

ڈاکٹر رفیع الدین فاؤنڈیشن کے زیر اہتمام

ڈاکٹر محمد رفیع الدین (مرحوم) کی معروف کتاب

قرآن اور علم جدید

کاساتواں ایڈیشن شائع ہو کر منظر عام پر آ گیا ہے

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MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

Translation and Brief Elucidation

By

Dr. Israr Ahmad

Surah An-Nisa

The grouping of Quranic Surahs:

In the name of Allah (SWT) and seeking His help, we begin our study of Surah An-Nisa. It seems appropriate at this point to review the grouping of Quranic surahs. The Quran consists of a hundred and fourteen surahs which have been grouped in two ways.

One mode of grouping is the division of the Quran into seven *Ahzaab* (groups) or *Manaazil* (destinations), so as to facilitate the completion of its recitation in a week. This division dates back to the days of the Prophet (SWS) and his companions (RAA). The *Ahzaab* are not precisely equal in volume, because if that were the case, it would have been imperative to break some surahs. However, there is a very beautiful design in this division. Other than Surah Al-Fatiha which is called *Ummul Kitab* (the root of the Book) and is like a preface to the Quran, the first *Hizb* (group) or *Manzil* (destination) comprises three surahs i.e. Surah Al-Baqarah, Surah Ale Imran, and Surah An-Nisa. The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth *Ahzaab* consist of five, seven, nine, eleven and thirteen surahs respectively, whereas the last *Hizb* contains sixty five surahs. This appears to be a mathematical division: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and then 65, a multiple of 13.

Besides this division, there is another grouping of Quranic surahs based on their subject matter. It is a known fact that the Makki and Madani surahs are interspersed in the Quran. We find four Madani surahs i.e. Surah Al-Baqarah, Surah Ale Imran, Surah An-Nisa and Surah Al-Maidah in the beginning of the Quran, which are then followed by two Makki surahs i.e. Surah Al-An'am and Surah Al-A'raf. After that, there are Surah Al-Anfaal and Surah At-Taubah which are Madani surahs, followed by fourteen Makki surahs and one Madani surah i.e. Surah An-Noor. Once again, there are several

Makki surahs and then a single Madani surah i.e. Surah Al-Ahzaab. Yet again, we find a number of Makki surahs, followed by three Madani surahs, Surah Muhammad, Surah Al-Fath and Surah Al-Hujurat. Next come seven Makki surahs, after which there are ten Madani surahs starting from Surah Al-Hadeed and ending with Surah At-Tahreem. The rest of the Quran comprises Makki Surahs except for a few Madani surahs at the end of the Quran. In this way, the Quran can be divided into seven groups, each group containing one or more Makki surahs along with one or more Madani surahs. Every group has its own central theme. While the Makki surahs discuss one aspect of that theme, the Madani surahs take the other aspect into account. The first of these groups comprises a single Makki surah i.e. Surah Al-Fatiha, whose pivotal theme is *Hidayah* (guidance): "O' Allah! Lead us to the right path." This is a supplication to Allah to guide us and not only guide, but also lead us to the right path. Now the four Madani surahs in this group show that right path in the form of do's and don'ts. The main theme of these surahs is the Shari'ah of Muhammad (SWS). They focus on describing the Halal and Haram (permissible and prohibited). As secondary topics, we find the issue of *Da'wah* in these surahs along with a charge sheet against the former Muslim Ummah consisting of the Jews and Christians. They had been the representatives of Allah (SWT) on the earth for two thousand years. *Musa* (Moses) (AS) was given the Torah fourteen hundred years before 'Eesa (Jesus) (AS), who came six hundred years earlier than Muhammad (SWS). After two thousand long years, that Muslim Ummah was deposed and a new Ummah installed on the basis of the Prophethood and Messengerhood of Muhammad (SWS). It is the greatest blessing of Allah upon us that we are part of that Ummah. It is by His grace alone that we were born as Muslims. However, we need to examine the reasons why that former Ummah was overthrown, and that is what we find in these four surahs in the form of a long charge sheet against them. Nevertheless, after being ousted, they are not necessarily doomed forever. The door of Allah's boundless mercy is still open for them. They can become a part of the Muslim Ummah by believing in Muhammad (SWS) and the Last Book of Allah (SWT). This has been stated in an ayah of Surah Bani Israel which is a Makki surah. Allah (SWT) removed them from their position because of their misdeeds, but He has left the door of regaining that position open for them. They can join the Ummah without any bars of race and color. This is the *Da'wah* (call) of the Quran to them. All they have to do is believe in the Last Prophet of Allah and His Book. The moment they do so, Allah (SWT) will

