

Right n. 3: The Right of the Tongue

حق اللسان

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ اللِّسَانِ فَأِكْرَامُهُ عَنِ الْخَنَى وَتَعْوِيدُهُ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ وَحَمْلُهُ عَلَى الْأَدَبِ
وَإِجْمَامُهُ إِلَّا لِمَوْضِعِ الْحَاجَةِ وَالْمَنْفَعَةِ لِلدِّينِ وَالْدُنْيَا وَإِعْفَاؤُهُ عَنِ الْفُضُولِ
أَلْشَّنْعَةِ الْقَلِيلَةِ الْفَائِدَةِ الَّتِي لَا يُؤْمَنُ ضَرَرُهَا مَعَ قَلَّةِ عَائِدَتِهَا. وَيُعَدُّ شَاهِدَ الْعَقْلِ
وَالدَّلِيلَ عَلَيْهِ وَتَزِينُ الْعَاقِلِ بِعَقْلِهِ حُسْنُ سِيرَتِهِ فِي لِسَانِهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ
الْعَظِيمِ.

And the right of the tongue is that you consider it too noble for obscenity, accustom it to good, direct it to politeness,¹ do not use it except in situations of needs and benefits of the religion and this world, and refrain from any meddling in which there is little to be gained; and there is no security from its harm that accompanies its small benefits. It² is the witness to and the evidence of the existence of the intellect. The demonstration of an intelligent person's intellect is through his reputation of good speech.³ And there is no power but in God the High, the Great.

In the previous chapter, Imam Sajjad instructed us to use all our faculties, i.e. ourselves to obey God, and respect the rights of our body parts which are the means by which we act. In this chapter we will start the discussion of the rights of our body parts by first discussing the rights of the tongue.

Our Tongue is Our Greatest Blessing

Undoubtedly, the tongue and the ability to speak are the greatest blessings that God has bestowed on man in His Creation. This has been explicitly stated in the following verse:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

“He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Rahman 55:3-4]

Speech has been described as meaning “uncovering” an object in Arabic. Our tongue expresses our inner thoughts and feelings. Our speech uncovers our inner thoughts and expresses what we think. If it was not for our ability to speak, we would be quiet just like animals and there would be no more discussion, explaining and understanding among men.

Different Languages as a Sign of God

The Almighty God stated in the Holy Qur’an:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلافُ اَللُّسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوَالِنِكُمْ اِنَّ فِى ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ

“And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Rum 30:22]

This clearly expresses that the existence of various colors, races, and languages among mankind is one of the signs of God.

Language as a Means of Getting to Know Others

There are various ways to get to know each person. One of these ways is through speech. Each person introduces his own personality when he talks. Our speaking clearly expresses our inner purity or wickedness. One can tell whether you are a good man or a corrupt one. Imam Baqir said:

الْمَرْءُ مَخْبُوءٌ تَحْتَ لِسَانِهِ.

“A man is hidden under his tongue.”⁴

The tongue will unveil the curtain and display our real character.

The Nature of Verbal Sins

Imam Ali said the following about the tongue:

جُرْمُهُ صَغِيرٌ وَجُرْمُهُ ثَقِيلٌ

“Its mass is small, but its sin is great.”

This wise saying clearly states how our little tongue can be used to create great sins. Each of the body parts that God has given us has a specific characteristic and purpose. Some have certain limitations, too. For instance, the eye can only see certain colors. The ears can only hear sounds. The hands can only feel through touching. However, the tongue has a wide range of application extending from wickedness and corruption to goodness and prosperity. If used in a good sense it can lead to human prosperity and if used in an evil way, it can be the biggest means by which Satan can misguide us.

The Effect of the Tongue on Social Improvement or Corruption

There are various ways to achieve social improvement or corruption. Speaking is one of the most effective means in this respect. A fluent speaker can direct the human society towards noble characteristics and human values. Likewise, he can lead the society towards moral and spiritual decay and corruption. He can easily agitate the still nation and excite them to move and change their lives, or direct the aroused feelings of a society towards calmness and pacification.

For example, when Imam Ali was martyred the news was spread throughout the Muslim community. When the news of his martyrdom in the prayer niche reached Sham, all the people there were surprised. They were so influenced by the speeches delivered against Imam Ali by the men hired by Mu`awiyah that they asked themselves, “Did Ali pray?” The extent of the influence of the tongue is so much that as you can see the most pious man who lived his whole lifetime to establish the prayer, is presented as being one who does not pray in the minds of the people of Sham.

Busr ibn Artā'ah and the Hamdan Tribe

When Mu`awiyah sent Busr ibn Artā'ah to the Hamdan Tribe to rule, Busr ibn Artā'ah exercised so much oppression and committed so many crimes that no one dared to object. At this time, a brave lady called Sawdah went to Sham (Syria) to defend the sacred religion and the people. When Mu`awiyah was informed of her arrival he was surprised. He said that he had been trying to arrest her with no result. Now she had gone there on her own.

He admitted her to the court. When she entered, she bitterly greeted Mu`awiyah. Mu`awiyah said: “See!

You had to come and greet me.” She replied: “Do not be proud of your rule. There is a term for everything. It will soon end. Do not be so attached to your position since it will not last.”

Mu`awiyah said: “O’ Sawdah! Do you remember the days of war when you sang heroic poetry among the soldiers of Ali? What was your goal then? Was it not my destruction? Sing them now.” Sawdah said: “Your oppression has made me forget everything. Now I have come to complain against the oppression of Busr ibn Artā`ah. He has oppressed us. He has confiscated the people’s property, and has murdered the men.” Mu`awiyah said: “Now I will send you to him to treat you as he pleases.”

Then Sawdah said: “May God bless the pure body that is buried, with whom justice was buried too.” Mu`awiyah said: “Whom are you referring to?” She replied: “I am referring to my Master, Imam Ali . You should know that I had a similar complaint that I expressed to Imam Ali before. He was alone, and wanted to start his prayer. When he noticed me, he asked the reason.

