

Reflection of Backbiting as socio-moral evil in the light of teachings of Quran and Hadith

Dr. Farhat Nisar

Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, Comsats University, Islamabad

Email: dr.farhatnisar@gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7219-9341>

Dr. Amna Saeed

Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, Comsats University, Islamabad

Email: amna.saeed@comsats.edu.pk ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7428-6203>

Dr. Zainab Sadiq

Lecturer, Department of Humanities, Comsats University, Islamabad

Email: zainab.sadiq@comsats.edu.pk ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0793-328X>

ABSTRACT:

Islam as religion expresses and represents true human nature both from individual and social framework. For this reason, Islam as a way of life guides and provides rules and codes which is be the reflection of discipline required for socio moral conduct of an ideal human society. As a member of social framework human beings required to developed moral norms and values in founding ideal nation demonstrates Allah's will on earth and implement His law.

For any healthy and peaceful society, social values must be enhanced. Islamic system of social framework social evils is discouraged with a strict disciplinary code of conduct. Back biting is one of those social and moral evils which can destroy decorum and discipline of a healthy society. Backbiting is kind of evil practice when character or reputation of a person is the discussion and the one who is the topic of discussion unfavorably is not present and saying such things which are not the attribute of the person about which the discussion is getting the heat.

This article will discuss the impact of back biting on human society and how teachings of Quran and hadith can address this social evil with the help system faith in believers. First part of the article defines back biting from linguistic and Islamic perspective. Second part of the article is about the effects of back biting. In third part some reasons of back biting have been given with response of Islamic teachings to address these reasons. Lastly, findings and conclusion of the article has been given to summaries the article.

Key words: Backbiting, Slandering, Anger, Jealousy, Social Evil.

Introduction:

To establish a human society where individuals social and moral growth is much needed. Any moral society consists of rules, values and code of conduct may be strong enough to provide physical, social, moral and political distribution of benefits and responsibilities to its members. Islam as a religion of human nature truly represents scheme of rules and values which may be powerful enough to enforce and influence a human behavior¹. Any society claims to be socially and morally strong must demonstrate reflection of equity, justice, brotherhood, cooperation, care and benevolence. In such a social framework where cooperation, brotherhood and benevolence are core values social evils should be discouraged both verbally and practically. Backbiting as socially unacceptable behavior, vicious disease, may threaten human cooperation, brotherhood, and benevolence. Islamic legal and moral framework strongly discourage any form of backbiting².

Sociomoral system of Islam guides and provides basis for an ideal human society where any type of social evil is strongly prohibited and penalized with punishment both in this world and hereafter. Backbiting as social evil not only discouraged in Islam but entitled as moral crime in the teachings of Quran and Hadith. This dangerously affected social and moral disease may ruin human cooperation and benevolence and ultimately result with the destruction of social structure³. Practice of backbiting is an attack on the character or reputation of a person who is not there when people do so or we can say that to speak unfavorably of person who is not present and saying such things which are not the attribute of the person about which the discussion is getting the heat⁴.

Defining backbiting:

According to Cambridge dictionary “Backbiting is unkind and unpleasant words about someone who is not present there to defend or oppose”⁵.

Definition given by Collins dictionary “If someone accused of backbiting, this means he/she said unpleasant things about someone who is not there to defend”⁶.

Back biting can be mentioning someone in a way that hurts one’s feelings and person does not like it either. Or saying something about a person who is not present and if he or she do so you can’t speak it out in front of that

person. And it can be saying something bad in absence of a person but that something is not true about him or her.

Keeping in view the above concepts, backbiting can be defined as an activity that may violate the physical, social and moral integrity of any individual who is not present there to defend and protect his or her self-integrity or image. In any activity of backbiting deficiency or weakness of a person is the subject backbiters⁷.

Back biting in Islamic concept:

Within the Islamic legal and moral framework term backbiting is almost relevant to the linguistic definitions. In Islamic terminology backbiting is the remembrance of a person especially believer with the subject of hates, dislikes and judgments based on clan, color, dressing, lifestyle, height, trait, habit of a specific person who is not present there to provide his or her version on the subject. Activity of backbiting can be done through speech, writing, gesture, discussion, and facial expression related to the one who is subject of backbiting⁸.

Surah Al-Hujrat as a framework of social and moral ethics provides clear example of backbiting as evil practice as mentioned:

“O you who have believed, avoid much speculation. Indeed, some perception is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of your brother when dead?”⁹

In the example of eating flesh of a dead person and when he is the brother of backbiter increases the level of seriousness of issue and its effects on the one who is backbiter and the also the one who is the subject of backbiting. Human nature and psychology hate or dislikes to eat flesh of human being and if considering that flesh is of a believer and even more serious if the subject is the close brother of backbiter. Even in the case of non-believer or enemy one cannot imagine to eat the flesh. One can imagine the serious ness of backbiting as moral and social evil through the example and exaggeration of effects of backbiting mentioned in Surah Al-Hujrat.

