

THE PROCESS OF CREATION

A QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE

(2)*

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THE IDEA OF BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION ON EARTH

The widely held belief that Charles Darwin (1809-1882) is the first initiator of evolutionary theory is quite wrong. Somehow this idea has become so popular that for ordinary folk evolution and Darwinism have almost become synonymous. However, the historical fact is that as far as the essential idea of evolutionary development is concerned, one can find it as far back as ancient Greek Thought. Quite a few Greek sophos including Aristotle have referred to it obliquely. Several centuries ago, Muslim thinkers --- Brethren of Purity, Allama Jahiz (d. 225 A.H.) and Ibn Maskawayh (d. 421 A.H.), among others, have maintained it quite explicitly. However, Maulana Rumi (d.1273 A.D.)--- about six hundred years earlier than Darwin --- has exquisitely described the various stages of evolution in his well-known and universally acclaimed *Mathnawi*. At two places in the long Persian epic, he described the stages of evolution in clear, unambiguous words and in great detail. In Book III of the *Mathnawi*, Maulana Rumi says:

I died as a mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was Man.
Why should I fear Death?
When was I less by dying?

Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blest;
But even from angelhood I must pass on,
All except Allah doth perish.

When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
Oh, let me not exist! For non-existence proclaims in organ tones,
"To Him we shall return"

(Translated by A. J. Arberry)

The ideal of evolution is very clearly present in these verses. Speaking on behalf of the mankind, the Maulana says that he was first present in the

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for that period. However, she is allowed to leave the house after her waiting period (i.e. four months and ten days) is over, if she desires so.

وَلْيُطْلَقِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٤١﴾

(241) And for the divorced women should be a benefit in a reasonable manner being an obligation over the God-fearing.

This is an extra grant to every divorced woman in addition to the dowry, whether the marriage was consummated or not.

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٤٢﴾

(242) Thus Allah makes clear for you His Ayaat so that you may behave sensibly.

From here, we again return to the subject of *Jihad*. As mentioned earlier, this *surah* was revealed just before the Battle of *Badr* and the Muslims in *Madinah* who were expelled from *Makkah* were again and again asking the Prophet (SAW) to permit them to fight. But when they were commanded to fight, some of them became reluctant and began to lose heart. So Allah (SWT) mentions the following incidents from the history of the Israelites to encourage them and to exhort them to do *Jihad*.

Endnotes

[58] Surah An-Nisa (4): 34.

[59] See Tafsir Ibn Kathir in his explanation of Al-Baqarah ayah 229, Tuhfat Al-Ahwadhi 4: 363 and Towards understanding the Qur'an by Syed Abu Ala Mawdudi in explanation of this ayah.

[60] This ill-practice is known as *Halalah*, where a woman marries another man only to make her eligible for her ex-husband. If she then marries her first husband, their marriage will be void and null and it will be considered as an act of adultery.

[61] Namely Fajr (the morning prayer), Dhuhr (when sun starts declining), Asr (the middle or the afternoon prayer), Maghrib (evening), and Isha (night).

[62] Al-Muwatta 1 : 184, Sahih Muslim 1: 478, 479, Abu Dawud 2: 40, At-Tabari 5 :247.

[63] According to the majority of scholars, this ayah is abrogated by the ayah 234 of this *surah* and ayah 12 of *surah An-Nisa* (4). See Tafsir Ibn Kathir.

Allah (SWT) has ordained for a husband who divorces his wife before the consummation of marriage but after the fixation of the dowry, to give his wife half of the dowry unless she wants to waive it in his favor "or waives the one in whose hand lies the marriage-knot" i.e. if the husband wants to pay the dowry in full instead of giving half of it, he may do so. "And that you waive is closer to piety." This refers to the husband giving up his half of the dowry and paying the woman in full.

حَفِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴿٢٣٨﴾

(238) Protect the prayers, especially the middle prayer and stand up before Allah with devotion.

Allah (SWT) has made it obligatory for all the Muslims to perform the five daily prayers [61] in their fixed times. This is an extremely important tenet of Islam and has been enjoined with great emphasis both in the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). According to one of his sayings, it is the borderline between a Muslim and a non-believer. "Especially the middle prayer." The word 'Wusta' carries two meanings; middle and excellent. Thus As-Salat-ul-Wusta means the middle prayer as well as the excellent prayer. According to the majority of scholars the middle prayer referred to in this ayah is the Asr prayer. "And stand up before Allah with devotion" i.e. in humility and humbleness with full concentration and presence of mind.

