

Section 14: All Polytheistic Traditions Denounced

Quest for the details of the unseen things discouraged – All polytheistic practices denounced –To call witness when anyone bequeaths at the time of his death.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verses 101 – 102

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنَ أَشْيَاءٍ إِن تُبَدَ لَكُمْ تَسْؤُكُمْ وَإِن تَسْأَلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ
يُنزَلُ الْقُرْآنُ تَبَدَّ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُوا بِهَا كَافِرِينَ

101. "O' you who have Faith! Do not ask about things (and secrets) which, if they are disclosed to you, may upset you. Yet, if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being sent down, they will be disclosed to you. Allah pardoned as to these matters and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing."

102. "Surely some people before you asked for such (disclosures). Then they came to disbelieve in them."

Occasion of Revelation

Upon the occasion of revelation of these two verses, it has been narrated from Ali-ibn-Abi Talib (as) as follows:

"It happened that one day the Prophet of Islam (S) preached a sermon in which he stated the command of Allah about Hajj. Then, a person by the name of 'Akkashah (and according to another narration Suraqah) asked whether that commandment was ordained for only that year or they should perform Hajj every year.

The Holy Prophet (S) delayed to answer him, but the man obstinately repeated his question two or three times.

The Prophet (S) said:

"Woe to you! Why do you persist so much? If I answer you positively, performing Hajj will become obligatory for all of you every year. So, if it becomes obligatory every year, you will not be able to perform it and the offender of it will be a sinner. Hence, as long as I have not said a thing to you, do not urge on it."

Then, the verse was revealed and dissuaded them from that action.

Improper Questions!

No doubt asking question is the key to the recognition of facts. The verses of the Qur'an and Islamic traditions have earnestly enjoined Muslims that they ask whatever they do not know.

But, in view of the fact that every rule usually has an exception, this basic educational principal has an exception, too. It is so that sometimes some affairs had better to be concealed in order that the system of the society be protected and the individuals' interests be safeguarded.

In such respects, researches and frequent questions, with the purpose of unveiling some facts, not only is not a virtue, but also is blameworthy and reprobated.

In this verse, the Qur'an has referred to this subject and explicitly says:

"O' you who have Faith! Do not ask about thing (and secrets) which, if they are disclosed to you, may upset you. ..."

But, since giving no answer to the questions that some persons sometimes urge on asking them repeatedly may cause some doubts for others which can bring forth greater evils, the Qur'an adds:

"... Yet, if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being sent down, they will be disclosed to you...."

In this case, you will fall into trouble.

Next to that meaning, the Qur'an implies that you should not imagine that when Allah is silent about some matters, He is neglectful of them. Nay! He desires to set you in some facilities. It says

"...Allah pardoned as to these matters and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing."

We recite in a tradition narrated from Imam Ali (as) who has said:

*"Verily Allah has enjoined you some obligations, do not waste them; and He has assigned some limits for you, do not violate them; and He has prohibited you from some things, do not betray (secrets of) them; and He has kept silent for you about some things which He has never been concealed because of forgetfulness. Then, do not urge to disclose these things."*¹

In order to emphasize on the subject, this verse says:

"Surely some people before you asked for such (disclosures). Then they came to disbelieve in them. "

In the conclusion of this discussion, it is necessary to hint to this point that the above-mentioned verses never close the path of asking logical, training, and constructive questions for human beings. The discussed condition is only due to improper questions and seeking the affairs that not only they are not needed, but their concealment is also better and even, sometimes, necessary.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 103

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَحِيرَةٍ وَلَا سَائِبَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ وَلَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَفْتَرُونَ
عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

103. "Allah has not appointed any Bahirah, Sa'ibah, Wasilah, and Ham, but those who disbelieve make up a lie against Allah, and most of them do not understand."

In this verse the Qur'an points to four improper innovations that were customary current among the pagan Arabs at the Age of Ignorance. For some reasons those people used to mark or nominate part of their animals, and prohibited eating their meat.

They did not count permitted to drink the milk of those animals, or to cut their wool, or to ride on them. In other word, they used to actually leave such animals useless.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"Allah has not appointed any Bahirah, Sa'ibah, Wasilah, and Ham....."

The Qur'an implies that Allah *has* not ordained anything in the nature of a Bahirah, or a Sa'ibah, or, Wasilah, or a Ham.

