

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ إِن تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ تَسْأَلُكُمْ وَإِن  
تَسْأَلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْءَانُ تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ

حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾

*Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread) 5:101*

### **O You Who Believe!**

- Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble.
- But if you ask about things when the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you.
- Allah will forgive those.
- For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing.

## **Commentary**

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

The verse forbids the believers to put questions about such things, which may pain and displease them if disclosed. It has left it vague who was the person asked from. But the sentence: "if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed", as well as the next verse: *A people before you indeed asked such questions, then became disbelievers on account of them*, clearly show that it is the Prophet (S) who is intended here – that the believers should not put such questions to him which would result in such and such.

However, the underlying reason of this prohibition conveys the idea that it covers also other situations; that it forbids man to enquire about, and search, the things Allah has left vague and put a veil on them which cannot be removed by normal means and usual ways. Obviously, there is a strong chance of misery and perdition if one were to acquire somehow the knowledge of such realities as, for example, the date when he would die, the cause of his death, the life-span of his near and dear ones, the fall of his kingdom and honor; probably the very knowledge might cause his perdition or misery.

The system of life has been streamlined by Allah and implemented by Him in the world. He has disclosed some things and put veil on the others. He has not made open what He has but for an underlying reason; and has not hidden what He has but for an underlying reason. Therefore, to cause hiding of what is apparent or to disclose what is hidden would disrupt the system, which covers the universe.

It is not unlike the human life based on the body-system which is made up of various powers, organs and limbs – if one of it is removed from, or added to it, a major function of life would be lost, and may be at times the life itself – or its meaning – will be ruined.

The second factor, which the verse has left vague, is the nature of things about which they are forbidden to ask. It only describes them as being such that they may pain or trouble you if they are disclosed. There is no doubt that the words: “which if declared to you, may trouble you,” are the attribute of the preceding word: “things.” It is a conditional sentence that shows that if the condition takes place, its concomitant is bound to take place. As those things were of such a nature that if disclosed they would certainly trouble them; therefore, putting questions about them and seeking to unearth their hidden affairs was tantamount to asking to be trouble and pained.

(as-Suyuti) quotes Ibn Jarir, Abu sh-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh who have narrated from Abu Hurayrah that he said, The Messenger of Allah (S), delivered a sermon before us, and said,

O people! Allah has prescribed *hajj* for you.

Ukashah ibn Muhsin stood up and said, *Every year? O Messenger of Allah!*

(The Prophet) said, as for it, if I had said, “Yes,” it would have become obligatory; and if it had become obligatory and then were you to leave it, you would have gone astray. Remain silent before me when I am silent before you, as those who were before you had perished only because of their questionings and their discord against their prophets. Then Allah revealed: *O you who believe! Do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you .....*

(ad-Durr Manthur)

(as-Suyuti) quotes Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim who have narrated from as-Suddi about the word of Allah: *O you who believe! Do not put question about things which declared to you .....*, that he said,

The Messenger of Allah (S), became angry one day, and stood up to address the people; and he said, ‘Ask me, for you will not ask me about anything but I shall inform you about it.’ So there stood up a Qurayshite man from Banu Sahn, Abdullah ibn Hadhqah by name – and people used to vilify him – and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! Who is my father?’ He said, ‘Your father is so-and-so (and he asserted his relationship to his father).’

Umar betook himself to him, kissed his foot and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! We are pleased with Allah as the Lord, and with you as the Prophet, and with the Qur’an as the leader; so pardon us, may Allah pardon you!’ So he continued beseeching him until his anger subsided. It was on that day that he said, ‘The child belongs to the bed and for the adulterer is the stone.’ And it was (then) revealed to him: *And people before indeed asked such questions, [and then became disbelievers on account of them].*”

(ibid)

Ali (AS) said,

Verily Allah has enjoined upon you some duties, so do not neglect them; and laid down for you some limits, so do not transgress them; and has forbidden you some things, so do not commit them; and has passed over some things, and has not left them because of forgetfulness, so do not force yourself concerning them.

