

Surah al-Hujurat, Chapter 49

(The Rooms)

Section (juz'): 26

Number of Verses: 18

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

The Chapter in question has eighteen Verses and it was revealed in Medina. The Arabic word hujurat is the plural form of hujra. The fourth Verse of the Chapter treats of the rooms of the Noble Prophet's (S) house, hence the designation Hujurat ("rooms").

The Merits of the Recitation of the Chapter

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

“One who recites Surah al-Hujurat every night or every day, shall be regarded as one of the visitors of Prophet Muhammad (S).”

It goes without saying that visiting the Noble Prophet (S) stands second to acting upon the rules mentioned herein concerning the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), since recitation is at all times a prelude to practice.

Surah al-Hujurat - Verse 1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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

1. O you who believe! Make not [a decision] in advance before Allah and His Messenger and fear Allah. Indeed! Allah is All-Hearing, Omniscient.

The three Chapters titled Ma'ida, Hujurat, and Mumtahana, opening with the clause:

“O you who believe!”

treat of social and political issues.

The blessed Verse in question intends to educate believers like angels, since the Holy Qur'an says regarding them:

“They speak not until He has spoken, and they act upon His Command”¹.

The instances of making decisions in advance before the Noble Prophet (S) are not attested in the Holy Qur'an so that it includes prohibitions of making decisions in advance in doctrinal, socio-political, economic, and other issues in words and deeds.

God Almighty strictly forbids making decisions in advance before the leader of the Islamic community, since one who makes decisions in advance before God Almighty and His Messenger (S), causes disorder in the management of the Islamic system, leads the society to chaos, and in fact plays with the legislative system through his personal inclinations.

Acting upon the blessed Verse in question prevents from the emergence of many a flaw, since following surmises, inclination toward innovation, hasty judgment, and so-called liberal thoughts may at times lead man to making decisions that involuntarily does so in advance before God Almighty and His Messenger (S).

In like manner, some people aspiring to worship God Almighty, be decisive, revolutionary, pious, and leading a simple life make decisions in advance before God Almighty and His Messenger (S) and

became more catholic than the Pope.

Therefore, acknowledging and acting upon social customs or secular laws and regulations which are not based upon the Holy Qur'an, traditions of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams (as), and human intellect and his natural and innate disposition (fitra) are all instances of making decisions in advance before God Almighty and His Messenger (S).

At any rate, God Almighty addresses believers in the blessed Verse in question saying:

“O you who believe! Make not [a decision] in advance before Allah and His Messenger (S).”

Believers are hereby asked not to obey anyone besides God Almighty and His Messenger (S). They are supposed not to say anything against the Book and Prophetic traditions (sunna).

“Fear Allah”

and withhold from disobeying Divine Commands and know that:

“Indeed! Allah is All-Hearing, Omniscient.”

He hears your words and He is All-Aware of your deeds.

It is worthy of note that a number of Qur'anic exegetes concerning the occasion of the revelation of the blessed Verse in question have said that it makes a reference to the deeds of some Muslims who performed some of their devotion rituals prior to their due time; as a consequence of which the blessed Verse in question was revealed to forbid them from embarking upon the same.² For the sake of brevity, other views are not mentioned herein.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 2

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

2. O you who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk as you speak aloud to one another, lest [for the sake of such indecency] your deeds should be rendered fruitless while you perceive not.

The preceding Verse forbade believers from making decisions in advance before the Messenger of Allah (S) and Divine Commands and the blessed Verse in question treats of speaking aloud in the presence of the Noble Prophet (S).

It is mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

“Make not the calling of the Messenger (S) among you as you call one another.”

The blessed Verse in question says:

“Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds should be rendered fruitless while you perceive not.”

The first clause,

“Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet,”

designates that such manner of speech before the Noble Prophet (S) is an act of indecency. One is not supposed to show such indecency before one's parents and teachers either.

The following clause,

“nor speak aloud to him in talk as you speak aloud to one another,”

may either lay further emphasis on the preceding one or make a reference to a novel point which is forbidding believers to address the Noble Prophet (S) by the phrase:

“O Muhammad!”

rather than

“O Messenger of Allah!”

Regarding the difference between the twain clauses, a number of Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the former indicates that in speaking to the Noble Prophet (S) people were not supposed to raise their voices above his voice and the latter designates that when the Noble Prophet (S) was silent and people were talking to him, they were not supposed to raise their voices either.

It goes without saying that if such acts of indecency aim at affronting the most exalted state of Prophethood, they will lead to disbelief and without aiming at abusing his most exalted state, they will be regarded as abuse and sin. It is evident that the former results in rendering one's good deeds fruitless, since disbelief leads to the same.

The latter may also lead to the same since such acts of indecency end in rendering many a righteous good deed fruitless owing to committing certain sins; in like manner, some of the sins committed may be definitely absolved through righteous good deeds. It is worthy of note that it is a general rule concerning righteous good deeds and sins and the same stands to reason as well.

According to a tradition, upon the revelation of the blessed Verse in question, Thabit ibn Qays, the

preacher of the Noble Prophet (S) who was loud spoken, said:

“It was I who raised my voice above that of the Noble Prophet (S). My righteous good deeds have been all rendered fruitless and I am one of the people of the Hell.”

Informed of his words, the Noble Prophet (S) said:

“It is not so. He is one of the people of Paradise, since he acted upon his duty when he delivered a sermon for believers or against opponents.”⁴

Likewise, it was in the battle of Hunayn and at the behest of the Noble Prophet (S) that ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib called loudly to deserters to return.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 3

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

3. Indeed, those who lower their voices in the presence of Allah’s Messenger (for the sake of good manners and their respect for him), they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested [and prepared] for [entertaining] piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward.

The Arabic word ghadhdh is used in the sense of “lower, cast down.”

It is employed in the Holy Qur’an in the senses of lowering one’s voice and glance; for instance, lower one’s glance to avoid from looking at those outside the circle of close kinship as it is attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an:

“Tell the believing men to lower their glance [from looking at forbidden things and persons]”⁵.

It should be borne in mind that we have to censure the wrong-doing and encourage the good-doing.

The preceding blessed Verse reproaches those who raised their voices in the presence of the Noble Prophet (S) and the blessed Verse in question and the following ones encourage decent people;

(“Indeed, those who lower their voices in the presence of Allah’s Messenger (for the sake of good manners and their respect for him), they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested [and prepared] for [entertaining] piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward”).

At any rate, the blessed Verse makes a reference to the pious whose characteristics includes speaking softly in the presence of the Noble Prophet (S) and never raise their voices above that of the Noble

Prophet (S), since his exalted state and grandeur have penetrated in their hearts such that they are so modest that they never raise their voices before him but they lower them. Divine Reward and Forgiving are in store for such people.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verses 4-5

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنَ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

4. Indeed those who call you from behind the rooms, most of them refrain from intellection.

5. And if they had patience till you could come out to them, it would have been definitely better for them. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Social decorum has the prime of place in Islam. Some of the rules of etiquette are mentioned in this Chapter, hence its designation Surah al-Adab (“The Chapter of Manners”).