embrace them with His mercy and they will be as much a part of the Ummah as any other Muslim.

Coming to these four surahs, they are divisible into two pairs of two surahs each. There are certain similarities between Surah Ale Imran and Surah Al-Baqarah. The most apparent of these is the similitude of their openings and conclusions. Both surahs start with *Al-Huroof-ul-Muqatta'at* (the letters which are pronounced separately) **الم** and end with extremely grand prayers. There are many other similarities, but without going into further details, we commence our study of the next pair of surahs in this group i.e. An-Nisa and Al-Maidah.

Here again, we notice similar beginnings and endings; both surahs start abruptly without any sort of a preface; there are no *Huroof Muqatta'at*, no *Tasbeeh* (glorification of Allah) or *Tahmeed* (praise of Allah). Instead, direct address starts from the very beginning. We shall note other points of similarity between these two surahs while going through the translation *in sha Allah* (if Allah wills so).

Introduction to Surah An-Nisa:

Surah An-Nisa consists of 24 ruku's (sections), and 176 ayaat. The subject of the surah can be divided into two parts: 37 of the ayaat address the former Ummah directly or indirectly by inviting them to embrace Islam or reminding them of their misdeeds, while the remaining 139 ayaat address the Muslims. This part of the surah can again be divided into two parts: A positive address to the true Muslims in the form of guidance towards the right path and ways to reform the society. 55 of these 139 ayaat fit into this category, while the other 84 ayaat carry the negative aspect of address to the Muslim Ummah. It is negative in the sense that it describes the hypocrites, who, by verbally attesting faith, were considered to be Muslims legally. They even used to pray behind Muhammad (SWS) in his mosque. But what they lacked was genuine faith. Therefore, it was imperative that they be exposed so that the Muslims could know the fifth columnists among their society and become aware of their evil designs. These ayahs criticize them as well as exhort them to mend their ways by reminding them of the fact that even though they consider themselves as Muslims, they will not be acknowledged as Muslims on the Day of Judgment. On the contrary, they will be in the lowest abyss of *Jahunnam* (Hellfire). Allah (SWT) despises them even more than the *Kuffar*. A *Kafir* is openly a disbeliever. If he is an enemy, he is an open enemy. If he attacks the Muslims, he does so from the

front. A *Munafiq* i.e. a hypocrite, on the other hand, is a hidden enemy. That is why a sizeable portion of the surah, nearly half of it, deals with the subject of *Nifaq* i.e. hypocrisy. It criticizes the *Munafiqeen* i.e. hypocrites, and cautions the Muslims about the hidden enemy within their own ranks. Nevertheless, as with the former Muslim Ummah, Allah (SWT) is ever ready to embrace them with His mercy and save them from His eternal wrath and punishment of the Hereafter if they attain real faith and mend their ways.

Before we commence our commentary on the surah itself, it seems appropriate to allude to one more preliminary point. These sections are interwoven with each other. The first 43 ayahs contain positive address to the Muslims in the form of do's and don'ts. For instance, there are commandments that refer to women rights, the rights of orphans, and the just distribution of inheritance etc. Then there is an address to the former Muslim Ummah, followed by an address to the *Munafiqeen*. However, this address to the *Munafiqeen* is not explicitly directed towards them. As a matter of fact, they have not been addressed directly anywhere in the Quran. This is so because legally they are also Muslims. They are also addressed as those who believe, but between the lines, the Quran addresses them as those who profess to believe but lack actual belief. One has to ponder over the subject of the ayah to know whether its addressees are the real *Momineen* i.e. believers, or the *Munafiqeen*.

