

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 222-223

(۲۲۲) وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ ۖ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَأَعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ ۖ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهَرْنَ ۚ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

(۲۲۳) نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأَتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ ۖ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ ۖ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And they ask you about menstruation. Say it is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go in them as Allah has commanded you; surely Allah loves those who purify themselves. (222)

Your women are a tillage for you, so go unto your tillage when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves; .and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers. (223)

Commentary

Qur'an: And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort:

mahidh (المحيض) and *haydh* (الحيض) are verbal infinitives; the Arabs say: *hadhati 'l-mar'ah* (حاضت المرأة) when the natural system of the woman discharges the well-known periodic blood, which has its own special colour, etc. and is a peculiarity of women.

Its active participle (*ismu 'l-fa'il*, اسم الفاعل) is used in both masculine and feminine genders, because there is no risk of misunderstanding. They say *ha'idh* (الحائض) and *haidhah* (الحائضة) i.e. the woman having monthly period; as they say *hamil* (الحامل) and *hamilah* (الحاملة) i.e. the pregnant women.

Adha (الاذى) means discomfort and distress. Some people say that it is synonymous with *dharar* (harm, loss, الضرر). But it is not correct. The opposite of *dharar* (harm, loss, الضرر) is *naʿ* (benefit, profit, النفع); but *naʿ* (النفع) is not the opposite of *adha* (الاذى).

Also people say *dawaun mudharrun* (harmful medicine, دواء مضر); but if they said *dawa'un mu'dhin* (مؤذ دواء) it would give another meaning; disagreeable or unpleasant medicine. Moreover, the Qur'an says:

They shall by no means harm you (*lan yadhurrakum, لن يضروكم*) **but with a distress** (*adhah, اذى* 3:111))

There would be no sense if you read it as: “they shall by no means harm you but with a harm.” In some other verses, also, it is difficult to interpret *adha* (اذى) as *dharar* (loss, harm, ضرر):

Surely (as for) those who annoy (*yu'dhanna, يؤذون*) **Allah and His Apostle ...** (33:57);

O my people! Why do you give me trouble (*tu'dhannani, تؤذوننى*) **and you know indeed that I am Allah's Apostle to you** (61:5).

Apparently, discomfort (*adha, اذى*) signifies the effect of a disagreeable thing, and there may be times when a situation can be a discomfort as well as a harm or loss.

Menstruation is called *adha* (اذى) in the meaning described above — discomfort, distress, disagreeable.

Those who interpret *adha* (اذى) as harm, say that the question was about sexual intercourse during the monthly period, and Allah replied that it was harmful.

The physicians have said that at that time nature is occupied with cleansing the womb and making it ready for pregnancy, and sexual intercourse in the midst .of that would creat a disturbance which is harmful to the health.

Qur'an: therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them...:

i'tizal (اعتزال) means to withdraw, to retire, to avoid mingling. They say *'azalta nasibahu* (عزلت نصيبه) when you separate his share and keep it in a place away from the others' shares.

Qurb (to be near, القرب) is the opposite of *bu'd* (to be far away, distant, البعد). It is used with the preposition *min* (from, من) and also without any preposition, as in this verse.

Keep aloof from woman during the menstruation means “do not establish sexual relation with them during the passing of blood.”

People have had different views and customs about women in their monthly period. The Jews were extremely harsh in this matter. They ostracized such a woman even in food and drink.

Her pots were separated; she took her meal apart from others, sat away from all the household, and slept alone. The Torah had ordained very severe rules concerning that period: about the woman as, well as about those who were unfortunate enough to go near her or even to touch her.

The Christians had no restriction at all about mingling, or even sleeping with them. The pagans of Arabia had no fixed rule.

The Arabs of Medina and its neighbourhood had adopted some of the Jewish customs, and had thus made the lives of rich women difficult for them.

On the other hand some pagans liked to have sexual intercourse with them in the belief that if a woman became pregnant at that time, the child would be cruel and extremely fond of shedding blood — these were admirable qualities for a man among the bedouins!

Apparently the words of this verse confirm the Jewish custom, but it is not so. When we read the next sentence,

then when they have cleansed themselves, go in to them as Allah has commanded you,

we know that it means ‘going in to them from their front’. It means that it was only this act, i.e. sexual intercourse in to their front, which was prohibited by the preceding sentences, and that the words, “keep aloof from them” and “do not go near them” are not used in their literal meaning; rather they are metaphors for sexual relations.

