INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT Muḥammad, 47.

We have examined and followed the current arrangement of the Sūras according to subject-matter and independently of chronology, and we have found that a logical thread runs through them. We have now finished more than five-sixths of the Qurān. The remaining sixth consists of short Sūras, but these are again grouped according to subject-matter.

We begin the first of such groups with a group of three Sūras (xlvii, to xlix.), which deal with the organisation of the Muslim Ummah or community both for external defence and in internal relations. The present Sūra deals with the necessity of defence against external foes by courage and strenuous fighting, and dates from about the first year of the Hijra, when the Muslims were under threat of extinction by invasion from Makkah.

Summary.–Aggressive hostility to Faith and Truth should be fought firmly, and Allah will guide (xlvii. 1-19).

Faint-heartedness condemned; those who strive and those who turn away will be sorted out (xlvii. 20-38).
Muhammad (the Prophet).

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Those who reject Allah And hinder (men) from The Path of Allah,— Their deeds will Allah Bring to naught. 4817

2. But those who believe And work deeds of Righteousness, and believe In the (Revelation) sent down To Muhammad—for it is The Truth from their Lord,— He will remove from them Their ills and improve Their condition. 4818

3. This because those who Reject Allah follow falsehood. While those who believe follow The Truth from their Lord: Thus does Allah set forth 4819 For men their lessons By similitudes.

4817. Whatever they do will miss its mark, because Allah is the source of all energy and life. If the wicked try to persecute men or seduce them from the Truth, the result will be the opposite of what they intend.

4818. Bal means state or condition, whether external, or of the heart and mind. Both meanings apply here. The more the wicked rage, the better will be the position of the righteous, and Allah will make it easier and easier for the righteous to love and follow the Truth.

4819. We learn the greatest moral lessons by parables and similitudes from things that happen in the outer world. If a man goes after a mirage or a thing that has no real existence, he can never reach his goal, while the man that follows the kindly Light from Allah that leads him on must be happier in mind, sounder in heart, and firmer in life, generally for every moment that he lives.
4. Therefore, when ye meet\textsuperscript{4820} The Unbelievers (in fight), Smite at their necks; At length, when ye have Thoroughly subdued them, Bind (the captives)\textsuperscript{4821} Firmly: therefore (Is the time for) either Generosity or ransom:\textsuperscript{4822} Until the war lays down Its burdens. Thus (are ye Commanded): but if it Had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted Retribution from them (Himself); But (He lets you fight) In order to test you,\textsuperscript{4823} Some with others. But those who are slain\textsuperscript{4824} In the way of Allah,— He will never let Their deeds be lost.

\textsuperscript{4820} When once the fight (\textit{jihād}) is entered upon, carry it out with the utmost vigour, and strike home your blows at the most vital points (\textit{smite at their necks}), both literally and figuratively. You cannot wage war with kid gloves.

\textsuperscript{4821} In the first onset there must necessarily be great loss of life; “after the enemy’s numbers are fairly thinned down, prisoners may be taken”. With this passage may be compared viii. 67, and n. 1234.

\textsuperscript{4822} When once the enemy is brought under control, generosity (\textit{i.e.}, the release of prisoners without ransom) or ransom is recommended.

\textsuperscript{4823} The Believers are tested in Faith by the extent to which they are willing to make sacrifices, even to the laying down of their lives; and the enemies are tested as to whether they would repent and let the righteous live in freedom and security.

\textsuperscript{4824} There are two alternative readings, (1) \textit{qātalū}, “those who fight”, and (2) \textit{qālūtū}, “those who are slain”. The meaning under the first reading is wider, and includes that under the second. I have translated on the basis of the second reading, which is in accordance with the text of the Royal Egyptian edition.
5. Soon will He guide them
   And improve their condition,

6. And admit them to
   The Garden which He
   Has made known to them.

7. O ye who believe!
   If ye will help
   (The cause of) Allah,
   He will help you,
   And plant your feet firmly.

8. But those who reject (Allah),—
   For them is destruction,
   And (Allah) will bring
   Their deeds to naught. 4827

9. That is because they
   Hate the Revelation of Allah;
   So He has made
   Their deeds fruitless. 4828

10. Do they not travel
    Through the earth, and see
    What was the End
    Of those before them
    (Who did evil)?
    Allah brought utter destruction
    On them, and similar
    (Fates await) those who
    Reject Allah.

