Ar-Rahman
(The Beneficent)

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English translation by
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Foreword

By the grace of Allah, The Muslim Literary Trust, Trinidad and Tobago, has been able to publish the complete English translation of *Anwarf Ur Qur'an*, Part 30, by Hazrat Dr. Basharat Ahmad, in three parts. The third part, consisting of chapters 86 - 101 was published before the start of the blessed month of Ramadan. The two parts of the commentary published earlier have been well received and very much appreciated by both students and *Imams* engaged in the study the Qur'an.

As most of the chapters of Part 30, especially the last fifteen chapters, are recited in the daily prayers, this simple and impressive explanation of Qur'anic truths enlivens the hearts of the suppliants.

We are happy to present yet another English translation of the commentary. It consists of the chapter, *Ar-Rahman* (The Beneficent). The impressive and penetrating commentary of this most poetic chapter of the Qur'an, which is also called The Heart of the Qur'an, infuses into the heart of man a high sense of gratitude to his Creator for the bounteous physical and spiritual blessings bestowed gratuitously upon him by his Loving Lord.

This chapter takes its title from one of the attributes of the Divine Being, the Beneficent, with which it begins, and the entire chapter speaks of the beneficence of Allah, both in the material and spiritual realms, repeating the words: *Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

The credit of this beautiful rendition goes to our learned brothers, Kalamazad Mohammed and Captain Abdus Salaam. It will not be an exaggeration to say that at places the English translation is more impressive than the original Urdu commentary. The publication of the English translation of this chapter, *The*
Beneficent, will Insha-Allah, be yet another beautiful addition to the publications regarding commentary of the Holy Qur'an sponsored by the Trust which has also published the English translation of the Inspired Sermon by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib

ENAYAT MOHAMMED
Chairman
Dedication

To our dear Brother, Nasir Ahmad Syed for his unbounded love of this chapter, AR-RAHMAN, and also for his unstinting assistance to the Muslim Literary Trust of Trinidad and Tobago.
Acknowledgements

Sincerest gratitude to many who contributed financially and otherwise to the publication of this commentary. Among them are: Our esteemed Brother, Nasir Ahmad Syed for revising and editing the translation and also for his monetary assistance; our beloved Brother, Farouk Shah and his wife, Shirmin Shah, as well as our dear Brother, Hidayat "Dio" Mohammed and his wife, Jennifer "Jenny" Mohammed.

May Allah bless and reward them and their loved ones till the end of time.
SECTION 1: Divine Beneficence

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
The Beneficent
Taught the Qur'an.
He created man,
Taught him expression.
The sun and the moon follow a reckoning,
And the herbs and the trees adore (Him).
And the heaven, He raised it high, and He set up the measure,
That you may not exceed the measure,
And keep up the balance with equity, nor fall short in the measure.
And the earth, He has set it for (His) creatures;
Therein is fruit and palms having sheathed clusters,
And the grain with (its) husk and fragrance.
Which then of the bounties of thy Lord will you deny?
He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels,
And He created the jinn of a flame of fire.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests.
Which then of the bounties of thy Lord will you deny?
He has made the two seas to flow freely — they meet:
Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
There come forth from them pearls and corals,
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

SECTION 2: Judgement of the Guilty

Every one on it passes away -
And there endures forever the person of thy Lord.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
All those in the heavens and the earth ask of Him. Every moment He is in a state (of glory).
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Soon shall We apply Ourselves to you, O you two armies.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
O assembly of jinn and men, if you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through. You cannot pass, through but with authority.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
The flames of fire and sparks of brass will be sent upon you, then you will not be able to defend yourselves.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
So when the heaven is rent asunder, so it becomes red like red hide.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
So on that day neither man nor jinni will be asked about his sin.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
The guilty will be known by their marks, so they shall be seized by the forelocks and the feet.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will
you deny?
This is the hell which the guilty deny.
Round about shall they go between it and hot, boiling water.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

SECTION 3: Reward of the Righteous

And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Full of varieties.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Therein are two fountains flowing.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Therein are pairs of every fruit.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Reclining on beds, whose inner coverings are of silk brocade. And the fruits of the two Gardens are within reach.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Therein are those restraining their glances whom no man nor jinni has touched before them.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
As though they were rubies and pearls.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
And besides those are two (other) Gardens.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Inclining to blackness.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
Therein are two springs gushing forth.

(. . .
In the last chapter, *Al-Qamar* (The Moon), the following point was strongly emphasised - those who opposed the guidance that Allah, Most High, revealed through the glorious Qur’an were sure to suffer destruction and failure whereas those who acted on that guidance would enjoy tremendous success both in this life and in the Hereafter.

In this chapter, *Ar-Rahman* (The Beneficent), the reasons for the necessity for Divine revelation are disclosed, for, the full spiritual perfection for which man was created, could not be attained by human intellect alone. For example, we can clearly see that those who have achieved excellence in the physical sciences are bereft of spiritual knowledge. As a result, all the advancement in scientific knowledge has not been able to save the world from strife and dissension and tension and war; neither is there any hope for preventing calamities in the future, nor saving oneself from punishment in the next life despite all this progress in the material sciences. This is why Allah, through His boundless mercy and grace, has come to the assistance of man by granting to him an invaluable gift — the Holy Qur’an — which has the power to save man from pain and chastisement in this life and the next and also to enable him to achieve everlasting happiness, tranquil-
lity, peace and contentment.

_The Beneficent_  
_Taught the Qur’an._  
_He created man,_  
_Taught him expression._

_Ar-Rahman_ means the most Beneficent, One Who gives gifts without any effort on man’s part.

_Al-Insan_ (man) refers to the human race generally, or to perfect man, that is, one who has reached the pinnacle of humanity. _Bayan_ (expression) means to describe the condition of a thing. Here it signifies the faculty of speech in man. But besides speech, the word _bayan_ (expression) is used here because _nutq_ (speech) is limited to speaking whilst _bayan_ (expression) includes speaking, writing and giving signs to indicate what is in one’s mind. _Bayan_ also means explanation and elucidation, as we find in the following verses which speak of the Holy Qur’an itself:

_Surely on Him rests the collecting of it. So when We recite it follow its recitation. Again on Us rests the explaining of it_ (75:19-19).

It has been mentioned several times before that a standing miracle of the Holy Qur’an is that many times a word bearing two meanings is used in a certain verse but both meanings are applicable with one meaning serving as proof of the other. And this is the case here. The verse states that it is only through the pure grace of Allah, and not as a result of any action of man, that Allah created man as a being possessing intelligence, understanding, insight and discrimination and also blessed him with the power of speech so that he could express what was in his mind and so convey his meaning and intention to others. Further, he can perform this function either by speech, writing or signs.

In any case, in the absence of this ability no person could perceive
what was in the mind of another, nor could he benefit from the latter’s knowledge, nor act upon his teaching, nor obey his instructions. In the light of this, how could it be possible for Allah, Who created man to obey His commands so as to fulfil the purpose of his creation, not to provide him with a means of understanding His will?

That medium of Allah is speech, that is, there was a crying need for language through which Allah could convey His will to man and bless him from His own perfect knowledge with such guidance as would enable him to travel along the path that would lead to the fulfilment of his creation, and to his attaining the summit of his humanity, for without speech it is impossible to comprehend the will of Allah or the intention of anyone else for that matter.

So, the attribute of Rahmaniyat (giving free gifts) demanded that Allah should favour man with His words and provide him with an eternal, comprehensive and perfect guidance in the form of the Holy Qur’an. By means of this Book, Allah has furnished him with knowledge of all the pathways to winning His pleasure. Should he follow this guidance he can render obedience to Allah to the furthest limits of his capacity and thus arrive at the highest rank of his human potential.

But this is not the end of Allah’s grace. Through His limitless mercy He created an extraordinary man who fittingly deserved to be called Al-Insan (The Perfect Man) so that the perfection of humanity should be fully actualised in him and in whom also, the nobility of the human race should attain its most glorious manifestation. That personality was the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) to whom He explained the teachings of the Holy Qur’an so that through his example man could find the right method of putting into practice all those pearls of guidance that are collected and preserved in the Holy Qur’an.

Thus, the revelation of the Holy Qur’an was exactly in accordance with the laws of nature. It is a fact that a person cannot know what is in the mind of another person, neither can he understand the instruc-
tions of a person in authority until that person, himself, communicated his message through the medium of language. So, in accordance with this Divine law, man cannot be apprised of Allah’s will unless Allah, Himself, gives him knowledge of it through language.

However, we all know that it is possible that a person may misunderstand the words of another and can offer a very good excuse for doing so. To obviate this possibility, Allah, Most High, created a person who would serve as the embodiment of human perfection, that is, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas), through whom mankind was taught the true meaning and explanation of the words of Allah. In short, not only did He teach the Holy Qur’an to him but He also vouchsafed to him the real interpretation and explanation of its teachings. Further, the Holy Prophet himself lived his whole life according to those teachings with the result that he became a perfect example for the whole world and each individual could derive the fullest benefit from the guidance of the Holy Qur’an and the practical life of the Holy Prophet (sas) so that he could mould his own life on the pattern of that model. After this, Allah, Most High, gives us a further explanation of the philosophy behind the necessity for a revealed Law from heaven.

_The sun and the moon follow a reckoning_
_And the herbs and the trees adore (Him)._ 

_Bi husban_ means under a reckoning, that is, the revolution of the sun and the moon, their rising and their setting, operate under such a strict systematic order that it enables man to derive great knowledge from this pattern. In fact, this has given birth to the science of astronomy. In this there is a sign that the knowledge of astronomy also follows an important law — that of reckoning — and those who know this law are able to compute the two kinds of months and years — the lunar and the solar. They can also predict long beforehand the occurrence of lunar and solar eclipses and can also gain insight into many other fields of knowledge.

_An-najm_ (the herbs) refer to those kinds of shrubbery that do not
have a trunk, for example, bushes, etc., which have to lean on other things for support, whilst by shajar (trees) are meant those kinds of vegetation that stand on their own trunk.

The Holy Qur’an tells us that Allah’s attribute of Rahman, through which man was taught the Holy Qur’an and a perfect man was created to expound it to the world, is not a strange phenomenon, for if we observe the physical world we can see the same attribute in operation throughout. For example, in order to sustain life on earth and to provide light and heat and other essential provisions, the Beneficent God has brought into existence wonderful heavenly means — a sun and a moon. The sun is the real source of light whilst the moon borrows it and in the absence of sunlight it sheds its reflected light on the surface of the earth and dispels the darkness. And these two major orbiting planets work in such an amazing and perfect measure, regularity and supreme harmony that if in the revolution of the sun and the moon and their rising and setting there is slight deviation in this precise system the earth will suffer great devastation instead of receiving countless benefits. For example, if the sunlight falls short of its preordained measure there will be destruction and so, too, if it exceeds this measure. And the same is true of the moonlight. Thus, if these heavenly bodies do not function according to a precise measure and law, then there will be no possibility of life on earth.

Similarly, in the spiritual world, which is a clear mirror of the physical world, there is a spiritual sun in the form of the Holy Qur’an, the light of which is destined to illumine the whole world and the beneficial rays of which burn away the chaff of falsehood and impart life to the dead soil of men’s hearts. On the other, the spiritual counterpart of the moon is the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas), who borrows light from the spiritual sun, that is, the Holy Qur’an. And just as the moon dispels darkness in the absence of the sun, so, too, the light of the Holy Prophet’s practical life clarifies any questions that are not explicitly explained in the Holy Qur’an and this brings men from darkness into light. Thus, Allah, from His infinite and perfect source of knowledge has blessed man with the Holy Qur’an and the practice of
the Holy Prophet and these are totally in consonance with his Divinely-ordained nature and his natural capabilities.

If these things were not created on a basis of precise measurement and limits, they could not provide benefit for man. For example, if man should be allowed to exceed the limits and lead an unrestrained life, then he would destroy his own self. Again, if the responsibility entrusted to him is too great for him he will be crushed by it. Therefore, it was exigent for everything to operate on a strict and rigid line. Therefore, as regards the Holy Qur’an and the life of the Holy Prophet, whatever was prescribed for man in order to help him to achieve an eternal life was ordained according to an exact measure that catered for the requirements of human nature.

Another point to which Allah draws our attention here pertains to the means of acquiring benefits from these heavenly lights. He informs us that whoever obeys the laws given to us in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah will profit from it to the extent of his obedience and will even be further rewarded. Accordingly, if we observe the laws of nature in the physical world we shall notice that nothing is as perfectly obedient to these laws as the herbs and the shrubs, so much so that it is they who profit most from the sun and the moon. As regards the world of man and animal we see that their observance of the laws of nature is perfect only when their actions mirror the obedience of the shrubs. However, as soon as they begin to yield to the dictates of their own volition, disobedience to the laws of nature starts to set in.

For example, look at the functioning of man’s stomach and liver. Like the herbs, they are so faithful to the laws of nature that they never swerve an iota from their limits, but as soon as man begins to follow his own will he breaks the natural laws and so brings disaster on himself. For instance, he eats whatever he feels to eat and this puts pressure on his stomach. And this is only one example of intemperate behaviour.

In short, if man desires to gain everlasting life and wishes to derive
true benefit from the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Prophet’s example, then he must follow their teachings as closely as the herbs obey the laws of nature. Just as the herbs never act out of their own volition but live under the command of the laws of nature as if they were lifeless things, in the same way it is incumbent on man to obey the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah so as to attain that height of perfection where no movement, or word, or action is his but all are in complete unison with the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Prophet (sas). That is the station that is called fana (extinction of the ego) and also baqa (permanence of blessings) which is the ultimate limit of every seeker-after-truth who follows the Shari’ah (Law) and the Tariqah (Way). Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra) has made the point that when man lays himself like an innocent baby in the lap of Allah and looks to Him for knowledge and guidance then Allah nurtures him just as a mother nourishes her baby.

The Holy Qur’an has held out a better way when it points out that the perfection of a servant is in his obedience to the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Prophet’s example as the herbs are subservient to the laws of nature.

Trees and herbs are mentioned separately because trees can stand on their own trunk whilst herbs do not have trunks of their own and are dependent on the help of other things. Among human beings, too, there are two classes: the rich who can stand on their own feet, and the poor who depend on assistance from other people. Similarly, learned people are like trees whilst ignorant people are like herbs, and the same analogy applies to the elite or the leaders in comparison with the masses or the followers who depend on the help of the gentry, as well as to the capitalists and the working classes and the rulers and their subjects. The intention here is to emphasise the point that to whichever of the above groups we belong, the only way we can obtain spiritual sight is through perfect obedience to the laws of the Creator.

And the heaven He raised it high, and He set up the measure
That you may not exceed the measure.

