

Combating **Backbiting**

Combating Backbiting © 2018 [1439 A.H.]
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(Khalifa of Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmad [d.b])

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Foreword

We offer our Hamd to our Karim Lord, for the blessing of Iman and the sustenance of our faith despite our very obvious negligence, apathy and ingratitude. May He, tabaraka wa ta'ala, aid us to living the rest of our lives pleasing Him and bringing others close to Him. May the path to taqwa be eased for us and for all aspirants to piety and rectitude. May Allahu ta'ala make our tongue, our gaze, our hearing, and our thoughts and feelings pious and virtuous. May He help us to end our lives like the exemplarily righteous and raise us among them when Qiyama comes, amin.

The '**soft sword**' called '**the tongue**' is a thousand times more powerful and more destructive than the sword made of steel. The tongue destroys in a moment what a million real swords would not bring to ruin in decades. The tongue is the delicate organ on which all our worldly fortunes precariously hang. If the tongue is righteous all our deeds get acceptance, and if it errs, all our efforts in the Deen become a waste. When mentioning few fundamental hints that would ease our path to salvation, Rasulu-Karim, Sayyidina Muhammad Mustafa (alaihi 's-salam) mentioned foremostly:

Hold your tongue

That is, control your tongue, mind your utterances,

weigh your words, maintain silence always, and say only what is good and beneficial. Allahu ta'ala has made the eyes with one door, but caged the tongue in two; the barricades – the teeth and that of the lips due to its dangers.

The sins of tongue are numerous, all with terrible consequences and telling effects on our Iman, and on our well-being in Dunya and the life eternal. One of the most deadly, and certainly the most technical of all the sins committed with the tongue is backbiting and this is what the booklet presently before you intends to discuss. The discourses here-in presented are from the lecture notes scribbled in jotters as this faqir mentioned the negative effects of backbiting in its bayanat in Nigeria and abroad. Brothers and sisters have expressed, with deep sense of sobriety, the great benefits derived from the lectures, especially the insight they have given in realizing the blunders and errors committed with the tongue.

The urge to, insha Allahu ta'ala, benefit many other Muslims by repeating what we have learnt at the noble feet of our pious mentors and teachers is what has driven this faqir to work towards printing this booklet. May our Karim Lord strengthen and purify the weak intention of this faqir making this short work beneficial, and a means to move us all forward in the effort to get our Islah (self-rectification) done. May He bless with

Jannah all the brothers and sisters who have chosen to invest in our publication fund thus putting this booklet free of all charges in the hands of Muslims, amin. May our noble and compassionate Lord, Allahu subhanahu wa ta'ala, make our lives meaningful, may He make our lives purposeful and fruitful, and may He make our end most blissful barakat of the noblest of His creation, the Imam of the pious and the crown of His Prophets, Sayyidina Habibullah Muhammad Mustafa (alaihi wa alihi wa sahabihi salawatu wataslimat attamuha wa akmaluha), amin.

Abdulqadr Naqshbandi

Dhul Qada 1439AH/July 2018

يَأْيُهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ

إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ ^ص وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا

يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ^ج أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ

أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ^ج

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ^ج

... and do not backbite one another. Does any one of you like that he eats the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. (Hujurat:12)
[Ma'ariful Qur'an]

COMBATING BACKBITING

YOUR HEART AND YOUR ETERNITY

May Allahu ta'ala, out of His sheer mercy, make the path to piety easy for us. May He bestow on us the fortune of using all our organs and limbs only to earn His pleasure, amin. Every human being carries a heart in his being, even the one who is said to be 'heartless' carries a heart too. He is described as such because his heart is emptied of true human feelings and consideration. Amazingly, the blood pumping heart of man, an insignificant part of his entity, determines his well-being in the physical and natural life, while the spiritual heart also plays the greatest role regarding his success eternal.

The physical, blood pumping heart, which is a piece of flesh in the body of man co-ordinates the function of the body system, while the spiritual heart, a latifa (spiritual essence) blown over the physical heart controls the entire spiritual well-being of every human being.

The physical heart of everyone is approximately the size of his fist, so it is designed proportionately to the body weight, while the spiritual heart is something of the ghayb, the unseen, although its reality is felt by everybody. If this heart is pure the entire being and its deeds become pure, and if it is evil, everything in and

from man becomes negative and repulsive, bad.

Everyone has got a heart, but the value of each heart varies from one person to another. A kilogram of stone, gold, diamond and charcoal would weigh the same on the scale, but valued monetarily, they are trillions of dollars apart. A kilogram of diamond would equal the budget of the worldly wealthy countries put together, while the valued of charcoal is absolutely negligible. The heart of the pious, most sincere believer, is like diamond while that of a reckless sinner is less than stone in value. Peace, progress and serenity in a given society is determined by how many quality-hearted individuals live in that environment. Indeed, the true value of man is not how much amassed and how many titles won, the true worth of man is the value of his heart.

Our Karim and most compassionately Lord has in His infinite wisdom made the heart attractive and extremely invaluable to all His Prophets (alaihimu 's-salam) throughout the ages. So, with the historical presence of the Prophets (alaihimu 's-salam) across the lands, the heart today becomes the concern of all cultures and all peoples.

