

Backbiting

(and its danger on the new Muslim)

Ahmad Al-Amir

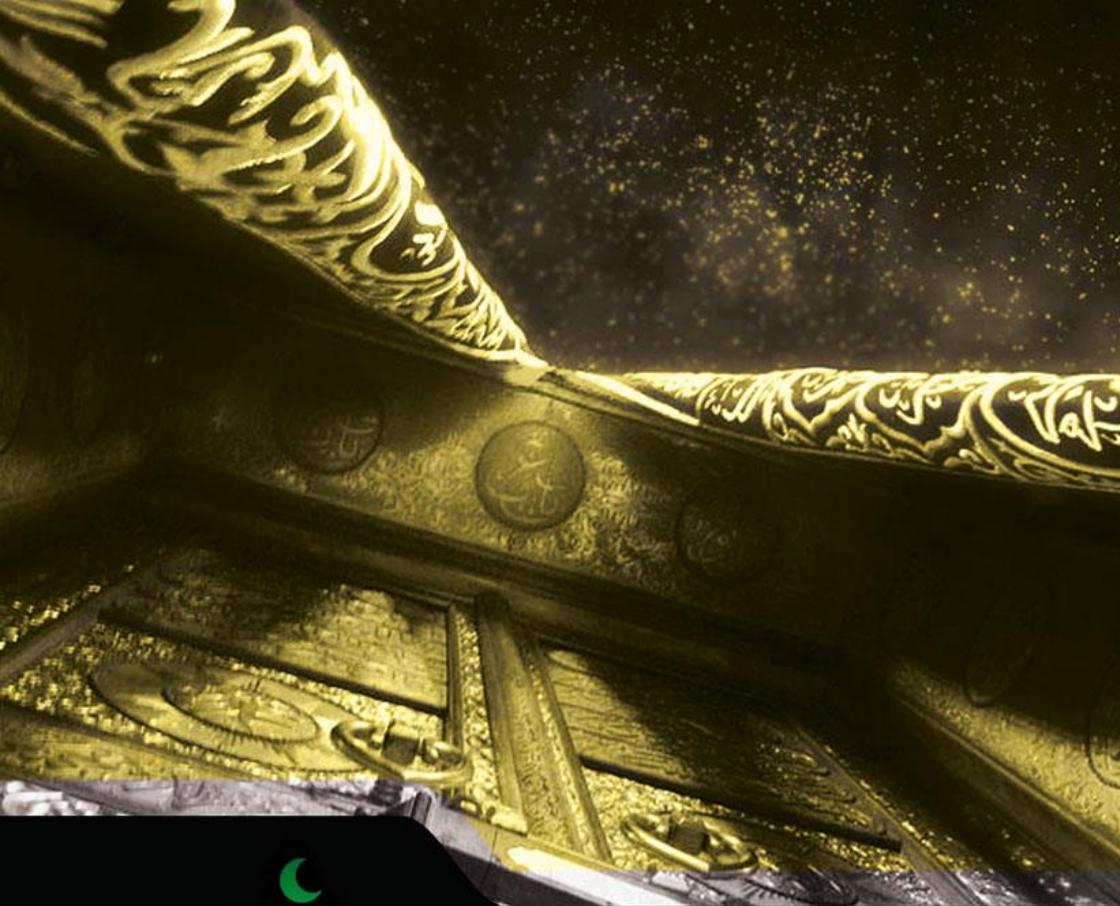
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Introduction

In the Name of Allah, Ar-Rahman (*the Most Graceful*), Ar-Raheem (*the Most Merciful*)

May peace and blessings be upon the most noble Messenger, Muhammad bin Abdu Allah, his Companions and family all together, until the day of Judgment.

One of the most dangerous matters that concern the Muslim and the new Muslim is falling into backbiting and calumny even unintentionally. The new Muslim before he abandons his previous religion used to live in a society that paid zero attention to backbiting. On the contrary, a society like his would probably consider backbiting a commendable act and the one who committed it worthy of reward.