When I told him that I had come to complain against his governor, he touched his beard and his eyes overflowed with tears and he said: “O’ God! Be a witness that I did not send my governor to oppress your servants.” He then wrote the order to fire the governor and handed it to me. Now you threaten me instead of considering my complaint. This is the difference between Imam Ali and you.” Mu`awiyah got upset and wrote a letter to Busr ibn Artā`ah to stop his crimes and acts of oppression.

Thus, we can see that the tongue can be used as an effective tool. It is so effective that it can even be used to change the views of a cruel man such as Mu`awiyah. Then Mu`awiyah said: “It was Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib who made you too proud by saying: If I were the gatekeeper of Heaven I will tell the Bani Hamdan tribe to safely enter Heaven.”⁵

The Effect of Eloquent Speech

Now we shall cite another example. There were many letters exchanged between Imam Ali and Mu`awiyah. Among them, there is one that Imam Ali wrote and handed to an eloquent man called al-Tirimma⁶ to deliver to Mu`awiyah. Al-Tirimma⁶ traveled to Sham. After meeting `Amr ibn al-`Aas and Yazeed, he visited Mu`awiyah. He was so eloquent in speech that he was able to influence them all. Mu`awiyah decided to use al-Tirimma⁶’s eloquence for his own purposes.

Thus he said: “O’ Arab! Will you accept what I donate to you?” He replied: “Why not? Why should I not accept your gifts while I wish to take away your life?” Mu`awiyah ordered that he be paid ten thousand Dirhams and said: “If it is not enough please say so. I will order more to be paid to you.” Al-Tirimma⁶ said: “Order them to give me more money. You are not paying out of your own father’s pocket anyway. Order them to give me another ten thousand Dirhams.” Then Mu`awiyah ordered that he be paid another ten thousand Dirhams. Then al-Tirimma⁶ said: “Order them to give another ten thousand Dirhams to make it thirty thousand Dirhams since there is only one God.”

After a while when al-Tirimmaؓ did not receive the additional ten thousand Dirhams he had asked for, he said: “Are you making a fool out of me? It seems like words were just a breeze from over a hill.” Then Mu`awiyah ordered that he be paid the money. `Amr ibn al-`Aas asked al-Tirimmaؓ: “How did you find the benevolence of the Commander of the Faithful.”⁶

Al-Tirimmaؓ said: “This is the property of the Muslims. One of God’s servants has obtained it from God’s treasures. What is his role in this?” Then Mu`awiyah said: “This made the world seem dark to me.” Then he called in his secretary and dictated a boastful letter in reply to Imam Ali’s letter. Al-Tirimmaؓ said: “O’ Mu`awiyah! Are you threatening a duck with water? I swear by God that Imam Ali has a big rooster that can store all your soldiers in its gullet.” Mu`awiyah said: “He is right. That is Malik al-Ashtar.”

When al-Tirimmaؓ left, Mu`awiyah said: “If I give you all that I possess, you will not even give me one tenth the services that this Bedouin gives Ali.” `Amr ibn al-`Aas said: “If you had the same position that Ali has relative to the Prophet, we would have been much more loyal to you.” Mu`awiyah said: “May God break your teeth. By God your words were harsher to me than his words.”⁷

Imam Sajjad advised us to get used to using our tongue in a good way. When used in this way, it becomes so strong that it can even defeat an enemy like Mu`awiyah, and make life bitter for him.

The Philosophy behind Silence

There is a certain stress placed on silence in some traditions. This stress is such that we can prefer silence to speaking. What is the philosophy behind this silence? When is it recommended?

As said, the tongue reflects what is in the heart. It expresses one’s inner feelings and thoughts. It portrays one’s character and personality. There are also possible harms due to its use. Imam Ali said:

اللِّسَانُ سَبْعُ اِنْ خُلِيَ عَقْرًا.

“The tongue is a beast that will cause an injury when unleashed.” ⁸

He also said:

اِعْجَبُوا لِهَذَا الْاِنْسَانَ يَنْظُرُ بِشَحْمٍ وَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِلَحْمٍ وَيَسْمَعُ بِعَظْمٍ وَيَتَنَفَّسُ مِنْ خَرَمٍ

*“Be amazed at man who sees using a piece of fat, talks using a piece of meat, hears using a piece of bone, and breathes through a hole.”*⁹

The Tongue: Most Instrumental in Entering Heaven or Hell

Sahl al-Sa'edi quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet that:

مَنْ يَتَكَفَّلُ لِي مَا بَيْنَ لِحْيَيْهِ وَرِجْلَيْهِ أَتَكْفُلُ لَهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ

*“Whoever guarantees to safeguard what is between his/her lips and his/her legs, 10 then I shall guarantee Heaven for him/her.”*¹¹

وَقَدْ سُئِلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ عَنْ أَكْثَرِ مَا يُدْخِلُ النَّاسَ الْجَنَّةَ، فَقَالَ: «بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَحُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ.» وَسُئِلَ عَنْ أَكْثَرِ مَا يُدْخِلُ النَّاسَ النَّارَ، قَالَ: «الْأُجُوفَانِ: الْفَمُ وَالْفَرْجُ.»

*The Noble Prophet was asked about the means most influential in taking people to Heaven. He replied: “Piety and good temper.” He was asked about the means most influential in taking people to Hell. He replied: “The two hollows: the mouth and the vulva.”*¹²

Ma`adh ibn Jabal asked the Noble Prophet : “Shall we be held responsible for what we say?” The Prophet said:

تَكَلَّتْكَ أُمُّكَ يَا بَنَ جَبَلٍ! وَهَلْ يَكُوبُ النَّاسَ (فِي جَهَنَّمَ) عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ
اللسنتهم؟

*“O Ibn Jabal! May your mother be bereft of you! Does anything else throw people down on their faces (in Hell) other than the harvest of their tongues?”*¹³

In all these traditions from the Prophet of God , we see that avoiding verbal abuse and preventing our tongue from engaging in sin is the best source of man’s prosperity and an important factor in taking him to Heaven. Anas ibn Malik quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

لَا يَسْتَقِيمُ إِيْمَانُ عَبْدٍ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ قَلْبُهُ، وَلَا يَسْتَقِيمُ قَلْبُهُ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ لِسَانُهُ، وَلَا
يُدْخِلُ الْجَنَّةَ رَجُلٌ لَا يَأْمَنُ جَارَهُ بِوَأْتِقَهُ.

