

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Ad-Dahr* or *Al-Insān* 76

The revelation of this Sūra was probably in the early Makkan period, with the possible exception of some verses.

Its theme is the contrast between the two classes of men, those who choose good and those who choose evil, with special reference to the former.

The title of the Sūra recalls a Pagan Arab idea, which explains Time as existing spontaneously from eternity to eternity and responsible for the misery or the happiness of mankind. In xlv. 24 we read: "They say....'nothing but Time can destroy us'." This attitude is of course wrong. Time is a created thing: it has its wonders, but it is no more eternal than matter. It is also relative to our conceptions and not absolute, as Einstein has proved. It is only Allah Who is self Subsisting, Eternal from the beginning and Eternal to the end, the absolute Existence and Reality. We must not transfer His attributes to any figments of our imagination.

This idea of Time (*Dahr*) as against a living personal God has given rise to the term *dahrīya*, as applied to an atheist or a materialist.

The whole of the Sūra is full of the highest meanings, as is generally the case with Makkan Sūras, and this should always be remembered in their interpretation.

Ad-Dahr, or Time.

or *Insān*, or Man.

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.

1. Has there not been⁵⁸³⁰
Over Man a long period
Of Time,⁵⁸³¹ when he was
Nothing-(not even) mentioned?
2. Verily We created
Man from a drop
Of mingled sperm,⁵⁸³²
In order to try him:
So We gave him (the gifts),
Of Hearing and Sight.
3. We showed him the Way:
Whether he be grateful
Or ungrateful.⁵⁸³³
4. For the Rejecters
We have prepared
Chains, Yokes, and
A Blazing Fire.⁵⁸³⁴

سُورَةُ الْإِنْسَانِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا
مَّذْكُورًا ﴿١﴾

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ
سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا ﴿٣﴾

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلًا وَأَغْلَالًا
وَسَعِيرًا ﴿٤﴾

5830. The undoubted fact is mentioned in the form of a question, to get the assent of man. It is certain that the physical world existed long before man was ever heard of or mentioned, as geological records prove. It is also true that the world existed long before man came on the scene: see ii. 30-31. Man is here taken in a generic sense.

5831. *Dahr* is Time as a whole, or for a long period.

5832. *Mingled*: the female ovum has to be fertilised with the male sperm before a new animal can be born. Man as an animal has this humble origin. But he has been given the gift of certain faculties of receiving instruction (typified by Hearing) and of intellectual and spiritual insight (typified by Sight). His life has therefore a meaning: with a certain amount of free-will, he is to be vicegerent on earth (ii. 30). But he must be trained and tried, and that is the whole problem of human life.

5833. Besides the gift of the faculties, Man has been shown the Way by means of Revelation, through men of the highest spiritual standing. If he is grateful, he will accept Guidance, be of the Righteous, and join the company of the Blessed. If not, he puts chains round himself, thus burdening himself with sin, and gets into the Blazing Fire of Punishment. See next verse. His choice rests on his will.

5834. Cf. xiii. 5; xxxiv. 33 and xl. 71.

5. As to the Righteous,
They shall drink
Of a Cup
Mixed with *Kāfur*,⁵⁸³⁵

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا
كَافُورًا ﴿٥﴾

6. A Fountain where
The Devotees of Allah
Do drink, making it
Flow in unstinted abundance.

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ﴿٦﴾

7. They⁵⁸³⁶ perform (their) vows,⁵⁸³⁷
And they fear a Day
Whose evil flies far and wide.⁵⁸³⁸

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا ﴿٧﴾

8. And they feed, for the love
Of Allah, the indigent,
The orphan, and the captive,⁵⁸³⁹

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾

9. (Saying), "We feed you
For the sake of Allah alone:
No reward do we desire
From you, nor thanks."⁵⁸⁴⁰

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا ﴿٩﴾

5835. *Kāfur* is literally Comphor. It is a fountain in the Realms of Bliss. It is a seasoning added to the Cup of pure, beatific Wine, which causes no intoxication (lvi. 18-19), but stands for all that is wholesome, agreeable, and refreshing. Camphor is cool and refreshing, and is given as a soothing tonic in Eastern medicine. In minute doses its odour and flavour are also agreeable.

5836. *They*: i.e., the Righteous: they are known in the present life by the virtues described in verses 7-10, and in the life of the Hereafter they will enjoy the Bliss described in verses 11-22.

5837. *Cf.* xxii. 29. The vows must be vows of spiritual service, which of course includes service to humanity, such as is mentioned in the next verse. They are Devotees of Allah, and they must perform all vows and contracts (v. 1 and n. 682). Vows of the Pagan sort, savouring of a sort of "bribe" to the Deity, are not approved.

