

he (the accuser husband) is certainly from among the liars, [8] and the fifth (oath) that Allah's wrath be on her if he is among the truthful. [9] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy and (had it not been) that Allah is Most-Relenting, All-Wise (you would have been ruined). [10]

Commentary

The fourth injunction is of Li'an (لِعَان : curse) among the adjuncts of fornication

The meaning of لِعَان and مُلَاعَنَةٌ is to curse and praying for Allah's wrath on each other. Certain specific types of oaths between husband and wife with special connotation are called *Li'ān* (لِعَان) in Islamic law. When a husband accuses his wife of adultery or refuses to own his child as being legitimate, and his wife refutes his allegation to be false, and claims for the punishment of false accusation (قَذْف) of eighty stripes to be awarded to him, then the husband will be asked to produce four witnesses. If the husband produces four witnesses, then the wife will be awarded the punishment of adultery, and if he could not produce four witnesses, then they will be subjected to *li'ān* (لِعَان), that is first the husband will be asked to testify four times with the wordings given in the Qur'an to the effect that he is honest, and the fifth time will say that if he was lying, then Allah's curse be on him.

If the husband hesitates from saying these words, then he should be arrested, and asked either to swear by saying these words five times or accept himself to be a liar. Until he accedes to one of the two alternatives, he should not be released. If he accepts himself to be a liar, then he should be awarded the punishment of false allegation of adultery (حَد القذف), but, in case he swears by repeating the required words five times, then the wife be asked to swear five times by uttering the words given in the Qur'an for this purpose. If she refuses to swear, then she should be put under arrest until such time that either she swears five times or accepts her guilt of adultery, in which case she will be awarded the punishment for adultery. In case she agrees to swear and utters the required words five times, then the process of *li'ān* (لِعَان) has been completed. This way they both have escaped the punishment in this world, but in the Hereafter, the one who has lied will suffer the punishment, as Allah knows best who is the liar. However, in this world

also, after the process of *li'ān* (لِعَان) this couple will be forbidden to each other for ever. The husband should free the woman by divorcing her. If the husband does not divorce her, then the judge or the ruler can have them separated by his decree, which will have the same force as divorce. Moreover, they also cannot get married again for ever. Details of the process of *li'ān* (لِعَان) are given in the books of *fiqh*, where they can be seen.

The law of *li'ān* (لِعَان) has been placed in the Islamic jurisprudence to take care of the psychology and emotions of the husband, because in the preceding verses it has been ruled that for putting the blame of adultery on anyone it is essential to produce four eyewitnesses, and if one fails to do so, then he himself will be liable to punishment of false allegation of adultery. For a common man it is possible to keep quiet and not to accuse someone of adultery if he cannot produce four eye-witnesses, in order to save himself from the punishment of false accusation of adultery, but for the husband it is different and a very grave matter, when he has seen the adultery of his wife with his own eyes. For if he accuses his wife without the support of four eye-witnesses he will be liable to punishment of eighty stripes, and if he keeps quiet, it will be a life long agony for him to live with the knowledge that his wife has been unfaithful to him. Therefore, the husband's case has been separated from the general law and a separate provision has been prescribed, which is exclusive to the case between husband and wife. For others the directive is the same as enjoined in the preceding verses.

The books of Ḥadīth have narrated two incidents under this subject. The commentators have different views as to which of the two incidents was the cause of revelation of these verses. Qurtubī has taken both the incidents as the cause of revelation of verses so as the revelation was repeated twice. Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥajr, the annotator of Bukhārī, and Nawawī, the annotator of Muslim, have treated both incidents as the cause of revelation of the verses. Their reasoning is more appealing, which will soon appear. One incident is that of Hilāl bin Umayyah and his wife, which is narrated in Bukhārī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. The initial part of this incident, also on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, has appeared in the Musnād of Aḥmad like this:

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that when the verses of Qur'ān on

punishment of false accusation of adultery were revealed namely,

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes - 24:4.

in which it is made obligatory on the person accusing a woman of adultery to produce four eyewitnesses, one of them he being himself, and if he fails to do so, then he should be charged with the false accusation and awarded eighty stripes instead, and should also be debarred for life from giving any evidence. After hearing these verses a leader of Madīnah, Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether these verses were revealed like that only. The Holy Prophet ﷺ (was very surprised to hear this from Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah), asked the Anṣār whether they were listening to what their leader had said. The group of Anṣār pleaded to the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to reproach him, as he had made this enquiry only because of extreme sense of honour. Then Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah spoke himself and said "My parents be sacrificed on your honour! I know fully well that these verses are nothing but truth, and have been revealed from Allah Ta'ālā; but what I am surprised of is that if I see a shameless wife in a situation that a strange man is lying over her, then would it not be right for me to scold him and remove him from there. Instead, will it be incumbent on me to get four men and show them this situation to make them eye-witnesses, and by the time I could find four men, he runs away after performing his work?". (Sayyidnā Sa'd's wordings are recorded with slight differences by various narrators, but the gist of all is the same. - Qurṭubī)

Only a short time had lapsed after revelation of the verses of punishment against false accusation of adultery and the remarks made by Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah, that the incident of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ took place. It so happened that Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ returned from his lands late in the night, when he saw a man with his wife with his own eyes, and listened to their conversation. But he did not do any thing and waited until the dawn, when he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated the story, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was very unhappy to hear about this incident and felt very bad. In the meantime the people of Anṣār were gathered and started discussing among themselves that the same thing had

happened as was hinted by their chief, and that Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ would be punished with eighty stripes in accordance with the Islamic law, and be debarred for life for giving any evidence. Nevertheless, Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ said 'By Allah I am very hopeful that Allah Ta'ālā will take me out of this predicament'. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has also quoted that in fact the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after hearing the incident of Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ had asked him, according to Islamic law, to produce four eye-witnesses or be prepared for the punishment of eighty stripes on the back. Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah swore an oath by God before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and pleaded that he was honest, and that Allah will surely send down a command which will save his back from flogging. While this conversation was still on Jibra'īl ؑ descended with the verses containing the law of *li'ān*, that is:

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ

And those who accuse their wives (of adultery). - 24:6.

Abū Ya'lā has quoted the same version on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, which also says that when the verses of *li'ān* were revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ gave the good tiding to Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ that Allah Ta'ālā has sent down the solution to his predicament. Hilāl replied that he was hoping the same from Allah Ta'ālā.

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ called Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah's ؓ wife also, and when they were both together, he inquired from the wife about the incident. She said that her husband was making a false accusation against her. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah knows one of you is a liar, so would you not dread (Allah's torment) and come out with the truth and repent. Then Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ said 'My parents be sacrificed on you! I have said nothing but truth and whatever I have said is true'. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ directed that the process of *li'ān* be conducted on both husband and wife according to the revealed verses of the Qur'ān. First Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ was asked to testify four times with the wordings of Qur'ān, which are, 'Believing Allah to be present everywhere and seeing everything, I testify that I am honest in my allegation', Sayyidnā Hilāl ؓ testified four times with the Qur'ānic wordings. When it came to testify the fifth time, of which the Qur'ānic wordings are, 'Allah's curse be on me, if I were lying'. At that

time the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ؓ, as a warning, that he must be careful and fear Allah, as worldly punishment is lighter than the torment of the Hereafter. The torment of Allah is much more severe than the punishment of people, and that the fifth testimony is the final one, on which the ruling would depend. But Hilāl Ibn Umayyah insisted that he could say under oath that Allah Ta'ālā would not punish him for his testimony in the Hereafter (as he was sure that this was a true testimony). Then he uttered the wordings of the fifth testimony. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ obtained four oaths, in the similar manner, from his wife. She too swore with Qur'ānic wordings that her husband was lying. When it came to testify the fifth time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked her to wait, and warned her that it was the fifth and final testimony, and as such she should be fearful of Allah, as His torment is much more severe than the punishment by the people, that is the Islamic punishment of adultery. On hearing this, she hesitated to swear and waited in that condition for a while. Then said ultimately 'By Allah I will not disgrace my people', and testified the fifth time, saying that if her husband was true then Allah's wrath be on her. This way when the process of *li'ān* was completed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ separated the husband and wife, that is broke down their marriage, and ruled that the child to be born of this conception will take the mother's name and will not be attributed to the father, but the child should not be disparaged. (Tafsīr Maḥzarī quoted from Musnad Aḥmad, authority Ibn 'Abbās).

The second incident

The second incident is also quoted in the Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim, and the details of the incident are narrated by Baghawī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. He has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while standing on *minbar*, related the verses in which it is enjoined to punish the man making false accusation of adultery (حَدِّ الْقَذْفِ), that is وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ (حَدِّ الْقَذْفِ) (24:4). At that time Sayyidnā 'Āṣim Ibn 'Adiyy al-Anṣārī ؓ was also present in the crowd. He got up and pleaded 'O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, my life be sacrificed on your honour ! If any one of us discovers his wife lying in bed with another man and narrates this situation, then he will be punished with eighty stripes, and would be debarred from giving evidence for life. Moreover, the Muslims would call him liar. In such a situation how can we get the eyewitnesses immediately? And if we do, and

go in search of eyewitnesses, he would run away after doing his work, by the time we could bring the witnesses. It was the same inquiry made by 'Āsim Ibn 'Adiyy رضي الله عنه, which was made by Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah رضي الله عنه in the first incident.

This inquiry was made on a Friday. After that it so happened that 'Āsim Ibn 'Adiyy's رضي الله عنه cousin, 'Uwaimir, who had married Khaula رضي الله عنها, another cousin of 'Adiyy's, saw his wife involved with yet another cousin, Sharīk Ibn Saḥmā'. 'Uwaimir رضي الله عنه related this incident to his cousin 'Āsim Ibn 'Adiyy رضي الله عنه, who recited **إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ** and went to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ the next day – again a Friday. 'Adiyy رضي الله عنه said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he had made an inquiry on the previous Friday in which he himself has got involved unfortunately, as the same incident has taken place in his family. Baghawī has narrated the incident in great detail as to how were the husband and wife were called and went through the process of *li'ān* (Maḥzarī)

This incident is narrated in the Ṣaḥīḥs on the authority of Sayyidnā Saḥal Ibn Sa'd Sa'idi رضي الله عنه that 'Uwaimir al-'Ajlānī رضي الله عنه inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if someone finds his wife in bed with another man then should he kill that man, as a result of which he will be killed by people or what else should he do? the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that Allah Ta'ālā has revealed an injunction for the case of your wife and yourself. Go and get your wife. Sayyidnā Saḥal Ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه, the narrator of the Ḥadīth, narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ subjected them to the process of *li'ān* in the mosque (This process has been explained above). When the process of *li'ān* was completed after both husband and wife had sworn five times, 'Uwaimir said 'If I still keep her as my wife this will mean as if I had made a false accusation against her. Therefore, I am announcing three divorces to her'. (Maḥzarī on authority of Ṣaḥīḥs)

In both these incidents it is reported that the verses of *li'ān* were revealed for that particular incident. Ḥafīẓ Ibn Ḥajar and Shaikh ul Islam Nawawī رحمه الله تعالى have noted the likeness in the two by explaining that it looks the first incident was that of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah رضي الله عنه, and the verses of *li'ān* were revealed in that connection, and immediately after that 'Uwaimir رضي الله عنه was also confronted with a similar incident, which he presented before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, perhaps not

knowing Hilāl Ibn Umayyah's ﷺ incident, which had occurred earlier. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him the judgement in his case. This appears plausible because, in the case of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ the wordings are فنزل جبرئيل (Then Jibra'īl descended with these verses), while in the case of 'Uwaimir ﷺ the wordings are قد أنزل الله فيك (Allah has revealed about you), the meaning of which could be that Allah Ta'ālā has enjoined His command in a case similar to yours. (Mazharī) والله اعلم.

Ruling

When *li'ān* has taken place between husband and wife before the judge then that woman becomes forbidden for good for that man, just like foster relatives are forbidden for marriage among themselves forever. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said in a Ḥadīth المتلاعنان لا يجتمعان ابداً (The spouses who have gone through *li'ān* can never join each other). Unlawfulness establishes immediately after the *li'ān*. As for the woman's second marriage with another man, she is allowed after the expiry of her *'iddah* period of three months, when she is divorced by her first husband or if he had just said that he had left her. This is the ruling given by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى. But if the husband does not carry out any of the two alternatives, then the ruler or the judge would order the separation, which would have the same effect as the divorce, and after that she would complete three periods of menses, and then she would be free to marry another man. (Mazharī etc.)

