

# Jurisprudential analysis of the social networks applications

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## ABSTRACT

Social networks are cyberspaces that are directed at establishing and reflecting the inter-personal social relations and the users can easily make use of such social networks as Telegram and Instagram via their own mobile phones. Social and communication networks serve two functions. Reasonable and safe use of such media can cause every society to progress and the unreasonable and unhealthy use of such media can bring about social and cultural disorders and waste the users' precious time. Jurisprudence, as the underlying premise of our statutory provisions, puts forth a clear-cut answer for such an issue. These media are exemplarily considered as Deviant Books and the verdicts addressing the issues pertaining to Deviant Books can be also applied thereto. Jurisprudence both forbids and permits the application of the social media. That is because social networks originally are in no contradiction with the undoubted religion of Islam and they are in whole recounted as a phenomenon that provide for an easier way of communication between the people and that eventually they enable more awareness. And, the Islamic government can also adopt purposive management methods to minimize the social harms resulting thereof.

**Keywords:** Social networks, social media application, cyberspace, deviant books.

## Introduction

It is for long that the fervor for making use of social networks including Telegram and Instagram has gone up. About four hundred million individuals worldwide use internet on a daily basis and one of the internet's main uses is getting the societies connected. Therefore, the author of the current research paper decided to investigate the use of social networks so as to make it clear whether it is jurisprudentially forbidden or permissible to make use of such social media and networks? Based on the fact that social networks are currently serving functions other than what they have been originally designed for and it is likely that the God's forbidden acts take place therein including the construction of fake profiles and offending the individuals' privacy, personal information and image thefts, dispersion of unethical images, spreading rumors, fraud, release of false news and invalid materials, the jurists have issued sentences signifying the obligatory impermissibility of any disallowed use of such networks and hold the government responsible for

stipulation of regulations and punishments in line with prevention from such crimes and preservation of the Islamic society from the detrimental effects of them in regard of the forbiddance of trading and use of deviant books, the forbiddance of releasing false news and invalid material, the forbiddance of information theft, the forbiddance of watching not-intimate individuals and unethical images, the forbiddance of promoting vice, the forbiddance of strengthening the Islam enemies and the forbiddance of violations from the Islamic government's rules and regulations.

On the other hand, it seems that in case that this arena is left unattended by the virtuous individuals, such a ready and highly influential space will be completely prepared for the futile intellectual and cultural streams and they will target both the religion and the world of the mankind community.

In other words, social networks are both opportunity and threat; a one-dimensional approach would only consider their positive aspects which does hold true if their negative aspects are highlighted whereas the comprehensive and specialist approach in such cases takes both the opportunities and the threats altogether into account.

Jurisprudence, as the foundation of our legal regulations, posits a vivid response to the issue of using social networks in cyberspace and it considers them as examples of the deviant books and the verdicts addressing the deviant books issues can also be applied to them, so their use can be forbidden in case that they are used unethically and not canonically; furthermore, their use can be permissible because these social networks are

### Access this article online

Website: [www.japer.in](http://www.japer.in)

E-ISSN: 2249-3379

**How to cite this article:** Muhsen Jahangiri, Muhammad Sheibani. Jurisprudential analysis of the social networks applications. *J Adv Pharm Edu Res* 2018;8(S2):1-9.

**Source of Support:** Nil, Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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originally not contradictory to the undoubted religion of Islam and they are holistically a phenomenon that enable greater communication between people and provide for their more in-depth awareness.

Since an information society is formed within the cyberspace and this renders likely the formation of a knowledge association, the foresaid space will be the place where wisdom can be created and transferred and the holy Quran interprets wisdom as the “great beneficence”. And, on the other hand, invitation to reading and learning and teaching that are revealed in the first revelations to the great apostle of Islam (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) and it has been repeated in the Holy Quran more than 128 times and the disparity of the holders of knowledge and the ones lacking it has been highly emphasized in the Holy Quran, there is no doubt that nowadays the best means of acquiring and generating knowledge is in cyberspace, thus it appears that the people’s access to the information cannot be easily restricted in the foresaid space and the outcome resulting thereof are the decline in the awareness level, deprivation of human beings’ essential rights, and the unfulfillment of the canonical obligations in areas like guidance, promotion of virtue and prevention of vice and invitation to Islam, deprivation of the Muslims’ canonical rights.