Again in Surah Al- Humazah, chapter 104, verse no 1, Allah Almighty has called backbiter as slander who scorns and mocks everyone.¹⁰

It was said in the interpretation of this text, that the humazah is to stabber, and Al-Lumazah is to mock and eat people's flesh.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) have emphasized to protect your tongue from backbiting as narrated:

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ لَا يَسْتَقِيمُ إِيمَانُ عَبْدٍ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ قَلْبُهُ
وَلَا يَسْتَقِيمُ قَلْبُهُ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ لِسَانُهُ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ رَجُلٌ الْجَنَّةَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِجَارِهِ بِوَاتِقٍ.

Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“The faith of a servant is not upright until his heart is upright, and his heart is not upright until his tongue is upright. A man will not enter Paradise if his neighbor is not secure from his evil”.¹¹

وَعَنْ حُدَيْفَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ قَتَاتٌ.

Hudhaifah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “A backbiter will not enter Paradise”.¹²

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: "أتدرون ما الغيبة؟" قالوا: الله ورسوله أعلم قال: "ذكرك أخاك بما يكره" قيل: أفرأيت إن كان في أخي ما أقول؟ قال: "إن كان فيه ما تقول، فقد اغتبتته، وإن لم يكن فيه ما تقول فقد بهتته.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Do you know what is backbiting?" The Companions said: "Allah and His Messenger know better." Thereupon he said, "Backbiting is talking about your (Muslim) brother in a manner which he dislikes." It was said to him: "What if my (Muslim) brother is as I say." He said, "If he is actually as you say, then that is backbiting; but if that is not in him, that is slandering".¹³

How Backbiting affects:

Mostly people do backbiting, backstabbing or leg pulling with pleasure and they do this with full of confidence to prove themselves intelligent by betraying the person who trust them more than anyone else, people do such thing without knowing the cost of such big mistake that they made to

not to deceive other but themselves because after some time everyone came to about such person who does not deserve the trust of a mini-second, so no one is willing to trust such person and at the end they have to survive alone due to which they have to suffer failures and hate of others, no one care's about such bad and negative person who always planned to strike again on anyone and everyone. Such people have very shameful and poor understanding about this negative and evil attribute, all those old and young or new successful person have very bad and terrible judgement about the people who got the title or tag of backbiters or back stabbers.

But in hadith of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) such types of people are bankrupt in their good deeds on the Day of Judgment.

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: "أتدرون من المفلس؟" قالوا: المفلس فينا من لا ذرهم له ولا متاع، فقال: إن المفلس من أمتي من يأتي يوم القيامة بصلاة وصيام وزكاة، ويأتي وقد شتم هذا، وقَدَفَ هذا، وأكل مال هذا، وسفك دم هذا، وضرب هذا، فيعطى هذا من حسناته، وهذا من حسناته، فإن فنيت حسناته قبل أن يقضى ما^{١٤} أخذ من خطاياهم فطُرِحَتْ عليه، ثم طرح في النار".

According to the above Hadith the one who has harmed other with violating their physical, moral, emotional rights will be bankrupt of his good deeds and virtues on the day of judgment not because he has not performed good deeds in this world but his reward of his or her good deeds will be given to those who were victims of his cruel practices, and the backbiters will be among those people. If the good deeds of such people will not be enough to compensate the victims than sins and bad deeds of oppressed will be cast upon the one who has committed harm on them and if that harm is in the form of backbiting than the back bitter will be deprived from the reward of praying, fasting or other good practices.

Reasons of back biting and Islamic response to them:

There are many psychological and moral reasons when people do backbite some of them are following:

1. Just to get things off one's chest: Especially when someone is having feelings of hatred, jealousy, arrogance, or pride. As a result some may harm other through verbal or facial expression in order to express hatred or jealousy. This could be a type of gossip in friends or group of some people. But Allah Almighty has countered this reason in Quran with a reward for those who avoid such practices as mentioned:
“And those who spend, whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon people”.¹⁵
2. Seeking success by letting down other: In such a scenario the practice of backbiting is done to degrade other just because the backbiter considers him or herself better than other may in communication skills, professional traits, presentation or living standards. And the backbiting is done in such a clever and tricky way that the one who is victim of backbiting may remain ignorant of this practice. But Islam has clearly discouraged such pride and arrogance that may be the one you thin is inferior is far better believer of Allah than you.
3. For making fun and fooling others: Backbiting and slandering other may be done just for the fun or entertainment. Some people may discuss others in their absence just for the sake of gossips or chatting for fun. In such cases of backbiting people may earn money to make other laugh. For such kind of people are called as those who are anguish and earn the wrath of Allah.¹⁶
4. Jealousy: It may happen that a person is praised in a gathering where s/ he is liked by the people, and a jealous person may hear this. The jealous one then insults the other, so that the latter may lose the status that s/he previously enjoyed. The jealous person should remember that, because of his/her jealousy and insults, the person who is the object of his/her envy will be above him/her, not only in this world but on the Day of Resurrection.¹⁷
5. For the sake of sympathy: In such cases of backbiting the backbiter mentions someone as poor of miserable person by showing sympathies and concern if the specific person is going through any

