

# The Evils of the Tongue

*My Advice To The Women, Part 4*

By Umm 'Abdillaah al-Waadi'eeyyah

## 1. Backbiting

The definition of backbiting has been clearly explained in the hadeeth reported by Muslim (4/2001) upon the authority of Aboo Hurairah that the Messenger of Allaah (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said:

"Do you know what backbiting is?"

They said: "Allaah and His Messenger know best."

He said: "Mentioning your brother with that which he dislikes."

It was said to the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam): "Even if what I mention about my brother is true?"

He (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said: "If what you have said concerning him is true, then surely you have backbitten him; and if what you said isn't true, then surely you have slandered him."

As for his statement: "*You have slandered him.*"

An-Nawawi (commenting upon this in) (Sharh Muslim 16/142), said: "The *Haa* is to be pronounced lightly, and it takes a fathah. It means: that which you have said about him was slander, and this is because it was false."

➤ *Backbiting is Haraam (impermissible), whether it is in small or great mounts:*

It is reported in the Sunan of Aboo Daawood upon the authority of 'Aa'ishah that she said:

"O Messenger of Allaah, it suffices you that Safiyyah is such and such."

One of the narrators said: 'She meant that she is a woman of short stature.' So the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said: "You have spoken a word that if it were mixed with the sea, it would pollute it."

It is reported in the Saheehayn (Bukhaari and Muslim) on the authority of Aboo Bakrah who said that the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said:

"Verily your blood and wealth is sacred just like the sanctity of this day, in this month of yours, in this land of yours."

There comes in the Sunan of At-Tirmidhee upon the authority of Ibn 'Umar that he said:

"The Messenger of Allaah (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) ascended the pulpit, and shouted out in a loud voice: 'O people who have believed with their tongue but Eemaan has not reached their hearts! Do not harm the Muslims, do not revile

them and do not reveal their faults. For surely, the one who follows the faults of his Muslim brother, Allaah will follow his faults; and if Allaah was to follow his faults, then He will expose him even if he was hidden in the deepest part of his house.' "

This hadeeth is found in Saheeh al-Musnad 1/508

It is reported in Sunan Aboo Daawood upon the authority of Anas Ibn Maalik who said: The Messenger of Allaah (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said:

"During the Mi`raaj (the Night of Ascension), I saw a group of people who were scratching their chests and faces with their copper nails. I asked, `Who are these people, O Jibreel?"

Jibreel replied: `These are the people who ate the flesh of others (by backbiting) and trampled upon people's honour."

This hadeeth is authentic.

Al Haafidh Ibn Katheer said in his tafseer (4/215):

"Backbiting is impermissible by unanimous agreement. The only exception to this is that speech which carries a greater overall benefit, as is the case with al-Jarh wa Ta'deel (recommendation and disparagement) and sincere advice. An example of this is the saying of the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam), at a time when a sinful individual sought permission to enter: "Let him enter, what an evil man is the brother of this clan."

Also the saying of the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) to Faatimah bint Qais, when Mu'aawiyah and Aboo Jahm sought her hand in marriage: "As for Mu'aawiyah then he is poor, and as for Aboo Jahm then he is very hard on the women."

Additionally, those cases that are similar to this, but apart from them, all the other types of backbiting are severely prohibited." End of quote.

I say: These cases that are not deemed to be backbiting have been collected in the statement of the poet:

*Dispraising is not backbiting in six cases*

*When voicing a grievance*

*Describing and warning*

*Speaking about the one who openly sins*

*For the one who seeks a religious fatwa*

*And when seeking aid in removing an evil*

The reference point for the two lines of poetry is (Subul As-Salaam 1084)

The scholars have differed over whether or not backbiting is counted as being from amongst the major sins.

Al Qurtubi has conveyed that there is a unanimous consensus that it is from the major sins.

However, this claim of a unanimous agreement is incorrect, as Ibn Hajr mentioned that the author of "Ar-Rawdah" and "Ar Rafaa'ee" both have stated that backbiting is from the minor sins.

Nevertheless, the evidences support the (stance) that backbiting is amongst the major sins. It is reported in Sunan Aboo Daawood upon the authority of Sa'eed Ibn Zayd that the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said:

"From the worst types of usury is violating the honour of a Muslim without any right"

This hadeeth is authentic and is mentioned in As Saheeh Al Musnad (1/313).

And it is reported in Sunan Aboo Daawood upon the authority of Anas Ibn Maalik that the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said:

"During the Mi`raaj (the Night of Ascension), I saw a group of people who were scratching their chests and faces with their copper nails. I asked, `Who are these people, O Jibreel?"

Jibreel replied: `These are the people who ate the flesh of others (by backbiting) and trampled upon people's honour."

This hadeeth has been mentioned earlier.

