Stone- in the Holy Masjid- from its place for years. As a matter of fact, the Karamita- a deviated group- invaded the Holy Masjid in Makkah, slaughtered the pilgrims, and stole the Black Stone- a stone that had descended from the heavens when Ibrahim (peace be on him) had built the Ka'aba. How could the Islamic ruling power be considered strong when such a tragedy occurred? How could deviated groups be allowed to do this? No doubt that there was negligence and deficiency in the management of the Islamic world among the rulers and scholars. They did not devote the proper effort to protect the Islamic world, and the sacred places from such deviated ideas, and groups.

The Messenger of Allah (sas) was able to restrict the first generation to the pure Quranic source, but those who came after him could not keep the Quran as the only pure source of knowledge, upbringing and understanding of the Religion. This variance led to the difference in quality between the first generation and subsequent generations, and eventual downfall of the whole nation into jahilliya as we live in now.

No doubt that when the Companions dealt with the Quran, they interacted with it in a special spirit, and with special feelings which can be summarized as follows:

1. They were honoring and glorifying Allah (swt) as He- the Almighty- deserves, and as His Divinity deserves. This made them take the book, the Religion, and the words of Allah with the highest respect and appreciation, and the deepest attentiveness to anything coming from Allah(swt).

2. They were sure that Allah (swt) was constantly present with them and saw them everywhere, and every time. They, also, felt that Allah (swt) had blessed them by giving them the correct Belief, and sent them His Messenger, and His Quran as valuable gifts from Him. They believed that Allah (swt) transferred them from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, and from the misery of jahilliya, disbelief and self-desires to the blessings of Belief and Islam. All these feelings had a deep impact on their lives, and they were observing the Messenger of Allah being the peak of devotion, servitude, and submission to Allah (swt). Hence, they lived with these deep feelings in the company of Allah, His observance and care.
3. When they approached the Quran, they were purified from all impurities of external ideas.
4. They were completely satisfied with the Quran, and rejected any other sources.
5. They embraced the Quran in their practical, daily life, and they did not take it as mere knowledge or philosophy, which is actually the second main difference as we will explain.

### **The second difference: “the-receive-to-put-in-action” method**

In addition to the purity of the source, there is another difference between the first generation and the generations that came after, that made the Companion’s generation so distinctive and that was the method of receiving the Quran.

**Qutub states: “They of the first generation did not approach the Quran for the purpose of acquiring culture and information, nor for the purpose of taste or enjoyment. None of them came to the Quran to increase his sum total of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself or to solve some scientific or legal problem, or to remove some defect in his understanding. He rather turned to the Quran to find out what the Almighty Creator had prescribed for him and for the group in which he lived, for his life and for the life of the group. He approached it to act on what he heard immediately, as a soldier on the battle- field reads “Today’s Bulletin” so that he may know what is to be done.”**

Indeed, it is a big difference; When somebody listens to the Quran broadcasting stations all over the Islamic world, he will be impressed with the amount of information that is given. That includes the issues of core Beliefs in the absolute authority of Allah (tawheed), following of the Messenger of Allah (sas), deep knowledge of the differences between the Islamic method and other methods, the greatness of the Islamic method, and so on.. Also, it discusses the wisdom of the Islamic laws, greatness of the Companions, the great loss of subsequent generations which deviated from the Islamic way, and explanation of the reasons of our contemporary misery. All these concepts are very clearly expressed.

Nevertheless, what is the status of those who explain all this? These people actually support the jahilliya and the non-Islamic governments, give the dictators and rulers the legitimacy to exist, and legalize submission to them. Those who are called scholars are actually just collectors of information, although when you listen to them, you will be impressed by the precise knowledge, and fine details that they present. However, what is their true position? They are either faithful soldiers of the tyrants (i.e. so-called “Muslim” rulers), or just negative and valueless people in the life of the nation. In fact, this is a crime because the scholars must not conceal the Truth and knowledge they have while they are offering forgiveness and obedience for these tyrants.

Thus, there is no doubt that the generations that came after the first generation were taking the Quran just as book full of great culture, eloquence and beauty. The scholars used to extract their

topics for their doctorates or masters degrees, and gain materialistic benefits from the Quran. Actually, the followers of the Companions were much much better than our generations as they tried hard to live with the Quran and its meanings. They were not engaged in studying its linguistic features as people are today, pointing out its exact halves in words...etc. Actually, studying the features of the Quran or any related field is worthwhile, however with the condition that it does not drag the Muslim's attention from living and applying its Truths and meanings.

Furthermore, the generations that came after the Companions have been taking the Quran as a material of joy, blessings, and protection from envy and misfortunes. On the other hand, the first generation were also taking it as a source of joy, blessings, and protection while their main goal was to obey the Quran, and live with it just like an obedient soldier.

Hence, their distinctiveness was that they received the Quran to act by its teachings while we receive it to study it and enjoy its magnificence.

Indeed, the Companions' life with the Messenger of Allah (sas) was astonishing as a single word from the Messenger or from the Quran was more than enough to change the entire nation. For example, when liquor was first forbidden by Allah (swt), the Muslims immediately desisted from drinking liquor when they heard the voice of one walking in the streets of Madina announcing: "liquor is certainly forbidden..." The issue of drinking ceased at once, and all it took was the single command of Allah (swt):

﴿ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ ﴾ [المائدة: ٩١]

"Will you not, then, desist?" (Surah Al-Maidah 5:91)

The Muslims immediately replied: "We desist; our Lord..." The issue did not need police, nor an army or courts or any enforcement as was necessary in America when prohibition of liquor was attempted. The case in America did not succeed, as they were later forced to allow alcohol again after devoting all punitive efforts because the American citizens did not accept the decision. So, what was the difference? In America, the issue was never a matter of religion, of deep Belief; it was not an issue concerning believing hearts which receive from their sovereign Lord. This is why Americans never obeyed the prohibition and the government was thus obliged later to permit liquor.

We have also read in our history how the Muslim women in the Companion's generation dealt with the issue of veils, full covering and modesty (hijab): they received the command, and reacted in a magnificent manner! When they first heard the commandment, they immediately obeyed and went to the Messenger of Allah (swt) wearing the hijab that covered them entirely, looking like "as if crows were standing over their heads." (an expression meant to convey an uncoordinated, fashionably speaking, disheveled look – this being due to the fact that they immediately covered themselves with the nearest available cloth, regardless of shape, color, texture or looks). Alternatively, one may think, that they could have gone first to the Messenger of Allah (swt) before taking action and analyzed the verses of hijab and argued with him about the details of the issue of hijab. None of this occurred, as their obedience was on the spot! On the other hand, women nowadays, are concerned with decorating their veils, displaying some of their hair, and wearing make-up in complete contradiction to the concept of hijab that they are presuming to implement. In fact, this means that they are ignorant of the meaning and reason of the hijab; it is meant to cover the woman in order to protect her and the man from falling into the temptation, and the prohibited.

Another example, when the direction that Muslims head towards during prayer (Qiblah) was changed (from Jerusalem to Makkah) by Allah (swt). A group of Muslims who heard the commandment while they were praying altered their direction right in the middle of their prayer, while still bowing, to the new direction, the new Qiblah. I do not know how this was accomplished because those who were in Madinah were oriented toward Jerusalem, and the new direction is completely opposite to the old one. How did they transfer their prayer direction while bowing in prayer to the new Qiblah and what happened to the place of the one leading the prayer (the Imam)? Nevertheless, they were implementing orders to the highest degree of perfection. A man came to the masjid door, while they were praying and exclaimed: "the Qiblah is transferred to Alk'abah (in Makkah)!" Then, they changed their direction while they were bowing, as a whole group, and it was not on the individual level. This means that this attitude, of immediate implementation, existed on the scale of the whole group and not just at the individual level, although as individuals, you could talk about their precision and sincerity of execution without limit. There were countless unique examples in the Companion's lives illustrating the manner by which they were obeying and executing any command or order received from Allah (swt) and from the Messenger of Allah (sas).