Translation and brief elucidation of Surah An-Nisa:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالرَّحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ۝

- (1) "O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you".

O mankind! Have *Taqwa* of your Lord, your Master, your Rab. It is very difficult, indeed impossible, to translate the word *Taqwa*. It is usually translated as fear of Allah, but to say the least, it is not appropriate. The word for fear in Arabic, which has been used at many places in the Quran, is *Khauf*. The word *Taqwa* comes from the root word *Waq*, which means to save someone from certain harm, while *Ittiqa*, the word used in the ayah, means to save oneself. Hence, *Taqwa* means saving oneself from moral decay, from the displeasure of Allah

(SWT), from Hellfire. This is why some modern translators explain it as having regard for Allah or being mindful of Him. This, in my opinion, is a better translation. It can also be translated as remaining dutiful towards your Lord, or keeping your moral sense alive. Therefore, I will use different words for *Taqwa* at different places.

O'mankind! Have regard for your Lord Who created you out of one living being. It is worth noting that the word used here is not *Bashar* (human being) or *Rajul* (man), but *Nafs* (life or soul). *Nafs* refers to a living organism.

And He created out of that (living being) its mate. According to modern biological and geological theories, life started on the earth in its primitive form i.e. a unicellular organism that had no sex. The procreation was by the division of that cell into two, which further divided into four, and so on. Later on, sexes appeared, but both sexes used to be in the same organism. Afterwards, at a later stage of evolution, the two sexes separated. It was at that point that Adam and Eve came into being. Another ayah of the Quran that discusses the same theme is ayah 13 of Surah Al-Hujurat which states that humans were created out of one man and one woman i.e. Adam and Eve. But here the word *Nafs* has been used.

And from these two i.e. from this pair, He spread a lot of men and women in this earth. Today the progeny of Adam (AS) and *Hawwa* (Eve) (AS) counts to be more than six billion.

And be mindful of Allah. It is significant to note here that this *Taqwa* is so important that it has been emphasized twice in the same ayah. You have to keep Allah in your mind at all times.

In the name of Whom you ask (each other). When a beggar asks for alms, he asks in the name of Allah. Similarly, when a person apologizes to another, he asks for forgiveness in the name of Allah. So when you provoke the name of Allah while asking for favors from one another, you must also be dutiful to Him and keep Him in your mind at all moments.

And the (relationships related to) wombs. You must respect the relationships related to the womb of your mother. Brothers and sisters have their mother's womb in common. Similarly, cousins are related through the wombs of their grandmothers. Infact, the whole of mankind comes within the folds of a universal brotherhood as they all have the womb of their mother *Hawwa* (Eve) (AS) in common. As mentioned earlier, the reformation of the society is the main subject of

the first 43 ayaat of this surah, and the basic unit of a society is a family. The West today is concerned that the institution of family has weakened so much in their societies that it is on the verge of collapse. A former President of the USA, Bill Clinton, expressed fears that in the near future, a vast majority of the American nation would consist of illegal children, born out of any wedlock. Islam lays great stress on the strengthening of the institution of family, because it is as fundamental to a society as a brick to a wall. Now what joins the members of a certain family is a womb. Therefore, the Quran emphasizes the rights of relations due to wombs to such an extent that in this ayah, regard for these relationships has been mentioned along with regard for Allah (SWT). It is also worth mentioning here that women, who have always been degraded and exploited by different societies, have been exalted by Islam, so much so that the wombs of mothers have been mentioned right after Allah (SWT).

Verily Allah (SWT) is watchful over you. He is witnessing every deed of yours.

وَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْغَيْبَ بِالظَّاهِرِ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَى أَمْوَالِهِمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا ۝

(2) "And give to the orphans their property, and substitute not worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and devour not their property (adding) to your own property. This is surely a great sin".