The explanation of these four animals are as follows:

1. The Arabic term / bahirah / was applied for the animal which had given birth to offsprings for five times and the fifth of them was a female animal (and according to another tradition a male one). They used to split the ears of such an animal and let it go for itself. They would not kill it after that.
2. The Pagan Arabs used the term /sa'ibah/ for a camel which had brought forth twelve (or ten) offsprings. They left that camel free so that even no one would ride on it. They might only milk it occasionally in order to give that milk to their guests.
3. The term /wasilah/ used to be applied for the lamb which could bring forth a child for seven times. (Or, according to another tradition it was used for the lamb which could bring forth twins.) Killing such a lamb was also considered unlawful (haram) by them.
4. The Arabic word /ham/ was applied for the male animal which had been used for fecundating female animals of the same kind for ten times and each time a new progeny was brought forth from its seed.

Shortly speaking, the objective meaning of mentioning these animals has been the beasts which could serve their owners considerably and frequently through the way of being beneficial for them, and their owners, in turn, offered a kind of honor and freedom to such animals, too. Then, the verse continues saying:

"... but those who disbelieve make up a lie against Allah...."

These pagans and idol worshippers used to say that those false ideas were from the laws of Allah while most of them did not apply the least contemplation about their speech. They did not utilize their intellects when they blindly imitated others' manner. The verse says:

"... and most of them do not understand."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 104

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ
آبَاءَنَا أَوْ لَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

104. "And when it is said to them: 'Come to what Allah has sent down and to the Messenger,' they say: 'That which we found our fathers upon is enough for us.' What! Even though their fathers did not know anything and did not follow the right way, (should they pave their way?)"

The fundamental principle is the Islamic culture, not the culture of the predecessors. Therefore, neither

absolutely tending to the traditions is the principle nor the new things.

To have honor towards the predecessors and respecting them is acceptable, but following their ignorantly thoughts and manner is rejected. Blindly imitation is a sign of foolishness.

The verse says:

"And when it is said to them: 'Come to what Allah has sent down and to the Messenger,' they say: 'That which we found our fathers upon is enough for us.' What! Even though their fathers did not know anything and did not follow the right way, (should they pave their way?) "

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 105

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

105. "O' you who have Faith! take care of your own selves. He who strays cannot harm you when you are on the right way. To Allah is your return totally; then He will inform you of what you had been doing."

Everybody Is Responsible of One's Own Deeds

In the previous verse, the words were about the blindly imitation of the people of the Age of Ignorance from their misguided ancestors; and the Qur'an warned them that such an imitation did not adapt to wisdom and logic.

Having this meaning in mind, they might question that if they separated their account in such affairs with their ancestors, then what about the fate of their ancestors. Besides, suppose they left that imitation, what would be the fate of many people who acted under the influence of such an imitation?

In answer to these questions, the holy verse addresses the believers and implies that they are responsible of their own selves. These misguided persons from among their ancestors, friends, and relatives, contemporary with them, could not harm them if they were on the right path. It says:

"O' you who have Faith! take care of your own selves. He who strays cannot harm you when you are on the right way. ..."

Then, the Qur'an refers to the subject of Resurrection and the reckoning of everyone's deeds, and says:

"... To Allah is your return totally; then He will inform you of what you had been doing."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 106

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا شَهَادَةٌ بَيْنَكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنَانِ ذَوَا
عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ أَوْ آخَرَانِ مِّنْ غَيْرِكُمْ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَأَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةُ
الْمَوْتِ تَحْبِسُونَهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ الصَّلَاةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ لَا نَشْتَرِي بِهِ ثَمَنًا
وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا إِذَا لَمِنَ الْآثِمِينَ

106. "O' you who have Faith! call to witness between you when death approaches any of you, while making a bequest, two just persons from among you, or two others from other than you, if you are traveling in the land and the affliction of death befalls you, detain the two after the prayer, then if you doubt them, they shall swear by Allah (saying): 'We will not sell it for any gain, even if it were a relative, and we will not conceal the testimony of Allah; for then we would indeed be among the sinners!'"

Occasion of Revelation

Upon the revelation of the above holy verse, as well as its two successive ones, it has been narrated that: a Muslim believer, called Ibn-i-'Abi-Mariyah, accompanied with two Christian Arabs, by the names of Tamim and 'Uday, came out of Medina with the intention of trade.

During the time they were traveling, Ibn-i-'Abi-Mariyah, who was a Muslim, became sick. He wrote his testament and hid it inside his properties. Then he trusted those properties with his Christian fellow-travelers.

