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Section 2: The Scandal Against Ayshah

Sura An-Nur - Verses 11-14

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَآءُوا بِالإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِنكُمْ لاَ تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرّاً لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُم مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الإِثْمِ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّي كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

لَوْلآ إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْراً وَقَالُوا هَذَآ إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ

لَوْلاَ جَآءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَأُوْلَئِكَ عِندَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

وَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالاَخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَآ أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

11. "Verily those who brought forward the lie are a band of you. Do not regard it an evil to you; nay, it is good for you. Unto every man of them will be paid that which he has earned of the sin; and as for him among them who had the greater part therein, he shall have a grievous chastisement."
12. "Why did not the believers, men and women, when you heard of it, think well of themselves; and say: 'This is a manifest lie'?"

13. "Why did they not bring four witnesses about it? But since they have not brought witnesses, they are liars before Allah."
14. "And had it not been Allah's and grace His mercy on you in the world and the Hereafter, a grievous chastisement would certainly have touched you on account of the discourse which you entered into."

The Adventure of 'Ifk, (a Great Slander)

It is understood from all the verses 11-16 that an innocent person was accused of unchaste act at the descending of these verses, and this rumour was spread throughout the society.

When a group of hypocrites, who were apparently Muslim, also wanted to use this event maliciously for causing Islamic society harm and for the sake of their own interest and weakening the common reputation of the Prophet (S), these verses were sent down and so this incident was dealt with in an unprecedented resoluteness. And so the insulting astray-goers and sinister hypocrites were firmly suppressed.

The holy Qur'an, without mentioning the main phenomenon in this verse, says:

"Verily those who brought forward the lie are a band of you..."

Then it commiserates the believers who were very annoyed by accusing a pure person of such an evil act, by saying:

"...Do not regard it an evil to you; nay, it is good for you..."

By means of it, the evil intentions of some of defeated enemies and undiscerning hypocrites were uncovered and

these outwardly good persons who were of a bad character, were disgraced. Possibly if this event had not occurred and they had still remained unknown, they would have attacked more severely and dangerously in the future.

This event taught the Muslims a lesson that following rumourmongers will cause them lose every thing. They must firmly resist this matter.

Then, two points are mentioned in the remaining part of the verse.

At first, it says:

"...Unto every man of them will be paid that which he has earned of the sin..."

It indicates that the great responsibility of those who led and found a sin would never prevent the responsibility of others, but every person is as responsible for a sin as he participates and shares in a

conspiracy.

For the second step, the verse continues saying:

"…and as for him among them who had the greater part therein, he shall have a grievous chastisement."

Commentators say that this person was 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abi Maslul, who was the chief person of 'Ifk companions. Some others have also mentioned Mastah Ibn 'Ithamah and Hassan Ibn Thabit as the referent of this concept.

Anyway, the one who was more active than others and set off the flames of 'Ifk and is considered as the leader of the group will be imposed with a punishment as great as his sin is great.

Then, in the next verse, the believers who were deceived in this affair and were influenced by this group are severely reprimanded through a few verses.

At first, it says:

"Why did not the believers, men and women, when you heard of it, think well of themselves; and say: this is a manifest lie?"

It means those why believers did not think good of other believers, who are as their own selves, when they heard hypocrites' words about their faithful persons, and why they did not say that it was a great and manifest slander.

They knew the evil and notorious background of these hypocrites. They were certain out of various contexts that such an accusation was impossible. They were well aware of that accused person's chastity.

They knew the plots which were planned and were carried out against the Prophet (S). Nevertheless, they must be reprimanded that they heard such false rumours and they remained silent, the worse was when they consciously or unconsciously spread it!

It is interesting that instead of asking believers to think good of the one who is accused of this calumny, it says they must think well of themselves. This way of speaking means that believers are of one essence, and if one of them is accused, it is as though all of them were accused.

They are like the limbs of each other, if world brings harm to one of the limbs, the other limbs do not stay calm and indifferent. As one is to defend himself against accusations, one must defend his religious female and male brothers.

The use of the word /'anfus/, in such cases, also is seen in other verses of the holy Qur'an, including Sura Al-Hujurat No. 49, verse 12 which says:

"…and find not fault with your own selves…".