*Mizan* (measure) means to maintain justice as is reported by a well-known companion of the Holy Prophet, Mujahid ibn Jabar. A pair of scales is only a representation of justice. Accordingly, on the halls of all the courts of the Mogul Emperors, there used to be a picture of a pair of scales regardless of whether the court was set up for judging matters concerning the masses or the aristocrats. But no one ever imagined that those scales in these courts were for weighing wheat. Instead everyone understood they were put there as signs of justice and impartiality. In short, the word *mizan* (measure) always stands for justice and fair play of all kinds and is not applied to a scale for weighing things.

The verse states that Allah made the heavens high, that is, He raised it way beyond human power and He set up the measure for everything, from the largest heavenly bodies in comparison with which our planet, Earth, is like a ball, to the smallest atom. In fact, the whole universe is so bound and connected by heavenly laws that every single thing performs its function in the prescribed manner so that the whole universe operates with perfect harmony according to the interaction of the twin laws of balance and measure. It is also evident that all this is constructed on the basis of such consummate knowledge and perfect law that it is beyond the reach of human intellect and imagination. Whatever exists in creation works according to its own peculiar measure, and if there is the slightest deviation from its true course, then this whole universe will be thrown into convulsion.

All these Divine laws are established far beyond human power because Allah does not want man, whose knowledge is deficient, to interfere in these matters and so bring destruction and devastation on himself. For example, if man should have power over rainfall, Allah alone knows what calamities would strike - the fighting and killing over the distribution of rain over one's own land and the deprivation of one's rival. Already there are raging disputes over the rights for river water. Can one imagine what will happen if man can interfere in
the distribution of rain? He will manoeuvre this in such a way that his land has sufficient water while other people's fields suffer drought, or he may cause floods to devastate his enemy's country. If the rising and setting of the sun were in the hands of man, then Europe will always have light while Asia will be bereft of it.

Therefore, it is a great act of mercy on the part of Allah that man has no power over the heavenly laws which control the sun and the moon from which man derives so much benefit, for Allah has created them so far above human ability that man has not the slightest opportunity to interfere in their workings.

The meaning of *So that He may not exceed the measure* is that if man had the power in this matter he would have gone to such extremes because of his imperfect knowledge and rebellious ego that he would have destroyed the whole universe. And whoever had the opportunity, because of his selfish desires, could have upset the balance on earth and turned the whole universe upside down.

Thus, it is along the lines of these heavenly physical laws that for man's spiritual life he has been blessed with the Holy Qur'an and the example of the Holy Prophet (sas). If these were not beyond human ability then man would have engaged in such logical and dialectical disputes that he would not have been able to come to a consensus on a single point. Further, everybody would have devised whatever moral and social laws suited his will and egotistic desires.

It is for this reason that Allah in His infinite mercy and perfect knowledge formulated His laws with such precision and balance that man can learn from them and so perform all his duties and obligations with great moderation. In addition, He has taught him through verbal revelation and hidden inspiration so it is the duty of man to obey those laws which are founded on balance and measure. So the Holy Qur'an continues:

*And keep up the balance with equity, nor fall short in the mea*
That is, Allah, Himself, establishes the Divine laws which are necessary for man’s spiritual existence. He did not entrust this task to man because man did not have the ability to maintain justice and equity in this function and so could not be equitable to mankind in general in this regard. However, after having made those laws, Allah imparted His knowledge to man through revelation and enjoined on him the following obligation: that whatever was entrusted to him and over which he had power and authority he should manage according to that *mizan* (measure) which Allah gave to him and he should do so on the lines of justice and equity and should never fall short in the measure. The word *mizan* here means the same as the *mizan* mentioned in another verse of the Holy Qur’an:

_Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments and sent down with them the Book and the mizan (measure)… (57:25)._  

What is the Book of Allah? It is a measure according to which there is justice and parity between the rights of Allah and the rights of His servants. If the morals of man are developed in moderation and harmony, he will achieve noble attributes and honourable actions. This harmony should be such that when he fulfils his obligations to the servants of Allah he does not fall short in his duties to Allah, Himself. For example, he should not become so engrossed in worldly business as to neglect his *salah* (prayer) and *zakah* (charity) and so on. On the other hand, he should not be so absorbed in his duties to Allah as to forget his obligations to people. The following example taken from the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sas*) clearly explains the point.

Once a lady got married and soon after entered into the service of Lady Ayesha (*rta*). Seeing her always in drab clothes, Lady Ayesha (*rta*) remarked to her: “Before you were married you always wore beautiful clothes. Why has this changed since your marriage?”
She replied: "My husband does not take the slightest interest in how I look, so what is the use of embellishing my appearance? He keeps fast every day and prays all night. He does not have the time to spare even a glance at me."

Lady Ayesha (rta) related the matter to the Holy Prophet (sas) who immediately summoned the lady’s husband and very sternly admonished him thus: "I also pray at night but I sleep, too, and sometimes I fast and sometimes I do not. So go to your wife and show love to her."

When the husband replied that he was fasting, the Holy Prophet (sas) ordered him to break the fast.

This is what is meant by harmony and balance in our duties to Allah and to His servants and it is for this reason that the Holy Prophet (sas) said: "There is no monkery in Islam," because in monkery there is no proper balance and equity in our obligations to Allah and to man. In this way, if there is true moderation and justice in the morals of man he can rise to the highest rank in moral excellence. For example, the desire for reward or benefit is embedded in human nature and to satisfy this urge Allah created in man passions of ambition and sexual desire. If these are absent in man then worldly enterprise will cease and man will not be able to make any progress. Motivated by these two instincts man undertakes all kinds of business enterprises and works for money and marries and has a wife and children.

If, according to the command aqimul wazna (keep up the balance) he acts with moderation and restraint, then on the foundation of ambition he will develop noble qualities like hard work and industry, perseverance and fortitude; and sexual desire will be sublimated into love and sympathy, kindness and sacrifice - excellences which embellish man's status. On the other hand, if there is no moderation and restraint, ambition will breed evil qualities like greed and covetousness, treachery and embezzlement and outright theft and corruption, and sexual instinct will lead to adultery and drunkenness and all kinds of
degenerate behaviour.

Similarly, self-preservation is integral to man's nature and for this Allah has provided him with the emotion of anger without which man will not be able to survive on earth. If according to the command, *aqimul wazna* (keep up the balance), man should control and regulate his anger, then he can develop sterling qualities like bravery and courage, honour and self-defence, power and dignity, and law and order. However, if his anger is unrestrained he will contract ignoble attributes and habits like envy and malice, ferocity and beastliness, murder and plunder, and cowardliness and dishonour.

A person once addressed Hazrat 'Umar (ra) thus: "In the days of ignorance you were a very hot-tempered person. What is your condition now?"

'Umar (ra) replied: "The temper is still there but whereas before it was unrestrained, now I use it only on the proper occasion."

In short, whatever emotions and passions are given to man are really for his progress and perfection and if he uses them moderately and temperately he develops high moral excellences. If, on the other hand, there is deficiency or excess in any human emotion, sin results.

Here the command, *Do not exceed the measure*, is given so as to ingrain in man the principle that he should not diminish the rights of others. If in repaying a person one should give more than what he owes, then that is considered an act of goodness. But if in giving this person less than is owed to him another person is deprived of his rightful due, then that is regarded as a sinful action because the measure has fallen short in this instance. For example, if a person should perform more than the compulsory *salah* (prayers) then it is not a sin but a cause for more blessings. But if his worship should cause him to neglect his duties to his wife and children then it is a reprehensible action as has been already explained in the earlier example above. A man can lavish as much love he wants on his wife but if in doing so he
deprives his mother of her share, it is a sinful thing. And this holds good for every virtue. Thus the meaning of aqimul wazna bil qist (and keep up the balance with equity) is that every right and every virtue should be used according to Allah's command along the lines of harmony and justice. To limit this verse to the weighing of grain on a scale is to destroy its beauty and restrict its comprehensiveness. Thus it is essential for man to establish justice and parity in every branch of his rights, obligations and virtues. He should never deviate from the path of harmony and moderation for this is the true purpose of his religion, the commands of the Law and the exhortation to develop sublime morals.

And the earth, He has set it for (His) creatures; 
Therein is fruit and palms having sheathed clusters, 
And grain with its husk and fragrance.

Anam means every creature on earth including man.

Akram refers to the sheathes that enclose the flowers of fruits.

Raihan means fragrance or fragrant flowers or edible foods.

The Holy Qur'an tells us that man has control over the heavens but everything on earth is subservient to him so that he can benefit from those heavenly means to sow all kinds of seeds and reap fruits and grain. He cultivates gardens from which he obtains many varieties of fruits. The date palm is especially mentioned because of all fruit trees this is the one that is most beneficial to man: its trunk provides material for the pillars and the roof of houses, whilst from its leaves mats and baskets are woven; its fruit serves as sustenance and sugar is made from it also; and from its bark clothes are made. This is why the Holy Prophet compared a believer to a date palm explaining that a believer must be beneficial to mankind in every possible way.

In short, a wise person may choose to plant in a certain area gardens from which he receives fruits; elsewhere he engages in agriculture
and reaps corn and clustered grain and in another place he cultivates flower plants from which he harvests fragrant flowers and from them also he makes perfumes which refresh the brain of man. Similarly, man is given the soil of his heart and everything connected with it in order that he can work according to the heavenly laws contained in the Holy Qur'an and the example of the Holy Prophet so that through his deeds he can sow different kinds of seeds. In this way, he can grow spiritual necessities and fruits for the nourishment of his spiritual life and can gather thereby several varieties of spiritual perfumes and fragrant fruits. We must remember that all these things come into being only as a result of good deeds.

In these verses a comparison has been made between the sowing of grain and fruit and the cultivation of good deeds by man. From this analogy we can learn a few lessons:

1. Man should not be remiss in doing his duty at the proper time. For example, we should perform our prayer service on time, and we should fulfil obligations to others without delay for just as seeds are destroyed when they are sown out of season so, too, our actions become futile when they are performed out of time.

2. Just as a person places his trust in God when he sows a seed in the ground, in the same way, when a man does a good deed he should depend on God alone and keep in mind His goodly pleasure. Although sometimes it may seem that his actions are not producing the anticipated results in the world, yet, like the farmer, the believer should place his hope and trust in Allah, firmly convinced that his actions are not hidden from the Almighty and that a day will come when the seed will grow into a big tree and he will be able to eat of its fruits.

3. A person's actions should be sincere and not for show.
Just as a tree is hidden in a seed and is concealed from the eyes of people but Allah sees it and nourishes it, so, too, is the case with the good deed of a person. Without doubt, it maybe hidden from the world but it is always under the eyes of Allah. If he acts with that thought in his mind, his actions will surely thrive and bear fruit.

4. Man’s good deeds and moral excellences should be evident in every area of his life for in this lies his perfection. If he needs food grain to assuage his hunger and enable him to live, he also stands in need of fruits to help him develop additional strength in life. Similarly, to strengthen and refresh the fine tissues of his brain, perfume is a necessity. In the same way, in his spiritual life he should not confine his good deeds and moral qualities to the fulfilment of only the major principles of the religion like observing his duties to Allah and to his fellow-human beings. Instead, he should strive to make progress in every aspect of life so that he may bear all kinds of beautiful fruits and be beneficial to others in every conceivable way. In addition to this, he should acquire those truths and subtle points of knowledge and divine gnosis from which perfume shall exude from every pore of his body and freshness and delight shall perpetually suffuse his faith.

*Which then of the bounties of thy Lord will you deny?*

According to some of the commentators of the Holy Qur’an, the dual form in *Rabbikuma* is used because both species, man and *jinn*, are addressed here. As there is no doubt that *jinn* form part of Allah’s creation and there are ungrateful ones among them as we find also among human beings, it may be correct to assume that both species are spoken to here. But there still remain some doubts concerning this interpretation. Firstly, the *jinn* are not mentioned above so we cannot take it for granted they are included in this address. Secondly,
the benefits that are listed here are all blessings that are enjoyed by man - fruits, grains, pearls, ships and so on. From this we can conclude that man and jinn refer to two classes of men as the Holy Qur’an mentions in several places, for example, rich and poor, or gentry and commoners, or leaders and followers, or capitalists and workers.

Jinn can also refer to those invisible beings that excite man’s passions (this point has been more fully argued in the commentary of chapter 51, section 3). Again, in using the dual form of Rabbikuma, the two parties addressed could be man as well as the instigator of his animal passions, and continually assailed by this evil prompting man often falls to its influence and so becomes guilty of ingratitude to his Nourisher and Cherisher. Another reason for the dual form is to lay emphasis. It was the custom of the Arab people, even when addressing or ordering a single person or group, to use the dual form solely for the sake of emphasis. This is why instead of using a word twice, the dual form is emphasised. For example, instead of saying Alaqt Alaqt! (Throw! Throw!), Alqiya is used, meaning, Please, do throw.

In this verse Allah, Most High, presents to man those blessings of His which were mentioned in the previous verses and which were granted purely through Allah’s attribute of Rahmaniyyat and not through any effort from man. On the one hand, in the physical world, He has made the sun and the moon and the whole celestial system subservient to man so that through their influence he can maintain his existence and derive benefit from their light, heat, air and rain. The earth, too, is made to serve his needs so that he can engage in different kinds of cultivation to provide food for his physical survival.

On the other hand, for his inner world he is blessed with a spiritual sun and moon, that is, the Holy Qur’an and the practice of the Holy Prophet (sas). Under this spiritual system the best provisions are made for man’s welfare so that he can build his spiritual life on a firm foundation. Further, by following the commands of the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah he can sow seeds of good actions in the soil of his heart and so make provision for peace and everlasting blessings in his next
life.

Now, if man should belie these favours which have been mercifully bestowed on him solely through Allah’s Providence and should become ungrateful to Him, and further, if even with the evidence before his eyes of Allah’s providence to him for his physical existence, he should still deny Allah’s providential favours for his spiritual life, then who can be held more accountable to Allah than him? It is for this reason that this verse is repeated several times in this chapter. In other words, trying to make man discover the favours of the spiritual world by observing the blessings of the physical world is specially emphasised so that every moment of his life he will always be conscious of it. And this form of expression is particularly chosen to highlight and accentuate the importance of the subject matter. Thus, it is for the sake of emphasis that every time a single favour or a number of favours is presented, this verse is repeated for the sole purpose that man may derive a corresponding spiritual benefit from the favour. In this way, when this matter is repeatedly brought before man’s eyes it may eventually sink into his heart.

It is recorded in the Hadith that the Holy Prophet (sas) told his Companions (rta) that when they were reciting this chapter and they reached this verse, that is, Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?, they should reply humbly to Allah thus: Laa bi-shayin min ni’matika Rabbana nukazzibu fa-lakal hamd. (“Our Lord, we do not deny a single one of Thy favours. Indeed, we are grateful for Thy blessings and we praise Thee whole-heartedly for them.”)

He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels,
And He created the jinn of a flame of fire.

