Before I begin the review of this awesome Surah, I would like to share with you an excerpt from my short story “my journey through Quran” in which I have described my experience of my first day at Al-Huda........... I had gone there as a listener, just to “see” how the Quran was being taught, not knowing that it was going to change my life forever!!

"As I descended down the cool white marble steps, a strong feeling of tranquility and peace enveloped me and the sound of Dr. Farhat Hashmi’s voice, echoing in that enormous hall, seemed to hold my heart. It was a pleasant surprise to see the discipline in the whole environment. The posture of the girls; the way they were writing in their Quran-copies, reflected their focus and sharp reflexes. They made it look so easy and natural! The proctors gliding along the aisles, in their floor length gowns, quietly helping out the students, guided me to the listener’s area. I had never experienced such pin-drop silence in my life!

I sat down and took out my diary and pen but I felt like an illiterate in that room full of learned people who had reached the end of 21st Para. So I continued to just sit there and let the sound of the Quran wash over me....... Little by little, I seemed to come out of my “hypnotic” state and began to make out what the teacher was saying. I realized that it was the explanation of Surah Ahzab and the teacher was telling about how the Prophet S.a.W. and His companions dug up a trench in one of the battles with the disbelievers who converged from all sides of Madinah for a combined attack against the Muslims. I opened up the Quran to see the verses. It was so strange that I must have read these verses countless times in my life, but had I ever felt the heat of the oncoming battle? Had I ever felt the tension that brings your heart to the throat? The following words of the Quran made me feel as if I myself was standing in that hot desert, digging the hard earth, with stones tied to my belly to ward off the hunger pangs..........
“When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harbouring doubts about Allah. There, the believers were tried and shaken with a mighty shaking.” (33:10-11)

It was unbelievable but true that I had read these same verses all my life without attaching any significance to the message in them. To me they were just sacred words of an unknown language and I had hoped to gain “sawab” or reward by just reciting them. Therefore it was a completely new experience for me to feel this turmoil in my heart and I thought that if just a few verses could do this to me then what about the whole of the Quran? No wonder Allah says in Surah- Al-Hashr verse 21:

“Had we sent down this Qur’an on a mountain, you would surely had seen it humbling itself and rending asunder by the fear of Allah.” (59:21)

I had barely come out of this wave of unexpected enlightenment, when the voice of Saad Al-Ghamidi filled the hall with the most beautiful recitation I had ever heard................... “Oh my God!” my heart cried out in wonder, Is this your Quran? Was it always there and my eyes were closed to it? Was it always being read out like this and I was not listening to it? Have I spent 35 years on this earth without understanding your words that were meant to guide me and to protect me from the misery of confusion and lack of direction? How did I let this happen to myself?

And that afternoon, I made a firm resolve to myself and to Allah that I was going to learn this Quran, whatever it takes.”

So you see, I love Surah Al-Ahzab so much because for me it is the entrance to a whole new world and a new life. It is full of a lot of historical information but the real thing is the inspiration within that information. You can open up any book of Tafseer and can go through lengthy details of all the happenings of the time when these verses were being revealed but our
target should be the level of consciousness that is achieved only when we believe that Allah is not simply telling us tales of an era long ago, but in fact He is making us aware of our own situation. So when we read about the forces coming towards Madinah to wipe out Islam from the face of the earth and the hypocrites inside the city, making conspiracies against the Muslims, we should think of the “enemies” surrounding our own heart, that is the shaitan (devil) and the negative elements in our environment, ready to attack, given half a chance, and the “hypocrite” inside us which is our “self” which conspires with the outside forces to try to make us come back to our former life of disbelief. Allah is telling us here, how to deal with these forces, because this is a battle we need to fight throughout our lives in this world, and we can’t afford to lose……….  

So let’s begin now, our journey through Surah Al-Ahzab, starting with the first Ayat which refers to the dilemma, which the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w) was going through at the time of its revelation. Most of us know the story of Zaid bin Haritha (r.a) who was the adopted son of the Prophet (s.a.w). Hazrat Zaid (r.a) had been married to Hazrat Zainab (r.a) who was the Prophet’s first cousin, but due to the differences between their temperaments, there arose serious incompatibility between the two, resulting in a divorce. And then Allah commanded the Prophet that he should now marry Zainab (r.a).  

