

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Al-Ḥujūrāt*, 49.

This is the third of the group of three Madinah Sūras, which began with S. xlvii. See the Introduction to that Sūra.

Its subject-matter is the manners to be observed by the members of the rapidly-growing Muslim community, among themselves and towards its Leader. The key-word "*Ḥujūrāt*" (Inner Apartments) occurs in verse 4.

Its date is referred to the Year of Deputations, A.H. 9, when a large number of deputations of all kinds visited Madinah to offer their allegiance to Islam.

Summary.—A community must show its respect to its Leader in all forms of behaviour; quarrels are unseemly and should be composed; manners spring from morals; and mutual respect and confidence are a duty and a privilege in Islam (xlix. 1-18).

Al-Hujurāt, or the Inner Apartments.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. O ye who believe!
Put not yourselves forward⁴⁹¹⁹
Before Allah and His Messenger;
But fear Allah: for Allah
Is He Who hears
And knows all things.
2. O ye who believe!
Raise not your voices⁴⁹²⁰
Above the voice of the Prophet,
Nor speak aloud to him
In talk, as ye may
Speak aloud to one another,
Lest your deeds become⁴⁹²¹
Vain and ye perceive not.
3. Those that lower their voice
In the Presence of
Allah's Messenger,—their hearts
Has Allah tested for piety:⁴⁹²²

سُورَةُ الْحُجُرَاتِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدُمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَقْرَبُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ
النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ
لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلنَّقَاةِ
لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾

4919. Several shades of meaning are implied: (1) do not make yourselves conspicuous in word or deed when in the presence of Allah (e.g. in a Mosque, or at Prayers or religious assemblies): (2) do not anticipate in word or deed what your Leader (Allah's Messenger) may say or do; (3) do not be impatient, trying to hasten things before the time is ripe, of which the best Judge is Allah, Who speaks through His Messenger. Be reverent in all things, as in the presence of Allah: for He hears and sees all things. (4) Look to the Qur-ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him) for guidance and let nothing else take precedence of them.

4920. It is bad manners to talk loudly before your Leader. Some ill-mannered people so raise their voices as to drown the voice of their Leader, in conversation or in Council.

4921. Such rudeness may even destroy the value of such services as they may otherwise have been able to render, and all this without their even realising the harm they were doing to the Cause.

4922. The essence of good manners arises from the heart. The man who really and sincerely respects his Leader has true piety in his heart, just as the man who does the opposite may undo the work of years by weakening the Leader's authority.

For them is Forgiveness
And a great Reward.

4. Those who shout out⁴⁹²³
To thee from without
The Inner Apartments—
Most of them lack understanding.
5. If only they had patience
Until thou couldst
Come out to them,
It would be best
For them: but Allah is
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.
6. O ye who believe!
If a sinner comes⁴⁹²⁴
To you with any news,
Ascertain the truth, lest
Ye harm people unwittingly,
And afterwards become
Full of repentance for
What ye have done.
7. And know that among you⁴⁹²⁵
Is Allah's Messenger: were he,
In many matters, to follow

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ
أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا
أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِمِجْهَلَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَيَّ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ
نَذِيرٍ ﴿٥١﴾

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ
مِنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ

4923. To shout aloud to your Leader from outside his Apartments shows disrespect both for his person, his time, and his engagements. Only ignorant fools would be guilty of such unseemly behaviour. It is more seemly for them to wait and bide their time until he is free to come out and attend to them. But, with the Messenger of Allah, much is forgiven that is due to lack of knowledge and understanding. In an earthly Court, ignorance of the Law excuseth no man. If a man behaved in that way to the General of an army or the Governor of a Province, not to speak of an earthly King, he would be laid hands on by the Guard, and could never gain the access he desires.

4924. All tittle-tattle or reports—especially if emanating from persons you do not know—are to be tested, and the truth ascertained. If they were believed and passed on, much harm may be done, of which you may have cause afterwards to repent heartily. Scandal or slander of all kinds is here condemned.

