

30) Tale-Bearing

One of the other cases, which requires Taqwa and in the society, people have to avoid is tale-bearing and slandering that leads to the destruction of the relations between two persons, two tribes, two communities, or two nations.

It is a blameworthy vice that has been reproached in the Holy Quran: ***“And yield not to any mean swearer, defamer, going about with slander.”***^{[1](#)}

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Sadiq (AS) and ibn Sinan as saying: “Shall I inform you of the bad people?” They said: “Yes, O Messenger of Allah!” The Holy Prophet (a.s.) said: “Those who go about with slander, those who create division among friends, and those who find fault with those who are faultless.”^{[2](#)}

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Jawad (AS) as saying: “On my Night Journey, I saw a woman, who had the head of a pig and the body of an ass, being punished with a thousand kinds of torments.” The Messenger of Allah (SAW) was asked: “What had she done?” The Holy Prophet said: “She was a talebearer, a slanderer!”^{[3](#)}

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as having said: “Three groups of people shall not enter Paradise; one who sheds blood, one who drinks wine, and one who goes about with slander.”^{[4](#)}

It has been related that there was famine among the Israelites. Prophet Moses (AS) searched for water. It was revealed to him: “I will not respond to the Children of Israel’s prayer, for there is a talebearer among you and he persists in it.” Prophet Moses (AS) said: “O Lord! Who is that person so that I will drive him away?” God said: “O Moses! I forbid you from slandering and you want Me to be a slanderer?!” They all repented and God sent them rain.”^{[5](#)}

It has been related that a man came to Imam Ali (AS) and criticized someone behind his back. Imam Ali (AS) said: “O man! I will ask about it! If what you say is the truth, you will be taken to task! If you tell a lie, I will punish you and if you want me to forgive you, I will forgive you!” The man said: “Forgive me O Ameerul Mo’minin!”

Imam Hassan (a.s.) has said: “Whoever speaks ill behind a person’s back before you, will surely speak ill behind your back.”⁶

Truly, tale-bearing is a major sin, for it is worse than backbiting and telling lie. In tale-bearing, there is both lying and backbiting. It will cause bloodshed, enmity, disruption in society, destruction of property and life, decline of society and nation.

It has been related that some man sold a slave to another man saying: “This slave is good, but he is a tale-bearer.” The man said: “It is alright” and he purchased him.

The slave worked for the man for some time. One day, the slave said to the wife of his master: “Your husband does not really love you. He wants to marry another woman. Take this knife and when he goes to sleep at night, cut some hairs from under his chin. I will practice magic on it so that he will love you.” He said to his master: “Your wife has taken a friend and she wants to kill you. Pretend you are asleep and you will find that I am truthful.”

The master pretended to be asleep and when the woman came to him with a knife in her hand, he jumped up and killed her. The woman’s relatives came and killed the man.”⁷

It goes without saying that this vice will not only harm the others, but will harm the tale-bearer too. It is said: “One day, a lion became sick. Animals were informed and they came to visit him. The fox was not seen among the visitors. The wolf criticized the fox behind his back, saying: O king of animals! All animals have come to visit you except the fox. The lion said: Remind me when he comes! At this time, the fox showed up.

The lion said angrily: Where have you been? Did you not know that I was sick? All the animals have visited me except you! The fox said: Sir, when I heard you were sick, I began thinking of a medicine to cure you, and I came to a conclusion! The lion said: What is it? The fox said: There is a gland in the rear leg of a wolf which is effective for your disease. The lion immediately jumped over the wolf, tore its rear leg and ate the gland. The fox crept away. Seeing the wolf limping on the way, the fox said: O you who are putting on a red shoe! Be careful of what you say when you are in the presence of kings.”⁸

^{1.} Qur'an, 68:10-11.

^{2.} Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 369.

^{3.} Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 264.

^{4.} Ibid., p. 265.

^{5.} Ibid., p. 268

^{6.} Ibid., p. 270

^{7.} Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 270.

^{8.} Al-Kuna wal-Alghab, vol. 2, p. 119.

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