In every language, it is the heart that longs, craves, and rejects. The generous is said to be large hearted, the easily scared is said to be weak hearted, the wicked, bellicose, is said to be stone-hearted and the

amiable and merciful is said to be soft-hearted. Indeed, we can hardly grasp in totality the much importance our entire lives attach to the heart. The heart is a gem of inestimable value in this world and most amazingly importantly in the world to come. As a matter of fact, our pious ancestors (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) concluded that not only human beings, but every single being in the entire creation has got a heart peculiar to it. For example, the heart of the day is the last hour before dawn (fajr), the heart of the week is the Day of Jumu'ah (Friday), the heart of the Jumu'ah day is the last hour before its sunset. The heart of the months is the month of Ramadan, the heart of the Ramadan month is the Qadr night, the heart of the year is the day of Arafah and the heart of the glorious Qur'an is the Yasin surah. The learned of the Ummah (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) would firmly maintain that Duas are never rejected whenever three hearts come together to present the requests before Allahu subhanahu wa ta'ala; the focused and sincere heart of the human supplicant, the heart of the Qur'an (the Yasin surah) and the heart of the day, that is towards the break of dawn, Allahu akbar!

As seen from these examples, the heart of man and its remaining in pure state should be his greatest concern. The pure heart attracts Allah's mercy every passing moment while a decadent heart is forever repulsive to our loving Lord. The heart of man is the

most wonderful part of his being, so Allahu ta'ala wants it devoted to Him and no other. The learned and the insightful sages of the Ummah (alaihimu 'r-rahma) mentioned that Allahu ta'ala created Jannat and keeps the key with the noble Angel Ridwan (alaihi 's-salam),. He created Jahannam (Hell fire) and deposited the key with the noble Angel Malik (alaihi 's-salam), He made the Baitullah, the Kaaba Sharif in Makka Mukkaramah and entrusted the key to the Bani Abi Shaybah, but when he created the hearts of his human creatures, He kept the key within His two 'fingers'. How greatly invaluable is the human heart to Allahu tabaraka wa ta'ala, our sublime and Karim Lord, that the key is only kept with Him, giving no other an access to it.

My brothers and sisters, those who make their hearts qualitative desiring the pleasure of their sublime Creator are the true human beings. They become honourable in this world and the Akhirah. The reality of life is that the quantity of our lives will vanish and only the quality will be retained and this only will remain eternally. It would not really matter whether life is extremely long or short, the state of one's heart and the virtues emanating from each person is of the utmost concern. Nabiyy Noah (alaihi 's-salam) was recorded to have lived a long life of about a thousand year, a long life indeed. But considered historically, that, his very long life expired thousands of years ago and if not for his Prophethood, his invaluable services to humanity,

and his steadfastness in the cause of Allahu ta'ala, time would have worked against the memory of men and nothing would have remained of his many years and countless activities.

It is understood from what is discussed this far, that the heart is central to our peace, ease and to our success temporal and eternal, this is why every deed and every ibadat in our most endowed Deen-i Islam has the heart as its focus. They are hearts' purifiers and anything that run athwart to the Islamic realities and teachings are means to corrupt the heart. Indeed, the entire science of Tasawwuf variously called Islah, Sufism or Tariqa, which is one-third of Islam, is devoted to the heart and its being pure. It is a science seeking purity through the polish of the sunnah. The one who abandon the sunnah can never be a sufi.

THE BEST IS ALSO THE WORST

It was related of Hadrat Luqman Hakim (alaihi 's-salam) that he was once ordered by those he served to slaughter a sheep and cut it into pieces. This, he did in pious obedience. Next, he was asked, as a man reputed for his great wisdom, to bring the best part of the slaughtered sheep. He, immediately went away and returned with the heart of the sheep. Then, he was asked to bring the worst part of the animal. To this directive, Luqman Hakim (alaihi 's-salam), refused to respond. When he was encouraged to go ahead and

bring the worst piece of the animal just as he had wisely picked the best. Hadrat Luqman (alaihi 's-salam) quietly responded:

The best is also the worst

If the heart is purified, polished with the soap of sunnah, zikr and muraqaba, it becomes golden, the best of the best, and if it is left decadent, corrupt and filled with desires and passion, it is the worst of all things terrible, subhanallah!

AN OCEAN WITHIN

In reality the heart is like an ocean with so many rivers enriching it with water. The tributaries pumping water to the heart are our limbs; the tongue, the eyes, the ears, our private organs, our stomach, our teeth and what we eat. If these tributaries, the supplying streams, are pure then the ocean of the heart will also be pure, but if in converse, they are turbid, impure, the possibility of a pure heart is absolutely remote, impossible. Then every sin from any of the organs stains the heart until it becomes complete dark and black, while obedience, ibadats and good deeds are light for the heart.

As seen, all organs of the body are of great importance to the heart, they must be kept pure, else they corrupt the heart and the person. Of all these organs, however,

the most dangerous is the tongue. The tongue is the most influential and the king of all the organs, when the tongue becomes erring, corrupt, all other organs lose their bearing, they go astray.

As a matter of fact, the saintly have reported that; every morning all the organs of the body present themselves before the tongue pleading for his righteousness saying: **“O tongue please save us from losing out, if you are righteous all our virtues are retained, but if you stray we are all destroyed.”**

My brothers, everyone is a saint until he starts to speak, when he commences speaking the true state of his heart is divulged. For this great reason, Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) says:

Silence is a rule but only few can maintain it.

The tongue is such a dangerous and powerful sword that it can bring to ruins a society that bombs and bayonets could not destroy, and can destroy relationship that is built with efforts for ages with just one careless statement.

ASAINTLY EXAMPLE

The Siddiq Akbar, Amirul Muminin, Sayyidina Abubakr (radiAllahu 'anh) was reported as seen by the noble companions (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) pulling out his

mubarak tongue with such a force that they feared so much for his most-valuable life. When, he (radiAllahu 'anh) was asked regarding this punitive act upon himself. He (radiAllahu 'anh) responded saying:

This tongue is bringing me to destruction.

Allahu Akbar!