Each of the rooms of the Noble Prophet’s (S) house was devoted to one of his wives. These rooms were quite simple, but unfortunately, they were destroyed under the caliphate of Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and their spaces were annexed to a mosque.⁶ Had these rooms been preserved, the world would have been able to notice the simplicity of their life and they would have received a lesson concerning the same.

Bad manners indicate insensibility.

Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

“One devoid of reason lacks good manners.”

Thus it is said in the blessed Verses in question:

“O Muhammad! Those who call you from behind the rooms, most of them are ignorant. If they had reason and could understand your exalted state of Prophethood, they ceased to do so. Had they had patience until you left the room, it would have been better for them, since they could reflect their understanding and modesty.”

The blessed Verses apparently make mention of those people concerning whom the blessed Verses were revealed.

Some Qur'anic exegetes have also said that the blessed Verses indicate that the Noble Prophet (S) is not supposed to be called:

“O Muhammad! O Ahmad!”

in the manner that they call themselves, but they are supposed to call him as:

“O Messenger of Allah! O Prophet of Allah!”

They maintain that the blessed Verses in question are like the other Qur'anic Verse7:

“Make not the calling of the Messenger among you as you call one another.”

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

6. O you who believe! If an evil-doer comes to you with important news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance [out of haste in belief and making decision], and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done.

Addressed to believers, the blessed Verse in question is saying that if an evil-doer comes to you with intelligence, do not acknowledge it unless you investigate its veracity, otherwise if you do something in ignorance, you may have done something wrong and thereafter you may regret what you have done.

A number of jurists make use of the blessed Verse in question to argue the authenticity of a tradition transmitted by one single but honest transmitter, since the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse indicates that the intelligence imparted by a wrong-doer is not to be trusted.

Concerning the occasion of the revelation of the blessed Verse in question, it is said that the Noble Prophet (S) dispatched Walid ibn 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'it to collect the alms tax from Banu Mustaliq. The latter intended to pay homage to him and in so doing went to welcome him.

Upon seeing them, Walid was afraid and thought that they were there to take his life. Thus, he returned to the Noble Prophet (S) saying that they failed to pay the alms tax and intended to take his life.

The Noble Prophet (S) became sad, but they came unto him saying:

“We had come to pay homage to your messenger by welcoming him, but upon seeing us, he returned and we are unaware as to the reason behind his return. Now, we have come to see whether he

conveyed the truth. The alms tax is ready. Send someone to collect it.”

The Noble Prophet (S) summoned Khalid ibn Walid and ordered him confidentially to go to them and see if they acted upon Islamic precepts and collect the alms tax if he sees that they act upon precepts but confront them like disbelievers if they fail to act upon them. When Khalid reached there, he heard the evening call to prayer. He collected the alms tax and returned.

It was then that the blessed Verse in question;

“O you who believe! If an evil-doer comes to you with important news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance [out of haste in belief and making decision], and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done”

was revealed. Another occasion for the revelation of the blessed Verse is reported but for the sake of brevity, mention is not herein made of the same.

Now, let us take a glance at the meaning of fisq (“wrong-doing”) and fasiq (“wrong-doer”). The Arabic word fisq denotes deviation and in Qur’anic terms, it connotes deviation from the straight path. The word is the antonym of ‘adala (“justice”) and fasiq is applied to someone who commits a grave sin but fails to repent it.

The Arabic word fisq is employed in different contexts in the Holy Qur’an, including: disobedience of the Pharaoh and his people to Allah:

“Indeed they are a people who are disobedient to Allah,”⁸;

Hypocrisy:

“Indeed, the hypocrites are disobedient to Allah,”⁹;

abusing Prophets and disobedience to their injunctions:

“They said: ‘O Moses! We shall never enter it so long as they are there. Therefore, go you and your Lord and fight you two, we are sitting right here.’ He said: ‘O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother, so separate us from the people who are disobedient to Allah.”¹⁰;

those who do not judge based on Divine Law:

“Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed therein. And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such people are disobedient to Allah.”¹¹;

the deceitful:

“And ask them about the town that was by the sea; when they transgressed in the matter of the

Sabbath, when their fish came to them openly on the Sabbath and did not come to them on the day they had no Sabbath. Thus, We made a trial of them, for they used to disobey Allah.”)12;

those who leave aside the significant obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil:

“Therefore, when they forgot the reminding that had been given to them, We rescued those who forbade evil, but We seized those who did wrong with a severe torment because they used to disobey Allah.”)13;

those who prefer their families and worldly possessions over jihad for Allah’s Cause:

“O you who believe! Take not as helpers your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to belief. And whoever of you does so, then he is one of the wrong-doers.”)14;

obvious sins and sexual deviations and unlawful sexuality:

“Indeed, We are about to bring down on the people of this town a great torment from the sky, because they have been disobedient to Allah.”)15;

consumption of unlawful food:

“Unlawful to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which Allah’s Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering, and that which has been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns and that which has been [partly] eaten by a wild animal unless you are able to slaughter it [before its death] and that which is sacrificed on stone altars. Unlawful is also to use arrows seeking luck or decision; all that is disobedience to Allah.”)16;

accusing chaste women:

“And those who accuse chaste women, and produce not four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes, and reject their testimony forever. Indeed, they are disobedient to Allah.”)17.

Other instances are not mentioned for the sake of brevity.

The Holy Qur’an harshly criticizes those who hear rumors and disseminate the same without investigation as to their authenticity

“When there comes to them some matter touching public safety or fear, they make it known. If only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority amongst them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them. Had it not been for Allah’s Favor and Mercy bestowed upon you, you would have followed Satan, but a few of you.”)18.

The Holy Qur’an has stipulated a harsh chastisement for those who agitate the society through

spreading false news among people:

“If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease and those who spread false news amongst the people in Medina do not cease [their activities], We shall certainly let you overpower them. Then, they will not be able to stay in it as your neighbors but a little while.” 19.

In his last year of life, when the Noble Prophet (S) was on pilgrimage he said:

“Those who spread false news are large in number and their number will grow in future. Whoever voluntarily accuses me of lying shall abide in Hell. Compare whatever you hear concerning me against the Holy Qur’an and my traditions (sunna). If you find them consistent with them, acknowledge them, but you do not, reject them.” 20

Imam Sadiq (as) cursed a certain person who falsely attributed traditions to his father (as) saying:

“Whatever you hear from us compare it against the Holy Qur’an or our words, if you find testimony for the same, you may accept them, otherwise do not acknowledge them.” 21

Imam Ridha (as) said:

“Our words are substantiated by the Holy Qur’an and Prophetic traditions.” 22

It is worthy of note that one of the most significant of Islamic sciences is that of transmission authorities (rijal) by which sound and unsound traditions narrated by transmitters may be assayed. Believers are supposed to be interested in investigation of matters rather than being superficial and look at matters simplistically.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verses 7-8

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ
إِلَيْكُمْ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الرَّاشِدُونَ

فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

7. And know that among you there is the Messenger of Allah [whom you should obey]. If he were to obey you in much of the matter, you would surely be in trouble. But Allah has endeared your

faith to you and has beautified it in your hearts, and has made disbelief, disobedience [to Allah], and committing sin hateful to you. Such are they who are the rightly guided.