_Salsal_ is dry clay while _fakhkhar_ are earthen vessels. Here the meaning is clay that is baked solid in fire. For this reason, earthen vessels are called _fakhkhar_ because they are put into fire until they become hard.
The creation of man is mentioned first and that of the jinn comes after with the explanation that man was created out of earth while the \textit{jinns} were created out of fire. Thus, in this verse man can in no way be included among the \textit{jinns}, for \textit{jinns} really refer to invisible beings. With this meaning in mind, the word \textit{jinn} can be applied to many different things. For example, the rich and the aristocrats can be called \textit{jinns} for they are hardly seen by people, as well as those people who live on the mountains and in the wilderness for they, too, are usually hidden from the eyes of people. The bacteria that cause illnesses are also called \textit{jinns} for without the aid of a microscope they cannot be seen. Similarly, those invisible beings that are created from fire and which inflame the passions of man are also called \textit{jinns}. In the verse above, \textit{jinns} refer to those invisible beings which arouse the animal passions of man because their nature is fire.

Man was created from dry clay like a potsherd. The object here is to point out that although it is an established fact that man was created out of earth yet what must be remembered here is that that piece of earth was first baked in fire. The purpose of this is to draw attention to the fact that the present surface of the earth came into being after having passed through fire and today science has proven that this planet, Earth, was once a piece of burning fire which gradually grew cooler and cooler until the upper crust became solid. Regarding the fiery condition of the earth, the Holy Qur’an states elsewhere: \textit{And the jinn, We created before of intensely hot fire} (15:27). And elsewhere it has been likened to \textit{fakhkhar} (55:14), which means \textit{clay that has been baked} showing that the earth’s surface itself has been baked in fire. It was undoubtedly a lump of fire originally.

The word \textit{before} is a sure indication that prior to its present condition the state of the earth was furnace-like and in accordance with this original condition some creatures of a fiery temperament called \textit{jinns} were created.

In these verses attention is drawn to the creation of man to demonstrate the point that if the earth did not have to pass through fire, then
the dirt from which man originated would not have had the capacity to give birth to man and this after gradually progressing through several evolutionary stages. If we now carry the reasoning process a little further and make an inference concerning the hidden from our observation of the manifest, we shall see that to become perfect, man also has to experience the test of fire. Man’s nature is like moist clay and the Holy Qur’ an uses the word tin over and over to remind us of this. And moist clay is such that it can be moulded into any particular shape. Thus, when a utensil is fashioned out of soft earth it is put repeatedly into fire till it becomes hard and solid after which it remains permanently moulded in the same shape we choose for it. Similarly, in order for man to become perfect it is essential that his nature, which is originally weak and which like moist clay, can be moulded into an ugly or beautiful form according to choice, should be put into fire again and again. Only then will his inner self become solid and like a baked utensil, it will remain forever in the same shape that was intended for it.

That fire into which man has to be thrown to be moulded like an unbaked piece of utensil is provided by those beings called jinns which are invisible creatures that serve to arouse man’s animal instincts. It is because of their existence that man’s passions are hot, for fire is the essential nature of jinns. We must bear in mind here that when these jinns arouse man’s animal passions to such a pitch that he begins to overstep the limits of Allah, then in Islamic terminology they are called Satan. In other words, Satan is another name for the one who influences man’s passions but as long as man remains within the limits set by Allah, this being is not called Satan but jinn. In short, the jinn or Satan wages a constant battle against man as either one strives to excite his emotions. This gives rise to a fire in which the seeker-after-truth falls as he attempts to transcend the many hurdles on the way to his destination. However, by Allah’s grace, if he displays patience and perseverance he will emerge from this furnace as safe and sound just as a piece of utensil of moist clay emerges intact from the heat. But this is not all. Just as a piece of earthen utensil becomes solid after passing through fire so, too, the character of the spiritual traveller
becomes like steel in the fire of Satan’s assaults.

In other words, satanic attacks on a righteous person only help to strengthen and improve his moral and spiritual powers. If there is no opposing evil force then man cannot advance in piety. For example, in order to develop his strength and power, a wrestler confronts other wrestlers in the arena and by exerting himself against them to the fullest he increases his power and ability. Similarly, if righteousness is not challenged by evil and man does not strive with might and main to save himself from iniquity, then he cannot improve his potential power to do acts of goodness.

If a person is presented with opportunities to tell a lie, to do which, in the eyes of a worldly-minded person, is decidedly mandatory — for example, to give false evidence in a court matter, or to save oneself from harm when people think they must speak untruth — and a believer in such circumstances turns away from falsehood and holds fast to the path of rectitude, then the result will be that his power for telling the truth will continually increase.

In short, when he falls in this fire of Satan’s attacks, his utensil of righteousness, as it were, will be further solidified, and no matter how many times he is thrown into this furnace, each time his piety will be further reinforced. This is why Hazrat Shah Abdul Aziz, the Muhaddath from Delhi, once wrote that every time a believer lowers his gaze in the presence of a strange female, his faith grows a degree stronger. That is, if every time his desire is excited and temptation strikes, he lowers his eyes and protects himself from lustful glances, his moral qualities of modesty and chastity become correspondingly stronger.

Similarly, if a person in time of dire necessity does not commit a dishonest act in spite of Satan’s temptation and promise that no one will know and that his most pressing need will be fulfilled, and if, in spite of Satan’s allurements and seductions, he is not overcome by this fire of temptation, then the consequence will be that his virtue of honesty will gain additional power and become more entrenched in him.
Thus, by stating that the *jinns* were created from a blazing fire, the Holy Qur’ān wants to establish the fact that that very fire was created in order to solidify man’s nature which comes from soft clay just as an unbaked earthen jar is put into fire and is made hard. Therefore, the existence of *jinns* is essential for man’s advancement and that is why it is one of Allah’s greatest favours. Thus, the Holy Qur’ān asks rhetorically:

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

People often raise the objection as to why Allah created *jinns* and Satan. Allah replies that they are indeed created as a blessing for man, for were it not for the fire that arises from their temptation and arousal of desires, then man’s moral beauties cannot be transformed from the state resembling an unbaked utensil to that of a solidly moulded one. Thus man should not look askance at this favour but should be grateful instead.

*Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests.*

*Which then of the bounties of thy Lord will you deny?*

In the verse, *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests*, there is sure evidence that the earth is round, because two Easts and two Wests can come about only when the earth is round, for when the sun rises over one region it sets in another and when it sets in one sphere it rises in another. Thus the actuality of two Easts and two Wests can clearly be seen.

Now let us look at the inner or spiritual world of man. It is an established fact in the physical world that the reason for the rising and setting of the sun is that in the course of the earth’s revolution whichever half of the earth faces the sun gets the sunrise and becomes bright. Similarly, the other half of the earth which is turned away from the sun, or which, in a manner of speaking, has its back to the sun, experiences the setting of the sun and its consequent darkness.
The same thing happens in the spiritual world. Any nation that turns its face towards guidance finds that the sun of guidance and progress begins to shed its rays on it, and this is so whether the enlightenment is physical or spiritual. In other words, to whatever kind of education a man directs his attention, the sun of that kind of guidance shines on him.

On the other hand, if a nation turns its face away from guidance it will be enveloped in the darkness of decadence and perdition. Thus, there is one East that pertains to physical growth and perfection and another East that relates to spiritual advancement and perfection and these are the two Easts mentioned in the verse above. Similarly, there are two Wests - one pertaining to physical decline and decay and the other to spiritual degradation and deviation from the true path. These conditions overtake nations in turns and this is so because of people’s own deeds.

From another vantage point, we find that today, too, the world is divided into two Easts - a near East and a far East, and two Wests — a near West, referring to Europe, and a far West, meaning America.

In short, these verses tell us that Allah is the complete Lord of both Easts and both Wests. As proof of His physical Providence, His physical sun shines on people in the East as well as those in the West. Similarly, why should His spiritual Providence not allow the Holy Qur’an, His spiritual sun, to illuminate the nations of the East and the West as well? And why should the East and the West not live under the same spiritual law? This comprises the second East and the second West.

In fact, these verses contain a prophecy that although at this time the sun of the Holy Qur’an shines on the Eastern nations, yet a time will come when that light will also irradiate the people of the West. But this has a resemblance to the physical system, that is, just as when the physical sun sets on the East it rises in the West, so, too, this spiritual sun of the Holy Qur’an will rise in the West just when the people of the East turn their backs on the Holy Qur’an and because of this
abandonment of the Book all kinds of misery and darkness will over-take them. When this happens, this spiritual sun will rise over the Western nations who will then bow their heads before the verities of the Holy Qur’an and will be illuminated by its splendour. This is the meaning of the prophecy recorded in the Hadith that before the Day of Resurrection the sun shall rise in the West. Thus, there is a remarkable prophecy hidden in this verse that the sun of the Holy Qur’an which now shines through the grace of the Holy Prophet (sas) in the East will one day illumine the Western world. And why should this not be so when Allah is not only the Lord of both East and West but the Lord of both kinds of Easts and Wests, that is, the physical and the spiritual East and West, and His Providence encompasses the physical as well as the spiritual kingdoms? If the physical sun gives light to both the East and the West, why should the spiritual sun of the Holy Qur’an not illumine both East and West? Thus, how unjust it is to deny these marvellous bounties of the Almighty!

_He has made the two seas to flow freely — they meet: Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass._

_Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?_

We must bear in mind here that Allah, Most High, employs a particular system in this section of the Holy Qur’an in that He always puts forward the physical as proof of the spiritual reality. Therefore, if we look at the previous verses we will see that they all follow the same arrangement and in these verses under discussion we notice also that the physical is followed by the hidden or spiritual. In other words, the manifest provides evidence of the hidden.

In the physical world, we can all observe that when the sweet river flows into the sea, the water of which is salty, it does not mix with the sea water for quite a long distance inwards. In fact, even the colour remains conspicuously distinct and if we drink it we will discover that there is a pronounced difference in taste between the sweet river water and the salty seawater. In fact, there is a barrier between these two kinds of water and in scientific terminology this is called “surface
tension”. Thus, they provide ample testimony of a spiritual reality in
that as far as knowledge is concerned there are also two seas – a sea
of physical knowledge that is called science and this is salty, and a sea
of spiritual knowledge called the Holy Qur’an which is sweet. Just as
the physical existence of all living things depends on this sweet water,
so, too, man’s spiritual life depends on the sweet water of the Holy
Qur’an. As there are great resemblances between the physical and the
spiritual, for this reason the two seas of physical and spiritual science
must meet and flow together. That is, there are countless similarities
between them but in spite of that, just as there is a barrier between the
physical and the spiritual, a similar veil exists between these catego-
ries of knowledge. In other words, it is not essential for an expert in
one field of knowledge to be equally adept in another field. For ex-
ample, a scientist is not required to be a religious scholar and vice
versa.

Indeed, this is a well-known fact for even today in the different branches
of physical science we witness the spectacle everyday of an expert in
one field of knowledge being totally ignorant in another area. For
example, a doctor is quite unacquainted with the science of Engineer-
ing and vice versa. So in medical matters an engineer’s opinion car-
ries no weight whilst in engineering business a doctor’s pronounce-
ment is of no value. Similarly, however advanced Europe and America
may be in the material sciences, when it comes to spiritual knowl-
edge, they are no wiser than school children.

A prophecy
These verses: He has made the two seas to flow freely - they meet:
Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass, also embody a
prophecy. One possible interpretation is that the two seas will mix
and flow together sometime in the future even though there is a bar-
rrier between them at the present time. That is, a time will come when
physical knowledge (science) and spiritual knowledge (Qur’anic sci-
ence) will merge and the existing barrier between them will be lifted.
By the fusion of the Qur’an and science is meant that people will
come to realise that Qur’anic knowledge is also a science, but a spiri-
tual one, and that physical science serves as merely a servant to it. In other words, physical science will begin to throw light on the subtle and esoteric truths of spiritual knowledge so that the more a person reads the book of nature and derives knowledge from it, the more will his faith be strengthened. In this way, more insight will be gained into the deep and subtle truths of the Holy Qur'an and its values will gradually become established as the eternal verities they are.

It will be an act of ingratitude on our part if we do not proclaim the role played by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Mujaddid of the fourteenth century, in removing this barrier between religion and science. In today's world of rampant materialism he was the first to make religion a science and present it in such a way that highly respected and eminent scientific experts in scientific circles were forced to acquiesce. Space does not permit a more detailed explanation but whoever desires further information can peruse his books and satisfy himself of the truth of this observation. In short, we are fortunate to witness today a clear manifestation of this prophecy unfolding before our very eyes.

At this juncture, there is another point worthy of consideration. Sometimes a certain matter is hidden behind an invisible veil and seems to be beyond human comprehension. Then a clear physical sign from the Almighty is established so that it may serve as proof of the spiritual point in question. An example of this is the good news that came to Prophet Zacharias of the birth of a son. This seemed so unlikely to him that he was struck with amazement and requested of Allah: My Lord, give me a sign (19:10), whereupon Allah gave him this sign: He said: Thy sign is that thou speak not to people for three successive nights being in sound health (19:10).

It is common knowledge among doctors that very old people often lose their power of speech for a while and this is known as "temporary aphasia". Accordingly, before the birth of Prophet John this condition befell Prophet Zacharias and this furnished a physical sign of the miraculous birth.
Similarly, a physical sign of the merging of the two seas of knowledge, the physical and the spiritual — something which to all appearances seems to be an unbelievable astonishing event — was created by the joining of the Red and the Mediterranean Seas, the former being an Eastern sea whilst the latter is a Western sea. These were the two seas, eastern and western, which should have flowed into each other but there was a barrier between them in the form of a piece of land called the Isthmus of Suez. Accordingly, in this age, that barrier was removed and the two seas, one eastern and the other western, were joined through the creation of the Suez Canal. This actuality was a manifest physical indication that the time has now come when the two seas of eastern spiritual knowledge and western physical science will freely mix.

Now if this is read together with the earlier verse, *Lord of the two Easts and the Lord of the two Wests*, it becomes abundantly clear that when Allah will allow the sun of the Holy Qur’an to rise in the West, then that will be the time of the meeting of the sea of physical science which is flourishing in the West with the sea of spiritual knowledge which is dominant in the East. That will be the time, too, when science will become the handmaiden of religion. And the event which will usher in that auspicious period will be the meeting of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. So the time of the physical merging of East and West is an indisputable indication of a similar spiritual coalescence of East and West. How wonderful a blessing is this which Allah has destined for man and how sinful is it to deny these favours!

