



THE CONDEMNATION OF BACKBITING

Almighty Allah, our Creator, has strictly condemned backbiting in the Holy Qur'an. Allah Ta'ala says, "O believers! Avoid most suspicions, verily some suspicion is a sin and do not look out for faults and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abominate it. And fear Allah, Verily Allah is Oft Returning, Merciful." [*Surah 49, Verse 12*]

Hazrat Allama Naeemuddin Muradabadi (Rahmatullah Alaih) says in his explanation of this verse, "If some one does not desire to eat the flesh of his dead brother then he must not talk behind his back. Just imagine, how would one feel if his flesh is being cut and eaten and he is helpless like a dead body to defend himself? This metaphor is used as an example to make us realise that backbiting hits hard upon the heart and breaking some one's heart is forbidden in Islam and is considered a grave sin. And backbiting hurts the other person's self-respect, and self-respect is more important than man's flesh." [*Khaza'inul Irfaan*]

While commenting upon the circumstances surrounding the revelation of this verse, he writes that when Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) prepared himself to leave for Jihad, he used to put two wealthy Muslims with one poor Muslim in a group so that the poor would serve the rich and would get food and shelter in return. In this way all of them enjoyed ease. Once, Hazrat Salman Farsi (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) went with two men. One day, he slept and could not cook the food so the two rich people sent him to Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). The attendant of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was Hazrat Osama (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) and he told Hazrat Salman Farsi (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) that he did not have anything left with him to give him. Hazrat Salman Farsi (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) gave the same reply to the two rich men, who then said, "Osama has been miserly." When they went to meet Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said to them, "I am seeing the pieces of meat on your mouths." They said, "No, we have not eaten meat." Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "You have done backbiting, and one who does backbiting of a Muslim, he has eaten his flesh." [*Khaza'inul Irfaan*]

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) narrates that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Do you know what backbiting is?" The blessed companions replied, "Allah and His Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) know best." Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Backbiting is saying something against your brother which is disliked by him." Someone asked, "What if that thing is present in his brother?" Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) explained, "If you say something which is present in your brother, it is backbiting, if you say something which is not present in your brother, then it is slander." [*Sahih Muslim*]

Everything that is said about a person in his absence, if he were to hear it and dislike it, is backbiting according to Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). To point out someone's physical features, such as black as smoke, having eyes like a cat, very tall like a giraffe, midget, dwarf etc. is also backbiting. Furthermore, backbiting also includes picking out the character of a Muslim by saying that he is proud, unfriendly, big mouthed, stupid etc., as well as to criticise someone's dress code or choice of dress such that if they heard us it would upset them.

Hazrat Jabir (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) narrates that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Backbiting is a more deadly sin than adultery." When the blessed companions asked why

backbiting was a more deadly sin than even adultery, Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “A man commits adultery and then asks for forgiveness, he is forgiven; but a person who backbites is not forgiven until that person, whose backbiting he had done, forgives him.”

Hazrat Anas (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) narrates that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “On the night of Me’raj, I passed by a nation who were scratching and bruising their faces and chests and I asked who they were. Hazrat Jibra’eel (Alaihis Salaam) told me, “They are those who ate the flesh of people and used to attack their respect and honour.” [*Tafseer Roohul Bayaan*].

Hazrat Jabir bin Abdullah (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) narrates that they were sitting with Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), when all of sudden a foul smell arose. Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “Do you know what this foul smell is? It is the smell of those who talk behind the back of Muslims.” [*Fatawa Razaviyya*]

Hazrat Jabir bin Abdullah (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) also narrates that during the lifetime of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the people used to do less backbiting, and the foul smell of a backbiter was recognisable. But now, it has become such a common sin that people have become used to it and can tolerate its foul smell. For example, the person who dyes leather has a very strong repulsive smell in his house. If some one comes from outside, this smell is intolerable for him, but the leather painter and his family get used to it and sleep, eat and live in the same place. The same is the case with the smell of backbiting these days. [*Makashifatul Quloob*]