8. [This interest in belief and hate of disbelief are] a Bounty from Allah and His Favor. And Allah is Omniscient, All-Wise.

Mention was made under the preceding Verse of Walid ibn 'Uqba's false report about people's failure to pay alms tax to the Noble Prophet (S) and people's besiege toward attack when the preceding blessed Verse was revealed as per which Muslims are supposed to investigate and assay the news reported by wrong-doers.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that people are basically supposed to obey the Noble Prophet (S) and the divinely appointed leader is not supposed to be affected by the frantic effervescence arising from the reports imparted by wrong-doers. There are traditions to the effect that endearment of believers indicates treading the straight path otherwise wayfarers are in error.²³

According to traditions, one of the tokens of faith attested in:

"Allah has endeared your faith to you"

is love for 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) and disbelief and disobedience to Allah are on a par with enmity against the Noble Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ("family").²⁴

If the decision maker happens not to be just or infallible, policy making will lead to despotism which leaves no room for growth

("And the command of Pharaoh was no right guide,")²⁵.

Au contraire, if the decision maker happens to be infallible or just, the ground is paved for growth;

("Such are they who are the rightly guided").

Thus, addressing believers, the blessed Verse aims at guiding them saying that the Messenger of Allah (S) is amongst you and you are supposed to obey his commands rather than expect him to obey you, since had he acted upon your wish, you believers, unaware of your gain and loss, would have been in trouble and hardship.

Furthermore, when you deviate from the right path, your faith will be penetrated by flaws. However, God Almighty has endeared your faith to you and has embellished it in your hearts, and has made disbelief, disobedience to Allah, and committing sin hateful to you.

Such people are the rightly guided. It is mentioned in the following Verse that if you obey the Messenger of Allah's (S) commands, faith shall be deeply rooted in our heart and you shall clearly perceive the truth of the Islamic faith; thus, your hearts shall be illumined by the light of the Islamic faith and you will find

Guidance through your belief in Islam which is Divine Bounty and Favor bestowed upon whomever He wills.

God Almighty is Omniscient and All-Aware of your states and deeds and has set everything in its proper place.

Surah al-Hujurat - Verse 9

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

9. And if two parties or groups among the believers engage in fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you against the one that outrages till it complies with the Command of Allah. Then if it complies [and ceases outrage], then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Indeed! Allah loves those who are equitable.

Although faith requires abstention from fighting and confrontation amongst believers, but the fact is that believers are not infallible and uttering one single word or doing one single act may lead to confrontation amongst them.

According to a tradition, believers are supposed to render aid to their brethren, either wrong-doer or wronged. If he is wronged, help him to reclaim what is due to him and if he is a wrong-doer, to prevent him from wrong-doing.²⁶ To reconcile Muslims, one is supposed to act immediately.

It is worthy of note that the conjunction fa- in fa-aslihu

(“then make reconciliation”)

indicates immediacy.

It is reported regarding the occasion of revelation of the blessed Verse in question that there emerged a contention between Aws and Khazraj, the two Medinan tribes of renown and some people from these the twain tribes engaged in some conflict and hit each other with wooden sticks and sandals.

The blessed Verse in question was revealed and Muslims were provided with instructions as to encountering such incidents.²⁷ It is also reported that some contention emerged between two persons from Helpers (ansar).

One said unto the other:

“I will reclaim from you what is due to me by force, since the population of my tribe exceeds yours.”

The other person suggested that they should consult with the Noble Prophet (S). The former declined the suggestion and there emerged a conflict between them and their supporters from the twain tribes. They attacked each other with sandals and even swords. It was then that the blessed Verse in question was revealed and clarified Muslims’ obligations against such disagreements.

As a general rule applicable anywhere and anytime, the Holy Qur’an says:

“And if two parties or groups among the believers engage in fighting, then make peace between them both.”²⁸

The verbal form *iqatalu* is from *q-t-l* (“fight”), but the context reflects that it encompasses any kind of contention and conflict, even if it has not resulted in fight and war. Some of the aforesaid occasions of revelation substantiate the meaning in question.

Furthermore, it could be said that when the ground is paved for conflict and contention, for instance disputations and clashes as preludes to bloody conflicts occur, it is incumbent upon Muslims to take reconciliatory measures, since the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse in question may be inferred through specification.

At any rate, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to prevent from occurrence of contention, conflict, and bloodshed amongst Muslims and assume responsibility in this respect rather than stay aside like indifferent and ignorant onlookers passing by such scenes. It is the first obligation of Muslims with respect to such incidents.

Then, the second obligation is thus expressed:

“But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you against the one that outrages till it complies with the Command of Allah.”

It goes without saying that if the blood of the disobedient and wrong-doing tribe, despite being Muslim, is shed, they are to blame for the bloodshed, since it is taken for granted that the incident concerns a conflict between two Muslim tribes. Thus, Islam requires that wrong-doing be hindered and justice is to be administered through reconciliation but in case it fails, it should be administered even if Muslims’ blood be shed.

Then, mention is made of the third injunction:

“Then if it complies [and ceases outrage], then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable.”

In other words, Muslims are not supposed to be content with shattering the power of the wrong-doing tribe, but their fight should serve as a prelude to peace and eradication of the causes of contention and conflict; otherwise, the wrong-doer will shortly resume the conflicts as soon as he feels competent enough to embark upon the same.

Taking into account the adverbial phrase *bi-l-'adl* ("justly"), some Qur'anic exegetes hold that had some right been trampled or some bloodshed leading to contention

and conflict, just reconciliation should be made in this respect, otherwise it may not be termed "just reconciliation" (*islah bi-l-'adl*).²⁹

Since inclination toward some groups at times make people tend toward either of the "twain conflicting tribes" and the same violates the arbiters' impartiality, thus the Holy Qur'an warns Muslims in the fourth and the last injunction:

"Be equitable. Indeed! Allah loves those who are equitable."

The blessed Verse in question closes with three injunctions as to establishing peace and reconciliation amongst people based on justice:

"Make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Indeed! Allah loves those who are equitable."

It is worthy of note that creation is based on justice:

*"The heavens rest upon justice"*³⁰

and the Prophets' Missions aimed at establishment of justice by people:

"Indeed We sent Our Messengers with clear proofs and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance [justice] that people may maintain justice,"³¹.

In modern societies, realization of justice requires abiding by the laws and injustice is synonymous with evading or delaying the law. Now the question arises as to which law? The law legislated by people like us? The law which is subject to alteration each and every day? The law in which people's interests lie? What arises from unmeasured thought, limited knowledge, and alteration?

What is subject to threats, enticement, and passions? What is legislated by those who delay laws and fail to act upon the same? Could such laws enjoy sanctity and credibility and provide the society with justice and security?

The point is that Divine laws may solely establish peace and justice in society and stay away from defects and flaws. Such laws are legislated by the Creator of man based upon infinite Grace and Omniscience and its Legislator is the first One Who has acted upon the same.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 10

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

10. The believers are nothing else than brethren. So make reconciliation amongst your brethren [in case contention and conflict arise] and fear Allah that you may receive Mercy.