And that its emphasis is put on 'the believers, men and women' shows that Faith is a quality that can prevent evil thinking and suspicions.

Up to now those believers were spiritually and morally reprimanded and rebuked, because on the whole it was not its time for the believers to be silent against that evil calumny or to be puppet of benighted rumourmongers.

Then, in this verse the subject is judicially paid attention, where it says:

"Why did they not bring four witnesses about it? But since they have not brought witnesses, they are liars before Allah."

This reprimand shows that the commandment of producing four witnesses as well as 'Qathf punishment', if witnesses are not produced, had been revealed before the verses of 'Ifck'.

But, why the Prophet (S) did not proceed to carry out this prescribed punishment is clearly answered. If people do not cooperate, the execution of such an affair is not possible, because tribal bigoted relationships sometimes make negative resistances to be temporarily brought about against carrying out some judgments. This event, as the history indicates, happened in the same way.

Finally, all these reprimands are concluded in the next holy verse, when it says:

"And had it not been Allah's and grace His mercy on you in the world and the Hereafter, a grievous chastisement would certainly have touched you on account of the discourse which you entered into."

With regard to the matter that the Qur'anic word /'afadtum/is derived from the word /'ifadah/, meaning pouring water out increasingly, and it is also sometimes used to mean sinking into water, it is understood froni this phrase that the rumour of such a calumny spread so much that it also enveloped all believers.

Sura An-Nur - Verses 15-18

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُم مَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّناً وَهُوَ عِندَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

وَلَوْلآ إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُم مَّا يَكُونُ لَنَآ أَن نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ

يَعِظُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَن تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَداً إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ

وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

15. "When you received it with your tongues, and uttered with your mouths what you had no knowledge of, and you counted it a trifle; while in the sight of Allah it is very great."
16. "And why did you not, when you heard it, say: 'It is not right of us to speak of this: glory be to You (O' Lord)! This is a great calumny'?"
17. "Allah admonishes you that you should never repeat the like of it for ever, if you are (true) believers."
18. "And Allah makes clear to you the signs: and Allah is knowing, Wise."

As a matter of fact this holy verse explains the previous discussion that how they were carelessly involved in this great sin. It implies that you may remember the time when you welcomed this great lie and you used to receive this rumour from the tongues of each other; and you used to utter something with your mouths that you had not any knowledge about it.

You considered it a tiny thing while it is very great with Allah.

The verse says:

"When you received it with your tongues, and uttered with your mouths what you had no knowledge of, and you counted it a trifle; while in the sight of Allah it is very great."

Actually this verse refers to their 3 great sins that were related to the affair:

First, they embraced and admitted this rumour by taking it from the tongues of each other.

Second, they spread this rumour and recited it for others, while they were not certain of it.

Third, they regarded it as an easy trifle act. It was not only about the reputation and honour of two Muslims, but also it involved the reputation of the Islamic society (thinking too little of rumour and using it as an amusing tool).

It is interesting that in one place the phrase

(***"…with your tongues…"***)

is used and in another place the phrase

(***"…with your mouths…"***)

is used. Although all words are uttered through tongue and mouth, the verse refers to the matter that neither their admission nor their distribution of this rumour was based on any reason. They only fell back on words that were nonsense, baseless and resulted from the movement of the tongue and the mouth.

Sines this event was a very important incident but a group of Muslims had considered it trifle, it is again in this verse emphasized, and they are once more faced with reprimand and their souls are scourged more firmly.

It says:

"And why did you not, when you heard it, say: 'It is not right of us to speak of this: glory be to You (O' Lord)! This is a great calumny'?"

In fact they were rebuked, because they did not regard the accused ones with a good consideration, but here it is said that not only they must regard them good, but also they must not have expressed such a calumny, let alone they themselves proceed to spread it.

They must have got wondered at such a great calumny. They must have remembered the pureness of Allah and have sought refuge to Him for being not involved in spreading this rumour of calumny.

Nevertheless, they took it lightly by saying it is easy to do it, and they touched off it, and became the puppet of rumour-mongering and conspiring hypocrites.

We will, if Allah wills, discuss the importance of sinful rumour-mongering and its motivations and how to struggle against it. We will also mention in detail some points in the commentary of later verses.