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَاتًا: فَإِذَا أَمْتُمْ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٩﴾

(239) And if you are in fear, then (offer prayer) on foot or while riding. And when you are in peace and security, commemorate Allah as he has taught you what you did not know.

This is known as *Salat-ul-Khawf* (Fear prayer). If there is intense fear while traveling or in a battle, when the time of prayer comes, it is lawful for a Muslim to offer his *Salah* (prayer) standing on foot or riding and praying only one *rak'ah* behind the Prophet (SAW) whether facing the *Qiblah* or otherwise. [62] "When you are in peace & security, commemorate Allah as he has taught you what you did not know" i.e. say the prayer as Allah (SWT) has taught you through His Prophet (SAW).

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا وَصِيَّةً لَّأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَّتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرِ إِخْرَاجٍ: فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَّعْرُوفٍ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٠﴾

(240) And those of you who die and leave behind wives should execute a will for their wives – to benefit them for a year without expelling, but if they themselves leave, then there is no sin upon you for whatever they have done for themselves in a fair manner. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [63]

In this *ayah*, Allah (SWT) commands a husband to bequeath maintenance for his wife (other than what a widow inherits) for a year after his death and that she should be allowed to remain in his house

This is the prescribed *iddah* for a widow including the cases where the marriage was not consummated. But in case a widow is pregnant, her *iddah* goes upto the time of delivery of her child. When the waiting period of a widow ends, she may adorn herself and accept a proposal for marriage in an honorable manner.

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خُطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْتُمْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَلَيْهِمُ اللَّهُ أَنْتُمْ سَتَدُّوهُنَّ
وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْرِمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ
أَجَلَهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُوٌّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٥﴾

(235) *And there is no sin on you if you hint as a proposal to the widows or conceal it in your hearts. Allah does know that you will certainly bear them in mind. But do not make an agreement with them secretly, except that you utter some fair words. And do not resolve on marriage-knot until the prescribed period reaches its end; and keep in mind that Allah knows whatever is in your hearts, so fear Him, and keep in mind that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Forbearing.*

Allah (SWT) has allowed a person to make an indirect proposal of marriage to a widow within her waiting period or conceal it in his heart till her *iddah* ends, but has forbidden making any promises or secret arrangements for marriage with her within the waiting period.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمْ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ قَدَرَهُ
وَعَلَى الْبُقْدِرِ قَدَرَهُ مِمَّا تَمَتَّعْتُمُ بِهِنَّ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٣٦﴾

(236) *There is no sin on you if you divorce women while you have not touched them yet, or settled for them any dower. So give them something anyhow – upon the affluent according to his capacity and upon the poor according to his capacity – a benefit in a fair manner, being an obligation upon those who excel in righteousness.*

Allah (SWT) has allowed a husband to divorce his wife before consummating the marriage or settling the dowry. However, there should be some compensation for the divorced woman after the marital relation has been broken and the husband should give provision to her according to his means, whether he is rich or poor, “being an obligation upon those who excel in righteousness” i.e. on those people who are keen to earn Allah’s pleasure by following His commandments.

وَإِنْ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَيَضْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا
الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٧﴾

(237) *And if you divorce them before you have touched them but you have fixed a dower for them, then one-half of what you have fixed (is payable) except that they waive, or waives the one in whose hand lies the marriage-knot. And that you waive is closer to piety, and do not forget liberality among yourselves. Verily, Allah is Watchful of whatever you do.*

who, among you, believes in Allah and the Last Day. That is more decent and chaste for you. And Allah knows whereas you do not know.