4925. The messenger of Allah, if he consults his friends and associates, should not be expected to follow their advice in all matters. The judgment and responsibility are his: he sees farther than the rest, and he is not swayed by personal feeling as others may be.

Your (wishes), ye would
 Certainly suffer:
 But Allah has endeared⁴⁹²⁶
 The Faith to you, and
 Has made it beautiful
 In your hearts, and He
 Has made hateful to you
 Unbelief, wrongdoing, and
 Rebellion: such indeed are
 Those who walk in righteousness;-

8. A grace and favour
 From Allah; and Allah
 Is full of Knowledge
 And Wisdom.

9. If two parties among⁴⁹²⁷
 The Believers fall into
 A fight, make ye peace
 Between them: but if
 One of them transgresses
 Beyond bounds against the other,
 Then fight ye (all) against
 The one that transgresses
 Until it complies with
 The command of Allah;

وَزَيْنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمْ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ
 وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ ﴿٧﴾

فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٨﴾

وَلِإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا
 بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِن بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا
 الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن فَاءَتْ
 فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

4926. Fortunate indeed was the generation among whom the Prophet of Allah walked in his daily life. His example was inspiring. Their inner Faith was dear to them; it was a thing to be proud of in their innermost hearts; and they loved discipline, obedience, and righteousness. No wonder all their other disadvantages were neutralised, and they went from strength to strength. Nothing but the Grace of Allah could have brought about such a result.

4927. Individual quarrels are easier to compose than group quarrels, or, in the modern world, national quarrels. But the collective community of Islam should be supreme over groups or nations. It would be expected to act justly and try to compose the quarrel, for peace is better than fighting. But if one party is determined to be the aggressor, the whole force of the community is brought to bear on it. The essential condition of course is that there should be perfect fairness and justice and respect for the highest principles; for Islam takes account of every just and legitimate interest without separating spiritual from temporal matters. The League of Nations failed because these essentials were absent and today the United Nations fails for the same reason.

But if it complies, then
Make peace between them
With justice, and be fair:
For Allah loves those
Who are fair (and just).

10. The Believers are but
A single Brotherhood:⁴⁹²⁸
So make peace and
Reconciliation between your
Two (contending) brothers;
And fear Allah, that ye
May receive Mercy.

SECTION 2.

11. O ye who believe!
Let not some men
Among you laugh at others:⁴⁹²⁹
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 be⁴⁹³⁰
Sarcastic to each other,

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ
أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ
أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا
بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ
وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

4928. The enforcement of the Muslim Brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. On it was based the Prophet's Sermon at his last pilgrimage, and Islam cannot be completely realised until this ideal is achieved.

4929. Mutual ridicule ceases to be fun when there is arrogance or selfishness or malice behind it. We may laugh *with* people, to share in the happiness of life: we must never laugh *at* people in contempt or ridicule. In many things they may be better than ourselves!

4930. 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 against some person whom we are not in a position to judge. A cutting, biting remark or taunt of sarcasm is included in the word *lamaza*. An offensive nickname may amount to defamation, but in any case there =

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.

12. O ye who believe!
Avoid suspicion as much⁴⁹³¹
(As possible): for suspicion
In some cases is a sin:
And spy not on each other,
Nor speak ill of each other
Behind their backs. Would any
Of you like to eat
The flesh of his dead⁴⁹³²
Brother? Nay, ye would
Abhor it... But fear Allah:
For Allah is Oft-Returning,
Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ
الظَّنِّ إِتْمٌ وَلَا يَجْتَسِسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا
أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا
فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

= is no point in using offensive nicknames, or names that suggest some real or fancied defect. They ill accord with the serious purpose which Muslims should have in life. For example, even if a man is lame, it is wrong to address him as "O lame one!" It causes him pain, and it is bad manners. So in the case of the rude remark, "the black man".