Accordingly, this verse prohibits only this one action, and imposes no restriction whatsoever on mingling with them in food, drink, sleep, etc. In short, Islam adopted the middle course between the severe restrictions of the Jews and the free license of the Christians.

The word “menstruation” (*mahidh*, المبيض) appears in the question, and then again in the answer (***keep aloof ... during the menstruation***)

Why has the word been repeated instead of using a pronoun in the answer? It is because there is a difference in meaning of the two words: the first refers to the menstruation, and the second to its period.

Qur'an: until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go into them as Allah has commanded you:

Cleanliness (*taharah*, الطهارة) and its opposite, uncleanness (*najasah*, النجاسة) are among the most extensively applied concepts in Islam. They have their own comprehensive laws which cover a major part of religious commandments.

The two words, because of their very common use, have become *al-haqiqatu 'sh-shar'iyyah* (الحقيقة الشرعية) as though they were “originally made to express these religious concepts.”

The meaning of cleanliness is known to the whole of mankind inspite of the differences in their languages. It shows that the idea of *taharah* (الطَّهَارَة) is well-known to all human beings whatever their origin and period.

Life depends on exploiting material things, and using them to achieve its goal. Man desires whatever he desires only because of its benefit, use and characteristics. The most basic and most comprehensive are the benefits concerned with feeding and reproduction.

Sometimes some changes occur in these material things which cause repulsion; and man wants to throw such things away. Such changes appear mostly in taste, smell or colour.

When this change appears, the material becomes unsavoury and repulsive. This change is called uncleanliness (*najasah*, النِّجَاسَة). Its opposite is *taharah* (الطَّهَارَة) which implies that the thing is still in its original condition of benefit and use, which attracts the man to it.

Cleanliness and uncleanliness are, therefore, two mutually exclusive qualities of a thing: it has either a quality which makes it lie likeable or another which makes it repulsive.

Man in the beginning must have perceived these qualities within the sphere of the five senses; gradually the concept would have been widened to cover mental and spiritual subjects, depending on whether those ideas were attractive or repulsive.

Thus we come to the concept of *taharah* (الطَّهَارَة) and *najasah* (النِّجَاسَة) in parentage, character, belief, action and word.

There are four words with nearly the same meaning: *nazafah* (النِّظَافَة), *nazahah* (النِّزَاهَة), *quds* (الْقُدْس) and *subhan* (سُبْحَانَ)

Nazafah (النِّظَافَة): It is the cleanliness of a thing after it had become unclean. It is exclusively used for the things which may be perceived by one of the five senses.

Nazahah (النِّزَاهَة): Its real meaning is “to be far away, distant”. Its use for cleanliness is metaphorical — the thing is far from ugliness, uncleanliness.

Quds (الْقُدْس) and *subhan* (سُبْحَانَ) are preserved for mental and spiritual subjects.

Near in meaning to *najasah* (النِّجَاسَة) are *qadharah* (الْقَذَارَة), *rijs* (الرِّجْس) and *rujz* (الرَّجْز).

Qadharah (الْقَذَارَة): Its real meaning is “to be distant”. The verbs and adjectives derived from this verbal infinitive are used for a she-camel which remains aloof from the drove, for an unsocial man who does not mingle with others, for a person isolated from others and for a thing which is disliked.

Therefore, its use in the meaning of *najasah* (النِّجَاسَة) must be metaphorical because an unclean thing is

left and put aside until it is clean again.

Rijs (الرّجس) and *rujz* (الرّجز): Their original meaning is fright and aversion. Their use in the meaning of uncleanness is metaphorical.

Islam has extended the meaning of cleanliness and uncleanness to cover not only the things perceived by the five senses but also to ideas and thoughts.

According to Islam, even general principles and social laws are either clean or unclean. For example, Allah says in this verse:

do not go near them until they have become clean ...

(Here cleanliness refers to cessation of menstruation, — a material cleanliness) Also, He says:

And your garments do purify (74:4);

... but He intends to purify you ... (5:6);

These are they whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts ... (5:41);

None shall touch it save the purified ones. (56:79)

Some of these verses refer to spiritual purifications and cleanliness.

The Islamic *shari'ah* treats some unclean things as *al-a'yanu'n-najisah* (inherently unclean things, الاعيان النجسة). Some of them are the blood, urine, stool and semen of man and of some animals, corpses, dogs and pigs.