Take for instance Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), during the invasion of Khaiber, when the Messenger (sas) announced: "tomorrow I shall give the banner of leadership of Islam to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and Allah and His Messenger love him." The Companions spent that night sleepless, and every one of them desired to be that man. Umar speaking of his own feelings on that night said, "I didn't desire of becoming the leader except on that day." Then, the Messenger of Allah (sas) gave the flag of Jihad to Ali Ibn Abi Taleb (may Allah be pleased with him); he happened to be suffering from conjunctivitis and the Messenger (sas) cured him and then ordered him: "proceed and don't turn back!" After Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) had proceeded just a few steps, he realized that he needed to ask the Messenger (sas), for what objective should he fight? Then he stopped, but he did not turn back his face since he was ordered not to turn back! He spoke with an elevated voice asking about his mission! This is astonishing behavior, according to our thinking. We would consider it impolite to the Messenger of Allah (sas) to speak to him facing our backs. Although this would be true under normal circumstances, look at Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) - he could not turn back - literally- once he was ordered not to turn back. If any of us were in his position, we may even turn back and start arguing, analyzing and justifying the retreat based on our own individual philosophy! The Companions of the Messenger of Allah (sas) were not like this - they did not integrate their own thinking, whims, desires, or philosophies when it came to the issue of obedience. The Messenger (sas) told him "don't turn back" thus, he couldn't turn his face backward, ever. We, however, always let a part of our own individual thinking, tastes, desires and philosophy mix and interfere when executing a very clear duty, and this is because real and sincere commitment, including our hearts, minds, and souls is not our first and topmost goal.

That was the attitude of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them); read the history of Companions to see many wonderful and surprising examples related to this issue. They were receiving everything with the intent to execute it literally, to ensure their sincere commitment and servitude to Allah (swt).

Thus, receiving the verses of the Quran for the sole purpose of executing them in their lives was a defining characteristic of the first Muslim generation. The study and mere enjoyment of the words of Allah was, however, a characteristic feature of the later generations.

That is why we find the carelessness and lack of commitment that appeared in the manners of Muslims after the first generation. The tendency of Muslims to select the scholarly opinions which suited their desires and unbound them from real commitments became part of their lives. Thus, many things foreign to Islam integrated with their lives, and thereby they continued declining till they reached their present situation and Islam became a mere play and pass-time as Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

﴿ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ﴾ [الأعراف: ٥١]

“Such as took their Religion to be mere amusement and play...” (Surah Al-Araf 7:51)

This is the feature of the so-called Muslims in the most recent generations; they have considered and valued their Religion as mere play and amusement. For example, they take their dawn meal before commencement of fasting in Ramadan in casinos (located on Al-Haram street in Cairo), or while listening to music or dancing! In the houses of fashions, they explore different dresses for veiled ladies. Thus Islam has become play and amusement in their lives, and not a Religion in the true sense. There is no doubt that the difference between the first generation- who lived with their Faith with such astonishing spirit, and the subsequent generations, is reason for this difference in quality. In Qutub’s words:

**“This understanding and feeling -the understanding that instruction is for action-opened the doors to spiritual fulfillment and to knowledge. If they had read the Quran only for the sake of discussion, learning and information, these doors would not have opened. Moreover, action became easy, the weight of responsibilities and commitments became light, and the Quran became a part of their personalities, mingling with their lives and characters so that they became living examples of Faith - a Faith not hidden in intellects or books, but expressing itself in a dynamic movement which changed conditions and events and the course of life.”**

There is no doubt that we should live with the Quran with the spirit and intention of complete submission, and the spirit of receiving for immediate implementation. Moreover, we should live with it with the intention of liberating ourselves from all desires and from the limitations of human understanding and from the human interference in determining the Divine laws. Certainly, this will cause a blessing in the Muslim’s life, and give the light and basis by which right and wrong can be distinguished, and this is what Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا ﴾ [الأنفال: ٢٩]

“O ye who believe! if ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong).” (Surah Al-Anfal 8:29)

There is no doubt that living with the Quran with that purpose gives the human being a light to observe things, and establishes peace and reassurance in his heart, as well as tranquility in society. When everyone lives in submission to Allah (swt), without questioning His orders, arguing, introducing new views or rules besides Allah's Revelations, and without changing what they have been directed, they will benefit in comfort and assurance due to their obedience, and it will also facilitate their life. There is a huge difference between receiving orders with even the least traces of doubt, feelings of discomfort , or the need to discuss the reasons of imposing them, compared with the one who receives these words while full of certainty, and satisfaction. The difference in performance and implementation is huge; the Companions were receiving these

orders to apply without any hesitation, whereas the later generations were receiving the words and orders of Allah with a completely different approach and attitude.

**“Indeed, this Quran does not open its treasures except to him who accepts it with this spirit: the spirit of knowing with the intention of acting upon it. It did not come to be a book of intellectual content, or a book of literature, or to be considered as a book of stories or history, although it has all these facets. It came to become a way of life, a way dedicated to Allah. Thus, Allah Most High imparted it to them in a gradual manner, to be read at intervals:**

﴿ وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَىٰ مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴾ [الإسراء ١٠٦]

**“We have revealed this Quran little by little so that you may recite it to people at intervals, and We have revealed it gradually.” (Surah Al-Israa 17:106)**

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As we said before, the fact that the whole Quran was not revealed all at once has had an immense effect which enabled the Companions to live with verses of the Quran for a long period of time. The verses were made to come alive and manifest in events, actions, and emotions that worked its effects in the Companions’ hearts and lives. As we said, a Companion would go to bed in anticipation of Revelation of Quran relating to himself- either of praise or blame-, a rule to solve a problem, or to impose a new order which may result in a new change in his way of life. This attentive attitude was keeping the hearts of the Companions alive, keeping them away from the heedlessness, sleepiness, relaxation, and the routine life experienced by generations that followed.

The later generations were living with the whole Quran in their hands: they read it when they wanted, and placed it on the shelf whenever they wanted. All this happened without intimately intertwining their daily life with the Quran as did the first generation. The Quran was revealed gradually and lived with the first generation of Muslims for a long time and thus had a remarkable effect on their hearts, intellects, and lives:

**“The Quran did not come down all at once; rather it came down according to the needs of the Islamic society in facing new problems, according to the growth of ideas and concepts, according to the progress of general social life, and according to new challenges faced by the Muslim community in its practical life. One verse or a few verses would be revealed according to the special circumstances and events, and these verses would answer questions which arose in the minds of people, would explain the nature of a particular situation, and would prescribe a way of dealing with it. These verses would correct their mistakes, either of understanding or of practice, would bring them closer to Allah, and would explain to them the wisdom of the various aspects of the universe in the light of Allah's attributes. Thus they clearly realized that every moment of their lives was under the continuous guidance and direction of the Almighty Creator and that they were traversing the path of life under the wings of Allah's mercy. Because of this sense of constant relationship with Allah, their lives were molded according to that sacred way of life which was being instructed by Him (swt).”**

This occurred often with the Companions in Al Madina. We can mention the story of Al-Jollas bin Sweyed, who was one of the hypocrites that did not follow the Messenger of Allah (sas) in the Tabuk invasion. Al-Jollas said: “if this man (he meant the Messenger, (sas)) was genuine, then we are worse than donkeys (an evil expression meant to convey hatred).” One of the Companions, named Umair bin Sa'ad (may Allah be pleased with him), heard what Al-Jollas said. It also

happened that Umair was the step-son of Al-Jollas and was totally dependent on him for his living. Nevertheless, Umair said to Al-Jollas: "By Allah you were the most I liked, and the most generous to me and it is of immense hurt to me that a harm may touch you, however, you said a statement which, if exposed, it will disclose you (your hypocrisy), and if I hide it then it would cost me my Religion and neither of these options is good." Despite all the worldly-pressure, Umair went to the Messenger (sas) and informed him of what Al-Jollas said. Al-Jollas testified to the Messenger (sas) that Umair was lying and denied saying those evil words, and some of the people accepted what Al-Jollas had said and even began saying that Umair must have forgotten the blessings and generosity of his care taker, Al-Jollas. The Companions looked deeply to Al-Jollas and Umair to determine who was truthful and who was lying, then the eyes of the young Umair began to flow with tears because he was denied and stood accused of a grave slander. Then, all of a sudden, a Revelation overcame the Messenger (sas) with the following decisive verse:

﴿ يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا وَمَا نَعَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴾ [التوبة: ٧٤]

"They swear by Allah that they said nothing (wrong), yet they did say the word of disbelief, and did disbelieve after their Surrender (to Allah). And they purposed that which they could not attain, and they sought revenge only that Allah by His Messenger should enrich them of His bounty. If they repent it will be better for them; and if they turn away, Allah will afflict them with a painful doom in the world and the Hereafter, and they have no protecting friend nor helper in the earth." (Surah Al-Tawba 9:74)

Al-Jollas fell to his knees, crumbling and said to the Messenger: "O Messenger, yes, I repent, I repent, and Umair was truthful and O Messenger I was the liar!" He continued requesting and seeking Allah's forgiveness, and he became a good Muslim from then on, and would say: "May Allah reward Umair for his goodness, he saved me from Al-Kufr (disbelief)."