(Majma’u ‘l-bayan; Tafsir as-Safi)

(al-Kulayni) narrates through his chains from Abul-Jarud that he said, Abu Ja’far (AS) said,

When I tell you anything, you should ask me for its authority from the Book of Allah. Thereafter he said in one of his talks, ‘Verily the Messenger of Allah (S) had forbidden idle talk, squandering of wealth and excessive questioning.’

It was said to him, ‘O Son of the Messenger of Allah! Where is it from the Book of Allah?’ He said, ‘Verily Allah, the Mighty, the Great, says: *There is no good in most of their secret talks except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people* (4:114); and He has said: *And do not give away your property which Allah has made for you a (means of) support to the weak of understanding* (4:5); and He has said: *do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you.*(5:101)

[al-Kafi]

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

Every companion of the Holy Prophet was not endowed with the intelligence to understand Allah, His commands, His creation and that which governs the creation. What was given to Salman was not given to Abu Dharr, and what Abu Dharr knew was out of the reach of other companions. Only the Holy Prophet and Ali were endowed with the full, complete and perfect wisdom (Ya Sin: 12 and Nisa 54). One was the city of knowledge and the other was its gate.

These verses denounce frivolous questioning on the part of the ignorant companions, sometimes merely to abate their idle curiosity, sometimes arising out of a sense of inferiority, sometimes with shrewd cunning in order to obtain scope for individual discretion to be used in future in the name of "the demands of circumstances".

The Holy Prophet said:

By Allah, I can tell you who among you will go to paradise, and who among you will burn in hell for ever. The whole universe is before my eyes. Beware! If I tell you about things and events, you will not like it. I have already told you all that which brings you near to Allah, so you must carry out those commands, and I have disclosed all that which separates you from Him and takes you to hell, so do not do what I have forbidden. Do not transgress the boundaries laid down by Allah. If you ask questions about the things He has not disclosed, because of His wisdom, you will find yourselves in deep trouble.

Aforetime people have asked questions of their prophets but they disbelieved them afterwards.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

Upon the occasion of revelation of these two verses, it has been narrated from Ali-ibn-Abi Talib (AS) as follows :

It happened that one day the Prophet of Islam (S) preached a sermon in which he stated the command of Allah about Hajj. Then, a person by the name of Akkashah (and according to another narration Suraqah) asked whether that commandment was ordained for only that year or they should perform Hajj every year.

The holy Prophet (S) delayed to answer him, but the man obstinately repeated his question two or three times. The Prophet (S) said:

Woe to you ! Why do you persist so much? If I answer you positively, performing Hajj will become obligatory for all of you every year. So, if it becomes obligatory every year, you will not be able to perform it and the offender of it will be a sinner. Hence, as long as I have not said a thing to you, do not urge on it. Then, the verse was revealed and dissuaded them from that action.

Improper Questions!

No doubt asking questions is the key to the recognition of facts. The verses of the Qur'an and Islamic traditions have earnestly enjoined Muslims that they ask whatever they do not know. But, in view of the fact that every rule usually has an exception, this basic educational principal has an exception, too. It is so that sometimes some affairs had better to be concealed in order that the system of the society be protected and the individuals' interests be safeguarded. In such respects, researches and frequent questions, with the purpose of unveiling some facts, not only is not a virtue, but also is blameworthy and reprobated.

In this verse, the Qur'an has referred to this subject and explicitly says:  
*" O you who have Faith! Do not ask about thing (and secrets ) which, if they are disclosed to you, may upset you. ..."*

But, since giving no answer to the questions that some persons sometimes urge on, asking them repeatedly may cause some doubts for others which can bring forth greater evils, the Qur'an adds:  
*"... Yet, if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being sent down, they will be disclosed to you. ..."*

In this case, you will fall into trouble.

Next to that meaning, the Qur'an implies that you should not imagine that when Allah is silent about some matters, He is neglectful of them. Nay ! He desires to set you in some facilities. It says:  
*"...Allah pardoned as to these matters and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing."*

We recite in a tradition narrated from Imam Ali (a.s.) who has said:

Verily Allah has enjoined you some obligations, do not waste them; and He has assigned some limits for you, do not violate them; and He has prohibited you from some things, do not betray (secrets of ) them; and He has kept silent for you about some things which He has never been concealed because of forgetfulness. Then, do not urge to disclose these things.