Think of all the media that went on insulting and publically exposing every man and woman's private secrets!

The more private secrets a reporter exposes and the greater the scandal that he causes to these people is –without having any mercy towards them, or even making sure that this information is valid, before exposing it –the greater his prize is, financially and socially, gaining a reliable position both in his society and workplace!

Regarding this issue in Islam, we see that it considers backbiting as a great sin and the one who commits it should be punished strictly in the Hereafter. In Islam everyone has the right to protect their honor, name and private secrets. So, no

one should refer to someone in his absence but with words that he would like to hear about himself.

We present this essay to every new Muslim who wishes to maintain his religion pure and clean from anything that can contaminate it. Needless to say that backbiting is a danger with great consequences both for the individual and the society as a whole, since it broadcasts and spreads hatred and hostility among people, and it also exposes their secrets and personal life. This goes against the aims of the Islamic Shari‘a which encourages people to converge, spread love, affinity and affection between each other. As a result, the Muslim society together will become as a cohesive whole, each person strengthening the other like the bricks of a wall do.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “[The relationship of the believer with another believer is like \(the bricks of\) a wall, each strengthening the other.](#)” He (ﷺ) illustrated this by interlacing the fingers of both his hands.”

Sahih Bukhâri.

Ahmad Al-Amir

Definition of backbiting

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “Do you know what backbiting is? They (the Companions) said: Allah and His Messenger know best. Thereupon he (the Prophet) said: Backbiting means your talking about your brother in a manner which he does not like. It was said to him: What is your opinion about this, that if I actually find (that failing) in my brother which I make a mentioning of? He said: If what you assert (that failing) is actually found (in him), you actually backbit him, and if that is not in him it is a slander.”

Sahih Muslim

Forbiddance of backbiting in the Noble Qur'an

Allah the Almighty said: **“Woe to every slanderer and backbiter.”**

(Sûrat 104:1)

Allah the Almighty said: **“And (O Muhâmmad) obey you not everyone *Hallâf Mahîn* (the one who swears much and is a liar or is worthless) * A slanderer, going about with calumnies.”**

(Sûrat 68:10-11)

Allah the Almighty said: **“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allâh. Verily, Allâh is *Tawwâb* (the One Who forgives and accepts repentance), *Raheem* (Most Merciful).”**

(Sûrat 49:12)

Allah the Almighty said: **“Not a word does he (or she) utter but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it).”**

(Sûrat 50:18)

Allah the Almighty said: **“And follow not (*O man, i.e., say not, or do not or witness not*) that of which you have no knowledge. Verily! The hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those one will be questioned (*by Allâh*).”**

(Sûrat_17:36)

Allah the Almighty said: **“And those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly, they bear (*on themselves*) the crime of slander and plain sin.”**

(Sûrat 33:58)

Forbiddance of backbiting in the Sunnah (the Prophet's صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم Tradition)

The Messenger of Allah (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) said: “A *Namam* (a person who goes about with calumnies in order to spread enmity among people) will never enter Jannah (the Paradise).”

Sahih Muslim

The Messenger of Allah (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) said: "Shall I tell you who the best of you is?" "Yes," they replied. He said, "Those who make you praise Allah's Name when you see them (*due to their virtue's signs reflected on their faces*)." He went on to say, "Shall I tell you who the worst of you is?" "Yes," they replied. He said, "Those who go about slandering, causing mischief between friends in order to separate them, and desiring to lead the innocent into distress, corruption and sin.”

Sahih Al-Adab al-Mufrad

The Messenger of Allah (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) said: “Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales; and do not look for the others' faults, and do not spy, and do not compete one another, and do not envy one another, and do not hate one another, do not turn your back to one another; and O Allah's worshipers! Be brothers (*as Allah has ordered you!*)”

Sahih Muslim

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “O community of people, who believed by their tongue, and belief did not enter your hearts, do not back-bite Muslims, and do not search for their faults, for if anyone searches for their faults, Allah will search for his fault, and if Allah searches for anyone’s fault, He disgraces him even if he is hiding in his house.”

