

Appendix: Explanatory Translation of Surah al-Hujurat

Explanatory Translation of Surah al-Hujurat (The Rooms) 1

Please note that the Original `Arabic text has been translated and formatted as normal text, whereas the explanatory translation is in *italics*. The subscripted number preceding the text refers to the verse number.

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Obedience to the Shari`ah

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ {1}

1 O you who believe! *In the matters of the shari`ah* do not go ahead of or take precedence before Allah and His Messenger and the Imams; and fear the punishment of Allah for such actions, and be careful of what you say or write about the shari`ah because Allah surely is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. (During the Occultation of the Present Imam, the same discipline should be observed by following the most learned mujtahid – expert of Islamic laws – of our time.)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ {2}

2 O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet. *After the death of the*

Prophet the believers can follow this command of Allah by not voicing their objections against the laws brought by the Prophet. And do not talk loudly to him as you talk to one another. Heed to these two commands, lest all your deeds become forfeited in such a way that you won't even realize it.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ
لِلتَّقْوَى ۗ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ {3}

3 Surely those who lower their voices in the presence of the Messenger of Allah are the people whose souls have been tested by Allah for their piety (tawqā); for them, *and for all those who heed to the above command*, is the forgiveness of Allah and a great reward.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنَ الْهُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ {4}

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ {5}

During the last years of the Prophet's life, many individuals and groups came to Madinah to visit the Prophet. Among these visitors, the Bedouins behaved in such a way that even Allah did not like it. Whenever they entered the city of Madinah, they would all go to the Prophet's house at the same time and call him out to see him; they did not realize that the Prophet was entitled to some privacy and rest. 4 Surely most of the people who call you, O Muhammad, from outside the rooms, do not understand. 5 If they waited patiently until you come out to them, this would be better for them. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

Criterion of Truth & Falshood in News

Walid bin `Uqbah bin Abi Mu`it of the tribe of Bani Umayyah was sent by the Prophet to the people of Bani Mustalaq to collect zakat. In pre-Islamic days, Walid and Bani Mustalaq were enemies of each other. When the people of Bani Mustalaq came to know that Walid is coming as a representative of the Prophet, they came forward to welcome him. When Walid saw them from far, he thought that they have come to fight against him because of their past enmity. Thus he returned to Madinah before even meeting the Bani Mustalaq people. In Madinah, he reported to the Prophet that, "The tribe of Bani Mustalaq had given up Islam and refused to pay zakat."

When the representatives of Bani Mustalaq came to Madinah to inquire about the strange attitude of

Walid, they found the Prophet very upset with them.

It was in relation to this false report of Walid bin `Uqbah that Allah revealed the following verse³:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ
فَتُصِيبُوهَا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ {6}

6 O you who believe! If a sinful person comes to you with news or a report about a person or people; then ascertain the truth of his report lest you harm a people because of your ignorance and then regret what you have done. (Therefore think twice before you criticize any Muslim nation or people when some news concerning it comes from a source which is unreliable or opposed to Islam.)

Obedience to the Prophet

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَن فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ۚ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ
حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ ۚ
أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ {7}

فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ {8}

7 And O you the believers, know that the Messenger of Allah is among you; if he were to obey you in most things, for example, in the case of Walid's false report, then surely you would fall into trouble. But Allah has saved you from trouble by endearing the faith to you, by adorning it for your hearts and by arousing dislike in you to disbelief, transgression and disobedience. These people who follow the commands of the Prophet and his rightful successors are the rightly guided people. 8 This right guidance is a grace from Allah and a favour and Allah is indeed All-Knowing and Wise.

Islamic Solidarity

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى
الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا

بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسَطُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسَطِينَ {9}

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ {10}

9 If two parties of believers, *or two people*, fight with each other, then *don't just stand as on-lookers*, but go forward to make peace between them.

But if one of them *refuses to make peace and continues to oppress* the other, then you should fight the oppressor until he agrees to return *and heed* to the command to Allah. When the oppressor heeds *to the commandments of Allah*, then make peace between them on basis of justice and act with equity. Surely Allah loves those who act with equity. (*Therefore to be "non-aligned" in regards to affairs of the Muslims is an un-Islamic attitude.*)

Why should a Muslim brother (or people) bother himself to make peace between two Muslims? What right does he have to do so? 10 Surely the believers are but brothers, therefore, *if two believers fight each other then you, as brothers, should make peace between your brothers*. And *while making peace act justly and fear the punishment of Allah*, so that He may have mercy on you.