While the first ayah accentuates the rights of one generally maltreated section of the society i.e. women, the second ayah emphasizes the responsibilities of the society towards another commonly oppressed segment of the society, the orphans.

Hand over to the orphans their properties and belongings. The kids left by a deceased who are too young to look after their affairs have to be taken care of by their uncles. These guardians of orphans are being advised here to hand over the belongings of these orphans to them and abstain from eating their wealth up and depriving them of it.

And substitute not worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and devour not their property (adding) to your own property. This is surely a great sin. It is very easy for a guardian to be dishonest and replace the valuable belongings of the orphans in their custody with worthless ones in his own possession. For instance, a person had left behind ten camels when he died. The guardian confiscates these camels and hands over ten feeble or diseased camels of his own to the orphan. The custodians are being warned here not to misuse their authority and eat up the property of the orphans under their responsibility by

mixing it with their own property. The orphans' property is to be kept discreet from the guardians' property. The devouring of orphans' property is a great crime in the eyes of Allah (SWT).

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ۗ

(3) “And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan-girls, then marry (other) women of your choice, two or three, or four. But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or (the captives and the slaves) that your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice”.

Some so-called scholars who do not consider the Hadith or Sunnah of the Prophet (SWS) to be an authority have misinterpreted this ayah. We get to know the actual meaning of the ayah from a Hadith narrated by Ayesha (RA) and as we go forward, we shall, if Allah wills, see that the same explanation has been given by the Quran itself in ayah 127 of this very surah. The background of this ayah is that if somebody had minor orphan girls under his guardianship and her parents had left behind valuable property, the guardian used to marry her without giving any dower, in order to devour her property, since she did not have any father or elder brothers to protect her rights. In this way, people used to oppress orphan girls and deprive them of their assets. In this context, Allah (SWT) says that if you are afraid that you would not be able to do justice with the orphan girls, do not marry them; marry other women you like instead.

Then marry (other) women of your choice, two or three, or four. But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one. The Shari'ah of Allah (SWT) allows a man to have two wives at a time or three or even four, but not more than that. However, this permission of marrying more than one woman is not unconditional. If a man thinks that he may not be able to do justice among his wives if he marries more than one, he should have only one wife, because it is absolutely mandatory to do justice in all calculable and measurable things. The time that one spends with one wife must be equivalent to the time one spends with the other. The money that one gives for household management to one wife has to be equal to the money one gives to the other. Anything that can be counted or measured, for instance dresses, dwellings etc. must be absolutely equal. However, there is one exception to this condition of equality. The heart of a man may be inclined more towards one wife of his than others, and since this is something beyond his control, there is no accountability for this

weakness. This fact has been elucidated in subsequent ayahs of this surah which we shall study if Allah wills so.

Or (the captives and the slaves) that your right hands possess. In addition to wives, it has been made lawful by Allah (SWT) to have slave girls. They are not counted among wives.

That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice. If a man marries only one woman, he is likelier to be saved from any injustice. So it is safer to have just one wife, as it means being accountable for her alone. But in certain circumstances, a person may need more than one wife and he is allowed to do so provided that he fulfills the rights of all his wives without giving preference to any of them.

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُنَّ فَكُلُوهُنَّ حَيًّا مَرِيًّا ۝

- (4) “And give women their dowers as a free gift. But if they of themselves be pleased to give you a portion thereof, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure”.

This ayah mentions what we call ‘Mahr’. The word *Saduqaat* is the plural of *Sudaaq* which means the bridal money that a husband gifts to the bride. A very similar word is *Sadaqah*, the plural of which is *Sadaqaat* and means alms or charity. It is obligatory upon a man to give his wife a certain amount of wealth at the time of marriage. This should be done with an open heart and with pleasure. It should not be considered a fine; it is a present that a man hands over to his would-be wife.