Ruling

When the *li'ān* is completed, after that the child that would be born from that conception would not have the name of her husband, but would be called after the name of the mother. The Holy Prophet ﷺ gave this ruling in both the cases of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah and 'Uwaimir رضي الله عنهم . اجمعين .

Ruling

Although the torment of Hereafter would increase on the one who is liar, after the *li'ān*, but the punishment of the world be annulled. Similarly, it is not permissible to call the woman an adulterer nor is it permissible to call her child illegitimate. This was also ruled by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the case of Hilāl Ibn Umayyah ﷺ. وقضى بان لا ترمى ولا ولدها.

Verses 11 - 26

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ۗ لَا تحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ ۗ بَلْ
 هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۗ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُم مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ ۗ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى
 كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
 وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِنَفْسِهِمْ خَيْرًا ۗ وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾ لَوْلَا جَاءُوا
 عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ
 الْكٰذِبُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
 لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ
 وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا ۗ وَهُوَ
 عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَّا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتكَلَّمَ
 بِهَذَا ۗ سُبْحٰنَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾ يَعِظُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا
 لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا ۚ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيبينُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
 عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفٰحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۗ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا
 تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رءُوفٌ
 رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ
 خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
 عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَاىَ مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا ۗ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَنْ
 يَّشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَا يَأْتِلْ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ
 وَالسَّعَةِ ۚ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ
 اللَّهِ ۗ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ

غُفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
 لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ
 عَلَيْهِمْ أَسِنَّتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ
 يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٥﴾
 الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ ۖ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ
 وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ ۖ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ ۖ وَرِزْقٌ
 كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Those who have come up with the false imputation are a gang among you. Do not think it is bad for you; rather, it is good for you. Everyone of them is liable for what he earned of the sin. And the one who undertook the major part of it, for him there is a mighty punishment. [11]

Why - when you (O believers) heard of it - did the believing men and the believing women not think well on their own selves and (why did they not) say, 'This is a manifest lie'. [12] Why did they (the accusers) not bring four witnesses to prove this? So, as they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars in the sight of Allah. [13] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a great punishment would have reached you for what you got indulged in - [14] when you were welcoming it with your tongues and were saying with your mouths something of which you had no knowledge, and were taking it as a trivial matter, while in the sight of Allah it was grave. [15] And why, when you heard of it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this. Pure are You (O Allah). This is a terrible calumny.' [16] Allah admonishes you never to repeat something like this, if you are believers. [17] And Allah makes the signs clear to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [18]

Surely, those who like that shamelessness spreads among the believers, for them there is painful

punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know. [19] And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy and that Allah is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful (you would have been destroyed). [20]

O those who believe, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, (should know that) he orders (one to commit) shameless acts and evil deeds. And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy, not a single person from you would have ever attained purity. But Allah purifies whomsoever He wills. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [21]

And the men of grace and wealth among you should not swear against giving (their charitable gifts) to the kinsmen and the poor and to those who have migrated in the way of Allah. And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [22]

Surely, those who level a false charge against the chaste, naïve and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is a mighty punishment [23] on the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them of what they used to do. [24] On that day Allah will give them their due recompense in full and they will know that Allah is the Truth Who makes all things manifest. [25]

Vile women are for vile men, and vile men are for vile women. And good women are for good men and good men are for good women. Those are free from what they (the accusers) say. For them there is forgiveness and a graceful provision. [26]

Interconnection of verses

As has been mentioned earlier, the major part of Sūrah An-Nūr is in connection with those injunctions which are related with protection and security of chastity and continence. Diametrically to that, any attempt to debase the chastity and honour would be in violation of the injunction, for which the punishment in the world and the torment in the Hereafter are enjoined. In this connection, first the maximum punishment of adultery

(حد زنا), then the punishment for false accusation (حد قذف) and after that the process of *li'ān* have already been described. False accusation of adultery against a chaste woman, without the support of four eyewitnesses, is held to be a great sin, and for such a person the punishment of eighty stripes is prescribed. This injunction is in regard to common chaste Muslim women. But the case of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was quite different and grave, when the hypocrites fabricated a false slander against her in 6th Hijra, and some Muslims also indulged in mentioning it. Indeed it was a much serious and grave situation than for an ordinary chaste Muslim woman, hence Allah Ta'ālā revealed ten verses at that point exonerating her from the accusation and to project her purity and chastity. These verses announce the exoneration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها on one hand and a warning of severe punishment to all those who were involved in the slander in any way. This incident of imputation is called the episode of *ifk* (false imputation) in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The word *Ifk* means worst type of lie, imputation or slander. In order to understand the explanation of these verses it is necessary to know the background of the incident of *Ifk*. Therefore, it will be in order to give a brief account of this episode to begin with.

The incident of *Ifk* and the slander

This incident has been narrated with extra ordinary details in the Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth. However its brief version is as follows: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ went for the battle (بنى المصطلق) of Banī Muṣṭaliq, also known as battle (مريسيع) of *Muraisī'*, in the 6th Hijra, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها amongst the mothers of believers, was also accompanying him. The common practice was that first she would sit in her litter and then it was placed on the back of the camel. It was because by that time the injunction in regard to *hijāb* had been revealed. After the battle was over and the caravan was returning to Madīnah it stopped for camping to spend the night. Towards the end of the night an announcement was made to the effect that the caravan would soon be departing, so that people should get ready after completing the necessities. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها felt the call of nature and went out to ease herself. There the string of her necklace was broken and it fell down. It took her some time to locate it, so she got a little late. By the time

she returned to the camp, the caravan had departed. As for her camel, her litter was mounted on it's back without realizing that she was not sitting in it. This happened because she was so young and frail at that time that her absence from the litter was not noticed; and also because the litter was covered. On her return to the camp when she did not find the caravan there, she did not panic nor ran helter-skelter to locate it. Instead, she acted very prudently and sat down at the camping place after wrapping herself. She did this knowing the Holy Prophet ﷺ very well that when he will not find her in her litter (هودج) he will send out men to locate her at the camping place, and if she were gone some other place to locate them, it will only complicate things for the searching party. So, it was best to wait for them there, at the camp. Since it was still dark and she was tired, she fell asleep.

On the other hand, it so happened that Sayyidnā Safwān Ibn Mu'aṭṭal ؓ, whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had assigned the duty to stay behind the caravan and pick up things if forgotten by anyone in a hurry, reached the camp at dawn. He saw someone sleeping. So he went there and recognized Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, whom he had seen before the injunction of *ḥijāb* was revealed. Seeing her there like that, he was extremely dismayed and uttered *إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ*. On hearing his voice she was awakened, and covered her face. Then Sayyidnā Safwān ؓ brought his camel near her and made it sit down. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها sat on the camel's back and rode on, while he was holding the string of the camel and walking in front. 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubbayy was a very wicked hypocrite and enemy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He got hold of this news and the wretched man fabricated shameless imputation against her. Unfortunately, some naïve Muslims also narrated the gossip on hearsay; for instance Sayyidnā Ḥassān and Miṣṭah ؓ among the males and Sayyidah Ḥamnah رضى الله عنها from the females. (Tafsīr Ad-Durr-al-Manthūr has reported this version with reference to Ibn Marduwaih on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ --- (اعانه اى عبدالله ابن ابي حسان ومسطح وحمنة ---

When this slander of the hypocrite was publicized, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself was also very hurt. As for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, it was but obvious to get hurt extremely. Even ordinary Muslims were also extremely pained on the spread of this totally false and fabricated slander. This went on for about a month, but at last Allah Ta'ālā revealed

these verses to exonerate her and condemn those who were involved in its fabrication or spread, in any way. The commentary on these verses will follow soon.

In accordance with the Qur'ānic injunction, which has been detailed above under the heading of punishment for false accusation (حدّ القذف), those who were involved in the spread of false slander were asked to produce the evidence in support of their accusation. Since that was a totally unfounded accusation, they could not produce any evidence whatsoever. As a consequence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment of false accusation (حدّ القذف) to them, and each one of them was flogged with eighty stripes. Bazzār and Ibn Marduwaih have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment to three Muslims, namely, Miṣṭah, Ḥannah and Ḥassān ؓ, while Ṭabarani has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had awarded double the punishment of false accusation to 'Abdullāh Ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite, who had fabricated this slander. After that the Muslims repented, but the hypocrites remained as they were. (Bayān ul Qur'ān)

Commentary

Unique proficiency of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضي الله عنها , and the remaining part of the incident of Ifk

The enemies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did their best to harm him, and did every thing they could possibly think to afflict him. Amongst all the afflictions which were perpetrated by the infidels, perhaps the most severe and emotionally torturous was to pass slander on the most exalted, proficient, learned, and respected mother of the believers amongst all his pure wives. With the contemptible false slander the respected name of Sayyidnā Safwān Ibn Mu'aṭṭal ؓ was also maligned by the hypocrite 'Abdulāh Ibn Ubayy. The hypocrites gave the slander different colours and then spread it. The most distressful thing in this episode was that some simple Muslims were carried away by the unfortunate slander and started narrating it as well. The unfounded slander would have been exposed by the truth in a few days time, but for compensating the emotional torture inflicted on Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself by it and for exonerating her, Allah Ta'ālā did not rest just at hinting at the episode in a revelation, but revealed almost two *ruku's* for

her exoneration. Not only that, but all those who had fabricated this slander, and those who had participated in narrating it, were warned to face the torment in this world and in the Hereafter. Perhaps never such warnings were revealed on any occasion.

In fact this incident of *Ifk* has brought into the open and highlighted the excellence of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah’s superior wisdom and intelligence along with her chastity and sanctity. That is why in the very first of the above quoted verses Allah Ta‘ālā has asked not to consider this incident as bad for her, rather it was a blessing. What could be a greater blessing than this, that Allah Ta‘ālā has confirmed her purity in no less than ten verses, which will be recited until the Dooms Day. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها had herself said that she was quite confident that Allah Ta‘ālā would exonerate her and clarify her position through a *Wahy* (message to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), but did not consider herself to be so fortunate that Qur’ānic verses would be revealed referring to her person, which will be recited for ever. At this point it will help the readers to know some details about the incident for understanding the verses. So, they are briefly narrated here:

On return from that journey Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها got involved in her household affairs, and was not the least aware of the rumor that was circulated by the hypocrites about her. Saḥīḥ of Bukhārī has narrated on the authority of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها herself that after the return from the journey she fell slightly sick, the main cause of which was that she did not notice the favour and grace from the Holy Prophet ﷺ towards her, which was his norm. Instead, she noticed during that period that when he would come home, he would only inquire about her health after the salutation and go back. Since she did not know at all anything about the rumor that was being circulated about her, hence she could not understand the cause of his attitude towards her, but took the grief to heart, which started telling on her health. One day she went out in the open to ease herself, as there used to be no latrines in the houses in those days. Because she was not keeping well she took along Miṣṭah’s mother with her. When they were returning home after she had eased herself, the foot of Miṣṭah’s mother got entangled in her sheet and she fell down. As she fell down she uttered the phrase تَعَسَ مِسْطَحٌ. This phrase is normally used by Arabs while cursing someone. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها

عنها was taken aback on hearing this phrase from Miṣṭah's mother for her own son, and said to her that it was very bad that she was cursing her own son, who was such a gentleman and who had participated in the battle of Badr. On that Miṣṭah's mother asked her 'My dear girl, don't you know, this son of mine, what has he been saying around?' Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها inquired as to what had he been saying around. Then Miṣṭah's mother told her the whole story of *Ifk* fabricated by the people, and how her son was involved in it's spreading. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها goes on to say that on hearing this her sickness was doubled. When she returned home and the Holy Prophet ﷺ came and inquired about her health after salutation as usual, she asked his permission whether she could go to her parent's house. He consented to her going to their house. The idea was to take them in confidence and have consultation. So she consulted her mother, who consoled her and said that there were people who were jealous of women like her, and spread rumors like that. So, she need not worry about it. Things would get alright on their own. On that she retorted 'Allah is Pure / Subhan Allah! People have been talking about that. How can I be patient?' Then the whole night she cried, and did not sleep a wink. On the other hand the Holy Prophet ﷺ was extremely grieved on the spread of this false story, more so, because he did not receive any revelation on the incident during that period. Therefore, he called Sayyidnā 'Alī and Usāmah Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنهما, who were both members of his household, and consulted them as to what should he do under the circumstances. Sayyidnā Usāmah Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنهما said very emphatically that on the basis of his information he had no misgivings about Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها whatsoever. There is absolutely nothing, which could point toward any mistrust. Hence he need not pay any heed to such rumors. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنهما advised him (in order to bring him out of his grief and anxiety) that Allah Ta'ālā had not put any restriction on him, hence if he had any unpleasant feelings about Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, because of the rumors, then there are many other women. Moreover he suggested another alternative to remove his unpleasant feelings, and advised him to make inquiries about her from Barīrah رضى الله عنها, who was the slave girl working for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها. Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made inquiries from Barīrah رضى الله عنها, who submitted that she did not see anything unbecoming in Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها except that sometimes, because of her young

age, she would leave the dough in the open and go to sleep, and the goat would eat up the dough. (After this the Ḥadīth narrates the address of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from the rostrum in great detail in which he had complained about those who had fabricated the accusation and those who had spread the slander. A brief account of what happened next is as follows).

