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KEY

At the end of Qur'anic verses, in brackets is shown a number configuration. The first number represents the chapter or Surat of the Qur'an, and the second number represents the verse number.

PREFACE

With the Name of Allah I begin and invoke Allah's blessings and greetings on our master Muhammad the Last and Final Messenger of Allah, on our masters Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus Christ and all Allah's prophets and messengers in between. Amen.

This humble work in your worthy hands discusses forty topics as occasionally inspired by the Most Gracious Lord although my human defects most probably could not fail to seep in as well: after all I am no prophet. I beg my dear readers (may Allah's blessings be on them) to study them with good will, purified hearts and clear minds and see what benefit they may give them if any by the help and permission of Allah Who is the Ultimate Benefactor (al Rahman) of all creation. They may kindly take what they like and forgive me for what they don't. I have no claim to infallibility.

My method has been to discuss each topic in the light of the Book of Allah, namely the Qur'an al Karim whose verses, correctly interpreted, should be the last word in all disputes and about all mysteries. The Hadith, that second most important source of Islamic knowledge can never contradict the Qur'an but can only confirm, support, explain and detail and retail its superb revelations while at the same time informing about matters not clearly touched upon by the Qur'an.

As a result you will find mainly the Qur'anic verses doing the job with a sprinkling of Hadith and anecdote as occasion demanded.

If this humble work goes some way towards delighting the pious hearts of my brothers and sisters in faith or any other human brothers and sisters of mine its purpose will have been served. I ask Allah's indulgence and pardon for my humble self and for all His servants in general. Amen.

BISMILLAHIRRAHMENIRRAHIM

BismillahirRahmanirRahim. Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil Alamin.
Wassalatu wassalamu ala rasulina Muhammadin wa ala alihi wa
sahbihi ajmain

INTRODUCTION

Although the Qur'an is sent to US all mankind, albeit through
Rasulullah sws, and especially binds us all muslims it is the
LEAST consulted source among us.

Of course one reason is that it often needs some additional
interpretation by an expert commentator to understand many
of its verses correctly and not to misunderstand and jump to
silly or dangerous conclusions. Yet it is a fact that the majority
of its verses are quite straightforward and explicit enough to
be understood by the average intelligent and well-meaning
person not blinded by certain prejudices.

We are proposing to begin a series of very brief articles
quoting and briefly commenting upon a number of selected
verses from the Qur'an which verses deal with some very
important concepts in the Book of Allah, concepts like Zikr,
Du'a, Rahmat and subjects like sincerity and generosity. What
we aim at by consulting the Qur'an directly and collating and
comparing verses on the same and selected subjects is that we
can build a picture of what Allah actually means for and wants
from us as no other method can elucidate.

In our translation of Allah's verses in the Qur'an we tried to
render the meanings clear and as more relevant to the context
by including more explanatory material without using brackets.
In certain cases we felt it necessary, though, to use brackets.

1. AL ZIKRA

"It is Us Who sent down the Supreme Reminder (al Zikra) and it is Us who are its Protectors" (15: 9)

Explanation: The name al Qur'an means 'The All-Inclusive Recitation' in the sense that It contains all that anyone may need to please his Creator and achieve salvation in this world and the next. In this verse Allah calls it also as 'al Zikra'. As you know 'zikr' means mindful remembrance with or without verbalisation. While just remembering something in your heart is real zikr, just mentioning it without an inner remembrance is not real zikr. Which means reciting the Qur'an without recreating its meanings in your heart is almost worthless; we are not supposed to be parrots but thinking souls capable of being influenced by what we pronounce.

We must also note that Allah is not using the simpler word 'al zikr' but the grander word 'al Zikra'. This means a superlative remembrance of the most comprehensive and effective kind; through the Qur'an Allah is reminding us our pledge to Him in the Day of Promises when he had taken our essences from the backs of our fathers and addressed them "Am I not your Lord?" to which we had answered "Thou truly art!" (7: 172). He had then added "This is for you not to say later 'We were not aware of this'." (when questioned on the Day of Judgement).