The blessed Verse in question treats of the relationship amongst believers like that between brothers. The similitude demonstrates a number of points including:

1. The friendship between two brothers is deeply rooted and firm.
2. The friendship between two brothers is bilateral rather than unilateral.
3. Such friendship is based on innate nature and disposition rather than on worldly and mundane appeals.
4. Two brothers are unanimous before strangers and support each other.
5. The two brothers descend from common progenitors.

It is narrated in traditions that two brethren are likened to two hands washing each other.³² The verbal form *aslihu* is attested three times in the preceding Verse and the one in question which indicates that the Islamic faith attends to the establishment of peace and reconciliation amongst individuals in society.

At any rate, the blessed Verse in question s lays emphasis upon reconciliation inter se (dhat al-bayn) whose reason is thus expressed:

“The believers are nothing else than brethren.”

The blessed Verse is saying that inasmuch as you strive to reconcile two brothers, it is also incumbent upon you to make peace seriously and decisively amongst conflicting believers. What a meaningful and interesting expression. All believers are like brethren and contentions and conflicts running amongst brethren are to be replaced by peace and sincerity.

Since preferential treatment at times replaces precepts, the blessed Verse warns once more and thus closes:

“fear Allah that you may receive Mercy.”

Thus, one of the most significant social responsibilities of Muslims against one another in administration

of justice is clarified with all its dimensions.

It is also worthy of note that the clause:

“The believers are nothing else than brethren”

is one of the fundamental and deeply rooted Islamic slogans, a very remarkable, profound, effective, and meaningful slogans.

When others intend to demonstrate their love for their co-religionists, they make mention of them as comrades; however, the Islamic faith has elevated the friendship amongst Muslims to such an extent that mention is made of the relationship between two human beings based upon equity by the love between two brothers.

Based upon this significant Islamic principle, Muslims from any race and tribe speaking any language and at any age range feel profound brotherly love amongst themselves, even if they live in different parts of the world.

Such love, relationship, and accord are quite intelligible in pilgrimage to Mecca in which Muslims from all parts of the world congregate at the focal point of monotheism and display the objective realization of this significant Islamic law.

In other words, the Islamic faith regards all Muslims as members of the same family and addresses them as brothers and sisters. They are brethren and sisters both in words and slogans and also in practice and mutual obligations.

Islamic traditions lay considerable emphasis on the issue, particularly on its practical aspects. Mention will be herein made of a number of meaningful traditions narrated in this respect:

According to a Prophetic tradition

“Muslims are brethren, they never do wrong to each other, they never forgo supporting each other, they never abandon their brethren in hardships.”

Imam Sadiq (as) says:

*“Muslims are brethren and serves as each other’s eye and guide. They never betray each other. They never do wrong to each other. They never deceive each other. They never break their promises.”*³³

Islamic sources abound in traditions concerning the claims of believers before his Muslim brethren, the kinds of such rights, the merits of visiting believing brethren, shaking hands with, embracing, remembering, and gladdening them and particularly meeting their demands and making efforts in this respect and also alleviating their sorrows, providing them with food and clothes, and respecting them; such claims have been dealt with in different chapters of Usul Kafi.

A Prophetic tradition regarding thirty claims of believers before their believing brethren which is one of the most comprehensive traditions in this respect will be narrated hereunder to crown the discussion.

The Noble Prophet (S) said:

“Muslims enjoy thirty claims before his Muslim brethren whose absence may not be cleared unless he acts upon them or his Muslim brethren waive their rights:

- 1. Forgive their faults.*
- 2. Be kind to them in afflictions.*
- 3. Keep their secrets.*
- 4. Make good for their errors and mistakes.*
- 5. Accept their apologies.*
- 6. Defend them against slanderers.*
- 7. Be benevolent toward them.*
- 8. Watch over their friendship.*
- 9. Be steadfast against their pacts.*
- 10. Visit them in their ailments.*
- 11. Attend their funeral processions.*
- 12. Answer their calls.*
- 13. Accept their gifts.*
- 14. Return their favors.*
- 15. Be grateful for their bounties.*
- 16. Make efforts to render them aid and support.*
- 17. Preserve their dignity and honor.*
- 18. Meet their demands.*
- 19. Intercede on their behalf.*
- 20. Say Gesundheit when they sneeze.*

21. Help them find what they have lost.

22. Return their greetings.

23. Cherish their words.

24. Be benevolent toward their bounties.

25. Acknowledge their oaths.

26. Regard their friends as his own friends.

27. Refrain from enmity against them.

28. Render them aid and support whether they be wrong-doers or wronged such that keep them from doing wrong and help them to reclaim their rights when they are wronged.

29. Stand by them in afflictions and refrain from belittling them.

30. Expect them to have whatever good he favors and disfavor for them whatever he disfavors.”³⁴

At any rate, one of the claims of Muslims before each other is rendering each other aid and support and reconciliation inter se (islah dhat al-bayn) as mentioned in the foregoing Qur’anic Verses and traditions.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْألقَابِ بِئْسَ الإِسْمُ الفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُم الظَّالِمُونَ

11. O you who believe! Let not a group derides another. It may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let women deride other women. It may be that the latter are better than the former. Neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames [since] doing wrong after having faith is an evil practice [unbefitting you]. And whosoever does not repent [of committing such deeds], then they are indeed wrong-doers.

The preceding Verse treated of the question of brotherhood amongst believers and the blessed Verse in question deals with the causes leading to its obliteration. Likewise, the preceding Verses discussed peace and reconciliation, but the blessed Verse in question makes a reference to a number of factors and roots of contention and conflict including deriding, belittling, and slandering.

Merits springing from acting upon Islamic injunctions include providing a healthy environment and impeding social conflicts. It may be said that deriding and belittling as mentioned in the blessed Verse in question serve as instances of such vices, but it should be borne in mind that uttering any word or committing any act that distorts Muslim brotherhood is forbidden.

Thus, addressed to believers, the blessed Verse in question is saying that you who believe should abstain from deriding your believing brethren. You are unaware of their hearts and acts. Those who have subject to your derision may be better than you. Believing women are strictly forbidden from deriding other women and casting sarcastic remarks upon them, since they are unaware of their excellence over them.

The blessed Verse provides believers with guidance and admonition to the effect that whenever they intend to deride someone, expose his faults, insult or reproach him or entertain evil thought about him, they are supposed to consider their own deeds, since

“man is aware of his self”

and if he contemplates about his own disposition and deeds he will perceive that even if he happens to be devoid of vices, such derision of believers is one of the most reprehensible demerits and thereby he may take measures toward improving his self and restrains himself from insulting others and finding faults with them.

Qur’anic exegetes’ views regarding the occasion of revelation of the blessed Verse in question. A group of Banu Tamim derided some the Companions of the Noble Prophet (S), including ‘Ammar, Khabbab, Balal, Salman, Suhayb, and Abu Darda’; as a consequence of which the blessed Verse in question was revealed forbidding them to deride believers saying that they are outwardly poor, but inwardly they may be better than deriders.