It has ordered the believers to protect themselves from these things in prayers, food and drink.

Taharah (الطهارة) is of two categories: From *khath* (الخبث) by which one becomes clean after coming into touch with the above mentioned inherently unclean things; and from *hadath* (الحدث), which comes through *wudh* or an obligatory bath as explained in the books of Islamic laws.

It was explained earlier that Islam is the religion of monotheism. This monotheism is the root to which all the branches owe their existence. Now the belief in monotheism is the highest cleanliness before Allah.

After that come other fundamentals of faith, and they increase the spiritual purification of man. Then comes ethical righteousness, and the laws of *shari'ah* made for the good in this world and the hereafter.

The verse quoted above may be explained by keeping this principle in view. Also, it explains the verse of purity,

Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! and to purify

you a (thorough) purifying. (33:33)

Now we return to the explanation of the words used in this verse under discussion: “until they have become clean”, i.e. until the blood stops. That is the beginning of the period of cleanliness (*tuhr*, الطَّهْر).

Then when they have cleansed themselves,

i.e., when they have taken an obligatory bath or at least washed the part of body from where blood comes out.

go into them as Allah has commanded you:

This command comes after the order forbidding sexual relation with them; therefore, it signifies only that the restriction is now lifted; in other words, it means that sexual relations with them are allowed after their becoming clean, not that it is obligatory.

Go into them is a metaphor for that relation. It is an example of the character building of the Qur’an; as is the phrase, ***as Allah has commanded you.***

Sexual relations are generally regarded as an amusement. But the Qur’an draws man’s attention to the fact that it is a thing ordered by Allah, the order being ingrained in his nature.

We may call it a creative order — an order given not in words, but programmed into our creation and nature.

Thus the Qur’an reminds us that it is an action without which the human species cannot survive; such an important function should not be treated as a sport or an amusement; it is one of the fundamental laws of nature.

This verse is similar to the words of Allah:

...now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you ... (2:187),

and:

... go into your tillage when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves ... (2:223)

Apparently, the order to go into them refers to that “creative order” which is known because Allah has given human beings reproductive organs and has created in them the power and inclination which lead them to reproduce.

Possibly the “command” could be interpreted as a legislative order: that it was obligatory to marry for a sufficient number of people to ensure continuity of the human race. But such a meaning is far-fetched.

Some commentators argue that the words ***as Allah has commanded you*** prohibit going into the

posterior of the women. But it is the weakest argument; this subject is difficult to prove from this verse.

The argument cannot be based on the order, ***go into them***, because, as explained earlier, this order, coming after a prohibition, signifies only the permission to establish sexual contact, it is not an obligatory rule.

Therefore, if one were to ignore it one would not be committing an offence. Nor can it be argued on the strength of the words, ***as Allah has commanded you***, because, the command referred to herein is the creative, not the legislative one, as we have explained just now.

And even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that it is a legislative order, it would be obligatory for only “a sufficient number of people”, as we have explained above. And going against an obligatory order is unlawful only when that order is personally obligatory on oneself.

Qur'an: Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves:

tawbah (usually translated as repentance, التَّوْبَةُ) means returning to Allah. *Tatahkur* (التَّطَهَّرَ) means purifying and cleansing oneself; in other words, turning away from dirtiness and returning to the original cleanliness.

The meanings of both words come true when one obeys the command of Allah, and especially so in the matters of cleanliness and uncleanness.

By doing whatever Allah has told one to do, and abstaining from what He has forbidden, one purifies oneself from the uncleanness of disobedience, and comes back to his Lord.

That is why Allah has ended this verse on these words; they are, therefore, applied to all the rules mentioned before them –

Keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and go into them as Allah has commanded you.

The sentences, ***Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves***, are not limited with any qualification or condition.

Therefore, they apply to all the grades of cleanliness, as mentioned earlier. And the forms *mutatahkurin* (الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ) and *tawwabin* (التَّوَّابِينَ) signify great emphasis.

These two factors taken together signify that Allah loves all kinds of repentance (be it by asking for His forgiveness, obeying all His commands or having true faith and belief) and all kinds of purification (be it by washing oneself, doing ablution, taking the obligatory bath, performing good deeds or acquiring true spiritual knowledge).

Also, it signifies an increase by number: Allah loves repeated repentance and repeated cleanliness.

Qur'an: *Your women are a tillage for you, so go unto your tillage when you like:*

harth (الحرث) is an infinitive verb, meaning to “to till, to cultivate”. It is also used for the land which is tilled or cultivated.