Sûnan Abi Dawud

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "One of you looks at the dust (*small defects*) in his brother's eye while forgetting the stump (*great defects*) in his own eye."

Sahih ibn Hibbân

Narrated ‘A’isha (may Allah be pleased with her): “I said to the Prophet (ﷺ): It is enough for you in Safiyyah that she is such and such -meaning that she was short-statured-. He replied: ‘Truly, you have said a word which would change the color, the taste and the smell of the sea if it were mixed with its water.’”

Sûnan Abi Dawud

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “The servant speaks words that he does not understand its repercussions but because of it he sinks down in Hell-Fire farther than the distance between the east and the west.”

Sahih Muslim

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “A man speaks a good word without knowing its worth, Allah shows him His Good Pleasure till the Day of Judgment; and a man utters an evil word without realizing its importance, Allah casts him His anger till the Day he will meet Him.”

Sahih ibn Hibbân

Narrated by Ibn Anas (may Allah be pleased with him): “Arabs used to serve each other during their journeys. Once, Abu Bakr and ‘Omar had a man who served them in their company. After they had slept and woken up, they found out that he had not prepared their meal. So, one of them said to the other: ‘He is sleeping like he sleeps in his house.’ Then, they woke him up and said to him: ‘Go to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and tell him that Abu Bakr and ‘Omar send their greetings and ask you for some food that can be eaten along with bread.’ Then, the Prophet (ﷺ) said to him: ‘Send them my greetings and tell them that they had truly already taken something to eat along with bread.’ Then, they got worried and rushed to the Prophet (ﷺ). They told him: ‘Oh, Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), we sent to you, asking for something to eat along with bread, but you told us that we had already taken something to eat along with bread. What is it that you meant? He said: ‘The flesh of your brother. By Allah, I see his flesh among your canine teeth. They said: ‘Ask Allah for our forgiveness.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘Let him ask Allah for your forgiveness.’”

As-Silsilah As-Sahiha 2608

Narrated Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him): “The Prophet (ﷺ) once passed by two graves and said, “These two

persons are being tortured not for a major sin (*to avoid*). One of them never covered himself when urinating in public, while the other used to go about with calumnies (*to make enmity between people*).”

Sahih Bukhâri

Abd Allah bin Mas‘ûd (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: “We were with the Prophet (ﷺ) and a man left. Then another talked about the one who left (backbitten him). The Prophet (ﷺ) told him: ‘Clean between your teeth with a toothpick’. The man replied: ‘But from what? I did not eat any meat.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) then replied: ‘You ate your brother’s flesh.’”

At-Tabarâni

Narrated Mu‘âdh bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him): “They mentioned a man at the presence of the Prophet (ﷺ) so they said: ‘He doesn’t eat unless he is fed, he doesn’t ride his camel unless it is saddled for him. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: You backbit him, they said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, we only said what is true’. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘It is enough (*to be considered as a sin against you*) to just mention your brother (*with something that he may not like while he is absent*) even with something that is true.’”

Al-Asbahâni, Al-Bâghawi

Therapy of backbiting

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “He who believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent.”

Sahih Bukhâri

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.”

Sahih Bukhâri

Abu Al-Yusr Ka‘b bin ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him), narrated: “I said to the Prophet (ﷺ): “O Messenger of Allah, point me to an action by which I will enter the heaven, he said: ‘Restrain this – he pointed to his tongue’. I repeated the question and the Messenger said: ‘But what do you think? Is there anything that throws people into the Hellfire on their noses except the harvests of their tongues?’”

Ahmad

Sufyan bin ‘Abd Allah Ath-Thâqafi (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, tell me of something that I can adhere to in order to be saved.’ He said: ‘Say: “Allah is my Lord’, then stand to the Straight Path (*adhere steadfastly to Islam*).’ He said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is the thing that you fear most for me?’ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) took hold of his own tongue, then he said: “This.”