According to Ibn ‘Abbas’ Tafsir³⁵, the blessed Verse was revealed regarding two wives of the Noble Prophet (S) who had derided another wife of his, Umm Salama thereby God Almighty impeded them from such reprehensible deed;

(“Nor let women deride other women”).

As it was recurrently mentioned above, the blessed Verse in question is not specific, in other words, it imparts a general rule forbidding believers not to commit such evil deed and the rule is applicable to those present at the time of revelation and also to those from the following generations.

The blessed Verse proceeds by saying:

“Neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames [since] doing wrong after having faith is an evil practice [unbefitting you].”

The Arabic word lamz indicates backbiting and finding faults with others and some have said that it denotes making mention of someone's fault before him. It is said that hamz denotes backbiting and lamz is to expose someone's faults through facial expressions. It is also said that hamz solely denotes expressing someone's faults.

The Qur'anic Chapter 104 opens with:

“Woe to every slanderer and backbiter.”

The blessed Verse forbids believers to find faults with one another. The pronoun 'one another' (anfusakum) may indicate that since believers are regarded as one single soul (nafs wahida), if they find faults with others through uttering words and facial expressions, they expose their own faults.

In other words,

“Believers are like one single soul” (al-mu'minun ka-'l-nafs wahida)

connotes that they are like one person since they are unanimous in faith and beneficence.

The negative imperative:

“nor insult one another”

(la tanabizu) is cognate with nabaz (“nickname”). The blessed Verse is saying that believers are not supposed to call each other by adverse nicknames; in like manner one who did some evil deed and thereby earned the an abusive nickname but afterwards repented committing the same is not supposed to be called by the same nickname.

The contextual meaning of the blessed Verse indicates that by 'nickname,' abusive nickname is being intended since the clause:

“[It] is an evil practice [unbefitting you]”

follows the same connoting that faith is like unto pure water absolving all dirt and filth. Therefore, it is forbidden to call someone by abusive nicknames following his conversion to faith.

“Those who repent not are wrong-doers.”

One who hurts believers through facial expressions and exposes the faults of others is regarded amongst evil-doers and if he fails to repent, he is regarded amongst wrong-doers.

Finally, deriding others is apparently one sin, but it actually consists of a number of sins: belittling, humiliating, exposing faults, causing discord, backbiting, rancor, contention, intrigue, and casting sarcastic remarks upon others.

Surah al-Hujurat - Verse 12

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

12. O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not [on others], neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? By no means, [since] you would hate it. And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful.

Resuming the discussion raised in the preceding Verse, the blessed Verse in question treats of factors perturbing the peace and brotherhood amongst believers among which mention may be made of suspicion, prying, and backbiting. It is worthy of note that the Holy Qur'an recommends believers to entertain good intentions toward others and refrain from entertaining suspicion about others.

The Arabic word ghayba designates talking behind someone's back without people being aware of the same and it happens to be offensive to the person being backbitten.

The blessed Verse in question opens with:

"O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins."

The word suspicion (dann) ad hoc refers to bad opinions exceed good ones amongst people, hence reference to them by 'much' (kathir); whereas forming good opinions about others is good rather than bad.

It is worthy of note that forming many suspicions is forbidden, but the blessed Verse is expounding that 'certain' suspicions are sins; the reason behind the same might be the fact that certain bad opinions are true hence the expression;

"Indeed some suspicions are sins."

Thus, committing such sin suffices to make man refrain from all such instances.

A question arises here as to forbidding involuntary good and bad opinions formed in mind consequent to a series of preliminary assumptions beyond human volition reflected in mind. Such forbidding applies to the sequence of acts; in other words, when one entertains a bad opinion about a Muslim in his mind, he is not supposed to pay the least attention to it in practice, nor should he make any alterations in his

attitude and relations with him.

Thus, acting upon the bad opinion or suspicion is considered as a sin. Consequently, it is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) that three things are unpleasant in Muslims and there exists a way out of them one of which being suspicion whose way out is to desist from acting upon it.³⁶ Man may contemplate different issues and thereby abstain from forming bad opinions about others.

Thus, he may reflect upon true alternatives and possibilities concerning the same and overcome forming bad opinions in time. Therefore, forming bad opinions is not at all times beyond human will. According to traditions, one has to form the best possible opinion concerning the deeds committed by his brethren unless the opposite be substantiated.

One is not supposed to form bad opinions regarding the words uttered by his Muslim brethren so long as one may find a favorable justification for the same.

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) said:

“Interpret the deeds of your brother in the best possible manner such that what he does pleases you. Do not form bad opinions about the words uttered by your brother as far as you may find good justification in them?”

At any rate, the Islamic injunction in question is one of the most comprehensive and well-measured injunctions in the domain of social relations perfectly guaranteeing security in society. In other words, taking into account all aspects of the issue, the Islamic faith aims at the security of people in their personal lives. It is evident that if anyone is allowed to pry into other people's affairs, he may bring disgrace to them and all individuals of the society will live in hell.

It is needless to say that such injunction is by no means inconsistent with the activities carried out by the intelligence systems of the Islamic government against conspiracies, assassinations, bloodshed, and arson.

According to the third and the last injunction which is the consequent of the twain preceding injunctions, the blessed Verse in question reads:

“And spy not [on others], neither backbite one another.”

Therefore, forming bad opinions leads to prying and exposing the defects and secrets of others and such knowledge results in backbiting whose causes and effects are all forbidden in Islam.

The blessed Verse in question thus clearly depicts the evil resulting from such act:

“Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?”

The blessed Verse further adds:

“By no means, [since] you would hate it.”

The honor of a Muslim brother is likened to the flesh of his dead body and putting him into disgrace leads to backbiting and exposing secrets is similar to consumption of his flesh. Making mention of ‘dead body’ is owing to the fact that backbiting is done behind people’s back in the same manner that the dead are unable to defend themselves.

Such evil act is the most dishonorable wrong which may be done by one human against his own brother. The similitude expresses the extraordinary unpleasantness of the act of backbiting and its entailing sin.

As it will be mentioned hereunder, backbiting receives significant treatment in Islamic traditions and few sins are on a par with it, since it sows rancor and enmity in hearts and at times entails bloody conflicts, murder, and massacre.

Since there may exist sinners having committed these three sins and intend to compensate for their sins upon hearing these blessed Verses, the Verse in question further adds:

“And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful.”

The point is that the spirit of fearing God Almighty is to be invigorated and then the sinner is supposed to repent from having committed sins so that Divine Mercy and Favor may embrace him.

Like many repugnant qualities, backbiting in time turns into mental disorder such that backbiters derive pleasure from their blameworthy acts and find satisfaction in disgracing others. It constitutes a quite perilous repugnant attribute. Thus, one may absolve his soul of such impurities through improving one’s self and reflecting upon the evil consequences springing from them and thereby one may refrain from committing the sin of backbiting.

Then, one may repent and since backbiting entails trampling human right (haqq al-nas), it is incumbent upon him to offer him his apologies even in terse expressions, like, owing to ignorance, he slandered him behind his back and demands forgiveness.

