

“Backbiting, Gossiping, Mocking and Slandering are all Prohibited in the Holy Qur’an”

The Holy Qur’an is, in addition to its unparalleled superlative magnificence as a Holy Scripture, a book blessed with perfection, which both teaches and guides Muslims on fundamental behavioural matters, such as of good manners and good morals.

Muslims are supposed to be an exemplary community of people, within any country’s society; and Muslims are expected to denounce the common vices which corrupt most societies. Some of these common vices are dealing with falsehood, which include backbiting and gossiping against others. Mocking others and slandering are also not permitted in Islam.

Both Muslim women and Muslim men are required under protocols of Islam to enjoin in practising social virtues and refrain from becoming parties to social vices such as backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering. Social vices include calling people by nick-names or some other falsely allocated name, so mischievously coded, which describes some other persons, and who unfortunately are falling victims to backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering. The Holy Qur’an makes very clear that Muslims must not involve themselves in such lowly vices, at 49:11 as *“O you who believe, let not people laugh at people, perchance they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perchance they may be better than they. Neither find fault with your own people, nor call one another by nick-names. Evil is a bad name after faith; and whoso turns not, these it is that are the iniquitous.”*

Islam regards mankind as a single nation. This principle is established in the Holy Qur’an at 2:213, as *“Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people concerning that in which they differed. And none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, envying one another. So Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path.”*

Bearing in mind that Islam regards mankind as a single nation, this principle is practically demonstrated when Muslims at prayer are required to stand shoulder to shoulder to his/her neighbour. There should not be space between persons at prayer, when led by an Imam. Hence, Muslims are required to honour and respect each other, regardless of external considerations such as social positions in society, employment, income level, racial and colour differences. Muslims must accept that all people cannot be the same and Allah has made them that way, so as to add distinct variety and to remove visual boredom.

It has often been seen in most communities that backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering are driven by basic animal instincts in some people of: jealousy, vengeance and hatred, which originate from those who feel that they are not matching up with the other; and then they begin exploratory ways to find some weakness or defect in the other person(s), making them targets of their

backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering. Such behaviours are certainly most lowly and relegate the backbiter, gossip, mocker and slanderer from respected human behaviour to the lowliness of animal instinctive behaviours.

Suspicious based on unfounded falsehood and then rumour mongering about those unfounded events are practices which have been around for at least 1,500 years. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was also not spared by his critics. As a result of such unethical behaviour of people involving in backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received a revelation, which appears in the Holy Qur'an as a verse, at 49:12 as *"O you who believe, avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is sin; and spy not nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You abhor it! And keep your duty to Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful."*

It is reiterated that Islam regards mankind as a single nation and so all members of the society are regarded as brothers. That is clearly reflected in the verse above. Very often, whenever there are gatherings at the mosque, or religious centre, or at other social gatherings or even at home, whenever a group of people get together, backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering always begin by those who have jealousy and hatred against other person(s) and that becomes the nucleus of the gossip group. In most cases, the victims of such gossip groups are not present in the gossip group; and the victims do not know of the slandering built up against them, but get to know about it from others as third party. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was also similarly targeted and victimised by some people, who were inspired by the devil (*Shaitan*) and the advice from Allah to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the following revelation of verse in the Holy Qur'an at, 7:200 as *"And if a false imputation from the devil afflict thee, seek refuge in Allah. Surely He is Hearing, Knowing."*

Gossipmongers exist in most societies and sadly, Islam is no exception. Regretfully, the prevalence of gossip mongering is highest amongst the women. The Holy Qur'an specifically highlighted this within the verse at 49:11, as stated earlier, above. In some cases, few men also do that; but the worst situation is when women carry on gossip mongering and they are equally supported by their husbands. This is known as aiding and abetting. In matters becoming criminal, aiding and abetting refers to another person (party) who acted as an agent and assisted the perpetrator. However in civil matters, concerning to defamation of character, aiding and abetting is also a matter of legal theory of civil accessory liability and the burden of proof in matters of civil aiding and abetting is shifted to the plaintiff, if entering into an action.

Once again, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was not spared and the devil-inspired women from the enemy camps (not Muslims) embarked upon slandering those pious women who had converted to Islam. Accordingly, the following verse was revealed in the Holy Qur'an at 24:23, as *"Surely those who accuse chaste believing women, unaware (of the evil), are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them is a grievous chastisement."* Many people do not appreciate the serious impact of the hurtfulness that the victims of backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering are silently suffering.

In the same vein, those who are directly involved in backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering at others, are doing so most regularly and as easily as breathing atmospheric air. Of course such slanderers are devil-inspired, as clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had also fallen victim to such slanderers, who did their level-best to insult the Holy Prophet (pbuh), so that he could no longer gain significant mileage in his valiant endeavours of spreading Islam. He received two identical revelations at different times but at different locations; and they appear as verses at 7:200 and again at 41:36 as *"And if a false imputation from the devil afflict thee, seek refuge in Allah. Surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing."*

The author wishes to stress, that all public gatherings of Muslims must always be very cordial and homely. This includes congregations at mosques, other functions at Muslim centres and multiple functions of various descriptions, which hold gatherings of Muslims.

Backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering are likened to infectious diseases. Once this vile habit manifests within a Muslim society, the immediate effect is segregations of those groups at such gatherings. The two groups move apart and sit apart. This effect has been witnessed so many times on regular basis at Muslim gatherings.

The gossipmongers will be in a group of their own classification, chattering away with those of similar views and habits. The victims who get to hear backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering against them from a sympathising third party, will be spaced away and not mix with the gossipmongers: That is not what Islam was intended to be.

The author reiterates, that backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering will not help to build up and enlarge in the spread of Islam, but reduce Islam to small factional groups within districts. Small factional groups do not hold strength to support Islam; the strength of Islam relies heavily on collective unity of all Muslims, and that point was stressed earlier in this article, with references to the Holy Qur'an at 2:213 that mankind is a single nation.

The author further reiterates that some of the foundational principles of unity in Islam stem from functional principles of congregational prayers at given mosques or Muslim-centres, standing and sitting at prayer shoulder to shoulder, giving out for charity regardless of who may be the end beneficiaries, attending compulsory Friday prayer (*jummah*), and meeting and greeting another Muslim with the world-famous salutation of *"Assalaamu'Alaikum."*

Backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering negates all the virtues which Islam emphatically stresses upon all Muslims. The virtues are the resins which bond Muslims together.

All those involved in backbiting, gossiping, mocking and slandering must be spoken to by those in authority with the view of protecting Islam and helping Islam grow to its full potential.

The ramification of this requirement is given in the Holy Qur'an at 3:103, as *"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful."*

The author concludes that the Holy Qur'an has several other quotations of chapters and verses from within the Holy Qur'an on the topic; and they have not all been stated, otherwise this article will become rather wordy and very large.

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