Anna (أنى) is an adverb meaning “when”, “whenever”. In this sentence it is synonymous with *mata* (when, متى). Sometimes it is also used for “where”. Allah says:

... O Maryam! Whence (*anna*, أنى) comes this to you? She said: It is from Allah. (3:36)

If, in the verse under discussion, *anna* (أنى) means “where”, then its meaning would be, “where you like”. If it means, “when”, then it means, “when you like”.

In any case, it gives a sort of freedom to the couple, and that is why we cannot take the words, “**so go unto your tillage**”, to be an obligatory order. No one gives a compulsory order and then leaves it in the hands of the doer to do as he likes.

The verse begins with the sentence, *Your women are a tillage for you*; after this reasoning comes the order, and there also the word “*tillage*” is repeated.

This emphasis shows that the freedom given to man of going in to the women is either about the place of the intercourse or about its time; but it is not a freedom of entering anywhere in her body. She is a *tillage* and that idea must be kept in mind when approaching her.

If the order means, ‘so go into your *tillage* at any place you like’, then it is not concerned with the time of intercourse, and has no conflict whatsoever with the previous verse,

keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them.

If, on the other hand, it means, ‘so go into your *tillage* at any time you like’, then it shall be limited to the period of purity from menstruation, because of the previous verse.

Just to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to point out that this verse could not have abrogated the verse of menstruation — no matter whichever of the two was revealed first:

The verse of menstruation gives two reasons why sexual relation in that period is forbidden — and both reasons are still valid, in spite of the verse of *tillage*.

First, it says that menstruation is a discomfort and it continues to be a discomfort. Second, it shows that this order was given to avoid dirtiness and to remain clean, and Allah always loves those who remain clean and pure; so much so that He counts keeping them cleansed as one of His graces upon them;

Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He intends to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you ... (5:6)

Such a language cannot be abrogated by a verse like that of *tillage*. Why? Because this verse says that your women are your tillage, so come into your tillage when you like.

Now, the reason for this putative “concession” was present even when the prohibition was ordained. If it could not stop its promulgation, how can it cause its abrogation after it had already been firmly established?

Second, the verse of tillage ends on the words, “and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you will meet Him.” Such an ending would be out of place if the verse (of tillage) contained a concession.

The meaning of the verse is as follows: Women are to humanity as tillage is to an individual. Agricultural land is needed to preserve the seed and to produce food, so that the human race may continue to exist.

Likewise, women are needed for the continuity of humanity. According to the system created by Allah, the woman’s womb is the place where a child is made and develops from a microscopic sperm to a human being.

As the original place of that sperm is the body of man, He created between the man and the woman a love and compassion and an attraction which excites the man to seek the woman.

As the creative purpose of this mutual attraction is to pave the way for the continuity of the human race, there was no reason why it should be confined to one place and not another, or one time and not another, as long as it helped in achieving that goal and did not hinder any other obligatory work.

This explanation shows the relevance of the words ***do good beforehand for yourselves***, coming after the verse of tillage.

Someone has written that the verse of tillage gives permission to remove the male organ from the woman just before ejaculation. Such an interpretation is patently absurd.

No less absurd is the view that the words, ***do good beforehand*** mean saying...*bismi'llah* ... (by the name of Allah ...*بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ*...) before the intercourse.

Qur'an: and do good beforehand for yourselves; and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers.

Obviously, these words addressed to males, or both males and females, are a sort of encouragement to keep the human species alive through marriage and reproduction.

But is not an end in itself. Mankind and its continuity is desired only for the continuity of the religion of

Allah, the dominance of monotheism and the divine worship through piety. Allah says:

And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me. (51:56)

When He commands them to do anything concerning their life in this world, it is done only to make it easier for them to worship their Lord; it is not done with the aim of encouraging them to submerge themselves in sexual desire and worldly attractions.

No doubt the apparent meaning of ***do good beforehand for yourselves*** is “reproduce and bring into this world new souls to replace those who are dying every day”; but it is not the final goal: the real aim is to keep the remembrance of Allah going on, by producing righteous people who will do good deeds, the recompense and reward of which will reach their forefathers who were instrumental in bringing those good-doers into the world. Allah says:

...and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints ... (36:12)

This leads us to believe that the real meaning of ***do good beforehand for yourselves*** is ‘send good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection’. Allah says:

...the day when man shall see what his two hands have sent before ... (78:40);

... and whatever of good you send on beforehand for yourselves you will find it with Allah ... (73:20)

This verse under discussion

(and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him ...)

is similar to verse 59:18:

O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for tomorrow and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.

