

Kufr

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Abstract: *One of the most frequent words used in the holy Quran is the word “kufr”. This frequency can be concluded as its significance in the teachings of Islam. In this article its different meanings, aspects, and effects, and also the signs of disbelievers (kuffar) have been discussed.*

Keywords: *Kufr, Disbelieving, Kuffar, Infidelity*

¹ Infidelity, disbelief, blasphemy

The Application (usage) of Kufr in Quranic Verses

In this article, we will have a short glimpse on the Quranic word “kufr”, its meanings, its different types and usage in Islamic texts. The basis of this study is the holy Quran in which the word *kufr* and its derivatives have been mentioned 505 times.

The Meaning of Kufr

The word “*kufr*” means to cover any thing and it has been used to refer to any condition in which something has been covered, hidden or put away from sight. In expressions and words derived from the word “*Kufr*” this meaning is clear.

For example: “night” has been called “*kafir*” (the coverer) for it covers people (in darkness)¹. A “Farmer” is also referred to as “*kafir*” for it hides seeds into the earth. In the Quran, in some cases, “*kuffar*” (the coverers) mean farmers. E.g. “...whereof the growth is pleasing to the farmers...”. (The holy Quran 57:20)

“*Kufr*” is mostly used in places where God, His Prophets, religion and the day of resurrection are rejected.²

Some sins are also referred to by this word because in those sins God’s Power, Domination and Authority are denied.

In a tradition Imam al-Sadiq (*as*) has called each and every sin committed out of “denying, belittling, and disparaging God’s commands” as “*Kufr*” and the sinner as a “*kafir*” (infidel)³; This is because if someone accepts Allah as

¹ Al-Ragheb Esfahani, *Mofradat Fi Gharib Al-Quran*, kufr substance

² Ibid

³ Al-Ameli, *Vasail Al-Shia*, vol. 1, p.24

his God and is loyal to this belief, he will never commit a sin and be disobedient.

Types of kufr

According to the Quran *kufr* can have five types. In a narration by Imam al-Sadiq (*as*) these are:

Denial (which itself is divided to two types of disobedience, renouncement) and denial of Gods blessings.

Kufr of denial: Disbelief out of denying God's Authority, Heaven, Hell, and the Hereafter; another type of this kind of Kufr, is disbelief out of rejection. This applies to someone who acknowledges the truth in his heart, but out of enmity rejects it with his tongue. *Allah says: "and they denied them, though their souls acknowledged them, for spite and arrogance. ." (The holy Quran 27:14)*

Kufr of disobedience: This occurs when mankind acts against his commitments, as God says: "...then is it only a part of the book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest?..." *(The holy Quran 2:85)*

Kufr of renouncement: means staying aloof from the disbelievers and from all their deeds. The holy prophet, Abraham, renounced his unfaithful tribe and said: "*we are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah: we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever, unless you believe in Allah and him alone*" *The holy Quran 60:4)*

Kufr regarding God's blessings: Thanklessness of God's favors and blessings endowed to human beings. e.g. Quran 27:40, 14:7; 1:152.

The different aspects of Kufr

Kufr means denying and not accepting. But what exactly are the things that we deny or not accept? According to the holy Quran, the following are some of the deeds which will result in *kufr*:

- Not believing in God
- Not believing the signs and verses of God
- Not believing in God's court
- Not believing in judgment day
- Having no faith
- Kufr* regarding blessings of God
- Not believing in the angels
- Not believing in the Hereafter
- Not believing in the Divine Books

From the aforementioned, the first and second are the most frequently used. In some verses a few of the above have been mentioned at the same time which is a great deviation from the right path:

"Whosoever disbelieves in Allah, his angels, his books, his messengers, and the last day, has surely gone astray into far error." (The holy Quran 4:136)

In other places "*Kufr* (disbelief) after faith" has been mentioned. This type of *kufr* is called "*Irtedad*" (apostasy) and he who acts like this is called a "*mortad*" (apostate). This is the most hideous type of *kufr* which results from xenophile or lack of self-esteem, being fooled by misleading propaganda, failing in solving economical problems, love of the material world or financial interests or other causes. This phenomenon of "converting in belief" is mentioned in verses such as:

"...they believed, and then they rejected faith..." (The holy Quran 63:3)

“...anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters disbelief...” (The holy Quran 27:14)

The effects of Kufr

In this part, we will discuss the effects *kufr* leaves in the hearts and souls of disbelievers. *Kufr* is a condition which does not remain stable. It can be strengthened or loosened, obviated or generated or hidden, and it can change into faith. Just as faith has different levels and a believer's faith can increase by paying attention to God's signs.

Kufr after faith or apostasy is the most vicious kind of *kufr* which leads to God's not accepting our repent, loss of God's forgiveness, and loss of the chances of guidance and salvation:

“surely (as for) those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them in the (right) path” (The holy Quran 4:137)

Because a *kafir* (infidel) does not accept truth out of his obstinacy and enmity, the verses and signs of God not only have no effect for his guidance, but also due to the impurity of his heart, he will become more aloof from God and he will show more insurgence:

“It is the revelation that cometh to thee from thy lord, that increases in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy, but sorrow thou not over (these) people without faith” (The holy Quran 5:68)

Some people because of the weakness of their soul, ignorance or evil temptations, will trade their faith with *kufr*; or out of worldly assets, in the crossroad of choosing between God and the materialistic world, prefer *kufr* over faith and choose the disbelievers path. What disaster is worse than finding the truth and then losing it?

The appearance of kuffar (infidels) in the Quran

Each of the characteristics which the Quran counts for the *kuffar* need a lot of clarification; here we will only take a brief look at these characteristics.

Disbelievers are:

- cruel and merciless
- hopeless of God's mercy
- deprived of salvation
- Proud, losers, strayed and depressed. They are brothers of the hypocrites.

According to the Quran this is what awaits the *kuffar* in the hereafter: disbelievers will suffer from extreme and painful torture, entangled in hell, are cursed and hated by God and far from His mercy, and God does not love them.

The life of disbelievers, out of lack of presence of faith, spirituality, love of God and purity, is like one of an animal which is devoted to eating and sleeping and nothing more....

"...while those who reject Allah will enjoy (this world) and eat as cattle eat; and the fire will be their abode."(The holy Quran 47:12)

Disbelievers have no patron or guardian. The Quran says:

"That is because Allah is patron of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no patron." (The holy Quran 47:11)

"Allah is the protecting guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the fire. They will abide therein." (The holy Quran 2:257)

"We have made the devils protecting friends for those who believe not." (The holy Quran 7:27)

When people ignore God and the rays of faith fade within them, Satan will enter their life. The shade of Satan will cover them and once this happens, even the prophet's (s) invitations to God and the words of righteous people will have no effect on them.

“Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).” (The holy Quran 2:27)