*There come forth from them pearls and corals.*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

We are told here that whether it is a sea of physical or spiritual knowledge, from both innumerable priceless jewels are obtained. That is, just as divers go down into the physical sea and bring out precious stones like pearls and corals, so, too, spiritual divers bring out countless invaluable treasures of deep insights and subtle points from the sea of spiritual knowledge. If people with knowledge and expertise
bring out from the sea of physical knowledge priceless pearls and corals of knowledge by which man is able to travel across the oceans and fly through the air and make use of electricity, a similar thing takes place in the spiritual world. Here, too, experts in the field of spiritual knowledge acquire precious pearls and corals of wisdom from the sea of spiritual science and through this man is able to traverse the ocean of divine gnosis, to soar high in the sky of spirituality and to make use of marvellous spiritual powers that make physical energy and lightning look like nothing in comparison.

As a matter of fact, the power of physical science does not enable man to fly beyond the magnetic sphere of the earth, but the strength of spiritual power enables the spiritual traveller to traverse the sky and his spiritual powers transport him from the earth to the throne of his Creator. Thus man ought to be grateful to his Lord for these extensive spiritual favours which vastly outstrip all physical blessings and he should give full praise to his Creator for these spiritual bounties instead of denying them.

A significant interpretation
In specially choosing the words *pearls* and *corals*, there is another Divine sign that comes to our notice and that is, that corals used to be taken out of the Red Sea whilst pearls were brought out from the Mediterranean Sea. So, in the merging of these two seas, the special characteristics of these two kinds of precious pearls also serve as a sign.

*And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains, Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

These verses tell us that the ships that sail on the seas are also favours granted by Allah, Most High, to man, for if there were no ships how could man cross the oceans? In the same way, Divine teachings perform the function of tall ships which come in the form of Divine revelation by means of which man is able to traverse the ocean of spiritual knowledge. Otherwise, if he is left to his own devices man will
never be able to make this voyage.

In addition, the similitude of the ship can be farther extended: just as ships transport provisions from one place to another for the maintenance of man’s physical livelihood, so, too, will they come into use in order to carry the teachings of the Holy Qur’an, that is, spiritual sustenance, to the people of the West. By means of these very ships, literature and missionaries for the teaching and propagation of Islam will be carried from the East to the West and thus the sun of spirituality shall rise in the West. These ships, which are lofty like mountains and which were built for the transaction of worldly business, will also perform the service of Allah’s religion. At the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur’an, ships as tall as mountains were not in existence. This was knowledge of the unseen which the Holy Qur’an vouchsafed to the world hundreds of years in advance, when it disclosed that ships high as mountains would be built and they would be pressed into the service of Allah’s religion.

SECTION 2

The second section of this surah tells us that however stupendous the advances man makes in worldly knowledge, all these things are transient. The only permanent things are those that are done for the sake of seeking Allah’s pleasure. Therefore, blessed indeed is he who turns his attention to this fact and gives precedence to Allah’s pleasure over all other matters. He who turns away from this is heedless and his end will be a bitter one. Even in this life he will never enjoy peace and quiet. As a matter of fact, despite all his dazzling worldly progress he cannot be saved from anxiety and restlessness, war and destruction. As regards the Hereafter, what else can he expect besides pain and punishment?

Every one on it passes away —
And there endures forever the person of thy Lord,
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?
*Jalal* means the highest point of greatness whilst *dhul jalal* means the Lord of Majesty, that is, the One Who possesses such power that to disobey Him is to court punishment and destruction.

*Dhul ikram* means the Most Generous One, obedience to Whom brings blessings and favours in abundance.

*Wajhu Rabbika* signifies the Being or Person of our Lord. There is another meaning which Imam Raghib records in his *Mufradat* from ‘Abdullah ibn-i Al-Raza who says that by *wajh* is meant a certain thing by means of which a particular point is reached, that is, such good deeds that are done for the sake of seeing the countenance or obtaining the pleasure of Allah, or those things which Allah desires to make everlasting. And this is the significance that is applicable here.

Allah, Most High, wishes to explain to us this point that there is no doubt that physical science is also a sea from which man acquires innumerable priceless treasures by means of which he can and does make astounding improvement in life. But ultimately all these things pass away and nothing remains of them. Thus, wise is the man who concentrates on those endeavours which are lasting, for these are the works that will remain with him forever and provide everlasting life for him. Indeed, in this transient world, the only permanent things are those with which Allah is pleased, for only Allah and His goodly pleasure are perpetual. Everything else vanishes. Thus, fortunate is the one whose good deeds are done for the sake of Allah’s pleasure and who lives in such a way as if every atom of his being operates in total consonance with the will of his Lord. That is the death (*fana fil-Al-lah*) that heralds a new life which is everlasting. After this extinction of the self, the righteous servant reaches the lap of Divine Providence and becomes a recipient of perpetual life and then the paths of continuous progress are opened to him.

This permanence is not something automatic but depends on the pleasure of Allah. Everything otherwise is transitory and will always be so. If, therefore, everlasting life is the cherished goal, then for the
sake of our Lord we should subject our good deeds to the will of Allah to such an extent that our desires are completely annihilated and our whole life is made subservient to the pleasure of Allah. This reverence is deservedly due to our Lord for His glory and honour certainly demand that we should efface our own ambitions in preference to His will and that we should reach the ultimate limit in our obedience to Him in order to win His pleasure. It is only then that we can come under the umbrella of Allah’s Providence and be blessed with everlasting life.

Verse 29 reads:

All those in the heavens and the earth ask of Him. Every moment He is in a state (of glory).

Verse 30:

Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

The word sha’ān means state, glorious manifestation.

A depiction of the glory and greatness of God, the Majestic, the Lord of Honour, is given in this verse: He is one to Whom everything that is in the earth and the heavens turns for assistance. In other words, all are in need of His mercy and beneficence. Indeed, the very state of things portrays this need: whichever way we look, everything appears to be dependent on the nourishing attribute of Allah, whether they be the inhabitants of the heavens, like the angels, the spirits or some creatures that might live on the stars, or the human beings inhabiting the earth, all are dependent on His attribute of the Nourisher. Nothing is self-sufficient. Indeed, the existence of all entities and their survival depend on external factors. And for these factors all must look towards the nourishing quality of the First Cause, the One Who is the Lord and Master of all. Take man, for example. Is he sufficient unto himself? No, not at all. Rather, he is dependent on external resources for his birth, his living and for his survival. He needs the earth,
the heaven, the sun, the moon, the air, the water, the food-grain, the fruits and thousands of other things. Every moment he needs them and is dependent on them. And all these needs of man, needs that are entreating their Ultimate Creator every moment by the very language of their circumstance, are all being fulfilled at every step by the nourishing God through His grace and beneficence.

And as the needs of men continue to take on new and varied forms with the passage of time, so does that Ultimate Creator show His manifestation of nourishing and beneficence in ever-new forms. This very thing has been expressed in the Hadith thus:

“One of His aspects or states is that He forgives sins, alleviates misfortunes, accepts the prayers of the suppliant, and He exalts some people and brings others low.”

It does not mean that all His manifestations end with these few states. How can that be, when He is in a new state of glory every second. Nay, what it meant here is that these are some of His manifestations out of His infinite manifestations.

The word Allah implies the Entity Who is perfect in His beauty and beneficence. The word husn means beauty, whether it is in a visible, apparent, physical form or relates to one’s manners and morals, and the word implies a state when the benefit of such beauty reaches someone else. For instance, being generous and beneficent are forms of husn whilst the attribute of ihsan (the exercising of these qualities) becomes applicable when someone else benefits from these traits of a person.

Similarly, bravery is husn, and when someone else benefits from this quality, the word ihsan can be added to his husn. Thus Allah, the High, is not only perfect in His husn but, in fact, the whole world is benefiting from His beneficent qualities, that is, He is also perfect in ihsan. Human nature is such that two things are necessary to engender love for something in man’s heart: one is husn and the other is
**ihsan.** The fire of love for someone is kindled in the heart either through the beloved’s physical beauty, or by beauty of character, or by the **ihsan** of the beloved. Thus, since Allah is perfect in both beauty and beneficence (**ihsan**), He deserves to be loved above everything in the world. The only drawback is that man does not have deep knowledge of His person. As his gnosis increases, so does his love for his Maker.

If you wish to develop a deep knowledge of the **husn** of Allah, the High, then, apart from the portrayal of His beautiful attributes and His exalted qualities in the Holy Qur’an, cast a glance at the book of nature. The world looks so full of beauty — the mountain ranges and the seas, the green meadows and the gardens, the flowers and the fruits, the singing birds with their colourful plumes — all these present such a panorama of beauty that it leaves one wonder-struck. And even more than these, the beauty of the human form is so varied and of so many kinds that man is left wondering which to choose and which to discard. From these, one can make an estimate of how much endowed with beauty is the Creator of all these. So if a man wants to enjoy all types of beauty, he should accept and align himself with the Entity Who is the Fountainhead of all beauty, and the Creator of all beautiful things, whether animate or inanimate, or whether possessed of physical beauty or spiritual beauty.

Not only that, with Allah there is no end to variety. As a rule, man’s nature is such that it is soon satiated with a single type of beauty because no novelty is left in it after one gets accustomed to it. But as for Allah’s person, His nature is such that He is in a new state of glory every second, and a manifestation of His beauty always has a new angle to it.

Furthermore, one should keep in mind that all the beauty of this world is ephemeral and temporary: many handsome and good-looking people eventually lose their beauty through age or sickness, or get annihilated after drinking the cup of death. But the beauty of the Lord is such that it is eternal. So, how fortunate is the person who adopts and seeks this unbounded and eternal Beauty, a Beauty manifesting a new
glory every instant, and who abandons the pursuit of limited and ephemeral beauty.

Now after His *husn*, ponder over His *ihsan* (beneficence), His bountiful nature. Apart from the portrayal of the divine attributes and the sacred works of Allah in the gracious Qur'an, if one looks at nature’s spectacle, we notice that there is not a thing in this universe that is not dependent on Him, under the dictum of the verse, *All those that are in the heavens and the earth ask of Him.* And who is it whose needs are not being met? Everything is benefiting, according to the verse, *Every moment He is in a new state of glory,* from a new manifestation of His perfect nourishing. And every individual is being pleased with His bounties and bestowal with an ever-new style and fashion.

In short, each gets the Creator’s attention according to his needs. Every particle, every animate thing, and every human being is beseeching Allah’s help for his birth, his life and for his growth, implicitly and explicitly. And when man gives thought to the fact that all the benefactors besides Allah, the High, in whatever form they may be, are deficient and that he, himself, is finite and his beneficence is always limited and deficient, and that it is only the Sublime Personage Whose beauty is perfect and Who is eternal in person and the cycle of His bounties unending, then how unfortunate a person who does not develop a loving relationship with the Entity Who is perfect in His beauty and beneficence, and who gives precedence to the love of others to the love of Allah.

If it is true that it is human nature that beauty and beneficence engender love in man’s heart, then Allah, the High, Who is perfect in His beauty and beneficence, deserves that He should be loved most of all. But man does not ponder over the bounties of Lord the High. Indeed, when Allah, Most High, raises prophets and reformers who are blessed with God-gnosis and full realisation of His beauty and benevolence and who tell the world about it, and call them to Allah’s love and benevolence, ungrateful man starts to give them the lie.
Indeed, if one thinks over it, the bounties of the Lord, bounties that should engender gnosis and love of God, are so many that it is not possible to count them. In fact, the Qur’an says:

*If you were to count the bounties of Allah you will not be able to number them* (14:34).

Once a man came to Hazrat Sultan Nizamuddin Aulia and brought some *laddoo* (sweets) for him. The latter gave one *laddoo* to Hazrat Amir Khusro also to eat. (Amir Khusro was one of his sincere disciples.) Amir Khusro ate it. Hazrat Sultan Nizamuddin Aulia was busy talking to someone. As soon as he had finished, he turned to Amir Khousrooe and inquired: “What have you done with the *laddoo*?”

He replied: “I ate it.”

Hazrat said: “So quickly?”

Amir Kusro replied: “What is a little *laddoo* after all, and how long does it take to eat it?”

Hazrat said: “Very well.” Picking up one *laddoo* in his hand he asked Amir Khusro: “What ingredients are used to make a *laddoo*?”

He replied: “Flour, butter, sugar, etc.”

Hazrat inquired: “From where did the flour come?”

He said: “From wheat.”

Hazrat asked: “How was the wheat produced?”

He said: “The farmers ploughed the land and sowed the seed; the sun shone on the sea causing vapours to rise; the winds blew and brought the rain-laden clouds from which rain fell. The seed sprouted, then the harvest was gathered; the chaff was separated from the grains; the
grains were ground in the grinder; the flour was kneaded, and that’s how the luddoo was made.”

Hearing this, Hazrat took one bite from the luddoo and uttered: “Al-hamdu lillah (all praise to Allah). So many powers of the heaven and earth and so many of Allah’s creatures worked to put this luddoo into my mouth.”

He then inquired: “Now tell me, how was the plough with which the land was ploughed, made?”

Amir Khusro replied: “The carpenter made it from iron and wood.”

He asked: “From where did the wood come?”

Amir Khusro replied: “The hewers sawed the tree, etc.”

Hazrat inquired: “From where did the tree come?”

Amir Khusro recounted all the natural factors that go in to make a tree.

Hazrat inquired: “From where did the iron come?”

Khusro said: “From a mine. Thousands of miners dug up the hills; the ore was melted in the furnace, and several more steps led to the production of iron.”

Hazrat took another bite and said: “Al-hamdu lillah. What a lot of God’s creatures worked to cause this morsel of food to reach my mouth.”

Similarly, he made Khusro recount the innumerable factors that go in to produce butter and sugar and hours passed in this dialogue and the luddoo still remained uneaten in his hand.
In short, if one were to ponder over the bounties of the Lord and should start to count them, it would be impossible to do so. Thus, if a person is fair he will never refuse to acknowledge his Lord's bounties. Otherwise, if anyone chooses to ignore these impertinently, we cannot help him.

Soon shall We apply Ourselves to you, O you two groups. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

The words *sa-nafrughu* here means "to intend to call to account". This does not imply that We are at the moment busy elsewhere, and when We are free We shall turn to you. Not at all! Nay, this style of address is merely for the sake of admonition. Just as in the preceding verse the aim was to engender a sense of love in our hearts through recounting the beauties and bounties of the Lord, in this verse, a sense of awe is sought to be created in our minds. The meaning is, "If We have not punished you so far for your heedlessness, rejection and opposition to truth, the reason is that We have not yet decided to call you to account; but the time is not far off when we shall resolve to do so, and then you shall get your just deserts." Although this process of reckoning does go on even in this life, its full implementation will come about only on the Day of Resurrection.