This was not quite so simple because according to Arab custom, the adopted son was regarded as a real son. He got share in inheritance; he was treated like a real son and real brother by the adopted mother and the adopted sister. This custom clashed in every detail with the laws of marriage and divorce and inheritance enjoined by Allah. When the artificial relations endued with customary sanctity are allowed to mix freely like the real relations, it cannot but produce evil results. That is why the Islamic law of marriage and divorce, the law of inheritance and the law of the prohibition of adultery required that the concept and custom of regarding the adopted son as the real son should be eradicated completely.  

This concept, however, could not be rooted out by merely passing a legal order, saying, “The adopted son is not the real son”. Therefore, it was inevitable that the custom should be eradicated practically, and through the
Holy Prophet himself. For no Muslim could ever conceive that a thing done by the Holy Prophet himself, and done by him under Allah’s Command, could be detestable.

But the Prophet (s.a.w) was hesitant because if he married the divorced wife of his adopted son, then the hypocrites and the Jews and the mushriks (polytheists) who were already bent on mischief would get a fresh excuse to start a propaganda campaign against Islam.

Therefore in the very first Ayat Allah is giving a clear command and although it is primarily addressed to the Prophet (s.a.w), it is obviously meant for us too:

\[
yā 'ībīhā al-nabī 'an-tiq al-lāh wa-lā tāțū al-kāfīrīn wa-l-munāfaqīn 'in al-lāh kān 'ulīmā hākimā
\]

{1}

O Prophet! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and do not comply with (the wishes of) the unbelievers and the hypocrites; surely Allah is Knowing, Wise;

If the Prophet (s.a.w) is being told to have the fear of Allah, how can we justify our own fearless way of life? And then it is so clear from this Ayat that we should never ever compromise on our duty towards Allah in order to please the disbelievers and hypocrites. But the question arises that there are some of us who truly fear Allah and want to live in complete obedience to Him, yet we fail to do so. What’s the reason behind that? It is because we are afraid of opposition. That is why we gladly take those things in Islam which are convenient to us and leave out the parts that might result in objections from people.

Fear of people is a crippling emotion; therefore, the following verses are going to give us the practical solution to put an end to this fear and confusion.

\[
wa-tābū 'ma yūhī 'alīk min rabbik 'in al-lāh kān bīma tāumūlūn ḥayirā
\]

{2}

And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord; surely Allah is Aware of what you do;
And rely on Allah; and Allah is sufficient for a Protector.

Surely Allah’s fear will put an end to all other apprehensions. And the next thing to do is to follow whatever is revealed from Allah i.e. Quran and Hadith. Merely reading it, is not enough as we mistakenly assume that “oh we are so pious just because we are reading the Quran.” No, these teachings are meant to be followed and to mould our lives accordingly, not just for quoting these words in gatherings so that we might appear knowledgeable. Also we need to put our complete trust in Allah that He is the disposer of our affairs. And that He is sufficient for us as our support against whomsoever we are afraid of. This is the crux of our faith and it is this faith which makes our heart strong.

Where social reforms were being discussed, there was another custom of the pagan Arabs that when a man wanted to divorce his wife, he used to say that you are like my mother to me. In the next Ayat Allah has put an end to this irrational practice too.

Now there was a hypocrite in those days, who went about claiming that he had two hearts; one was with the disbelievers and the other was with the believers. Allah denied this ridiculous idea and used this example to make them understand that just as Allah has not made two hearts inside a body, similarly your wife can not become your mother, nor the son of another person can become your own son.

Allah has not made for any man two hearts within him; nor has He made your wives whose backs you liken to the backs of your mothers as your mothers, nor has He made those whom you assert to be your sons your real sons; these are the words of your mouths; and Allah speaks the truth and He guides to the way.
And now the following Ayat puts everything into perspective and leaves no
doubt in our minds regarding the status of our beloved Prophet (s.a.w) in the
sight of Allah:

النبي أولى بالمؤمنين من أنفسهم وأزواجه أمهاتهم وأولو الأرحام بعضهم أولى
بغض فِي كتاب الله من المؤمنين والمهاجرين إلا أن تفعّلوا إلَى أوليائكم
مَعْروفًا كَانَ ذلِك في الكتاب مَسْتُورًا {6}

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are (as) their
mothers; and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of
Allah to inheritance, one with respect to another, than (other) believers, and (than)
those who have fled (their homes), except that you do some good to your friends; this is
written in the Book.