This *ayah* warns the *Wali* (guardian) and the relatives of a woman not to prevent her from remarrying her husband who had divorced her once or twice but did not reunite with her within the waiting period, provided they can live on honorable terms with each other. *Therewith being admonished is one who, among you, believes in Allah and the Last Day.* Only a firm believer follows Allah's commandments in their true spirit, while those who do not have a firm belief in Allah (SWT) and the Hereafter, do not pay heed to the admonishment from Him.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنْفِقَ الرِّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تَضْرِبُ الْوَالِدَةُ يُوَلَدِيهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ يُولَدِيهَا وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْرِعُوا فَأَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٣﴾

(233) And the mothers shall breast-feed their offspring for two complete years, (it is) for one who intends to complete the breast-feeding. And on him to whom the child is born, is the liability of their feeding and clothing in a fair manner. No one is burdened beyond his capacity. Neither a mother should be harmed due to her child, nor should a father due to his child, and upon the father's heir is the same liability. But if they both intend to wean with mutual consent and consultation, then there is no sin upon them both. And if you intend to have a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you provided you pay off what you are to pay, in a fair manner. And fear Allah and be sure that Allah is Watchful of what you do.

In this *ayah*, Allah (SWT) commands the mothers to suckle their children for two years and not beyond that period and states that it is the responsibility of the father to provide the mother and his child with reasonable clothing and food according to his means. Each of the parents must fulfill their part in the fostering of the child and none of them should be burdened with what is more than their capability. There should be a mutual consent regarding whether they decide to wean the child or the father assumes the custody of the child and brings in a foster-mother for his offspring. In any case, the father should kindly give the mother her expenses for the care and suckling of the child.

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَضَّنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا قَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٤﴾

(234) And those of you who die and leave behind widows, such widows must hold themselves back (from remarrying) for four months and ten days. So when they reach (the end of) their waiting period, then there is no sin on you for what they do for themselves in a reasonable manner. And Allah is Aware of whatever you do.

(230) So if he divorces her (for the third time), then she will not be lawful for him thereafter unless she marries a husband (man)* other than him. Then if he divorces her too, now there is no sin upon both that they return to each other provided they think that will maintain the limits set by Allah. And these are the limits set by Allah which He makes clear for a people who know.

This *ayah* means that if a person divorces his wife for the third time, he cannot take her back and the decision will be irrevocable. Then if she marries another man, who after having consummated the marriage, divorces her in normal circumstances and not only for paving way for her to marry her ex-husband, [60] it is allowed to her to marry her first husband, provided that they can live together honorably. "And these are the limits set by Allah which He makes clear for a people who know." It is incumbent on a believer to act according to the commandments given by Allah (SWT). These are the bounds set by Allah (SWT) which must not be transgressed in any case.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُرُوفًا وَأَدْكُرُوا يَغْمِتَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ لِيَعْظُمَ بِهِ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٠﴾

(231) And when you divorce women and they reach (the end of) their waiting period, then either retain them on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms, but do not hold them back to inflict harm and to violate the limits. And whoever does that has indeed wronged his own soul. And do not make the Ayaat of Allah a mockery. And remember the blessing of Allah upon you and that which He has sent down to you of the Book and the wisdom, He admonishes you therewith; so have regard of Allah and keep in mind that Allah is Well-Acquainted with everything.

This *ayah* states that it is not lawful for a person to reunite with his wife within the *iddah* simply to harass her or punish her. If a person really intends to take her back, he should do so with kindness and in a way that is pleasant for both of them. Otherwise, he should let her go in a graceful manner. "And whoever does that has indeed wronged his own soul" i.e. he will be responsible for the consequences if he defies Allah's commandments. "And do not make the Ayaat of Allah a mockery. And remember the blessing of Allah upon you and that which He has sent down to you of the Book and the wisdom, He admonishes you therewith; i.e. Allah (SWT) has given you the Book and Wisdom for your guidance. Therefore, it does not behoove you to make a mockery of Allah's revelations or to defy His prescribed laws.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاصُوا بَيْنَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذَلِكَ يُؤَظِّقُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَأَظْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٢﴾

(232) And when you divorce women and they reach (the end of) their waiting period, do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they are agreed mutually on reasonable terms. Therewith being admonished is one

degree of advantage over women physically and by means provided to them, as Allah (SWT) says: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah (SWT) has given the one more strength than the other and because they support them from their means..." [58]

"And Allah is Mighty, Wise." Allah (SWT) is Mighty and all His decisions and orders are based on wisdom which may or may be not evident to us.

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَيْنِ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(229) The divorce is twice, thereafter either to retain honorably, or to release in a fair manner. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything back out of what you have given them, except if they both fear that they would not maintain the limits set by Allah. But if you fear that they both will not maintain the limits set by Allah, then there is no sin on both for whatever she waives for her freedom. These are the limits set by Allah, so do not transgress them. And whosoever transgresses the limits set by Allah, those are the unjust.