Sahih ibn Hibbân

‘Uqbah bin ‘Amir (May Allah be pleased with him) said: “I asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), "How can salvation be achieved?" He replied, "Control your tongue, stay in your house, and weep over your sins.”

Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “When the son of Adam gets up in the morning, all the limbs humble themselves before the tongue and say: 'Fear Allah for our sake because our fate is connected to yours: *(i.e., we will be rewarded or punished as a result of what you do)* if you are straight, we will be straight; and if you stray, we will stray.”

Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hands the Muslims are safe.”

Muslim, Bukhâri

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “Whosoever gives me a guarantee to safeguard what is between his jaws (*i.e. his tongue*) and what is between his legs (*genitals*), I shall guarantee him Jannah (*Paradise*).”

Sahih Bukhâri

Criticism of backbiting by the pious predecessors

‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ûd (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “Whoever hears in front of him a backbiting against a believer, and defends him, Allah will reward him with goodness in this life and the hereafter, and whoever hears in front of him a backbiting against a believer, but doesn’t defend him, Allah will punish him with bad in this life and the hereafter. And no one has eaten a mouthful worse than committing backbiting against a believer. If he said what he knows is true, then he committed backbiting. And if he said what he knows it is not true, then he has lied about it.”

Sahih Al-Adab Al-Mufrad

Qais bin Abi Hazem said: “Amr bin al-‘As was walking with a group of his friends and he passed by a dead mule which had been distended. He said: I swear that it is better for someone out of you to eat from its meat until his stomach is full, than to eat a Muslim’s flesh (backbite him).”

Sahih Al-Adab Al-Mufrad

Al-Hafiz bin Hajr said about backbiting that it is: “To mention someone who’s absent with something that he wouldn’t like to hear, whether it is about his body, religion, life, himself, physical appearance, morals, wealth, father, son, wife/husband, servant, clothes, movement, smile, frown, or any other thing

related to him whether mentioning him verbally, by sign language or by symbols.”

Fat-h al-Bâri

The role of the one who heard backbiting against his Muslim brother

Whoever hears someone backbiting another person must defend his brother's honor and answer back to the person who committed backbiting. If he cannot do that or if the other person does not accept his defense, then he should leave that place if he can do that.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "He who defends the honor of his (*Muslim*) brother, Allah will secure his face against the Fire on the Day of Resurrection."

Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "If a Muslim defends his brother's honor in his absence, Allah will truly free him from the fire of Hell on the Day of Resurrection."

Ahmad, At-Tabrani

The Prophet (ﷺ) was sitting among his companions in Tabûk. He (ﷺ) said, "What happened to Ka'b bin Malik (*i.e. why didn't he come to the battle of Tabuk*)?" A man from the tribe of Bani Salamah said: "O Messenger of Allah! the embellishment of his cloak and an appreciation of his sides have made him not come." Mu'adh bin Jabal (May Allah be pleased with him) said: "How bad is what you have said! O

Messenger of Allah! by Allah, we know nothing about him but good.”

Muslim, Bukhâri

What is permissible of backbiting

Kamal Ad-Deen bin abi Sharif said:

‘Criticizing and insulting are not considered backbiting in six occasions: for the one who has been wronged, for the one who is described correctly for identification, for the cautioner, for the one who announces/shows someone else’s public immorality, for the consulter and for the one who asks support to eliminate the evilness.’

As-San‘âni in Subul as-Salâm

Therefore, backbiting is allowed to someone who is wronged and then complains to the judge by saying “that someone wronged me in this way”

It is also permissible, if someone is known by a nickname (and he is identified only by this nickname), such as the cockeyed or crippled, to be called that, in order for someone else to identify through this nickname the person it refers to. It is forbidden though to call him by that nickname with the intention of devaluing him. Furthermore, if he can be identified by another name then it is better.

It is also permissible to warn Muslims about the evilness of someone or give them advice about him. For example, consulting on the relationship that is made by marriage,

working with a person or being a neighbor with them. The person who consults must not hide anything, but he should mention all that is wrong with that person, having solely the intention of consulting.