Since in the next verse the story of ''Ifk' is mentioned and the gloomy agonizing consequences of rumour-mongering and slandering reputation of pure persons are brought up, the Qur'an says:

"Allah admonishes you that you should never repeat the like of it for ever, if you are (true) believers."

If an individual does not go after such great sins, it means this individual is faithful. As a matter of fact the above verse outlines one of the principles of repentance, because merely being regretful of the past is not enough, and decision for not repeating it in the future must be taken, too.

To give caution that these words are not some common or usual ones and it is Allah, the All-Knowing and Wise, Who has stated this to make some great facts clear.

The next verse explains some crucial truths:

"And Allah makes clear to you the signs: and Allah is knowing, Wise."

Allah is aware of our needs, evil and good deeds as His knowledge demands and He modulates His commandments and ordinances to it as His Wisdom demands.

Some Points About Tongue

Tongue is the only limb that, because of speaking, does not ache and get tired during man's lifetime. Its form and size is small, but its crime and sin is great. There are many faithless persons who become Muslim and pure by saying one sentence (testifying that Allah is One and Unique).

And there are many Muslims who become faithless and impure by profaning Allah or denying religion ordinances. On one hand, tongue can bring peace and serenity by telling truth, repeating Allah's name, praying and advising others.

On the other hand, it can cause annoyance and resentment by irritating and biting others. Tongue is the key of intellect, the light of knowledge, and the simplest and the cheapest means of transmission of all sciences and experiments. Masters of ethics have written many books and papers about tongue.

Some Traditions On Tongue Maladies

1. The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*"The salvation of the believer lies in controlling his tongue."*1

2. Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

*"One who does not keep his tongue does not protect his faith."*2

3. Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*"Do not you get satisfied and pleased that you perform ritual prayers, pay amis-tax, and keep your tongue and then enter Paradise."*3

4. Ibn Abbas said:

*"The Messenger of Allah (p.b.uJi.) once said: 'May Allah bless one who keeps his tongue, knows circumstances of his era, and his way is a straight path'."*4

5. Imam Ali (as) said:

*"The slip of the tongue is more painful than the harm of spearhead."*5

6. Imam Ali (as) said:

*"The slip of the tongue is the severest perdition."*6

7. The Prophet (S) said:

*"The worst person is the one of whose tongue people are afraid."*7

8. Imam Sadiq (as) narrated from his great father, Imam Sajjad Ali-ibn-il-Hussayn (as), who said that his father, Imam Ali (as), retold that the Prophet (S) said:

"Tongue will be so chastised that no other limb will be punished (in that way).

Then the tongue will say:

'Oh Allah, you have punished me in a way that none of other limbs has been chastised so.'

Allah will say:

*'You, tongue, have uttered words that have reached east and west and because of that many honorable bloods have been shed, people's properties are plundered, and people's reputation is marred. I swear by My Glory that I punish you in a way that I have not chastised other limbs'."*8

9. Imam Ali (as) said:

*"Hell-dwellers are inspire because of tongue, and the dead will merit and deserve light because of tongue. Then keep your tongue and make it busy with uttering Allah's name."*9

10. Imam Ali (as) said:

*"The tongue is a beast of prey. If you release it, it attacks and bites."*10

11. Imam Ali (as) said:

*"There are many persons whose tongue caused them annihilation."*11

12. 'Abi Bakr said:

*"I heard the Prophet (S) said: 'Verily most of man's faults are caused by his tongue'."*12

13. The Prophet (S) said:

*"Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand people are saved, and believer is the one to whom people can entrust their blood and properties."*13

Sura An-Nur - Verses 19-20

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا

وَالاَخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَتَعْلَمُونَ

وَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

19. "Verily those who love that indecency should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter; and Allah knows, while you do not know."
20. "And had it not been for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, and Allah is Compassionate, Merciful, (you would have been chastised)."

Interest in spreading indecency is sometimes materialized by tongue and pen and sometimes by setting up some centers of abomination and wickedness, encouraging others to commit sin, and providing others with facilities for doing wrong action and committing sin.

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*"One who hears or sees something about a believer and retells it for others is among the examples of this verse."*14

There is a tradition that says one who gives publicity to an evil action is like the one who commits it.15

Therefore in this verse, for leaving no doubt, the words are changed from expressing a private phenomenon into statement of a general and comprehensive rule.