In addition, according to the general and specific implications of some narratives as well as the reason and consensus verdicts, the author of the present study envisions that it is through correct and greatly beneficent use of social networks and by the Islamic government’s minimization of their dangers and social harms through purposive management that not only the correct use of social networks can be allowed like any other instrument or tool that can be used legitimately or illegitimately but also it is the duty of anyone who has the ability and proficiency in making correct use of these efficient tools to enter such cyberspaces to uphold canonical responsibility of “promote virtue and prevent vice” and utilize the social networks in line with the promotion of the religion and Islamic revolution’s values as well as elucidation the Islamic government’s principles.

## Conceptualization:

### Jurisprudence Defined:

Lexicologists provide several definitions of the term “jurisprudence” in their books: “Jurisprudence” means “understanding and gaining knowledge about something”; of course, due to the superiority and priority of the knowledge of religion over the other sciences, its use is more prevalent than the other sciences ...”<sup>[1]</sup> This is the idea confirmed by a great many of the lexicologists and it is defined by the jurists in the famous phrase “knowledge of ancillary canonical verdicts through detailed proofs”<sup>[2]</sup>.

The common jurisprudence includes the very ancillary canonical verdicts that the people are required to observe in their daily affairs and they pertain to worships, transactions and policies.

### Social Networks Defined:

The concept “social network” incorporates the entire network structure and digital activities including the contents, insertions, concepts and actions that are guided through digital networks<sup>[3]</sup>. Although the internet-based social networks are not the genuine ones, they do not feature face-to-face communication, but many of the internet researchers tend to use the expression “community” to refer to the internet users collectively. Social networks can be divided to some sets:

#### 1) Non-Virtual Social Networks:

- a) Organizational social networks like cooperatives, parties, formations and NGOs;
- b) Non-organizational social networks like the local cultural institutions, local financial funds, family sessions and friendly forums;
- c) Governmental social networks like the mobilization (Basij), university, seminaries

#### 2) Virtual Social Networks:

The virtual networks that actively take part in cyberspace can be, in a gross classification, divided to general and specific social networks. General networks usually are characterized by the membership of a great many of the users who enter these networks with their own various goals and motivations such as Facebook, tweeter, Orkut and others of the like. Specific social networks’ activities revolve around special pivots like books, good readers, music, last.fm, photos, flickr and others of the like. Facebook is highly popular amongst such virtual social networks as Friends Feeds, Myspace and Utube and it is ranked first in terms of the number of member users<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Virtual Social Networks:** This is an expression for describing the tools and databases by means of which the users disperse their own materials<sup>[5]</sup>. These networks incorporate a site or a collection of sites in which the users can share their interests, thoughts and activities mutually with the others<sup>[6]</sup>.

Virtual social network is a phenomenon in the cyberspace that has influenced the entire aspects of human lives and it has faced the political, social and cultural areas with a great many of opportunities and threats. These networks while being capable of facilitating the inter-individual communication can at the same time serve economical, security, informational, educational and other functions<sup>[7]</sup>.

The concept “social network” was first introduced in 1940 by Brown in the field of anthropology. Then, amidst the 1950s, the concept was again utilized by Butt and Barns<sup>[8]</sup>. Nowadays,

<sup>1</sup>. “Jurisprudence is the knowledge about the things and developing understanding about them and the knowledge of religion is superior to the other kinds of sciences for its dignity, priority and nobility ...”

<sup>2</sup> “التفصيلية أدلتها عن الفرعية الشرعية بالأحكام هو: العلم الاصطلاح وفي”

, Hassan Ben Zayd Al-Din Al-Ameli, the writer of “Ma’alem Al-Din” has ordered that “And, commonly it is: the knowledge over the ancillary canonical verdicts through their detailed proofs”.

<sup>2</sup>.

communications and interactions between the people are considerably expanded in virtual spaces. The today's world is exposed to increasing metamorphosis, changes and evolutions, especially, in its move towards "a single global village"<sup>[9]</sup>.

One specific function of the media, particularly virtual social networks, is information transfer and news coverage. With their news coverage in such areas as social, political, economical and so forth, these collections try to direct the public thoughts towards their own objectives. Therefore, the recognition of the information transfer method used by these virtual social networks in respect to the global events and evolutions is necessary and required.

Due to the extensiveness of the virtual social network field in the today's communities and the phenomenon's enjoyment of features such as fluidity and dynamic motion, it is necessary to keep pace with the technological and content-related growth and perfection of the virtual social networks in every respect and carry out further research on their functions, especially in social evolutions in this globalization era.

