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Part 15

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لا يَسْخَرْ قَومٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ، وَلا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ، وَلا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ، وَلا تَنَابَزُوا بِالأَلْقَابِ، بِئْسَ الاِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الإِيمَانِ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

"O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they; and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nicknames; evil is a bad name after faith, and whoever does not turn, these it is that are the unjust. (49:11)"

Thabit recalls a Muslim's mother in bad light

It is written in commentaries of Holy Qur'an about the circumstances in which the above verse was revealed. According to a narration, a companion of Prophet, Thabit bin Qais was an attendant of the congregation and he was hard of hearing. Therefore he always sat near the Prophet, so that he could hear him properly.

One morning he arrived late for prayers and the Prophet was offering the second unit of the Morning Prayer. So he joined the congregation and standing in the last row, completed his second unit alone. The Prophet used to give admonitions after prayer, reciting Qur'anic verses. Thabit tried for the place where he used to sit daily (near the Holy Prophet). In his effort he pushed some people aside. No one told him anything thinking that being somewhat deaf he was trying to sit near the Holy Prophet. So they gave him room to move forward. There remained only one gentleman, who, if he moved slightly, Thabit could get his usual place.

But that man did not oblige and told Thabit, "Sit where you are." Thabit helplessly sat there. As the Holy Prophet was speaking, Thabit looked at the person who did not utter a word until the former stopped his sermon. Then Thabit looked at the person who did not allow him space and asked, "Who are you?" The person replied, "I am son of so and so." He took the name of his father, as he knew that his mother had a bad name in society before the advent of Islam. Thabit said, "But you are son of such and such

woman, who was notorious for her bad deeds." This poor Muslim became very sad and felt ashamed in front of the Holy Prophet and all the Muslims. Thabit did an unwise thing referring to his mother. He did give way; even then, he must not have been mocked and insulted and Thabit should not have said that he was son of such and such woman.

So, these were the circumstances in which this verse under our study was revealed.

Who is addressed?

God has issued a general command for all time to come till Judgment Day: First He addressed the believers. The first part of the verse and the earlier order, which later on refers to suspicion (having bad opinion). He addresses the believers that they must act upon this order and fulfill their responsibility. As regards the one who is disbeliever, who has no faith in Allah and the Hereafter, it is said that do not make a mockery of anyone on account of his disbelief. Though he has no faith, all are servants of Only One God. All are made of dust. There is no cause for mockery. He has no faith to understand these words. He does not accept what is said about Judgment Day, Hereafter, ranks and reward. But how do you know that you are better than him? These very words are mocking for him. There is no benefit in such words. So this address must be made to you. O those who say: There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.

﴿وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لا رَيْبَ فِيهَا﴾

"Most surely, the hour is coming, there is no doubt therein,"[1]

Do you believe in Judgment Day? Have you accepted belief in reward and punishment? Then:

﴿لا يَسْخَرْ قَومٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ﴾

"...let not (one) people laugh at (another) people..."

A group may not mock another, men must not mock men, and women should not mock women. Of course, there is no inconsistency in this. It is also unlawful if, for once, a man mocks a woman and vice versa. This verse mentions men by way of generality. Mostly men mock men, but the command is general. It makes no difference. In short, a Muslim has no right to mock a Muslim. Also: Do not find faults in one another nor use bad words for one another, do not give bad titles to one another. Do not, for example, say: You are the son of such and such mother. Do you intend to disgrace a Muslim? You have no right to do so. You cannot perturb another Muslim.

Akrama, son of Abu Jahl, better than Muslims

Here is the example of Akrama bin Abu Jahl. This gentleman was a pious and a pure Muslim. Yet some unwise people sometimes used to taunt him saying that this is the son of Abu Jahl. A Muslim's honor is his Islam to which one has turned sincerely. Even if his father was what he was. Abu Jahl, a pagan, a disbeliever, wretched, vicious, Hell dweller etc., but what is important is the condition of Akrama himself. Look at his honor and respect, his Islam: Do not give him ugly titles.

Thereafter, He gives a logical reason also. Logical, because it is against human wisdom to mock someone or to give a bad name to somebody. When someone belittles or humiliates a Muslim, what is the meaning of such humiliation? To pull down another and to think high of oneself. When somebody insults and belittles another person does it mean anything else but that the former imagines himself higher and the latter, lower. He disgraces another man.