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4825. If we read “who are slain” in the last clause but one of verse 4, (see last note), “guide” would mean “guide them in their journey after death”.

4826. “The Garden which He has made known to them”: Cf. ii. 25.

4827. See above, xlvii. 1 and n. 4817.

4828. Their deeds are “fruitless” in the sense that they are vain; they do not produce the results intended by their doers. But they will not be exempt from producing the natural consequences of evil, viz., further degradation and misery for the soul.

4829. The end of evil is evil. All past history and tradition shows that. Will not men of every generation learn that lesson? Allah helps His servants, but those who rebel against Allah have no one to help them.
11. That is because Allah
   Is the Protector of those
   Who believe, but
   Those who reject Allah
   Have no protector.

SECTION 2.

12. Verily Allah will admit
   Those who believe and do
   Righteous deeds, to Gardens
   Beneath which rivers flow;
   While those who reject Allah
   Will enjoy (this world)\textsuperscript{4830}
   And eat as cattle eat;
   And the Fire will
   Be their abode.

13. And how many cities,
   With more power than
   Thy city which has
   Driven thee out,\textsuperscript{4831}
   Have We destroyed
   (For their sins)?
   And there was none
   To aid them.

14. Is then one who is
   On a clear\textsuperscript{4832} (Path)
   From his Lord,
   
\textsuperscript{4830} An apt simile. Beasts of the field eat their fill, but have no higher interests. Men who worship the world exclusively are no better: their pleasures and enjoyments rise no higher than those of the beasts of the field. They have no inkling of spiritual happiness. On the contrary, as they were endowed with spiritual faculties which they misused, they will not escape the Fire of Punishment, the Penalty of Sin.

\textsuperscript{4831} A reference to Pagan Makkah, which drove out the holy Prophet because of his righteousness and because he preached Repentance. The date of this Sūra must therefore be after the Hijrat.

\textsuperscript{4832} Clear, or enlightened; a Path on which shines the Light of Allah.
No better than one
To whom the evil
Of his conduct seems pleasing,
And such as follow
Their own lusts?

15. (Here is) the description
Of the Garden which
The righteous are promised:
In it are rivers
Of water unstaling;\(^{4833}\)
Rivers of milk
Of which the taste
Never changes; rivers
Of wine, a joy
To those who drink;
And rivers of honey
Pure and clear. In it
There are for them
All kinds of fruits;\(^{4834}\)
And Forgiveness from their Lord,\(^{4835}\)
(Can those in such Bliss)
Be compared to such as
Shall dwell for ever
In the Fire, and be given,

4833. In this description there are four kinds of drinks and all kinds of fruits; and the summing up of all delights in the “Forgiveness from their Lord”. The four kinds of drinks are: (1) delicious, cool, pure water, not like earthly water, for it never suffers corruption; (2) milk which never turns sour, whose taste is like that of fresh warm milk drawn from the udder; (3) wine, not like any wine on earth, for it leaves no headaches behind, and causes no intoxication, which is a kind of madness or poison, but is ever a joy to drink; and (4) honey, pure and clear, with no admixture of wax or any foreign substance. These drinks, will cool the spirit, feed the heart, warm the affections, and sweeten life.

4834. See n. 4671 to xliii. 73.

4835. **Forgiveness from their Lord**: that is the covering up or blotting out of sin and all that was sad or unsatisfactory in the lower life; the pure Light from the Countenance of Allah Most High: xcii. 20.
To drink, boiling water, 
So that it cuts up\textsuperscript{4836}
Their bowels (to pieces)?