We know from the Quran and Hadith that our love for our Prophet is a part
of our faith. And it’s no ordinary kind of emotion; but a love which moves us
towards an unquestioning obedience of the Prophet (s.a.w)

Just think about these words: “the Prophet is closer to the believers than
their own selves”

Are we believers? And is the Prophet closer to us than our own selves?
When someone is “close” to you, then you know that person. Do we know
about the Prophet?

We trust whom we are close to; we believe in their judgment; we act upon
their advice.........So do we feel the same way towards the teachings of the
Prophet (saw)?

It is a pity that we have “invented” lots of ways to show our love of this
great personality through extravagant displays on his birthday, although the
Prophet himself has warned us against these innovations. And we
conveniently turn our eyes away from the fact that the only way acceptable
to Allah and His Messenger, to prove our love for him is that we
wholeheartedly accept his teachings and follow his Sunnah.
Next we have the section of this Surah which refers to the Battle of “Khandaq” (the Trench) which is also known as the Battle of Al-Ahzab. In the fifth year of Prophet’s migration to Madinah, an unprecedentedly large army of the Arab tribes, in a combined attack against the Muslims, marched against the small city of Madinah. Together they numbered from ten to twelve thousand men. Had it been a sudden attack it would have been disastrous. But the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had been informed in time. It was decided that the best way to defend themselves against this huge attack was to dig a trench big enough to prevent the enemies from entering the city. This was no simple task.

It makes my heart ache just to visualize that staunch group of faithful companions along with their Prophet (s.a.w), digging in the sun, without any fancy tools, not even sufficient food to keep them going and hovering above them like a sword, the fear of the approaching enemy. can we survive even a fraction of such a trial? What made them so brave? What made them so steadfast? Their main driving force was not love of their own life or safety but, Love of Allah and Love of His Prophet (s.a.w). Complete surrender without any doubt.

Was it as easy as the utterance of these words? We can look at the following words of Quran and see for ourselves that the way of Love, is a way of selflessness and sacrifice; and a way which is interspersed with obstacles that are excruciatingly painful but in the end this is the way which leads to success and a heavenly pleasure that is unknown to people who live without this passion. The Quran tells it all, we just need to open our hearts and eyes and ears:

إذ جَاءَوْكُم مِّنَ الْقُوُّ مِنْ أَسْفَلِ الْقُلُوبِ وَإذْ زَاغَتْ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتْ الْقُلُوبُ الحَناِجَرَ وَتَطْنُونَ بَالِلَّهِ الْظَّنُّوْنَا {10}

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull, and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts of Allah.

هَنَالِكَ اتَّبَعْتِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وُزْلُلُوا زُلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا {11}

There the believers were tried and they were shaken with severe shaking.
Did the companions of the Prophet wait for everyone’s approval before they took upon this task? Like we do? Were they being appreciated for their efforts? No, on the contrary, the hypocrites were constantly demoralizing them by putting doubts in their hearts:

إِذْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَّنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلاَّ غُرُورًا

{12}

And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease began to say: Allah and His Messenger did not promise us (victory) but only to deceive.

Just look at these words and see how amazingly familiar they sound. I mean, even today we hear certain people saying things like, “Oh no! Why are you going to read the Quran? What will become of your home and family? Your home will be neglected. Your husband will lose interest in you. Your children will turn against you.” Or, “Who will marry you like this? You will look awful in hijab. What are you going to get out of it anyway?”

إِذْ قَالَ اِلَّخَاقَةُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ يَا أُهْلِ يَتَرَبَّبْ لَا مَقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجَعُوا وَيَسْتَأْذَنُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ

{13}

And when a party of them said: O people of Yasrib! There IS no place to stand for you (here), therefore go back; and a party of them asked permission of the prophet, saying. Surely our houses are exposed; and they were not exposed; they only desired to fly away.