*“A servant’s faith is balanced only when his heart is directed to God and his heart is directed to God only when his tongue is on the straight path. A man whose neighbor is not safe from his harmful conduct will not enter Heaven.”*¹⁴

What we see in this tradition is that the balance of faith depends on the balance of the heart, and that the balance of the heart depends on the balance of the tongue. Therefore, if you do not watch your tongue, you cannot have peace anywhere within you.

Silence: The Easiest Form of Worship

afwan ibn Saleem quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِأَيْسَرِ الْعِبَادَةِ وَأَهْوَنَهَا عَلَى الْبَدَنِ؟ الصَّمْتُ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ.

*“Do you want me to inform you about the easiest form of worship and the lightest on the body? It is silence and having a good temper.”*¹⁵

Al-Barra` ibn `Azib narrated that an Arab came to the Prophet and asked him to teach him something to enable him to go to Heaven. The Prophet said:

أَطْعِمِ الْجَائِعَ وَاسْقِ الظَّمَانَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تُطِقْ فَكُفَّ لِسَانَكَ إِلَّا مِنْ خَيْرٍ.

*“Feed the hungry. Quench the thirst of the thirsty. Advise the people to do good deeds and admonish them against evil deeds. If you are not able (to do that), then just guard your tongue from whatever is not good.”*¹⁶

The Noble Prophet of God said:

لِسَانُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَرَاءَ قَلْبِهِ، فَإِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَكَلَّمَ تَدَبَّرَهُ بِقَلْبِهِ ثُمَّ أَمَضَاهُ بِلِسَانِهِ، وَإِنْ لِسَانَ الْمُنَافِقِ أَمَامَ قَلْبِهِ فَإِذَا هَمَّ بِشَيْءٍ أَمَضَاهُ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يَتَدَبَّرَهُ بِقَلْبِهِ.

“A believer’s tongue is located behind his heart. Whenever he wants to talk, he first presents his words to his heart. If the heart approves of what he wants to say it issues an order to the tongue to utter the words. However, if the heart does not issue a permit, then the lips stay sealed. But a hypocrite’s tongue

is in front of his heart. Whenever he intends to say something, he utters it without the approval of his heart.”¹⁷

It has also been narrated that some people were talking together in Mu`awiyah's palace. Al-A`naf ibn Qays was quietly sitting in a corner. They asked him: “O' Aba Bahr! Why don't you talk?” He said: “If I lie, I shall fear God. Moreover, if I tell the truth, I shall fear you. Thus it is best that I do not talk at all.”¹⁸ The importance of silence became clear from the traditions cited. We learned that man could remain secure from the dangerous potential of committing a sin in talking by remaining silent.

An intelligent person first trusts his words to his intellect and conscience to judge before uttering them. If the intellect and conscience do not give him permission to express those words, then he remains silent. The traditions that encourage us to remain silent are meant to free us from the potential bad consequences of bad talk. It is obvious that talking is an important factor in the development of man and the society as stated before.

What Corrupts the Tongue

Researchers in ethics say that there is a cause of corruption for everything. The tongue is not an exception to this. Many things will corrupt it. Nearly twenty causes have been cited for the corruption of the tongue.

1) Talking in Vain

Talking in vain will only waste our time and is one of the causes of corruption of the tongue. The Noble Prophet said:

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يُعْنِيهِ.

“One of the signs of the excellence of a Muslim's submission to God is his leaving what does not concern him.”¹⁹

2) Over talking

The Noble Prophet said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ لَمِنَ أَمْسَكَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَأَطْلَقَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ مَالِهِ

“Blessed be the one who restrains his tongue from excessive speech and gives his excess wealth in

charity to the needy.”²⁰

3) Bad Talk

Examples of bad talk are attending the get-together sessions of some women, meetings of those who drink, and talking with the corrupt, the rich, the rulers and the kings. The Noble Prophet said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ يَضْحَكُ بِهَا جُلَسَاؤُهُ يَهْوِي بِهَا أُبْعَدَ مِنَ الثُّرَيَّا.

“One who says something to make the people laugh has deviated from his position as a human being, and has fallen down like one who falls down from a star, even farther than that!”²¹

The Prophet also said:

أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ خَطَايَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ خَوْضاً بِالْبَاطِلِ

“The greatest in sins on Resurrection Day are those who have delved the most into wrong.”

Then he referred to the Qur’an where those who have gone to Hell say:

وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ

“We delved into wrong and were playing around” (74:45) ²²

Salman has been quoted as saying:

أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ ذُنُوباً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ كَلَاماً فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ

“The most sinful people on the Resurrection Day are those who have spoken the most in disobedience to God.”²³

4) Arguing

Arguing and teasing are factors that will corrupt the tongue. Islam has ordered us not to argue since it is blameworthy. The Noble Prophet said:

لَا تُمَارِ أَخَاكَ وَلَا تُمَارِحُهُ وَلَا تَعِدُّهُ مَوْعِدًا فَتُخْلِفُهُ.

*“Do not argue with, tease, or break the promise you have made to your brethren.”*²⁴

The Prophet also said:

لَا يَسْتَكْمِلُ عَبْدٌ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَدَعَ الْمِرَاءَ وَالْجِدَالَ وَإِنْ كَانَ حَقًّا.

*“A servant cannot attain full faith unless he quits verbal arguments even if he is right.”*²⁵

He also said:

مَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ مُحِقُّ بَنِي لَهُ بَيْتٌ فِي أَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ مُبْطِلٌ بَنِي لَهُ بَيْتٌ فِي رِبْضِ الْجَنَّةِ.

*“Whoever knows he is right but quits arguing shall be given a residence in a high heavenly place. Whoever knows that he is wrong and quits arguing shall be given a residence in a low heavenly place.”*²⁶

5) Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse or expression of animosity to get one’s right or property is another factor that corrupts the tongue. Abu Hurayrah quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

مَنْ جَادَلَ فِي خُصُومَةٍ بَغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لَمْ يَزَلْ فِي سَخَطِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْزِعَ.