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها goes on to say “I cried the whole day and the second night also continuously. My parents had also come to me, as they feared that I would break down with grief. While my parents were sitting with me the Holy Prophet ﷺ came in and sat down alongside me. He had not sit with me before ever since this incident had started. Then he recited the *khutbah* of *shahādah* and said ‘O, ‘Ā’ishah, I have received this information about you. If you are free from blame, then Allah will definitely exonerate you (that is express exoneration through revelation), but if you have slipped, then beg for Allah’s pardon with repentance, because when the servant invokes His mercy after admitting his sin then Allah Ta‘ālā accepts his repentance’. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ had completed his discourse, my tears dried up completely. There was not a drop in my eyes. I requested my father, Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, to give an answer to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but he excused himself saying what could he say. Then I asked my mother to give an answer, and she too excused herself saying as to what could she say. Then per force I had to speak. I was only a young girl, and by then had not learnt much even the Qur’ān”. In such a perplexing condition of grief and distress that she was in, even extremely learned and intelligent persons would have found it very difficult to express themselves in a balanced manner, but what Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها said at that time is a piece of highly intellectual and scholarly discourse. Her wordings are reproduced verbatim below:

والله لقد عرفت لقد سمعتم هذا الحديث حتى استقر في انفسكم وصدقتم به،
ولئن قلت لكم: اني بريئة، والله يعلم اني بريئة، لا تصدقوني ولئن اعترفت لكم
بامر، والله يعلم اني منه بريئة، لتصدقوني، والله لا اجد لى ولكم مثلا الا كما قال
ابو يوسف: فصبر جميل والله المستعان على ما تصفون

“By God, I fully realize that you listened to this talk and kept on listening until it made inroads into your heart, and you have confirmed this (by your actions). Now if I say that I am free

from this blame, as Allah knows well that I am in reality, then you will not verify my statement. And if I make admission of the accusation, of which Allah knows I am free, then you will agree with my admission. Wallah, now I do not see any example on the issue between you and me, except the one which the father of Yūsuf عليه السلام (Ya'qūb عليه السلام), said after hearing the wrong statement of his sons that 'So patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe.'

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها related further that "After having said so I went away and lied down on my bed. I was confident that since I was free from the blame in reality, Allah Ta'ālā would surely exonerate me by sending down a revelation. But I did not have the slightest idea or expectation that in my case Qur'ānic verses will be revealed, which will be recited forever. It was because I considered my position to be much lower than that. All I had expected was that probably my exoneration will be revealed to him in his dream". Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها goes on to narrate that "the Holy Prophet ﷺ had not got up from that company yet, nor anyone from the household had got up, when he was overtaken by the condition which he used to experience at the time of revelation of the Qur'ān. In this condition he used to perspire profusely on the forehead. When this condition was over, then the Holy Prophet ﷺ got up smiling, and the very first thing that he said was يا عائشة أما الله فقد ابرأك that is "O 'Ā'ishah, listen the good tiding . As for Allah Ta'ālā, He has exonerated you". Then my mother said to me "Get up and go to the Holy Prophet ﷺ". I replied, "I do not feel obliged to any one in this case, except Allah, nor would I get up. I am thankful to my Lord, and it is He who has exonerated me."

Few distinctions of Sayyidah Ṣiddīqa رضي الله عنها:

While explaining these verses Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has said that there were some distinctions of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها which no woman other than her could get, and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها also used to relate them with a sense of pride (as honorable gift). First, that before the marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ Jibra'īl عليه السلام had brought to him her image wrapped in a silk cloth, and said to him 'she is your wife', (As reported by At-Tirmidhī – from 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها) while some other versions say that Jibra'īl had brought this image in his palm.

Second, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not marry any maiden girl

other than her.

Third, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ died in her lap.

Fourth, that he ﷺ was buried in her house.

Fifth, that he ﷺ had received revelation even at that time also when he used to be with Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها under the same quilt. None other wives was granted this distinction ever.

Sixth, that her رضى الله عنها exoneration was sent down from the Heaven.

Seventh, that she was the daughter of the caliph of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was herself a Şiddīqua رضى الله عنها, and was among those whom Allah Ta'ālā had promised forgiveness and bountiful sustenance even during their lifetime. (Maẓharī)

After seeing Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضى الله عنها scholarly research, understanding of jurisprudence and eloquent expression, Sayyidnā Musā Ibn Ṭalḥah رضى الله عنه commented that he had never come across a person more eloquent than her. (Tirmidhī)

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī has related that when Sayyidnā Yūsuf رضى الله عنه was falsely accused, Allah Ta'ālā exonerated him through the evidence of a baby by granting him speech, and when Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام was falsely accused, Allah Ta'ālā exonerated her through the evidence of her son, 'Īsā رضى الله عنه, but when false accusation was leveled against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, then Allah Ta'ālā sent down ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān to declare her exoneration, which has further enhanced her respect and stature.

Now the specific sentences of these verses will be discussed and elaborated:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ

Those who have come up with the false imputation are a gang among you. 24:11.

Literal meaning of *Ifk* (إفك) is to turn over, reverse or to change. The worst type of lie which turns the truth to falsehood and the false as truth, and labels the pious and God fearing as sinner, and the sinner as pious

and God fearing, also falls under the connotation of *Ifk*. 'Uṣbah : عُصْبَةُ means a group of ten to forty persons, but is also used for less or more persons. The word مِنْكُمْ (among you) in the verse refers to Muslims. Although the actual fabricator of the slander was 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy, who was a hypocrite and not a Muslim, but since the hypocrites used to claim themselves as Muslims, he too has been included within the fold of (مِنْكُمْ). Among the Muslims two men and one woman got involved in the spread of slander, who were awarded the punishment of false accusation by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after the revelation of these verses. But all Muslims felt penitence and their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Among them were Sayyidnā Ḥassān and Miṣṭah ﷺ, who had both participated in the battle of Badr, and for whom Allah Ta'ālā has declared forgiveness in the Qur'an. For this very reason Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها used to dislike if any one would speak ill of Sayyidnā Ḥassān ﷺ before her, although he was one of those two men who were punished for false accusation. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها used to say that Ḥassān ﷺ was the one who had defended the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his poetry against the infidels. Hence, no one should speak ill of him. Whenever he used to visit Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, she would make him sit with dignity and respect. (Maḏharī etc.)

لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَكُمْ

Do not think it is bad for you - 24:11.

This sentence is addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, Ṣafwān ﷺ and all the Muslims, who were hurt by the spread of this rumor. The purport of the sentence is that you should not feel bad about this incident, because after the exoneration declared in the Qur'an by Allah Ta'ālā her esteem has been raised further, and those who were involved in rumor-mongering were warned strongly in the Qur'an, which will be recited until the Dooms Day.

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ

Everyone of them is liable for what he earned of the sin - 24:11.

It means that whoever had taken part in the spread of this slander, his sin has been recorded exactly in the same proportion as was his share in the spread of the slander, and he will be punished accordingly. The one who had fabricated this rumor, which will be dealt later, deserves the

most severe punishment, and the one who endorsed the rumor when it reached him, a little less than that, and the one who kept quiet after hearing it, still less than that.

وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And the one who undertook the major part of it, for him there is a mighty punishment - 24:11.

The word كِبْر means big, large or great. Here it means that the one who has taken big part in the slander, that is who fabricated it and passed on to others, for him is the great punishment. The indication is toward 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Ubayy (Baghawi etc.).

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ

Why - when you (O believers) heard of it – did the believing men and the believing women not think well on their own selves and (why did they not) say, 'This is a manifest lie'. - 24:12.

It means that when the Muslim men women heard about this slander they should have a good assumption about their own-self – that is about their Muslim brother and sister – and declared that it was but an open lie. In this verse quite a few things need attention. In the first place the Holy Qur'an has hinted by the word بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ (on their own selves) that if a Muslim defames and disgraces another Muslim, he in fact disgraces himself, because the relationship of Islam has brought them all together as one body. A similar expression is used by the Holy Qur'an wherever the close tie between a Muslim and the whole Ummah is to be emphasized, for instance, a verse says لَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ (49:11) which means 'Do not cast aspersion on your own-self', which actually means do not cast aspersion on any of your Muslim brethren – man or woman. At another place the Qur'an says لَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ (4:29) which means 'Do not kill yourselves'. Here again the sense is the same, that is, do not kill any of your Muslim brethren. Yet at a third place it says وَلَا تُخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ (2:84) which means 'You shall not drive out yourselves from your homes'. Here also it means not to expel any Muslim from his house. At a fourth place it says فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ, which means 'Salute your own-self', which in fact means, salute your Muslim brethren. All these verses point toward one theme, that a Muslim who casts aspersion on another Muslim or causes oppression and harm to another Muslim, he in fact casts aspersion

and causes harm to himself, because it leads to defamation of the whole Muslim Ummah, as the poet Saadi has said:

چواز قومے یکے بے دانشی کرد ☆ نہ کہہ را منزلت ماند نہ مہ را

"When a single person from a nation does an unwise act, no one from that nation, big or small, can achieve a respectful place (in the eyes of others).

It was this teaching of the Qur'ān which brought up the Muslims into prominence, and when they gained prominence, it was the whole nation which was uplifted, both collectively and individually. One can see the result of giving up of the Qur'ānic teachings, that the Muslims have slumped into oblivion, again both collectively and individually.

The other point, which needs attention in this verse, is that after having said *لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ* (Why, when you (O believers) heard of it) it was in the fitness of things that the address form should have been used by saying, "why did you not think well of your own selves". But the verse has opted for "the believers" instead of "you". The Holy Qur'ān at this point has changed its form and said *ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ* instead *ظَنَنْتُمْ*. In this form there is a subtle allusion that those who had committed this act were not fit to be called Mu'mins (believers) to the extent of this act, because it was the demand of faith that a Muslim should have stuck to the favourable view for another Muslim.

The third point which needs attention is that in the last sentence of this verse *وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ* (24:12) it has been instilled that it was the demand of faith that the Muslims on hearing this rumor should have immediately rejected it as a total lie. This proves that to think good about any other Muslim is an obligatory demand of faith, unless an act of sin or evil is proved against him under Islamic law. Likewise, it is also the demand of faith to call an attribute of a sin or evil against a Muslim a lie, if there is no proof under Islamic law against him.

Ruling

This has proved that to think good about all Muslims men and women is obligatory, unless proved otherwise by Islamic law. And if someone accuses a Muslim without the proof under Islamic law, then the rejection of that accusation and to declare it as a lie is also obligatory, because it is nothing but backbiting and defaming an innocent Muslim. (Maẓharī)

لَوْلَا جَاءَ وَعَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةٍ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

Why did they (the accusers) not bring four witnesses to prove this? So, as they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars in the sight of Allah - 24:13.