## Social Network in Iran:

In Iran, the concept "social network" became extensively prevalent with Orkut<sup>3</sup>. And, it developed in such a rapid pace that Iran was ranked third in its use of Orkut, after Brazil and US<sup>[10]</sup>.

Joining the social networks is not considered a breach of law in Iran but it depends on the type of the individual's use and the network's type. Based on the laws on computer-based crimes, the principle is freedom of action and the citizens can make use of the entire facilities provided on the internet. But there are exceptions that are required to be taken into consideration and it is substantially stated in the laws on computer-based infringement that ignoring the stipulated impermissible cases is considered a breach thereof<sup>[10]</sup>. Although an accurate statistics of the social networks in Iran is not at hand, approximately about 600 cases under such titles as social networks, weblogs<sup>4</sup><sup>[11]</sup>, Wikis<sup>5</sup>, webcasts and podcasts<sup>6</sup>, forums<sup>7</sup>, content virtual communities and Microblogs<sup>8</sup> are active in the country. And, this is indicative of the booming status of such sites in Iran<sup>[12]</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Orkut is a social network.

<sup>4</sup> Ariyanpour Kashani, Abbas, "Persian-English university dictionary", terms "web" and "log". Weblog is made up of two words "web", meaning worldwide network, and "log", meaning daily report or daily writing and it is a personal or group page that is updated daily or once every now and then with new material.

<sup>5</sup> Longman "English-English" dictionary: Wiki is a dictionary or encyclopedia in cyberspace

<sup>6</sup> Oxford English-English dictionary: literally, Oxford defines Podcast as radio-based programs that are recorded digitally and they are placed on the internet to be downloaded by the personal devices and they can be listened to in two ways of online broadcasting through pressing the broadcast button on the web page or via downloading the audio file to a computer system or a mobile set and then running it.

<sup>7</sup> Longman English-English dictionary: forum is a Latin word meaning square, market, a place for public assembly, court and so on. In the internet and computer, forum is a public assembly to which anyone from anywhere can join and consult with the others about any topic. In other words, it is the same "conversation hall".

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Microblog is a type of weblog writing in which the users are provided with the ability to write and publish short text. The materials presented in the microblogs can be image or movies and the possibility to send them is completely a choice of the microblog service provider or the main service provider.

Such a rapid expansion and development in virtual social networks is reflective of the idea that such services are highly welcomed by the people's mass in the global community. Although many of the social networks including Tweeter and Facebook are filtered in Iran, we are bearing witness to the Iranian users' high interests in the aforementioned sites. In such a manner that, according to Alexa's statistics, Facebook is one of the ten most superior sites in the cyberspace which is also utilized by the Iranians. One reason behind such a considerable interest is that although not much time has elapsed since these sites entered the arena of virtual world, there are factors that cause the individuals to become willing to make use of such sites including their novelty and attractions as well as their serviceability that makes the site users exit passivity and find themselves active individuals who are striving among millions of active others and also their getting in touch with the thoughts and the things that are of interest to them<sup>[12]</sup>.

## Proofs of Virtual Network Use Forbiddance:

### 1) Avoiding "Amusement of Speech"

”وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْأَحْدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ“

Meaning "And of the people is he who buys the amusement of speech to mislead [others] from the way of Allah without knowledge and who takes it in ridicule. Those will have a humiliating punishment." (Loqman: 6)

Based on the interpreters' ideas, the AYA has been revealed about Nazr Ben Hares Ben Alghamah Ben Abduldar Ben Ghassi Ben Kalab. He was a tradesman who had learnt a lot of stories and narrations meanwhile taking business trips to Iran such as the story of "Rustam and Esfandiyar" and he used to retell them to the people upon his return to Mecca and he equaled himself to the great apostle of Islam (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) by accusing him of storytelling; he denied the great apostle's prophecy and distracted the people from paying attention to the Holy Quran's teachings<sup>[13]</sup>. The AYA orders "some people buy vain speech so as to deviate the people from the path of the God"; the "amusement of speech", as declared in the abovementioned AYA, means topics against what is right bring about the grounding for the people's astray. And, on the other hand, if a sentence of punishment is issued on a deed, it means the act is forbidden and its elimination is necessary at least in terms of an obligatory introduction. It is necessarily forbidden to keep and publish a book that is considered as a deviant book, though it is not found actually harmful.