*“Whoever argues in a dispute without true knowledge shall remain subject to God’s wrath until he desists.”*²⁷

The Noble Prophet also said:

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لَعُرْفًا يُرَى ظَاهِرُهَا مِنْ بَاطِنِهَا وَبَاطِنُهَا مِنْ ظَاهِرِهَا أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لِمَنْ أَطْعَمَ الطَّعَامَ وَأَطَابَ الْكَلَامَ.

*“There are rooms in Heaven, the exterior of which can be seen from their interior and the interior of which is visible from their exterior. God has prepared them for those who feed the hungry ones, and are pleasant in speech.”*²⁸

Thus, the Prophet instructs all Muslims to be polite in speech, and not to use bad or obscene language. Muslims are instructed to attract other people’s love and friendship by using good words.

6) Excessive Eloquence

The Blessed Fatima quoted on the authority of her noble father :

شِرَارُ أُمَّتِي الَّذِينَ غَدَّوْا بِالنَّعِيمِ يَأْكُلُونَ أَلْوَانَ الطَّعَامِ وَيَلْبَسُونَ أَلْوَانَ الثِّيَابِ
وَيَتَشَدَّقُونَ فِي الْكَلَامِ

*“The most wicked people in my nation are those who are feeding off divine blessings by eating various dishes and wearing colorful clothing, but speak using an excessively eloquent language.”*²⁹

We can realize that we should not overburden ourselves by using excessively eloquent language when talking with others. Rather we should try to use nice words and expressions to express important topics.

7) Swearing

Swearing is considered bad in Islam. It is one of the factors that corrupt the tongue. The Noble Prophet said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْفُحْشَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُحْشَ وَلَا التَّفَحُّشَ

*“Beware of swearing since God does not like swearing and those who are used to swearing.”*³⁰

In another tradition we read that the Noble Prophet said:

الْجَنَّةُ حَرَامٌ عَلَى كُلِّ فَاحِشٍ أَنْ يَدْخُلَهَا.

*“Heaven is forbidden to whoever is used to swearing. He cannot enter it.”*³¹

In another tradition we read that the Prophet told Ayesah:

يَا عَائِشَةُ، لَوْ كَانَ الْفُحْشُ رَجُلًا لَكَانَ رَجُلًا سُوًءٍ

“O Ayesha! If swearing could appear like a man it would be an evil man.”

Swearing is one of the very bad characteristics. Whoever gets used to swearing should try to treat himself. Swearing is defined to be the expression of vulgar things. One who swears is trying to hurt the other person, and hurting others is certainly forbidden. It may be the result of associating with bad people who use obscene language. This has also been declared to be bad in Islam.

An Arab went to see the Prophet and said: “Please give me some advice.” The Prophet said:

عَلَيْكَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ أَمْرٌ عَيْرَكَ بِشَيْءٍ يَعْلَمُهُ مِنْكَ فَلَا تُعِيرَهُ بِشَيْءٍ تَعْلَمُهُ فِيهِ
يَكُنْ وَبِأَلِهِ عَلَيْهِ وَأَجْرُهُ لَكَ. وَلَا تَسِبَنَّ شَيْئًا مِنْ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ.

“I advise you to fear God. If someone blames you for what is in you, do not blame him for what you know that may lie in him. Thus, he will suffer from the ill consequences of his deeds and you will prosper from your good deeds. Also never revile any of God’s creatures.”

The man took the Prophet’s advice and never swore at anyone.³²

We learn from this tradition that we should never use our knowledge of other people’s weaknesses to harm their honor. Ayaz ibn Samar told the Prophet of God: “O Prophet of God! A relative of mine who is lower than me in rank swears at me. Should I swear at him in defense?” The Prophet said:

الْمُتَسَابِّانِ شَيْطَانَانِ يَتَعَاوَنَانِ وَيَتَهَاتَرَانِ

“Whenever two people revile each other they are like two Satans helping each other and making false accusations against each other.”³³

8) Cursing

Cursing is also another factor that corrupts the tongue. Whoever curses others is pushing them away from the circle of God’s Mercy. This issue has been referred to in several verses of the Holy Qur’an. God has cursed many and has deprived them of his Mercy. An important case is that of Satan:

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

"And My curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment." [The Holy Qur'an, Sad 38:78]

Those who conceal the truth are also cursed:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي
الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ

"Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, - on them shall be God's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2: 159]

Those who lie were also cursed as in the following verse:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ
وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ

"If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, say: "Come! Let us gather together, - our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie!" [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3:61]

The pagans and the Jews who were awaiting the coming of the Prophet Muhammad refused to believe in him after they recognized him. We read in the following verse that they too are cursed:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

"And when there comes to them a Book from God, confirming what is with them, - although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without Faith, - when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized, they refuse to believe in it but the curse of God is on those without Faith." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:89]

The Prophet and Imam Ali cursed several people. The Prophet cursed Abu Sufyan in seven places.³⁴ Imam Ali has been narrated to have quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

سَبْعَةٌ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ، وَكُلُّ نَبِيٍّ مُجَابٍ: الْمُغَيِّرُ لِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُكَذِّبُ بِقَدْرِ اللَّهِ وَ
الْمُبَدِّلُ سُنَّةَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَحِلُّ مِنْ عِزَّتِي مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَالْمُتَسَلِّطُ فِي سُلْطَانِهِ
لِيُعِزَّ مَنْ أَدَلَّ اللَّهُ وَيُذِلَّ مَنْ أَعَزَّ اللَّهُ وَالْمُسْتَحِلُّ لِحَرَمِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُتَكَبِّرُ عَلَى عِبَادَةِ
اللَّهِ.

“There are seven groups of people who were cursed by God and His Prophet :

- 1- Those who change the Divine Book.*
- 2- Those who deny divine decrees*
- 3- Those who change the Prophet's traditions*
- 4- Those who make permissible the violation of the rights of my progeny that God has forbidden*
- 5- Those who use their power and rule to belittle one whom God has honored, and those who use their power and rule to honor one whom God has debased*
- 6- Those who make lawful what God has forbidden.*
- 7 - Those who are haughty in worshipping God.*

Believers Do Not Curse

The Noble Prophet said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ لَيْسَ بِلَعَّانٍ.