In this manner, the Revelation was stimulating and stirring the Companions' fear from being witness to any evil, even if it was little or "hidden." They knew that such evil may anger Allah (swt) or may anger the Messenger (sas), and Allah may reveal a verse of Quran, exposing them - a recitation that would be repeated and repeated till the Day of Judgment.

There is no doubt that the Companions lived with the Quran in a way that enabled them to receive it for immediate implementation and experience it with such spirit:

**"Thus, instruction to be translated into action was the method of the first group of Muslims. The method of later generations was instruction for academic discussion and enjoyment. And without doubt this is the second major factor which made later generations inferior to the first unique generation of Islam."**

Could this method be repeated in any generation? How can we establish this struggling and self-reproaching spirit - the spirit which lives for and keeps on expecting and waiting and seeking for something which was experienced by the individuals of the first generation - the spirit they had when the Quran was revealed gradually, when the "hotline" was opened between heaven and earth, and when Gabriel was traveling between the heaven and earth carrying the commandments of Allah? How can this reality be re-established? Definitely it cannot be fully recreated, as there were special circumstances which were restricted to the first Revelation and the first interval and, thus, the same level of consciousness and fear cannot happen again as it

was with the first generation. However, is there a possibility of something similar recurring? Is this completely impossible now? Can we, somehow, make our hearts live the Truth of Allah's (swt) constant presence, at the level of consciousness that Allah wants us to aspire as is mentioned in the Quran?

﴿ يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ ﴾ [غافر: ١٩]

He knows the fraud of the eyes, and all that which the breasts hide (Surah Ghafir 40:19)

﴿ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ﴾

[المجادلة: ٧]

“There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than that or more but He is with them wheresoever they may be...”

(Surah Al-Mujadilah 58:7)

Whenever we live with this spirit, then, we can live with Allah (swt), and our hearts will be filled of apprehension and tension which will enable us to fear that Allah will expose us and will inform our brothers of what is hidden in our hearts. Thus, every human being, irrespective of how well he may be able to hide himself from others, will one day be disclosed by Allah (swt) if he insists on deviation.

As we know, Allah (swt) has covered-up the faults of the Companions many times out of His Mercy. Nevertheless, we should also remember how many times Allah (swt) has exposed the truth about issues at the time of the Companions! Also, how many times has Allah shielded us? We should remember how many times Allah has disclosed some of the people even after a while. So, if we feel and sense that Allah (swt) is observing us, then we must respect Him with the same attitude and the same fear and apprehension of displeasing Him, and the same feelings of longing and seeking His pleasure which the Companions lived with so abundantly in their lives.

In our present lives, we can once again live with some of these feelings, only when we realize that the Quran is still addressed to us, now, with our present personalities and situations, as it had been speaking to the first generation. Furthermore, Allah (swt) is alive forever immortal, and has always been and will be ever present, and does not change. Allah (swt), Who was observing the Companions, is also observing us. Moreover, we should believe that Allah (swt), Who was revealing the Quran either to shield or disclose, is the One Who can now reveal into the heart of others the feelings of satisfaction toward us, or to disclose us in our very places. If we live with the sense that Allah (swt) is capable of doing what has been done before, then we can introduce and stimulate this feeling in our hearts, to live fearing and respecting Allah (swt) which will enable us to accomplish within ourselves what was accomplished in the first generation.

### **The third difference: the complete detachment from jahilliya, and the complete devotion to Islam**

Sayyid Qutub, then says:

“A third cause is also operative in the history of Muslims; we ought to look at it also.

It was when a person enters the threshold of Islam that he casts off all of his past jahilliya. He would feel at the moment of coming to Islam, that he had begun a new era, completely separate from his life that he had lived in jahilliya. His position towards all that he knew during his

**time in jahilliya would be that of caution and suspicion and of one who feels that all the filth he knew does not fit in with Islam and with these feelings he would receive the new guidance of Islam. Thus if his self overcame him or if he was drawn back to his old habits and if he became weak and didn't fulfill certain Islamic obligations he would immediately feel his sin and guilt and realize deep within himself that he is in need of purifying himself of what he has done and try once again to be in accordance with the Quranic guidance."**

**"It is when a person enters the threshold of Islam that he casts off all of his past jahilliya..."**

Perhaps this explains what the Companions meant when they said "we were given Faith before the Quran." Each one of them would first seek Islam and his heart would be filled with Faith. Thus when he received any thing from the Quran, he would do what we have heard about – he would immediately put it into practice. The Companions did not read the Quran first, in order to believe in it, but rather belief came before this. They were actually captured by the great Truth; the Belief-, the Islamic call, and the New Perception. Then, they would hear the Quran with great Faith already in their hearts, and they would live by it, through the light of Faith which already had illuminated their souls.

When a Companion entered the threshold of Islam, he cast off all of his past jahilliya and viewed the deeds of his jahilliya with great caution and suspicion. The Companions knew that they used to be in falsehood and delusion and then they moved to the guidance, that they had been in darkness and then moved into the light, and that they had been in decline and then they rose to the highest horizon. These feelings made them leave everything they had been doing in jahilliya and viewed it with fearful caution. This is why they had numerous questions about everything they faced until they were forbidden to do so. It was because they felt that they were facing a new leadership, a new vision, and a new life that they needed to ask about every detail big or small.

This rejection of all that they had been doing in jahilliya, in light of their new reality was what created the first generation. They were afraid to do anything before asking for guidance, which created in themselves a sort of fear that made them like a soldier who is afraid to take a wrong step after Allah blessed him by Islam. Perhaps this also explains the new and strong loyalty and feeling of devotion which filled the hearts of the new Muslims when they converted to Islam. They became loyal to this Religion, to the leaders of this Religion, to the perceptions of this Religion, to the values of this Religion, and to the direction of this Religion. They wiped their hands clean of all the old leaderships, the tribal leaders, tribal-based values, the customs, behaviors, and mannerisms of jahilliya. They left all this, crushed it, and entered with a new spirit into Islam, with a new vision and new loyalty.

Hence, true loyalty to this Truth was one of the characteristics of those who entered Islam for the first time. They did not enter dragging in their customs, traditions, and old loyalties, nor did they come to bargain or haggle with Islam and say "we would worship your Lord one day and you worship our gods one day." They did not say "be considerate and ease the obligations." Instead, they dropped everything old, objected to it, and viewed it with contempt and scorn. They set off towards the new light, the new horizon, and the new purity in order to learn.

## **The emotional separation, and the physical separation**

Qutub then continues:

**"There is complete emotional separation between the Muslim's past in jahilliya and his newly-established Islam. This gives rise to complete abandonment of links to the jahili society**

**and social connections. He separates completely from his jahili environment and joins totally the Islamic environment. Even if he would interact with non-Believers in the world of trade and everyday dealings, emotional isolation is one thing and everyday dealings are another."**

This issue is one of the most important issues which confounds many of those who receive Islam in this era: They do not know, nor do they differentiate between emotional isolation and actual isolation in dealings. Emotional isolation is one thing and complete alienation from physical reality is another.