The Muhadditheen Kiram, our most distinguished and respected elders and scholars in the field of Hadith (ridwanullahi alaihim ajmain), all agreed that not more than twenty-one Ahadith were directly reported by Hadrat Abubakr Siddiq (radiAllahu 'anh) from Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) despite the very close relationship and life-time companionship. Hadrat Abubakr (radiAllahu 'anh) used to be cautious of this speech so much that he would keep pieces of stone in his mubarak mouth lest he speaks unnecessarily. Indeed, Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) was reported to have warned:

Every speech of man is counted against him except his forbidding the wrong, encouraging righteousness and the zikr (remembrance) of Allah.

Imam Tabarani (rahimahullah) in his Awsat mention the very instructive hadith:

He, whose speech is abundant, his errors are in abundance. The one whose error is in abundance, his sins are many, and the one whose sins are many is most eligible, qualified, for the Fire.

Sayyidina al-Uqba ibn Aamir (radiAllahu 'anh) said:

Hold your tongue and your home will be expanded for you and your mistakes shielded by your merciful Lord.

Shaykh Yunus ibn Ubayd (rahimahullah) said:

There are two things which if rectified all other things in one's life are also corrected by themselves: Salat and the tongue.

The one who speaks much certainly speaks much lies. The one who speaks seldom and reflect on his every statement is a true man of piety. Our superiors (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) said man has been given two ears and one tongue so that he would listen and reflect twice before he speaks. They (alaihimu 'r-rahma) said the earlier saints (alaihimu 'ridwan) would reflect deeply before they speak. Later generations became forgetful and would only reflect over their speeches

after they have spoken. Today, the Ummah is soaked in complete ghaflah (forgetfulness) that we neither reflect before nor after our speech. This should be a great cause for concern, really.

The proof of Islam, Hadrat Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (rahimahullah) once advised:

When you want to say something, pause and reflect. If you are going to be held accountable by your Lord if you do not say it, then say it; otherwise remain silent.

This advice is so golden that every wise believer needs to memorize it and make it a watchword until they constantly act by it. A poem:

*Do not speak without thinking
Even if it means silence for a while
Surely there is no pain in any silence
That is followed by beneficial speech*

*Weigh your words my brother before you speak
Never in submission to anger, abuse or curse
All disasters in Dunya are mainly from speech
Silence is a treasure better than gold*

THE POWER IN WORDS

A noble Sahabiyyah (a lady companion of Rasulullah {alaihi 's-salam}) came out to welcome back the noblest of Prophets (alaihi 's-salam) into the lightsome city of Medina after the Uhud expedition with the Kuffar, the disbelievers. This blessed lady (radiAllahu 'anha) extremely happy to see the Prophet returning, asked about her son who had fought behind Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) to spread the message of Tawhid, Peace, Justice and purity under the flag of Islam. She was informed with all sense of sobriety that her son had passed on during the confrontation with the enemies. Happy that her son had sacrificed life itself in the cause of Allahu ta'ala, yet grieved that she would miss the loving companionship of her son, she said in low and regretful tone, repeating the blessed name of her heroic son:

***O son, enjoy the breeze of Paradise
O son, enjoy the breeze of Paradise***

On this great and very solemn occasion, the mercy for the worlds, Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) decided to teach humanity a great lesson. He (alaihi 's-salam) cautioned the noble lady saying:

***How do you know he is in Jannah
(Paradise), perhaps he has said a
word where he should not, or***

withdrew his hand where he should have spent.

Allahu Akbar, with this great speech that would make the dead rise, we can understand that a single word spoken out of place, or a moment miserliness may deprive one of the benefit of very great and most rewardable ibadat like fighting and staking one's life behind Allahu ta'ala's most beloved, Sayyidina Muhammad Mustafa (alaihi 's-salam).

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) said:

A man says a word in order to make others laugh and for this he is topped on in the Fire.

One of the last words of guidance, of the parting admonitions given by the best of creation (alaihi 's-salam) as he (alaihi 's-salam) bid this worldly life bye is:

Whoever among you desires to be with me tomorrow (in Jannah), should restrain his hand and (be cautious) with his tongue. O people! Verily sins do away with blessings.

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) described the true believer as the one in whose tongue and hands the believers are safe, secured. That is, a true Muslim is always

careful never to bring harm to others with their tongues or their hands.

Amazingly, here, the tongue is mentioned before the hands despite the fact that the hands are understood to be more damaging. But the learned pointed out that the wisdom in mentioning the tongue first is to draw our attention to its extremely destructive effect and its far-reaching consequences.

The hands can hit and break down, but its object of attack must be within its reach, close by. The tongue attacks and destroys honours and wreaks embarrassment despite its victims being the farthest away. Indeed, even the inmates of the graves are not safe from the harm of the evil tongue.

When the hand causes injury, it is instantly treated and it heals with time. The wound effected by the tongue defies the very effective balm of time. The damage lasts till death, or let say till the Akhirah.

The hand attacks only the physical aspect of its victim, but the tongue descends violently on all the entire dimensions of human life; the spiritual, the emotional, the intellectual, the physical, the matrimonial and all the rest.

The harms of the tongue are so many that it is very difficult to put a count to them. The saintly 'alim and

'arif, the exalted Hadrat Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi (rahimahullah) has mentioned the following as the most basic of these:

- To engage in futile, useless speech
- To speak more than necessary even on a useful subject
- To narrate tales of sinning and wrong doing
- To argue
- To swear
- To be foul-mouthed
- To curse
- To sing poems encouraging and strengthening passion
- To engage in loud, hilarious laughter
- To belittle others
- To expose someone's secret
- To tell a lie

- To backbite
- To slander
- To carry tales
- To praise someone in his presence when it can negatively affect him, the praised
- For a trader to praise his wares with qualities that are not in them
- To ask questions that are of no necessity or relevance to your need

Of all these wrongs of the tongue, the most erroneous, common and very technical is backbiting which is the main concern of this discourse. All other sins are known clearly as sinful by those who engage in them. Backbiting is different, its definition is not properly grasped except by the learned, its sources, what prompts it, is not realized except by the reflective, and its consequences are not truly perceived except by the pious.