In short, the meaning of these sentences is as follows:

and do good beforehand for yourselves:

Send on good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection. Producing children and training them to be righteous servants of Allah and good members of the society is one of those good deeds.

and fear All`ah:

taqwa (fear of Allah, piety, التَّقْوَى) consists of going into the tillage as commanded by Allah, neither exceeding the limits imposed by Him, neglecting the divine ordinance, nor committing unlawful acts.

and know that you are to meet Him.

The order, in fact, means ‘fear Allah whom you have to meet on the day of resurrection, lest your reckoning be severe’. The same is the significance of verse 59: 18, mentioned earlier which says:

and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.

It is not uncommon to use the verb “to know” for the meaning “to be on guard”, “to safeguard” and “to look out”. Allah says:

... and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart ... (8:24);

it means, ‘be afraid of His intervention between you and your hearts.’

and give good news to the believers.

Good deeds and fear of the day of reckoning are the chief characteristics of faith. Therefore, the talk was ended by giving good news to the believers.

For this very reason, verse 59: 18 began with the words:

O you who believe.

Traditions

Ahmad, ‘Abd ibn Hamid, ad-Darimi, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah, Abū Ya’la, Ibn al-Mundhir, Abū Hatim, an-Nahhas (in *an-Nasikh*), Abū Hayyan, and al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from Anas:

“The Jews, when a woman of their house was in monthly period, turned her out of the house; they did not eat with her, did not drink with her, nor did they live with her in the same house.

The Messenger of Allah was asked concerning this matter. Then Allah sent down the verse:

And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation ...

The Messenger of Allah, therefore, said: ‘Remain with them in the (same) houses, and do everything except sexual intercourse.’ This report reached the Jews, and they said, ‘This man does not want to leave anything to our customs without going against it.’

Usayd ibn al-Hudhayr and ‘Abbad ibn Bishr came and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! The Jews are saying so-and-so. Should we not establish sexual relations also with them?’

On hearing it the face of the Messenger of Allah changed and we thought that he had become angry

with them.

Then they went out; and at the same moment some milk was brought to the Messenger of Allah as a present; so he sent it behind them and made them drink it. Thus they knew that he was not angry with them.” [ad-Durru 'l-manthūr]

It is reported from as-Suddi about the verse, *And they ask you about menstruation* that the man who asked it was Thabit ibn ad-Dahdah. [ibid.]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated also from Muqatil.

There is a tradition that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah,

go into them as Allah has commanded you:

It is about seeking a child; therefore seek a child from where Allah has commanded you. [at-Tahdhib]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: “What can the husband of a menstruating woman get from her?” He said: “Everything except the front part itself.” [al-Kafi]

Another tradition is reported from the same Imam about the woman whose blood stops at the end of her usual period.

The Imam said: “If her husband is overcome by sexual desire, then he should order her to wash her front part, then he may touch her, if he so wishes, before she takes her obligatory bath.” Other tradition adds: “And the bath is preferable to me.” [ibid.]

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the same meaning. The word used in the Qur'an is recited *hatta yathurna* (till they have become clean حتى يطهروا); and it refers to the stopping of blood. Therefore, the Qur'an and these traditions support each other.

It is said that the difference between the two words, *yathurna* (they have become clean, يطهروا) and *yatahharuna* (they have cleansed themselves, يتطهرون) is that the second form implies doing something by one's own choice; therefore, it would mean taking the bath; but the first does not imply any choice; thus it would refer to the stopping of blood.

Accordingly, sexual intercourse is prohibited ***until they have become clean***, i.e., until the blood stops. As soon as the blood stops, relations are again allowed.

When they have cleansed themselves go into them:

If the cleansing refers to washing it would mean that the washing, as described in this tradition, is *sunnah* (commendable); and if it means taking the obligatory bath, then the verse would imply that it is commendable (*sunnah*) to go into them after they have taken their obligatory bath, as the above tradition

says, “and bath is preferable to me”.

But in no case does this verse imply that going into them after stoppage of blood and before the bath is prohibited, because the moment of prohibition lasts until the blood stops.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah,

Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves,

that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “The people used to cleanse themselves (after defecation) with cotton and stones etc. Then was instituted cleansing with water, and it is a good habit.