“A believer does not curse others.”³⁵

It is even forbidden to curse animals in Islam. Overall, we can conclude that cursing men, animals and objects is forbidden, except for some instances of the infidels, the hypocrites and those who have usurped the rights of Imam Ali and his descendants.

9) Lustful Songs

The next factor that corrupts the tongue is listening to lustful songs. Consider the following verses:

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ حُرْمَاتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“Such (is the Pilgrimage): whoever honors the sacred rites of God, for him it is good in the Sight of his Lord. Lawful to you (for food in Pilgrimage) are cattle, except those mentioned to you (as exception): but shun the abomination of idols, and shun the word that is false.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hajj 22:30]

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا

“Those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable (avoidance).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Furqan 25:72]

The Arabic expressions that are translated into “shun the word that is false” and “witness no falsehood” in the above verses of the Holy Qur’an have been interpreted by Shuham and Ibn Abi Amir and Abi Basir (in *al-Kafi*) and others as implying lustful music. The following verse is also said to refer to lustful music aimed at corrupting the people.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

“But there are, among men, those who purchase idle tales, without knowledge (or meaning), to mislead (men) from the Path of God and throw ridicule (on the Path): for such there will be a Humiliating Penalty.” [The Holy Qur’an, Luqman 31:6]

However, there are two groups of traditions regarding poetry. Religious poetry is considered to be good in one group of traditions. Other traditions consider lustful poetry to be bad.

10) Joking Around

Joking around is considered to be bad in Islam. The Noble Prophet said:

لَا تُمَارِ أَخَاكَ وَلَا تُمَارِحُهُ

*“Avoid arguing with your brethren and abstain from excessive joking around.”*³⁶

The Prophet also said:

إِنِّي لَأَمْزِحُ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِلَّا حَقًّا.

*“I tell jokes, but only say the truth.”*³⁷

The Prophet’s Jokes

The Prophet told some nice jokes. As an example, consider the following. One day an old lady went to see the Prophet . The Prophet said: “An old lady does not go to Heaven.” The old lady started to cry. Then the Prophet said: “On that day you will not be old. You will be young. God said the following in the Holy Qur’an:”

إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنْشَاءً فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا

“We have created (their Companions) of special creation, and made them virgin – pure (and undefiled).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Waqi`ah 56:35-36]

Imam Ali said:

مَا مَزَحَ امْرُؤٌ مَزْحَةً إِلَّا مَجَّ مِنْ عَقْلِهِ مَجَّةً.

“A person does not jest but that something of his intellect is cast out.” ³⁸

11) Making Fun of Others

Scholars in ethics have considered making fun of people as one of the factors that corrupt the tongue.

God said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءً مِّنْ

نِسَاءٌ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ
الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“O ye 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.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hujurat 49: 11]

The first principle referred to in this verse is respecting the Muslims. Muslims should respect each other in social encounters. Materialists have a different world outlook than Muslims. Materialists respect one for his physical beauty, but Muslims respect man’s moral values. In the above verse, making fun of others is forbidden. Men are unaware of each other’s inner thoughts and feelings. It may be that an ugly man has a very beautiful character. He might be made fun of for his looks, but if others knew him well they would never make fun of him. That is why it is not allowed to make fun of anyone.

The Psychological Motivation behind Making Fun of Others

A form of inferiority complex is considered a psychological root of making fun of other people. That is why respectable people never make fun of anyone. Those who make fun of others also enjoy insulting others. They have a sort of vicious attitude. Beasts attack the people physically, and they attack the people’s honor.

Imam Sajjad’s Views on Clowns

A clown once pulled off Imam Sajjad’s cloak. The Imam did not say anything. The people followed the clown and took back the cloak. They brought it back and put it on Imam Sajjad’s shoulder. Imam Sajjad asked: “Who did that?” The people said: “It was a clown who makes the people laugh.” Then Imam Sajjad said:

انَّ لِلَّهِ يَوْمًا يَخْسِرُ فِيهِ الْمُبْطِلُونَ.

“Tell him that there is a day for God in which those who indulge in vain and futile acts will not gain anything but loss.”³⁹

It is Forbidden to Make Fun of the Crippled

Some people are crippled for some reason. They lose their physical health. If people make fun of those

who are crippled, then they will get hurt. They will get hurt due to being made fun of and due to not being healthy. That is why Imam Ali said the following in his supplications:

إِلَّاهُمَّ اجْعَلْ نَفْسِي أَوَّلَ كَرِيمَةٍ تَنْتَزِعُهَا مِنِّكَ وَأَوَّلَ وَدِيعَةٍ تُرْجِعُهَا مِنِّي وَدَائِعِ
نِعْمِكَ عِنْدِي.

“O God! Make my soul the first of the my precious possessions that You take from me, and the first trust that you return to me from among Your blessings entrusted to me.” 40

Imam Husayn said:

وَمَتَّعْنِي بِجَوَارِحِي وَاجْعَلْ سَمْعِي وَبَصَرِي الْوَارِثَيْنِ عَنِّي وَأَنْصُرْنِي عَلَى مَنْ
ظَلَمَنِي

“O Lord! Make me benefit from all my body parts. Let my eyes and ears be my inheritors, (i.e. protect me from becoming crippled), and give me victory over everyone who oppresses me.” 41

AL-Jahiz and the Effect of Making Fun of Others

Al-Jahiz was an educated man who lived in the ninth century. Many books and writings have remained from him. He was a very ugly man. He was always supported by the Abbasid Caliphs since he expressed his opposition to Ali . One day he told his students that he was never belittled as much as he was done by a lady once. She had run across him once and asked him to follow her. She had taken him to a sculptor, and said to him: “That is it.” Then she walked away. When he asked the artist what the story was, he was told that the lady had ordered the artist to make a sculpture of Satan. The artist had told her that he could only make the sculpture if he sees Satan. Then the lady had brought him in and shown him to the artist as a model for Satan.

12) Divulging Secrets

Another factor that corrupts the tongue is divulging other people’s secrets. This is considered bad in Islam. The Noble Prophet said:

إِذَا حَدَّثَ الرَّجُلُ الْحَدِيثَ ثُمَّ التَفَتَ فَهِيَ أَمَانَةٌ

“When someone says something and goes away, what he said is left as a trust near the one who hears him.”⁴²

He also said:

الْحَدِيثُ بَيْنَكُمْ أَمَانَةٌ.