THE BASIC GROUPING

Let it be primarily known that man on the earth have parted into three basic groups. The first group live only

to satisfy their passion and desire. Asleep, awake and in all situations, they crave things that would keep their ego strong. They revel in music, move with women, sleep browsing and wake up to films, news, games and other internet errors. Though, some answer Muslim names and observe salat casually, they have made their desires the ultimate. They are people who are lost to the trivials and the temporal. They abandoned Allah and the Akhirah so He made them to forget themselves.

The second group live only to please Allahu ta'ala. Their every moment is dedicated to Allah's service and His eternal pleasure. They relate with the creation to make Allahu ta'ala happy, serve and guide them to His light. Allahu ta'ala loves this group, they are the saved party.

The third group makes effort to please Allahu ta'ala while still submitting once in a while to the desires of the self. These are the endangered group. They seek a balance between their worldly pursuits and the works of the Akhirah, but most fall by the way due to the subtle tricks of Shaytan who, taking them by degrees, completely deprived them of any sincere concern for anything eternal and sacred.

The heart of the first group is dead, that of the second group is active and vibrant, while the heart of the third group is between life and death.

Sinning, love for Dunya and inclination to all egoistic tendencies corrupt and gradually kills the heart. Unless these are put into check, one loses the eternity without the least awareness. One of the most destructive sins to the heart is backbiting.

Backbiting is not to say what a person has not done, rather, it is to speak in the absence of someone in a way that he would feel bad if he was to be present, even if it is the truth. It is also an attempt to expose the secret fault of a Muslim, broadcasting his failings in order to degrade, lower or discredit him.

It is backbiting to reveal or discuss someone's shortcoming regarding his body, his height, his lineage, his action, his speech, his Deen, etc.

When we are asked to stop backbiting, we ignorantly say; 'Yes, what I am saying is the truth, I am not lying about him.'

But saying the truth about his private life in the public is still backbiting because his honour is sacred. If you have lied against him, that would be slander, a clearer and more deadly sin.

Some others say: 'I can even say it to his face, I do not really care.' But this will not also take you off the sin of backbiting. You can repeat your words in his presence but he would feel hurt, bad and dishonoured, so it is still

backbiting.

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) said:

***Sacred is the blood, the wealth and the honour
of a Muslim.***

So it is a great crime to enter into this sacred precincts of his life. His honour is trampled upon when he is backbited and the consequences of such an enormity is certainly arresting. Indeed, Rasulallah (alaihi 's-salam) said:

Backbiting is worse than zina (fornication). (Imam Tabarani in Awsat, 65)

He (alaihi 's-salam) also declares:

He who backbites and repents will be the last to enter Jannah, and he who dies without repenting from backbiting will be the first to enter the Hell-fire.

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) mentioned in hadith of Imams Abu Dawud and Ahmad (rahimahumullah) that:

On the night of miraj (ascension), he (alaihi 's-salam) passed by a group of

people who were scratching their faces with their nails. 'Jibril (alaihi 's-salam) informed me that they were those who used to backbite while in the world.'

Remember, the blood, honours and wealth of a believer are sacred due to the extreme value and sacredness of La ilaha illallah. The one who believes in this great words of tawhid is immediately granted a level of wilayat with Allahu ta'ala. So do not castigate the friend of Allahu ta'ala, do not belittle him, do not amplify his fault. He had displayed some sincerity to his Kalimatush-Shahada by not indulging openly in sins, for this, he is honourable and becomes an aspirant to taqwa.

In a very popular Hadith, a Sahabi (radiAllahu 'anh) took some hard (alcoholic) drinks after it was declared prohibited and was whipped as commanded in the Shari'a. The same person was caught in this wrong act the second time and was also punished accordingly. When, eventually he was discovered drinking the third time, he was not only whipped, but Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam), somewhat angry, removed his Mubarak sandal and threw it at the mistaking Sahabi (radiAllahu 'anh) saying; **'If you are caught in this act again, I know what to do with you.'**

On this occasion, a concerned companion (radiAllahu

'anh) stood up and made to raise his voice against the three times offender, but Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) promptly prevented him saying:

Do not insult him for he loves Allahu tabaraka wa ta'ala and His Rasul.

Allahu Akbar! Here we can see and understand the balance of Islam and its robust and enlivening nature. Sinning will never remove Iman whatever the number or the enormity as far as the sinner sees himself as a sinful, guilty servant, and the sin itself is not tantamount to disbelief. What removes Iman is to justify sins and wrongdoings or to make what is haram halal or the other way round. This is a food for thought for the modern, self-opionated and self-righteous members of the Ummah who pronounce Muslims as Kuffar (disbelievers) without the least fear for their own Iman. In this Ummah, it is the responsibility of the strong, the saintly and the pious to pull the weak up and along. Keeping ample beards and regulating the trouser length are noble sunnah endearing to all Muslims, but these should not be taken to be piety itself, nor a license to take others out of the Deen.

According to a Hadith when a believer is backbited, the backbiter is visited with three calamities immediately;

- **His dua is always rejected until he repents**

- **His ibadat is never accepted**

And

- **His sins are piled up**

Allahu Akbar!

MAKING THE OCEAN TURBID

Someone in the lightsome presence of Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) mentioned something in reference to the short stature of Sayyida Saffiyyah (radiAllahu 'anha). Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) responded instantly saying:

**You have said a word (so terrible)
that if thrown to the sea, it would
make it turbid.**

Subhanallah, one moment of backbiting would make the ocean muddy despite its great volume and its expansiveness. Now we can understand the Divine wisdom behind likening a backbiter to the one who eats the flesh of the fresh corpse of his Muslim brother. Eating the flesh alive is one thing, but eating when fresh at death, at moment that even the hardest of heart would be moved to pity, is another much more terrible thing.