16. And among them are men 
Who listen to thee, 
Till when they 
Go out from thee,\textsuperscript{4837}
They say to those who 
Have received Knowledge, 
“What is it he said 
Just then?” Such are 
Men whose hearts Allah 
Has sealed, and who 
Follow their own lusts.

17. But to those who receive\textsuperscript{4838} 
Guidance, He increases 
Their Guidance, 
And bestows on them 
Their Piety and Restraint 
(From evil).

18. Do they then only wait\textsuperscript{4839} 
For the Hour,—that it 
Should come on them

\textsuperscript{4836} Cf. xxxvii. 66-67, and n. 4074. Just as the Bliss of the Blessed will penetrate their being through and through, so the agony of the condemned ones will penetrate their being through and through.

\textsuperscript{4837} Cf. x. 42, and n. 1434; also vi. 25, 36, and n. 857. The case here referred to is that of the Hypocrites who came to the assemblies of Islam in Madinah and pretended to listen to the Prophet’s teaching and preaching. But their heart and mind were not in learning righteousness, but in carping at things they saw and heard. When they got out, they knew nothing of the teaching, but on the contrary asked foolish and ignorant questions, such as might raise doubts.

\textsuperscript{4838} Spiritual advancement is progressive: each step makes the next ones easier and more complete.

\textsuperscript{4839} Cf. xliii. 66, and n. 4665.
Of a sudden? But already
Have come some tokens\textsuperscript{4840}
Thereof,
And when it comes to them,
How shall they have
Their Reminder?

19. Know, therefore, that
There is no god
But Allah, and ask
Forgiveness for thy fault,\textsuperscript{4841}
And for the men
And women who believe:
For Allah knows how ye\textsuperscript{4842}
Move about and how
Ye dwell in your homes.

SECTION 3.

20. Those who believe say,\textsuperscript{4843}
"Why is not a Sûra
Sent down (for us)?"

\textsuperscript{4840} The sands of time are always running, and when a wrong is done, the time for its punishment is approaching every moment. No one should therefore wait. The time for repentance is \textit{Now} at any given time. When the punishment comes, it is too late for repentance, and all admonition would be useless.

Looking to the particular time when this Sûra was revealed, \textit{viz.}, about a year after the Hijrat, already there were Signs that the plans of the Pagans to crush Islam were crumbling to pieces. The Hijrat showed how much good-will there was in Madinah for the holy Prophet of Allah, and how many people from Makkah adhered to him. The battle of Badr showed that they could hold their own against odds of three to one.

\textsuperscript{4841} Cf. xl. 55, and n. 4428.

\textsuperscript{4842} The time and manner of our conducting ourselves at home and when we move about on our business are all material to the judgment of our conduct, and for every nuance in our moral and spiritual progress, we must seek Allah's help and guidance.

\textsuperscript{4843} The men of faith and loyalty are eager and anxious to get a command to serve the Cause even if it be at the sacrifice of their lives. Not so the Hypocrites, "those in whose hearts is a disease". They are mortally afraid as mentioned below.
But when a Sûra
Of decisive 4844
Meaning is revealed,
And fighting is mentioned
Therein, thou wilt see those
In whose hearts is a disease 4845
Looking at thee with a look
Of one in swoon at
The approach of death.
But more fitting for them—

21. Were it to obey
And say what is just,
And when a matter 4846
Is resolved on, it were
Best for them if they
Were true to Allah.

22. Then, is it 4847
To be expected of you,
If ye were put in authority,
That ye will do mischief
In the land, and break
Your ties of kith and kin?

4844. Cf. iii. 7, and n. 347. The defence of truth and righteousness at all sacrifice, when a definite and categorical command issues from the ruler of an Islamic state is a fundamental condition of enlistment in the cause of Allah. It is true that Punishment and Judgment belong to Allah alone; but our mettle and fidelity have to be tested, (see verse 4 above), and Allah uses human agency in human affairs.