What two groups are meant by the word *thaqalan*? Obviously, men and *jinn*, though by the word *jinn* we may take it to mean the imperceptible creatures that incite our animal passions. *Thaqalan* may also mean the two groups comprising the rich and the poor, or the capitalists and the workers, etc. Or we may take it to mean the leaders and the public, or the whites and the coloured, or the Eastern and the Western nations (to whom the word *jinn* could also aptly apply because, at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, these people were not in the centre-stage of history. Rather, they were still hidden under the veil of the future, and these are the people who are most enamoured of the things of this ephemeral world and heedless and mindless of the Eternal Creator).
And if we also keep in mind the verse: *The Lord of the two Easts and the two Wests*, then the meaning becomes yet more clear, and then it becomes: “O you two groups, of the East and the West, the reason that you have not been punished for your wrong-doings so far is that We have not yet resolved to do so, but the time is nigh when We shall do so and then you are bound to get your just deserts. Then, at that time, which of the bounties of the Lord will you deny?”

In other words, the nourishing attribute of Allah, the High, has provided so many bounties in the form of guidance for man’s physical and spiritual training that, at the time of reckoning, he will be at a loss for words when confronted with all the bounties he was provided and will have no reply to the charge of having rejected these.

*O assembly of jinn and men, if you are able to pass through the boundaries of the heavens and the earth, then pass through. You cannot pass through but with authority. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

The word *ma‘shar* here is derived from the root ‘*ashira*, which is used for the close associates of a person, and through whom he achieves numerical majority (*Mufradat*, Imam Raghib). From the same root is derived the word *ma‘shar* which denotes a group that has the same identity and goal, as we say *ma‘shar al-muslimin* (assembly of Muslims). By calling the *jinn* and men as one *ma‘shar* here, it has been clearly implied that at least for this verse the *jinn* are not some other species of creatures distinct from men; had it been so, the *jinn* would not have been classified as one *ma‘shar* with men. Thus, here the intention is to address the two groups of human beings, the nations of the East and the West (of Europe and America), as I have shown in the note on the last verse.

Worldly progress tends to make man heedless of Allah, because he becomes proud of these achievements. That is why Allah, the High, says that however high you may fly through material and technological advances, you cannot escape the ambit and limitations of the king-
dom of Allah and the rule of His laws. Can anyone break out of the boundaries of the heavens and the earth, no matter how great a progress in science he may make? If this can never happen, then just as it is impossible to rebel against the laws of nature laid down by Allah — whoever does so will be destroyed — similarly, destruction is the result of rebellion against laws of Allah's Shari‘ah (Code). And whether these are Allah's laws of nature or of His Shari‘ah, you cannot escape them except if you gain mastery over them, and that is an impossibility.

[Translator's note: In the light of the present situation, when man has broken out of the bounds of the earth, the revised interpretation of this verse should be: "You cannot escape from these boundaries except by gaining mastery (over the laws of physical sciences)."

No matter how many material advances man may make, yet he cannot escape from even the most minor laws of nature. Then, despite such helplessness and weakness, why this haughtiness, obliviousness and carelessness towards God? And your rebellion is against Whom? It is against the Entity Who is your Nourisher. Indeed, your creation, your life, and all the facilities for your nurturing and guidance in themselves come from an endless chain of His favours. How long can you continue to deny all these bounties?

*The flames of fire and sparks of brass will be sent upon you, then you will not be able to defend yourself.*
*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

The word *naar* used here means fire; war was also called *naar* by the Arabs, and a calamity was also called *naar*, metaphorically.

The word *shuwaz* means flame without smoke (*Mufradat*, Imam Raghib).

*Nuhas* means smoke that comes out of a flame (*Tafsir Ruh al-Ma‘ani*).
The outcome of the infringement of Allah's laws is always pain, a pain that, like a fire, burns away man's tranquillity and repose. Again, the sins may be minor or major; every sin begins by being minor but the end point is major. For instance, if a man gazes lustfully at a strange woman it is a minor sin; farther, when enamoured of her, the efforts he makes and the means he resorts to for getting her, are all minor sins. But when the process reaches its climax and he commits adultery with her, it becomes a serious sin. Similarly, when we start to light a fire, in the beginning, oxygen is not fully interacting with the wooden particles, so the fire is weak and gives off smoke. But when oxygen begins to mix fully with the wood particles, then the flame lights up. Similarly, the fire that results from minor sins is just smoke, but the result of cardinal sins is a fully raging flame of fire.

In other words, when a sin reaches its climax, the fire of its punishment also reaches a climax and bursts forth as a flame. So, this verse explains that the result of rebelling against the laws of Allah is nothing except that the punishment for our minor and major sins are meted out to us in the form of fire and smoke. And the outcome of our deeds is always so inevitable that we can never escape from it.

No doubt this will come about on the Day of Resurrection, but even for this worldly life also one can see a very powerful prophecy of coming chastisement in this verse - a prophecy that we saw being fulfilled with our own eyes in the form of the two World Wars. This verse is telling us in clear words that Allah will send a chastisement in the form of fire and smoke on these rebels against His kingdom, a chastisement they will not be able to avert. Naar also means war and its flame is that fire of war in which people perish. That is to say, people fight one another and kill one another with swords, spears, rifles and guns, bombs and shells, by aeroplanes and warships.

In addition, there is a smoke accompanying this fire of war that comprises all the ill-effects that affect even those who are not directly fighting the war: things become expensive, epidemics break out, trade vanishes, poverty becomes rampant, and those whose kith and kin are
fighting on the front are besieged by all kinds of worry and grief.

In short, though the flame of the fire of war remains confined to one locality, its smoke fall-out spreads everywhere. This is what happened in the First World War; the flames of war were ignited in Europe only, but the entire East and West, indeed, the whole world, was engulfed in its smoke. This scourge so afflicted the jinn and men (the people of the West, particularly, and the people of the East, generally) that all the people, the wise as well as the ignorant, felt that ever since the creation of the world such a world-wide war and such chastisement had never afflicted it. The beauty of it is that the smoke emitted in the form of gas shells and the fire coming out of the artillery shells and bombs seemed to declare: See for yourself the prophecy made by Allah, the High, in the Qur’an, (viz., that when man becomes so conceited and haughty as to try to throw off the yoke of Allah’s rule over him, Allah will send down a chastisement in the form of fire and smoke upon him), being fulfilled today. Fear the Lord, they seemed to say, before Whose might all man’s bragging and boasting becomes naught.

Then, according to the wording of the verse, And then you will not be able to defend yourselves, the people of Europe tried their best to save themselves from this scourge of war, but could not. They formed the League of Nations, and passed resolutions therein for adopting rules for the avoidance of war and for the settlement of disputes through peaceful means, but they all came to naught. The Prime Minister of the UK, Mr. Asquith, tried his very best to avert the war but nothing came of it and the fire of war was suddenly lit up. Mr. Asquith’s face, they say, overnight became the face of an old man.

Then Allah goes on to say that this chastisement is the result of denying the bounties of Allah. Had they taken to heart the guidance provided in the Qur’an, a great bounty of Allah, and had firmly held to the correct teachings of religion given in it, they would then have developed God-consciousness and goodwill towards His creatures in place of their self-indulgence, national selfishness and pride. They would not have been overtaken by the punishment through war, and
would not have used their intellect and diverse types of inventions, which Allah had vouchsafed to men so that mankind might benefit from these, against one another.

You cannot deny the bounties, says Allah, that He has given you in the form of your intellect and in the form of divine revelation. You could have averted the torment of war by using these. Hence you cannot now say: Why has God sent this scourge to punish us? This punishment is the result of your misdeeds. Allah, the High, gave you intellect and gave you knowledge through His divine revelation. All this was done so that you could avert this painful chastisement, but you did not avail yourselves of these bounties and becoming slaves to national selfishness, you brought this scourge upon yourselves. Which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny and how can you deny the existence of these bounties? If you did not make use of these bounties, it is your own fault.

*So when the heaven is rent asunder, so it becomes like red hide*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

The word *dihan* used in this verse means “red leather that is very clean, though, since *duhun* means oil, some have taken it to mean “red oil”. Allah says in this verse that in addition to the punishment in this world, we should also worry about the chastisement in the Hereafter, for this world is only a transitory residence. Eventually, a day will come when the heaven will be rent asunder (that is, all the astronomical mechanisms, including the earth, will fall apart) and its rare and clear atmosphere, which now looks blue, will look like red leather. That is, just as in the beginning of the universe all the elements were in a homogeneous mass of fire and from this mass of gases evolved the present system of the universe, so, too, will another universe take shape after the falling apart of the present system, and this will be made from all the debris of the present universe. The details of that universe will be quite different from the details of the present system. The present universe is like a forerunner, and that system will be the
end result. None can fathom the actual details of this revolutionary change except Allah. We can only venture a guess, a deficient and incomplete one, because our knowledge falls short in these matters. It is Allah alone Who has the knowledge and He has forewarned us of this great change, the Day of Resurrection, and of the pain and punishment that will be the reward for those who err and deviate from the right path. It is He Who has pointed out to us the ways to escape this chastisement. How great a favour of Allah is this which He has bestowed upon us. Is this forewarning of the bad results of our misdeeds not a bounty and a favour of the Lord? Is it not a favour to warn someone and alert him when he is about to fall into a well? Thus, do those verses of the Holy Qur’an that warn man of the evil consequences of his misdeeds by themselves not constitute innumerable favours of Allah? On the Day of Resurrection man will not be able to plead ignorance at the time of punishment by saying that he did not know that such actions would bring forth such dire consequences. How great are Allah’s favours and blessings with which He has tried to admonish man through revelation, telling him to take hold of himself in time! Then He has gone on to explain the ways to avoid those evil ways and misdeeds. So then, which bounties of the Lord can man deny? Nay, truly speaking, what greater bounties can there be than those teachings that save man from painful punishment.

So on that day neither man nor jinn will be asked about his sin. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

A question can be of two types. It can be for the purpose of gaining knowledge, and it can also be by way of interrogation for the purpose of admonishment and making one fearful. Here, the negation of questioning mentioned is of the first type, that is, for gaining knowledge, because in another place it says in the Qur’an: So by thy Lord! We shall question them all (15:92).

By this questioning is meant the process of accountability and the consequent giving of punishment for evil deeds, and by the negation made here is meant the negation of the need to hold an enquiry for
gaining knowledge of certain things, meaning thereby that since Allah has knowledge of everything, He has no need to ask questions. Nay, every little action and word of man is being recorded. In fact, the Holy Qur'an says: *And every minor and major (action) is written down* (54:53).

Moreover, the very deeds of man, by their effects, will leave their mark on him and every culprit will be recognised by these marks. Indeed, it says in the next verse that even the hands and feet of man shall bear witness against him. Therefore, where is the need to question anyone, to ask him whether he had committed so and so sin, or to give him the opportunity to deny the fact and indulge in excuses? Thus, when Allah's knowledge regarding the deeds of man will be so perfect, there will be no way for the guilty to escape. So, O people, says He, take advantage of this bounty of the Lord, that He has forewarned you of the Day of Judgement, and of the most difficult moment and the most dangerous reckoning that you shall have to face. How great a compassion and concern He shows for poor mankind. So how can you be so ungrateful to deny His favours and His bounties that He has bestowed upon you in the form of admonishments and warnings about avoiding the evil consequences of misdeeds. Therefore, take advantage of the guidance and the bounties He has bestowed on you.

*The guilty will be known by their marks, so they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet.*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

Here the word *nawasi* is the plural of *nasiya*, and by *nasiya* is meant the hair falling on the forehead. The Arabs used the expression *akhaza nasiya* (he caught the forelocks) to indicate an extreme condition of humiliation and helplessness, meaning thereby that the person holding the forelocks can drive the victim as he likes. Allah says that the results of deeds will be clearly visible on the body and face of man, that the guilty shall be recognised by just looking at their face. There will be no need to ask a question or take down a statement. I have
personally observed that sufferers from syphilis can easily be recognised by merely looking at their faces alone. And this is the meaning of the verse: *That day We shall seal their mouth, and their hands will speak to us, and their feet will bear witness as to what they earned* (36:65).

The result will be, says Allah, that they will be led to their chastisement in a state of great abjectness and helplessness, and this will be the outcome of their own actions. Just as they used to hold high their heads in haughtiness against the commandments of Allah, and just as their feet used to rush along the path of disobedience to His Will, so will they be seized by their forelocks and their feet.

Then Allah says: O people, just as We have helped you with all kinds of physical and spiritual favours and bounties and pointed out to you the Way of rectitude and salvation, similarly, We have also given you fore-knowledge of the evil results of disobedience, culminating in a life of pain and disgrace. So, which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? If nothing else, the least you can do is to benefit from this bounty, the Qur’an, and shun such deeds as have an evil consequence.

*This is the hell which the guilty deny*

*Round about shall they go between it and boiling water.*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

The word *aan* used here means extremely hot.

The denial by the guilty of the possibility of their meeting hell can be seen by their deeds. If a person were sure that such and such actions would result in hell, he would not commit such actions. For instance, even if a person has some suspicion that there is poison mixed in his food, he will never eat it. If a man suspects that there may be a snake inside a hole, he will never put his finger into such a hole. So if a sinner, even if not completely sure, has some intimation about the evil consequences of evil deeds, he will not commit the deed. That is why it says in the *Hadith* that a thief, in the act of stealing, and a fornicator,
in the act of fornicating, has no faith. This is what is meant by the statement that a guilty person gives the lie to hell, by his acts. But the day the results emerge and the recompense of evil deeds, in the form of hell confronts him, at that time it will be said to him: “This is the hell which you have been denying through your deeds.” But at that time there will be no other way except to continue to burn in the fire lit by his carnal passions and desires, a fire that he kept alive and raging by breaking the bounds of Allah.

If there can be any remedy for extinguishing fire, it is water. In this world, this water, on the one hand, was provided for man through divine revelation and, on the other, it was given to him by placing a conscience in his make-up and endowing him with high morals, so that he might continue to keep under control the fire of his sensual passions and vain desires and not allow them to go out of bounds. But he lit up and kindled this fire to such an extent that he made it take precedence over divine revelation and his conscience and morals. The result was that instead of that water overcoming the fire and cooling it, the water was overcome by the fire, and affected by its heat, began to boil. That is, his morals, instead of making him increase in good works, degenerated, and influenced by the fire of sensual passions, turned into evil and became devilish and thus he became heir to a life which was like a burning hell. As a result, at the time of resurrection, where there will be this fire of passions and vain desires, there will also be this boiling water. And the sinner will be going around between them, having no way to escape. When he, himself, made the water provided by God for deliverance and salvation into a fire by his evil deeds, now, from where would water come to put out the fire at that time?

Allah asks: *O people, which bounties of the Lord will you deny?* In fact, it is the result of this denying of the bounties that will manifest itself in the form of hell. Allah gave to man bounties in the shape of his faculties, his organs, the power of intellect and cognition, and further helped him with divine revelation; and then He bestowed upon you diverse types of facilities for his comfort and ease in this world
and the next. All these bounties were vouchsafed to him, so that his life in the Hereafter may be set right. Is it not true that all these bounties were given to him, but he did not take advantage of them? Nay, by his deeds he gave the lie to them. Remember, when the results of actions materialise, then this fact itself will be a source of torment for man will say in regret: "Why didn’t I appreciate and avail myself of these bounties?"