Therefore, the Messenger of Allah ordered it and did it. Then Allah sent down in His Book:

Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves.

”[*al-Kafi*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning, and it is said in some of them that the first man to cleanse himself with water was Bara’ ibn ‘Azib; then this verse was revealed and the custom established.

There is a tradition in the same book from Salam ibn al-Mustanir that he said: “I was with Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) when Himran ibn A‘yun entered and asked him concerning some things.

When Himran wanted to stand up (and go back), he told Abū Ja‘far (a.s.): ‘I wish to inform you — May Allah prolong your life and may He grant us the benefit of your presence — that we come to you; and before we go out from your presence, our hearts become soft, our souls think no more about this world, and we disdain the wealth which people have in their hands.

Then we go away from your presence, and when we mingle with people and traders, we (again) love this world.’ Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) said: ‘It is these hearts; at one time they become hard, at another, soft.’

Then the Imam continued: ‘Surely, the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) once told him: “O Messenger of Allah! We are afraid of hypocrisy (appearing) in ourselves.”

He asked: “And why do you feel so?” They said: “When we are in your presence and you remind us (of Allah) and invite us (to piety), we become afraid (of the displeasure of Allah), and we forget the world and forsake it, so much so that we (seem to) see the hereafter and the garden and the fire; this all is so long as we are in your presence.

But as soon as we come out of your presence, and enter these (our) houses, and feel the scent of our children and see our families, our condition changes almost completely, as though we had no conviction of anything. Do you fear that it is hypocrisy on our part?”

Then the Messenger of Allah told them:

“Not at all. Surely, these steps are of Satan who wants to attract you towards this world. By Allah! If you continued in that condition which you have just described, you would indeed shake hands with the angels, and would walk upon the water.

And had it not been that you commit sins and then seek pardon from Allah, He would certainly create (another) creation who would commit sins and then ask forgiveness of Allah, so that Allah would forgive them. Verily the believer is seduced, (but is also) often–returning (to Allah).”

Have you not heard the words of Allah:

Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves.

And Allah says:

And that ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him ... (11:3) ’”

The author says: A similar tradition has been reported by al-‘Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir*.

The words of the Prophet, “if you continued in that condition...” point to the position of *wilayah* (friendship of Allah, *الولاية*) which means keeping aloof from the world and fixing the eyes on to what is with Allah. We have explained it partly under verse 2:156.

His words, “And had it not been that you commit sins ...”, allude to a mystery of the divine decree. And we shall talk about it under verse 15:21

(And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure)

and other such verses.

The words, “Have you not heard....”, are of Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) and are addressed to Himran. These words interpret *tawbah* (*التوبة*) and *taharah* (*الطهارة*) as returning to Allah by desisting from wrong and removing the filth of sins from the soul and the rust of mistakes from the heart.

It is an example of deducing a conclusion by looking at a verse from one level while at another level a new result (but never in conflict with the first) may be obtained. For example, the verse,

None shall touch it save the purified ones (56:79)

proves at one level that none has the knowledge of the Book except the sinless members of the family of the Prophet, while, on other level, it declares that touching the writing of the Qur’an without doing *wudhu* or taking the bath is prohibited.

Creation progresses, taking from the treasures that are with Allah, until it reaches the last level of *maqadir* (the measures, decrees, المقادير). Allah says:

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. (15:21)

Likewise, the decrees do not come down to us except after passing through various stages of reality. This subject will be further explained under the verse,

He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive ... (3:7)

From above, it may be understood that the verse under discussion, at one level refers to returning the soul and heart to Allah by cleansing them from the dirt of sins (as mentioned just above), and, at another level, obliges one to take the bath; and at this level these two words would mean returning the body towards Allah by removing uncleanness.

This explains also the tradition of the Imam: “Allah sent down to Ibrahim (a.s.) uprightness (*hanifiyyah*, الحنيفية) and it is cleanliness (*taharah*, الطهارة). And it is ten things — five in the head, and five in the body.

That which is in the head is: trimming the moustache, keeping the beard, cutting the hair, cleansing the teeth, and picking the teeth; and that which is in the body is: removing the hair from the body, circumcision, cutting the nails, taking bath after *janabah* (*i.e.* after sexual intercourse or ejaculation during sleep), and cleansing by water after an evacuation of the bowel.