5838. That is, they prepare for the Judgment to come, where the effects of Sin will not be transitory but far-reaching.

5839. *The captive*: when taken literally, it refers to the old state of things when captives of war had to earn their own food, or their own redemption; even ordinary prisoners in jail for criminal offences often starved unless food was provided for them by private friends or from their own earnings.

5840. These words need not be actually uttered. They express the true motives of pious and unpretentious Charity.

10. "We only fear a Day
Of frowning and distress
From the side of our Lord".⁵⁸⁴¹
11. But Allah will deliver
Them from the evil
Of that Day, and will
Shed over them brightness⁵⁸⁴²
And a (blissful) Joy.
12. And because they were
Patient and constant, He will
Reward them with a Garden
And (garments of) silk.⁵⁸⁴³
13. Reclining in the (Garden)
On raised couches,⁵⁸⁴⁴
They will see there neither
The sun's (excessive heat)
Nor excessive cold.⁵⁸⁴⁵
14. And the shades of the (Garden)
Will come low over them,
And the bunches (of fruit),

إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا غَمًّا قَطِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

فَوْقَهُمْ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّهْم نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا ﴿١١﴾

وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾

مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا
وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا ﴿١٣﴾

وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلُّهَا وَذُلَّتْ أَطْوَافُهَا نَذِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾

5841. It is a Day of Distress for sin and evil. But the truly righteous are not self-righteous. They have the fear of Allah in their minds: they know they are human, and they fear lest they should be found wanting in the sight of Allah. But Allah in His Mercy gives them a bountiful Reward.

5842. Cf. lxxv. 22-23.

5843. Cf. xxii. 23.

5844. Cf. xviii. 31.

5845. The sun and the moon as we know them will be no longer there. It will be a new world on a different plane. But to give us an idea of comfort we recall the excessive heat of the sun especially in tropical climates, and the excessive cold of the moon especially in northern climates, and we negate them both. That is, the temperature will be just that delightful one that is most agreeable to our sensations as we know them now. The moon is not mentioned, but *Zamharir* (excessive cold) is sometimes used for the moon.

There, will hang low
Easy to reach.⁵⁸⁴⁶

15. And amongst them will be
Passed round vessels of silver⁵⁸⁴⁷
And goblets of crystal, -

16. Crystal-clear, made of silver:⁵⁸⁴⁸
They will determine
The measure thereof
(According to their wishes).

17. And they will be given
To drink there of a Cup
Mixed⁵⁸⁴⁹ with Zanjabil, -

18. A fountain there,
Called Salsabil.⁵⁸⁵⁰

19. And round about them
Will (serve) youths
Of perpetual (freshness):⁵⁸⁵¹

وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِثَانِيَةٍ مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرًا ﴿١٥﴾

قَوَارِيرًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا ﴿١٧﴾

عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾

﴿١٩﴾ وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَوْهُمُ حَسِبْتَهُمْ

5846. Without sun and moon there will of course be no shade in the literal sense of the word. But for full comfort, there will be sheltering shade for rest and change from whatever light there be.

5847. Cf. xliii. 71, where "dishes and goblets of gold" are mentioned. The idea conveyed is that of rarity, preciousness, and spotless splendour.

5848. That is, silver polished and white, and shining like crystal.

5849. Cf. above, lxxvi. 5-6, and n. 5835, where the Cup of *Kāfur* (Camphor) was mentioned for coolness and refreshment to the Righteous, who had just passed the great Event of Judgment. The second stage is described in verses 12-14, when they enter the Garden in Garments of Silk, and find that their former humility in the probationary life is rewarded with high honour in the new world they have entered. The third stage is in verses 15-21, where they settle down in Bliss, with Garments of fine silk and heavy brocades, with Ornaments and Jewels, with an ordered Feast of set service, and the Cup of *Zanjabil*. This word literally means Ginger. In Eastern medicine Ginger is administered to give warmth to the body and zest to the taste; this is appropriate for the Royal Feast which is now figured forth.

5850. *Salsabil*: A fountain in Paradise.

5851. Cf. lvi. 17 and n. 5231.

If thou seest them,
Thou wouldst think them
Scattered Pearls.⁵⁸⁵²

20. And when thou lookest,
It is there thou wilt see
A Bliss and
A Realm Magnificent.
21. Upon them will be
Green Garments of fine silk
And heavy brocade,
And they will be adorned
With Bracelets of silver,⁵⁸⁵³
And their Lord will
Give to them to drink
A pure drink.⁵⁸⁵⁴
22. "Verily this is a Reward
For you, and your Endeavour
Is accepted and recognised."

SECTION 2.