Maybe the mocked one is better than you

Almighty Allah says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لا يَسْخَرْ قَومٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ، وَلا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ﴾

"O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they... (49:11)"

O ignorant one! On what criterion did you measure yourself higher and pulled down another one? Is it due to the apparent reason that, for example, you have wealth and he does not have; your dress is new and his old, you are handsome and he is ugly? If so, then this is not a criterion to measure good and evil. Real good and bad must be measured by one's distance from God. In God's sight, rich and poor, handsome and ugly are alike. The ignorant one who looks at only the outer things is not wise. They do not know what is behind the apparent dress and appearance.

The Messenger of God is reported to have said that several chairless persons who sit on ground and a number of persons who do not have new and shining dress are honorable in the sight of God. If they seek anything from God, God grants it to them; that is, their prayers are accepted. What do you know? Do not look at others with contempt as it is possible that some of them are really good servants of God. One may appear of no value apparently, but it is quite possible that from within God likes him or her. Apparent deeds also are no criterion. You are looking at only outward things and deeds and imagine that you are pious, clean and righteous. You consider yourself a religious scholar and look down at others, as they do not have knowledge; that he is not careful enough and so you look at him hatefully. If he says

something, you retort: Go and obtain knowledge. Do you know what all this is?

O Servant of God! The one whom you looked with contempt may be better than what you imagined. You may have apparent righteousness. You perform ablution but how is it that you do not keep yourself away from impermissible things! O pious gentleman! You, in your own opinion are knowledgeable and he, ignorant of religious affairs. But he avoids the illegal things more than you! Now, who is more honorable, you or he? You dip your hands in water ten times for cleaning and he does only once, but when unlawful income comes, you fall on it like a cat falling on a rat. But he never indulges in impermissible things. Now, who is better, you or he?

According to some narrations, if a man lies once, its foul smell rise upto high heavens and angels curse the liar. Such a man puts on nice clothes and applies scent and perfume. But he also has utterly foul smell, the smell of sins and miserliness. His forehead does have a mark of prostration but of what use is that piety when he also is a miser. He indeed belongs to hell even if he makes innumerable ablutions. Another man who makes ablution by dipping his hands in water only once is certainly better than this fellow if he is not a miser.

If one considers himself better than others, one is certainly an ignorant man. It is possible that he avoids impurities, which you do not avoid. You do not avoid impurities, the bad smell of which is much more than common impurities. You may think that the other person is careless and hence belongs to hell. But from inside, that person may have much more love for Ahle Bait whereby he gets Paradise earlier than you. But you, the unlucky one, you have much attraction for wealth. Your love for money such, that finally it drives you to hell. How does one know that the other person has a warm heart, he has a kind heart, he is just and equitable? Only God knows how many persons he helped during his life? How one knows what kind of a man he will be at the end of his life?

Forgiven for giving water to a dog

It is mentioned[2] that a woman of ill fame once reached a pit of water during her journey. She saw that a thirsty dog came to the water, which was deep (beyond its reach) and turned back and again came and turned back. Its tongue was hanging, as it was very thirsty in the hot atmosphere of the sandy land. This woman of loose character however became restless on seeing the poor and helpless condition of the thirsty dog and thought of doing something to help this creature of God. She observed that there was some water in the pit but it was very far down. What to do? From where to get a rope to fetch the water? She cut off her hair to make a sort of cup, tied it with her hands, fetched some water in this way and put it before the thirsty dog. She did not move away till the dog was gratified.

The most merciful God pardoned that lady for this kind act towards one of His creatures. As her character was loose, you imagined she belonged to hell. Perhaps, the one whom you imagine as belonging to hell may become aware and repent. It is also possible, that God forbid, you and I become proud and move away from the path of God's service. How do we know? His Hereafter may be good

and our bad! No one knows this.

There are many instances of such change. If I want, I may relate many examples. Let me tell you only a story from the book *Hayatul Haiwan* by Damiri. In how much danger man is.