This is the pure uprightness brought by Ibrahim; it was not abrogated, nor will it be abrogated up to the day of resurrection ... ” [at-Tafsir, al-Qummi]

There are many traditions showing that the above things are a part of cleanliness. Some of them say: Indeed *nṣrah* (hair removing paste, النورة) is a purifier.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah: ***Your women are a tillage for you ...*** narrated by Mu‘ammar ibn Khallad that Abu ‘1-Hasan ar-Ridha (a.s.) told him:

“What do you say about going into the women in their posterior? I said: ‘I have been told that the people of Medina have no objection about it.’ He said:

‘Verily the Jews said that if a man comes (into her) from her behind, his child (resulting .from that intercourse) will be cross-eyed. Therefore, Allah revealed:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your filth from where you like,

that is, from their behind.’ ” [al-‘Ayyashi]

There is in the same book a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said about this verse: “From her front and from her behind (but) in the vagina”.

Another tradition in the same book reports that Abū Basir asked Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who enters into the posterior of his wife. The Imam expressed his abhorance of it and said:

“Beware of the anus of women.” Then he said: “Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage as you like” only means “whenever you like”.

The same book narrates from al-Fath ibn Yazid al-Jurjani that he wrote same question to ar-Ridha (a.s.); and the same reply came:

“You asked about the man who enters into a woman in her posterior; the woman is a play-thing; she should not be hurt, and she is a tillage as Allah has said.”

The author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu ‘l-bayt* (a.s.) in *al-Kafi*, *at-Tahdhib*, and *Tafsirs* of al-‘Ayyashi and al-Qummi.

All of them show that the verse of tillage only proves that intercourse should be into the front part. Of course, there is a tradition in *Tafsir* of al-‘Ayyashi narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Ya‘fūr in which he says:

“I asked Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.) about going into women in their posterior; he said: ‘There is no harm’; then he recited the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when (as) you like.

But, apparently the meaning of “going into women in their posterior” means entering into vagina from behind; and the verse quoted supports this meaning, as has been seen in the tradition of Mu‘ammar ibn Khallad, mentioned above.

Ibn ‘Asakir has narrated a tradition from Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah that he said: “The Ansar (of Medina) used to go into their women lying down; and the Quraysh (of Mecca) used various postures. A

Qurayshite man married a woman from Ansar, and wanted to sleep with her (in his own way). She said: except in the way it should be done. The case was reported to the Messenger of Allah; so Allah revealed:

so go into your tillage when (as) you like.

That is, in any posture, standing, sitting or lying down, but it should be into the same passage.” [*ad Durru ‘l-manthūr*]

The author says: This meaning is narrated with numerous chains from various companions, giving the same reason for its revelation.

And the tradition of ar-Ridha (a.s.) has already been quoted giving the same meaning. The words in this last tradition, “in one passage” allude to the rule that intercourse should be in the front part only.

There are numerous traditions showing that going into their posterior is prohibited; the traditions are from numerous chains through numerous companions from the Prophet.

Even those traditions narrated by our Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* which show that entering into their posterior is allowed but with the utmost abhorance do not offer the verse of tillage as their proof. They argue on the basis of verse 15:71, which quotes L^qt as saying:

“He said: ‘These are my daughters if you are to do (aught)’.”

Here L^qt (a.s.) offered his daughters to them, knowing well that they did not enter into the front part. And this was not abrogated by any Qur’anic verse. We shall talk about it there. Here it is enough to say that the verse of tillage has no relevance to this topic.

But, even according to the Sunni traditions, the ruling is not unanimous.

It has been narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, Malik ibn Anas, Ab^q Sa‘id al-Khudri and others that they did not see any harm in that practice and they used the verse of tillage as their proof. Ibn ‘Umar goes so far as to say that it was revealed specifically to legalise this practice.

It is reported on the authority of ad-Dar Qutni (in *al-Ghara’ib* of Malik) through his chain to Nafi‘ that he said: “Ibn ‘Umar told me, ‘Keep the Qur’an before me, O Nafi!’ Then he recited until he reached the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like.

He asked me: ‘Do you know, O Nafi! about whom this verse was revealed?’ I replied: ‘No!’ He said: ‘It was revealed about a man from Ansar who entered into the posterior of his woman; so people thought it a grave matter. Then Allah revealed:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like.’

I said: ‘From her back side into her front part?’ He said: ‘No. But into her back side itself.’ [*ad Durru 'l-manth^qr*]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from Ibn ‘Umar with numerous chains. Ibn ‘Abdi ‘1-Barr has said: “The tradition with this meaning from Ibn ‘Umar is *sahih* (correct) well-known and famous.”