4845. Cf. ii. 10. The disease is hypocrisy, disloyalty to the Cause, want of courage and of the spirit of self-sacrifice, want of true understanding.

4846. The resolution is not taken except under guidance from Allah. Those, therefore, who fail to implement it by their own effort and sacrifice, are not true to Allah. And such disloyalty or cowardice is not even good for them from a worldly point of view. With what face can they meet their friends after their disgraceful conduct?

4847. It is no use to say, as the Quraish said, that it is not seemly to fight against kith and kin. From one point of view the stand against sin brings “not peace, but a sword”. It is a case of either subduing evil or being subdued by evil. If evil gets the upper hand, it is not likely to respect ties of kith and kin. It did not in the case of the holy Prophet and his adherents, and had to be suppressed, to bring about the conditions necessary for peace.
23. Such are the men
Whom Allah has cursed
For He has made them
Deaf and blinded their sight.

24. Do they not then
Earnestly seek to understand
The Qur-an, or is that there are
Locks upon their hearts?

25. Those who turn back
As apostates after Guidance
Was clearly shown to them,—
Satan has instigated
Them and buoyed them up
With false hopes.

26. This, because they said
To those who hate what
Allah has revealed, “We
Will obey you in part
Of (this) matter”; but Allah
Knows their (inner) secrets.

27. But how (will it be)
When the angels take
Their souls at death,

4848. Cursed: i.e., deprived of His Grace: left them straying, because they
deliberately rejected His guidance. The result is that what they hear is as if they had not
heard, and what they see is as if they had not seen. They have no desire to understand
Allah’s Will or Allah’s Revelation;—or is it that they have themselves locked and bolted
their hearts and minds, so that nothing can penetrate them?

4849. Such men are entirely in the hands of Satan. They follow his suggestions, and
their hopes are built on his deceptions.

4850. They have become so impervious to facts and truths, because, without the
courage to oppose Allah’s Cause openly, they secretly intrigue with Allah’s enemies, and
say that they will follow them part of the way, and by remaining partly in the other camp,
they will be far more useful as spies and half-hearted doubters than by going over
altogether. If they think that this game will be successful, they are mistaken. All the inner
secrets and motives of their hearts are known to Allah. Cf. lix. 11.

4851. It is all very well for them to practise hypocrisy in this life. How will they feel
at death, when they find that the angels know all, and touch the very spots they had
taken such care to conceal?
And smite their faces\textsuperscript{4852} and their backs?

28. This because they followed that which displeased Allah, and they hated Allah's good pleasure; So He made their deeds of no effect.

SECTION 4.

29. Or do those in whose hearts\textsuperscript{4853} is a disease, think that Allah will not bring to light all their rancour? Had We so willed, we could have shown them up to thee, and thou shouldst have known them by their marks: but surely thou wilt know them by the tone of their speech! And Allah knows all that ye do.

4852. Their faces and their backs: there is a subtle metaphor. The face is what looks to the front, the side you present to the outer world; the back is what is not shown, what is hidden from the world. The hypocrites will be hit at both points. Or, the face is what they boast of, what they are proud of; the back is the skeleton in the cupboard, the things they dare not utter, but which yet haunt them. The hypocrites are hit on every side. Cf. viii. 50.

4853. Cf. verse 20 above, and n. 4845. Being diseased at the very core of their being, they do not understand the simplest facts of spiritual life.

4854. Evil is not always necessarily branded in this life with a distinguishing mark or brand. But the discerning ones know. Evil is betrayed by its speech and behaviour.
31. And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive 
   Their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall 
   try your reported (mettle).

32. Those who disbelieve, hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, and resist 
   The Messenger, after Guidance has been clearly shown to them, 
   Will not harm Allah in the least, but He will make their deeds 
   Of no effect.

33. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and make 
   Not vain your deeds!