Before his death, he bequeathed that those two Christians would deliver them to his family. After his death, those two fellow-travelers untied his furniture and took its worthy and interesting parts, and then they returned the rest to the inheritors of the man.

When the inheritors opened the parcel of the properties, they did not find some parts of what Ibn-i-'Abi-Mariyah had brought with him. But suddenly they saw the testament he had left. They found that the list of all the stolen things was recorded in that testament.

They detailed the matter for those two Christian fellow-travelers, but they denied and said that they delivered them what he had given them. Then, they could not help complaining the Prophet (S). So, the verse was revealed and stated its ordinance.

One of the most important matters that Islam emphasizes on is the subject of observing and protecting the rights and properties of people, and, in general, the execution of social justice.

At first, in order that the inheritors' rights in the properties of the diseased not to be spoiled, and that the rights of those members remained behind, including orphans and minors, not to be violated, the Qur'an instructs the believers, saying:

"O' you who have Faith! Call to witness between you when death approaches any of you, while making a bequest, two just persons from among you....."

Here, the expression of bearing witness, of course, is accompanied with the accomplishment of testament. In other words, these two persons are witnesses to both the testament and the executors of the testament.

Thus, the verse indicates that if you are on a journey and one of you is going to die and you cannot find any executors of testament and witnesses, then you may take two persons from non-Muslims for the purpose. The verse continues saying:

"... or two others from other than you, if you are traveling in the land and the affliction of death befalls you....."

The objective meaning of 'other than you' (non-Muslims) is only the people of the Book, viz. the Jews and the Christians, because nowhere Islam has attached importance to pagans and idolaters.

Then the verse says:

"... detain the two after the prayer, then if you doubt them, they shall swear by Allah (saying): We will not sell it for any gain, even if it were a relative....."

And also they should add:

"... and we will not conceal the testimony of Allah; for then we would indeed be among the sinners!"

It is cited in Qurar-ul-Hikam, vol. 1, p. 185 that Hadrat Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

"The quickest retribution is the retribution of a false oath."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 107

فَإِنْ عَثَرَ عَلَىٰ أَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّا إِثْمًا فَأَخْرَانِ يَقُومَانِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَحَقَّ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَوْلِيَانِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ لَشَهَادَتُنَا أَحَقُّ مِنْ شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا اعْتَدَيْنَا إِنَّا إِذَا
لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

107. "Then if it becomes known that both of them have been guilty of a sin (of perjury), then two others (of Muslims) shall stand up in their place from among those nearest (to the deceased) who have a claim against them, and swear by Allah: 'Certainly our testimony is truer than the testimony of those two, and we have not transgressed (the limits), for then we would indeed be of the unjust'."

It should be unconcealed that when those persons, who are next of kin to the dead, bear witness or make an oath, their action is based on the information that they have had from before about the dead person's properties at the time of journey or other than that.

Therefore, you are not rightful to search or to be inquisitive, but when there comes forth new information, the situation changes. As the explanation of Mufradat-i-Raqib, an Arabic-Persian dictionary, indicates, an acknowledgment without any research, in Arabic language, is called /uḡr/

The verse says:

"Then if it becomes known that both of them have been guilty of a sin (of perjury), then two others (of Muslims) shall stand up in their place from among those nearest (to the deceased) who have a claim against them, and swear by Allah: 'Certainly our testimony is truer than the testimony of those two, and we have not transgressed (the limits), for then we would indeed be of the unjust'."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 108

ذَلِكَ أَذْنَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلَىٰ وَجْههَا أَوْ يَخَافُوا أَنْ تُرَدَّ أَيْمَانٌ بَعْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَسْمِعُوا لِلَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

108. "This (style) is more proper that they give testimony truly, or fear that other oaths be given after their oaths. And be in awe of Allah and hearken (His commandments), and Allah does not guide the transgressing people."

The statement of this verse is about the philosophy of severity and accuracy of the case which was referred to in the previous verses upon bearing witness and taking witnesses.

Taking oath after the establishment of prayer at the presence of people, causes that witnesses to be certainly true (not false), because if their witness is not accepted, that invalidity of their oath and witness may disgrace them in the society. The verse says:

"This (style) is more proper that they give testimony truly, or fear that other oaths be given after

their oaths. And be in awe of Allah and hearken (His commandments), and Allah does not guide the transgressing people."

1. Majma'ul-Bayan, Vol. 3, P. 250 (Arabic version)

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