Before the advent of Islam, one of the horrible practices of the Arab society was that a husband would pronounce divorce as many times as he wished. He would divorce his wife repeatedly and then take her back whenever he wished. This *ayah* put an end to this cruel practice and Allah (SWT) made the divorce thrice, where the husband is allowed to take her back after the first and the second divorce within the *iddah* (waiting period), but as soon as he divorces her for the third time, his wife is separated from him permanently. "Thereafter either to retain honorably, or to release in a fair manner" i.e. if a husband decides to take his wife back after the first or the second divorce, he can do so within the *iddah*, but if he does not do so, he should let her go with kindness. "And it is not lawful for you that you take anything back out of what you have given them, except if they both fear that they would not maintain the limits set by Allah." After a husband divorces his wife, he is not allowed to take anything out of the *Mahr* (dowry) or from the gifts he has given to his wife "But if you fear that they both will not maintain the limits set by Allah, then there is no sin on both for whatever she waives for her freedom." This is known as *Khula'* in Islamic law i.e. if a wife dislikes her husband and cannot live with him, she is allowed to free herself from the marriage by giving up her *Mahr* totally or partially and the husband has to accept that and divorce his wife. "These are the limits set by Allah, so do not transgress them. And whosoever transgresses the limits set by Allah, those are the unjust." The limits set by Allah are His rulings and commandments. This *ayah* also alludes to the fact that pronouncing three divorces in one go is not right. The Prophet (SAW) also denounced this practice very severely. [59]

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ طَلَّقَا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

ordained, thereafter if they revert back, Allah is Most-Forgiving Most Merciful.

Such a separation between a husband and his wife is called 'Eela' where a husband vows not to sleep with his wife for a certain period. But the Qur'an ignores such oaths concerning disassociation with wives and gives four months for reconsideration and reconciliation. "Thereafter if they revert back, then Allah is Most-Forgiving Most Merciful" i.e. if they return to their wives within the prescribed four months, Allah (SWT) will forgive them.

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

(227) But if they resolve to divorce, then Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. i.e. Fear Allah (SWT) and do not divorce your wives for unjustifiable reasons, for He knows everything.

وَالْمُظْلَمَةُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنْنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبُعُوَّتُهُمْ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِنْهُنَّ الَّذِي دَعَى عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾

(228) And the divorced women must hold themselves back for three periods. And it is not lawful for them that they conceal whatever Allah has created in their wombs, if they really believe in Allah and in the Last Day. And their husbands have preferred right to take them back in the meanwhile provided they intend reconciliation. Women have rights in proportion to the liabilities over them, in a fair manner; however, the men have a degree over them. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.

This *ayah* describes the *iddah* (waiting period) of a divorced woman. She is required to keep herself in waiting for three menstrual periods, before she can remarry if she wishes. "And it is not lawful for them that they conceal whatever Allah has created in their wombs, if they really believe in Allah and in the Last Day." If the woman finds out that she is pregnant, it is not lawful for her to hide that from her husband, neither is it legitimate for her to hide the knowledge of her menstruation cycles. Allah (SWT) warns women not to conceal the truth in order to act according to their own desires. "And their husbands have preferred right to take them back in the meanwhile provided they intend reconciliation" i.e. the door of reconciliation remains open and if the husband wants to take his wife back before the expiry of *iddah* (waiting period), he can do so. "Women have rights in proportion to the liabilities over them, in a fair manner." This *ayah* states that a woman has certain rights over her husband as he has rights over her. A woman should take care of her husband's property and honour in his absence, look after the house and the children and should also take care of her appearance so as to please her husband. Similarly a husband has the responsibility to spend on her food and clothing and to take care of her in all other affairs. That is why Allah (SWT) says: "However, the men have a degree over them" i.e. men are the protectors and maintainers of women, and hence are given a

The Muslims have been commanded not to have sexual intercourse with their wives until they get purified from menstruation. After that, Allah (SWT) commands the Muslims to approach their wives in only the manner ordained by Him i.e. avoiding impurity and filth in sexual relations. And Allah (SWT) says: "Verily Allah loves those who repent often and He loves those who keep themselves clean & pure" i.e. those who repent for their sins and avoid sexual immorality.