Now, to honour our pledge and keep our promise to our Creator we are sent the Qur'an as our most fundamental and indispensable salvation manual or road map. Allah is so serious about this equipment for our salvation that He took unto Himself to protect the Qur'an from all change and corruption till the Day of Judgement; this is a measure not applied to the Torah or the Gospel- so important and unique is the Qur'an.

Lastly, we sufis are very interested in and fond of zikr. We perform many forms of it, some of them with pretty artistic features. But in the infallible light of the above Divine verse we find the very best form of zikr: It is the constant, most interested and alert study of the Qur'an. This is 'al Zikra', the most effective and sweetest form of remembering and keeping

in mind Allah always and thereby benefiting from His Guidance and Promises as no other form of zikr can deliver. We shall insha Allah see how true is this when we add our other small articles to this introductory one. Amen.

2. BROTHERS IN HEAVEN

Said the All-Gracious: "The truly pious are in Gardens and Springs- 'enter you there in safety with greetings'- We removed from their hearts what is of resentment- (you) as brothers reclining on comforts and facing each other" (15: 45-47)

It is axiomatic among true sufis that all verses of the Qur'an which speak of events and states which refer to the Hereafter are necessarily metaphorical in the sense that the true affairs of the after-death are far too different things than those of this world. It is impossible to describe them anywhere near fully in the terms of this life we now are living and therefore metaphors must be employed. For all that the Paradise is infinitely more glorious than all worldly descriptions can portray it while the Hell is infinitely more terrible than all the worldly descriptions can portray it- so do not think that their metaphoric descriptions amount to their denial; you should be more intelligent than that.

A second axiom of true sufi understanding is that all descriptions of the states in the Hereafter have their seeds and signs in this world in our individual lives. Hence the verse quoted above means this: The sign that a group of Muslims are bound for the Paradise in the Hereafter is that such Muslims have solved their problem of selfishness and are presently able to get along very well indeed; they truly regard each other as beloved brothers (and sisters), are fully comfortable at each other's company, look at each other with full favour, see eye to eye and have no resentments or grudges whatsoever to poison their minds and trouble their relations. In fact they are at their happiest in each other's company, they cannot wait to meet again and they are never disappointed with each other and are only too happy to forgive any lapses.

As for being in gardens and springs this means they are already enjoying the delicious fruits of a pious life free from the poisons of a bad conscience or desire for revenge and this is the garden; and also they are blessed with an incessant flow of guiding and beatifying inspirations from Allah which again they

share like best friends playing together in a very pleasantly cool and sparkling spring which these inspirations are.

If you are one bound for the Paradise that should be your state of mind at all times in a basic sense, since the ups and downs of this world are inseparable from our destiny. See whether that is the case with you and make sure that it remains so. Make sure that you find and keep the right company at all times and also you bless all others you may meet with your kindness and grace at all times so that they also get the message that there is a better life more worth living. Amen.

3. GOOD LIFE

We know, don't we that most people shun religion simply because they think that a religious life stops one from enjoying the good things of this world or to put it differently, religion bans the most delicious things in life and demands that we postpone our satisfactions to a next life; what is worse, they suspect that this is a pipe dream, a pie in the sky invented by teachers of religion and also most probably its exploiters etc. etc. Is that so?

Well, I do not want to talk about other religions but Islam cannot be accused of cheating people like that.

You see, Islam is not about banning the real good things of this life but about two other things:

1. Discouraging from harm hidden behind pleasure
2. Encouraging good whether it is hidden behind pleasure or some pain, for good is good and eventually gives more pleasure than anything else.

