

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُونَ قَوْمًا مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ
وَلَا نِسَاءً مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا
تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ
هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Al-Hujurat (The Dwellings) 49:11

O You Who Believe!

- Let not some men among you laugh at others.
- It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former).
- Nor let some women laugh at others.
- It may be that the (latter are better than the (former).
- Nor defame, nor be sarcastic to each other.
- Nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames.
- Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed.
- And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong.

Commentary

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

God says, " O you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former; Nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former."

The Arabic word "Yasakkkhir" is the same as the Arabic word " Istihza" and both mean to ridicule or to say something that is demeaning and insulting to a person either by words, signs or through deeds. It is done often by aping somebody in a manner resulting in immediate natural laughter. The Arabic word "Qaum" here means a tribe or a nation or a group of either sex. Men perform important tasks and not women and the "Qaum" here refers to the sex opposite the female sex. The wisdom of this is mentioned in the words " nor defame one another or nor insult one another by nicknames." From the words of the verse we discern that the person being ridiculed may be better in the eyes of God than the one who insults him whether it be a woman or a man. In the same way it stands about one group insulting another and women insulting each other is a part of their natural behavioral pattern.

" Nor defame one another" means to accuse one another of defects because all people in the society are inter connected and accusing or insulting or defaming one another is the same as defaming oneself. One should avoid insulting or defaming another because one does not like to be defamed or insulted by some one else. This is what is meant by the Arabic word " Anfusikum" here.

God says, " *nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad it is to insult one's brother after having faith.*"

The Arabic word " Alnabaz" means nicknames. It is at times very insulting for a person to be nicknamed as a "fool" or an "idiot" or " heretic" etc. and the word "ism" in the verse " how bad it is to insult one's brother after having faith."

We sometimes remember people for being wise, or generous. So the verse will mean giving each other bad names or calling them by insulting titles because it is the right for the believer to be addressed properly for he is a man of belief. No one should be demeaningly critical of another even indirectly such as saying that " some one whose father was this or that" or whose mother was this or that."

The Arabic word "Ism" may also mean signs, or attributes and this means to name a person after he has accepted faith. In the same way if a person in an early stage of life has committed a sin but repented seriously after that but is still called by the name " the man who did such and such crime". It may also mean naming people badly or giving people some demeaning name and this is also a part of the ban imposed.

God says, " *And whosoever does not repent then such are the wrongdoers*", because that person has not been able to give up doing the sin that he has been asked not to and continues in his old ways. He is not repentant and does not return to God's fold. Truly, these sorts of person are the wrongdoers. He does not lose hope after doing these evil deeds from which God has ordered him to desist. The words "and does not repent" here also may refer to the believers who are immersed in this sin.

A Discussion on Hadith

In Durre Manthur Ibn Hatim quoting Maqatil has detailed the facts about the verse " O You who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group" that this verse had been revealed for the Bani Tamim because they had made fun of Bilal, Salman, Ammar, Suhaib, Ibn Fahira and the slave of Abi Huzaifa named Salim.

In Majmaul Bayan it says the words, " Let not a group scoff at another group" was revealed for Thabit bin Qais bin Shamas. This man was hard of hearing and he was given to sit beside the Messenger whenever he came to the mosque and he could hear the Messenger speak.

One day he came after the prayers were over and the people had gone. He came out searching for them saying aloud " Give way! Give way!" and when he reached a person he said, " I have reached the sitting" and then sat angrily behind him. When darkness spread he asked " Who is it?" the man replied " I am so and so" He said, (insultingly) " You are the son of so and so who.." and spoke about the nickname of the father in the days of ignorance. The man bowed his head in shame and this was when the verse was revealed.

The word " Women scoff at other women" according to Ibn Abbas refers to the wives of the Messenger. They had made fun of Janab Umme Salma and insulted her. Umme Salma had tied a white piece of cloth around her waist and the two ends were dangling behind her back and they were pulling them. Ayesha then told Hafsa " See what dangles behind her. It seems it is the the tongue of a dog". This was how they were insulting and ridiculing her. It is said that Umme Salma was short in stature and Ayesha through signs with her hands indicated that she is short.

In Durre Manthur, Ahmed, Abd bin Hameed, and Bukhari in Adab, Abu Daud, Tirmizi, Sanai, Ibn Maja, Abu Leila, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Manzar; Baghwi in Mu'jama, Ibn Haban and Shirazi in Alqab, Tibrani and Ibn Sani in Amal al Yom wa Layla, Hakim, Ibn Marduia and Bahiqi in Sha'ab Al Iman have all quoted Abu Jeira bin Zahak that he said, the words, " Nor insult one another by nicknames" as revealed for us Bani Salma. When the Messenger came to Madina there was no person who did not have two or three names. When the Messenger addressed any such person by one of his name they said, " O Messenger of God this person dislikes this name." It was then that God revealed this verse.

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

Mutual ridicule ceases to be fun when there is arrogance or selfishness or malice or contempt behind it. We may laugh with people, but we must never laugh at people to disgrace or dishonour them.

Defamation may consist in speaking ill of others by the spoken or written word, or in acting in such a way as to suggest a charge. A biting remark or taunt or sarcasm is included in the word lamaza. An offensive nickname may amount to defamation.

Ammar, Bilal, Suhayl, Salman and Habib were used to be ridiculed by the people of Bani Tamim for their not having sufficient means of livelihood. A-isha used to hold Umme Salimah in contempt because she had no adornments. Once A-isha and Hafsa laughed at Safiyah in contempt to remind her that she was the daughter of a Jew.

The Holy Prophet asked Safiyah to say: *Yes, My father was Harun and my uncle was Musa, the messengers of Allah, and my husband the last Prophet of Allah.*