It should be born in mind, however, that one has to desist from offering apologies if he finds out that it may lead to further problems and adverse consequences. In case the victim of backbiting is not available or he is not known or he has deceased, the sinner is supposed to ask forgiveness for him and embark upon doing righteous good deeds so that God Almighty may forgive him and gain the satisfaction of the victim.

Finally, like any other injunction, that of backbiting has certain exceptions. It may be committed for consultation; for instance it may aim at choosing a spouse, business partner, and colleague.

Confidentiality in providing consultation is a certain Islamic precept necessitating that the defects of the person are to be expressed, lest a Muslim may be ensnared and talking behind someone’s back for this

purpose does not involve committing unlawful acts. The same rule applies when significant goals are involved instances of which include like those of consultation or reclaiming the rights and wrongs.

One who openly commits sins and is notorious for debauchery (*mutajahir bi-'l fisq*) is an exception to the rule and mentioning his sins behind his back does not involve committing sins, though it should be borne in mind that such rule solely applies to those who are notorious for debauchery. For other instances, one should consult the relevant chapters in hadith sources.

It is also worthy of note that besides committing the sin of backbiting, listening to the same or attending sessions in which people are being slandered behind their back are also unlawful. According to a number of traditions, it is incumbent upon Muslims to reject backbiting, i.e. they are supposed to defend the honor of their Muslim brother.

It would be so pleasant to live in a society in which such moral precepts are precisely acted upon. In this respect, a number of traditions will be cited hereunder.

The Noble Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Three persons will not be admitted to Paradise: reminder of past favors done to others, slanderer talking behind other people’s back, drinker of alcoholic beverages.”*³⁷

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S):

*“Abstaining from backbiting is dearer to God Almighty than establishing ten thousand units of recommendable prayers.”*³⁸

It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S):

*“The expiation for the victim of backbiting is to ask God Almighty to forgive him.”*³⁹

It is narrated on the authority of Abu ‘Abd Allah [Imam Sadiq] (as) from the Messenger of God (S):

*“Whoever believes in God Almighty and the Day of Judgment is not supposed to attend a session in which a certain Imam or leader is slandered or a Muslim is the victim of backbiting.”*⁴⁰

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“One who listens to backbiting is a culprit of the backbiter.”*⁴¹

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Backbiting, slandering, and telling lies lead to torment of the grave.”*⁴²

It is narrated from Ja’far ibn Muhammad [Imam Sadiq] (as):

*“Paradise is ordained to one who abstains from backbiting, anger, and envy.”*⁴³

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Abstain from envy, anger, and backbiting and maintain brotherhood O God’s servants.”*⁴⁴

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

*“It is unlawful for Muslims to backbite. Verily, in the like manner that fire consumes firewood, backbiting consumes good deeds and qualities.”*⁴⁵

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Leave the deceased alone and abstain from reiterating their vices. Talk about the good qualities of the deceased.”*⁴⁶

Imam Ridha (as) narrates from Imam Sajjad that whoever refrains from disgracing Muslims, God Almighty will ignore his faults.⁴⁷

According to traditions, one who pries into his brethren’s faults [and talks about the same with others] God Almighty will expose his vices.⁴⁸

According to a tradition, sitting at a mosque waiting for congregation prayer so long as it does not involve backbiting is regarded as worship of God Almighty.⁴⁹

In his last sermon in Medina, the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) said:

“Backbiting invalidates fasting.”

In other words, one who backbites is deprived of the spiritual and religious merits of the fasting.⁵⁰

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 13

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

13. O people! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you with Allah is that [one] who fears Allah. Indeed, Allah is Omniscient, All-Aware.

The Islamic faith rejects all racial, political, ethnological, tribal, geographical, economic, intellectual, cultural, social, and military segregations and places fear of God as the standard for distinction between

virtues and vice;

“Indeed, the most honorable of you with Allah is that [one] who fears Allah”.

The preceding Verses were addressed to believers by the phrase:

“O people!”

It is worthy of note that numerous Qur’anic Verses deal with factors leading ‘believing community’ to perils and forbids people from the same. The blessed Verse in question addresses the members of the human society and thus expresses the most significant principle guaranteeing discipline and stability and the true standard of human values against false values.

The blessed Verse is saying:

“O people! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another.”

‘Creation of mankind from a male and a female’

indicates tracing the genealogy of mankind to Adam and Eve. Therefore, all mankind spring from the same root and taking pride in terms of genealogy and tribe is meaningless.

God Almighty created different characteristics for tribes for the maintenance of social order, since such different characteristics identify men without which identification of people and thereby maintenance of social order in human society may not be established and chaos would encompass human society.

Following an invalidation of taking pride in ancestors and tribes predominant as the most significant source of honor and pride in the age of ignorance, the Glorious Qur’an treats of the true standard of values by saying:

“Indeed, the most honorable of you with Allah is that [one] who fears Allah.”

Thus, all outward and material privileges are invalidated and the true standard of values is determined by fear of God saying that it is solely through fear of God that one may attain to closeness to God Almighty and the threshold of his sanctity. Fear of God is a spiritual and inward quality whose permanence in the heart and soul should precede any other quality. Besides, many people pretend to have the quality in question but only few people possess the same.

Thus the blessed Verse in question closes:

“Indeed, Allah is Omniscient, All-Aware.”

He knows the righteous quite well and is fully aware of the degree of their fear of God, sincerity of

intention and purity of heart.

He endears them based upon His Omniscience and bestows rewards upon them. He also knows pretenders and chastises them.

What follows constitutes a brief discussion on fear of God Almighty. As mentioned above, the Holy Qur'an recognizes fear of God as the highest privilege and acknowledges that it is the only standard for assaying human values.

Fear of God is elsewhere⁵¹ regarded by the Holy Qur'an as the best provision:

“And take a provision [with you] for the journey, but the best provision is Fear of God (taqwa).”

Fear of God Almighty is elsewhere regarded as:

“the best garment”⁵².

Numerous Qur'anic Verses consider the first principle of the Prophetic Call as fear of God and the significance of fear of God Almighty is so exalted that:

“He [Allah] is the One, deserving that mankind should stand in awe before Him and He is the One Who forgives [mankind]”⁵³.

Fear of God is reflected in the Holy Qur'an as Divine Light creating knowledge wherever it takes roots:

“Be afraid of Allah and He teaches you,”⁵⁴.

Doing righteous good deeds are considered to be on a par with fear of God;

“Render one another help in doing righteous good deeds and fear of God Almighty”.

Besides, justice is regarded on a par with fear of God Almighty;

“Be just and it is closer to fear of God”.

Now, let us attend to the truth of fear of God as the great spiritual capital and the most exalted of honors with so many privileges. The Holy Qur'an makes certain allusions and thereby reveals the truth of fear of God Almighty.

According to numerous Qur'anic Verses, the place of fear of God Almighty is human heart, for instance:

“Indeed, those who lower their voices in the presence of Allah’s Messenger (for the sake of good manners and their respect for him), they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested [and prepared] for [entertaining] piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward”⁵⁵.

According to the Holy Qur'an, taqwa ("fear of God Almighty") is the antonym of fujur ("immorality, iniquity, depravation, dissolution, debauchery, licentiousness, profligacy, dissolute life")

("Then He showed him what is debauchery for him and what is fear of God for him,")⁵⁶.

