

## Chapter 12: The Status

### Backbiting Condemned

All schools of thoughts in Islam are united on condemning back-bitiing as a *haram* act. It is proved beyond doubt through authentic traditions that the Prophet of Islam (S) has termed backbiting as a major sin worst than adultery.

Backbiting is more nefarious than adultery. If a person commits adultery and expresses his compunction wholeheartedly, Allah might pardon him. But backbiting is an unpardonable sin. The only way out for the backbiter is that the person about whom he carried tales himself pardons him.

Abusing a Muslim is impiety, fighting with him is infidelity but backbiting against him is like eating the flesh of one's own brother. This is tantamount to disobedience to Allah.

It is authentically reported from Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) that If a person carries the tales of a *Mu'min*, that he had witnessed or heard, his position will be as stated by Allah,

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

***Those who like to reveal the failings of the faithful, they have severe chastisement in store for them? (24: 19)***

Backbiting destroys the faith of a Muslim as leprosy disintegrates the body from inside.

Awaiting the arrival of the time of the next congregation in the mosque is an act of virtue, if one doesnot indulge in backbiting about others in the meantime.

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) that. "If a person narrates the doings of a *Mu'min* to others

with a purpose of belittling him, Allah will remove this backbiter from his guardianship and transfer him to the guardianship of the Satan. Satan willingly accepts the charge of such a person!”

It is narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S) that a person who has faith in the Day of Judgement, he should not sit in a company where there is talk against the Infallible members of the Prophet (S)’s Family and also there is a practice of backbiting against *Mu’mins*. When a person prevents others from backbiting, Allah will remove from him a thousand difficulties. If the person quietly listens to backbiting and doesn’t intervene on behalf of the absent person, he will himself become a party to the sin of backbiting. This sin will be seventy times more severe than the sin of the person who was actually doing the backbiting.

It is narrated from Imam Ja’far As–Sadiq (as) that one who backbites against a *Mu’min*, although he may have no enmity against the person, the progeny of such backbiter will have the Satan’s share in it.

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen (as) says that when someone talks against a *Mu’min* with the purpose of putting him to disrepute, Allah will place him in such a station on the Day of Judgement where there will be accumulation of the scum of the adulterers’ semen. He will remain there till he receives a pardon.

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said, “Abstain from carrying false notions against others. This is the biggest weakness. Move in the way of Allah as brothers. Allah ordains thus: ‘... and don’t call one another with bad names. Don’t search others’ faults. Don’t use abusive language while conversing. Don’t do backbiting. Abstain from fights. Don’t hate or be jealous of others. Remember, jealousy eats away faith the same way as the fire consumes the dried wood!”

In another narrative the Prophet (S) says, “Allah sent a Revelation to prophet Musa (as), ‘If a backbiter repents, he will be among the last to enter the precincts of the Heaven. If he doesn’t repent his act, he will be amongst the first to be sent to the Hell!’”

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said: Four persons are such that their torture would even cause pain to the people of the Hell. The *Hameem* of the Hell will be there for them to feed on. They will raise lots of wails. The people of the Hell would complain that despite their own pain, they are raising noise and disturbing them the more. Some of them will be hanging on the sarcophagus of the Hell. They will be pulling out the innards of each other.

From the mouths of others pus and blood will flow out. Some others will snatch the flesh from their own bodies and eat. The people of the Hell will inquire about those hanging on to the sarcophagus and will be told that at the time of their death they owed lot of money to others. They did not leave behind anything to settle others’ dues. They will then inquire about those who were pulling at each other’s innards. They will be told that these were the people who eased themselves anywhere not bothering about anyone. When they inquired about the persons who were oozing pus and blood from their mouths; they will be told that they were the persons who were in the habit of backbiting and carrying tales.

The companions of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) asked him about the meaning of the tradition of the Prophet (S), "A *Mu'min's* woman is taboo for another *Mu'min*." The Imam replied: Revealing a *Mu'min's* secret is *haram*. The fast and the ablution of a backbiter goes void. One who recounts the failings of others, himself has many failings.

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen Ameer al Mimineen (as) has asked people to refrain from backbiting. This habit is the fodder of the dogs of the Hell.

## Meaning Of Backbiting

Talking about a *Mu'min* in a tone that would hurt him, if he were around, and heard you talk, is tantamount to backbiting.