“What others tell you is entrusted to you.”⁴³

Imam Hasan has been narrated as saying:

إِنَّ مِنَ الْخِيَانَةِ أَنْ تُحَدِّثَ بِسِرِّ أَخِيكَ.

“It is an act of treachery to speak of your brethren’s secrets.”⁴⁴

13) Fake Promise

One of the factors that corrupt the tongue is making fake promises upon which one does not act. Acting upon what you promise is one of the signs of divine men. We read the following in the Holy Qur’an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

“O ye who believe! Fulfil (all) obligations.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ma’ida 5: 1]

The Noble Prophet said:

الْعِدَّةُ دَيْنٌ

“A promise is a debt.”⁴⁵

God has mentioned Isma’il to be strictly true to what he promised:

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

“Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma’i: He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was an apostle (and) a Prophet.” [The Holy Qur’an, Maryam 19:54]

14) False Swearing or Statements

Lying is a great sin. It will result in the loss of one’s honor. Many Qur’anic verses and traditions outline the wickedness of lying. Abu Sa`eed was quoted to have heard the Prophet supplicate to God as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ طَهِّرْ قَلْبِي مِنَ النِّفَاقِ وَفَرْجِي مِنَ الزِّنَا وَلِسَانِي مِنَ الْكَذِبِ.

“O God! Please purify my heart from hypocrisy, purify me from acts of fornication, and purify my tongue from lying.” 46

Imam Baqir said:

إِنَّ الْكَذِبَ هُوَ خَرَابُ الْإِيمَانِ.

“Lying is the ruin of man’s faith.”47

The Commander of the Faithful said:

لَا يَجِدُ عَبْدٌ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَ الْكَذِبَ جِدًّا وَهَزْلًا.

“No man shall taste faith unless he abandons lying, be it serious or as a joke.”48

A man told the Prophet : “O’ Prophet of God! Would a believer commit a sexual sin?” He said: “Maybe sometimes.” The man asked: “Would a believer tell a lie?” The Prophet answered:

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

Never! God the Exalted said: “It is those who believe not in the Signs of God that forge falsehood....”49 [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16: 105]

It was quoted on the authority of Imam Hasan Askari:

حُطَّتِ الْخَبَائِثُ فِي بَيْتٍ وَجُعِلَ مِفْتَاحُهُ الْكَذِبُ.

*“All evil deeds were placed in a room and lying was made its key.”*⁵⁰

This implies that if one lies he will fall into sin.

Finding the Roots of Lying

The Noble Prophet said:

لَا يَكْذِبُ الْكَاذِبُ إِلَّا مِنْ مَهَانَةٍ نَفْسِهِ.

*“One only tells lies because of his feeling of being lowly.”*⁵¹

On the other hand, honesty is rooted in a feeling of self-security and confidence. One day Hajjaj extended his sermon when he was lecturing on the pulpit. A man cried from the crowd: “It is time for prayer. Cut it short. Neither time will stop in respect for you nor will God accept your apology.” Hajjaj became upset about this open statement in public and had the man imprisoned.

When the man’s relatives went to see Hajjaj and told him that the man is insane, Hajjaj said that he had to confess to this fact himself. They went to see the man and told him to confess to being insane to be freed. The man said: “God has created me healthy and intelligent. I am not mad. Why should I falsely confess to being insane?” Then Hajjaj was told about what the man said. Hajjaj respected his honesty and freed him.⁵²

15) Gossiping

Gossiping will also corrupt the tongue. Before proceeding, we must clarify what is meant by gossiping. The late Shaheed Thani defined gossiping as ascribing things to someone behind their back that they dislike, and with the intention of belittling him.⁵³ Abu-Dharr was questioned about the meaning of gossiping. He replied: “Saying what might hurt your Muslim brother if he hears it behind his back.”⁵⁴ Gossiping is forbidden in Islam. Sheikh Mortazavi has declared gossiping to be forbidden, and has used the following verse to support his view:⁵⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا

يَغْتَابُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ

“O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. But fear God: For God is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hujurat 49: 12]

The act of gossiping is bad since both the speaker and the listener are attacking a defenseless person. It is as if one eats the flesh of his dead defenseless brother and the other one attacks one who is not present there to defend himself. Four points are stressed in the Qur’an in this regard:

1 Muslims and brothers in faith are just like our brothers.

2 A Muslim’s honor is just like his flesh.

3 Gossiping behind his back to hurt his honor is like eating his flesh.

4 The fact that he is absent and is unable to defend himself is similar to him being dead. It is not right to attack a dead defenseless person.

That is why Imam Ali has said:

الْغَيْبَةُ جُهْدُ الْعَاجِزِ.

*“Backbiting is the endeavour of the weak.”*⁵⁶

The second verse regarding this issue is:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers, will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: God knows, and ye know not.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Noor 24: 19]

Man is a social creature and the society in which he lives is like his house. He should safeguard it just as

he safeguards his house and prevent the influence of any corruption into the society. Islam seriously fights whatever corrupts the society. Gossiping is also seriously fought with because it unveils hidden flaws. Islam does not like this and instructs people to cover up each other's faults. The third verse regarding this issue is:

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا

“God loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done; for God is He who heareth and knoweth all things.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4: 148]

We must realize that any form of evil in public speech has been forbidden here. Thus gossiping is forbidden. The fourth verse in this regard is as follows:

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

“Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and-backbiter.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Humaza, 104: 1]

Some commentators have said that this verse was revealed about al-Walīd ibn al-Mughārah who used to gossip behind the Prophet's back and made fun of him up front.

Gossiping is Forbidden as Expressed by Traditions

There are many traditions that stress the bad effects of gossiping. The Noble Prophet said:

كُلُّ الْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ حَرَامٌ: دَمُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَعِرْضُهُ.