Allah says: “Tell them, running away will not do you any good, and if you are running away from death or being killed, you would enjoy this life only for a little while.” How logical the Quran is and how practical.........Don’t we realize that only Allah can help us whether we keep hiding in our comfort zones or venture out on His command:

قُلْ مِنَ الدَّيْنِ الَّذِي يَعْصِبُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً وَلَا يَجْدُدُنَّ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَيْاً وَلَا نَصِيرًا

{17}
Say: Who is it that can withhold you from Allah if He intends to do you evil, rather He intends to show you mercy? And they will not find for themselves besides Allah any guardian or a helper.

We need to think upon it that although the doubts raised by the hypocrites were the same as we have to face today, but there is a great difference between the response of the companions of the Prophet, and our own reaction to such comments. We tend to lose heart, every now and then, because our Love for Allah and His Messenger is not strong. But just look at the patience and determination of those blessed people............... They stood like a rock till the end and eventually the armies had to retreat after a month long siege. We should study these events in detail and discuss it among our families and friends so that we may be inspired towards a courageous way of life in which nothing should make us lose our trust in Allah and His Messenger.

When we want to serve Allah, we cannot do it haphazardly, or follow our own heart’s desires or our self created theories. Allah has indeed given us the most beautiful example in the life and personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). Although numerous books have been written on this topic but this one Ayat of the Quran encompasses it all..............for all those who have put their hopes with Allah, and hope for the day of the Hereafter, and who remember Allah a lot...............let them know who their guide should be........who should they idealize and who should they follow:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يُرِجُو اللَّهَ وَالَّيُومَ الْآخِرَ، وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيراً {21}

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.

The Prophet didn’t just issue commands, rather he demonstrated all the teachings of the Quran by acting upon them first. So in this Battle too, he was side by side with his companions. When a believer complained of hunger and showed him that he had tied a stone to his belly to avoid the hunger pangs, the Prophet (s.a.w) showed that he himself had tied two stones instead of one.
In his entire life, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) was the perfect reflection of the spirit of Quran. It is Allah’s favor on us that, just as he has preserved the Quran for us, He has also preserved the Sunnah of His Prophet for all times to come, so that we have a perfect role model to follow. However, if today we find ourselves misdirected and confused, it’s all because we have let ourselves be deluded into following other “ideals”, leaving behind the clear, shining example of our Prophet (s.a.w). But there is still time while we are alive, to turn back to our original sources of guidance so as to live with an inner sense of peace in this world and reap great success in the Hereafter.

It was this trust in the Prophet (s.a.w) which strengthened the faith of the believers in Madinah even in the face of severe trials. They had taken an oath to obey Allah and His Messenger and they proved their sincerity in every gesture. Their loyalty did not waver with time, whether in happiness or in trials and difficult times, they gave preference to the obedience of Allah and His Messenger over their own comforts and desires. Our glorious history is full of shining examples of their sacrifices for the sake of Islam. That is why Allah appreciates them in these beautiful words:

من المُؤمِّنينِ رُجُّالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضَى نَحْيَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَتَبَيَّنُ وَمَا بَدَّلَوْا تَبْدِيلًا {23}

Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least

This is the key: never changing your determination to serve Allah, even if it costs your life. We also say these words but our actions do not live up to the claims we make. So let’s take a quiet moment and check up on our sincerity of purpose. What are we really working for? If our focus is on anything other than Allah then surely it cannot give us the constant and ever present energy we need to keep going with determination. That is why the truth of true believers is so much valuable in the eyes of Allah:
That Allah may reward the truthful for their truth, and punish the hypocrites if He please or turn to them (mercifully); surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

The battle of Ahzab lasted almost a month. The enemies could not enter Madinah because of the trench, thus they had to lay a siege during the cold winter for which they were not prepared. The believers faced a two sided dilemma. On one hand, they had to stand ready to fight at the battle front in case the enemy should try and cross the trench and on the other hand they were being pressurized by the treachery of the Jews inside Madinah, who had pledged to support them but were now changing their alliance. It was a painful test of faith in which the hypocrisy of the hypocrites came out in the open, and the belief of the believers was strengthened more than ever.