In the first sentence of this verse it is emphasized that the Muslims should have demanded to produce evidence from those who were spreading this rumor, instead of becoming instrumental in passing on the rumor to others. Since the accusation of adultery cannot be proved without the production of four eyewitnesses, it should have been demanded of them either to produce four eyewitnesses or keep quiet. In the second sentence of the verse it is declared that, as they could not produce four eyewitnesses, so they are the ones who are liars before Allah.

It is worth noting here that it is quite probable that a person sees such an event with his own eyes, but is unable to produce four witnesses. And if he relates the event, which, in fact, he has seen with his own eyes, then how can he be called a liar. More so, to call him liar before Allah is not at all understandable, because Allah knows the truth about every thing happening. So, how could he be declared a liar before Allah, when the incident has actually taken place. There are two answers to this. First, here *عِنْدَ اللَّهِ* (in the sight of Allah) stands for Allah's command and the rule of Allah, Therefore, it means that in accordance with the rule of Allah and His command this person would be declared a liar and awarded the punishment of false accusation, because the command of Allah is not to relate the incidence, despite the fact that you have seen it, if four witnesses are not available. If someone relates it without the support of four witnesses, then he will be declared liar by law and will be punished.

The second explanation is that, it is against the dignity of a Muslim to do something having no purpose and object, especially a thing which would put blame on a Muslim. Hence, a Muslim should testify the commission of a crime or sin against another Muslim only with the intent of controlling and eradicating the crime and sin, and not for the purpose of defaming or hurting someone. So, if a person relates such an incident without the support of four witnesses claiming that he is doing it with the intent of reforming the society and for removing the evil from it, knowing that without the production of four witnesses he would neither be able to

prove the crime according to requirements of the Islamic law nor would the accused be punished, and on the other hand he will himself be liable to punishment for relating a lie, in such a situation he is عِنْدَ اللَّهِ (in the sight of Allah) a liar in the proclamation of his intent, claiming that he was testifying the incident for reforming the society and removing the evil. It is for the simple reason that in the absence of witnesses it is not possible to harbor this intention under the Islamic code. (Maḏḥarī)

An important and necessary warning

In both the above verses it is emphasized that every Muslim should have good opinion about other Muslims, and it is made obligatory for them to contradict and deny any insinuation and accusations without proof against the Muslims. But one should not have any doubt as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not have the belief that the rumor was false, and as such denied it at the outset, instead he suffered for a month and asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا to beg Allah's pardon if there was a slip on her part. (Bukhārī)

The explanation for this is that the anxiety of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not inconsistent with the injunction for Muslims to have good opinion about other Muslims, because he neither denied this rumor nor did he act on its exigency, and also he did not like the spread of the rumor. All did he say in the gathering of companions was مَا عَلِمْتُ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ الْآخِرَةِ (Bukhārī) that is, 'I do not know anything but good and virtuous about my wife., All these things are proofs of acting in conformity with the injunction of the verses of having good opinion. However, the definite and absolute belief, which could also remove the natural anxiety, followed when the verses of exoneration were revealed.

The substance of explanation is that in such a situation, creation of doubts and anxiety is but natural, but to act with care and caution, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ did, was not against having good opinion about the Muslims, especially when no action was taken on its exigency. Those Muslims who were awarded the punishment for false accusation and were reprimanded in these two verses, had actually acted on the exigency of the rumor and were involved in its spread. Spreading falsehood was unlawful and punishable even before the revelation of these verses.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ

عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy in this world and in the Hereafter, a great punishment would have reached you for what you got indulged in - 24:14.

This verse was revealed for those believers who had by mistake got somehow involved in the slander, but then repented and begged Allah's pardon. Some of them were even punished, but all of them were told through this verse that the crime they had committed was a very grave one, and on that crime they could have been subjected to punishment even in this world, like the one sent down on earlier people. In addition, they would have also been punished severely in the Hereafter, but Allah's dealings with those believers were that of grace and mercy, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Hence, the chastisement was withdrawn from them. The manifestation of Allah's grace and mercy in the world is that, first, the Divine help was granted to adopt Islam and its faith, then the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was accorded, which is an impediment for the award of punishment, and then again the Divine help was granted to repent sincerely and beg Allah's forgiveness for the sin which was committed, and ultimately the repentance was accepted and the sin was pardoned. While in the Hereafter, the token of Allah's grace and mercy is that He has promised to forgive and overlook and grant pardon.

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ

When you were welcoming it with your tongues - 24:15.

The word تَلَقَّى means to make inquiries from each other (to be inquisitive) and repeat before others. Here it means to repeat hearsay without probe and proof. (1)

وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

And were taking it as a trivial matter, while in the sight of Allah it was grave - 24:15.

It means that you regarded it a trifle matter that you heard it and passed it on to others. But in the sight of Allah it was a great sin that without probing and finding out any proof you passed on something to

(1). Lexically the word also means 'welcoming'. This meaning is adopted in the translation of the text, because it also covers the meaning of receiving and conveying the news without hesitation. (Editor)

others to cause harm to other Muslims and to make their life miserable.

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا ۖ سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ

And why, when you heard of it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this. Pure are You (O Allah). This is a terrible calumny.' - 24:16.

In this verse the same advice is repeated which was imparted in an earlier verse, with further elaboration as to what should the Muslims do in such a situation when they hear a rumor. The advice is that they should say in categorical terms that they are not allowed even to mention such a thing for which there is no proof. It is a very grave accusation.

A doubt and its answer

If someone has a doubt that just as the truth of an event cannot be verified without a proof, and hence it is unlawful to mention it and spread it, likewise, the report of that event should not be believed to be a lie and a 'terrible calumny' without a proof of its being a lie. The answer to this doubt is that it is the integral spirit of Islam to consider every Muslim as free from sins, and this is based on reasoning. Anything contrary to this proven reality is a lie if put forward without a proof, and no further proof is required to prove this assertion a lie. This is enough to call it a slander if a believer Muslim is blamed for a crime without proof.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۗ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ

Surely, those who like that shamelessness spreads among the believers, for them there is a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter - 24:19.

Those who had taken part in any way in the slander are again condemned in this verse, and are warned with the punishment in the world and in the Hereafter. An extra element in this verse is that those who propagate such rumors actually want the spread of obscenity and immorality among the Muslims.

The Qur'ānic system for the prevention of obscenity

The Holy Qur'ān has drawn out this unique system for the prevention of obscenity that, in the first place such a news should not spread, and if at all it is leaked out, it should be backed up with lawful proof, so that the

punishment of adultery is also executed publicly, immediately after the spread of the news. This way the publicity itself will serve as a preventive measure. If there were no condition of lawful proof, then it would have been lot easy to pass on and publicize such scandals, especially, when there is no punishment attached to it. Absence of any fear against spreading scandals leads to minimizing the repulsion against immorality and obscenity from the people's mind; rather it encourages to indulge in such crimes and to propagate them. This is an every day experience that this sort of scandals is published in the newspapers daily. Young men and women read them frequently. As a result, the intensity of such wicked acts is minimized gradually, and instead a slow inclination for indulging in them develops in their minds. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an has allowed publicity of such news only in such situations when it is supported with lawful evidence, so that people should see the severe punishment for the obscene crime along with the news of adultery when they learn about it. Where there is no proof and punishment, Qur'an has proclaimed the publicity of such news as a tool for spreading obscenity among the Muslims. This vital point needs to be pondered by the Muslims. This verse actually emphasizes that to give publicity to scandals without proof will invite very severe punishment both in this world and in the Hereafter. The punishment in the Hereafter will naturally follow after the Dooms Day, and thus cannot be experienced here, but the punishment of the world can be seen. So, those who were punished for false accusation have in fact experienced the punishment of the world. If anyone has escaped the execution of the punishment for want of proof needed for the award of this punishment, even then he has earned the punishment (which will be executed in the Hereafter). For the implication of the verse even this is enough.

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ
 فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ
 رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

And the men of grace and wealth among you should not swear against giving (their charitable gifts) to the kinsmen and the poor and to those who have migrated in the way of Allah. And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 24:22.

Teachings of high morals for the exalted companions

The word اتلاء means to swear. Sayyidnā Miṣṭah and Ḥassān got involved in the incident of slandering Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها from amongst the Muslims. They were awarded punishment for false accusation by the Holy Prophet ﷺ after the revelation of exoneration verses. Both Sayyidnā Miṣṭah and Ḥassān were illustrious companions and had taken part in the battle of Badr, but they slipped on this occasion and received Divine help for the sincere repentance. Then the way exoneration was revealed by Allah Ta‘ālā for Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها, in the same manner it was also declared that the repentance of these believers was accepted and they were pardoned.

Sayyidnā Miṣṭah was a relative of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, and was a poor person. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr used to help him materially. When the involvement of Miṣṭah in the spread of the incident of *Ifk* was established, then Sayyidnā Abū Bakr's paternal love for the daughter surged up, and he was annoyed with Sayyidnā Miṣṭah as a natural corollary, because her feelings were deeply injured by him. He then swore an oath that he would never help Sayyidnā Miṣṭah materially. It is obvious that to help any specific poor person is not obligatory for a Muslim, and if someone stops the material help he used to give to a poor person, it is not a sin. But Allah Ta‘ālā wanted to make the illustrious group of companions as a model for the society. So, whereas on the one hand those who had slipped were granted Divine help to repent sincerely and reform themselves, on the other hand those who had sworn not to help any more the poor people, because of the natural grief and displeasure, were imparted wisdom of supreme ethics in this verse, that they should break their oath and expiate for it. It is below their dignity to stop the material help. They should also forgive and overlook, the way Allah has forgiven them.

Since it was not a religious obligation on Sayyidnā Abū Bakr to help Sayyidnā Miṣṭah, therefore the Qur’ān has adopted the line to say that those whom Allah Ta‘ālā has bestowed the knowledge and excellence, and who are granted the means to spend in the way of Allah, they should be careful not to undertake such an oath. The words *أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ وَالسَّعَةِ* (the men of grace and wealth) are used to put across this meaning.

The last sentence of this verse is *أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ*, (24:22) which says

'Do you not like that Allah forgives you?'

On this Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said immediately *والله أتى أحب أن يغفر الله لي* that is 'By God, I definitely want that Allah forgives me'. Immediately after that he restored the material help of Sayyidnā Miṣṭah رضي الله عنه, and said 'This help will never stop now'. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

These are the graces of ethics which were imparted to train the illustrious companions. Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said :

ليس الواصل بالمكافي ولكن الواصل الذي اذا قطعت رحمه وصلها

'He is not the kind hearted towards relatives who only returns their favours, but the real kind hearted towards relatives is the one who maintains his relationship with them, despite they have severed the relations' (Maḥzarī).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Surely, those who level a false charge against the chaste, naïve and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is a mighty punishment - 24:23.

On the face of it the same subject has been repeated in this verse which has already appeared in the verses of

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ. إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more, and they are the sinners, [4] except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (24:4,5)

But in fact there is a big difference between the two, because at the end of verses on punishment of false accusation (24:4,5), those who repent are exempted and promised forgiveness. There is no such thing in this verse, and instead it announces the curse in this world and in the Hereafter, without any exception.

Therefore, it is obvious that this verse (24:23) is aimed at those who were involved in slandering Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها, and did not repent, so much so that even after the revelation of her exoneration in the Qur’ān they adhered to their malicious accusation and kept on propagating it. It is but obvious that no Muslim could do such a thing. If a Muslim disregards a categorical Qur’ānic injunction, he cannot remain a Muslim. Hence, this reference relates to those hypocrites who did not stop their slander-mongering campaign against Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها even after the exoneration was revealed in her favour. There is no doubt that they were hypocrites and disbelievers. Therefore, those who had felt remorse on their doing they were granted pardon in the two worlds by Allah’s mercy, and those who did not repent are declared in this verse as cursed, both in this world and the Hereafter. Those who felt remorse were given the glad tiding of deliverance from punishment, and those who did not feel remorse were warned of severe punishment. Those who repented were given the good news in إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (Allah is Most forgiving Very-Merciful) and those who did not repent were warned of punishment in the next verse by saying يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ (On the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them). (Bayān al-Qur’ān).

An important Warning

The few Muslims who got involved in the episode in connection with the slander on Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها did so at a time when verses regarding her exoneration were not revealed. After the revelation of verses of exoneration whoever makes an insinuation on her character is indeed a disbeliever and a denier of the Qur’ān, like the few groups of Shi’ities and some other individuals, who are involved in the shameful practice. There is not the slightest doubt that they are disbelievers. They are regarded disbelievers by the consensus of entire Ummah.