“Everything of the Muslim is to be respected by Muslims: his life, his wealth and his honor.”⁵⁷

Fayz Kashani has declared that gossiping is a cause of violation of one's honor. Jabir and Abu Saeed have both quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغَيْبَةَ فَإِنَّ الْغَيْبَةَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزَّانَا. فَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ قَدْ يَزْنِي فَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ.
وَإِنَّ صَاحِبَ الْغَيْبَةِ لَا يُغْفَرُ لَهُ حَتَّىٰ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ.

*“Avoid gossiping since it is worse than committing fornication. Sometimes a man might make a mistake and commit fornication. Once he gets sorry and repents, God will accept his repentance. But if one gossips his sin will not be forgiven unless the one behind whose back he gossips forgives him.”*⁵⁸

The Important News of the Night of Ascension

Anas quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

مَرَرْتُ لَيْلَةَ أُسْرِي بِي عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَخْمِشُونَ وُجُوهُهُمْ بِأَظْفَانِهِمْ، فَقُلْتُ: يَا جِبْرَائِيلُ، مَنْ هَؤُلَاءِ؟ قَالَ: هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ يَغْتَابُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَقَعُونَ فِي أَعْرَاضِهِمْ.

*“On the night of the Ascension, I ran across a group of people who were scratching their faces with their nails. I asked Gabriel about them. He said: These are the people who have gossiped behind the people’s backs and have caused the loss of people’s honor.”*⁵⁹

Gossiping and Immediate Reaction

It is natural that for every action there is a reaction. What is the reaction to gossiping? Al-Barra` said: “The Prophet delivered a sermon. All those who were freed were also there and heard his sermon. The Prophet said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِقَلْبِهِ! لَا تَغْتَابُوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ تَتَّبَعَ عَوْرَةَ أَخِيهِ تَتَّبَعَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ، وَمَنْ تَتَّبَعَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ وَلَوْ فِي بَيْتِهِ.

*“O those who have confessed faith but do not really have faith! Do not gossip behind the Muslims’ backs. Do not pursue their hidden secrets. Whoever does so, God will pursue his hidden secrets, and when God does that He will disgrace him although it may be in his own house.”*⁶⁰

Sheikh Sadooq quoted on the authority of the Prophet :

مَنْ مَشَى فِي غَيْبَةِ أَخِيهِ وَكَشَفَ عَوْرَتَهُ كَانَتْ أَوَّلُ خُطْوَةٍ خَطَاها وَضَعَهَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ وَكَشَفَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ عَلَى رُؤُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ. وَمَنْ اغْتَابَ مُسْلِمًا بَطُلَ صَوْمُهُ وَنُقِضَ وُضُوؤُهُ فَإِنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ كَذَلِكَ مَاتَ وَهُوَ مُسْتَحِلٌّ لِمَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ.

*“One who gossips behind his Muslim brother’s back and intends to divulge his secrets is taking a step towards Hell. God will make his hidden secrets known to the public. Whoever gossips behind a Muslim’s back loses the acceptance of his fasting and ablution. If he dies in this state, he has died as one who has allowed what God has forbidden.”*⁶¹

It is obvious that the loss of the reward of the fasting and the prayer is meant here. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

الْغَيْبَةُ أَسْرَعُ فِي دِينِ الرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ مِنَ الْآكِلَةِ فِي جَوْفِهِ.

*“Gossiping works faster than a cancerous cell in destroying a Muslim’s faith.”*⁶²

Therefore, we can say that gossiping is like the cancer of the religion. Al-Mufaddal ibn `Umar quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

مَنْ رَوَى عَلَى مُؤْمِنٍ رَوَايَةً يُرِيدُ بِهَا شَيْنَهُ وَهَدَمَ مَرْوَتَهُ لَيْسَقُطَ مِنْ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ
أَخْرَجَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ وِلَايَتِهِ إِلَى وِلَايَةِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَلَا يَقْبَلُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ.

*“One who talks against a believer and intends to harm him, belittle him or harm his honor shall be cast out of divine friendship by God and entrusted to Satan. Even Satan shall not accept him.”*⁶³

Gossiping is Not Limited to Acts of the Tongue

Gossiping is not limited to acts of the tongue. Rather it could be any kind of act that has the same purpose behind it. It is forbidden by the tongue since it shows the flaws of a brother to another brother. Therefore, it is also forbidden in any other form. Imitating the way a crippled person walks is also another form of gossiping since it shows his flaw. It is even worse. A woman went to see Ayeshah. When she left Ayeshah pointed at her implying that she is short. God’s Prophet said: “You gossiped behind her back.”⁶⁴

The Listener is a Partner in Gossiping

God’s Prophet said:

الْمُسْتَمِعُ لِلْغَيْبَةِ صِنُّ الْمُسْتَغِيبِ.

*“One who listens to gossip is a partner in gossiping.”*⁶⁵

Therefore, he has a share of the punishment for this sin unless he verbally condemns the act of gossiping, interrupts it, or leaves the meeting. Even if he cannot do so, he should consider it bad in his mind. If he verbally opposes what is said but is internally in agreement with it, then he is a hypocrite.

God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ أُذِلَّ عِنْدَهُ مُؤْمِنٌ وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى أَنْ يَنْتَصِرَ لَهُ فَلَمْ يَنْصُرْهُ أَذَلَّهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
عَلَى رُؤُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ.

*“Whoever sees a believer is belittled in front of him and can help him but does not do so, shall be belittled by God in public in the Hereafter.”*⁶⁶

He also said:

مَنْ رَدَّ عَنْ عَرَضِ أَخِيهِ بِالْغَيْبِ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يَرُدَّ عَنْ عَرَضِهِ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ.

*“On the Resurrection Day God shall protect the honor of whoever protects a brother’s honor in his absence.”*⁶⁷

He also said:

مَنْ ذَبَّ عَنْ عَرَضِ أَخِيهِ بِالْغَيْبِ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُعْتَقَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ.