Every night is followed by a morning; similarly this trial also came to an end. Suddenly one night, help arrived from Allah; a severe windstorm accompanied by thunder and lightning hit the camp. It added to the cold and darkness. The wind blew over the tents and put the enemy in disarray. They could not withstand this blow from nature so they fled from the battle field in humiliation:

And Allah turned back the unbelievers in their rage; they did not obtain any advantage, and Allah sufficed the believers in fighting; and Allah is Strong, Mighty.

Islam is a religion of peace. But peace is a condition which is achieved through hard work and perseverance and selflessness. Just to defeat the enemies in battlefields is not enough. You need to have individuals who are at peace with themselves and who can maintain an environment of peace and stability. For this purpose Allah sent a complete guideline of social reforms which was aimed at creating an inner strength within the Believers, to guard themselves against the negative effects of the Hypocrites, who were so
intermingled in the Muslim society of Madinah that their removal was not possible. So this education starts with the most important members of the society………the women.

Most people ask the question, “What is the status of women in Islam?” The following verses which are addressed primarily to the wives of the Prophet (s.a.w), prove that in Allah's eyes, women are the foundations of a society. Their conduct and personality affects the environment of the home and families, who in turn transfer it to the whole society. Therefore it was very important that their education should be given top priority. Look at how Quran provides us with a set of values, beginning with the most honorable of Ladies, the blessed Wives of the Prophet (s.a.w) who are the mothers of the believers, and thus a role model for us to follow.

Allah says:

O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other of the women; if you will be on your guard, then be not soft in (your) speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire BUT speak in an honorable manner.

This is the best education because it is coming directly from Allah. And so the order of commands is so amazingly perfect. What is the first thing about a personality that needs to be put right? Your way of talking………women should be very careful because the way they talk has a far reaching effect on the listener. So the tone they reserve for their loved ones should not be used randomly for every other man. Also they have been told to talk in a straightforward manner. Being precise in the choice of words, prevents misinterpretation and saves a lot of time.

The next thing is that the home for a woman should be regarded by her as a sanctuary and not a prison. It should be a place she loves, because she knows that her honour and dignity are preserved within its boundary. It doesn’t mean that Allah has forbidden her to step outside the house. She can go out occasionally but not without a solid reason. Obviously Allah is not holding her back from going out for education, or going to a doctor, or fulfilling other
needs. But going out of habit and purposelessly traversing the roads, and spending hours on window shopping is a different thing........which needs to be stopped. Similarly going to meet somebody with a purpose, is different than just going about into one's neighborhood out of curiosity and boredom, to kill time with gossip and idle talk. Another important factor here is that when a woman has to go out of necessity then she should go in respectable attire and not copy the fashions of the ignorant. Isn't it ironical that nowadays we associate being fashionable to being educated and Allah is calling it the way of the ignorant people!! And then at the end Allah is assuring us that these are not restrictions. Nor should we mistakenly assume that Allah doesn't want us to enjoy freedom. No, the fact is that Allah loves us so much that he doesn't want us to pollute ourselves with the harmful elements of the society. The words of the Quran are so very clear and precise:

وَقَرَنَّ فِي بَيَّنِيكُنَّ وَلَا تَبْرَجِنَّ تَبْرَجُ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولِيَّةِ وَأَقْمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَأَتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطْعِنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنِّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَذْهَبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطْهِرَكُمْ

[^33]

And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying in the days of Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic ignorance); and keep up prayer, and pay the obligatory charity (Zakat), and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying.

One might ask what should the women do with all the time that they have on their hands? Shouldn't they contribute towards the society? Allah says why not! Their responsibility is a great one and that is to educate themselves as well as their families with the Book of Allah and the Wisdom in the Sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w):

وَادْكُرْنَ مَا يَتَّلِى فِي بَيَّنِيكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحُكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا

[^34]

And remember that what is recited in your houses of the verses of Allah and the wisdom (of the teachings of the Prophet s.a.w); surely Allah is ever most courteous, well Aware of all things.
If after all this anyone has a doubt in their minds about Allah’s love and mercy for women, then look at the following Ayat in which Allah has once and for all made it clear, that He has created both man and woman with equal opportunities to excel and to seek a closer relationship with their Creator, even if they have been created in different moulds to be able to fulfill the specific roles assigned to them respectively.