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

On the Day their tongues, their hands and their legs will testify against them of what they used to do. - 24:24.

The Day on which their own tongues, hands and feet will speak against them and will testify against their crimes, they will be punished precisely according to the crimes they had committed. It is related in Aḥādīth that on the Dooms Day those who will admit their sins will be

pardoned by Allah Ta'ālā, and He will conceal their sins from the crowd of people. If anyone will deny his sins and will claim that he did not commit them, and say that the angels did not write his record of actions correctly, then his speech will be taken away from him and his hands and feet will be asked to testify, who will speak and testify. Another verse **الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ** (Today We set a seal on their mouths, - 36:65) states this very point. This verse says that their mouths will be sealed, but the verse under discussion (of Sūrah An-Nūr) says that their tongues will testify. There is no contradiction in the two verses in that they will not be able to use their tongues at their discretion. In other words they will have no control on tongues to say anything wrong, as they have in this world. Instead their tongues will say only the right things against their intent and wish. It is also possible that at a certain time their mouths and tongues will be completely sealed and then the tongues are commanded to speak the truth (Only Allah knows best)

الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ
أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

Vile women are for vile men, and vile men are for vile women. And good women are for good men and good men are for good women. Those are free from what they (the accusers) say. For them there is forgiveness and a graceful provision - 24:26.

It means that the vulgar women are suitable for vulgar men and the vulgar men are suitable for vulgar women. And pure women are worthy for pure men and pure men are worthy for pure women.

In this last verse the common principle is stated that Allah Ta'ālā has created a connection between the people of the same nature. Thus, vulgar and unchaste women are inclined towards vulgar and unchaste men and vice versa. Similarly, pure and chaste women show inclination towards pure and decent men and vice versa. Therefore, every one tries to find the spouse according to one's inclination and liking, and in a natural way one does find one to suit him or her.

In the light of this norm and principle it is now quite clear that the messengers of Allah, who are the models of purity and chastity both outwardly and inwardly in this world, are granted spouses by Allah Ta'ālā in accordance with their status. Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who is

the head of all messengers, was bestowed with spouses who were befitting to his position and status in purity, chastity and ethical excellence, and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها is more prominent among them all. Only those can have any doubt or suspicion about her who do not have faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. It is mentioned about the wife of Sayyidnā Nūḥ and Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليهما السلام in the Qur'an that they were disbelievers, but it is also established that they were not involved in any obscenity or vulgarity. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said ما بفت امرأة نبي قط Never did a wife of a messenger commit adultery'. (ذكر في الدر المنثور). It is, therefore, corroborated that it is possible that a messenger's wife could be a disbeliever, but it is not possible that she could be vulgar and sexually immoral, because adultery is a natural detestable act in the eyes of people, whereas disbelief is not a natural detestable thing. (Bayān al-Qur'an)

Verses 27- 29

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا
وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَإِنْ
لَّمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّىٰ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۗ وَإِنْ قِيلَ
لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ
﴿٢٨﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ
لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

O those who believe, do not enter any houses, other than your own houses unless you seek permission and greet their inmates with Salām. That is good for you, so that you may observe advice. [27] Then, if you do not find anyone there, do not enter therein until permission is given to you. And if it is said to you, 'Go back', just go back; it is more decent for you. And Allah is All-Knowing of what you do. [28] There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal. [29]

Commentary

The fifth injunction regarding mutual meetings and asking permission before entering anyone's home

Right from the beginning of Sūrah An-Nūr it is enjoined to curb the obscenity and immorality in the society, and to restrain this, various punishments are prescribed. Then labeling of false accusation on someone is condemned. After that such injunctions are enjoined which can check these obscenities and safeguard the chastity and continence, and also create an atmosphere to eliminate the conditions of their development. The issues and instructions regarding seeking permission before entering anyone's house (*Isti'dhān*) also fall within these injunctions. Hence, entering in anyone's house or to peep in without the permission of the owner has been prohibited. The wisdom in this instruction is that one should not cast an eye on women who are not one's *mahram* (with whom marriage is prohibited). In the above verses various instructions are given against various types of houses.

There are four categories of houses. One, in which one lives, where there is no possibility of the presence of some stranger. Two, where someone else is also residing, irrespective of being *mahram* or not, and where there is a possibility of someone's entry. Three, where there are both possibilities that someone is living or the house is empty. Four, a house which is not specified for anyone's living, such as, a mosque, school, monastery, shrine etc., where all people go in. Out of these four categories it is obvious that there is no need of asking permission to go in the houses of the first kind. Hence, the first category is not mentioned specifically in these verses, but for the other three categories injunctions are spelled out.

An important aspect of Qur'ānic social ethic is that if you go to meet someone, first ask the permission and do not enter in anyone's house without permission.

It is a pity that the amount of importance Islam has attached to ethics of visiting someone by providing detailed instructions about them in the Qur'ān, and which were strongly emphasized by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, both by practice and oral teachings, the present day Muslims neglect them by the same margin. Even the pious and educated people do not regard this a sin, nor do they make an effort to act on them. The other civilized nations of the world have adopted them to improve their society,

but the Muslims have lagged behind them all. This was the very first Islamic injunction which was overlooked by the Muslims to begin with. It is worth noting that seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*) is that injunction of the Holy Qur'ān in which even the slightest laxity or alteration is termed by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as the rejection of the Qur'ān itself. As a matter of fact now people overlook these injunctions so much as if they are not part of the Holy Qur'ān. *أَنَا لِلَّهِ وَأَنَا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ*

Wisdom of seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*)

Allah Ta'ālā has provided every person a place where he lives, whether he owns it or has acquired it on rent. Such a place is his home, and the real purpose of a home is to provide comfort and tranquility. When the Holy Qur'ān has referred to one's home as a great blessing of Allah, it has an indication towards this basic objective of a home. The Qur'ān says, *جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا* (16:80) It means that Allah has given you peace and comfort through your homes. One can enjoy peace and comfort in his home only when he can live there without the interference of any one else, and can rest and work at will. Any interference in his freedom is tantamount to killing the very purpose of the home, which is naturally very damaging. Islam has prohibited harming anyone without any cause. A great wisdom in the injunction of seeking permission is to save people from interference of others and its consequent ill effects, which is obligatory on all peace loving people.

The other consideration in the injunction is for the visitor himself, in that if he would go in to meet someone after taking permission, then the host will also reciprocate his gesture by giving him due importance and respect. If his visit is with purpose then the host will be sympathetic and try to meet his need. On the other hand, if he would go in to call on someone without taking his permission, like an uncouth, then naturally he would not be so welcome, and the host would like to get rid of him as quickly as possible. Even if the host had any sympathy toward him, it would be reduced, and the sin for causing trouble to a Muslim would be additional.

The third consideration is the elimination of obscenity and immorality. If one enters someone's home without taking prior permission, the possibility is that he might see the ladies of the house, which may lead to temptations. It is for this reason that the injunctions on seeking

permission are placed next to punishment of adultery and punishment of false accusation etc.

The fourth consideration is that sometimes one is busy in the solitude of his home doing something which he does not want others to see. If someone comes into his house unannounced, then that act will be known to others, which he wanted to conceal. Any attempt to disclose the secrets of others is also a sin and a source of vexation. Some issues concerning seeking permission have been described in the above verses themselves, so they should be considered first. Other related issues will be dealt with later.

Ruling

In these verses the address is with the phrase يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (O those who believe) which is used for men, (because the relative pronoun in the text الَّذِينَ is originally of masculine gender) but women are also included in the injunction, like other Qur'ānic injunctions, which are normally addressed to men but women are included in them, except in some cases where it is expressly mentioned that they are exclusive for men. Therefore, wives of the Ṣaḥābah included themselves in the address of the present verse and acted accordingly. Whenever they would visit any one's house, they used to seek permission. Sayyidah Umm Iyās رضى الله عنها has said 'We were four women who used to visit frequently Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها together, and used to seek permission before going in the house, and would enter only after she had permitted'. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Ruling

It is clear from the universality of this verse that on a visit to anyone's house the injunction of seeking permission is common to all, whether men or women, Maḥram or non-Maḥram. Either a woman goes to visit another woman, or a man goes to visit another man, it is obligatory on all to seek permission. Similarly, if a man visits his mother, sisters or any other Maḥram woman, he should seek permission. Imām Mālik has narrated in Muwaṭṭa' quoting 'Aṭā' Ibn Yasār رحمه الله تعالى that someone enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether he should seek permission before going to his mother. He ﷺ said 'Yes, do seek permission'. Then that fellow said 'O Messenger of Allah, ﷺ I live with my mother in the same house'. He ﷺ said even then you should not enter the house without taking

permission. He asked again "O Messenger of Allah, ﷺ ! 'I am always at her service'. He ﷺ replied, 'You should still ask her permission. Would you like that you see your mother naked? He said 'No, no'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'It is for this reason that you should seek permission, because there is a possibility that she might have uncovered some of her coverable parts in the house for some need'. (Maḏharī)

One learns from this Ḥadīth that the word "other than your own houses" in the phrase *غَيْرِ بُيُوتِكُمْ*, (24:27) as it appears in the Qur'an, refers to those houses where one lives alone and no one else, like parents, brothers or sisters reside with him. (It is only in this case that seeking permission is not necessary).

Ruling

If someone is living alone in the house with his wife, even then it is preferable and a *sunnah* to make some sort of sound, such as hem or thump, before entering, in order to make known his incoming, although seeking permission is not obligatory in this case. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's wife رضي الله عنها has reported that whenever 'Abdullāh would come in the house, he would always make a hemming sound at the door to announce his arrival before entering, so that he should not see us in a condition that he would like to avoid. (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ibn Jarīr with an authentic chain). In another situation Ibn Juraij inquired from 'Aṭā' رحمه الله تعالى whether it is obligatory to seek permission before going in one's own house to his wife, and he said 'no'. Ibn Kathīr after quoting this version has explained that what it means is that it is not obligatory but preferable.

The Traditional way of seeking permission

The procedure for seeking permission, as explained in the verse is *حَتَّىٰ تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا*, (24:27) that is do not enter into any one's house until carrying out two things. First, *Isti'nās* – its literal meaning is to seek acquaintance. Majority of commentators have taken this word for *isti'dhān*, that is to take permission. By the use of word *Isti'nās* instead of *isti'dhān* there is a hint that in taking permission before entering, the host gets acquainted with the visitor through his voice and the element of surprise is removed. The second requirement is greeting the inmates of the house with *salām*. Some commentators have elaborated it as; one should first seek permission and on entering the house should greet the

inmates. Qurṭubī has also adopted this explanation that one should first seek permission, and when it is granted, only then go in and greet the hosts. Sayyidnā Abū Ayyub Anṣārī's Ḥadīth also corresponds well with this explanation, to which Māwardī has added further that if the visitor happens to see an inmate of the house before seeking permission, then he should first greet him, and then seek permission to go in, otherwise one should first seek permission and then greet on entering. But the procedure that seems to be *masnun* through narrations of Ḥadīth, is that one should first greet from outside with *Assalamu 'Alaikum* (السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ) and then by announcing his name should seek permission to go in.

Imām Bukhārī in his *al-Adab ul-Mufrad* has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Huraira ؓ that if someone seeks permission before greeting, the host need not reply (because he has deviated from the practice adopted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Abū Dāwūd has narrated in his Ḥadīth that someone from Banī 'Āmir sought permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, saying أَلِجْ (that is, can I thrust in?). On hearing that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his servant, "this man does not know how to seek permission. Go to him and explain to him that the permission should be sought by saying السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ (that is, Assalāmu 'Alaikum, can I come in?). Before the servant could go out that fellow himself said 'Assalāmu 'Alaikum' السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ as he had heard the instruction of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then he ﷺ permitted him to come in. (Ibn Kathīr)

Baihaqi has narrated in *Shu'ab-ul-'Īmān* on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said لَا تَأْذِنُوا لِمَنْ لَمْ يَبْدَأْ بِالسَّلَامِ (that is 'Do not let in the one who does not greet before seeking permission'. (Maḥzarī). In this case the Holy Prophet ﷺ has made two corrections. One, that one should greet first. Two, that he had used the word أَدْخُلْ instead of أَلِجْ, which was not proper, because the word is derived from *wulūj* (وُلُوج) which means, to make an entry with force into a narrow space. This expression is against all ethics. In any case, one learns from these narrations that the instruction of greetings given in the Qur'ānic verses relate to the greeting for seeking permission, which is offered from outside the house for inviting the attention of the inmates. On entering the house, the greetings should be repeated in the usual manner.