### Reasoning from the AYA:

**Theorem:** possessing and maintaining deviating media is among the examples of "amusement of speech".

**Major Point:** any sort of "amusement of speech" such as purchase, keeping and maintaining thereof is forbidden canonically.

**Conclusion:** possessing and maintaining and keeping antireligious media is forbidden.

**Response:** corresponding to an apparent and famous rendering of the aforementioned AYA, it can be used for such cases as the purchase of deviant books, amusement of speech and deviant media but here we do not address the initialization and maintenance of such things rather we intend discussions on the necessity to filter such sites and this latter issue cannot be understood from the AYA. That is because the others have established these media and the necessity to eradicate and shut down the deviant media cannot be perceived from the context of the AYA so it is found having nothing to do with the topic presented herein.

## 2) Avoiding False Statement:

Another AYA that can be used as a premise for clarifying the verdicts on deviant books is the AYA 30 of Surah Hajj.

وَأَجَلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ ...  
وَأَجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

meaning “And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you. So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement”, (Hajj: 30).

The author of “Majma’a Al-Bayan” states in his interpretation of the AYA that “Avoid false statement” that “it is narrated by our companions [Imamiyyeh jurisprudence] that this statement encompasses ecstatic songs and the other things featuring an in vain nature”<sup>14</sup>.

The late Saheb Javaher, as well, in his clarification of the deviant books, bases his rendering on the above-cited AYA and places the deviant book among the examples of “false statement” and writes “the forbiddance of the deviant books can also be used for whatever that implies the necessity to avoid false statement”<sup>9</sup> [15]. The deceased Sheikh Ansari also clasps onto the AYA to express the verdicts pertaining to deviant books. He writes: “besides ... the order to avoid false statement as well implies the deviant books forbiddance”<sup>10</sup>. [16]

**Response:** The abovementioned AYA’s implications regarding the verdicts on deviant books are more distant in contrast to the AYA “amusement of speech” to what is really intended. Although, fundamentalists do not consider the AYA’s revelation case and conditions as being specific to the generalities, but in generalizing the extant verdict in the AYA to similar cases there should be a proportion between the AYA’s case and the case to which it is going to be generalized. If we accept Sheikh Ansari’s interpretation of the deviant books, then the road to attributions to the above AYA for inferring a verdict for deviant book is blocked; because, Sheikh considers the deviant books as the ones that it is confirmed that they cause deviation [14], whereas the AYA’s intention addresses a certain type of deviation that has been customary among a group of Saudi Arabia’s people in the form of a habit unless we accept Saheb Javaher’s statement regarding the deviant books and say “therefore, by deviant books any sort of writing that provides for deviation from the growth and development path is

intended”<sup>11</sup>. [15] Thus, the foresaid Arabs’ habit has been a sort of “misleading” and any “misleading thing” is to be incorporated by the “false statement” and as it was mentioned the AYA denies “false statement”. But, the fact of the matter is not all the “misleading” can be grouped among the deviants hence forbid. If the circle is narrowed this much, then many of the mankind’s deeds and behaviors are condemned to forbiddance because a great many of the people perform much more acts with no attention to their “righteousness” or “non-rightfulness” and no trace of growth can be observed on such a deeds of them. It is far from such a jurisprudent as Saheb Javaher to have accepted such inclusiveness.

## 3) The Forbiddance of Contribution to Sins:

Another AYA that is used for the elucidation of the verdicts on the deviant books is the AYA pertaining to the denial of cooperation on wrongdoing.

It is read from the second AYA of the Surah Ma’ida that,

”وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ”

meaning “and, do not cooperate on performing sins and aggression and believe in the God, verily He is most severely chastising” (Ma’ida: 2). The interpreters write about the AYA that “in opposite to cooperation for virtue and goodness there is placed cooperation on perpetrating sins which is in fact a heinous act and provides for laggardness from the felicitous life and cooperation for aggression bearing the meaning of abusing the genuine rights of the people through depriving them from physical, fame-related and financial welfare”<sup>12</sup>.