\[
\text{إنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلِلْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ،}
\]

\[
\text{وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ، وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ، وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ،}
\]

\[
\text{وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ، وَالْصَّائِمِينَ وَالْصَّائِمَاتِ، وَالْحَافِظِينَ فَرُوجَهُمْ،}
\]

\[
\text{وَالْحَافِظَاتِ، وَالْذَّاکْرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا، وَالْذَّاکْرَاتِ أَعْدَ اللَّهَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا.}
\]

\[
\text{عَظِيمًا} \{35\}
\]

Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women and the humble men and the humble women, and the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember—Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.

But it’s a pity that those who do not wish to see the truth, come up with a lot of objections that women have been suppressed in Islam and that they should be given freedom and equality with men etc. A lot can be said in response but there is no match to the simplicity and clarity of Quran, which has given us the following Ayat as an answer to put an end to all such doubts:

\[
\text{وَمَا كَانَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَاتِ إِذَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ وُسُّوْلَهُ أُمْرًا، أَنْ يَكُونُ لَهُمْ الْخَيْرَةُ مِنْ}
\]

\[
\text{آَمِرَهُمْ وَمِنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَوُسُّوْلَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ صَلَّالَا مًُّبِينًا} \{36\}
\]

And it is not for a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying.

The fact is that we cannot truly worship Allah until we have a complete trust in His love and mercy for us. Allah wants us to succeed that is why He has
taught us a beautiful way to increase our faith in Him; and that is through His constant remembrance and glorification:


O you who believe! Remember Allah, with frequent remembrance

And glorify His praises morning and evening.

Allah’s mercy for us is so boundless. Just listen to these soothing words of assurance:

He it is Who sends His blessings on you, and (so do) His angels, that He may bring you forth out of utter darkness into the light; and He is Merciful to the believers.

This great Surah has many things to teach us but its basic lesson is that we should have a very clear perspective about the status of the Prophet (s.a.w) in the sight of Allah as well as his importance in our own life.

Even with this great honour and status, given by Allah, the Prophet (s.a.w) was the most humble and soft-hearted person; quick to show mercy to all, especially to the weak and downtrodden ones, and even to those who annoyed him. However this softness of attitude caused some people to take undue advantage of him. Those were mostly the Bedouins from around Madinah who had embraced Islam but were not yet aware of the manners and etiquettes to conduct themselves in the company of the Prophet (s.a.w). The following
O you who believe! do not enter the houses of the Prophet unless permission is given to you, nor stay waiting for mealtime-- but when you are invited to a meal, enter, and when you have eaten, then disperse—and do not seek long conversation; surely such behavior gives the Prophet trouble, but he feels shy in asking you to leave, and Allah does not feel shy in telling you the truth. If you have to ask His wives for anything, ask of them from behind a curtain; this is purer for your hearts and (for) their hearts; and it is not proper that you that you should give trouble to the Messenger of Allah, nor that you should marry his wives after him ever; surely this is grievous offence in the sight of Allah.

If you do a thing openly or do it in secret, then surely Allah is witness of all things.

The one line that captured my attention the most is that the person you are offending, intentionally or otherwise, might be too good natured and shy to tell you so because he does not want to hurt your feelings; but don’t forget that Allah is watching and keeping a record of your deeds and “He Doesn’t feel shy in telling the truth” So we should look deep into our own selves and make corrections before the Almighty decides to tell us the truth about ourselves. It might be too late to make amends then.

It really makes me feel a tremendous love for my Beloved Prophet to imagine how much he went through, including the painful attitudes of the people, so
as to accomplish the task of conveying to us the message of Allah, to connect us with Allah through this never ending bond of the Quran. How should we express our gratitude to Him and our love? What is the best gift that we can send him to show our devotion? Allah says:

\[
\text{إنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يَصِلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلُّمُوا}
\]

{66}

Surely Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet; O you who believe! call for (Divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation.