Indeed a Muslim is required to dedicate his loyalty to the new Religion and the new Belief. Moreover, the Believer's Belief (aqeedah) should be determined by the light of the Supremacy, Uniqueness and Oneness of Allah (swt) (Tawheed) and he is required to purify his heart from all it had of the doctrines of polytheism and jahilliya before. With regards to the physical world of dealings however, these issues need jurisprudence which moves with reality and with the stages of establishment of Islam. Surely all these rules which control the movement in the world of dealings are derived from the fundamentals of Islam, and not from our own whims. Muslims and the Muslim group need in this era not just a theoretical jurisprudence, but jurisprudence or methodology of movement which gives certain detailed measurements of the needs of the stage and the needs of the group, rather than the needs of the moment and the needs of the individual. Thus, a Muslim's life needs to be regulated by a practical jurisprudence that gives detailed guidance in real life scenarios which control his dealings with people of jahilliya. Thus Qutub says:

**"This renunciation of the jahili environment, its customs and traditions, its ideas and concepts, proceeded from the replacement of polytheism by the concept of the Oneness of Allah and His Supremacy. For the Muslim, the jahili view of life was thrown away and replaced by the Islamic world-view, and thereby he was admitted into the new Islamic community, under a new leadership, and dedicating himself with full loyalty and commitment to this new society and new leadership.**

**For the new Muslim, this was the parting-of-the-ways and the starting of a new journey, a journey free from the pressures of the values, concepts and traditions of jahili society. The Muslim would encounter nothing burdensome except the torture and oppression from jahili society; but he had already decided in the depths of his heart that he would face it with equanimity and great nobleness, and hence no amount of pressure from jahili society, Allah willing, would have any effect on his continuing steadfastness."**

There is no doubt that the person who receives Islam in the correct manner and understands the Oneness and Supremacy of Allah (swt) properly, as well as judges the society around him correctly, will have no hesitation in abandoning this society which he will clearly see as jahili. In fact, he will find nothing in this jahili society that is desirable and will wish to flee and abandon this society all together. He will scorn the idea that one could live in some sort of compromise with the jahili society, or to be a hypocrite accepting some of their concepts and at the same time he engages in inviting people to Islam. Indeed, he would find himself most reluctant to live with such a society and would desire to completely separate himself, both physically and mentally, to a new independent life; Islam.

Hence a Muslim may feel that he wants to completely isolate himself - both physically as well as emotionally from this jahilliya. For example, he may have the urge to go live on top of a mountain far away from today's societies and create his own society, however this would actually be

against the proper Islamic methodology. The Islamic methodology works to temper the Muslim, and prevent him from such rash and miscalculated steps where he goes beyond limiting himself to emotional isolation into actual physical separation. Actually, the Islamic methodology requires the Muslims to be very very cautious in dealing with jahilliya, and to take each step after full study and calculation. The Islamic methodology moves the Muslim society through stages that precisely reflect its development in Belief, along with its material capabilities. For example, Islam forbids the Muslims from direct confrontation at the very beginning of their movement. Thus, in the absence of direct confrontation (which would destroy the movement in its infancy), Muslims have the chance to slowly and deeply develop the Islamic manners and traditions within their characters, as well as their material capabilities. In this way, the Islamic community develops until it gets to the later steps where it can now go ahead and openly confront the jahili society, then physically isolate itself from jahilliya, and further on actually engage in fighting the jahilliya. This is how the pure and Faithful society is created, struggling and existing just for Tawheed, and for establishment of Allah's authority on earth. This is how the Muslims must finally face jahilliya, with a clear confrontation, however there is the step-by-step methodology of Islam that we must follow, so that we can establish the vision the Messenger of Allah (sas) who has commanded us to fulfill: "the Muslim and non-Muslim should not be together in the same place of power or leadership..."

Before actualization of this vision, there are long stages the Muslim needs to go through. This journey starts from the whole-hearted testimonial to the Oneness, and Supremacy of Allah (swt), summarized in the words "there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad (sas) is His Messenger." From the moment of declaring this testimonial the Muslim becomes a stranger to jahili society, and progresses until he reaches a state of complete isolation from jahili society. We must emphasize that the emotional isolation should take place from the very first moment of testifying that "there is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah," and then physical isolation will come later. So initially, the Muslim movement should be established and steps taken after thorough and cautious study, according to Islamic rules and regulations which match the stage that the movement is living.

We should emphasize that the Muslim, no matter what stage he is applying in the Islamic methodology, should never have the feelings of inferiority or weakness. Dealing with jahilliya, he should always feel that he is free and superior, but at the same time he calculates his movements carefully. In fact, he must take his steps according to the regulations of the Islamic methodology, and his Belief in Allah, and not through his desires, rigidness, rashness, or his feelings of defeat, carelessness or impatience. It is a methodology that controls him on how to move, how to deal with others and what he should take and leave from this jahili society. The Muslim is directed through these stages until the right time comes for complete isolation from the jahili society, at which time he can build his own society based on pure Faith - at the time that Allah (swt) wants him to do so.

### **The chapter's conclusion: contemporary jahilliya, and the duties of the Islamic movement**

Qutub states:

**"Now, we are in the same situation, completely surrounded by jahilliya, and furthermore, this jahilliya is even worse. Indeed every thing surrounding us is jahilliya - the concepts and morals, the faith, the traditions and customs, source of culture, the arts, the laws, and even**

**what we may think as “Islamic culture,” “Islamic sources,” “Islamic philosophy,” and “Islamic thought” are actually parts and products of jahilliya.”**

This statement is describing “modern jahilliya” which we will discuss later. Regarding the statement in this paragraph: “this jahilliya is even worse,” there is no doubt that this contemporary jahilliya is worse, harder, darker, evil and more complicated in many ways compared to the jahilliya of old. It is empty from all morals and wholesome concepts, and deviated from basic human nature and more misleading. It strives to establish every wicked deviation and abnormal behavior in society. In this respect, it is more evil and more dark than the past jahilliya which used to be characterized, to a certain extent, with simplicity, naivety and lack of persuasive tools. Also, it used to possess some of the innate morals and humane manners which prevented many of the non-Muslim dictators from abusing the Muslims. Indeed, there were some traditions of the past jahili society which were helpful for the Muslims, such as neighborliness, fulfilling the promise, honoring agreements, and generosity. All of these elements reduced the burden and unfairness of the non-Muslim towards the Companions of the Messenger of Allah. This modern jahilliya however, does not even recognize the sanctity of human morals; instead, it hates every thing related to Islam. On top of this, modern jahilliya has great resources and expertise in fighting the spread of Islam which has made it harder and darker than all the past jahilliyas combined.

**“People’s concepts, beliefs, traditions, and customs are from jahilliya-”** this is clear from reality. Modern jahilliya has once again returned to its “source of culture,” which is Greek and Roman jahilliya. The Greko-Roman tradition, as they call it, had everything they want from moral corruption and cruelty to imperialism.

**“The arts -”** their arts and literature are inspired once again by the old arts from the time of the Romans and Greeks. These arts have extreme promiscuity; a person becomes embarrassed when he enters the museums in Rome or Greece and sees the naked statues. They have returned once again to their naked arts which is spreading now excessively and widely; one only need to glance at their magazines, journals, and every place like public undergrounds and stations.

In every country in Europe and America you find these shameful pictures easily. As was stated before, nakedness has become a goal of the Jewish agenda, forcing the human to become naked. Modern arts and literature have become extreme, and this jahilliya has no shame, while there used to be a lot of morals and modesty in the Arabic and Eastern jahilliya in general.

**“The laws-”** Laws and regulations are also jahilliya.

Actually, many of our contemporary thinkers are provoked and angry with what Sayyid Qutub has expressed: **“A lot of what we think is Islamic culture, resources, philosophy, and thought is in fact also made up by jahilliya.”** This is, indeed, the truth! Anybody who understands the real concepts of Islam and the reality of the fundamental pillar of Islam, Tawheed, as it was revealed by the Messengers of Allah (peace be on them all) would know that. In fact, when someone reads the present literature and what is so called “Islamic thought, or Islamic culture,” he will immediately realize that this is the product of jahilliya, an imitation and an integration with jahilliya.