The Qur'an al-Majid says:

... and do not backbite one another. Does any one of you like that he eats the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. (Hujurat:12) [Ma'ariful Qur'an]

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) declared:

The one who backbites a Muslim in order to discredit or lower him will be made to stand on the edge of Jahannam until he withdraws his words.

In another wonderful Hadith, Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) warned:

Whosoever wishes to escape the grave torture should distance himself from backbiting.

In another Hadith, documented by Imam Ahmad (rahimahullah), Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) was reported as saying:

'A servant (of Allah) may utter a word which Allahu ta'ala is pleased with

without him giving much importance to it, but this promotes him and enrich him in reward, and a servant (of Allah) may make a pronouncement that is repulsive to Allahu ta'ala, without him knowing its gravity, and for which he will be thrown into Hellish fire.'

JANNAT, SO CHEAP

The noblest of creation (alaihi 's-salam) once advised:

'Make your utterances blessed, spread the greetings of peace, be kind to your relatives, pray at night while others are asleep, then enter Paradise in peace.'

ASCARY EXPERIENCE

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) once passed by a burial ground with some of his most honourable companions (alahimu 'r-ridwan). On reaching the graves, his Mubarak horse became restless, anxious, running about. Rasulullaha (alaihi 's-salam) then informed the astonished Sahaba (alahimu 'r-ridwan) that the horse became agitated, unsettled, because of the punishments going on in the two graves. **'One inmate was being punished for backbiting and the other for splashing urine on his clothing when relieving**

himself in the world.'

BACKBITING OF THE HAND?

Our beloved mother, Sayyida Aisha (radiAllahu 'anha) was with Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) when a very short status woman approached and gave salam. She was warmly received and she turned to go. Sayyida Aisha (radiAllahu 'anha) looked smilingly towards Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) and demonstrated with her hand the height of the departing lady. Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) changed his mubarak countenance instantly saying:

That is backbiting

Allahu Akbar! Backbiting of the hand. So not only the tongue backbites, there can be the backbiting of gesture, of the hand, of the pen, of the eyes, and in the modern time, on the internet.

WASTED EFFORTS

When a Muslim is backbited, half of the good deeds of the backbiter is immediately transferred to the one backbited, while half of the sins of the one backbited goes to the backbiter. What a calamity that people who persevere on a life of piety would find themselves loaded with sins in the Akhirah, while many sinners would get a clean bill because of those who had

dishonoured them by discussing their secret failings in Dunya.

For this reason, the saintly elders (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) have concluded that the one who backbites is an ignoramus who places his good deeds on a catapult one by one and shoot them in different directions; one to Baghdad, one to Basra until they are wasted all over the world. Everyone he backbites takes a share of his good deeds even if that person is already in the grave, subhanallah!

Imam 'Ali (radiAllahu 'anh) once declared that backbiting is bitter and more destructive than poison. He (radiAllahu 'anh) also said that everyone is concealed beneath his tongue, his reality is known when he speaks.

LEARNING TO LET GO

Backbiting mostly originates from arrogance, hatred, envy and spites, a remnant of enmity in the heart even after years of reconciliation. We should dread backbiting the way we fear a ferocious lion, for it takes away all our virtues throwing us to spiritual penury before our just and All-Seeing Lord, Allahu subhanahu wa ta'ala. The one who exposes the secret error of a Muslim thus disgracing him will not die until he falls into the same error or commit the same blunders he criticized.

HIS SAINTLY SUBMISSION

In his priceless book *Islahi Akhlaq*, the saintly elder, Hadrat Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) gave these invaluable guidance on backbiting:

Backbiting is to speak ill of any Muslim in his absence or anything related to him e.g. his children, vehicle or house. This may be verbal, by hand signs e.g. making a sign that he is short, by pointing to one being one-eyed or blind by eye-signs, by bending one's back alluding to someone's bent back, or by raising one leg and walking referring to someone's limb. In short, to make mention of your brother in such a way that if he was present, he would be upset and saddened. Thus, when you speak about any person, think first if he was present here would he be pleased or displeased with my speech. If your heart feels that he will be displeased, then this is back-biting, even if what is said is true. If the speech is not true, then this is referred to as *buhtaan* (slander) and this too is prohibited, and a greater sin.

Some people make mention of a person's house, vehicle, wife or children in such a way that if he was present, he would have

felt bad due to his special connection with them. This is also back-biting. However, with the intention of reformation, if one informs parents of their children, teachers of their students or spiritual guides of their Mureedeen, then this will not be backbiting. Similarly, if one comes to know of someone intending to cause harm to somebody else then to inform him with this intention that he will be saved from harm is necessary and this is included in having concern for your Muslim brother.

A Hadith states that back-biting is more severe than fornication. The scholars (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) have stated that the reason for this is that fornication is amongst Allah's rights. If one seeks forgiveness and repentance from Allah Ta'ala, there is hope of being forgiven. However, back-biting is a servant's right. As long as the one backbited does not forgive, the backbiter will not be forgiven. Hazrat Hakeem-ul-Ummah Thanwi (rahmatullahi alaihi) said, "Backbiting is the father and son of enmity." This means that at times by backbiting, enmity and hatred is created and at times enmity was originally there. Then a person begins to

backbite. The person whose lineage is so despicable that he is the father and also the son, then from this, we can understand how evil this sin is.