Ruling

The procedure of greeting first and then seeking permission for entry, as has been established by various Aḥādīth, can best be followed if the visitor himself announces his name for seeking permission. This was exactly the practice of Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. He used to announce at the door of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم *السّلام على رسول الله، السّلام عليكم أيّدخل عمر؟* that is, after the greetings whether Umar can come in. (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim has narrated that Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه went to see Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and sought permission to get in by saying *السّلام عليكم هذا الاشعري* (Qurṭubī). First he gave his name as Abū Mūsā and then for further clarification added Ash‘arī. This is to help the host recognize the caller immediately and respond quickly, for without recognizing the visitor the host may hesitate to give permission for getting in.

Ruling

Some people adopt the worst possible practice in this regard that they ask permission from outside to come in without disclosing their identity. And when the host inquires as to who was there, they would answer ‘It is me’. This is not the right answer to the host. If he has not recognized the voice on the first call, how can he recognize with the answer – ‘it is me’.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi has reported in his Jāmi‘ quoting ‘Alī Ibn ‘Aṣim al-Wāsiṭī that when he went to Baṣrah he went to see Sayyidnā Mughira Ibn Shu‘bah رضي الله عنه, and knocked at his door. Sayyidnā Mughīrah رضي الله عنه inquired from inside as to who was there. He answered *Ana* (أنا) that is ‘It is me’. So, Sayyidnā Mughīrah رضي الله عنه said ‘I do not have anyone among my friends by the name *Ana*’ (أنا). Then he went out and related the Ḥadīth to him that one day Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn ‘Abdullāh رضي الله عنه went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and knocked at his door. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم inquired from inside as to who was there, and Jābir رضي الله عنه said *Ana* (أنا) that is ‘It is me’. Then the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeated the words ‘*Ana Ana*’ (أنا، أنا) to explain that there is no point in saying *Ana, Ana*, as no one can be recognized by this word.

Ruling

There is yet another very wrong practice which is commonly observed these days even by the educated people, and that is they would knock at the door and when the inmates would enquire from inside as to who was

there, they do not reply at all and remain silent. This is the worst practice to tease the host, as he remains in suspense about the identity of the visitor, and the very spirit of seeking permission is defeated.

Ruling

This has also been established by these narrations that it is also a correct procedure of seeking permission to knock at the door, provided one tells his name at the same time.

Ruling

If one knocks at the door, it should not be so strong that the inmates get upset, rather it should be mild with the sole purpose of letting the inmates know that some one is at the door. Those who used to knock at the door of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they used to knock with their nails in a manner that the sound should not be loud enough to disturb him. (As narrated by Al-Khaṭīb in his *Jāmi' – Qurṭubī*) If one understands the spirit behind *isti'dhān* that it is meant to seek permission with familiarization (*isti'nās*) of the caller, then automatically he would take care of all those things which could possibly trouble the host. What is required is to knock gently and announce the name for familiarization.

Important Warning

These days people do not pay any attention toward seeking permission, which is a clear sin for forsaking an obligation. But on the other hand there are some problems in our time for those who do want to take permission in the prescribed manner, that is first offer greetings from outside and then seek permission by announcing their name. One problem is that the host to whom they want their voice to reach is not available close to the door, hence it is difficult to convey to him the sound of greetings and the name of the caller. Therefore, the important thing to note is that the spirit of the injunction is not to enter anyone's house without permission. There may be different forms of seeking permission in different places in different times. One such form is to knock at the door, which is established by the record of Ḥadīth. In the present time people fix up bells at their doors. It is sufficient for carrying out the obligation of seeking permission to press the button of the bell, provided the caller also announces his name after that in an audible voice for the host. Apart from this, it is also in order to adopt any other method of seeking permission in vogue at any place. The present day system of sending in

visiting cards to disclose the identity of the caller is a good practice in that not only the name of the caller but also his address is made known to the host without any effort on his part, which fulfils the spirit behind *isti'dhān*. Therefore, there is no harm in adopting this system.

Ruling

If a person asks permission from someone and he replies in the negative that he cannot meet at that time, then the caller should go back and not feel offended. He should realize that every one's needs and circumstances are different, and at times it is beyond the control of persons to call in the visitor or to go out and meet him. Hence, his refusal to meet should be accepted with good grace. In the present verse the same thing is emphasized *وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكى لَكُمْ* that is, 'If it is said to you, "Go back" just go back, it is more decent for you - 24:28. Some people of the past ages are reported to have said 'I waited all my life wishing that I visit someone and seek permission to go in the house, and the host turns down my request asking me to go back so that I could be rewarded the grace of this Qur'ānic injunction by following it. But, alas, I could never get that blessing'.

Ruling

The Islamic jurisprudence has established a two-sided system of teaching the mannerism of social graces and of saving all from the troubles and inconvenience. The way visitors are advised in this verse that if their request for permission to go in is turned down, they should not feel offended, similarly, the other side of the coin is taught in a Ḥadīth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said *إِنَّ لِرُورِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا*. (Surely your visitors have some rights to be observed by you). It means that one who comes to meet you he too has his right on you. His right is that you should call him in, pay him respect and listen to him. Do not refuse to meet him without any serious excuse or a genuine reason.'

Ruling

If one goes to meet someone and seeks permission to go in, but does not get an answer, then according to practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he should knock a second time, and still if there is no answer then he should knock a third time. If he does not get an answer the third time, then the injunction is, that he should go back. After knocking three times it becomes obvious that the inmate must have heard the knock, but

presumably he is in a condition that he cannot answer, for instance, praying or in the toilet or taking shower. Alternatively, he does not want to meet at that time. In both the situations it is not advisable to keep on staying there or keep on knocking, as it will upset the host, which must be avoided. The real purpose of *isti'dhān* is to avoid any inconvenience to the host.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Ash'arī ؓ has narrated that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that *اذا استأذن احدكم ثلاثاً فلم يردن له فليرجع* that is, 'when someone seeks permission three times and does not get reply, he should go back' (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī). And Masnad Aḥmad has reported on authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ had gone to meet Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah ؓ, and said *Assalāmu 'Alaikum* (السلام عليكم) from outside to seek permission (*Isti'dhān*) to go in, according to his practice. Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ did reply the greeting but in a soft tone, so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ does not hear. He ؓ repeated the greeting a second time and then a third time. On each occasion Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ listened the greeting and replied in a soft tone. After that the Holy Prophet ﷺ went back. When Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ realized that, he ran after him and explained that he heard his voice every time and also replied but in a soft tone, so that the greeting words are spoken for him repeatedly by the blessed tongue, as they will bring good fortune to him. (the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained to him the way of *sunnah* that when there is no response from inside, the visitor should go back) After that Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ took the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with him to his house where he treated him with some refreshments, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ accepted graciously.

This action of Sayyidnā Sa'd ؓ was the result of overwhelming love and affection for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and at that moment he did not realize that the most exalted Messenger was waiting at his door and he should immediately go out and receive him with due respect. Instead, his mind was induced toward the thought that it would be of benefit to him if the blessed tongue would utter *Assalāmu 'Alaikum* repeatedly. In any case this incident has established the issue that if there is no answer after seeking permission thrice, then according to practice of the Prophet ﷺ, the visitor should go back. It is against the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to keep on waiting there, which will be a cause of trouble for the inmate and tantamount to forcing the host to come out.

Ruling

The foregoing ruling relates to the situation when one has sought permission thrice by knocking and greetings. In that situation to keep on waiting there would cause trouble to the host. But if someone waits at the door of a scholar or a pious person without seeking permission or without informing him, in the hope that he would meet him when he would come out according to his convenience, such a waiting is not undesirable, rather it is a great respect shown by the caller. The Qur'an itself has advised people that to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ while he is inside, with the purpose of calling him out of the house is disrespect to him. People should wait for him outside until he comes out on his own according to his convenience. The related verse says **وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ** (And if they had patience until you come out to them, that would be better for them - 49:5). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said, 'Sometimes I keep on waiting the whole afternoon at the door of an Anṣārī companion until he would come out on his own, for asking about some *Aḥadīth*. Had I sought permission to go in, he would have definitely allowed me, but I regarded that against ethics. That is why I used to bear the trouble of waiting'. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَكُمْ

There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit - 24:29.

Literal meaning of the word **مَتَاعٌ** *Mata'* is to use, put to use, and to benefit from something. Anything from which some benefit is drawn is also called *Mata'*. In this verse *Mata'* is used in its literal meaning and is translated as 'rightful benefit'. It is reported by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه that when verses regarding *isti'dhān* (seeking permission) were revealed, he inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Ya Rasūl Allah! What would the traders of Quraish do after this prohibition? They travel with trading caravans from Makkah and Madīnah to Syria and have a number of resting places spread out all along the route, where they stay while traveling. There are no permanent inmates in those places. So, what will be the form of *isti'dhān* at those places? Whom will they seek the permission from?" On this enquiry the above verse was revealed (Mazḥarī on authority of Ibn Abi Ḥātim).

The background of revelation of this verse tells us that the phrase **بُيُوتًا** **غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ** (uninhabited houses) relates to those houses and places which are not specifically meant for the residence of any individual or community. Rather they are open to all to go in and stay or use, such as public inns, which are made for the purpose of free stay of the travelers, mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals, post offices, railway stations, airports and community centers. Thus, all places built for the common welfare of people fall under this category, where every one is allowed to go in and use.

Ruling

In all the welfare centers where there are some restrictions or conditions placed by the owners or by the organizers for entry, their observance is obligatory by religious law also. For instance, if it is necessary for entering a railway platform to purchase the ticket, it will not be permissible in Shari'ah to enter it without the ticket. The ticket is compulsory. Similarly, going into the restricted area of an airport is not allowed without having the necessary permission.

Ruling

However, if the specific rooms are reserved in mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals etc. for their staff, such as closets in mosques, shrines and schools or the offices in the hospitals, railway stations and airports, they do not fall under the category of 'uninhabited houses'. In all such places entry without permission is prohibited by Shariah.

Some other issues related to Isti'dhan

When we have learnt that the basic purpose of the Shari'ah injunction of Isti'dhān is to avoid giving any trouble to others, and teaching of ethics of social graces, on the same principle the following code of conducts can also be drawn.

Some Issues relating to Telephone

To ring up anyone at a time which is normally his resting time or the time for prayers, unless extremely urgent, is not justified, for the same reason that it will be troublesome for him, just like entering anyone's house without permission, which disturbs the freedom of the host.

Ruling

If one has to talk to someone frequently, then it is desirable that it should be enquired from him the convenient time when he can talk without any trouble, and then only at that time he should be contacted on telephone.

Ruling

If one has to discuss something in detail with someone on telephone, then it is advisable that he should first find out from him whether he can talk in detail for some length of time. It is a common happening that when one is busy, the telephone bell rings, and he is compelled to lift the receiver no matter what he was doing, and if the caller talks for long, it really hurts the listener.

Ruling

Some people do not care about the ringing of telephone. It keeps on ringing but they would not lift the receiver. This habit is also against the Islamic ethics, and tantamount to usurpation of the right of the caller. As the Ḥadīth says *ان لزورك عليك حقا* (Your guests have some rights obligated on you). It indicates that the one who has come to meet you, it is his right that you talk to him, and do not refuse meeting him without reason, similarly, the one who wants to talk to you on telephone, it is his right that you respond.

Ruling

If you have gone to someone's house to meet him, and are waiting for the permission, in that situation you must not peep in, because the purpose of *Isti'dhān* is that you should not know what the host wants to hide from you. If you see it by peeping inside, then that purpose is lost. It is strongly prohibited in the *ḥadīth* (Bukhārī and Muslim quoting Saḥal Ibn Sa'd as-Sa'īdī). It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if he would go to meet someone and wait for the permission to go in, he would stand by the side of the door and not in front of it. He used to make *Isti'dhān* by the side of the door, because very seldom there were curtains on the door during that time, and if they were, there was the possibility of their opening up with the wind. (Mazharī)

Ruling

The prohibition to go in the houses mentioned in the above verse is meant under normal conditions. But if there is an emergency, like fire or

demolition of the house, then one can enter without taking permission, rather it is desirable to go in immediately.