This has not happened only in the present era but also in the past as well, when some of the Islamic scholars tried to defend against the Greek and Roman thoughts and philosophy as well as Persian myths. Hence, they started using the Greek and Persian philosophical terms and phrases, so they made up what is called the “science of speech” which borrowed the same phrases

and concepts of atheism and Greek culture. They tried to give it Islamic forms, but in fact it did not become Islamic nor did it stay purely atheist. This resulted in a mixture of Islamic thought with Greek, Roman, and atheist thought and made a distorted culture. This distortion is clear in all what is so called "Islamic philosophy."

In the modern era, European and Western thoughts have colonized the Islamic world and started to reshape the national culture present in the Islamic world in the mold of Western culture as this is very clear in every aspect. They succeeded in changing the thoughts, expressions, measures, and the values toward those of the Western world. Hence the effect on culture and thought is a measure for the success of the colonization of the Islamic world. We can say that they succeeded greatly in damaging the Islamic Belief, morals, behaviors, clothing, dealings, economy, politics, sports, and education in every way.

There is no doubt, that modern jahilliya in the Islamic world is worse than Western jahilliya because it is foreign and imposed, whereas Western jahilliya is self-produced and genuine. The jahilliya in the Islamic world now is not respectful, nor original - it is imported and unreal, and it has a mixture of truth, errors, and distortions. We have found that a lot of modern "Islamic" thoughts are affected by the non-Muslim thoughts and concepts. Therefore, the Muslim should be careful in choosing what is written in the name of Islam.

When we survey the current media and literature in the so-called Islamic world, we find big alluring titles and topics which seem great, but when we read them, we find that they contain a lot of non-Muslim concepts. Even a lot of children's books are affected by Western jahilliya, therefore we must place the so-called Islamic culture in the category of the production of jahilliya, and not in the category of true Islamic production. This will lead us to analyze in detail all the jahili works when we want to make our own Islamic society.

We have to imitate the efforts of our predecessors who had maintained the Islamic civilization, as they continuously had to struggle to purify the culture, retain the good and give it a real Islamic sense. Thus, we can understand the statement of the martyr Qutub: **"A lot of what we think is Islamic culture, resources, philosophy, and thoughts are also made up by jahilliya..."** The phrase "it is made up by jahilliya," shows, also, that jahilliya deliberately aims at reshaping and redefining Islam. This is another truth which is not clear to many people. Jahilliya has cunningly undertaken detailed studies to measure reflex actions of the Muslims. For example, if they want the Islamic world to write about a certain topic in a certain way- according to their devious wishes - they have figured out how to trick the so-called Islamic world to carry out their own agenda. These have all been scientifically studied and tested. When they want their opponent to react in a certain way, they invent a topic for him which forces him to retaliate in the way that they want. So, in this sense, we can say that a lot of the Islamic writings are reflex actions to Western provocations, and jahilliya has expertly planned on purpose to force them to retaliate in the way they want from them. This is history repeated; the jahilliya of old times utilized the same tricks in promoting "the science of expression," where they wanted Muslims to write about Islam using Greek and Roman philosophy and unfortunately many Muslim scholars fell in the trap. They corrupted the Islamic Belief with incompatible ideas and distorted terminology, which did not evoke faith or lead to certainty, thus man was left to muddle in idle thoughts and talk which ended up destroying the Faith.

Islam has its own shape and form, likewise Islamic Belief has its own characteristic: these are all determined by the Quran, which presents the Faith in a special way. Thus, whoever wants to spread the Islamic Belief must place it in the form of the Quran. We learn this method of thinking

from the Quran itself, and also from the way of the Messenger of Allah (sas) when he presented the Truth of Faith. Hence, we too must present Islam in this way; the unique way of Islam itself, and not by the methodology, concepts, and way of jahilliya. In fact, if the previous generations fell in the trap of thinking about Islam by jahili methodology and attitudes, then more recently, our contemporaries have fallen in the trap in a even greater way. This is because they added to the problem their feelings of inferiority in front of the West. Thus, we can say with full confidence that **“A lot of what we think is Islamic culture, resources, philosophy, and thoughts are also made up by jahilliya...”**

Therefore, if we receive the facts from these jahili sources, even if they were bearing Islamic titles, **“we will not understand Islam and we will not be like the great generation, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (sas), which was itself the product of true Islam.”**

### **The duties of the contemporary Islamic movement**

Qutub says:

**“It must be then, in the period of forming and growing, we must protect ourselves from all the effects of jahilliya. We must return to the pure and non-mixed sources, from which that generation gained their concepts and rules, and from those sources we should gain our insight into life and our morals, values, behaviors, and our methods, rules for leadership, politics, economy, and basically every aspect of life.”**

This is what the rightly guided group should do; It should free its members from the effects of jahilliya, which are abundant in our present time. These effects are characterized by deviousness and evil, that can mislead many of those who want to spread Islam. We find that many of the contemporary Islamic movements do not pay attention to these fine details which we talk about, so we find them extremely naive when they consider many of the media outlets and jahili books as resources for their Islamic movement. From this we find that the children of their movement grow in distorted ways, similar to a distorted fetus which was the result of harmful medications taken by the mother during pregnancy, so they become like distorted infants. Therefore, we find many of the young men engaged in the Islamic movements were not brought up on pure manners, did not receive from the pure sources, and have only received from wrongful and doubtful sources. They have distorted thoughts, behaviors, and understanding, even though they have good and sincere intentions, thus they commit grave mistakes in their movement, call, and Islamic mission, as Allah (swt) describes:

﴿ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴾ [الزخرف: ٣٧]

“while they think that they are rightly guided” (Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:37)

There is no doubt that this issue is something that we must pay very close attention to, and we must not forget it for even one moment. We must be diligent no matter how much jahilliya pressures us to change our ways, or however compromises are beautified for us. Moreover, we must not trust ourselves to the level that we become relaxed and negligent when we receive things coming to us. Therefore, we must filter things in a precise and sensitive way so that we only allow those things which are pure and have been filtered. Thus, we can guarantee that we are honest to the future generations which we want to bring up in a rightful manner. We must not care what objections and hardships we face or even some of the restrictions that we and our families have to endure. We should not be weak in front of these pressures and should not be

relaxed, under the pretense of sympathy or reduction of burden. Otherwise, we will commit grave mistakes and our future generations will be distorted because of our misguided sympathy. This point in particular is one of the most important points in the issues of culture, spreading Islam, and upbringing. We must insist regardless of the unhappy and rebellious voices, even if they are coming from within us, and we must not let these cries make us give up or compromise in issues which may harm us, no matter what were the circumstances. It is better for us to be a small, rightfully guided, pure group than to be a big, distorted, false group, because Allah (swt) will only give the victory to the group which is rightfully guided and faithful to Him.

When the first Muslims faced hardships in a battle, they use to call on the most distinguished among them. They would say: "make an exclusive army, O` Khalid." This is because when they used to enter a battle mixed with some of the hypocrites and those of weak Faith, victory would be delayed. When the distinguished Companions took over- even with their few numbers-, victory came quickly because of the purity of Faith. So, the small group with high status of Faith will have a greater chance for victory from Allah (swt) compared to the big weak group which would be of mixed quality.