34. Those who disbelieve, and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, then die disbelieving; 
   Allah will not forgive them.

4855. Cf. xxxiv. 21, and n. 3821. The test and trial is for our own psychological 
   development, to help in the exercise of such choice as has been given to us in our free-
   will. Cf. also iii. 154, and n. 467.

4856. *Akhbār*: the things reported of you; reputation for courage and constancy, 
   which has to be brought to the test of facts and experience. In an epigram of Tacitus 
   we are told of a Roman Emperor that he would have been considered in every way to 
   have been worthy of being a ruler if only he had never ruled! So in life people may think 
   us courageous, true, noble, and self-sacrificing; and we may consider ourselves as 
   possessing all such virtues; but it is actual experience that will bring them to the test.

4857. Cf. verse 25 above, and verse 34 below: in verse 25 was shown the source of 
   the evil, viz., yielding to the deceptions of Satan; in this verse are shown the proximate 
   consequences of such yielding to evil, viz., failure of all we do; and in verse 34 below 
   are shown the eternal consequences, viz., our deprivation of Allah's Grace and Mercy.

4858. See last note.
35. Be not weary and
Faint-hearted, crying for peace,
When ye are The Uppermost: for Allah is
With you, and will never
Put you in loss
For your (good) deeds.

36. The life of this world
Is but play and amusement:
And if ye believe
And guard against evil,
He will grant you
Your recompense, and will not
Ask you (to give up)
Your possessions.

37. If He were to ask you
For all of them, and
Press you, ye would
Covetously withhold, and He

4859. To those who are trying to root out evil, and have authority to do so, the question is not of peace or conflict, but of whether Good or Evil is to prevail. They must remember that Good must ultimately prevail, and Allah's help is with those who, as far as men can, are trying to further the universal Plan. Cf. n. 4847 to verse 22 above.

4860. Cf. vi. 32, and n. 855; and xxix. 64, and n. 3497. Amusement and play are not bad things in themselves. As preparations for the more serious life, they have their value. But if we concentrate on them, and neglect the business of life, we cannot prosper. So we must use our life in this world as a preparation for the next life.

4861. Complete self-sacrifice, if voluntarily offered, has a meaning: it means that the person's devotion is exclusively and completely for the Cause. But no law or rule can demand it. And a mere offer to kill yourself has no meaning. You should be ready to take risks to your life in fighting for the Cause, but you should aim at life, not death. If you live, you should be ready to place your substance and your acquisitions at the disposal of the Cause. But it is not reasonable to pauperise yourself and become a hanger-on for the Cause. Moreover, the inborn tendency to self-preservation in an average man would lead to concealment and niggardliness if all were asked for the Cause, by Law, and there would further be a feeling of bitterness and rebellion.

4862. Cf. iii. 180.
38. Behold, ye are those Invited to spend (Of your substance) In the Way of Allah: But among you are some That are niggardly. But any Who are niggardly are so At the expense of Their own souls. But Allah is free Of all wants, And it is ye that are needy. If ye turn back (From the Path), He will Substitute in your stead Another people; then they Would not be like you!

4863. Cf. above, verse 29. Rancour or ill-feeling, or any desire but that of devotion, should never be given a handle in a wise Law.

4864. Here the case of the special devotee and of the average man with his human foibles are distinguished. Stinginess is not a virtue: it hurts more the finer-nature of the individual practising it that it hurts the Cause. Allah is free of all wants and independent of any need that we can meet. His Cause is similarly independent of human aid. But it uses human agency for our own human advancement. The need to be able to serve Allah's cause is ours. We are the needy beggars who should claim the privilege before the Lord of Bounties unbounded.

4865. If we desert the Cause, the Cause will not fail. Better men than we will uphold the flag. But we should fall, and others will take our place, who are not so timid, half-hearted, or stingy. In Wordsworth's words, "High Heaven rejects the lore of nicely calculated less or more."