Ruling

If a person has sent someone to call another person, and he comes along with the person who had gone to fetch him, then he need not take permission to go in. The messenger who had gone to fetch him is permission by itself. But if he does not turn up along with the messenger, but goes later, then seeking of permission will be required. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said 'اذا دعى أحدكم فجاء مع الرسول فان ذلك له اذن' 'If someone is called and he comes along with the messenger, then this by itself is permission for going in'. (Abū Dāwūd – Maḏhari)

Verses 30 - 31

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۗ ذَلِكَ
 أَرَكِي لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
 يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا
 مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۗ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ
 زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ
 بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ
 أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّبِيعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولَى الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
 أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَتِ النِّسَاءِ ۗ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ
 بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ ۗ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ ۗ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ
 الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. [30] And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts, and must not expose their adornment, except that which

appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands, or to their sons or the sons of their husbands, or to their brothers or the sons of their brothers or the sons of their sisters, or to their women, or to those owned by their right hands, or male attendants having no (sexual) urge, or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of women. And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known. And repent to Allah O believers, all of you, so that you may achieve success.

[31]

Commentary

An important chapter for the prevention of obscenity and security of chastity: *Ḥijāb* for women

The very first verses on the subject of *ḥijāb* for women are the ones which were revealed in Sūrah Aḥzāb at the time of marriage of the mother of the believers Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥash رضى الله عنها with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some have given the date of revelation of these verses as 3rd Hijra while others say it was 5th Hijra. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Nail Al-Auṭār have given preference to the latter date, while Rūḥ ul-M'āni has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that this marriage was solemnized in Dhulqā'dah 5th Hijra. But it is an agreed position that the first verse on *Ḥijāb* was revealed on this occasion. As for the above referred verses of Sūrah an-Nūr, they were revealed at the time of incident of *Ifk*, which had happened on return from the battle of Banī Mustaliq or Muraisī'. This battle had taken place in the 6th Hijra. Hence, it is clear from the revelation point of view that Sūrah An-Nūr's verses on *ḥijāb* were revealed later, and Sūrah Aḥzāb's four verses were revealed earlier, and that the practice on the injunction of *ḥijāb* had started when the verses of Sūrah Aḥzāb were revealed. The subject of *ḥijāb* will be discussed Inshallah in detail under Sūrah Aḥzāb. Here the explanation will be restricted to only those verses which appear in Sūrah an-Nūr.

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and

guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. (24:30)

The word *يُغْضُ* (*yaghuddu*) is derived from *غَضَّ* (*ghadd*), which means to bring down or to lower, (Rāghib) lowering of eyes or to keep eyes down as enjoined in the verse, means to turn the eyes from something which is prohibited to be seen by Shari'ah (Ibn Kathīr). Ibn Ḥibbān has given the explanation that to look at a non-Maḥram woman with intent to have (sexual) pleasure is totally prohibited, and to look without any such motive is *makrūh* (undesirable). To look at any woman's or man's private parts of the body is included in this explanation (except in case of dire necessity, such as medical examination). Peeping into anyone's house with the intent of finding out his secrets, and all such acts where looking is prohibited by Shari'ah are all included in the injunction.

وَيَحْفَظُوا أَرْوَاجَهُمْ (24:30) Protection of private parts is purported to express that all possible situations of satisfying unlawful sexual desires be guarded against. In this, adultery, sodomy, lesbian act, masturbation and all such acts that fulfill unlawful lust and passions are prohibited. The purpose of the verse is to prohibit all illicit acts for fulfilling unlawful passions. For this purpose the initial and the ultimate acts have been mentioned rather clearly, and all those actions which fall in between them are also included in the prohibition. For unlawful sexual passion the very first act is casting eye with bad motive and its ultimate result is adultery. Both these acts have been mentioned clearly and are prohibited. All other acts falling in between, such as touching hands or having conversation, are included by implication.

Ibn Kathīr has related Sayyidnā 'Ubaidah رضي الله عنه having said *كل ما عصى الله* كل ما عصى الله that is 'Any act done in disobedience to Allah is a major sin, but the initial and ultimate acts are mentioned at the two ends of the verse'. The initial act is to cast eye, and the ultimate is adultery. Ṭabarānī has quoted Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once said :

النظر سهم من سهام ابليس مسموم من تركها مخافتى ابدلته ايماننا يجد حلاوته
في قلبه. (از ابن كثير)

'Casting eye is a poisonous arrow among the arrows of Satan. Whoever turns away his eye fearing from Me (despite demand of the heart), I will give him such strong faith, the delight of

which he will feel in his heart'. (Ibn Kathīr)

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Jarīr Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Bajali ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised what should one do if by chance one's eye is cast on a non-Maḥram woman. He has quoted the Holy Prophet ﷺ as saying 'Turn away your eyes from there'. (Ibn Kathīr). Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ has said that first sight is forgivable, but casting eye a second time is sin. Both versions are alike, that is, if one casts his eye by chance without intention, it is forgiven being not intentional, otherwise it is prohibited to cast the eye intentionally, even the first time.

To stare intentionally at boys having no beard also falls within this ruling

Ibn Kathīr has reported that many elders of the Ummah used to forbid forcefully staring at young boys (having no beard), and many scholars have declared it as forbidden (Perhaps it is in a situation when one looks with bad intention and passionate desire. God knows best)

Looking at non-Maḥram is forbidden

وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ

And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes - 24:31.

In the initial part of this long verse the injunction is the same which has been enjoined on men-folk in the preceding verse, that is, keep the eyes down or turn away the eyes. Women-folk are also included in the injunction along with men, but in the next verse there is a separate injunction for them for laying more emphasis. Hence, it is clear that for women it is forbidden to look at any man except their *maḥrams*. Many scholars have declared that it is absolutely forbidden for women to see non-Maḥram men, irrespective of looking with bad intent and passion or without any intent and passion; in either case it is forbidden. For this ruling the argument put forward in support is the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah 'Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها, which relates that once 'Umm Salamah and Maimūnah رضى الله عنهما both were with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when suddenly 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umm Maktūm, the companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was blind, came in, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked them to go inside. This incident had happened after the injunction of *ḥijāb* for

women was revealed. On this 'Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها - pleaded 'O Holy Prophet! But he is only blind, he can't see us'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied 'Is it that you are blind too?' (Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī – Tirmidhī declared this *ḥadīth* as *hasan Ṣaḥīḥ*). Other jurists have ruled that there is no harm if women look at strange males without any passion. They base their argument on the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, in which it is related that on an Eid day some African youths were showing their military exercises in the courtyard of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was watching this game, and so was Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, under the cover of the back of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. She kept on watching the game until she herself got tired of it, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not object to her watching. Scholars are all unanimous on the point that looking with lust is prohibited, but looking without lust is also not a preferred act.

To look at a woman's *satr* (concealable) parts by another woman without any lawful reason is also prohibited in line with the wordings of this verse. It is for the reason that concealing of *satr* (concealable) from all, both by men and women, is obligatory by Shariah. Man's *satr* (concealable) comprises all parts of the body from navel to knees, and that of women, the whole body, except face and palms. Neither can a man see another man's *satr* nor can a woman see another woman's *satr*. Looking by a man at a woman's *satr* or of a woman at a man's *satr* is highly prohibited, and amounts to contradiction of the injunction of the Qur'ānic verse which enjoins for 'turning away the eyes'. As has been explained above in detail, it is enjoined in the verse to lower the eyes or to turn the eyes away from everything which is prohibited to be seen under Islamic injunctions. To look at a woman's *satr* by another woman is included in that.

وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۚ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ
زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ

And must not expose their adornment, except that which appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment except to their husbands - 24:31.

The literal meaning of *zīnah* (زينة) is that with which a woman adorns herself to appear attractive. It may be nice clothes or ornaments. There is

an agreement of the scholars on the point that when the clothes and ornaments are not worn by women, and are only displayed in the market place, then they are allowed to be seen by men-folk. For this reason majority of scholars have taken the meaning of *zīnah* as those parts of the body where the objects of *zīnah* are worn. Hence, the meaning of the verse is that it is obligatory for women not to show the parts of the body where the objects of adornments are worn. (Rūḥ ul-Ma‘ānī). Whereas it is prohibited for women in this verse to show their *zīnah*, two exceptions have, however, been made. One is for that to be seen, and the other for those who see.

Exception from the injunction of *ḥijāb*

First exception is that of *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* (except that which appears thereof). It means that ‘Women are not permitted to show their *zīnah* to men, except that which is revealed on its own’. The indication is that while women are working, some parts of the body get uncovered automatically, and their covering is difficult, hence, exception of such parts is permitted. There is no sin in their uncovering. (Ibn Kathīr). Which parts do really fall under this exception? On this subject Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه and ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه have given different explanations. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه has explained that what has been excepted in *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* is the outer covering, such as veil or the sheet used for *ḥijāb*. These over-clothings are used to cover up the normal garments of *zīnah*. Hence, the meaning of the verse would be that it is not permitted to show anything from the *zīnah* (garments), except the over-clothings like veil, whose hiding is not possible when going out for some work. On the other hand Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه has interpreted that it is purported for face and palms, because when a woman is forced to go out because of necessity, it is difficult to hide face and palms while engaged in her work. Therefore, according to the explanation of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه it is not permitted for women even to uncover – their faces and palms before non-Maḥram men. Only the over-clothings, like veil etc. are excepted under necessity. But in accordance with the explanation of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه it is permitted to uncover the face and palms before the non-Maḥrams. Thus, there is a difference of opinion among the religious scholars on the issue whether it is permissible to uncover the face and palms before non-Maḥrams or not. But all agree on

that if there is a risk of *fitnah* (i.e. stimulation of illicit desires) by looking at feminine face and palms, then its uncovering is not allowed, and women are not permitted to uncover their faces and palms in that situation. All scholars also agree on that in prayers women can uncover their faces and palms and in the uncovered position their prayers will be considered valid.

Qāḍī Baiḍāwī and Khāzīn have said in the explanation of this verse that the object of the verse appears to be that women should not let anything of their *zīnah* be seen, except that which gets uncovered during the process of working. In this definition the veil and sheet, as well as face and palms are all included, because when a woman goes out for some necessary work, veil and sheet are open to be seen in any case, but sometimes face and palms also get uncovered during the movements of work. Hence, their uncovering is allowed and is not regarded a sin. But it does not mean that men are allowed to see faces and palms of women unnecessarily. Instead, it is enjoined upon men to keep their eyes lower, and if a woman is constrained to uncover her face or palms, the men should turn their eyes away, unless required to see in the performance of some lawful act. In this explanation both the traditions and interpretations are reconciled. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also ruled that it is not allowed to see the face and palms of a non-Maḥram woman without a lawful need. Ibn Ḥajar Makki Shafi'ī has quoted in his *zawājir* that Imām Shafi'ī's view is also the same that although women's face and palms are not part of their *satr*, and they are allowed to pray while these parts are uncovered, yet non-Maḥrams are not allowed to see them without a lawful need. However, this has already been stated above that even those scholars who have ruled it permissible to see women's face and palms, also agree that if there is a risk of mischief, then looking at their faces is not permissible. It is well known that the center of beauty and attraction is the face of a person, and the present age is full of temptation, mischief and lasciviousness, and people are lost in remissness. Therefore, in the present circumstances it is impermissible to uncover the face before the non-Maḥram men, except for medical treatment or in emergency. Similarly, it is not allowed for the men-folk as well to look at women intentionally, unless it is required by a genuine need.