The fact is that a bounty is appreciated when it is taken away from one. In old age one truly recognises the value of youth and in sickness one appreciates the value of good health. Similarly, when all these bounties will be out of reach, bounties through which man could attain to salvation and success, then how great will be the regret at that time, as he asks himself: "Why did I reject and deny these bounties?"

This regret in itself will be a kind of severe torment. So man is told to appreciate the grand bounty granted to him in the form of the Qur’an. Every verse of this Book that makes man fear the result of his misdeeds is in itself a bounty.

The truth of the matter is that the mercy as well as the grace of Allah guides and helps man at every step and is geared towards bringing man towards guidance and success, but man, because of his conceit and haughtiness, does not pay heed. Hence, how true the words of Allah that if man were to show due appreciation for these bounties, Allah, the High, would not hesitate to save him from chastisement. There is yet time, so he should take heed. After all, which one of these bounties will man keep denying and for how long?

**Section 3**

We were told in the last section that mere progress in worldly sciences, a progress that makes man oblivious of religious knowledge and a life of rectitude according to religion, cannot avert from man the pain and chastisement in this world and in the Hereafter. Nay,
such heedlessness and the disobedience to Allah's pleasure and commandments plunge man into a severe torment. Now, we are told in this section that by progressing in religious knowledge and practices — knowledge and practices that have been perfectly conveyed through the Qur'an — man can attain to ease, comfort, happiness and tranquillity of mind, in this world as well as in the next.

This paradise is attained in an inner and spiritual sense in this world, but is achieved both physically as well as spiritually in the next. In respect of one's actions, (including one's faith), the Holy Qur'an has divided man's self into three categories or stages:

1. *Nafs al-ammarah* (the self that commands evil): that is, the stage at which the self keeps suggesting evil to man, and under the influence of carnal passions and vain desires a man does not feel embarrassed in committing evil deeds. Even if there does emerge an impulse to do good, it is so weak that it is suppressed by the evil impulses. Such persons are the ones who are destined for hell and it is they who are likened to the wives of Noah and of Lot in chapter 66, *At-Tahrim*.

2. *Nafs-ul-lawwamah* (the accusing self): that is, the state of man in which there is a battle raging within him between the human and the satanic sides. He wants to shun evil, that is, the satanic impulses, carnal passions and desires. Sometimes he succeeds; at other times he succumbs to these evil impulses and commits evil deeds. But his conscience chides him for it. If the good deeds of such a person exceed his evil deeds, he becomes entitled to Paradise, as the Qur'an says: *And as for him whose measure (of good deeds) is heavy, he will live a pleasant life* (101:6,7)

It is such a person who is likened to Pharaoh's wife, who, though related to Pharaoh, always wanted to be delivered from him. The same is the state of mind of this type of believer, who, though being human, is always beset by animal desires. However, he is always yearning and struggling to be delivered from their bondage.
3. *Nafs-ul-mutma’innah* (the soul at rest), that is the stage where the battle between the human and the satanic aspects is over and the devil is overcome for good. In this condition a man does good deeds with such willingness as if these were second nature to him. He becomes foremost in good works and his will and his Lord’s Will become one. Such a person then enters the fold of the close circle of Allah’s chosen and enters His Paradise. It is to this state that the Holy Qur’an refers when it says: *O soul that art at rest, return to thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing. So enter among My servants, and enter My Garden* (89:27-30).

These are the ones who have been likened to Mary in chapter 66, *At-Tahrim*. That is, just as Mary was devoted to the temple, so do these servants of God devote themselves to the pleasure of the Lord, and, disassociating themselves from all else, their soul prostrates itself in humility at the threshold of their Lord. These are promised the highest places in Paradise, and these are the ones upon whom the highest bounties of the Lord shall be sent down in a perfect and sublime form.

The above is a classification of men according to their deeds. The Holy Qur’an has also divided them into three categories according to the rewards that they will receive. This has been mentioned in detail in chapter 56, *Al-Waqi’ah* as follows:

1. The first group comprises *as-sabiqun* (the foremost); these are the ones who are possessors of the *nafs al-mutma’innah* (soul at rest), and for whom are reserved the highest reaches of Paradise.

2. The second group comprises *ashabul mainanah* (those on the right hand) who are blessed, and possess the *nafs-ul-lawwanah* (the self-accusing soul), and these are the ones whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. They shall also inherit Paradise, but their Paradise shall be of a lesser degree than the Paradise of those in the first category.
3. The third group comprises *ashabul mash’amah* (those on the left hand) and these are those who possess the *nafs al-ammarah* (the evil-commanding soul), and their eventual resort will be hell.

*And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens.*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

The word *khafā* is derived from the root *khauf* (fear).

Fearing to stand before one’s Lord does not mean fear in the sense of a person fearing a tiger. Nay, the word “fear” used here connotes the fear of the Final Reckoning before the Lord in respect of one’s deeds, a fear that stops a man from sinning and motivates him towards obedience to Allah, Most High. That is why it has been said that anyone who does not give up sinning cannot be called a man fearful of Allah (*Mufradat*, Imam Raghib).

Thus, this verse means that a person who is always conscious of his accountability before the Lord will inherit two paradises. Now, obviously a person who is conscious of his accountability before the Lord will be able to avoid the carnal desires of his lower self and will try to step forward in good works; for him are two paradises — one of this world and one of the next. This world’s paradise is the tranquillity of the mind that one attains after making a true peace with his Maker. In such a state he feels no hardship in carrying out Allah’s commandments. Indeed, he experiences joy and comfort in complying with them. See, for instance, how people generally are allergic to the regular offering of ritual prayers. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet (*sas*) says: “The coolness of my eyes lies in the ritual prayer.”

On seeing a pious ascetic, a worldly person thinks: How boring a person and how dead his spirit is … and gets upset on seeing his condition. But little does he know how much ecstasy a true worshipper derives from his worship and piety, an ecstasy that a worldly person is
ignorant of in his rounds of the cinema and the music halls. And most of all, in worldly pleasures one starts to feel a certain boredom after a while and a reaction of sadness and listlessness of the heart sets in; after a while, one gets fed up of even the prettiest woman, the best lyric or dance. But the transport one feels and the ecstasy experienced by one's soul in worship, piety and rectitude has no hangover. Nay, the joyous and delight of the heart increases every moment.

This is the paradise that a believer never loses and from which he is never separated, and which is always with him in good or bad times. Even a tragedy that may crush a worldly person, and may even induce him to commit suicide, becomes a means of sublimating the believer's faith in his Maker. He does not get depressed and upset by the tragedy and saying, *Inna lil-lahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un* (we are from Allah and to Him we shall return), he steps cheerfully forward in his obedience to Allah and the attainment of His pleasure. Worldly means may have been exhausted, but since he is not relying on worldly means, but on Allah, the High, he continues to have faith and trust in his Creator.

He knows that if his God so wishes, He will provide favourable means; and even if something does not happen according to his will, so what? His ultimate objective, his beloved, and his sole object of worship is Allah and not the things of this world. Even if he suffers a loss of the thing he loves most in this world, it is no loss, because this world was not his objective in the first place. Under the inspiration of *La ilaha illal-lah* (there is none worthy of worship but Allah) his objective and the object of his devotions and worship is Allah, the High. As long as He is present and is pleased with him, all his wishes and his objectives stand fulfilled and he cannot be grieved by the loss of anything.

A person once came to Hazrat Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani (may Allah have mercy on him) and said: "I have heard a lot about your miracles and supernatural feats, so I will like permission to stay in your company and derive benefit from your spiritual wonders." He was granted permission.
A year passed but he did not witness any miracle or supernatural feat. Hazrat Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani was a big merchant and had three cargo ships engaged in commerce. One day his manager came and said: “Sir! Our three ships have sunk and our entire business is ruined.”

Hazrat remained silent for a while and then said: “Al-hamdu lillah (all praise to Allah).”

After a few days the manager came again and said: “Sir, that was a false rumour which was spread by our enemies. All three ships have reached port safely.”

Hazrat again remained silent for a while and then said: “Al-hamdu lillah (all praise to Allah).

The person who had come to benefit from Hazrat’s feats, asked in surprise: “If on the first occasion, when you suffered a loss of your worldly goods, you said Al-hamdu lillah, why have you uttered Al-hamdu lillah now, on the restoration of the loss? If now you have said Al-hamdu lillah thinking that the goods of this world are also a grace of Allah, why did you say Al-hamdu lillah on the first occasion? At that you should have recited: Inna lil-Lahi wa inna ilaihi raji’un (surely we are Allah’s and to Him we shall return).”

Hazrat replied: “I did not utter Al-hamdu lillah over the loss of the goods of this world, nor over their restoration. The fact of the matter is that when the news reached me that all my property was lost, I examined my heart to see whether it was at all grieved by this bad news. And when I saw that there was no sign of grief in it, I exclaimed: Al-hamdu lillah, that is, Allah be thanked that there was no love for the goods of this world in my heart, that I should be grieved over their loss. And now when the news of the restoration of my goods came, I again searched my heart, and when I found it had experienced no joy over the good news, I again uttered Al-hamdu lillah over the fact that there was no love for the goods of this world left in
my heart, and that only the love of Allah permeates it.”

Hearing this, the person was satisfied, for what greater miracle could there be than this?

Similarly, when court cases alleging murder and defamation were insti-
tuted against Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Reformer of the Faith for these times (Allah’s mercies be upon him), and there came critical times during these cases when there seemed to be no hope of escaping conviction, even then there seemed to be no trace of anxiety and nervousness in his daily routine of delivering sermons, admonish-
ments, spreading the message, publishing and engaging in other pri-
ivate and public duties. All the time he maintained the same smiling,
cheerful and tranquil face. Whenever his lawyers, Khwaja Kamal-ud-
Din and others, came to him full of worry and showed despair, he
always responded by saying: “Khwaja Sahib, pray leave some room
for Allah, the High. If all of the defence depended on your work,
people will think that the case was won because the lawyer was bril-
liant. Nay, the effects of Allah’s power can only be seen when all the
usual means have been exhausted and then Allah grants us victory.”

In these words of the Founder of the Movement there was such se-
renity and cheerfulness that the Khwaja, who had come crying, would
go away laughing. And eventually the outcome was the same as fore-
told by Hazrat Mirza: Allah, the High, delivered him from those ex-
tremely dangerous hurdles that one could have discerned, as it were,
the presence of Allah. And successes were granted to him in such
unforeseen ways that they became a means of enhancing the observer’s
faith.

In short, the paradise of such persons never leaves them, a paradise
comprising of peace of mind, spiritual happiness and comfort. And is
it not true that there can be no greater paradise in this world than this?
True happiness and bliss cannot be had through wealth and power.
Rather, it can only be attained through peace of mind and ecstasy. If
there is happiness in the heart, even a shack seems to be a palace full
of luxury and comfort and if the heart is full of grief and anxiety, even a palace and its courtyard full of flowers seem worse than a jail.

Thus, a believer finds his environment to be a paradise through his inner peace of mind and spiritual bliss and the same paradise founded on peace of mind will take on a physical form in the Hereafter, and will become a source of true and eternal happiness and a life of bliss. In this world, this paradise was born from sacrificing his lower desires for gaining the pleasure of the Lord, and the result was that his desires, coming under Allah’s approval, were restricted to the straight path. Now, when he is blessed with paradise in the Hereafter, as a reward for his sacrifices in this worldly life, Allah, the High, will fulfil all his desires in a full and handsome manner. As every desire of his has come in accord with the intent and pleasure of his Lord, and is restricted to the straight path, hence, obviously, any desire that arises in his mind will not be directed towards a wrong end, but will always be on the right course. Therefore, Allah, the High, will make provisions for fulfilling every desire of his. And since, above everything else, the real objective and desire of the believer is to meet with his Beloved, his Maker, hence his paradise cannot be complete until he is united with his True Beloved. The fact is that when one is united with one’s Beloved, every sensory faculty and every aspect of one’s person derives intense pleasure from such a union. So when the union is with the real Beloved, Allah, obviously every sensory perception and every faculty of such an individual will derive intense joy and enjoyment from it. This is the secret of Paradise, that is, the real factor is the union with Allah. However, when a person is united with his Maker, there can be no sensory perception and faculty that does not enjoy the joy and delight of such a union. And this is really the truth - the extent of enjoyment and rapture experienced by anyone who finds access to the court of such a Great King must be intense.

At this juncture, it is essential to bear in mind that it is no virtue to extinguish every desire. On the contrary, the real virtue lies in bringing all desires under the purview of Allah’s approval and pleasure. The mention made above about abandoning one’s desires or to desist
from them, does not mean to abandon one's legitimate desires in contravention to the intentions of Allah, the High. For example, sexual relations between a man and a woman are not evil things in themselves as long as these are exercised within Allah's limits, for these are part of one's natural desires. However, the same thing will become evil if done outside Allah's limits. Thus, if someone is asked to abandon his natural desires, it does not signify that he should eradicate such desires. Rather, it means that he should not let his desires go on a course which is against the approval and pleasure of the Lord. Otherwise, to fulfil one's natural desires is exactly in accord with the intention of the Maker who created him, and Who has pointed out the way by treading which a person can lawfully and properly satisfy his desires.

A person who enters into marriage is fulfilling the intention of his Creator, and one who does not is acting contrary to the intention of his Creator. Not marrying and remaining celibate is no virtue. On the other hand, marrying is exactly in accord with Allah's intentions. The same applies to the bounties like food and drink; if taken in accordance with Allah's intention, it is an act of virtue, and if taken in contravention of Allah's intention, it becomes a vice.

Thus, the satisfying of man's natural needs and desires according to the intention of Allah fulfils the purpose of creation of man; anyone who acts to the contrary is going against nature and hence engaged in a serious error.

I have mentioned earlier under the commentary on chapter 52, At-Tur, that the next life is in itself a proper life and that a life without feelings, faculties, knowledge, comprehension and a sense of discrimination would be a meaningless life. So, it is essential that the human mind should be endowed with a knowledge and a sense of comfort and ease, of joy and contentment in his next life also, and such perception and knowledge can only be had through the ways in which he has been trained to perceive and know these states in his worldly life. He cannot now perceive or feel states of discomfort or ease, joy and
sorrow, relish and torment in any new way except the ways that he was used to in his worldly life. Thus, for any human mind to experience joy and delight in the next life, it is essential that he should be given the bounties of the Lord in the same form as he was given these in this world, even though these bounties may be perpetual and much higher, superior, more perfect and sublime, than the ones he has known in this life and may possess qualities beyond his imagination.