Christian youths become rightly guided through Qur'an

There were two persons formerly Christians but later on they became Muslim. They lived in a city called Taleetah, perhaps in Morocco. I asked them the cause of their conversion. I asked them how you, former Christians, are now in deep search of Islamic truths. They replied: A few years ago, we were imprisoned in a jail. An Iraqi Muslim was also with us in our cell. Everyday he used to read Qur'an. As we did not know Arabic language, by and by we learned some words from that gentleman and began to understand a little from what he recited. One day he recited the verse:

﴿وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ﴾

"...and ask Allah of His grace...[3]

Then he also recited the verse:

﴿ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ﴾

"Call upon Me, I will answer you..."[4]
And he said that it was God's Word. God also says:

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِي إِذَا دَعَانِ﴾

"And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me..."[5]

If you want anything, say: O Allah, yourself. You don't have to come to the Mosque. He does not order to come and to give hand in the hand of a scholar, but He says: "Anyone from My servants who wants Me, I am near him." God is not far. He even does not want you to complain. He only asks to seek from Him whatever you want. You can even remember Him from your heart. He knows what is there in your heart. He says it is better if you recite supplication, as it is more effective.

When I heard these two or three verses of the Holy Qur'an, I told my companion, "See what the Prophet of Islam says; being Christians, we do not have such belief. The Christian faith has ceremonies, protocols, and formalities. They say that man cannot approach God unless he comes to the priests and

the priests seek forgiveness for his sins. So the helpless person is compelled to come to the church priests, who is the representative of their religion and makes a confession of his sin and gives him money of getting pardoned (whereas this priest himself has no approach to God)."

They also have lengthy machinery for this purpose in all Christian cities. One of the companions said, "Once I had gone to a Church in Paris to observe things. It is a very big church." He said the segments of pardoning were worth seeing. First were people who had sinned. They sat with humility in that section of the church having a pen and paper in their hands. They wrote about the sin committed by them and took that piece of paper to another section from where they got instructions about the amount of money to be paid for the forgiveness of his sin. Then he pays the amount and gets a receipt for it and then proceeds to the last place where he is informed that his sin has been pardoned!

Those two Christian gentlemen said that when they heard the above two or three verses of Qur'an wherein Almighty God conveys through His Prophet, that God is very near; that He needs no mediation; that He is not far; that ask for whatever you want from God, Who answers your request, we became very much astonished. Does Muhammad really tell the truth? Can everybody reach God? We were wondering about this matter in jail when we became very thirsty. There was no water and our thirst was very hard. There was no one to come to our help. We wished to die rather than remain in that condition. Then I recalled this verse and said: O God! If this verse:

﴿وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ﴾

"...and ask Allah of His grace..."[6]

Is Your Word, and if Muhammad has told the truth:

﴿ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ﴾

"Call upon Me, I will answer you..."[7]

Then O Almighty! Help us as we are dying of severe thirst. Suddenly, before our eyes, from the wall in front of us, water began to flow. We drank it and quenched our thirst with full gratification. Then and there, we decided to become Muslims. So, after our release from jail, we embraced Islam and put total faith in the Holy Qur'an.

Guidance for some and misguidance for others

The so-called Muslim who used to recite the Holy Qur'an and who had taught some Arabic grammar, saw that these two Christians, who were thirsty got water from an unexpected place in the wall. So he

put the Qur'an aside and thought that the Christian faith was true; that truth was with Christianity and hence this miracle. The unwise fellow could not realize that it was due to the Qur'an. He thought that, as they were Christians, their prayer was answered. He fell down in front of them saying: I want to embrace your religion. They asked, "Why?"

The man replied, "I saw, with my own eyes that water flew for you from this wall. So it seems your religion is true." They (the two former Christians) replied, "We were helpless and we clung to the Holy verse of Qur'an." That fellow said, "I do not accept your word. Do you want deprive me and to prevent me from becoming a Christian?" In short, that fellow converted to Christianity and put the Holy Qur'an aside. It was all because of a faulty imagination and an imaginary illusion.

End of a learned Haji

These two gentlemen again said: O God! By the truthfulness of Qur'an and by the honor of Muhammad guide us on the true path. That night, in a dream they were told: Go to Syria and contact scholars of Islam. Subsequently they became very nice people. In one moment two Christians become true Muslims but a Muslim becomes a disbeliever. Man is unaware of his end.