After granting exception to the opened Zinah, it is enjoined in the

verse under reference *وَلْيَضُرَّيْنِ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ*, (24:31) that is, 'must wrap their bosoms with their shawls'. (*خُمْرٌ*) Khomor is the plural of (*خِمَارٌ*) Khimār. It is the piece of cloth which women use to cover their head, and it also covers up the neck and bosom. *جُيُوبٌ* (*juyūb*) is the plural of *جَيْبٌ*, (*jayb*) which means upper part of the shirt just below the neck. Since the time immemorial this part of the garment is placed over the chest of a person, hence the covering of *juyūb* means covering of the chest or bosom. In the beginning of the verse showing of *zīnah* was prohibited, while in this sentence hiding of *zīnah* is emphasized and a specific situation is also described, the purpose of which is to eliminate an old custom of pre-Islamic days. In the pre-Islamic time women used to place the sheet on their head and let its two sides hang on their back, with the result that their neck, ears and bosom were left uncovered. Therefore, Muslim women were enjoined not to follow this, and instead were advised to place the two sides of the sheet one over the other, so that all these parts are covered. (Ibn Abī Ḥātīm from Ibn Jubair – Rūh)

The second exception in the verse relates to the men before whom no *hijab* is to be observed by women. There are two reasons for this exception. First, those men who are exempt from this injunction are the *maḥrams*, hence, no risk of any trouble is expected from them. Allah Ta'ālā has put in their hearts deep respect and honour of their close female relatives, hence, there is no possibility of any mischief from them. Secondly, since the close relatives normally live all together, for the sake of convenience it is required that they do not hide from each other. But this should also be kept in mind that this exception from hiding from *maḥrams* is exclusive to *ḥijāb*, and not from the *satr* of women, where the exception is allowed only to husbands. Those parts of the body of women which are included in *satr*, and which are not allowed to be uncovered in the prayers, are not permitted to be seen by any *maḥram*.

Eight types of *maḥram* men and four other types with whom no *ḥijāb* is necessary are listed in this verse. In another verse of Sūrah Aḥzāb, which was revealed before this verse, only seven types of *maḥram* are mentioned. Hence, five more types were added in the above referred verse of Sūrah an-Nūr, which is a later revelation.

Warning

It should be noted that the word *maḥram* is used here in its general

sense, which includes husband also. In the connotation used by the scholars for this word it means the person with whom marriage is not allowed. That meaning of the word is not intended here. Let us now take up the details of the twelve exceptions mentioned in the verse under consideration: The first exception is that of husband with whom hiding of any part of the wife's body is not required. But, looking at the private parts of wife without need is not a preferable act. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said ما رأى منى ولا رأيت منه 'Neither he saw my private parts nor did I see his'.

Second, exception is of fathers, in which category apart from father, grandfather, great grandfather are all included. Third, is the father-in-law, and husband's grandfather and great grandfather. Fourth, are the sons. Fifth, are the husband's sons, who may be from his other wives. Sixth, are the brothers, in which category all step-brothers whether from real-mother or from real-father are included. But cousin brothers are not part of this category. They are all non-Maḥrams. Seventh, are the sons of brothers. Here also sons of step-brothers are included, but sons of cousins are not included. Eighth, are the sons of sisters, and here again sons of step-sisters are included but not those of the cousins. These are the eight categories of *maḥrams*.

Ninth category

أَوْ نِسَائِهِمْ (31) (or to their women). These words are used for Muslim women, before whom all such parts can be uncovered which are allowed to be uncovered before father or sons. It has already been clarified earlier that this exception relates to *ḥijāb* alone and not the *satr*. It is for the simple reason that, what is not allowed to be uncovered before *maḥram* men is also not permitted to be uncovered before any Muslim woman, except for medical treatment or under dire need.

By the exception made only for Muslim women it becomes obvious that it is necessary for Muslim women to cover themselves before non-Muslim women as well. Non-Muslim women are thus in the same category as that of non-Maḥram men. Ibn Kathīr has quoted the explanation given by Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى for this verse that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman to uncover herself before non-Muslim women. But there are Ṣaḥīḥ *aḥadīth* available which prove that non-Muslim women used to visit wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, hence,

there is a difference of opinion among the jurists on the subject. Some have declared non-Muslim women like men for the application of this injunction, while others have placed both Muslim and non-Muslim women under one category - that is covering before them is not necessary. Imām Rāzi رحمه الله تعالى has opined that the word نِسَائِهِنَّ (their women) encompasses both Muslim and non-Muslim women, and the practice of virtuous elders of making Muslim women covered before non-Muslim women was because it was desirable (but not obligatory). Mufti of Baghdad, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī رحمه الله تعالى has adopted this explanation in the Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, and has remarked هذا القول اوفق بالناس اليوم فإنه لا يكاد يمكن احتجاب This explanation is more suited to present time because it has become almost impossible for Muslim women to cover themselves before non-Muslim women. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Tenth category

أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ (24:31). (or to those owned by their right hands). The general sense of the wording includes both male and female slaves and servants, but many a scholars and jurists consider that it applies only to female slaves, and not to the male slaves. Therefore, it is obligatory to be in cover before them, like other non-Maḥrams. Sa'īd Ibn al-Mussayab رحمه الله تعالى has said expressing his final view 'Do not be under the misconception that the wordings أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ are general, and include male slaves as well. It is not so. This verse refers to only female slaves, male slaves are not included in it'. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibn Sīrīn رحمه الله تعالى have said that it is not permissible for a male slave to see his female owner's hair (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). Now the question is that if by the wordings أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ only female slaves were meant, then they were already included in the word نِسَائِهِنَّ (or to their women). What was the point in describing them separately? Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has answered this question by explaining that the word نِسَائِهِنَّ in its apparent sense is meant for Muslim women only, and in case there are non-Muslims also among the female slaves, they need to be separated from the rest, hence the use of this word.

Eleventh category

أَوِ التَّبَعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولَى الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ (or male attendants having no {sexual} urge). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has explained that, here those confused and deranged type of persons are meant who have no liking and inclination

toward women (Ibn Kathīr). The same explanation has been put forward by Ibn Jarīr quoting Abu ‘Abdullāh, Ibn Jubair, Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah رَحْمَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى etc. Therefore, those men are referred to here who do not have any lust or inclination towards women, nor are they interested in the beauty and charm of women, which they could describe before others. As against this, eunuchs do take interest in women’s special attributes; hence women should keep covered before them. There is a *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا on the subject, that an eunuch used to visit the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and they regarded him to be included in the category of *غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ*, (31) hence they allowed him to come in their homes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw him and listened his conversation, he stopped him from coming inside the homes. (Rūḥ ul-Ma‘ānī).

For this very reason Ibn Ḥajar Makkī رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى has commented in *Sharaḥ al-Minhāj* that no matter a man be impotent or devoid of genital organs or be very old, he is not included in the expression *غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْأَرْبَةِ*, and women are required to cover themselves before all of them. However, addition of the word *التَّابِعِينَ* with the expression *غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْأَرْبَةِ* is meant to indicate those who are confused and deranged, and enter the houses with the purpose of eating and drinking as an attendant of some guests. Such men are excluded and it is not necessary to observe *ḥijāb* before them. They have been mentioned here because in fact there were some such men at that time, and they used to go inside the homes, only with the intention of eating and drinking, but the real cause of their being excepted from the rules of *ḥijāb* is their being of unsound mind and having no sexual urge and not being attendants of someone

Twelfth category

أَوَالِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ (or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of women - 31). This refers to those young children who have not yet attained puberty, and are totally ignorant of ladies special attributes, gestures and postures. Any boy who takes interest in ladies company for their special attributes is nearing his puberty, and covering before him becomes obligatory. (Ibn Kathīr). Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى has explained that the word *Tifl* (children) refers here to those children who do not differentiate between men and women in special attributes. (Jaṣṣāṣ has narrated this from Mujāhid).

وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ

And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known - 24:31.

It is incumbent upon women to step so gently that no sound is made of their ornaments and none of their *zīnah* is exposed to men.

To cause hearing of jewellery's sound to non-Maḥrams is prohibited

In the beginning of the verse it was prohibited for women to show their *zīnah* (ornaments or garments) to non-Maḥram men. At the end of it, it is reemphasized that covering of head and bosom etc. was in any way obligatory as part of hiding of *zīnah*, rather any exposure of hidden *zīnah* by any means is also prohibited. Putting in something in the ornaments so that they produce sound, or making of sound by the touch of ornaments with each other, or putting the feet on the ground in such a manner that ornaments make sound, and the non-Maḥrams listen to these sounds; they are all prohibited under the provision of this verse. In the light of this explanation many jurists have drawn the conclusion that when causing to hear the ornament's sound is prohibited, then to cause hearing of women's own voice would be prohibited even more strongly. Therefore, they have ruled that the voice of women is also included in their *satr*. For this reason it is declared in *Nawāzil* that women should learn Qur'ān from women only, as far as possible. Learning of Qur'ān from men should be as a last resort only.

Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim have quoted a *ḥadīth* which says that while offering prayers if someone passes in front, he should be warned with a loud voice by saying *Subhān Allah* by men, but the women should not make any sound, and instead hit the back of the palm with the other for warning.

The issue of women's voice

Is women's voice included in their *satr* per se, and it's causing to hear by non-Maḥrams is prohibited? The jurists differ on this issue. In the books of Imām Shafī'ī رحمه الله تعالى the voice of women is not included in their *satr*. In the case of Ḥanafī there are different views. Ibn Humām رحمه الله تعالى has included the voice in *satr* on the basis of statements in *Nawāzil*. Because of this the call for prayer اذان by women is regarded

makrūh by Ḥanafī School. However, it is established by *ḥadīth* that the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to talk to non-Maḥrams from behind the curtain even after the revelation of injunction of *ḥijāb*. Keeping in view all the material on this point, what seems to be the correct position is that hearing the voice of a woman is impermissible only when and where it may create a *fitnah*, but where there is no such apprehension, it is allowed. (Jaṣṣāṣ). However, the prudent way for women is to take care and avoid talking to non-Maḥrams, even from behind the curtains, unless necessary. (Only Allah knows best)

To go out wearing perfume

It is also included in this injunction that when women go out of the house for some need, they should not wear any perfume, because that is also their hidden *zīnah*, and it is impermissible to cause it to reach non-Maḥrams. In a *ḥadīth* reported by Tirmidhī from Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ؓ those women are declared bad who go out wearing perfume.

Going out wearing decorated veil is also prohibited

Imām Jaṣṣāṣ رحمه الله تعالى has commented that when Qur'an has included even the sound of ornaments as the exposure of *zīnah* and declared it unlawful, then going out wearing decorated veil would be unlawful more strongly. By inference it is also clear that although the face of women is not included in her *satr*, but it is the pivotal point of *zīnah*, hence, its hiding from the non-Maḥrams is essential, except in cases of need. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

And repent to Allah O believers, all of you - 24:31.

In this verse first the men have been enjoined to keep their eyes low, then the women are enjoined the same. After that women are directed to cover themselves before non-Maḥrams. After enjoining these injunctions separately to men and women, now a combined instruction is given that the sexual desire is a delicate thing, and it remains concealed from others. But everything, concealed or open, is completely known to Allah. Therefore, if someone has erred in following the foregoing injunctions, he should beg Allah's pardon, feel repentant on his past deeds and make a firm resolve not to indulge in them again.

Verse 32 - 33 ...

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ
يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِيهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٢﴾
وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ

And arrange the marriage of the spouse-less among you, and the capable from among your bond-men and bond-girls. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing. [32] And those who cannot afford marriage should keep chaste until Allah enriches them out of His grace...

Commentary

Some injunctions regarding marriage

It has been pointed out earlier that Sūrah an-Nūr contains mostly the injunctions relating to protection of chastity and continence, and prevention of obscenity and shamelessness. In this connection severe punishments against adultery and related matters are mentioned, then *isti'dhān* is highlighted, and after that *hijāb* for women is described. Since Islamic jurisprudence is based on the precept of moderation, all its injunctions are moderate, and have affinity with natural human emotions and desires. It is also based on the principle to control the tendency of excessiveness and transgression. When it is enjoined to desist strictly from unlawful lust, it is equally important to provide a lawful access for the natural human emotions and desires. At the same time it is also needed both from a rational and religious point of view that men and women are shown a way for the lawful copulation for the preservation of human race. In the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah it is called *nikāḥ* (marriage). In the verse under consideration the guardians of unmarried girls and the owners of slave girls and boys are enjoined to marry them off.

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

And arrange the marriage of the spouse-less among you - 24:32.

Ayamā (أَيَامَى) is the plural of Aym (أَيْم), which is used for all those men and women who are not married, irrespective of the situation whether