Yet these must be in the same form as they were given to him in this world, that is, in the form of a house, a garden, things to eat and drink, wife and children. Otherwise he cannot derive pleasure and enjoyment from these bounties or comprehend them. His self had not learned to experience ecstasy from anything else except in these forms nor did he have the capability within him to do so. Otherwise, that capability must have been present in his worldly life also. We observe that in this world also, if a person experiences a bounty in a virtual and inner way, the experience takes several ways to reach him: he either has an experience in which he is witnessing a scene (which is called a vision or dream), or, that he is hearing someone speak (called ilham - revelation), or, that he is eating or drinking something. Thus, he had been getting to know certain experiences through such perceptions inwardly in a similar way as he gets to know them physically. Hence, if there is a life in the Hereafter, and there certainly is, then the ways of perceiving and feeling sorrow and joy and of gaining knowledge should be the same as they were in this worldly life. Therefore, if he meets his faith in the next life in the form of a verdant and green garden, this would be absolutely appropriate, reasonable and wise. Thus, when his faith takes on a palpable manifestation in the Hereafter, he will feel that he is in a green garden, because in his worldly life he used to enjoy his faith inwardly as if he were in a green garden. So why should these perceptions not be transformed and presented as a garden to him in the Hereafter?

Indeed, all these things are such great bounties of the Lord that to deny them and to show disdain towards them is the height of ingratitude.
Both (gardens) are full of fresh-leafed branches. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

The word *afnan* used here is the plural of *fanan*, which means a branch of a tree having fresh leaves. So *dhawata afnan* means a garden that is full of all types of fruit and flowering trees.

This describes the paradise of the Foremost, and they deserve it because they are the ones who make progress in all branches of faith and ethics; hence, their paradise should also be full of all types of fruit and flowering trees, and the branches of these trees are full of fresh and verdant leaves. In other words, no branch of their person is devoid of a remarkable progress in morals and faith. This is a sketch of the faith and ethics of a perfect group, in that no aspect of their personality is devoid of evolution and progress, because they take every aspect of faith and ethics to its perfection.

These are the bounties that can be enjoyed by every person provided he does not behave in a heedless manner and resort to denial.

*Therein are two springs flowing. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

Whereas faith will be transformed into a garden, deeds will take on the shape of rivulets, rivulets that will be springing forth from this garden and will help to keep it green and verdant. The reason is that correct faith gives rise to good deeds, and this is shown there as rivulets gushing out of the gardens of faith. And then these very rivulets of good deeds keep the garden of faith green and verdant. It is a fact, that if there are no good deeds resulting from faith, then it gradually declines and diminishes like a garden drying up for lack of water.

So from faith are born good deeds and by good deeds faith is kept fresh and alive. From the point of view of rights, the Holy Qur’an has divided deeds into two parts: the rights of Allah and the rights of fellow-men - that is, Allah’s rights, namely, the deference one must
show to His commandments, and the rights of fellow-men, namely, that one must show compassion and kindness to one’s fellow-men.

That is why here Allah has mentioned two types of flowing springs, one representing the fulfilment of one’s duty to Allah and the other one’s duty to one’s fellow-men. By the word “flowing” is meant the works of these foremost persons not only benefit their own selves, but their beneficence extends to others also. Hence, their springs are not keeping only their garden green, but their water flows and spreads out to benefit other places besides these gardens.

So, man should keep pondering over these bounties; after all, for how long will he keep denying them? And this denial is through deeds, that is, to show indifference towards them.

*Therein are pairs of every type of fruit.*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

This is the paradise of the Foremost, where every type of fruit will be present, because they did all types of good works. Again, these fruits will also be of two types: one will be for the good deeds that they did for themselves (which include such things as worship and piety), and the other will be for the good deeds they did to benefit the creatures of Allah and to guide them on the right path. For example, if they engaged in prayer, they not only prayed for themselves, they also prayed for the creatures of Allah. Hence, their reward in the shape of fruits will also be two-fold. Since these people had reached the highest point in their love and affection for the creatures of Allah, hence, every type of good that they desired for themselves they also desired for others.

What grand bounties are these! To deny them, that is, to overlook them and to be oblivious of them is a sign of the greatest misfortune and deprivation.

*Reclining on bedspreads whose inner coverings are of silk*
brocade.
And the fruits of the two Gardens are within easy reach.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Furush is the plural of farash and farash is derived from farasha, which means to spread a cloth. It seems that these spreads will be laid out over couches, because in the Qur'an it is said about the inmates of Paradise that they will be reclining against pillows on couches. Here, the word used is covering or bed-spread instead of couches, which indicates that these coverings will be spread out over a couch, just as in the royal courts, the chairs and couches are placed over a carpet, or, as in a high-class drawing room chairs and sofas and couches are laid out over an underlying carpet. This is a token of the host's respect and honour for the guests and a show of welcome and joy, and also for the ease and comfort of the guests.

This is the paradise of the Foremost, of those who accepted all kinds of disgrace and pain for the sake of gaining Allah's pleasure, and who rejected all the enticements of worldly goods, dignity and power, honour and wealth of worldly life: today, they will be treated royally, and carpets and couches of honour and esteem will be laid out for them. They will be among those entitled to a chair in the court of Allah. All the requisites for their ease and comfort will be provided by Allah, the High. Just as in their worldly life, Allah alone was their support, and their entire trust was in Him in times of humiliation and pain, today, the same support will be provided to them in the form of a large-sized pillow, which will be a source of honour and comfort for them.

Istabraq means raw and thick silk. Another meaning is, "It became lit up or became shining due to lightning". The inner part of the covering being of thick silk or being bright and lit-up suggests that the inner part of a believer is more beautiful and shining than the outer part. In contrast, it is customary in mundane life that the inner layer of a dress or a covering is always of an inferior cloth whilst only the outer layer is of a fine and shining cloth. If they put a silken cloth outside, they
make the inner layer of coarse cloth because the idea is to make it look attractive. On the other hand, though the actions of a believer are beautiful from outside, they are more luminous and beautiful from the inside.

What a fine prayer has been taught to us by the Holy Prophet (sas):

"O Allah! Make my inner self better than my outer self and make my outer self virtuous."

In short, the inner self of a believer is more virtuous and shining than his outer self; so whatever dresses and covers they will get in Paradise will have their inner covers also of silk and these will be bright and shining. And their rewards will also not be just for show. Nay, they will be excellent both in their inner and outer forms.

Here, some people raise the objection, questioning why silk has been made unlawful for men in this world’s life, whereas its use will be a form of reward in Paradise. The answer to this is that silk and ornaments are not unlawful by themselves; it was just because of the demands of the different circumstances of worldly life that these were made unlawful. Since silken dress and ornaments are signs of rulership and power, of luxury and ease, these have not been made lawful for men, because Allah has given man a special distinction of having to engage in labour and toil and continuous struggle and these luxurious articles usually stand in the way of the field of action. There is the apprehension that man, once enamoured and getting used to luxury and ease and self-adornment and embellishment, would gradually lose his spirit of hard work and struggle. But in the Hereafter when the struggle and hard work are over, and the time comes for recompense and reward, then ease and comfort after toil, and recompense after work are as much worthy of praise as these would be worthy of condemnation during the time of work and toil.

As for the sentence, The fruits of the two Gardens shall be within easy reach, it means that in the Hereafter, when the time for struggle
is over and the time of reward will have come, the results of his good works will automatically come to man. There will be no need to go to any trouble to have access to them. For example, we notice in this world how much bother one has to go through in installing household electrical wiring, meters and switches, but once these are in place, it does not take long to switch on a light. Similarly, it takes a lot of effort and overcoming of difficulties to fit the electrical current of God’s light in one’s self and character, but once fitted, it appears at once at the slightest effort.

_Daan_ refers to the condition of the bounties of Paradise. The fruit of one’s struggle and efforts that one put in the worldly life will be so close that it will be available at the slightest hint. But we also observe in the case of the worldly paradise, that when a servant of Allah makes his intentions and resolves to be totally subservient to Allah’s Will, he is blessed with the boon of the acceptance of his supplications. Nay, the slightest desire arising in his heart leads to immediate fulfilment. So, in the Hereafter, this status of acceptance of supplications will be more marked, and the slightest intention of a believer will lead to the fulfilment of whatever he desires.

Undoubtedly this is the greatest of grace and honour bestowed on a servant, and these are such marvellous bounties that denying them and being mindless of them are signs of a big misfortune.

_Therein are those restraining their glances, whom no man or jinn has touched before them_  
_Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?_

The phrase _qasirat-ut-tarf_ means “those who keep their glances cast down,” that is, their glances not only avoid falling on strange men, but, more that that, they do not allow them to fall upon anyone besides Allah.

The word _yatmithhu_ is derived from _tamatha_, which means, “to touch”. I have time and again stressed the point that the Hereafter is also the
name for man's next life. And if there is a life in the Hereafter, then the
bounties that are given to man for his joy and delight should be on the
same pattern as they were in the earthly life and to which he had
already been introduced.

So, just as a person would be given things like gardens, rivulets,
couches, carpets and pillows, he would also be in need of a compan-
ion, and there can be no better companion than a wife. That is why
Allah says that they will be given wives. And then He goes on to
define them, and the first thing He mentions in recounting their high
qualities is their character and morals, keeping physical beauty last.
And this is also a fact, that the chastity and integrity of a wife should
take precedence over her physical beauty.

The Holy Prophet (sas) says: "Some marry for beauty, some for wealth,
some for family and honour, but when you get married, marry a woman
for her religion." In other words, one should give the virtue and reli-
giosity of a woman precedence over all other qualities. The same
thing obtains here; mention of physical beauty comes in the next verse,
but what finds first mention is the beauty of character and morals.
And the first quality Allah mentions is the quality of keeping the gaze
averted from strange men, because this is the essence of all chastity
and integrity. Nay, the phrase "keeping the eyes down" also includes
the pointer that their gaze should not only avoid strange men, but
should be focussed only on Allah, Most High.

The second quality stated by Allah is that their chastity and integrity
would be of such a high order that neither a man nor a jinn would
have touched them before. If by the word jinn we take it to mean men
of wealth and power, that is also appropriate, (because people with
pelf and power show a lot of boldness in enticing women by tempting
them with their luxury and authority). If also by jinn we take it to
mean those intangible entities that motivate carnal impulses in a man's
heart, then the sentence will mean that these women will be of such
high virtue and character that, far from being touched by any human
being, the very unholy and dirty thought would not have crossed their
minds. This is the acme of chastity and integrity, purity and chaste thinking. There are people, who apparently seem to possess impeccable character and chastity, but it happens to them that at times satanic impulses begin to excite their hearts, even though they may not commit any such satanic deed. But how pure is the heart in which such an impulse to commit a sin never arises!

So, how grand a bounty of Allah it will be to be blessed with such consorts who were so firm in their love for One God that they never even looked at anything besides Him. Nor did the devil find his way into their hearts. In fact, their hearts had nothing but Allah in them.

At this point, some raise the question as to who these women will be. Some say they are the women who have passed away from this very world whilst others opine that they are one of the bounties of Paradise (Ruh al-Ma‘am).

May I submit that the first conjecture is definitely apt. After all, why should the women of this world, who kept guard over their chastity, integrity, modesty and piety all their life, not join their pious husbands in Paradise, after being endowed with physical beauty in addition to their purity from all dirty thoughts and satanic impulses? And if they are to be blessed on that day by having their modesty, chastity and integrity take on the form of women with downcast eyes and pure hearts, this would be an entirely appropriate reward.

*As though they were rubies and corals.*
*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

After mentioning the beauty of their character Allah has also mentioned the beauty of their looks. Virtuous deeds, in whatever form these are personified, must be beautiful. Every woman, to whom are attributed such deeds, will be made beautiful in looks as a result of the effects of such deeds for any attractiveness or beauty to be found in their faces will be the outcome of good deeds, and will bestow upon the doer of such deeds a beauty in looks as well as attractiveness in
the next life.

In Arabic, it is customary to use the metaphor “rubies and corals” to denote beauty, and here, also, the same metaphor has been adopted. Since both these stones are red in colour, the tinge of red in their hue denotes their robust health, a trait which will be a special distinction of the righteous in the next life, a distinction arising out of the good deeds that they used to do. On the other hand, sickness and pain will be the symptom of those who engendered diverse spiritual diseases in their persons through their misdeeds.

Obviously, each of these constitutes a major bounty of the Lord, and to avert one’s eyes from them and to keep on denying them connotes the height of ingratitude.

_Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness? Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?_

*Ihsan* here means “goodness”, and in human relationships it means giving someone more than his due, and in the case of Allah, the High, its meaning is explained by the Holy Prophet himself. He said that *ihsan* means that a person should always be conscious of his conduct as if he is actually seeing Allah, or at least he should bear in mind that Allah is seeing him. This is the highest station to which the foremost and the closest to Allah ascend.

Once, the Holy Prophet was eating food while sitting on his haunches, so someone said to him: “Sir, why don’t you make yourself comfortable by crossing your legs and thus eat at ease?”

To this the Holy Prophet said: “I am eating like a servant who eats in front of his Master.”

In other words, Allah was visible to him in his mind’s eye even in this state.
Once the Holy Companions asked him: “Sir, is there any harm in taking off all our clothes when resting in the afternoon in hot weather?”

He replied: “Allah is more deserving that you should show modesty before Him.”

In other words, even in the privacy of the home and the bedrooms the notion of the presence of Allah should be present in the mind.

Someone asked the Reformer of the time, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him): “How can one ensure presence of mind during prayers?”

He replied: “I fail to understand how one can have absence of mind in such a state!”

In other words, how can Allah be absent from our minds at any time?

In short, the recompense of those who never let Allah be out of their mind’s eye and never strayed from the path of His Pleasure whilst obeying His Commandments will be given to them in a measure considerably more than their due. The details of this reward has been given to some extent above, but most of it has not been described, because we can envisage a reward if it is equal to the good deed, but when it is to be given in the form of ihsan, and the giver is no other than the Original Benefactor, then it is beyond human powers to visualise His rewards.

Here the statement, Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?, has been put in the interrogative form in order to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that he should also try and inculcate in himself the same excellence of character and manners, so that if someone does him a good turn, he should respond with something better in return.

Everyone in this world wishes that people should deal kindly with him, yet he does not feel the need to be kind to others. In this verse
we have been taught the golden rule that it is becoming of a true believer that if someone does a kindness to him, he should repay it with a greater kindness.

So by saying, *which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?* Allah keeps on recounting the bounties of Paradise and at the end of each such statement He draws the attention of man to the fact that he should not give a lie to these bounties by indulging in evil deeds.

In other words, Allah is saying: “O man! Do not be negligent and careless in your struggle to attain these bounties, because these are the bounties on which depend your true happiness and joy, in this world and the next.”

So, if we do not pay any attention to them, then how great an act of disavowal of a bounty it is! And that is why Allah, the High, keeps on warning after each mention of His bounties, so that at some stage man may suddenly realise the truth.

