

BACKBITING (*Ghibah*) AND TALE-BEARING (*Namimah*)

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْقَائِلِ:

وَلَا تُطْعَ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ. هَمَّازٌ مَشَاءٌ بِنَمِيمٍ.

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ،

فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، إِنِّقُوا اللَّهَ أُوصِيكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، فَقَدْ فَازَ الْمُتَّقُونَ.

Let us increase our righteousness to Allah the Almighty by doing all that He prescribes and leaving all that He prohibits. May we be blessed by Allah the Almighty in this life and the hereafter.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Islam is a religion that greatly respects the honor and dignity of a human being regardless of religion and status. Therefore, Islam prohibits things that can tarnish or damage a person's dignity, such as backbiting and tale-bearing. Backbiting and tale-bearing are despicable traits i.e. traits of *mazmumah* (despicable). Allah the Almighty says in chapter 49 (surah al-Hujurat) verse 12:

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْنُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ .

Which means: *“O believers! Avoid many suspicions, for indeed, some suspicions are sinful. And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that! And fear Allah. Surely Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.”*

This verse clearly equates backbiting (*ghibah*) as a disgusting act such as eating the carcass of one's own brother. This shows how serious the sin of backbiting is in the sight of Allah the Almighty. This definition of backbiting is as stated by the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim:

أَتَذَرُونَ مَا الْغَيْبَةُ؟ قَالُوا: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ، قَالَ: ذِكْرُكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ

Which means: *“Do you know what backbiting is?” They said: "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said: "It is to say of your brother what he dislikes.”*

Backbiting is talking bad about someone else behind their backs, even if it is true. Whereas if the matter mentioned is not true, then it becomes slander, which is a greater sin. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim which means: *“If what you said about him is true you have backbitten him, and if it is not true you have slandered him”*.

Dear beloved brothers and sisters,

Apart from backbiting, another very dangerous social disease is tale-bearing, also known as *namimah*. This act creates hostility between two parties by conveying words that can strain their relationship. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in a hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim which means: *“The gossip will not enter Paradise.”*

A tale-bearer is someone who conveys someone's words to someone else with the intention of damaging relationships, causing misunderstandings or dividing society. The negative effects of this act are very great as it not only damages brotherhood relationships, but also cause slander, fights, and disharmony in society. Eventually, Muslims become weak and are easily defeated by enemies. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in a hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad which means:

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِشِرَارِكُمْ؟ الْمَشَاءُونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ، الْمُفْسِدُونَ بَيْنَ الْأَحِبَّةِ، الْبَاغُونَ لِلْبُرَاءِ الْعَنَتَ

Which means: *“Shall I inform you of the worst among you? Those who like to tell tales, who like to divide those who love each other, who accuse good people of evil.”*

Imam al-Ghazali Rahimahullah in his book *Ihya' Ulumiddin* stated that revealing the secrets of others and compromising their self-respect by revealing their secrets is considered an act of backbiting and slander. He listed several guidelines that need to be followed when receiving defamatory news. Among them is not easily believing the slander, prohibiting the person who brought the slanderous news from continuing to slander because of not wanting to be in cahoots with him/her. Besides,

the act of slandering others also invites a major sin. Apart from this, do not have a bad opinion of the person being talked about, do not spread slander and do not tell others about it.

Scholars say that the main characteristic of gossipers is that they like to swear. Furthermore, everyone is always wrong in their eyes. What comes out of a person's mouth actually determines their situation and personality. We must always try to stop ourselves from saying bad words or trying to hurt the feelings of those around us. If our mouths are not controlled, it is very easy to spread bad and nasty words.

Dear brothers and sisters,

In conclusion, the act of backbiting and tale-bearing is forbidden and is a great sin. Backbiting is a disgusting act and likened to eating the carcass of our own brother. Backbiting can also lead to slander. Meanwhile, the act of tale-bearing can damage relationships, cause misunderstandings, or divide society. The negative effects of this act result in damaged brotherhood relationships and cause fights and divisions in society. Muslims can become a weak nation because of the effects of this act.

There are several guidelines that need to be followed when receiving defamatory news. Among them is do not easily believe the slander and forbid the slanderer from continuing to spread slander. Do not conspire to spread slander, especially on social media. In addition, do not have a bad opinion of the person being slandered and do not spread slander about that person.

Let us try to guard our mouths and tongues from gossiping and tale-bearing. Remember the negative effects of this act. Seek forgiveness (*istighfar*) and perform

zikir in remembrance of Allah the Almighty. May Allah the Almighty protect us in this world and the hereafter.

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وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدْ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ. أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.