It says:

"Verily those who love that indecency should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter…"

It is worth-studying that the verse does not say: those who spread indecency, but it says:

"Verily those who love that indecency should be spread, "

and this is the ultimate emphasis on this field.

In other words, it says it must not be thought that such insistence and emphasis is just for the sake that the wife of the Prophet (S), or someone as important as her, is accused, but if such a thing happens to anyone and to every faithful person, this emphasis and insistence will be applied to that person, because other aspects will be added to it.

By the way, we must pay careful attention to the fact that spreading indecency is not allocated to only spreading false baseless accusation of a faithful man and woman and to accuse them of an unchaste action.

This is one of its examples and it is not limited to it. This phrase has got a wider concept that involves every kind of dissemination of corruption, spreading indecency and giving help to its development.

Of course, in the holy Qur'an, the Arabic word /fahišah/, or /fahša/, is mostly applied to sexual deviations and obscenity in honour, (defilements of honour), but philologically, as Raqib says in the book Mufradat, 'Fuhsh', 'Fahsha', and 'Fahishah' refer to any behaviour and speech that the obscenity of it is very bad and great.

And, in the holy Qur'an, it is sometimes used in the same vast meaning, such as the verse which says:

"And those who shun the great sins and indecencies..."16

Thus, the extent of the concept of the verse gets completely clear.

But, the sentence

"...theirs will be a painful punishment in the world..."

may refer to religiously prescribed punishments, social reactions, and individual gloomy consequences that in this very world will catch those who commit these actions. Moreover, their deprivation from the right of testimony and their condemnation to disgrace and iniquity are also its other worldly signs.

The agonizing punishment of the Hereafter is Hell Fire, Divine wrath and fury, and not enjoying Allah's bless.

At the end of the verse, it says:

"...and Allah knows, while you do not know."

Allah is well aware of the gloomy consequences and fatal results of spreading indecency both in the world and the Hereafter, but we are not aware of its different dimensions.

He does know in whose heart the interest and love of committing this sin lies. He knows those who carry out this evil action under beguiling names, but we do not know them. He knows how to reveal His ordinances to prevent this wicked and indecent action.

In the last verse in question, that is the last verse which is about 'Ifk', 'struggling with indecency', and 'Qathf, again emphasis is put on the fact that: Had it not been for the grace of Allah and His mercy unto you, and if Allah were not Clement, Merciful on you, He would have sent such a great and painful chastisement upon you in this world that your life could be ruined.

The verse says:

"And had it not been for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, and Allah is Compassionate, Merciful, (***you would have been chastised***)***."***

Pay Attention to Some Matters

1- What is Spreading Indecency?

Since man is a social creature, the great community in which he lives, from one point of view, is like his home and its enclosure are counted as that of his home. The pureness of society helps his pureness and its defilement helps his defilement. Consequently, Islam is against anything that pollutes the atmosphere of the society and severely struggles with anything that defiles it.

If we see that backbiting is severely struggled with in Islam, one of its philosophies is that backbiting divulges secret faults and dishonours society.

If we see that it is commanded to hide faults, one of its reasons is to prevent sin from being common and widespread.

We see that open and seen sin is more important than hidden and covered sin. It is so important that Imam Rida (as) says:

"One who disseminates sin is rejected and one who hides sin is divinely forgiven."

If we see that in the above verses spreading indecency is severely reprimanded and condemned, is also because of this.

Essentially sin is like fire. When this fire is stirred in a part of society, it must be tried to put off the fire or at least to encircle it. But if we spread fire and move it from one part to the other part, fire will increase and no one can control it.

Moreover, the importance of sin in the opinion of people and saving the superficial aspect of society are great bars against corruption. Spreading slander and sin and pretending wickedness unbar it, belittle the sin and make being involved in it easy.

The Holy Prophet (S) in a tradition said:

"One who disseminates a wickedness is like one who has first (*committed and*) *established it."*17

Also there is a tradition that says:

"One day a man came to Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (*as*) *and said:*

'May I lay down my life for you! One of brothers retold me something about a religious brother, the thing

which I disliked. I asked him (that religious brother), but he denied it, while some of trustworthy persons narrated this.'