4931. Most kinds of suspicion are baseless and to be avoided, and some are crimes in themselves: for they do cruel injustice to innocent men and women. Spying, or enquiring too curiously into other people's affairs, means either idle curiosity, and is therefore futile, or suspicion carried a stage further, which almost amounts to sin. Back-biting also is a brood of the same genus. It may be either futile but all the same mischievous, or it may be poisoned with malice, in which case it is a sin added to sin.

4932. No one would like even to think of such an abomination as eating the flesh of his brother. But when the brother is dead, and the flesh is carrion, abomination is added to abomination. In the same way we are asked to refrain from hurting people's feelings when they are present; how much worse is it when we say things, true or false, when they are absent!

13. O mankind! We created⁴⁹³³
 You from a single (pair)
 Of a male and a female,
 And made you into
 Nations and tribes, that
 Ye may know each other
 (Not that ye may despise
 (Each other). Verily
 The most honoured of you
 In the sight of Allah
 Is (he who is) the most
 Righteous of you.
 And Allah has full knowledge
 And is well acquainted
 (With all things).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ
 شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
 أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

14. The desert Arabs say,⁴⁹³⁴
 "We believe." Say, "Ye
 Have no faith; but ye
 (Only) say, 'We have submitted'⁴⁹³⁵
 Our wills to Allah,'
 For not yet has Faith
 Entered your hearts.
 But if ye obey Allah
 And His Messenger, He
 Will not belittle aught
 Of your deeds: for Allah
 Is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ
 قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ
 وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ
 شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

4933. This is addressed to all mankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood, though it is understood that in a perfected world the two would be synonymous. As it is, mankind is descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, races, and nations are convenient labels by which we may know certain differing characteristics. Before Allah they are all one, and he gets most honour who is most righteous.

4934. The desert Arabs were somewhat shaky in their faith. Their hearts and minds were petty, and they thought of petty things, while Islam requires the complete submission of one's being to Allah. See next verse. Some of the failings of the desert Arabs are described in xlviii. 11-15. But the reference here is said to be to the Banū Asad, who came to profess Islam in order to get charity during a famine.

4935. 'This is what ye ought to prove if your faith has any meaning, but ye only say it with your tongues.'

15. Only those are Believers
Who have believed in Allah
And His Messenger, and have
Never since doubted, but
Have striven with their
Belongings and their persons
In the Cause of Allah:
Such are the sincere ones.

16. Say: "What! Will ye⁴⁹³⁶
Tell Allah about your
Religion? But Allah knows
All that is in the heavens
And on earth: He has
Full knowledge of all things.

17. They impress on thee⁴⁹³⁷
As a favour that they
Have embraced Islam.
Say, "Count not your Islam
As a favour upon me:
Nay, Allah has conferred
A favour upon you
That He has guided you
To the Faith, if ye
Be true and sincere.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَأَلَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾

يَعْمُرُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمْنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ
بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

4936. 'You say (or perhaps even think) that you are Muslims, but where are the fruits of your Faith? Allah knows the innermost motives and secrets of your heart, and you cannot deceive Him by attaching a certain label to yourselves'. Alas! that this answer to the desert Arabs is true of so many others in our own times!

4937. Islam in itself is a precious privilege. By accepting it we confer no favour on its preacher or on any community. If the acceptance is from the heart, it is a great favour done to those who accept, that the Light of Allah has entered their hearts and they have received guidance.

18. "Verily Allah Knows⁴⁹³⁸

The Unseen of the heavens
And the earth: and Allah
Sees well all
That ye do."

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ
بَصِيرٌ يُمَاتَعْمَلُونَ



4938. This does not mean that we should seek petty motives in newcomers into the House of Islam. That would indeed be harbouring suspicions or allowing curiosity to spy out motives, which would be a crime under xlix. 12. We should be true, sincere, and devoted ourselves, and leave the case of others to Allah, from Whose eyes nothing is hidden.