It also means that if man gets into the habit of pondering over each one of the Lord’s bounties separately, a stage will eventually come when the sheer abundance of bounties will engender love for his Benefactor. And this is a magnificent and, in fact, the right way to inculcate the love of Allah, the Ultimate Benefactor, in one’s heart.

*And besides these are two (other) Gardens*
*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

Although these two Gardens resemble the earlier two Gardens, they are lesser in degree as far as their bounties are concerned. The reason is that the two earlier-mentioned Gardens were meant for the Foremost, those drawn nigh to Allah. And hence, just as their deeds were of a very high order, so should the bounties bestowed upon them be, for man makes his own paradise through his own deeds.

However, these two Gardens, which are now being mentioned, are
meant for the ordinary believers, those who have been called *those of the right hand*, or *those blessed* in chapter *Al-Waqi’ah*. It was but natural that the bounties provided in these Gardens should be of a lesser degree than those provided in the Gardens meant for the Foremost and the Closest to Allah, because their deeds did not reach that height of perfection attained by the Foremost and the Closest. And for them, the ordinary believers, there is also a promise of two Gardens, one in this world and the other in the next.

And just as before, here also the Garden of Faith that was vouchsafed to the believer in this world will be given to him in the shape of an actual garden in the next. How great a bounty of the Lord is this and how encouraging for us poor mortals, but how sad it is that human beings keep on denying these bounties by showing disdain and heedlessness towards them.

*Both are dark green (inclining to blackness).*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

*Mudham* here is derived from *dahama* which means the blackness of the night; here it means greenery whose colour is intensely (or dark) green (*Mufradat*, Imam Raghib).

This is the faith that made man tread the right path and thus made him heir to the Garden of Paradise - how fresh and verdant that faith must have been! Hence, when this faith is transformed into a garden in the Hereafter, it follows that such a garden should also be very verdant and green. But since this group of believers has not attained perfection in all departments of manners and morals, hence no mention has been made of the fruit-bearing and flowering trees here. Rather, the description is limited to just the greenness of the Garden.

*Therein are two springs gushing forth*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

*Nad-daa-khataan* is derived from *nadakha*, which connotes the inten-
sity of the gushing forth of water and the spouting of a spring due to this pressure.

Like the Garden of the Foremost, here are also two springs of deeds, namely, the deeds that must be done as a duty to Allah, and those that must be performed as a duty to fellow-men. The only difference is that whereas the springs in the Garden of the Foremost not only gush forth, but, as is evident from the word tajriyan (flowing), they also benefit and irrigate others. As regards the springs of ordinary believers, there is no mention of their flowing forth. In other words, the deeds performed by these believers were limited in scope only to their own persons and these springs, the springs of one’s deeds, are the instruments by which one’s faith is kept fresh and green. Hence, anyone who is oblivious of these bounties of the Lord is unfortunate indeed.

Therein are fruits and palms and pomegranates
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Mention of date-palms and pomegranates after the word fruits is by way of explaining the general by the particular.

These are also the same types of fruits that are to be found in the Gardens of the Foremost, but there the fruits are two-fold, but not here. That is because here, there are people who did not have the same affection for the creatures of Allah as was shown by the Foremost, in that they did not desire for others what they desired for themselves. They did fulfil their duty to Allah and to men, and certainly did so for gaining the pleasure of their Lord, (otherwise they would have never borne this fruit), but they did it mostly for their own good; hence, they did get fruits thereof, but only in an equal measure and not two-fold.

Again, there is no mention here of all types of fruit. Rather, the reference has been limited to only the word fruits, because they did not fully comply with all the branches and requisites of good deeds. How-
ever, a special mention was still deemed necessary here of two types of fruits, which means that two types of deeds are essential for a believer, whether he is from the Foremost or from the ordinary believers (because without works he cannot become deserving of the Garden). One is a deed whose fruit is the date and the other, a deed whose fruit is the pomegranate. As regards the date, the Holy Prophet himself has said that the parable of a believer is like a date-palm, a tree whose every part is useful: its fruit, its bark, its leaves and even its trunk are all useful to man. Its fruit is used for food, its bark is used as dress and as writing material, and with its leaves are made mats and baskets, etc; whilst the trunk is used for columns and beams. Hence, it is essential that a believer should also be beneficial to mankind. If, due to his incapacity, he cannot be useful in a certain department, he should try to be useful in the department in which he is capable. For instance, if he is poor and does not have money to benefit others, he should be ready to be of service to others by using the capabilities with which Allah, the High, has endowed him. If a strong man carries the load of a disabled person to his destination, or a man with eyesight leads a blind man home, all these come under the category of being beneficial to mankind. These are the works that create the Paradise, of this world and the next. Anyone who is not beneficial to mankind is not deserving of Paradise.

A pomegranate is an antidote for excessive bile and a cure for a lot of diseases. Thus, the fruit of deeds that helps alleviate people’s pains and distresses and which also heal their spiritual maladies will certainly be the pomegranate. In other words, a believer is like a pomegranate for the creatures of Allah. He is of help at every time of distress and affliction as he tries to remedy them, and even for man’s inner spiritual maladies, his person has a healing effect. That is to say, his virtuous model, his precious advice and preaching are like antidotes for people’s spiritual maladies. In other words, for a believer to be admitted to Paradise, it is essential that he possesses two basic qualities, whether in abundance or in a small measure. Firstly, his person, like a date-palm, should be beneficial for people, and not harmful. Secondly, his person, like the pomegranate, should be, according
to his capability and capacity, an antidote for people’s ills and a cure for their spiritual maladies, and not a source of trouble and trial for them. Thus, despite the promise of all these blessings those who do not pay attention to Allah’s bounties are unfortunate in the extreme.

_Therein are goodly, beautiful ones_  
_Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?_

*Khairat* is the plural of *khairah*, meaning “good”, and *imra’atun khairah* is used to mean a good woman.

*Hisan* is the plural of *hasanah*, which denotes a beautiful woman.

Here, also, goodly and beautiful women are mentioned by way of providing consortship and company to the believers, but the description here is not of the high standard of woman to be found in the Paradise of the Foremost.

_Pure ones confined to pavilions_  
_Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?_

*Hur*, the plural of *hurah*, means a woman whose white of the eyes is of a very pure white and the black part intensely black. In addition, her complexion is also fair.

From the standpoint of character, they are described as *confined to pavilions*, by which the intention is to highlight their state of complete devotion to Allah and their being oblivious to all else besides Him. But along with this, they have been mentioned as being *confined* (in the passive voice), in contrast to the women in the paradise of the Foremost, who are described as _restraining their glances_ (in the active voice). This highlights the fact that they have been made to reach this state of devotion, just as in the case of a person who does not turn completely to Allah on his own, but Allah, the High, Himself, alienates him from all else besides Him. In contrast to this, the women in the paradise of the Foremost are described as _restraining their_
glances, which signifies that out of their own free will they do not look at anyone besides Allah. In other words, they had achieved such heights of chastity and integrity, monotheism and gnosis of Allah, that they would naturally and without any conscious effort keep their eyes averted from all else besides Him. But the women mentioned in this verse do have complete devotion to Allah and are alienated from all else due to their chastity and integrity, monotheism and God-gnosis, but this needs an effort on their part. That is to say, they have become oblivious to all else besides Allah by guarding the limits as laid down by Allah.

Now, these women, whether they are from this very world or are a person's good deeds personified, connote the following difference between the paradise of the Foremost and that of ordinary believers, namely, that in the paradise of the Foremost the good deeds that are personified had been done spontaneously and naturally (which refers to a spiritual state called "the contented soul", where virtuous deeds become second nature), whereas the good deeds that are personified in the paradise of ordinary believers have been done with a conscious effort by forcing the reluctant self and in deference to the dictates of piety. But the deficiency in the women in this paradise that we notice is made up by Allah in the next verse by saying:

*Before them man has not touched them, nor jinn.*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny.*

Here, also, the same high level of chastity and integrity has been ascribed to these women as was ascribed to the women in the paradise of the Foremost. That is, far from the possibility of any man having touched them, no satanic idea ever crossed their minds. In other words, their hearts never became the playground of dirty and unholy notions and emotions.

The difference between the women in the two paradises is that in the hearts of the women in the paradise of the Foremost satanic thoughts and unholy emotions are non-existent (that is, the satan in them had
himself become a Muslim, and thus was not able to stir any wrong or impure ideas in the mind, but here, in the paradise of the ordinary believers, though the satan has not become a Muslim, yet due to their piety, he has been debarred from entering their hearts. Although the lower self does have an underlying potential to stir up impure thoughts and emotions, God-consciousness does not allow it to raise its head. And if it does raise its head, it is crushed forthwith. Thus, the hearts of both classes of women are devoid of any dirty and impure impulses, but in one group it is natural whilst in the other group, it is achieved with a certain amount of effort.

A slight difference has also been maintained in the style of description when describing the two groups. Only the inner beauty of the women in the paradise of the Foremost has been stated in the initial verse, which reads: *Those restraining their glances, whom no man nor jinn has touched before them*, and their outward, physical beauty has been described in the second verse by comparing them to rubies and corals. This clearly shows that their inner beauty has been given precedence. Nay, after merely mentioning their inner beauty in the first verse, Allah has gone on to draw attention to His bounty by saying: *Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*, which signifies that their inner beauty is at such a high stage of development that even if the external beauty is not present, the inner beauty in itself has sufficient potential to attract and charm a person’s heart. And then after that, by mentioning the outer beauty He has also indicated that even in this aspect they are not in any way deficient, and this, in itself, possesses a great attraction and is a great bounty of Allah.

In the paradise of the ordinary believers, both the inner and the outer beauty have been mentioned together. That is, Allah says: *Therein are goodly, beautiful ones*. Here, also, He has given precedence to the inner beauty, but He has placed *goodly* and *beautiful* together, to indicate that both, when combined, become a source of attraction. In the following verse, namely, *pure ones confined to pavilions*, both the outer and inner beauties have been mentioned together. This is
done to attract the attention of the believer and to divert him from the external to the internal beauty.

And finally, in the third verse, by mentioning, *Before them man has not touched them nor jinn*, Allah, the High, has highlighted the fact that for a true believer the ultimate concern that should attract him should be a spiritual state in which a perfection of monotheism and total devotion to Allah can be seen. And each of these is a bounty that must evoke the highest sense of gratitude in us.

*Reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets.*
*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

*Rafraf* is a type of cloth or carpet that resembles a green garden; some have taken it to mean plots of some garden. That is to say, *rafrasin khudrin* means plots of a garden or a floor covering that resembles the scene of a garden.

Glory be to Allah, that when the Holy Companions conquered Iran, they found in the treasury of the Chosroes, the King of Iran, a grand carpet that depicted an entire garden. It had trees of gold and silver, and the leaves and fruits were made of diamonds, emeralds and rubies. In other words, the Holy Companions developed their virtuous deeds to such an extent that, like the Hereafter, even this world became a paradise for them. And in the same context the Holy Prophet is reported to have said:

"The rivers Jeehooon (Bactrus) and Seehoon (the Jaxartes), Euphrates and Nile are rivers of paradise." *(Sahih Muslim).*

The meaning of this saying also is that if you develop your virtuous deeds to their perfection, the paradise of this world will also be disclosed to you like the paradise of the Hereafter, and that it will come to pass that you will gain possession of the countries that have these rivers in them. And that is what actually happened, that from Turkistan to Egypt, all the countries were conquered by the Holy Companions.
(ra), and the above-mentioned four rivers fell under their possession. The Jeehoon and the Seehoon are in Turkistan, the Euphrates is in Iraq and the Nile is in Egypt.

Abgariyy means a chief, above whom there is no other chief, or a thing that excels other things (Nihaya of Ibn-i Asir), or a floor covering (Mufradat, Imam Raghib).

The picture of people reclining on cushions on fine carpets, or in plots of a green garden, depicts the ease, joy and honour that will be the portion of the believers in Paradise. The same scene is to be witnessed in the paradise of the Foremost. But since they are heirs to the spiritual kingdom, hence in their picture one sees thrones, servants, majesty and glory (as is described in detail in the chapter Al-Waqi’ah); they represent a scene from the courtiers of Allah’s court. On the other hand, the scene depicted here is that of the ease and comfort that the common public will experience. I have often witnessed this scene in the Nishat and Shalimar gardens of Srinagar, Kashmir, where groups of the public are to be seen sitting on fine carpets, along with their families and friends, in diverse green plots of these Gardens, where the grass is level and green like velvet. They have their food and their own cooking arrangement, and one finds them cooking their food and enjoying it. Indeed, these gatherings give rise to such resounding laughter and joyful screams that even an onlooker derives happiness and joy from their merrymaking. And how much better will be the scene in Paradise, where everything will be so much more perfect and of such high quality that even our fanciful thoughts cannot reach those heights. Along with this, it will be perennial and never-ending.

So, fortunate is he who becomes an heir to these bounties, and who gets to enjoy these blessings in this very world, favours that make man experience an inner paradise in this world, and an inner and outward paradise in the Hereafter. And unlucky is the man who gives the lie to these bounties, whether through his convictions or through his deeds.
Blessed is the name of thy Lord, the Lord of glory and honour.

Tabaraka is from baraka which means such goodness, reward of which is never cut-off.

Dhul jalal: Possessor of awesome majesty, disobedience to Whom becomes a cause of disgrace and humiliation.

Dhul ikram: Possessor of beneficent and compassionate qualities, obedience to Whom is the cause of great bounties and blessings.

Allah says: The name of thy Lord is very blessed. Now, which name is meant here? Obviously, it is Ar-Rahman (The Beneficent), Who taught us the Qur’an. This is the name whose blessings are made manifest from the fact that He taught us a book like the Qur’an, a Book whose goodness and reward can never be cut off.

After this, by mentioning His two attributes, Dhul-jalal (Lord of awesome majesty) and Dhul ikram (Lord of compassion and beneficence), Allah wants us to know that both these attributes will be manifested through this Book. He will prove to be of awesome majesty for the disobedient (that is, they will eventually be destroyed, and be humiliated) and He will also prove to be the Lord of compassion and beneficence for the obedient. In other words, the obedient people shall be fully blessed with the bounties and favours of the Lord, in this world and in the Hereafter.

The second section of this chapter began with these attributes of Dhul jalal wal ikram (Lord of awesome majesty and Lord of compassion and beneficence), and the third section has ended with these two attributes. In the second section we saw a reflection of Allah’s awesome majesty and how the disobedient will be punished; in the third section we witness a reflection of His attribute of compassion and beneficence and how the obedient will be endowed with all kinds of bounties and favours. By witnessing these two manifestations of His
glory, one spontaneously begins to say: Blessed is the name of the Lord, the Lord of awesome majesty and beneficent compassion.