But if they of themselves be pleased to give you a portion thereof, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure. For instance, if a husband had promised ten thousand dollars as *Mahr* and his wife volunteers to relinquish two thousand dollars out of them, there is absolutely no problem in using that money; the husband can consume this wealth without any worries.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيًّا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ۝

- (5) “And make not over your property, which Allah has made a (means of) support for you, to the weak of understanding, and maintain them out of it, and clothe them and speak to them words of kindness and justice”.

If an orphan is mentally retarded and his father has left a lot of wealth for him, handing over this property to him is tantamount to wasting it, because he does not have the understanding and maturity of thinking required to handle financial matters. During the British rule in India, there used to be a court of ward. The property inherited by minors was not left at their own disposal. The government would

manage for them and they were only allowed an annual expenditure out of the income obtained through that property. It is essential to have this kind of a system in the society. Every society can have people who do not know their good and bad, and if they are handed over the wealth that Allah (SWT) has made a means of living in this world, they will end up wasting it and the community as a whole will suffer a loss. However, as the property belongs to them, they have to be taken care of and their needs have to be fulfilled using their wealth. It is the responsibility of the guardians to feed and clothe them properly and be kind to them. They should not treat them harshly and should take care of them.

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَإِنْ أَنْسَمْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبَرُوا ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعِظْ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

- (6) “And test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage. Then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property, and consume it not extravagantly and hastily against their growing up. And whoever is rich, let him abstain, and whoever is poor let him consume reasonably. And when you make over their property to them, call witnesses in their presence. And Allah is enough as a Reckoner”.

When the orphans reach the age of puberty, it should be observed whether they have attained the understanding of their good and bad. If it is so, they should be handed over the property left by their fathers. The guardian does not have the right to keep it under his custody anymore.

And consume it not extravagantly and hastily against their growing up. Among the social evils of the Arab society before Islam was that the guardians of orphans used to spend their wealth extravagantly, fearing that they might grow up and become able to carry out their financial matters, upon which their hold on the property would end. Now that the Muslims were building a society of their own, Allah (SWT) ordered them to refrain from such evil practices. The Quran reformed the society and the state from all aspects. The importance of these societal instructions can be judged from the fact that they have been cited repeatedly and in great detail. No injustice should be done to any section of the society, specially the weaker ones like women and orphans.

And whoever is rich, let him abstain, and whoever is poor let him consume reasonably. If the guardian of an orphan is rich and self-sufficient, he should abstain from taking anything out of the orphan's property.

Conversely, in case the guardian is poor and is devoting his time to looking after the property of the orphan under his custody, he is allowed to use some of the wealth to fulfill his needs. However, this should be done in a reasonable manner and the guardian should take only as much as is necessary for him. All this should be done fairly and with noble intentions.

And when you make over their property to them, call witnesses in their presence. Witnesses should be called while handing over the orphans' belongings to them, lest they should claim afterwards not having received them. These are practical problems that arise in a society, and that is why they have been discussed in such detail in Allah's Book.

And Allah is enough as a Reckoner. He knows everything and everyone will be answerable to Him on the Day of Judgment. He will take account of whether you had been just in your treatment of the orphans under you or not.

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ۚ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ۝

(7) "For men is a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave whether it be little or much -- an appointed share".

This is a preamble for the law of inheritance which will be discussed in detail in the second section. Men and women both have a certain share in the wealth left by their parents and near relatives. This is a huge social reform made by Islam. Before Islam, there was no share for women in inheritance. Even today in some societies like the Hindu society, women do not have any share in inheritance. Mostly, the eldest son is the only inheritor of a deceased person. The property is not divided and distributed so that the holding remains large. This is a norm in many societies even in the so-called modern and civilized world. In stark contrast to these practices, the Quran asserts that the property left by a person, be it small or large, is to be divided according to the Divine law. How much each successor gets has been ordained by Allah (SWT). This is not a human law that can be amended; it has been decreed by Allah (SWT).

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينُ فَأَرْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ۝

(8) "And when relatives and the orphans and the needy are present at the division, give them out of it and speak to them kind words".

If relatives of the deceased who are not his inheritors or orphans and other deprived people are present at the time of the division of