The first jurisprudent who posited the AYA as bearing the intentions of the deviant books verdict was the late Saheb Riyadh. In this regard, he writes: “... besides the idea that there is a sort of contribution to sin perpetration in rendering the deviant books permissible”<sup>13</sup> [17]. There is no doubt that publishing the deviant books is a sort of aid to the dispersion of vice; particularly, about the ones who do not know the right from the wrong. But, as it was later on reminded by the deceased Naraghi in his book, “Al-Shiite”, it lacks the necessary pervasiveness and this is not likely that all the deviant books lead to the dispersion of vice or at least it cannot be accepted that any work on the deviant books could lead to the development of sins. The late Naraghi writes: “in proving the verdict, it does not suffice us to clasp onto the axiom of contribution to the sin perpetration because it is not all-inclusive”<sup>14</sup> [18].

## Proofs on the Permissibility of Virtual Networks Use:

<sup>11</sup> “So, the intention here addresses all the individuals who acquire any writing that deviates or misleads”.

<sup>12</sup> “... cooperation on sins which is a wrongdoing resulting in the laggardness from the felicitous life and on aggression which is violating the people’s genuine rights through depriving them from body, fame and property safety ...”, (Tabataba’ee, Muhammad Hussein, “Al-Mizan fi Tafsir Al-Quran”, v.5, p.163)

<sup>13</sup> “... plus the fact that there is a type of assistance to sin therein ...”

<sup>14</sup> “... and resorting to the forbiddance of contribution to sin does not suffice”, (Naraghi, Ahmad Ben Muhammad Mahdi, “Al-Shiite document”, discussion on forbidden jobs)

<sup>9</sup> “Rather, its forbiddance can also be used for whatever imply the necessity to avoid false statement ...”.

<sup>10</sup> “And it additionally implies ... and orders avoiding false statement”.

## 1) Inviting Others to Islam:

One of the major concerns of the families, teachers, cultural officials and society authorities is the transferring of their own accepted values to the later generations as well as promotion of their values to the other groups and communities. Many of the individuals choose the formal instruction methods for doing so and, in between, there are those who insist on direct training and instruction of the beliefs and values and that in the form of philosophical and fundamental discussions. These methods, addressing special audience, are per se very effective and fruitful and they may be the only way to advertise and promote values in certain cases as these are the ways of the Holy Quran's invitation to Islam.

“قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ”

meaning “Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]" (Al-e-Imran: 64).

According to the importance of advertisement in the today's world, any sort of modern facilities and tools can be utilized to promote religion. One such a tool is cyberspace. The importance of advertising religion in the virtual space is far more increasingly important than such media as pulpit and mosque space. Groups of seminarians who are proficient in virtual spaces should enter such cyberspaces and promote religion. It is in this case that they can exert a far more accentuated effect on the users. In fact, every individual able to promote religion in virtual networks should enter such cyberspaces. But, it appears that the necessity of promoting the religion in cyberspace has not been publicized for the seminarians and seminaries and it is required to reach an objective and practical stage and it has to be actualized within the format of executive guidelines. This is while, currently, there are on average more than 500 million virtual network users worldwide about 100 million of which are active users and, thus, we can make use of the social networks in which the users are more interested.

As an example, two specimens of recently frequently applied social networks are Instagram and Telegram.

Instagram is an image-based social network that can be effectively used in the area of religion promotion and the users can be attracted and influenced increasingly through the generation of proper contents.

Telegram, as well, is a messaging network featuring the ability to create channels (the capability of inserting materials only by the admins) and groups (the capability to insert materials by the entire members) and the religious materials can be used through adopting novel and audience-friendly approaches, analysis through highly visited channels, so as to attract a great many of the users.

## 2) Recommending Humans to Travel on the Earth:

The Holy Quran binds the past epochs to the present era and ties the present time to the past time's graduality and it knows the intellectual and cultural bound between the current generation with their precedents necessary and required for gaining an insight over the truth; because, it is through relating and knotting these two time periods, now and past, that the late-coming generations' duties and responsibilities are made clear.

“قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُشْرِكِينَ”

meaning “Say, [O Muhammad], "Travel through the land and observe how was the end of those before. Most of them were associators [of others with Allah]" (Al-Rum: 42).

وَقَدْ خَلَّتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ”

meaning “Similar situations [as yours] have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how was the end of those who denied?” (Al-e-Imran: 137).

Though there is a trivial difference but the styles in the AYAT Al-Rum: 42, Al-An'am: 11, Al-Naml: 69, Al-e-Imran: 137 and Al-Nahl: 36 are so much similar and two examples were provided above.