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأَتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلْفُؤُهُ وَتَبَيَّرِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

(223) *Your women are tillage for you, so come to your tillage in whatever manner you like and send ahead for your own selves. And fear Allah and keep it in mind that you are to meet Him and give glad tidings to the believers.*

In the previous *ayah*, Allah (SWT) has commanded the believers to approach their wives only in the manner ordained by Him. This *ayah* illuminates what that manner is by affirming that a woman is a field for her husband, who should sow his seed in order to reap the harvest and not cultivate it in a wasteful or unnatural way. "And send ahead for your own selves." Sending ahead means acting with the Hereafter in mind, striving to attain success in the eternal life, and keeping the highest spiritual goal i.e. to meet Allah (SWT) on the Day of Resurrection in mind.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

(224) *And do not make Allah by your oaths, a shield against your doing good, observing righteousness and setting things right between people. And Allah is Ever-Hearing, Ever-Knowing.*

Allah (SWT) prohibits the believers to make an oath in His name an excuse for not doing the right thing or refraining from guarding against evil or making peace between two parties, reminding them that He is "Ever-Hearing, Ever-Knowing".

لَا يَأْخِذُكُمْ اللَّهُ بِاللَّعْوِفِ أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَأْخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾

(225) *Allah will not hold you accountable for what is vain in your oaths rather he will hold you accountable for that which your hearts have earned. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Forbearing.*

Allah (SWT) will not hold anyone accountable for unintentional oaths, but will call to account for the vows made deliberately. There is neither any expiation for such an unintentional oath nor any punishment. "And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Forbearing" i.e. He forgives the mistakes of His servants made unintentionally.

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِن فَاءُوا فَإِنَ اللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

(226) *For those who swear to abstain from their wives, a waiting for four months is*

the Hereafter. "And they ask you about the orphans." The Companions (RAA) asked the Prophet (SAW) about the properties of the orphans getting mixed up with their properties. Allah (SWT) revealed the commandment in this connection, ordering them to do what was best in the interest of the orphans and allowing them to join their food with that of the orphans. At the same time, Allah (SWT) warned them that He knows the intentions of those who want to cause mischief and those who are sincere in the welfare of the orphans. "And had Allah wished, He would have put you in trouble. Verily Allah is Dominant, Wise" i.e. if Allah had wanted, He could have afflicted you or put you in difficulty by disallowing the intermingling of things with the orphans, but He did not. So you should deal with them justly and obey Allah's commandments.

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوْا ۗ وَلَا مُمْرِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ
يُؤْمِنُوْا ۗ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ ۗ وَلَا يُجْبَىٰ بِكُمُ الْوَالِدُ وَالْآلُ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ إِلَىٰ النَّارِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوْا إِلَىٰ الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ
بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٢١﴾

(221) And do not marry 'Mushrik' women (idolatresses) until they believe. And definitely a believing slave woman is better than a Mushrik woman, though she may fascinate you. And do not give (your women) into marriage to 'Mushriks' (unbelievers) until they believe; and definitely a believing slave is better than a 'Mushrik' even though he may fascinate you. They call you to the Hell whereas Allah invites you towards the Paradise and forgiveness by His grace, and He makes clear His signs for people so that they may observe the advice.

Through this *ayah*, Allah (SWT) has prohibited the believers from marrying idolatresses, spelling out that no matter how much an unbelieving woman attracts them, a slave woman who does not worship anyone or anything besides Allah (SWT) is much better than her. Similarly Allah (SWT) has commanded the Muslims not to marry their daughters to unbelieving men, explicating that a Muslim slave is better than an idolater, even if he is a wealthy person and pleases them greatly. The reason for this prohibition is that the *Mushriks* invite the believers to the Hellfire i.e. the love of a *Mushrik* may cause a believer to love the worldly life more than the life of the Hereafter and thus cause him to be a dweller of the Hell. On the other hand, Allah (SWT) invites the believers to earn His forgiveness, blessings and the best of rewards in the form of the Paradise by following His commandments and abstaining from what He has prohibited.

وَيَسْأَلُوْكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيْضِ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ اَذَىٰ فَاَعْتَرِلُوْا النَّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيْضِ ۗ وَلَا تَقْرُبُوْهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهَرْنَ ۗ فَاِذَا طَهَّرْنَ
فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

(222) And they ask you about menstruation. Say: "It is discomfort, so keep away from women during menstruation and do not go near them until they are cleansed. But when they cleanse themselves, then approach them from where Allah has commanded you. Verily Allah loves those who repent often and He loves those who keep themselves clean and pure.

cruelty so as to force the Muslims to forsake their faith. "And whoever of you turns back from his faith then dies as a disbeliever--so such are the people whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter. And those are the companions of the Fire; they will be therein 'eternal residents'." Those who were weak in faith could not bear the pressure and lost their faith in Allah (SWT). So Allah (SWT) says that those who turn their backs on faith and die in that state, will be the losers in this life as well as in the Hereafter and their abode will be the Hellfire forever.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢١٨﴾

(218) Verily those who believed and those who migrated and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah (SWT), they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

In stark contrast to the characteristics of the disbelievers who create *Fitnah*, the believers suffer from persecution and exile, struggle for Allah's sake and remain devoted to Him through all torment and oppression in the hope of His Mercy and Pleasure.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْمِرِ وَقُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِنَّهُمَا لَأَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١٩﴾

(219) They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In both there is great sin and some benefits for the people; but the sin of both is greater than their benefit". And they ask you as to what they should spend? Say: "Whatever is beyond your needs". Thus Allah makes His Signs clear to you, so that you may ponder.

This was the first injunction concerning intoxicants and gambling, which did not explicitly prohibit them. The final prohibition was revealed later, which is in *Surah Al-Maidah*. The *ayah* continues, "And they ask you as to what they should spend? Say: "Whatever is beyond your needs". Allah (SWT) is encouraging the believers to spend in His way whatever they can spare after fulfilling their own needs and those of their families and relatives.

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَانحُوا إِلَيْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْتَبْتُمْ إِنْ اللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٠﴾

(220) Upon this world and the Hereafter. And they ask you about the orphans. Say: "To improve their lot is the best. But if you intermix (affairs) with them, then they are your brethren. And Allah knows him who spoils from him who improves. And had Allah wished, He would have put you in trouble. Verily Allah is Dominant, Wise."

The first part of this *ayah* is connected with the *ayah* before it. "Thus Allah makes His Signs clear to you, so that you may ponder--upon this world and the Hereafter i.e. Allah (SWT) has made His revelations clear for all to understand, so that one may reflect upon this worldly life and

MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

Translation and Brief Elucidation

By

Dr. Israr Ahmad

Al-Baqarah

(Ayaat 217-242)

يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرًا بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَإِحْرَاجِ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَزِدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ
إِنْ اسْتَطَاعُوا وَمَنْ يَزِدْكُمْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَبُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢١٧﴾

(217) They ask about fighting in the Sacred Month. Say: "Fighting therein is a grave (sin), but to obstruct from the way of Allah, and to disbelieve in Him and (to obstruct from) the Sacred Mosque; and to expel its people therefrom is more heinous in the sight of Allah. And Fitnah is worse than killing. And they will not cease fighting against you unless they turn you back from your faith, if they could. And whoever of you turns back from his faith then dies as a disbeliever--so such are the people whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter. And those are the companions of the Fire; they will be therein 'eternal residents'.

A group of Muslims under the leadership of Abdullah Bin Jahsh (RA) killed one of the disbelievers of Quraysh, at the place of Nakhlah. The Muslims thought that it was the thirtieth of Jamadi-uth-thani, the month before Rajab, but the new moon had already been sighted the evening before and it was the first day of Rajab. Now, Rajab is counted among the sacred months, and Arabs considered it a great sin fighting in those months. Therefore, the polytheists started accusing the Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RAA) of the violation of the sanctity of the sacred months. Allah (SWT) affirms the sanctity of the holy months in this ayah but says that Fitnah i.e. creating disorder in the land, denying Him, debarring others from His path and oppression are far greater crimes than fighting in the sacred months. In other words, idolatry is worse than carnage. "And they will not cease fighting against you unless they turn you back from your faith, if they could." The disbelievers did not cease fighting with the Muslims in the sacred months; instead, they prevented them from visiting the Ka'bah, turned them out of their houses and tormented them with extreme forms of