Today, there is hardly any gathering in which backbiting is not found. Never mind the general masses, even the Ulama and the elite are involved in it. For this reason, Hazrat Hakeem-ul-Ummah Thanwi (rahmatullahi alaihi) has with great emphasis encouraged giving up this sin. If one is granted the ability, then he should seek forgiveness from those whom he backbited. However, if the backbited is not aware of this sin, and by seeking forgiveness and informing him, there is a fear of causing sorrow and creating hatred and enmity in the heart, then make a firm and sincere intention, "I will not backbite in the future." Praise him especially in the gathering of those people in front of whom you had backbited him. Accept your error and make dua'a for him. Make some recitation or at least recite Surah Ikhlas thrice daily for sometimes and convey the rewards to those whom you had backbited. There is hope that on the Day of Judgment, Allah Ta'ala will ask those

people to forgive this sin. When these people themselves see the reward sent to them, then they will feel mercy and forgive. However, do not make conveyance of reward an excuse to backbite. Allah Ta'ala knows well the intention within the heart. At times, there is fear of an evil end due to backbiting about accepted servants of Allah Ta'ala. Nobody can judge who is accepted by Allah Ta'ala. At times, a person outwardly appears to be a simple ordinary Muslim. However, some of his actions done in solitude have caused him to have a high status in the sight of Allah Ta'ala. Similarly, the converse also holds true. On the Day of Judgment, many people walking will be on conveyances and many on conveyances will be seen walking. May Allah Ta'ala grant us all the ability to honor all Muslims and abstain from backbiting, amin.

Backbiting is generally caused because of evil thoughts and pride. If one is concerned about himself, then his gaze will not fall unto the faults of others. Hazrat Hakeem-ul-Ummah Thanwi (rahmatullahi alaihi) said, "Whoever has concern of his evil condition, then at all times he will fear

Allah Ta'ala regarding himself so much that never mind Muslims, he will regard himself worse than disbelievers and animals.

*The sign of perfection is knowing yourself
Sinful and worthless ever needing Allah's grace
This tension heralds your Lord's attention
You remain forever deprived if you see yourself great*

The friends of Allah Ta'ala, due to fear of their result on the plains of Resurrection, do not regard themselves better than even dogs. The reason for this is that a person who has an evil end, then dogs and even pigs are better than him since there is no punishment in hell for them. Due to this servitude and annihilation, they even surpass angels in honor, since Allah Ta'ala desires humbleness, servitude and annihilation from His servants. There, strength will not avail one. By crying, one's work is accomplished. This is the crux of sulook and Tasawwuf. In fact! Whoever possesses such humility, he will show compassion to all of creation, not cause harm to anyone, and will not take revenge. Allamah Abdul Qasim Qushairi

(rahmatullahi alaihi) has written, “A person who takes revenge, becoming overpowered by the fervor of revenge, can never be a friend of Allah Ta'ala. A friend of Allah Ta'ala is he who is forebearant and who continues making dua for those who vex and trouble him. Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Saheb (rahmatullahi alaihi) has composed this amazing couplet,

***“Whoever has broken my heart into bits by his
oppression***

***Ahmad has also made dua'a for him from the
recess of his heart.”***

Some people are quite advanced, constant and particular in Ishraq, Awwabeen, Zikr, muraqabah (meditation) and tasbihaat. However, if someone causes them any difficulty or some matter contrary to their temperament occurs, then, they place their tasbih in their pockets and start uttering obscenities and vulgar language. Then, they do not see who they are addressing: Is this an elder or

junior? They forget whether it is their parents, teacher or Shaikh. It is regarding such people that this statement is well known.

“At one moment, they are Auliya, at another they are beasts”

Whoever keeps before himself the anger of Allahu Ta'ala at all times automatically forgets his own anger. To use one's anger in the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala is only achieved after annihilating the Nafs, the ego. Hadrat Umar (radiAllahu 'anh)'s anger before accepting Islam, was used against Islam. However, by the nurturing of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and due to the blessings of his company, this anger was then used against the disbelievers and hypocrites. Today also, if a person's anger is reformed, then he will become angry on his Nafs to abstain from sin. He will forgive the errors of Allah Ta'ala's creation. He will show compassion and mercy to them. He will compel his Nafs to respect the elders, have compassion on the young and honor the Ulama. Practicing on this for a period of time, although difficult initially, will

become a habit and natural.

Hazrat Hakeem-ul-Ummah Thanwi (rahmatullahi alaihi) said, "You will not see a person being hanged backbiting about a person caught for a minor crime. You will not see a person suffering from leprosy, laughing at one who has a cough. Therefore, those whose gaze is on the frightening accounting of the Day of Judgment and his final result will not laugh or backbite others. Neither will he have the time nor courage to do so. A poem:

"Truly, inappropriate it is, O foolish heart!

***For one suffering from leprosy to laugh at one
with a common cold."***

ASAINTLY EXAMPLE

It is mentioned in the priceless book, the *Risalat-i Qushayriyyah* by Imam Abu Qasim (rahimahullah) that the great sage, the saintly Hadrat Ibrahim Ad'ham (rahimahullah) was invited to partake in a meal, a walimah given after a nikah. On arrival, the noble Hadrat (rahimahullah) sat with two other Muslims. These two Muslims started to comment on a third person who could not make it to the walimah. They say; 'he is a boring, an unlively personality.' Hadrat

Ibrahim Ad'ham (rahimahullah) over heard this and fell remorseful immediately. He began to lament saying:

Ya Allah! What sin has Ibrahim committed that he fell into the misfortune of sitting with those who backbite their Muslim brother?

He left the walimah without taking the meal and gave up eating for three days thereafter. This is the repentance of the pious for sitting in the company of the backbiters. They understand that the backbiter and his listeners are partners in the crime, very severe punishment awaits them in the Akhirah unless they bring sincere repentance.

In the 38th Hadith of the arbain by the saintly Hadrat Abdur-Rahman Jami, Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) was quoted as saying:

All disasters (afflicting man) result from his spoken words.