The man can backbite a person because of his public immorality or his innovation in religion. For example, when a person declares publically that he drinks alcohol, or when he eats up people's money in vanity. It is permissible to mention him of what he publically declares, and it is forbidden to mention his other flaws that are not publically declared.

It is permissible to whoever goes to the judge in order to seek advice for someone to say: "that someone wronged me in this way", asking whether he has the right to do what he did and how to correct the injustice and take his right back from him.

It is also permissible to whoever wants to eliminate what is bad and to return the disobedient to the straight path to say to another, who is capable of eliminating the bad thing: "That someone is doing this. Stop him from doing it." His intention must be to eliminate the bad thing, otherwise backbiting is forbidden.

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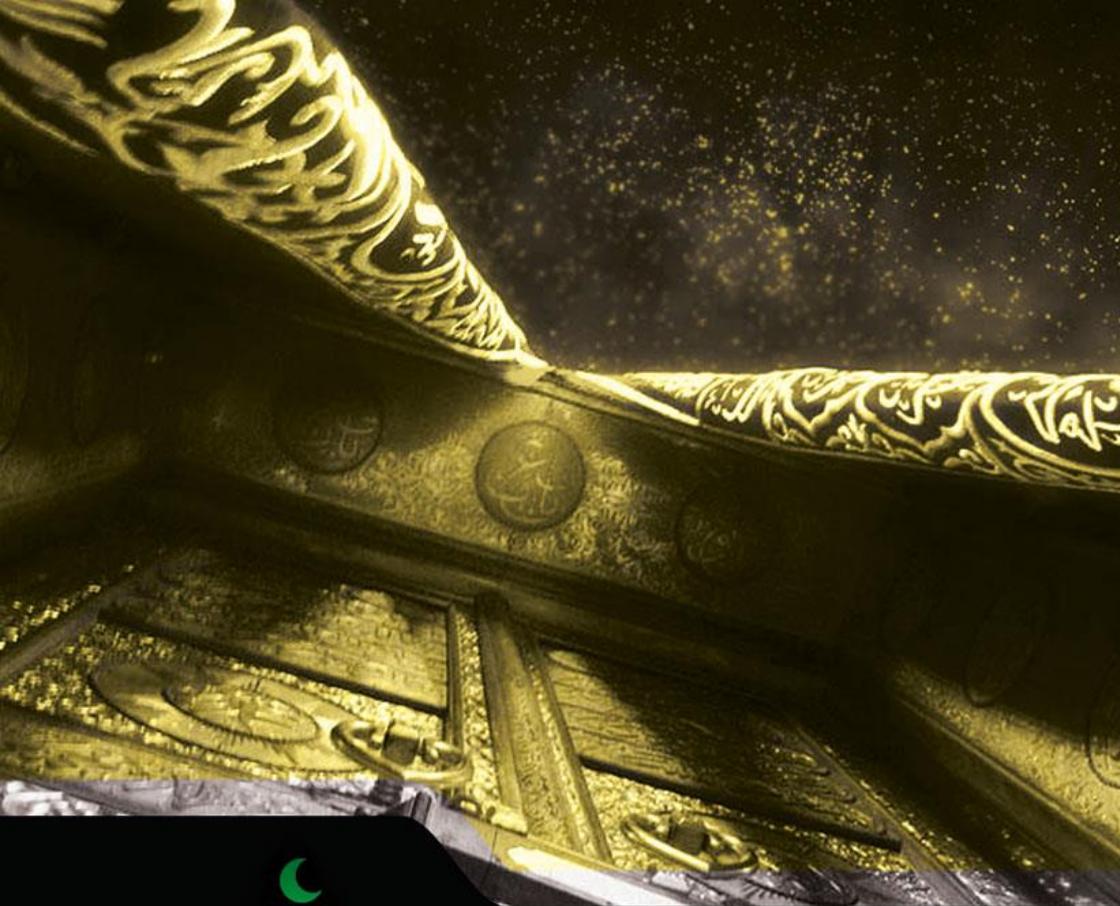
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