Those who persist in hurting Allah and The Messenger, have been warned in the following ayat:

\[
\text{إنَّ الَّذينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنْهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَأَغْدَبَ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا}
\]

{57}

Surely (as for) those who speak evil things of Allah and His Messenger, Allah has cursed them in this world and the hereafter, and He has prepared for them a chastisement bringing disgrace.

It is not possible to rid the society of all harmful people or attitudes. Although social reforms are meant to educate the society but there would always be certain elements which might not even be visible. So it becomes absolutely necessary to protect our own self against such possible dangers. Therefore Allah commanded the Prophet to tell his wives, daughters and all the believing women to cover themselves properly before venturing out of the safety of their homes:

\[
\text{يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لَّأَؤْرَاجِكُ وَبَنَاتِكُ وَنَسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يَدْنُونَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِن جِلَابِيِهِنَّ}
\]

{59}

O Prophet! say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their outer-garments; this will be more proper, that they may be known, and thus they will not be given trouble; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.
The above Ayat is a superb example of the balance of Islam. Neither have the women been held captives in their houses, nor can they go about carelessly. The covering for a Woman, is like protecting a precious jewel. Allah knows His creation and He knows what is best for us. Unfortunately it is a topic which is misunderstood by most and thus has become an “issue”. Ironically, while people feel it’s a violation of women’s rights, the women who actually chose to wear the complete Hijab feel happy and liberated, not imprisoned. I came across a poem written by one such woman. Hope you will enjoy it:

**The Muslim Woman "Unveiled"**

You look at me and call me oppressed,
Simply because of the way I’m dressed,
You know me not for what’s inside,
You judge the clothing I wear with pride
My body’s not for your eyes to hold,
You must speak to my mind, not my feminine mold,
I’m an individual, I’m no mans slave,
It’s Allah’s pleasure that I only crave
I have a voice so I will be heard,
for in my heart I carry His word,

"O ye women, wrap close your cloak,
so you won't be bothered by ignorant folk"

Man doesn't tell me to dress this way,
It's a Law from God that I obey,
Oppressed is something I'm truly NOT,
For liberation is what I've got
It was given to me many years ago,
With the right to prosper, the right to grow,
I can climb mountains or cross the seas,
Expand my mind in all degrees
for God Himself gave us LIB-ER-TY,
When He sent Islam,
To You and Me!
A lot can be said about the advantages of Hijab in our day to day life. Because when we remain connected with these natural laws, our best talents and inner resources get a chance to come to surface and benefit us in fulfilling our roles in this world. But success in this world is not our only target. Our main focus should be on the Day of Recompense, when all matters shall be decided by Allah and we will not be allowed to put forward our own philosophies. The guidance of the Quran is clear and simple, it our choice whether to accept it or make excuses.

Allah has given us a certain time in which to exercise this limited power of choice. But this time will end anytime and we are not even aware how soon that might be:

\[\text{يَسْأَلُكَ الْلَّهُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قُلْ إِنِّي عَلِمَهَا عَنَّى اللَّهِ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا} \]

Men ask you about the hour; say: The knowledge of it is only with Allah, and what will make you comprehend that the hour may be near.

We know what Allah has forbidden and yet we continue to indulge in those activities. We have knowledge of the ways to please Him yet we are not rushing towards those things? Why? May be it’s because we have a false sense of security that just as in this world we are allowed to go about our lives without any obstacles even if we disobey Allah. So we will not have to face any consequences of our actions even in the hereafter and just because we are all Muslims He will grant us Jannah (Paradise). It is such a great folly to deceive oneself. The truth is that Allah’s disobedience is not such a minor offence as we have made ourselves believe. Allah says very clearly:

\[\text{إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا} \]

Surely Allah has cursed the unbelievers and has prepared for them a burning fire,

Obviously none of us wants to face such a terrible end; But, how to avoid it? How to get out of this quicksand of disobedience to Allah and love of worldly success?
The only power that can take us out of this darkness, and bring us into light, is a strong belief in Allah and the fear of His displeasure; along with the desire for a complete, everlasting success of both the worlds. And so, at the end of this Surah Allah gives us this reminder to take with us as we close this chapter, something that will remain with us as we go about in our lives..........

O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and speak the right word,

He will put your deeds into a right state for you, and forgive you your faults; and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he indeed achieves a mighty success.