The Shaykh Abdur-Rahman Jami (rahimahullah) then commented on this saying:

*Whoever is afflicted with the bane of talkativeness
Get caught up in troubles beyond all counts
Most of the disasters man experience
Are direct results of what they say*

AMEASURE OF PIETY

Indeed, one of the saintly has mentioned three basic measure of piety of a pious person; they are in what he accepts, what he rejects and what he utters. Subhanallah!

A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

A saintly elder (rahimahullah) would immediately pack a bundle of gift to anyone he learnt was backbiting him saying: **'Accept this as a token of gratitude, I learnt that you have been sending your good deed to me.'**

Apoem:

*If with backbiting you waste away your life
Please backbite only your mother, siblings and
other next of kin*

*So that your good deeds would not go to strangers
Only this way they can remain at home*

KEEP A PROPER WATCH

It is mentioned in the ***Tadkhiratul Awliya*** of Imam Fariddin Attar (rahimahullah) about the noble and unique elder, Imam Abu Qasim Junayd Baghdadi (rahimahullah) that one evening Imam Baghdadi (rahimahullah) was in the masjid preparatory to the Ishai salat. A well dressed and robust gentle man stood

up and started to walk around the masjid with his hand stretched, begging. Imam Junayd (rahimahullah) immediately felt uncomfortable. 'It is quite understandable if the deprived and have-nots are begging others for their needs, but what excuse is there for a kingly person like this to go about requesting alms.' All these thoughts came in the mind in some seconds and the Imam (rahimahullah) quickly passed it over.

That same night, Imam Junayd Baghdadi (rahimahullah) went to sleep, and in his dream he saw Allah's magnificent Angels coming to him with a large tray of food urging to eat. When the tray was opened, it was a roasted human body. 'I do not eat human being, I am not a carnibal, subhanallah'. The Imam (rahimahullah) objected. But the Angels responded with some firmness. 'Eat, this is the body of your brother you backbite in your mind last night, (backbiters are carnibal eating their brother's fresh). At this point the Imam (rahimahullah) woke up extremely distressed, worried. He made wudu and resumed ibadats and istighfar. That night it took too long for fajr (dawn) to break. As soon as it was dawn the Imam (rahimahullah) ran to the masjid eager to see the robust beggar in order to tender his apology. But all around the masjid the beggar was not found. The Imam (rahimahullah) restlessly did the fajr salat and stumbled out of masjid in search of the kingly beggar.

After a long search that morning, Allahu ta'ala guided the Imam (rahimahullah) to the bank of the great river of Baghdad. Here is the robust looking beggar picking some green vegetables for his breakfast, his face towards the flowing river. 'As-Salam alaykum', Imam Junayd (rahimahullah) greeted. 'Wa alaykum salam, Junayd.' The beggar replied without looking back at the Imam nor turned his head. The beggar then added. 'Have you sought forgiveness for the backbiting you did in your mind yesternight?' Imam Junayd Baghdadi (rahimahullah) eagerly said 'Yes'. 'Then, from now', the beggar said, 'keep a proper watch over your heart'. Allahu Akbar!

A LEARNING MOMENT

There is this one blessed learning occasion with the saintly Maliki Faqih, Shaykh Murabit al Hajj ibn Fahfu (rahmatullahi alaihi). The Mauritanian Grand Shaykh was trying to simplify a difficult Arabic word in a sacred text to his students. The noble Shaykh said, 'This word describes a very slow, inactive horse.' One of the listeners interjected by saying 'like the horse of so and so', mentioning a name. Instantly Shaykh Murabit (Damat Barakatuhu) said, '**I do not want to backbite him through his animal.**' Allahu Akbar! This is how careful our pious elders used to be very strict whenever they smell the stench of backbiting coming in the air. Even a man can be wronged through his

deficient animal, subhanallah!

Let us repeat that backbiting is not about raising false allegation against a believer, it is about mentioning his true but secret lapses or failings to others in a way to discredit him, so that he would feel offended if present at the occasion of mentioning.

What is not backbiting?

- ✓ It is not backbiting to talk about the excessiveness of an open sinner, those who act contrary to directives of Allahu ta'ala without any sense of caution nor shame. They are obviously challenging the authority of our sublime Lord. The one who act without shame has no right to complain of slander.
- ✓ It is not backbiting to say what you know about a matter before the Qadi, the judge, when you are called in as a witness. It is mandatory for one to say what he knows without malice nor enmity against the accused, and it will be sinful not to help the cause of justice, balance and rectitude.
- ✓ It is not backbiting to say what you know about the character of a would-be husband if the proposed wife or her family approaches you in order to have an insight into the personality of

the man to be engaged.

- ✓ It is not backbiting to discuss the fault or failing of a Muslim with another Muslim who is ignorant of the personality of the one being discussed. But if you give so much detailed description and clues that he starts to have an idea of the identity of the person involved, it would be sinful. Please, remember, that it is a waste of time to discuss sins, the sins of an open sinner, and of the sinners that are not known, unless such is meant to serve as warnings and guiding lessons to the listeners.

- ✓ It is also not backbiting to warn Muslims of the fraudulent acts of a person lest they are cheated, defrauded. It is of great service to warn Muslims against dangers such as this. In addition, talking to Muslims about the dangers of deviants like Shia, Ahmadis, the Iamadhabs, the Khawarijis alias salafis, the ignorant men of Tasawwuf (tariqa, Sufism) and everyone neglecting the tartib (methodology) of the traditional sunni elders and Imams (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) is not backbiting, but a great service to the Deen-Islam.

- ✓ It is not backbiting to report in privacy the fault of a Muslim to the one who is in position to effect

correction. However, public correction of private error is nothing but insult. Attempts to bring someone to rectification should mostly be a private affairs.