23. It is We Who
Have sent down the Qur-ān
To thee by stages.⁵⁸⁵⁵

لَوْلَوْ أَمْسُورًا ﴿١٩﴾

وَلِإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثُمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

عَلَيْهِمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٌ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوْا أَصَاوِرَ
مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ﴿٢١﴾

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا ﴿٢٢﴾

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿٢٣﴾

5852. *Pearls* for beauty and splendour: *scattered*, because they are moving to and fro.

5853. Cf. xviii. 31. The bracelets are there said to be of gold.

5854. This would seem to be the culmination of the honour which the Blessed receive at the Royal and Divine Banquet. The words in the next verse express the sort of speech which will make the Guest a denizen of Heaven.

5855. The Qur-ān was being revealed stage by stage as the occasion demanded and at the date of this Sūra it was still one of the earlier stages. Persecution, abuse, and false charges were being levelled against the man of Allah, but he is bidden to stand firm and do his duty. In a minor degree this applies to all of us who suffer in the cause of Truth.

24. Therefore be patient
With constancy to the Command
Of thy Lord, and obey not
To the sinner or the ingrate
Among them.

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَطِعْ مَنَّهُمْ إِنَّمَا أَوْفَوْنَا

25. And celebrate the name⁵⁸⁵⁶
Of thy Lord morning
And evening,

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٢٥﴾

26. And part of the night,
Prostrate thyself to Him;
And glorify Him⁵⁸⁵⁷
A long night through.

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا ﴿٢٦﴾

27. As to these, they love
The fleeting life,
And put away behind them⁵⁸⁵⁸
A Day (that will be) hard.

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُونَ وَرَاءَهُمْ
يَوْمًا نَقِيلًا ﴿٢٧﴾

5856. Three methods of Prayer and Devotion are mentioned: (1) to remember and celebrate the holy name of Allah always; (2) to spend a part of the night in humble prostration; and (3) to glorify Him in the long hours of a weary night of waiting and watching. As to (1), "morning and evening" means all the waking hours of our life, but in the special hours of morning and evening the physical world without us, and the inner world within us, combine to make us specially receptive of spiritual influences. The "name" of Allah includes His attributes, as a locked golden casket might include priceless jewels. Any one may carry the casket, even though he may not be worthy to handle the jewels. If he carries the casket, he is in potential possession of the jewels, and he hopes some time to get the key which opens the jewels to him. So the tyro, who celebrates the holy name of Allah, hopes some day to see the "Face" of Allah and be blessed with the privilege of proximity to His Person. For (2) and (3) see next note.

5857. See last note. (2) Humble *prostration* to Allah means some visible mode of dedication. That is best done at night, when the soul, free from worldly occupations, is alone with its God. (3) The weary hours of a long night are no longer weary, but become full of meaning when we join in concert with the whole Creation, which glorifies Allah: lvii. 1.

5858. *Fleeting life*: Cf. lxxv. 20. *They*: the immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraish: the general reference is to the Unbelievers of all ages. They reject, or at least put away the thought of, a Hereafter, a Day that will be hard, for the easy pleasures of a fleeting life.

28. It is We Who created
Them, and We have made
Their frame strong;⁵⁸⁵⁹
But, when We will,
We shall exchange
Their likes.⁵⁸⁶⁰

29. This is an admonition:
Whosoever will, let him
Take a (straight) Path
To his Lord.

30. But ye will not,
Except as Allah wills;⁵⁸⁶¹
For Allah is full of
Knowledge and Wisdom.

31. He will admit
To His Mercy Whom He will;⁵⁸⁶²
But the wrong-doers,-
For them has He prepared
A grievous Chastisement.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ وَإِذَا شِئْنَا
بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَلَهُمْ تَبْدِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾

إِنْ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ
سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٩﴾

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٣٠﴾

يَدْخُلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ
عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

5859. Allah has not only created men, but "made their frame strong", i.e., given them the power and strength to withstand the temptations of Evil and stand firmly in the Path of Right.

5860. If, in spite of Allah's loving care, any particular men or group of men, misuse their powers or wilfully disobey Allah's Law, Allah will set them aside, and substitute others in their place, with like powers. Allah's gifts are free, but let no one think that he can monopolise them or misuse them without being called to answer for the trust. And the man of Allah must not be discouraged by the whole world being at some moment completely against him. Allah can in a moment make a complete change. Either the same men that fought against him will be his zealous adherents, or another generation will spring up, which will carry the flag of Righteousness to victory. Allah's Will and Plan work in their own good time.

5861. Man in himself is weak; he must seek Allah's Grace; without it he can do nothing; with it he can do all. For Allah knows all things, and His wisdom comprehends the good of all.

5862. That is according to His just and wise Plan. If the will is right, it obtains Allah's Grace and Mercy. If the will of man rejects Allah, man must suffer the Penalty.