Whatever springs from the spirit of sincerity, faith, and pure intention is regarded as a quality based on fear of God Almighty, as in the case of the Mosque of Quba opposite which the Mosque of Âirar was built by hypocrites, the Holy Qur'an says:

"Indeed the mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on fear of God is more worthy that you stand therein,")⁵⁷.

The aforesaid Qur'anic Verses clearly indicate that fear of God is the same feeling of obligation and duty which follows the penetration of faith in heart, predominating his existence, impeding him from committing impiety and sin, calls him to good, purity, and justice, and purifying his thought and intention from impurities.

Taking a glance at the etymology of the Arabic word taqwa, we come to the same conclusion, since the root w-q-y denotes "striving toward preserving something." The word ad hoc connotes preserving the soul from any impurity and concentrating one's faculties in carrying out deeds in which Divine Satisfaction lies.

A number of eminent personalities consider three stages for fear of God Almighty:

1. Preservation of soul from everlasting torment through attaining to true beliefs.
2. Abstaining from committing any sin including abandonment of carrying out obligations and committing sins.
3. Restraining one's self from entanglement in what preoccupies the mind and keeps man from remembrance of God Almighty. This is the most exalted kind of fear of God Almighty.⁵⁸

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) expresses clear and graphic depictions and expressions regarding fear of God Almighty in which he contrasts fear of God with sins and impurities:

*"Know that sins are like wild mounts used by sinners whose reins are torn asunder thus casting sinners into the depth of Hell; whereas, fear of God Almighty is like a tamed and calm mount whose riders take their reins in their hands and gallop toward the heart of Paradise."*⁵⁹

Based on this delicate depiction, fear of God is restraining and checking one's self and overcoming one's concupiscence against wild desires and leaving them unchecked.

Imam 'Ali (as) also says elsewhere:

*“Know O servants of Allah that fear of God Almighty is like a fortified and invincible castle, but impiety and sin are like a weak and indefensible wall which may not save those seeking refuge in it, nor may any one find security in it. Know that many may solely stay unharmed by sins through fear of God Almighty.”*⁶⁰

He says elsewhere:

*“Grasp fear of God Almighty which is a strong cord and hold and a secure refuge.”*⁶¹

The truth and the spirit of fear of God Almighty are revealed from these depictions and expressions. It is also worthy of note that fear of God Almighty is the fruit of the tree of faith. Consequently, one has to fortify the pillars of faith in order to attain to such great reward.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 14

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. The Bedouin Arabs say: “We believe.” Say: “You believe not but you only say: ‘We have submitted [to the Will of Allah],’ for faith has not yet penetrated your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not decrease an iota in reward for your deeds. Indeed, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

The Arabic word a’rab ad hoc connotes those Bedouin Arabs some of whom were believers and they were cherished elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an⁶²:

“And of the Bedouin Arabs there are some who believe in Allah and the Last Day.”

Nonetheless, some of who attached more importance to themselves than they deserved despite the fact that they were newly converted to the Islamic faith.

At times the incentive behind conversion to the Islamic faith is attaining or preserving mundane possessions, but that of faith is certainly spiritual. Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*“Pure blood is preserved through conversion to the Islamic faith and marrying Muslims becomes lawful as well, but the reward in the Hereafter will be bestowed based on heart-felt faith.”*⁶³

A number of Qur’anic exegetes make mention of an occasion of revelation for the blessed Verse in question whose summary will be mentioned herein.

Some people from the tribe of Banu Asad entered Median in one of the years of famine and aspiring to receive aid from the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) they uttered the formula:

“There is no god but Allah and Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allah”

and thus addressed the Noble Prophet (S):

“Mounting Arab tribes waged war against you but we have come to you with our families without engaging in fight with you”

and thus they intended to remind the Noble Prophet (S) of their so-called favor.

It was on this occasion that the blessed in question and the following Verses were revealed reminding them that they have nominally converted to the Islamic faith and faith has not penetrated into their hearts. Besides, even if they converted to Islam, they should not remind the Noble Prophet (S) of their so-called favors but God Almighty reminds them of His Guidance bestowed upon them.⁶⁴

The preceding Verse treated of the standard of the values of humanity, namely fear of God Almighty.

Since fear of God Almighty is the fruit of the tree of faith, the faith penetrating the depth of heart, the blessed Verse in question deals with the truth of faith, saying:

“The Bedouin Arabs say: ‘We believe.’ Say: ‘You believe not but you only say: ‘We have submitted [to the Will of Allah],’ for faith has not yet penetrated your hearts.”

The blessed Verse reflects the difference between Islam and faith, saying that Islam is the outward and legal aspect of faith and whoever utters the formula:

“There is no god but Allah and Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allah”

is recognized as a Muslim and is thus obliged to act upon Islamic laws; but faith is a real and inward affair whose place is human heart rather than his tongue and appearance. There might be different incentives, even personal and material ones, behind Islam but those of faith are necessarily spiritual springing from knowledge and awareness. Such faith is like a tree bearing on whose branches the rejuvenating fruit of fear of God Almighty.

The same theme is clearly expressed by the Noble Prophet of Islam (S):

“Islam is something evident, but faith resides in heart.”⁶⁵

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

“It is through Islam that the [purity] of blood is preserved, one’s trust is guaranteed, and marrying him or her will be lawful, but Divine Rewards will be bestowed upon man through his faith.”⁶⁶

It is in the same vein that according to some traditions, the meaning of Islam is solely restricted to verbal proclamation whereas faith is mentioned as proclamation together with practice.⁶⁷The same theme is to be found in a different expression in the chapter on “Islam and Faith.”

Fudhayl ibn Sayyar narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

“Faith accompanies Islam but the opposite is not true [in other words, every believer is a Muslim but every Muslim is not a believer]. Faith resides in heart but Islam is something thereby people act upon the laws of marriage, inheritance, and preservation of blood.”⁶⁸

The conceptual difference reveals when the twain words are juxtaposed unless the words Islam and faith are applied to the same referent.

The blessed Verse further adds:

“But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not decrease an iota in reward for your deeds. Indeed, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

The Arabic clause *la yaltakum*

(“He will not decrease an iota in reward”)

derives from l-y-t denoting “decrease what is due. The aforesaid clauses actually make a reference to the Qur’anic principle as per which deeds shall be accepted if they are carried out through faith.

The blessed Verse is saying that the token of obedience to Allah’s and His Messenger’s Commands lies in faith them from the bottom of one’s heart and it is solely in this case that your deeds will be of any significance and God Almighty will accept and reward the least of your righteous good deeds and it is through the same faith that He will forgive your sins since He is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 15

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

15. Believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger (S) and then doubt not but strive with their possessions and their lives for the Cause of Allah. They are the truthful [in their claims to faith].

Having faith in the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) is supposed to accompany that in God Almighty;

(“Believe in Allah and His Messenger [SAW]”).

Faith is something inward that may be recognized through practice and without struggling in the Cause of Allah is nothing more than empty words.

The token of true faith is perseverance and doubtlessness regarding the same;

(“And then doubt not but strive with their possessions and their lives for the Cause of Allah”).