Even if this backbiting is in gestures and and subtle indications, it is taboo. However if the name of the person is not mentioned and only said that in the city there is a person who has such and such a bad habit, then it will not be termed backbiting. But if certain traits are attributed to a person in his absence, and, in fact, he doesn't manifest those traits, then the act is backbiting and is taboo. In fact this would be an allegation much worse than backbiting.

## Justification For Backbiting

There are ten situations in which backbiting is justified

When a tyrant oppresses someone and the oppressed persons seeks help from another person in authority by informing him of the oppression he has suffered at the hands of the tyrant.

Recounting the faults of a person to someone else with the solemn hope that this way the faults of the person could be corrected.

While applying for an edict (*fatwa*) mentioning the name of the other party. For example, informing to the jurist the name of a brother who is denying to him his just rights.

If a *Mu'min* takes the advice of another *Mu'min* whether he can entrust his valuables to a particular person and that whether that person, in his opinion, can be depended upon.

Revealing the hypocritic acts of the hypocrites that can harm the society is justified.

If a jurist (*mujtahid*) points out the *khata al-mujtahidi* (error of judgement) of another *mujtahid*, it is permissible.

Arguing about the veracity or otherwise of narrators of events is permitted.

When people are told about a particular failing of a person and they don't agree, then highlighting that

defect as an explanation is justified. For example, someone says about a person that he is volubly talkative!

If a group of persons is compulsively committing the same mistake, then it is permissible to talk about their failings.

When a culprit is arraigned in front of a magistrate for repeated commitment of crimes, then it is justified to recount his foul acts in the court.

## **Giving Ear To Backbiting**

One who listens to backbiting is a sinner as much as the one who carries the tales. Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) has said, "The one who gives ears to backbiting is one of the two backbiters!" It is a common saying that one should discourage backbiting. If one fails to achieve this, then he should discreetly walk away from the place.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) has said, "One who prevents people from backbiting against brother *Mu'mins* and helps them, Allah will save him from the travails of this world and the Hereafter."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq has said, "If someone is, whom we donot know, backbites about a *Mu'min*, we should not belittle the *Mu'min*. Who knows he may be the righteous one!"

## **Expiation For Backbiting**

The expiation for backbiting is that one should seek the pardon of those against whom he has committed the act and try to remove the rancor from their hearts.

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said that backbiting is a sin worse than adultery. People asked the reason for this. The Prophet (S) replied, "If one repents having committed adultery, Allah might pardon the person. But repentence for having done backbiting is not accepted till the person who was the victim of the act does not forgive the perpetrator." Also the Prophet (S) said, "If a person whose backbiting has been done is not aware of the act, even then the person who has talked about him should personally seek his forgiveness. If, in the meantime, the victim dies, the backbiter will not be pardoned at all."

## **False Allegations Condemned**

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said that if someone makes a false allegation against a *Mu'min* or a *Mu'mina*, and relates a thing about them that is not true, such a person would be made to stand on a hill of fire on the Day of Judgement.

Someone asked Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as), "What is the distance between truth and falsehood!" The Imam (as) replied, "Only the width equivalent to the width of four fingers! He told this putting his four fingers

between his ear and the eye. Then added, "What you see with your eye is the truth and most of what you hear through your ear might be the falsehood!"

One who tells falsehoods about brother *Mu'mins* to belittle them, Allah will shame him in this world and the Hereafter!

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) made a will that people should keep away from those who make false allegations about others. Their company might make others adopt their nefarious habit.

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said: One who keeps company of people who tell falsehoods, might himself be in the same habit.

## Jealousy

Jealousy is among the worst psychological sins. This is the first sin that Satan committed against prophet Adam (as). Jealousy is one of the major sins. The jealous person wishes harm to the subject of his feelings. If he feels that he should attain the same status as the other person has, then it can be termed as the spirit of competition that is permissible. When a jealous person wishes that the status of his subject of jealousy diminishes, it may not happen because all privileges are a gift from Allah. Jealousy against what Allah has given to some will be tantamount to confronting Him! The jealous person, therefore, will be sad and dejected because of this pernicious habit.

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) has said, "Don't be jealous. Jealousy eats away the Faith as the fire devours the dry wood!"

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) has said, "A *Mu'min* has recourse to the spirit of competition (*Ghibta*) and not jealousy. In *Ghibta* there is no element of wishing diminishing of the other person's status but the wish to equal him or even surpass him in his achievements."

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) has said, "Heaven is taboo for the *nammam* (the backbiter), carrier of tales and the jealous!"

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said, "O Abu Dharr! One who is a hypocrite and tale carrier in this world, he will be in the Hell on the Day of Reckoning. A hypocrite is one who praises the person on his face and belittles him in his absence."