Imam said:

'When something bad is told about your brother, do not believe your eye and ear. Even if 50 persons take oath that he has done it and he says he has not done it, accept him. Do not disseminate anything that causes him disgrace and slander in society. If you do it, you will be one of those about whom Allah says:

'Verily those who love that indecency should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter… 18*'."*19

It is also necessary to mention that 'spreading indecency' has got different forms:

Sometimes there are centers that cause corruption and disseminate wickedness. Sometimes the case is in the form of providing people with means of sin, or encouraging people to commit wrong action.

Finally the result is being no more decent and modest and then they commit sin in public. All of these are examples of 'spreading indecency', because the concept of this phrase is vast and extensive.

2- The Calamity of Rumour-Mongering

Vamping and circulating false rumours is one of the main branches of conspirators' psychological warfare. When enemy cannot bring damage to the other party face to face, it resorts to spreading rumour.

In this way enemy worries public opinion and makes people self-busy, so people are diverted from their main and crucial issues.

Rumour vamping is one of the ruinous weapons to mar the reputation of pure and good persons and to scatter people who are around them.

In the concerning verses, according to the famous occasions of revelation, for weakening and marring the reputation of the Messenger of Allah (S), some hypocrites fabricated and circulated the most unfair rumour.

And, using a proper opportunity, they expressed doubts about pureness of some of the wives of the great Prophet of Islam (S). For a relatively long period, they upset Muslims so much that the real and steadfast believers twisted like the person who is bitten by a snake.

And then the divine revelation was sent down to help them and it castigated the hypocrites so much that others would take lessen.

Though in societies in which there is political repression, spreading rumour is considered a kind of campaigning, other motivations such as retaliation, settlement of personal accounts, ruining public trust, marring some great persons' notability, and deviating people from thinking about political issues are also counted as the main factors of mongering rumour.

This is not enough for us to know what motivation is the cause of fabricating rumour, but it is important to give warning to people to avoid being puppet of rumour-fabricators and the factor of its circulation, and so they do not get the means of society destruction provided.

People must be aware that when they hear a rumour, they must bury it immediately; otherwise we have made the enemy happy and successful. Moreover, we will be imposed with painful punishment of the world and the Hereafter, which has been mentioned in the above verses.

3- Sin Should Not Be Counted Trifle

One of the issues that were reprimanded in the above verses was that people commit a sin, such as spreading calumny and slander, while they consider it rather little.

Verily belittling sin is itself one of the sins.

A person who commits a sin, and then magnifies it and is upset by his action, tries to repent and make amends, but a person who belittles sin and even sometimes he says:

"How blessed I am, because I have only committed this sin",

is in a dangerous path and still he continues his sin.

Thus, Imam Ali (as) in a tradition said:

*"The severest sin is the sin whose committer considers it light."*20

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1. 'Usul-i-Kafi, No. 3, p. 178
2. Qurar ul-Hikam, Vol. 2, p. 744
3. Al-Mahasin ul-Barqi, p. 166
4. Kanz ul-'A'mal, Vol. 6, p. 553
5. Nasikh ut-Tawarikh, Vol. 6, p. 205
6. Qurar ul-Hikam, Vol. 1, p. 428
7. Bihar, Vol. 72, p. 281
8. Mostadrak ul-Wasa'il, Vol. 3, p. 174 & Wasa'il, Vol. 18, p. 10
9. Tuhaf ul-'Uqul, p. 118
10. Nahj ul-Balaqah, p. 1115
11. Qurar ul-Hikam, Vol. 2, p. 550
12. 'Ihyae 'Ulum, Vol. 3, p. 110
13. Sonane Nisa'i, Vol. 8, p. 105

14. Kanz ud-Daqa'iq, the Commentary
15. Ibid
16. Sura Ash-Shura, No. 42, verse 37
17. 'Usul-i-Kafi, Vol. 2, Chapter 'At-Ta'bir'
18. Of course there are some exceptions including testimony in court or some cases of prohibition of doing evils which necessitates divulging what wicked things a person has done.
19. Thawab ul-A'amal, narrated from Nur-uth-Thaqalyn, Vol. 2, p. 582
20. Nahj ul-Balaqah, Aphorisms, No. 328

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