Some Moral Rights of Muslims

As the Muslims have been declared brothers of each other, they must respect the rights of one another. These rights are of reciprocal nature:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ ۚ بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ {11}

A. 11 O you who believe! People should not laugh at, *or make fun of*, another people, *because possibly those who are being laughed at may be better, in the view of Allah than those who laugh*. Nor should women *laugh at other women because possibly those who are being laughed at may be better, in the view of Allah, than those who laugh*.

B. Do not find fault with your own Muslim brothers, *rather pay more attention to self-criticism and to your own perfection*.

C. Do not call one another by *bad and insulting* nicknames, *because calling someone by bad names after his declaration of the faith is itself a transgression*. And those who *indulge in these wrongful acts* and do not ask forgiveness *for their sins*; they are the unjust people.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا
وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ {12}

D. 12 O you who believe! Avoid most of the suspicious *thoughts about other Muslims*; for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin.

E. And do not spy *on each other*.

F. Nor should some of you back-bite others. Does any one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?! *Surely you abhor it. Suspicion leads to spying and spying in turn leads to backbiting. Avoidance of suspicion helps in refraining from spying on others and thus backbiting. So fear the punishment of Allah in violating these rights of a Muslim brother. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving and Merciful.*

Racism Rejected

One of the most abhorring social features of our present age is racial discrimination. Almost every country and community suffers from this social disease in varying degrees. Addressing the human society, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ
أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ {13}

13 O you men! We have created you from a male and a female (*i.e., Adam and Hawwa*), and then We made you *into different* races and tribes so that you may know *and recognise* each other.

According to Islam, each and every human being is from Adam and Hawwa. Allah divided them into different tribes and races so that it would be easy to recognise one another. Thus the difference in race, tribe, colour and language are to facilitate the recognition of each other.

These physical and material differences cannot be a standard for preference or superiority of one group

over others. Besides knowledge and jihad (in its every sense), the only mark of distinction in Islam is *taqwa* i.e., piety and God fearing. Surely the most honourable of you in Allah's sight is the one who is most pious among you; surely Allah is All-Knowing and Aware.

Difference Between Islam and Iman: Submission & Conviction

The Bedouin people of Bani Asad were overcome by famine. They came to Madinah and declared themselves Muslims. Then they asked the Prophet to give them some of the zakat. They talked to the Prophet in such a way that it seemed that they had done him a favour by becoming Muslims, and that he was obliged to help them. It was about them that Allah says:

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا ۗ قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ۗ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ {14}

14 The Arabs of the desert say, "O Muhammad! We believe in you and your God." Tell them: "You do not believe in me or my Lord, however you should say, 'We submit (aslamna) ourselves to your Lord,' because the faith (iman) has not yet entered into your hearts. But if you sincerely obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything from your deeds. Surely Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

Therefore, Islam (submission) and Iman (faith, conviction) are two different stages of belief. "Islam" is verbal confession, whereas "Iman" is spiritual conviction; Islam is believing in Allah and His Messenger by just following others (like parents and society, etc.), whereas Iman is believing in Allah and His Messenger after achieving conviction about the truth of Allah and His Messenger.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ {15}

The next verse defines the mu'minin (those who believe with conviction) vis-a-vis the muslimin (those who verbally submit themselves to Allah).

15 The mu'minin (believers) are only those who:

- believe in Allah and His Messenger, verbally as well as spiritually;
- and then they never doubt in their faith because it originates from conviction not blind following;

- and they struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah.

These are the truthful *believers*.

قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ {16}

16 O Muhammad, tell *those Arabs* that: Are you appraising Allah about your religion by saying that, “We Believe?” Allah knows what is in the Heavens and what is in the Earth. Allah knows all things.

يَمُنُّونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا ۗ قُلْ لَا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُم ۗ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ {17}

17 By becoming Muslims, they seem to do you a favour! Tell *them that*, “By becoming Muslims you do not do me a favour, rather Allah has done you a favour by guiding you to the faith. *This is a fact which you can easily understand* if you are truthful.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ {18}

18 Surely Allah knows the unseen things of the heavens and the earth, and Allah sees what you do.

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1. We reproduce the explanatory translation of Surah al-Hujurat from the Holy Qur’an as translated by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi [with permission from the translator]. This translation has been extracted from Volume 2 of his work entitled, “An Explanatory Translation of the Holy Qur’an” (ISBN 0-920675-02-6) (Tr.)
 2. The original words in `Arabic are min wara` which means “from behind”; but in accordance with the present-day context, I have translated it as “from outside.”
 3. Al-Zamakhshari, Tafsir al-Kashaf, Volume 3, Page 129.
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