hardship or struggle. This practice may be done with sincerity but causes negative impact on the self-respect or image if the name of the subjected person is mentioned in his or her absence without taking consent. As Allah Almighty said:

“Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it”.¹⁸

Sometimes people do the most shameful kind of backbiting, on the one side the person says that he likes the victim and he wants good things about the person but secretly he is trying to say that the victim is not so good and he makes mistakes offontly but the person who is listening to it is intelligent enough to say that just stop trash talking and forget about it, its straightaway backbiting so don't speak about it in front ever again this causes shame and disrespect for the person who is doing such thing

6. Leisure time activity: Some people backbite just to pass time as their leisure time activity. Such backbiters have much time to discuss people, their faults, appearances, lifestyle, and family backgrounds. In order to avoid such types of backbiting one should engage him or herself in remembrance of Allah, to get some productive knowledge, healthy sports activities, and with the company of righteous people so the free time may not be cause of harming others or sinning. One should remind him or herself that he may also be answerable before Allah Almighty for the time he has spend in this world...his life, youth, and wealth both in earing and spending, and knowledge.¹⁹

How Islamic faith system prevents backbiting:

Islam as religion of human nature carefully and comprehensively addresses all aspects of life especially the moral dimension so that the individuals and systems may be saved from corruption. On last farewell of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized to respect the honors, wealth, and lives of other believers. Even the lives, wealth and integrity of Muslims for each other has been given equal importance to time, day and month of Haj as mentioned by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ):

O people your blood, wealth and honor are equally respectable and sacred as this day, month and place is sacred for you.²⁰

A true Muslim can avoid the sin of backbiting by remembering the love and care of Allah Almighty among the creature and also reminding himself about the wrath caused by admitting such a big sin, person also has to think about the fire of hell which will come upon the person who admitted or tries to admit the sin of backbiting.

Gossip and discussing people their appearance, height, color, lifestyle especially when they are not present is highly disliked and discouraged by the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Even it is equally poisoned that to mix with the water of sea and the poisonous of this word of backbiting may pollute the whole water of the sea. According to the narration of Aisha (RA) once I said something about a woman regarding her height... Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) disliked it so much and said your words if to mix with the water of sea may pollute the whole sea.²¹

Results of backbiting corrupt and pollute images, relations, integrity of people and communities so much that it can badly affect like poison or something that is equally dangerous to disrupt human relations and social behaviors. So before backbiting, gossiping, or slandering other one should think for a while how this act can affect the affecters. Additionally, every act of human being through tongue hand or feet is labial before Allah as said in the Quran:

“Every act of hearing, or seeing, or of [feeling in] the heart will be enquired into [on the Day of Reckoning”].²²

Findings:

Keeping in view all the above discussion following are the findings of article:

1. Backbiting has become one of the most dangerous and widespread socio-moral evil, especially tears apart cultural decorum of Muslims, dividing their inclusion, weakens their social structure.
2. Back biting can be mentioning someone in a way that hurts one’s feelings and person does not like it either.
3. Backbiting is achieved by mentioning anyone in negative connotation by speech, writing, gesture, or facial expression.

4. In many verses of Quran and narrations of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) it is emphasized to protect your tongue from backbiting.
5. There are many motives of back biting among them, pleasure, jealousy, anger and pride are most dominant which motives people to do back biting.
6. Islamic faith and its motivation through Quran and hadith of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) can work like an internal counselor and force to prevent back biting among individuals and communities.

Conclusion:

Today no one cares about anyone else, everyone tries to bow his\her own garden but not willing to bow a garden of humanity due to which everyone is suffering from sin's like backbiting and some other harmful and shameful sins. The one who wants to purify himself first and his page must monitor his tongue because nothing can throw people into the Hellfire upon their faces — or: on their noses — except the harvests of their tongues. Evil of tongue in the form of back biting should be avoided to protect oneself from its affects in this world and here after. Back biting eats good deeds as fire consumes firewood which is mentioned by narrations of Hadith of Prophet (ﷺ). Every Muslim is obliged to strive to control his/her ego and to prevent it from doing and encouraging backbiting; one must establish internal motivation and counsellor motivated by teachings of Quran and Hadith.

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