This point in particular is the one that we must be conscious of, especially that some of us have tendency to sway towards leniency and sympathy. They want us to reduce some of the limitations which we forced upon ourselves and which we believe has protected us until the present time from a lot of distortions. Hence, we must be careful and be aware of this point- filtering our sources continuously- so we will not lose the company, and victory of Allah (swt). Thus Qutub reminds us:

**"We must return to it (the Quran) with a sense of instruction for obedience and action, and not for academic discussion and enjoyment."**

This issue is very important. We will never be giving Allah and His Book the proper respect if we read the Quran and this produces a temporary affection and admiration, without actual effect and change in our behavior. Actually, when we read the Quran, it should have an immediate effect on us, leading us to check and refine our emotions and behavior, family and group relations and even our relations with jahilliya. When practical deeds do not follow admiration and theoretical persuasion, then this should be a warning sign, that we may not be chosen and may not be welcomed in the path of the Messengers of Allah and Islamic leaders. We must receive in order to apply what we are commanded, rather than admiring theoretical cultural knowledge. Qutub explains further:

**"Along the path of Islam we will indeed meet the artistic beauty in the Quran, together with its fantastic stories, scenes of the Day of Judgment, and wonderfully logical expressions. We will find all of these as those who mainly seek to study and admire beauty. However, we must meet all these with determination to obey, and to apply what is asked of us. Our first goal is to know so we can apply: what does the Quran ask us to do? What is the whole outlook and attitude that Allah (swt) wants us to have? What does the Quran want our feelings towards Allah (swt) to be? How does it want our behavior, our morals and manners, and our way of life to be?"**

Answering these questions and then applying the knowledge gained in real life is the goal. Through this goal we will attain not only all what those who only seek beauty and art, but much more. We will find this art and beauty, however this is not our primary aim. Instead our first goal is to be Allah's followers and become a Quranic generation close in its characteristics to that first

unique generation, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (sas). Unfortunately, we will not all be able to rise to that level that Allah has willed for the first generation, nevertheless we should try our utmost to come as close as we can.

Indeed, we hope the reward from Allah (swt) and to be among those who He has chosen by working hard and trying our best and competing to reach that high position. We will only approach this high position if we receive every thing from that pure source, the Quran, and not from those mixed sources. If we purify our source in this way, we will be able to trust our feelings, that they will be the same as the Companions' feelings where they received the orders and put them into practice straight away.

## **Breaking free from the pressures of jahilliya**

We should add a third point from Qutub:

**“We must also free ourselves from the clutches of jahili society, jahili concepts, jahili traditions and jahili leadership.”**

We have to liberate ourselves from the desire of reaching high positions and power in this non-Muslim society, whatever form it may be, and we must not have any feelings of fear, retreat or seek safety in compromise. We must keep our loyalty to the Truth and to our Religion, so that we will be on the righteous path. We must get rid of all kinds of jahili influence in the forms of views, traditions, etc., and we must not give them loyalty or validity, nor feel fear from their power, because in reality, jahilliya can not even give themselves any benefit or protect themselves from any harm.

## **Our mission is changing the reality of jahilliya, not to reconcile with it**

Qutub emphasizes:

**“Our duty is not to have any compromise with this non Muslim society, jahilliya, and not to give it any loyalty. Our duty is to change ourselves first, and then to change society.”**

This point is very important and is overlooked by many Islamic movements. Those who are working in the Islamic field think that they can stand only by their good intentions, and by their Islamic thoughts, and the society will be changed!! Thus, as soon as they know about the Truth of Islam, they start to deliver the Message, face the society, and even attempt to change the society by force!! They imagine that this is the easiest way to establish Islam and the people will follow them. That is not the truth! The truth is, humanity must see practical examples presenting Islam, and face all the consequences of hardship and pain with patience. Only after this, it is hoped that the people will be persuaded. The issue is not an issue of mere theoretical calling or announcement; along with it, the practical examples must be there, as the people listen with their eyes and not with their ears. Do some Islamic advocates actually put what they say into practice? Do they have the pure and complete loyalty to the Truth they believe in? Do they have any fear, retreat, or hypocrisy? Are they feeling that they are in a high rank above the society, as they are Believers? Are they just saying words? If they were to face the consequences, would they draw back and retreat? Thus Qutub says:

**“The first duty and mission is to change the situation of the non-Muslim society from its roots - this society which opposes and is against the Islamic concept and as such deprives us by force and pressure from living as Allah wants us to live.”**

Even before this, our first duty and mission is to change ourselves in order then to change the society to ultimately become an Islamic society. However, the way to achieve that aim is to change ourselves first; in fact we cannot change ourselves except by those three points we have already mentioned: 1) to purify the source through which we receive our concepts and behaviors; 2) to receive the commands in order to practice; 3) to get rid of all the pressures of jahilliya, and liberate ourselves from all the remains of jahilliya in our lives. If we follow these steps, then –as Allah wills- the non-Muslim society will eventually change.

It is prohibited to have any sort of agreement with the non-Muslim society at any stage except under one condition: that the non-Muslim society is converted completely and becomes an Islamic society.

This non-Muslim society collides and disagrees with Islam; it is not just a minor conflict as some Islamic movements imagine. These who work in the Islamic field think that the gap between us and the non-Muslim society is small and that the people are “OK,” their faith is correct, and their devious behaviors are due to ignorance and the pressures of jahilliya. No, it is not the truth!! The truth is that those people are on a different religion; they have their own religion and the difference is essential and the conflict is at the core of the matter. They want to deprive us of truly living as Allah wants us to live; as true Muslims.

**“Our first step should be to raise ourselves above the jahili society and all its values and concepts. We will never change our own values and concepts in order to make a bargain with this jahili society. Never! We and it are on different roads, and if we take even one step in its company, we will lose our goal entirely and lose our way as well!**

**We know that in this we will have difficulties and trials, and we will have to make great sacrifices, but if we strive to walk in the footsteps of the first generation of Muslims, through whom Allah established His system and gave it victory over jahilliya, then we will succeed.”**

Again, **“our first step will be to raise ourselves above the jahili society and all its values and concepts:”** this feeling of super-eminence is very crucial as we mentioned earlier. It is a main characteristic of the pioneer and advocate of Islam that will face jahilliya with all its huge, dangerous, heavy, and dreadful organizations and capabilities. These pioneers are unarmed persons, who have nothing but their Belief, Islamic honor, and feelings of super-eminence with their Islam.

If we lose these feelings of honor, superiority, and boldly challenging jahilliya, as the Messengers (peace be on them all) challenged their nations and welcomed the battle raising their voices: “don’t wait, don’t hesitate, come to us as fast as you could!” We should always face jahilliya with such mentality – the mentality of the Messengers, and with this super-eminence, and disregard of jahilliya. We know that the consequences cannot exceed getting killed in the sake of this Truth. They do not have much more to do than strangling, hanging, or bullets; and so be it, and our problem is solved; we go to Paradise which is as broad as all the heavens and earth! If we are really loyal to Islam, we should take this as our first step: that we are far superior to this jahili society in all its values and concepts. We should never feel defeated, at any moment, or show them any compromise in any issue, whether it is an essential Islamic issue or one of its details. We should face what their society produces such as advanced modernization with an unimpressed indifference, and say, “what you produce is a gift from human effort that is not truly from you; it is only from the Creator, Allah (swt) who gave you this brain. Instead of helping people, you (jahilliya) are spoiling humanity with the way you are using your capabilities for

oppression and corruption across the world. So we are not thankful for what you (jahilliya) have accomplished, because you are using the gifts of Allah (swt) in disobeying Allah (swt)!"

So, jahilliya should never feel that we are grateful for their accomplishments; although we can take their advancements and utilize them in our own way, never praising them as jahili achievements, but as a normal product of any ordinary human effort. Even if we are being devoured by them, we have to feel higher than them, even if we are few people and weak. This is a very important point: we should not stand breathless and stare in astonishment, attracted to them because of their material production, otherwise we would appear defeated, as if we were missing something so huge. In fact, we have something much greater and whatever they have done really is not worth a thing. Indeed, we can actually live without it, however they cannot afford to live without what we have of Belief, values and concepts. What we have is much more valuable, higher, and more necessary than what they have.