In the above AYAT, the God has had traditions running among the predecessor tribes and these traditions have never been specific and have been, are being and will be equally exercised among all, the past and the future generations. In these traditions, progress and sublimity of the virtuous and pious and united and mindful individuals as well as the defeat and elimination of the scattered and impious and sinful nations are anticipated and history of the mankind has the records thereof. Yes, history is of a vital importance to everyone. The history retells the moral characteristics and the good and bad deeds and the thoughts of the ancestors and it reveals the reasons behind the downfall and the felicity and accomplishment and discomfiture of our predecessors during various eras and centuries. In fact, the history of our ancestors mirrors the spiritual and psychological life of the mankind communities and it is a warning for the forthcoming generations.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in a part of Sermon 16, Nahj Al-Balaqa, orders:

“ذممتي بما أقولُ به رَهينَه، و أنا به رَعيَم، إنَّ من صرَّحت له العيرُ عَمَّا بيَن يَدَيه مِنَ المَثَلاتِ حَجَرَته التَّقوى عن تَقَعُمِ الشُّبُهاتِ”

meaning “whatever I say is my duty and I myself am the warrantor thereof. He who bears witness to the instructive admonitory examples of the events in the course of time and take advices thereof, his virtuousness will prevent him from being blemished even with the things that are dubious to be sins”.

Nowadays, the social networks are the cradle of various human cultures and civilizations. The existence of various languages in the social media provides the involvement of every society member who can expose the culture governing their society to

the eyes of all the people. And, the ability to communicate with one's counterparts around the globe makes these media a proper place for introducing one's own cultures, rituals and traditions and sharing ideas and this same issue can cause an expansion in the pure monotheistic thoughts around the globe; moreover, this can be used as a ground for the revolution of His Highness Mahdi (may Allah hasten his honorable reappearance) and it is, as well, the instrument that has been used by the mankind enemies to impose their false cultures and beliefs on the dominated and third world nations so as to be able to continue their tyrannies and dominations and now it is the time to be used rightfully and correctly against their own nations and this way the pure Islamic values and cultures can be promoted.

### 3) Making Efforts to Advance Muslims'

#### Affairs in Islam's Mindset:

There are numerous AYAT under various titles, including disbursement, benediction, alms, Zakat, visiting the close kin and advancing the Muslim affairs, regarding this legal-ethical issue. Additionally, the Immaculate Imams' way of conduct concerning advancing the Muslims' and Islamic society's affairs is reflective of the lofty stance of such a social value in the Islam's values and norms system and the effect it has on the creation of affiliation and solidification of social relations.

### 4) Receiving the Others' Ideas with Open

#### Arms:

Many of the religions prohibit their followers from studying and investigating the other religions' talks because they are afraid that their logic outperform those of them and hence lose their followers, but the Holy Quran in this regard knows the trustworthy servant of the God as those who do research. These individuals do not fear to hear the others' talks; they neither submit to them unconditionally nor let in all the temptations. The Holy Quran encourages the human beings to think freely and orders,

“فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ”

meaning “And announce with the good news the ones who listen to speech and follow the best of it.” (Al-Zumar: 18). In order to come to the truth, one should hear the others' ideas and then choose the best of them.

The honorable foresaid AYA describes the God's servants and the wise people as the ones who listen to the speakers' speech with no regard of who is speaking and with what characteristics and then tries to select the best of the ideas aided by the power of reason and wisdom, these individuals are not dogmatic and there is no limitation in their ideas because they are the right-seekers and thirsty for truth. Wherever it is found they welcome it from the bottom of their hearts.

### 5) The Necessity to Acquire Knowledge and Learn Reading:

It is true if it is stated that Islam is the religion of knowledge and education for a felicitous this-worldly and otherworldly life.

The importance of knowledge and science in Islam is to the extent that the first sentence revealed to the great apostle of Islam (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) was,

“أَفْرَأَ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ”

meaning “read to the name of your God who created”.

Undoubtedly, human being's value as taught in the Holy Quran is measured by the knowledge s/he has acquired; this is why the humans are said to have become capable of taking the possession of the angles and the universe when the God taught them with the divine names and the mankind got familiar with the celestial knowledge. The God orders in the Holy Quran that,

“وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ”

meaning “And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful” (Baqara: 31).