Fortunate is one who looks at his end. (Persian saying)
One of my friends once told me: I myself have seen a man who used to stand in the first row in Mosque for prayer, in those hard days, he had also performed Hajj. He also had religious knowledge and used to answer relevant problems to people. The same Haji gentleman, after some years was seen engaged in house construction work. I was also there. Laborers and masons were busy doing building work in a corner of his garden. Then we saw the Haji was passing water standing facing Qibla. See what is this? I could not restrain myself from asking. I asked him, "O Haji! What are you doing?" He replied, "O sir! We actually did not understand. For several years we prayed in mosque and went to Hajj where Arabs usurped our money." In short, he spoke up his disbelief himself. This man was once praying in the first row. He had performed Hajj. No one knows what and how his end will be. How he can lose Faith!

Pray, so that we die in a good condition

I have repeatedly heard that whenever students and scholar used to visit the late great scholar Mirza Hujjatul Islam Shirazi and also to visit graves, the said gentleman was recommending and requesting everyone: Please pray so that Allah may make my end a good end. How do you know what is going to happen the next moment, or after two days or after two years? In your own view you are a very good person and you look at others with contempt. You are not afraid that maybe in a slip your heart becomes stony and dark. Then you may, by and by, stop attending the mosque and give up supplications and the recitations of Qur'an etc.

We should always seek God's refuge against a bad end. O the one who mocks others! How do you know, he may be better than you. You may not recognize him. How do you know, he may be a friend of

God. Woe unto the one who mocks a friend of God. None except God knows a friend of God. There also is no criterion to know who is nearer to God? No one knows. Only God does.

Three things hidden in three things

Allah has kept three things hidden in three things: First, he has kept his friends hidden from the eyes of the creation so that no one may not mock others and look at them with contempt for fear of the possibility of the other being God's friend. For the preservation of one's honor He has kept His friend hidden from the eyes of people. Second, God has concealed His anger in sins. There are some sins, which draw God's anger. It is mentioned in *al-Kafi.* There comes a voice: O one who committed this sin! Now you will not be forgiven. The late Majlisi says explaining this tradition: It means that after committing this sin you will not able to repent. It is not that one repents but is not forgiven. What is meant is that, that person is not inclined to repent. Now what is that sin? Neither the Imam tells it nor anyone else knows it. It is kept hidden. Just know only that among sins there are some which, if one commits them it is certain that one will have a bad end and that his Hereafter is destroyed. God's mercy is not to reach him.

But what sin is that? I do not know. Nor the Imam has pointed it out. Why? So that people may fear all sins and may not go near any sin fearing that it could be the sin which attracts God's wrath and anger and then man may not be able to find a way to salvation.

Thirdly, among worships also there are some worship acts, which if performed, will give one salvation for sure. What is that act of God's obedience? It is also not clearly mentioned. We do not know anything. Nor should we know, as it is a hidden matter.

In short, a friend of God (Wali of Allah) is hidden. Nobody is able to find him out. Why? So that man may look at everyone and imagine that perhaps he is a friend of God. Of course, one has no right to imagine that one (he himself) is the friend of God. God forbid, we may be friends of Satan instead! But we must imagine about others that God might like them and they might love God; that they might be obeying God in the right way. So they are better.

O Women! You have no right to look with contempt at other women. You should not mock other women. How do you know? It is quite likely that some of them, who have sinned, may get guidance to repent. They might be having good deeds in their scroll of deeds, which draw Allah's mercy. How do we know her actual condition? You see that a lady has no veil that she moves in streets and markets without her head wear. Do prevent her, but never mock her. Never consider yourself higher than her. It is possible that her condition may change with God's guidance and she may become righteous after repenting and may become much better than a number of old women who are ashamed of showing their gray hair.

On the other hand, it is likely that this lady who is not wearing Islamic modest dress (Hijab) may make amends after repentance and conceal her breast, head, legs and feet of God's sake and may become

more honorable in the sight of God than that aged woman who mocked others. The old lady may rank behind the young woman in the most supreme court of Almighty Allah.

Those whose grief will be more

There are three groups of people whose grief in the grand gathering field (Mahshar), tomorrow on the Judgment Day will be more than that of the entire gathering. Firstly, those scholars and orators who advise people to do good and refrain from evil, but who do not act according to what they say. You can see that such and such Haji lady admonished another woman to wear veil or Hijab. That lady did accept her advice and acted accordingly, wearing a veil. But the adviser lady proved so unlucky that she did not conceal herself from a stranger male. Tomorrow, on the Judgment Day, she burns in fire, but the lady who accepted her advice is in a high bliss. Most fear some burning is for the scholars whose sermons made many people benefit and provided salvation to them but they (the admonishers) went to hell, as they did not act themselves in the way desired by God Almighty.