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) narrates that when Hazrat Ma’iz Aslami (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) was being beaten to death with stones, two men started chatting. One of them said, “See! How Allah Ta’ala gave him respect and hid his sins but his desire did not spare him and he is beaten to death with stones like a dog.” Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) heard their conversation and kept on walking quietly. There was a dead donkey lying on the road with scattered legs. Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said to them, “Go and eat the flesh of this dead donkey.” They said, “How can the flesh of a dead donkey be eaten?” Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “You insulted your brother, which is worse than eating the flesh of a dead donkey, By Allah! In whose custody my life is, he (Hazrat Ma’iz Aslami Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) is taking a bath in the rivers of Paradise.” [*Abu Dawood*]

It is narrated by Hazrat Mu’awiya (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “Pointing out the faults of a transgressor is not backbiting.” [*Kanzul A’maal*] This refers to a wronged person complaining about a cruel person in front of the King for help and justice and is not backbiting. Pointing out the faults of a person in front of a Mufti (Religious Scholar) for clarifications and a verdict (Fatwa) is not backbiting. Imaginary names such as Amar or Zaid can be used or real names can be mentioned. Once, Hinda complained against Hazrat Abu Sufiyan (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) for not giving her sufficient money for groceries for her family. She asked if she could take money according to her requirement without telling Hazrat Abu Sufiyan (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh). Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) replied, “You can take what you need to be enough for you and your children.” [*Raddul Mukhtar; Bahaare Shariat*] Similarly, for the safety of the Muslims, to expose those that cause trouble and mischief (Fitna) is not backbiting.

Hazrat Shaikh Sa’di Shirazi (Rahmatullah Alaih) writes in his famous book ‘Gulistan’ that in his childhood he developed a love for worship and used to offer prayers during the night. One night, he was praying with his father and other people in the house were enjoying sleep. He said to his father, “Why don’t these people wake up and offer two rakaats nafl prayer instead of laying there

like dead people?” His father said, “My son, it would have been better for you to sleep all night than this worship that you are doing, because you are involving yourself in backbiting. Moral: A person usually sees himself with his own eyes and thinks very highly of himself; open the door of the heart and you will find yourself lowest of all.

We see that even great scholars never hesitate to introspect and correct themselves and ask for forgiveness from Allah Ta'ala. But nowadays, we see a majority of people who boast about their worship and consider others low for not worshipping as they do. Actually they do not inspire others to worship, rather they offend others and send them away from worship due to their arrogance. Such people appreciate themselves and keep on depreciating others and their apparent piety fails to spread dignity at all. Such attitude shows that we are caught by the paws of our nafs (lower self) and do not think about any others but ourselves.

Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlvi (Rahmatullah Alaih) writes that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “Whenever you sit in a gathering recite, “Bismillah Hir Rahman Nirraheem Wa Sallallahu Ala Muhammad” and Allah Ta'ala will appoint an angel upon you that will keep you away from backbiting. When you leave the gathering, recite, “Bismillah Hir Rahman Nirraheem Wa Sallallahu Ala Muhammad” and Allah Ta'ala will keep people away from backbiting about you.” [*Jazbul Quloob ala Dayarul Mahboob*] Try to memorise these words and tell other Muslims to do the same so that we may Insha Allah save ourselves from this grave sin.

In this day and age it has become a social custom that if two people meet, they start backbiting about a third person who is not present with them. Our hearts have become hardened and are void of the fear of Allah Ta'ala. We are facing a spiritual famine which has snatched our sense of differentiating between vice and virtue! We must wake up from this heedlessness and should keep in mind the command of Allah Ta'ala and His Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). We must always watch our words, and think before we say anything so that we do not intentionally or unintentionally backbite about someone. After learning from the Ahadith that backbiting is worse than adultery, worse than eating a dead donkey's meat, and about its frightening punishments, how then can we continue to commit this grave sin?

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the Taufeeq to stay away from backbiting and hurting others with our tongue and may He grant us the Taufeeq and courage to ask those, that we have committed backbiting against, for forgiveness, Ameen.