His Highness supreme leader orders in his utterances that “the Islamic countries should progress in science and technology. The west and the US could dominate the world by the blessing of their science; one of their means was science; they also collected wealth by science. Of course, part of their wealth was gathered through meanness and policies and cheating but science was also effective. There is a narrative that orders “”, meaning “knowledge is power, he who acquires it will dominate and he who does not acquire it will be dominated” (An explication of Nahj Al-Balaqa, Ibn Abi Al-Hadid, v. 20, p.319)<sup>[19]</sup>.

“One should acquire knowledge. When you acquired knowledge then you will have a strong arm. If you do not find knowledge, then the others who are strong in their arms will defeat you. Encourage your youngsters to acquire knowledge; this is possible and we did it in Iran. Before the Islamic Revolution, we were holding the lowest ranks of the world's science and nobody took an interest in us. Now, by the blessing of the Islamic Revolution, by the blessing of Shi'ism, the ones who perform science ranks assessment in the world have said and it has also been released that today's Iran is holding the rank sixteen of the world's science” (His Highness Supreme Leader's speech, 21/12/2012).

And, on the other hand, the inequality of the individuals with and without knowledge is highly emphasized in the Holy Quran.

“قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ”

meaning “Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding” (Al-Zumar: 9).

Undoubtedly, nowadays, the cyberspace is the best means for acquiring and generating knowledge. Thus, it seems that the people's access to information cannot be limited in the aforementioned space and such a limitation, if done, would result in the decline in the awareness levels, depriving the people from their essential right, and the unfulfillment of the canonical duties in such areas as promotion of virtues and prevention of vice and invitation to Islam, deprivation of the Muslims from their religious rights.

## 6) The Shiite Scholars' consensus on the Permissibility of Cyberspace Use:

The following section provides the readers with the ideas opined by some Islamic Texts Exegetes regarding the use of mobile-based social networks.

### His Highness Supreme Leader:

Generally, it is not permissible to make use of such mobile-based social networks if it entails perpetration of depravity (such as promotion of vice, spreading of false statements and in vain material) or if there is a fear of sin perpetration or if it provides for the strengthening of the Islam enemies otherwise it is allowed (this inquiring has been for a question on the use of Facebook but it can be generalized to all the social networks).

### Safi Golpayegani:

Generally, the use of cyberspace for legitimate and correct things that do not cause the corruption of opinions and immorality but contrarily serve the advertisement and promotion of the religious teachings is not only encouraged but it also is favorable.

### Sadegh Rowhani:

Joining such sites and social networks is permissible if it does not bring about the grounding for the perpetration of the deeds against the canonical rules.

### Ayatullah Javadi Amoli:

The culture, thought and contemplation do not fit in virtual space rather they are consistent with tangible spaces! Whether be it obtained via sensory means or trans-sensory means. The topics directly connected to the thinkers' thoughts conveys a message to the mind or creates a feature in the individual's ego, this is actual not virtual! Such social networks cannot be permissible because neither the cabled connections are tangible leave alone the wireless communications nor the TV screen is a reality so that we could permit the things that are faceless and with no picture; the reality and truth should be found wherever there is a thought and notion and where the thoughts and notions are transferred.

### Ayatullah Makarem Shirazi:

The today's cyberspace speaks the first and last word in destruction and construction; though, its founders in the outside of the country intend to undermine our religious culture. So, such an instrument that can give rise to guidance or astray should be properly utilized.

We defend technology by all means. Some should not imagine that we are against these technologies, but the western technology is like muddy and insanitary water. Water is the essence of life but it has to be filtered when it becomes muddy and insanitary. All we ask is filtration of this muddy and insanitary water named 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Internet to make it sanitary and then it can be offered to everyone and nobody will be against it. A man with no reason opposes progress and technology.

### Ayatullah Sobhani:

Internet as a new phenomenon is a very useful and advantageous media that disperses the humans' thoughts rapidly in the entire world and we congratulate the founders on the invention of this 21<sup>st</sup> century industry. The important point is the content of this phenomenon that has to be healthy and constructive and solidify the religious and behavioral premises. But, if an individual proposes an idea for such an excuse as the freedom of writing and thought that causes the society to be dragged to atheism and distantness from the values, surely it will be harmful and devastative.

### His Highness Ayatullah Hosseini Rowhani:

Membership in such sites and social networks is permissible, if it does not bring about the grounding for the perpetration of deeds which are against the canonical rules and religion.