O Abu Dharr! Every secret that a brother *Mu'min* has confided to you in private, revealing it to others is dishonesty. Abstain from revealing it. If you don't guard the secret of a brother *Mu'min*, he too might not uphold your secrets!

## The Talebearer

A talebearer will never enter the Heaven and will not have any relief from the tortures of the Hell.

The Prophet of Allah (S) has said, "Those who have made it their habit to gossip and carry tales, create enmity amongst good friends, and allege failings in others that are not there, are the worst of men. Heaven is taboo for such persons." Then the Prophet (S) added, "Four types of people will be denied the Heaven: 1. Soothsayers or wizards. 2. Hypocrites. 3. Alcoholics. 4. Talebearers."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) narrates that three categories of persons will not go to the Heaven. 1. Those who shed the blood of Muslims. 2. Those who take intoxicants. 3. The talebearers.

It is narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S) that on the night of *Meraj* he saw a woman whose head was like that of a pig and the body akin to one of a monkey. She was victim to a thousand hardships. The companions asked the Prophet (S), "Ya Imam! Why the hardships visited the woman?" He (as) replied, "She was a talecarrier and perpetrator of untruths!"

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) has said, "Very bad is the person who has two opinions and two words! He praises one on his face and condemns him behind his back! He will be jealous when given something and run away in times of difficulty!"

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said, "A twofaced person will come on the Day of Judgement with a face having a second tongue in the back of his head. One of the tongues will be hanging in front of his head. Flames will be emanating from both the tongues. The fire will then enter his entire body. A herald will announce that this was the same person who adopted two tongues and faces in the world!"

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as) has said, "Three types of persons will be under the shadow of the Firmament on the Day of Judgement, when there will be no other shade than this: 1. A person who arranges marriages of unmarried *Mu'mins*. 2. One who provides a servant for a brother *Mu'min*. 3. *One who keeps the secrets of Mu'mins*. Remember keeping others' secrets is very important."

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) has said, "Keep good relations with your friends lest they become your enemies someday. Don't exceed in the enmity with your enemies. Perhaps they might become your good friends someday!"

"O Abu Dharr! The acts of people committed between a Friday to the next are recounted to Allah on the following Wednesday and Thursday. Allah pardons the sins of all barring those who have carried enmity against their brothers. Allah orders to keep their deeds in abeyance till they reach a rapprochement and the enmity is banished."

"O Abu Dharr! Abstain from keeping a distance from your brother! Because of creating distances, no action will be acceptable to Allah! O Abu Dharr! I warn you against creating distances! If circumstance

force separation, let it not be for more than three days! One who keeps away for more than three days from his brother *Mu'min*, and dies in that period, then the Hellfire will be more appropriate for him!”

An authentic source quotes from the Prophet of Islam (S), “One who has more cares and sorrow will be sickly. One who carries a bad character, will be the accursed. One who fights and argues with people will lack humanness and thoughtfulness.” Then the Prophet (S) added, “Jibrael (as) has always been warning me against litigation the same way that he warned against drinking and idolatory!”

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as), “As long as two Muslims remain at loggerheads, Satan will remain happy. When they reach a rapprochement, the Satan's knees crumble! He then complains, ‘What a calamity has struck me!’”

The Imam (as) also said, “*Sadaqa* (charity) is very dear to Allah. That is, arranging a rapprochement between warring groups arranging a truce between two fighting men is a better charity than giving away two gold coins in alms!”

## Pride

“O Abu Dharr! The maximum number of people who will go to the Hell will be from those who are victims of pride!”

Someone asked, “Ya Imam! What is the way of protecting oneself from becoming proud?” The Prophet (S) replied, “A person who wears coarse cloth, rides on the long eared mules, milks his own goats and shares his food with the poor and prefers to carry his own burden is free from the trait of pride!” This means that humility protects one from becoming proud.

“O Abu Dharr! One who makes his robe trail behind him in pride, Allah will not cast the look of Blessing towards him on the Day of Reckoning!” One who draws the ends of his robe in his hands and walsk on the street, and doesn't walk like the proud, conceited Arabs, who repairs his own footwear and bows his Head to Allah on the sands is free from the trait of false pride!

Very soon the Prophet (S) said, “My *Ummat* will have people who will be born in affluence. They will be pampered with delicious foods and victuals. Flattering poets will sing paens in their praise. These will be the bad ones among my *Ummat!*”