Allaah says:

...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 Allāh. Verily, Allāh is the One Who accepts repentance, Most Merciful.  
Soorah Al-Hujuraat (49): 12

Refer to Al Fath (10/470) and Subul as Salaam (no.1073)

➤ *Is it backbiting only in the absence of the individual?*

That which is apparent from his saying (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam): "*Mentioning your brother with that which he dislikes*" applies to mentioning him in his presence and his absence; but al Haafidh Ibn Hajr said:

"The strongest position is that backbiting is specific to when the individual is absent. This is in compliance with the derivation of this word from its root. This is what the scholars of the Arabic language firmly state."

He went on to say:

"Yes, mentioning that which a person dislikes in his presence is impermissible because this is considered an insult and abuse." End of his words.

In our time, backbiting has become the enjoyment of many women, except for those whom Allaah has mercy upon.

Hence, it is obligatory upon us that we submit to what our Lord has legislated.

He said:

**It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decreed a matter, that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error.**

### Soorah Al-Ahzaab(33):36

He said:

The only saying of the faithful believers, when they are called to Allâh (His Words, the Qur'ân) and His Messenger (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), to judge between them, is that they say: "We hear and we obey." And such are the prosperous ones (who will live forever in Paradise). And whosoever obeys Allâh and His Messenger (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), fears Allâh, and keeps his duty (to Him), such are the successful ones. Soorah an-Noor(24):51-52

He said:

But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission. Soorah An-Nisa(4): 65

And He Said:

Say (O Muhammad (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)) to these idolaters (pagan Arabs) of your folk]: Follow what has been sent down unto you from your Lord (the Qur'ân and Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah), and follow not any Auliya' (protectors and helpers, etc. who order you to associate partners in worship with Allâh), besides Him (Allâh). Little do you remember! Soorah Al-A'raaf(7):3

And He Said:

And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)) gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it), and fear Allâh. Verily, Allâh is Severe in punishment. Soorah Al-Hashr (59):7

Let us not resemble the People of the Book by saying: 'We hear and we disobey' rather, let us say: "We hear and we obey.'  
(If you want) more evidences about the obligation of sticking to the Islamic legislation, then look at the book 'Al Itisaam' authored by Ash-Shaatibee- may Allaah have mercy upon him.

So this issue of backbiting is a very dangerous subject indeed, as a person might fall into it without even being aware.  
So be careful! And it is upon you to repent to Allaah from this act.

#### ➤ *The Way to Repent from Backbiting*

Ibnul Qayyim said in his book 'Al-Wabil As-Sayyib' pg.113:  
"It is mentioned that the Prophet (Salla Allaahu 'Alayhi wa sallam) said:  
'The expiation for backbiting is to seek forgiveness for the person you have backbitten, and say: O Allaah, forgive us and him.'

Al Bayhaqi relates this hadeeth in 'Ad Da'waat Al Kabeer', and he states that there is a weakness in the chain of narrators.

The scholars have two opinions on this issue (i.e. the way to repent from backbiting); and these two opinions have been narrated upon Imaam Ahmad.

They are:

Is it sufficient to repent from backbiting by seeking forgiveness for the one who has been backbitten?

Or is it mandatory to inform him and seek his pardon?

The correct position is that there is no need to inform him (i.e. the one who has been backbitten). It is sufficient to seek forgiveness and to mention him with good in the places where you have backbitten him. This is what Shaykhul Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah and others held to be the strongest opinion.

Those who have said it is necessary to inform him, hold backbiting to be similar to the rights that a person has when it relates to their wealth, but the difference between them is obvious. As for the rights related to a person's wealth, then this is because the oppressed benefits when that which has been wrongfully taken from him is returned. If he chooses he can take it or if he chooses he can give it as charity.

When it comes to backbiting this isn't possible, as nothing results from informing the one who has been backbitten, except (an outcome) that is contrary to that what has been intended by the legislator. For surely the one who has been backbitten will harbour this in his chest. He will be harmed when he hears about what he has been accused of. This could possibly incite enmity between them, which would never be resolved. Anything that could lead to this, then there is no doubt that the wise legislator would not allow it or make it permissible, let alone make it an obligation or command it.

The Sharee'ah revolves around stopping harms and limiting them, not causing and adding to them. And Allaah knows best." End of his words-may Allaah have mercy upon him.

There is nothing that could be added to the words of Ibnul Qayyim for he has spoken excellently and skilfully.

(For further information) refer back to 'Tafseer Ibn Katheer' where he explains the Saying of Allaah: **Do not backbite one another.**

Also, refer to 'As Silsilatul Ad-Da'eefah' (4/1519) for further details about the chain of narration for the hadeeth:

"The expiation for backbiting is to seek forgiveness for the one you have backbitten."

I will close the subject of backbiting with the saying of Al-Qahtanee in his Nooniyah pg.39:

Do not busy yourself with (finding the) faults of others  
Whilst forgetting your own faults  
Verily these are two defective qualities