Since attainment to such inward affair, namely faith, is not so facile, the blessed Verse treats of its tokens distinguishing believers from Muslims, the sincere from the lying, and those who enthusiastically answered to the Noble Prophet’s (S) Call from those who pretended belief in order to achieve worldly possessions, saying that true believers are solely those who believe in God Almighty and His Messenger (S) and entertain no doubt but struggle with their lives and possessions in the Cause of Allah.

The first token of faith is doubtlessness in proceeding on the Path of the Islamic faith. The second token is to struggle in Allah’s Cause with one’s possessions. The third token which is the most exalted is to struggle with one’s life.

Thus, Islam makes mention of the most obvious tokens: perseverance and doubtlessness on the one hand and sacrificing one’s possessions and life on the other. How may faith be deeply rooted in heart when man does not sacrifice his possessions and life in the Cause of the Beloved?

Thus the blessed Verse closes:

“They are the truthful [in their claims to faith].”

They are truthful believers in whose hearts the spirit of faith flows.

The standard put forth by the Holy Qur’an for distinguishing between

“truthful believers”

and

“liars pretending belief in the Islamic faith”

is not restricted to the tribe of Banu Asad, but it is a clear criterion for all times thereby a distinction may be made between true believers from pretenders.

The criterion may also serve to reveal the value of those who pretend belief in the Islamic faith anywhere and claim the Noble Prophet’s (S) indebtedness to them but in practice they do not reflect the least token of their faith and belief in Islam.

Au contraire, there are people who not only claim nothing but also regard themselves at fault and at the

same time stand foremost in the arena of self sacrifice. If we apply this Qur'anic criterion in assaying true believers, the number of pretenders to belief in the Islamic faith far exceeds that of true believers.

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 16

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

16. Say: “Will you inform Allah of your religion while Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; and Allah is All-Aware of everything.

A number of people taking the oath said unto the Noble Prophet (S) that they were sincere in their belief in Allah and his Prophethood. Consequently, the blessed Verse in question was revealed saying that there was no need to take the oath since Allah is All-Aware of everything.

Presenting one's beliefs to Allah's saints is quite fine in case it serves to assay, improve, and/or attainment to certitude as Hadhrat 'Abd al-'Adim Hasani (as) presented his beliefs to Imam Hadi (as);69 otherwise hypocritical presentation of beliefs is reprehensible.

Addressing the Noble Prophet (S) the blessed Verse is saying:

“O Muhammad (S)! Say unto those who utter the formula ‘There is no god but Allah and Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allah’: Do you intend to inform me that you have converted to the Islamic faith? God Almighty is All-Aware of what is concealed in the heavens and in the earth. He is Omniscient of everything and your inward and outward. If your belief is out of hypocrisy, He is All-Aware of it and He is All-Aware of your intentions.”

Surah al-Hujurat – Verse 17-18

يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُوا عَلَيَّ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

17. They regard as a favor to you that they have converted to Islam. Say: “Count not your Islam as a favor to me. Nay, but Allah has conferred a favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith if you indeed are truthful.

18. Truly, Allah knows the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is the All-Seer of what you do.

Being guided to the Islamic faith and embracing it are great Divine Favors conferred upon man, since God Almighty is needless of his belief, faith, and worship;

(“Count not your Islam as a favor to me. Nay, but Allah has conferred a favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith if you indeed are truthful”).

At any rate, the tribe of Banu Asad counted their conversion to the Islamic faith as a favor to the Noble Prophet (S) saying that they had come to him with their families without waging war against him and had converted to the Islamic faith as a consequence of which they regarded themselves worthy of being rewarded imagining that they render a service to the Noble Prophet (S) through their conversion and requested him to return their favor.

Thus, the blessed Verses in question was revealed to refute their false belief so that no one may presume that conversion to the Islamic faith or doing righteous good deeds requires God Almighty and His Messenger (S) to return their favor through conferring rewards upon him. Nonetheless, God confers a Favor upon those who believe, since being guided and any righteous good deed are dependent upon Divine Favor.

The blessed Verse 17 reflects that no one deserves Reward in return for his belief or for his righteous good deeds. The Rewards promised to believers are through Divine Favor rather than owing to worthiness since God Almighty confers whatever He wills to whoever He wants.

The blessed Verse 18 is saying that God Almighty is certainly All-Aware of what is concealed from sense perception in the heavens and the earth. The blessed Verse disapproves the claims of those who making attempts at dissimulating their inward wickedness pretend belief without faith having penetrated their hearts and count themselves amongst believers.

Such people should know that the truth is other than what they imagine since God Almighty and His Messenger (S) are fully aware of their secret intentions.

1. 21:27

2. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 9, p. 6121; Majma' al-Bayan; Burhan, under the blessed Verse in question.

3. 24:62

4. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 9, p. 130.

5. 24:30

6. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, apud Ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat.

7. 24:63
8. 27:12
9. 9:67
10. 5:24–26
11. 5:47
12. 7:163
13. 7:165
14. 9:23
15. 29:34
16. 5:3
17. 24:4
18. 4:83
19. 33:60
20. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 225.
21. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 250.
22. Ibid.
23. Kafi, vol. 2, p. 126.
24. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 426.
25. 11:97
26. Wasa'il, vol. 12, p. 212.
27. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 9, p. 132.
28. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 9, p. 6136.
29. Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 18, p. 342.
30. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 33, p. 493.
31. 57:25
32. Mahajjat al-Baydha', vol. 3, p. 319.
33. Usul Kafi, vol. 2.
34. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, p. 236.
35. "Commentary," p. 323
36. Mahajjat al-Baydha', vol. 5, p. 269.
37. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 260.
38. Ibid, p. 261.
39. Mir'at al-'Uqul, vol. 10, p. 432.
40. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 246; Safina, vol. 2, p. 337.
41. Ibn Warram's Majmu'a ("[Hadith] Compendium"), p. 84.
42. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 259.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibn Warram's Majmu'a ("[Hadith] Compendium"), p. 81.
45. Mahajjat al-Baydha', vol. 5, p. 255.
46. Nahj al-Fasaha, tradition no. 264.
47. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 256.
48. Abu Da'ud's Sunan, apud Mahajjat al-Baydha', vol. 5, p. 252
49. Kafi, vol. 2, p. 357.
50. Mahajjat al-Baydha', vol. 5, p. 254.
51. 2:197
52. 7:26
53. 74:56
54. 2:282

55. 49:3
56. 91:8
57. 9:108
58. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 136.
59. Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 16.
60. Ibid, sermon 157.
61. Ibid, sermon 19.
62. 9:99
63. Kafi, vol. 2, p. 24.
64. Tafsir al-Mizan; Ruh al-Bayan; Fi Thalal al-Qur'an, under the blessed Verses in question.
65. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 9, p. 138.
66. Kafi, vol. 2, traditions 1 and 2, Bab Inna al-Islam Yuhaqqiqu bi-hi al-Damm.
67. Ibid.
68. Usul Kafi, vol. 2, tradition 3.
69. Tafsir Nur, vol. 11, p. 198.

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