### Ayatullah Mesbah Yazdi:

One of the issues we are currently faced with is the very modern information means a branch of which is internet ... It is the best tool for introducing Islam to the world with the smallest cost; the individuals with the thirst for truth are not few. According to the shortcomings in the facilities and the force, if we cannot in person satisfy the needs of the world for realizing Islam, Shi'ism and the truth, but we can use these means to compensate for a great many of the shortages [20].

## Conclusion:

Social networks are effective on various aspects of individual and social lives within country levels as well as internationally and due to the same reason they are expanding and they will play more important and more prominent roles in future in the world people's lives. His Highness Supreme Leader has ordered that "if I was not the leader of revolution today I would have been the manager of the country's cyberspace". This is reflective of the importance of cyberspace for the supreme leader and the enemy has made a file for every single one person of our country's 70-million population and it has a plan to take the possession of our minds and hearts (The Supreme Leader's information database).

His Highness points to the ten missions of the Supreme Council of cyberspace in the new period:

- 1) Enhancement of the Islamic Republic of Iran's cyberspace power in such a manner that it can be equal to the influential world powers' and enjoyment of taking initiative measures and powerful cooperation with the other countries in forming ethics-oriented and fair rules and regulations of the cyberspace in the global arena;
- 2) Taking particular steps in line with full-scale safeguarding and securing the country's cyberspace as well as strict adherence to the preservation of individual society members' privacies and effective

confrontation with the foreigners' influence and infiltration in this area;

- 3) Promotion of Islamic Iranian norms, values and lifestyles and prevention from the prevalence of the cultural and social harms in this field and effective confrontation with the full-scale cultural invasion as well as enhancing the culture of internet use and knowledge of virtual networks<sup>[20]</sup>.

Also, in response to a question that his highness has been inquired in this regard, his highness orders that "generally speaking, it is not permissible to make use of such social networks if using them and other networks of the like entail depravity, such as promotion of vice, dispersion of false statements and invalid material and harming the Islam and Muslims, or if there is the fear that using them will be accompanied by perpetration of a sin or against the rules and regulations of Islamic Republic of Iran and it is the duty of an obliged Muslim to come to a realization thereof"<sup>[20]</sup>.

And, on the other hand, it seems that if the pious individuals leave such an arena unattended then such a ready and highly influential space will be completely available to the invalid intellectual and cultural streams and they will target both the religion and the world of the human communities and since our duty under such circumstances has been well clarified in the honorable AYA of the Holy Quran that orders,

“وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُوا كَآفَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ”

meaning "And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious." (Tawbeh: 122); also, according to the fact that the human is naturally inclined towards the God and purity as ordered in the following AYA,

“فَاقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ”

meaning "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know" (Al-Rum: 30) and because it is the duty of everyone to awaken the pure and divine nature and the aware and prophecy-oriented individuals are responsible to promote virtue and prevent vice so the virtual social networks should be considered as a field of activity for promoting the religious values.

There are four great Islamic rules that, if observed, turn the cyberspace to a space replete with only opportunities: first of all, they are to give value to human veneration and, second of all, the use of such spaces should not lead to one's own and the others' loss and, thirdly, they should not be seeking to deviate the others and fourthly one should be cautious when approaching the dubious lines. And, in a nutshell, it can be stated that as it is ordered by the supreme leader "the today's world is the world of communication and one cannot enclose his country" therefore, the social networks should be approached wisely and this necessitates an accompanying

cultural definition proportionate to the country's culture so as to make an optimal use of the cyberspace and there will be auspicious opportunities provided if the cyberspace is employed with a deep insight of the scientific capacities therein.

So, all of the scientists and scholars of the Islamic community are obliged (sufficiency duty) to, meanwhile getting perfectly familiar with the social network applications, make a proper use of such information spaces for the advertisement of the religion and the teachings of the immaculate and pure Ahl Al-Bayt thereby to promote the Islamic teachings in every corner of the world.

In the end, several general suggestions are offered as a cure for immunizing the social network users against contingent harms as well as for making a positive use of them:

- 1) Creation and initialization of healthy and fruitful social networks to fight back the detrimental social networks;
- 2) Teaching and establishing proper cultures;
- 3) Continuous and specialized supervision over the virtual communities' space and making appropriate future plans;
- 4) Determination of a permissible age for social networks membership;
- 5) Discussing the dangers and the results of improper use of social networks with the children and adolescents;
- 6) Allocation of the best place at home to computer emplacement;
- 7) Specifying guidelines (rules) for making use of social networks, and
- 8) Checking the private set-ups of children's profiles in social networks.

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