As for harm hidden behind pleasure we can cite all the artificially mood altering drugs from alcohol to ecstasy. Unmarried or unnatural sex is another. That is because the motive behind such sex is no more than a selfish and hasty relief of a pressure which should not be there had marriage been brought in. It is selfish and therefore irresponsible at least in two senses- one, it is blind to risks inherent in an act involving two people hardly aware of each others latent illnesses which the act will help to spread, and two, it converts the partner from a full person entitled to full responsibility and honour of a fellow human being to a mechanical device only good for a mechanical relief. That is why illicit sex must either be sold and bought or imposed in the form of seduction or rape, all of which are crimes and insults!

Other so called pleasures of this world have also great risks caused by great irresponsibilities. A life of luxury may put all such offences under one umbrella: To live a luxurious life one

need the manufacture of goods which cost too much in money, energy, materials and labour- all of which help deplete the natural resources and harm the environment, like in the present extreme pollution of the environment or the global warming. Furthermore a life of luxury swings between indulgent indolence (like drinking and womanising) and undue risks taking like daredevil car races or balloon flights. At the same time billions starve and die from simplest infections in their millions while our cigar puffing and gambling or ballooning prodigals corrode their lives in their silly activities.

So, is there a balance, an optimal middle point between such a life and a life of unnecessary hardship and deprivation?

Yes, there is and it is in Islam, in fact it is ISLAM.

Look how Allah praises and legitimises the essentially good gifts of this life, seeing that some other religions take an unnecessarily pessimistic view of them:

"Say: Who banned Allah's embellishments and the good provisions He issued to His servants? They are for the believers in the life of this world and are exclusively theirs in the life to come. Thus Allah details His verses for a people who would know" (7: 32)

You see, Allah wants us to enjoy all the elegant, embellishing things as well as all the healthy delicious foods He provided us with. Yet, some silly people, sometimes even among muslims said that one should eat very little food of the lowest quality or worst taste, or go about in rags and without grooming etc. This Allah squarely rejects and says that we should enjoy all the halals which include many embellishments like good dress, attractive grooming and elegant, clean surroundings- all without going to excess which could be called luxury and waste. Just before the above verse Allah says:

"Eat you and drink but do not waste- Allah does not like the wasteful" (7: 31)

Now we quote another verse which leaves no doubt that within the limits of halal and non-waste we Muslims can enjoy ourselves as much as we want:

"Male or female, whoever does good works while also being a believer then We will make sure he or she lives a good life and We will reward all such in the Hereafter according to the very best they had been doing (during their worldly lives)" (16: 97)

What is the waste which limits our actions? It is the excess consumption of any asset which diminishes its benefit while increasing its harm. If you eat too much you do not get more nutrition since the excess food turns to waste like gas and inadequately digested food or more fat under your skin and inside your arteries etc. If you drive too big a car for pleasure you waste resources like raw materials, labour and fuel while at the same time polluting the environment more. Allah says in condemnation of the wasteful:

"Indeed the wasteful are the brothers of devils" (17: 27)

If we have excess wealth or can save from our expenses it should go not to luxuries but to charity, beginning from our near and dear and extending if possible to all on earth who need help. This point brings us back to the verse above speaking about the good life promised to those who do good works while also being believers. It shows that when we do not waste Allah's gifts to us in seeking more selfish pleasure but spend them on the relief of the needs of others in need Allah promises to make our life the most pleasurable and honourable life among all men. A charitable giver is loved even by bandits and crooks because as the Arab saying goes "Man is the slave of kind generosity (ihsan)". A believer whose hands are busy with giving and giving and giving as much as he can afford and not withholding or wasting, is secure from all hostility and threat in all forms of human association and company for Allah surrounds him with angels especially instructed to make all people love him and avoid harming him.

Read if you wish "Those who say "Our Lord is Allah" and then walk the straight path- on them angels come down, saying "Do not have any fears, do not have any sorrows but instead rejoice with the good news of the Garden you have been promised. We are your guarding friends in this world and the next..." (41: 30- 31) Amen.