*“It is incumbent upon God to protect from the Fire of Hell one who defends a brother’s honor in his absence.”*⁶⁸

The Motivations for Gossiping

- 1 – Anger, jealousy or grudge
- 2 – Making fun of others
- 3 – Seeking nobility

4 – Ascribing wicked deeds to others

5 – Peer pressure

6 – Knowing that someone will inform someone else of one's flaws

7 – Sympathy

8 – Acting amazed at what wicked acts are performed

How to Cure the Bad Habit of Gossiping

One of the ways to treat the bad habit of gossiping is to educate the person about its bad consequences in this world and the Hereafter. It is also important to eliminate the internal motivations for gossiping. It is helpful to remember that one will be subject to God's wrath. It is also important to realize that it does not help to fool oneself.

In case gossiping is done due to peer pressure, it is best to realize that God's pleasure is more important than that of our peers. One should also realize that gossiping with other motivations like sympathy and the like is in itself a violation of divine decrees and is not considered a religiously motivated act.

Gossiping and the Freedom of Speech as Viewed by Islam

How much freedom of speech is there in Islam? What are the limits to the freedom of speech, if any? There is no doubt that Islam allows the freedom of speech as we read:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَ
أُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

“So announce the good news to My Servants, – Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Zumar 39: 16-17]

This act of listening to the Word and following the best is only possible where there is freedom of speech. Imam Ali has been quoted as saying:

أَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَا قَالَ وَلَا تَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَنْ قَالَ.

*“Look at what is said, not at who has said it.”*⁶⁹

Imam Ali said:

خُذُوا الْحِكْمَةَ وَلَوْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الضَّلَالِ. خُذُوا الْحِكْمَةَ وَلَوْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

*“Accept words of wisdom even if uttered by those who have gone astray. Accept wisdom even if it is expressed by the infidels.”*⁷⁰

The Way the Immaculate Imams Encountered Opposing Views

A study of the way the Immaculate Imams encountered opposing views shows that they all stressed good treatment of those with opposite views. As an example we can cite people like Sa`d ibn Waqqas, Abu-Musa Al-Ash`ari and many others who did not pledge allegiance to Imam Ali in the beginning of his Caliphate. Imam Ali did not bother any of them. He also tried not to fight with those who broke their covenant and tried to enter a fight with him as much as possible. We can cite people like Talḥah and Zubayr as examples.

We read the following in Wasa`il al-Shḥah: “Indeed Ali never ascribed paganism to those who fought with him. He only said that they are those of our brothers who have oppressed us.”⁷¹ Also Imam Sadiq treated people like Ibn Abi'l-`Awja` well. Therefore, there is no doubt about the freedom to speak. Rather Islam forbids any form of abuse and anarchy.

The Jurisprudents’ View on the Value of the Tongue

At last, we shall study the jurisprudents’ view on the value of the tongue. The jurisprudents have stated that there is full compensation for cutting off a healthy person’s tongue. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Hilli said:⁷² “There is full compensation for a healthy tongue. If the tongue of a healthy person is partially damaged, there is partial compensation for it based on the amount of his ability left to express the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet.⁷³ There is one-third compensation for a damaged or stuttering tongue.”⁷⁴

The grand Ayatollah Khu`i said: “When the tongue is so damaged that it is not useful for the purpose it is supposed to serve, one does not consider how much of it is damaged. Rather the compensation for the tongue depends on the degree of loss of the ability to speak. For example, if one fourth of the tongue is cut, but the person can only utter one fourth of the words then there is half compensation.

If one half of the tongue is cut, but only one fourth of the letters cannot be uttered by the person damaged, then there is only one-fourth compensation required. Thus, the compensation for the tongue does not depend on the geographical location or the language of the person whose tongue has been damaged. Rather it depends on the degree of loss of the ability to utter the letters.”⁷⁵

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1. In the other version we read: “.. and refrain from any meddling in which there is nothing to be gained, express kindness to people and speak well concerning them.” Then the rest follows.
 2. The tongue.
 3. His tongue and good speech are like an ornament for his intellect.
 4. Muntaha al-Amal, v.2, p.358.
 5. A’lam al-Nisa, v.2, p.270; Zanan-i-Ghahreman, v. 1, p. 169.
 6. Referring to Mu’awiyah.
 7. Maktab-i-Islam Magazine, Year 4, No.2, p.46.
 8. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayzul Islam, Hikmat no.57.
 9. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayzul Islam, Hikmat no.7
 10. i.e. his/her tongue and sex organs.
 11. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.192
 12. Ibid. p.193.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda. p.194
 16. Ibid. p.195.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Ibid., v.5, p.198.
 19. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.200.
 20. Ibid. p.204.
 21. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.207.
 22. Ibid.
 23. Ibid.
 24. Ibid.
 25. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.208.
 26. Ibid.
 27. Ibid. p.211.
 28. Ibid. p.213.
 29. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, p.214.
 30. Ibid. p.215.
 31. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.215.
 32. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, p.217.
 33. Ibid. v.5, p.217.
 34. Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p.513.
 35. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.219
 36. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.231.
 37. Ibid. pg.232.
 38. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayzul Islam, Hikmat no.442.
 39. Manaqib Ibn Shahrashub, v.4, p.158.
 40. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Sermon No. 206.
 41. A part of Du’a ‘Arafah, Tatamat al-Muntaha, p.256.
 42. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v. 5, p.37.
 43. Ibid.
 44. Ibid.
 45. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v. 5, p.237 .
 46. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, p.241.
 47. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.329.

48. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.340.
49. Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p.473.
50. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p. 100.
51. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p. 100.
52. Koodak, Guftar-e-Falsafi, v.2, p.45, quoted from Thamarat al-Awraq, p.233.
53. Makasib, p.41.
54. Ibid.
55. Makasib.
56. Sharh Ghurar wa Durar, Khansari, v. 1, p.268.
57. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p. 251.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.252
61. Ibid. p.254.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid. p.255.
64. 'Ilm-e-Akhlaq-e-Islami, (Farsi translation of Jami'al-Sa'dat) v.2, pp.393-396.
65. Ibid.
66. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Daramadi bar Huquq-e-Islami, p.271, quoted from Ithbat al-Huda, translated by Jannati, v. 1, p.46.
70. Ibid.
71. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 11, p.62.
72. Mukhtasar al-Nafi', p.300.
73. He was referring to Arabic. Obviously this can be adjusted for other languages accordingly.
74. Mukhtasar al-Nafi', p. 300.
75. Mabani Taklimat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.290.

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