Ibn Rahwayh, Ab^q Ya‘la, Ibn Jarir, at-Tahawi (in his *Mushkilu. 'l-athar*) and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated with good chains from Ab^q Sa‘id al-Khudri that a man entered into the posterior of his woman; people thought it bad of him; then the verse of tillage was revealed. [*ad Durru 'l-manth^qr*]

al-Khatib has narrated in the “narrators of Malik” from Abū Sulayman al-Jawzjani that he said: “I asked Malik ibn Anas about intercourse with lawful women into their posterior. He told me: ‘Just now I have washed my head (i.e. taken a bath) after (doing) it.’” [*ibid.*]

at-Tahawi has narrated from the chain of Asbagh ibn al-Faraj from ‘Abdullah ibn al-Qasim that he said: “I did not find anyone whom I follow in my religion who was doubtful about its legality, (meaning, entering into the back-side, of the women).

Then he read: ***Your women are a tillage for you.*** Then he asked: ‘So what is more clear than this.’” [*ibid.*]

There is a tradition in *as-Sunan* of Abū Dawūd, from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said: “Surely Ibn ‘Umar, May Allah forgive him, fell into error (in interpreting the verse of tillage in this way).

The fact is that there were some tribes of Medina, and they were idol worshippers, residing with some tribes of the Jews, and they were the people of the Book.

And these Medinites thought that the Jews were superior than them in knowledge, and they, therefore, followed them in many of their customs.

And those people of the Book did not go to the women but in one posture only (i.e. lying down), and that was most comfortable to the woman. And these tribes of Ansar of Medina adopted this method from them.

Now these Qurayshite used very strange postures; and they enjoyed keeping them in various position — lying down, facing them or entering from their back side.

When the emigrants came to Medina, one of them married a woman from Ansar and started doing like this with her. She complained of it to him and said:

‘We were doing it in one way; you do like that or keep away from me.’

This news spread, till it reached the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like.

It means, facing them, from their back side or lying down, meaning in the place of child (i.e. in the place where conception may take place).”

The author says: as-Suyūti has narrated it through other chains also, from Mujahid from Ibn ‘Abbas.

It is reported in the same book: Ibn ‘Abdi ‘1-Hakam has narrated that ash-Shafi‘i argued with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan on this subject. Ibn al-Hasan argued that “the tillage can be in the front part only.” ash-Shafi‘i said:

“Then doing it anywhere except in the front part will be prohibited?” He agreed. He (ash-Shafi’i) said: “Do you think, if he did with her between her thighs or in the folds of her belly, is there any tillage in it?”

He replied: “No!” He asked: “Will it then be unlawful?” He said: “No!” ash-Shafi’i said: “Then why do you bring an argument which you yourselves do not believe in?”

It is reported in the same book: Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi ’1-Hatim have narrated from Sa’id ibn Jubayr that he said: “Mujahid and I were sitting with Ibn ‘Abbas when a man came to him and said:

‘Will you not satisfy me about the verse of menstruation?’ He replied: ‘Surely! Recite it.’ He recited:

And they ask you about menstruation ... go into them as Allah has commanded you.

Ibn ‘Abbas said: ‘From where the blood was coming, you are ordered to go into the same place.’ The man said: ‘Then what about the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like?’

He replied: ‘O Woe unto thee! Is there any tillage in the posterior? If what you say were correct then the verse of menstruation would be abrogated, because if that place was not open (because of blood) you would go into this (other) place! But his verse means “whenever you like” in the night or day!’ ”

The author says: The last argument is defective. The verse of menstruation only says that in that period going into the front part of the women is prohibited.

If, allegedly, the verse of tillage allows going into their posterior, it would cover a new subject, and there would be no conflict between it and the verse of menstruation.

So, there would be no question of either abrogating the other. Moreover, we have already explained that the verse of tillage does not say that going into women in their posterior is allowed.

Of course, some traditions narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas argue that the words, “go into them as Allah has commanded you”, prove that going into women in their posterior is forbidden.

But we have already explained that it is the most defective argument, because the verse only says that entering into their front part is prohibited so long as they have not become clean.

It says nothing about other matters; and the verse of filth also says nothing except that one may go into one’s tillage at any time.

This subject is from Islamic law; we have dealt here with only that side of it which was relevant to the subject of *at-Tafsir*.

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