COMBATING BACKBITING

Today, everyone emphasizes ibadats, zikr and nightly worship, whereas there is no acceptance without taqwa and being extremely careful with the tongue. How many outstanding men of ibadats and services are there who backbite, take interest and are oppressive to their wives and other relatives. Such would meet great astonishment on Qiyamah when all their deeds are rendered a waste. It is imperative, to be extra cautious regarding whatever the Deen as made haram, especially the ones involving the rights of his creation.

Backbiting is very technical and a deadly poison, hardly can two people sit without this evil coming into their discourse. Therefore, it requires very strong piety to fend off backbiting.

HEART TO HEART

The learned superiors (alaihimu 'r-ridwan) have encouraged Muslims never to sit in a gathering where others are being negatively discussed. Avoid

mentioning others at all, if not possible then mention others only for good and as soon as the word 'but' or 'however' is introduced to his goodness, in an attempt to mention his negatives, get up and leave if you cannot stop the speaker.

But if leaving the gathering is not possible then start to say something positive about the person being discredited, castigated. Say, 'but I know him to be this good and blessed' or something to that effect.

When you counter the backbiters like this they would feel ashamed and keep quiet. In the Hadith reported by Ibn Abi Dunya from Hadrat Anas (radiAllahu 'anh), Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) was reported to have said:

'Whoever hears his brother being backbitten and does not come to his defence while he is able to do so, Allahu ta'ala will humiliate him in this world and the next.'

THE PATH TO TAWBA

If you have ever fallen, like most of us, into the very destructive sin of backbiting, then make haste to seek forgiveness and be resolute not to go back to this path of spiritual loss again.

Some of our respected elders (alaihimu 'r-ridwan)

mentioned that it is necessary to go to the one backbited and seek his pardon directly. This is one great way out, and a blessed means of humbling the ego so that it would not be inclined to the terrible sin of backbiting again. Some other noble superiors (alaihimu 'r-ridwan), however, said going to the one backbited to repent for one's error is tantamount to insulting him twice. The backbiter should rather seek forgiveness, make Dua for his victim (the backbited) and struggle to stay off mentioning others' faults.

The saintly 'alim, Hadrat Abdullahi ibn Muhammad ibn Fuduye (Fodio) (rahimahullah), mentioned in his very precious book *Diya'l Qawaa'id* (The Light of the Tenets) that the one who backbites should recite the Surah Ikhlas, Surah Falaq and the Surah Nas and send the reward to the backbited, insha-Allah it would suffice as an atonement as long as we stay resolutely out of the error committed thenceforth.

AN ENLIGHTENING STORY

The Hujjatul Islam, the uniquely exalted Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (rahimahullah) mentioned the enlightening story of two ladies who were fasting in the lightsome city of Medina. In the afternoon of the fasting day, the fasting two-some experienced most severe hunger and thirst that people started to fear for their lives. They sent a messenger to Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) requesting permission to break their fast.

Rasulullah (alaihi 's-salam) on receiving the message invited the ladies to his most honoured presence. They came completely dehydrated and emaciated, collapsing. Rasulallah (alaihi 's-salam) ordered for a bowl which was given to the ladies in turn. They were directed to vomit into it. The first lady vomited until the bowl was half-filled, and the other lady took her turn and vomited until the bowl was filled to brim. People were amazed to see both of them vomiting fresh flesh and blood. Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) then addressed all present:

These ladies fasted from halal, but ended up breaking it with haram.

These – as you can see – is the flesh and blood of the people they have backbited.

Thus, showing most practically that a backbiter is nothing but a carnibal consuming the fresh flesh of his brother in the Deen. May our Karim Lord, Allahu ta'ala, give us the great tawfiq of perfect control of our tongue, and make us truly submissive to His sublime majesty in true servitude, as alm for the crown of creation, and the noblest of servants, Sayyidina Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam).

*My purpose in life is to please your Lordship
I am a weakling Ya Karim please be my aid
Right and left temptations are countless*

So only in Your Help I rest my hope

LAST WORDS

The one who backbites destroys all his goodness and risks the wrath of his Gracious Lord. So whenever you notice the fault of a Muslim, throw a blanket over it in your mind warning your tongue never to mention it. After all, no one is faultless, we have our mistakes and others too have their tongues. The one who exposes faults is sooner or later dishonoured, so the wise need to tread with care. Success eternal is in focusing our own faults and holding our tongues from others' failings. The saintly Muhadith, Sayyidina Abdullahi bn Mubarak (rahimahullah) would earnestly advise his students:

- **Stop your eyes from wrong gazes and you will attain the pleasure of piety**
- **Leave blameworthy pursuit and you will attain wisdom**
- **Eat less and you will become steadfast in ibadat (worship).**

And

- **Stop finding faults with others and you**

will progress.

Allahu Akbar!

Rabbana faghfir lana dhunubana wa kaffir 'anna sayyiatina watawaffana ma'al abrar. Rabbana atimimlana nurana faghfirlana innaka 'ala kulli shayin qadir. Wasallallahu ta'ala 'ala Habibihī Sayyidina Muhammad wa 'ala ali wa sahabihī ajmain. Subhana rabbika rabbil izzati amma yasifun wasalamun 'alal mursalina walhamdulillahi rabbil 'alamin.

*Mind your steps you will surely be judged
Guide your tongue else it causes your fall
Act with tact, live fearing your Lord
Whenever you talk remember your end*

* * * * *

*Never take pride in status nor in the wealth amassed
They are all reduced to zero at the moment of death
Protect the honours of others watching your tongue
Spreading the message of virtues wherever you are*

* * * * *

*Weigh your words my brother before you speak
Never in submission to anger, abuse or curse
All disasters in Dunya are mainly from speech
Silence is truly a treasure better than gold*