Secondly, in a more severe grief is a rich man who, till he was in this world, did not pay dues from his wealth but only kept it in front of his eyes and finally all of it went to his heirs. Then the latter spent it as liked by God and helped the needy. Tomorrow, on Judgment Day, the former will look at his heirs and see that they are in Paradise. But with the help of whose wealth? With the riches of their unfortunate father! The father burns in hell. He is most grievous and terribly unhappy.

The unwise man only bore the burden and the wise benefited fully. (Persian saying)
He fanned fire for himself with this wealth. How fortunate was his heir who acted wisely and got full benefit from his wealth.

The third group: The master and his servant, the lady and her mistress, the employer and his employee. O Master and servants, you ladies and your maidservants, employers and employees, workers, students! Know that, tomorrow in the Hereafter, the lower cadre will be in Paradise and the higher ups in hell. The master who looked with contempt in this world at his servant will see that the servant is on a high rank and he himself is in the lowest pits. How much he himself burns! How much sorrowful and in grief! So these are the three kinds of groups you are told about. Their grief is terrible. So never look down at your servant, peon, worker or slave.

﴿عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ﴾

"Perchance they may be better. (***49:11***)***"***

The lowly became high

I shall relate another narration. Waram, teacher of Sayyid bin Tawus has, in his compilation *Majmae Waram* written that a Messenger of God, in olden days asked God to show him His friend and, as per another quotation, he asked Almighty Allah to inform him as to who will be his (the Prophet's) companion in the Hereafter. A revelation reached the Prophet indicating that such and such shoemaker would be his companion in the other life; that he was God's friend. This messenger went to the person indicated in the revelation, sat by his shop to observe what special virtues he had which made him a friend of God. Then he talked with him and asked some questions only to find that neither he has much knowledge nor any intelligence.

Also, he was not a great worshipper either. In short, he could not find any extraordinary virtue in him. At last, the Prophet asked, "My friend! I want to know what virtue is there in you?" The man replied, "Sir, I do not possess anything. I have no knowledge and no specialty in my deed. I am what you see." The Prophet again asked, "No, it cannot be so. You must be having something very extraordinary in your character. Please tell me truly." Finally that man replied, "I have neither any knowledge nor perfection. My condition is that whenever I meet anyone, I imagine that he has much higher rank in the sight of God." The Prophet replied, "This is the virtue which made you high-ranking in the Hereafter."

Such is the humility, lowliness, and courtesy for God. Man considers himself low, weak and servile in front of Almighty Allah. Since he considers God as the greatest, he imagines himself to be nothing. Then, seeing anyone, he says, "Perhaps he is better than me; that he may have a standing in the sight of God." One who is a friend of God considers himself worthless.

Once, angel Jibraeel came to Prophet Ibrahim and gave him good tidings that he was a friend of God. Ibrahim expressed wonder saying, "Me and God's friend?" The angel replied, "Yes, you are God's friend." Ibrahim asked again, "I do not have any special deed at my credit. How is it that God made me His friend?" The angel said, "O Ibrahim! You have two virtues, which God likes very much and hence He made you His friend (Khalil). (These two virtues make one lovable). First, you do not ask anything from anyone except God. You seek help only from Him. You never put your need before His creation. Secondly, you never turned away any beggar from your door. You never turned away a needy person empty-handed from your door."

O Lord! It is now known that You do not like the one who turns away the needy empty handed. We also have extended our begging hands before You. Please do not deprive us.
Imam Zainul Abideen, in Dua Abu Hamzah, which you recite in these holy nights, prays: O Lord! You have ordered us not to turn away a needy from our door. Now, we are the needy beggars who have come to Your Door of Mercy. Your Honor will certainly not make us return empty handed. Our need is that kindly, do not leave any of our sins unforgiven by Your Mercy.

1. Surah Momin 40:59

2. Biharul Anwar, vol. 4
3. Surah Nisa 4:32
4. Surah Momin 40:60
5. Surah Baqarah 2:186
6. Surah Nisa 4:32
7. Surah Momin 40:60

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