Therefore, we should not behave in front of jahilliya's accomplishments in a breathless and mentally defeated manner, and feel as if they have done us a great favor. We can give-up all this and ride the backs of donkeys, live in tents, and give rebirth to Islam again, the same way as our predecessors did at the time of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (sas) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them). This feeling of super-eminence is very important while facing the jahili nation; it should be within ourselves whenever we get into a battle with jahilliya, and they have to feel that we are totally a new type of people. They must see that we are one of a kind, a type of people that will not surrender to them, a type of people that will not weaken before them, or will not fall to our knees admiring what they have done or being afraid of them. This is how we should be, same as the Companions did before Rustom and Yazdagard (Persian Generals) and before all the mighty forces during that period. These arrogant military commanders were easily humiliated whenever a simple Arab who was Muslim came to them; such as Rabiya Bin Amer & Mughira Bin Shouba. These Companions entered and confronted Rustom and Yazdagard with the feelings of superiority, and that they, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (sas), were the masters! And as a result these so-called kings retreated. This is how we should be whenever we get into confrontation with jahilliya, being ready at any time at any moment, whether we are just a few individuals or we are kings on thrones. We should never forget that we get our power and our super-eminence only from this Truth- Islam - and not from ourselves.

The next crucial point is that **"we will not change our own values and concepts to compromise with this jahili society."**

No! We should stand and they should come to us, and this attitude makes jahilliya very angry as mentioned before. They are totally uncomfortable with someone standing before them, full of feelings of eminence. They start accusing the Islamic groups in all their ways, through publications, books, journals, and all media. They proclaim that the Islamic groups refuse other opinions, discussions, and that they are intolerant and domineer with their own views, and think of themselves, with their thoughts, above all other humans! This fact makes them very annoyed, and actually, this is the Truth that any Muslim has to live, and feel. The Muslim has to be high above and refuse any other opinions, refuse to have a discussion that will result in giving any credibility to jahilliya. We do agree to have conversations with jahilliya, but not from where they stand or their point of view; on the contrary, it should be from our base and from our point of view. This is very important and we should have certainty regarding this matter. We should not change our concepts and values for their sake or for the sake of approaching them. We have seen

how the Quran has reproached Messenger Muhammad (sas) in a very tough manner when he avoided the poor blind man for the sake of gaining the attention and inviting the notables of Quraish to Islam (see Surah 80: Abasa).

## Islam is concerned with the methodology; not the results

Islam is very cautious and gives great importance to methodology even more than the results. We should be very eager and meticulous about our methodology, about our concepts, and values, and we should never abandon or compromise them. This is what we have and offer; if the jahilliya joins, they are welcome and if they refuse, then we say to them:

﴿ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١﴾ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾ [الكافرون: ١-٣]

“Say: O you who disbelieve! We will not worship what you worship and you will not worship what we worship.” (Surah Al-Kafiroon 109:1-3)

This is what the Quran taught us; to never change our concepts, values, or our scales, as some groups did like the Muslims Brotherhood, Mawdoudy, or Abbas Madny. They tried to approach jahilliya by acknowledging democracy, other opinions, elections, voting, and cooperation in what “we agreed on initially.” These compromises should never be committed; **“Never! We and jahilliya are on different roads, and if we take even one step in its company, we will lose our goal entirely and lose our way as well!”** As Allah (swt) said to His Messenger:

﴿ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ﴿١١﴾ فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ ﴿١٢﴾ [عبس: ١١-١٢]

“Behold! This is an admonition (11) So let him, who wishes, pay heed (12)”  
(Surah Abasa 80:11-12)

Thus, Allah (swt) forbade the Messenger to comply with them even for a second; for instance, Allah (swt) reproached His Messenger (sas) very strongly when the Messenger hesitated a little in his marriage with Zainab (may Allah be pleased with her) after her divorce from Zaid (may Allah be pleased with him): (Zaid was the adopted son of the Messenger of Allah – adopted before Allah Himself nullified this type of relationship. After the nullification, the Messenger still continued to take care of Zaid, however as a brother in Islam, and not as a son. According to jahili tradition however, marriage with the divorced wife of an adopted son was shunned, and due to his history with Zaid, the Messenger hesitated, though just for an instant, when he was ordered to marry Zainab after her divorce from Zaid. Allah commanded His Messenger to declare that this is lawful and wholesome no matter what jahili customs may say.)

﴿ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ ﴿٣٧﴾ [الأحزاب: ٣٧]

“...But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah...” (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:37)

Thus, Islam does not favor anyone even the Messenger (sas). Hence, the Quran came teaching and guiding us through these kind of warnings and commanding that we should never compromise, modify, flatter or provide a truce or middle way between Islam and jahilliya:

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ﴿٣٩﴾ [الأحزاب: ٣٩]

“[It is the practice of those] who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah.” (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:39)

These Quranic verses came commenting on these stories to educate the pioneers that they should not be scared from any blamer, and that they should not give up even if they have to die for this sake. Dying is much better than stepping down from this Truth, even if this step is as small as an ant’s foot step.

## The law of affliction

Qutub reminds us:

**“We know that in this we will have difficulties and trials, and we will have to make great sacrifices...”**

This is necessary as we will not be brought up unless we go through suffering and hardship. We will not learn by sitting in an air conditioned rooms, eating, having cold drinks and having light conversation. This will not last forever since we are in a truce period and we have the chance to live with the Truth, and with Allah (swt), but the time that we will get tested will certainly come, as Allah (swt) says:

﴿ أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴾ [العنكبوت: ٢]

“Do men think that they will be left alone saying, ‘We believe,’ and that they will not be tested?” (Surah Al-Ankaboot 20:2)

We will surely be tested, and we should be ready for that test! We should know that the more we receive of such suffering, discomfort and unease, the more we will increase our interaction with this Truth. We must sacrifice, and shake off all tiredness. We must get rid of all of our personal ambitions, and desires for worldly positions. In jails we will get bad-mouthed, our fathers and mothers will be insulted, and we will get hit, offended, and insulted in ways that we cannot imagine now. This is not new, as it already happened with the Messenger of Allah (sas), when rubbish was thrown on his noble body. He got beaten and Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) came to defend him but he was beaten as well until he bled heavily. They did this with The Messengers’ (sas) Companions: Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) was dragged through the streets of Makkah by the lowest people in that society. Therefore, what the Muslims will find at all times is discomfort and uneasiness. We are not so special that we are entitled to keep meeting in our comfortable air-conditioned rooms, eating and drinking. This has to change one day, and we will find ourselves before a very hard test and examination, where we will not find anyone but Allah (swt) to help us. After He sees the truthfulness in our hearts, He can relieve us from all of this pain; but before that we have to pass through the exam; so indeed, we should be tested. So, if we pass the exam, Allah (swt) will ease things. Nevertheless, we should pass the exam first, just like Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be on them all):

﴿ فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ ﴾ [الصافات: ١٠٣]

“So when they had both submitted their wills to Allah, and he (Ibrahim) had laid him prostrate on his (Ismail’s) forehead for sacrifice” (Sura Al-Saffat 37:103)

Remember, only when Ibrahim (peace be on him) really intended to sacrifice his son, when he and his son were satisfied with Allah's (swt) ruling, and had faith in Allah's (swt) orders, only then Allah (swt) relieved them:

﴿ مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ ﴾ [النساء: ١٤٧]

“What can Allah gain by your punishment, if ye are grateful and ye believe?”  
(Surah Al-Nisa 4:147)

Thus, if Islam and true submission is really achieved internally for an individual- as was in the examples of Ibrahim and those who struggled in the way of Allah- then the Muslim's problems are solved as is mentioned in the Quran:

﴿ فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ ﴾ [الصفات: ١٠٣]

“So when they had both submitted their wills to Allah, and he (Ibrahim) had laid him prostrate on his (Ismail's) forehead for sacrifice.” (Sura Al-Saffat 37:103)

﴿ ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُوا ثُمَّ جَاهَدُوا وَصَبِرُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾ [النحل: ١١٠]

“But verily thy Lord,- to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions,- and who thereafter strive and fight for the Faith and patiently persevere,- Thy Lord, after all this is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Surah Al-Nahl 16:110)

The struggle is not just migration from Makkah to Madinah. This may come as a relief, so you first have to get tested, examined, and then migrate. Following this is even more struggle: jihad. Acceptance by Allah (swt) will not be achieved unless you pass these tough stages:

﴿ ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُوا ثُمَّ جَاهَدُوا وَصَبِرُوا ﴾ [النحل: ١١٠]

“But verily thy Lord,- to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions,- and who thereafter strive and fight for the Faith and patiently persevere,- Thy Lord, after all this is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Surah Al-Nahl 16:110)

Undoubtedly, the reward of the one who migrates and fights in the way of Allah (swt), and bears these patiently, his reward is very big. This is what Allah (swt) has promised:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ﴾ [النحل: ٤١]

“To those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, after suffering oppression,- We will assuredly give a goodly home in this world.” (Surah Al-Nahl 16:41)

Allah (swt) has promised the Muslims a good life here on earth, even before their life after death. We have seen this in the lives of the Messenger's (sas) Companions. They reached positions they could not have ever dreamed of in the best of their dreams, in terms of power, command, position, and high rank. Just consider how a desert-dwelling bedouin became the prince, the ruler, to vast territories, and another bedouin became such a rich man that his wealth after death got weighed with scales of gold! Allah (swt) fulfilled His promise in this life:

﴿ وَلَا جُرْ الْأَجْرَةَ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ [النحل: ٤١]

“...but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater. If they only realized this!”  
(Surah Al-Nahl 16:41)

However, this was only after the Muslims were tested and sacrificed, and after they suffered with a spirit of satisfaction. I cried when I read about one of the invasions into the Persian lands: The castle of the enemy was very well fortified and Muslims did not know what to do. The leader of this army started encouraging and reminding Muslims to be completely devoted to Allah (swt), and he did not even specify when the battle would start. While doing this, one of the soldiers stood up and said to him “do you need anything from Messenger Muhammad? I have decided to go to him right now- in Paradise!” The leader replied, “yes, pass my greetings to him and tell the Messenger of Allah (sas) that we have truly found what Allah (swt) had promised.” Thus, the man, and all Muslims entered the battle with fierceness and utmost vigor until they won the battle. Indeed, I cry intensely whenever I imagine this situation, witnessing these feelings of certainty - this amazing certainty that they had - this certainty that they are going to Allah (swt) and they are holding The Truth, and their life is so cheap compared to this Truth. This man was saying to his leader that he is going to Messenger Muhammad (sas), meaning that he would die now, and yes this is what happened: he went through the battle, he fought in the cause of Allah, and died, and the Persians were horribly defeated. No doubt that this spirit, this really amazing spirit, was made of very deep, firm and solid Faith.

So, there is no doubt that we should pass this experience as our great ancestors did. We should encounter suffering and discomfort, and we should do what is expected from us with a satisfied and pleased spirit in the same way as the Companions did. Especially what they had done in the Battles of Riddah (secession battles – the series of battles against the tribes that left Islam after the Messenger’s death). There were astonishing feats from the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) in these battles - situations that were seemingly beyond human capacity. Nevertheless, they were facing the terror with a strange defiance, as if they were playing in a playground. For example, Baraa Bin Malek (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “Put me on the blades of the spears and throw me over the wall, into the garden holding Musailamah the liar’s supporters, so that I will fall on them and open the door for you or I’ll be martyred.” They immediately did as he suggested. They hoisted him up with their sharp blades and threw him above the fortress door, and he fell on Musailamah’s supporters and killed ten of them and opened the fortress door for the Muslim army to get in. They easily agreed to this unusual request, and this is great proof that all these soldiers were on the same level of understanding and realization of the concepts as Baraa Bin Malek (may Allah be pleased with him). In this battle no less than 20,000 of Musailamah’s supporters were killed as well as Musailamah himself...

We have to live with these events. We should read the Companions' stories again, read them with these new feelings, and live with them in a new way. We should stop at each word and contemplate at what these Companions said and lived. We need to do this in order to know where we stand, and to know how they managed to do all this, and how we should live like the Companions. We should once again review the Companions' history, with their astonishing details - a great testimonial to how tireless they were upholding the Truth.

The one who lives at this height and then looks down to the despicable reality around him, with all its dirtiness and humiliation, as well as its ridiculous concerns, no doubt he will thank Allah (swt) for the richness that he lives. This should push us to insist on living at these heights, even if jahilliya tore us apart. We have to live in this lofty position, and we have to see this swamp below,

to thank Allah (swt) for what we have, and for all these blessings and favors. We should know that this will not pass without suffering, discomfort, burden, and sacrifice.

Qutub finally says:

**“If we are to walk in the footsteps of the first generation of Muslims, through whom Allah established His system and gave it victory over jahilliya, then we will be obliged to make a lot of sacrifices and we will face a lot of difficulties.”**

We must be keenly aware that the devil will put all kind of fears before us, like imprisonment, torture, death, losing our kids, positions, certificates, and humiliation; all this the devil puts in front of us as obstacles in order to make us fear advancing on the true road. When Qutub says: "if we are to walk in the footsteps of the first generation of Muslims," means that otherwise, we have the option of walking in the footsteps of others like Abu-jahil, Omayia bin Khalaf and the other disbelievers. So, the road and choice is clear in front of us: if we are insisting on what we say - that we want to be with our exalted predecessors, from the Muhajereen and Ansar (the two groups of Companions specifically from Madinah), and be the people who follow them sincerely, then we have no road other than this one road which is the road of the Messengers of Allah (peace be on them all), with all its suffering, sacrifice, bloodshed, and thorns. After this commitment, we are happy that Allah (swt) will do whatever He wants with us.

Although, the road appears very hard and filled with thorns, suffering, sacrifice, and bloodshed, but in reality, the jahili roads are filled with even greater troubles, difficulties and uneasiness. This is because jahilliya puts itself through rivers of blood and thorns in order to achieve their own goals and way of life - for instance, that is what happens during their military coups:

﴿ إِنَّ تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ﴾ [النساء: ١٠٤]

“...If ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships; but ye have Hope from Allah, while they have none...” (Surah Al-Nisa 4:104)

Thus, even if we suffer something similar compared to jahilliya, nevertheless we will be far above them for we expect a magnificent reward from Allah (swt). At the end of the road, we will not be the same, so our gain is assured. Even if the pains and unease is as long as this life, we should know that anyone who wants to achieve an ambition has to pay its price. We as well have to pay a price, and we have to hope and desire for reward in the other life. In this life, we hope to elevate our humanity, our dignity, through living with Allah (swt). We need to feel that we are one of a kind, and much superior with this Truth and this Faith, facing these disgusting animals, whatever their form, place, or colour. This is the real triumph, along with the feeling of security, and peace - the feelings that Allah (swt) only gives His Faithful followers. The Believer and Faithful follower can expect Allah's (swt) intervention when the suffering gets to a point where he really thinks he can no longer withstand this torturing and unease. Allah (swt) interferes with His mercy and His grace, to give His slave ease and chooses him to live in His Paradise. Therefore, Allah (swt) is always with us, but they- the jahilliya- have no one standing by their side. They only have the devil with them, and he abandons his followers in the most critical of times, betraying them and leaving them for their enemies. Yet, there is still to come our compensation on the Last Day, and it is a compensation that we know, as Allah (swt) told us:

﴿ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ [السجدة: ١٧]

“No person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden in reserve for them - as a reward for their [good] deeds.” (Surah Sajda 32:17)

If we are Muslim, we have no other choice: if we should walk this road, we should know that this road will not ease its suffering for ambitious people. Alternatively, we can live as worms on earth, and as the worms and insects do- choosing the bottom, and ignoring the summit. Thus, everyone should select his road for himself, and Allah (swt) knows who to select for His message and service:

﴿اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمَنْ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ﴾ [الحج: ٧٥]

“Allah chooses Messengers from angels and from men for Allah is He Who hears and sees all things.” (Surah Al-Hajj 22:75)

Hence, Qutub finally says:

**“It is therefore desirable that we should be aware at all times of the nature of our course of action, of the nature of our position, and the nature of the road which we must traverse to come out of ignorance, as the distinguished and unique generation of the Companions of the Messenger (sas) succeeded.”**