

## Preventive Treatment of Gheeba

Be informed that all ill manners are treated with a mixture of knowledge and the acting upon such knowledge. The treatment of an ailment is done with the opposite of its cause, its antidote. So, let us look first for the cause behind backbiting, we will then state how a tongue is restrained from articulating it in a way that suits the treatment of these causes.

We are stating below some of the causes that have been indicated as resulting in backbiting, and they are ten in number. Imam al-Sadiq (ع) has drawn attention to it by saying that the root of backbiting is of ten types: 1. seeking satisfaction for one's anger, 2. agreeing with some people, 3. believing a report without verifying it, 4. an accusation, 5. ill thinking, 6. jealousy, 7. ridicule, 8. conceit, 9. displeasure, and 10. bragging (*Misbah al-Shari'a*, p. 205).

Now we point out to them in detail:

**First:** One seeks to satisfy his anger. If one has a reason to be angry, and when his anger rages, he seeks to quell it by mentioning the faults of the individual who caused him to grow angry, and he would first do so by his tongue unless he is pious, God-fearing. One may avoid having to satisfy his anger, so his anger is stored inwardly, turning into a fixed grudge. This will become a permanent cause for mentioning those faults.

Grudge and anger are major causes for backbiting.

**Second:** Agreeing with some companions and being nice to fellows by assisting them with such talk. If they have fun speaking ill of some people's honor, one may see that if he disagrees or terminates a gathering, he will be belittled by the others who will avoid him, so he agrees with them, seeing that doing so is indicative of good companionship, and he thinks he is just being nice to his companions. His companions may get angry, so he, too, feels he should be angry, too, seeing it as a sign of good companionship when sharing with his fellows their sentiments openly as well as inwardly. He, therefore, takes part in mentioning others' faults and shortcomings.

**Third:** One may sense that someone targets him and speaks ill of him or of his condition in front of a good person, or he may testify against him, so he takes the initiative and speaks ill of him in order to foil the impact of his testimony and action. Or he may start by mentioning how one truly is so after that he may tell lies about him. Thus, he circulates his lies by first being truthful. He seeks support from facts saying, "It is not my habit to tell a lie, for I have told you such-and-such about his conditions, and he has been just as I had said."

**Fourth:** Something may be attributed to someone, so the latter wants to clear himself of it. He, hence, speaks ill of the person who had done so. He had the right to clear himself of the charge without mentioning the name of the person who charged him. He does not have to make a connection between the charge and the person who made it. He does not have to tell others that he was a partner in an action in order to pave the way for finding for himself an excuse for his deed.

**Fifth:** Affectation and bragging: One may try to raise his status above that of others, so he labels someone as ignorant, weak of understanding, weak in stating something with the goal being to prove that he is better than him. He wants to show others that he is better than that person, or he may thus take a precaution against people honoring someone as much as they honor that person, so he belittles him.

**Sixth:** Jealousy: One may feel jealous of someone praised, loved or honored by others, so he wants these blessings to be removed from that individual. He finds no way to do so except by speaking ill of him. He wants to discredit that person to people so they may stop honoring and praising him because it is heavy on his heart to see people praising him, honoring him. Such is jealousy, and it is anger and grudge. One may be jealous of a benevolent friend or a relative who is in harmony with him.

**Seventh:** Sporting, jesting, agreeing with others and having fun laughing at others: One may mention someone else in a way that prompts the listeners to laugh when he imitates him or seeks to show that he is better than him.

**Eighth:** Ridiculing, making fun of someone in order to downgrade him: This may take place in the presence of someone or behind someone's back as well, and it originates in one being arrogant and desiring to belittle one whom he ridicules.

**Ninth:** This is difficult to detect and may cause even the elite or cautious persons to fall into speaking ill of others: One may feel sad because of something with which someone is afflicted, so he says, "Poor so-and-so, I am really sad about what has happened to him and about his affliction." He would then mention the cause of his sadness. He will then be truthful if it comes to the reason behind his grief, but his grief distracts him from taking precaution, so he mentions his name and says something which that person hates.

He will in that case be backbiting him. His grief and his seeking Allāh's mercy for him are acts of righteousness, but they led him to evil without being aware of it. Seeking Allāh's mercy for someone and

feeling sad about someone are both possible without one having to mention the name of an individual then attributing to him what he dislikes. Satan stirs him to mention his name in order to void the rewards of his grief and his pleading to Allāh to have mercy on him.

**Tenth:** Feeling angry for the sake of Allāh Almighty: One may feel angry because of something wrong which someone did, so he shows his anger and mentions that person's wrongdoing, thus committing a wrongdoing himself without prohibiting a wrong deed. What he should have done is to show his anger specifically in that manner. This is a pitfall in which even the elite may fall. They think that feeling angry for the sake of Allāh Almighty is an excuse no matter how it is expressed, but it is not so.

If you come to know that these are the causes of backbiting, be informed that the path towards preventing the tongue from backbiting is of two types: One of them is general, whereas the other is particular:

Regarding generality, one must know that he exposes himself to the wrath of Allāh Almighty when he backbites, as you have already come to know from the previous reports. And he must be informed that such wrath voids his good deeds, his acts of righteousness. On the Day of Judgment, backbiting shifts his good deeds to the scales of those whom he had backbitten. If he has no good deeds, the backbitten person's wrongdoings will then be shifted to the backbiter's scales, and he remains the object of the wrath of Allāh Almighty and will be like one eating dead flesh.

It has been narrated about the Prophet (ص) that he said, "Fire burning what is dry is not faster than backbiting as it burns the good deeds of a servant of Allāh" (*Ulūm ad-Dīn*, Vol. 3, p. 140).

It has been narrated that a man said to a man of virtue, "It has come to my knowledge that you speak ill of me behind my back." The virtuous man said, "Your status in my eyes does not permit me to let you fare thus with my own good deeds!"

No matter how much one believes in reports coming to him, his tongue must not articulate backbiting. He must fear for his good deeds being thus burnt. It also avails him if he looks at his own self. If he finds fault with himself, he ought to feel ashamed lest he should leave himself out while speaking ill of others. Rather, he ought to know that if others are unable to rise above committing backbiting, whether it is relevant to something which he did by choice or because of a deformity or shortcoming in him, he likewise is unable to rise to admit his own defects and shortcomings.

If the matter is relevant to his physique, speaking ill of it is actually speaking ill of its Creator, for when one faults something, he faults its maker. Someone once said to a wise man, "How ugly your face is!" The wise man said, "I had no choice in creating my face so I would make it very good." If one does not find fault with himself, let him thank Allāh and not pollute himself with the greatest of faults, for finding fault with people and eating their dead flesh is surely the greatest of all faults. He will then be faulty. Had he been fair to himself, he would have realized that his belief that he is faultless proves the extent of his ignorance of himself, which is one of the greatest of all faults.

It behooves him to know that when others suffer because he backbites them, he likewise suffers when others backbite him. If he does not like others to backbite him, he ought not accept others to be backbitten.

Such are general remedies.

As regarding delving into the details, one ought to look into the reason that prompts him to backbite and deal with it, for an ailment is treated by eradicating its cause. And you have already come to know the causes behind backbiting:

- Regarding anger, he can treat it by saying, "If I overlook my anger with him, perhaps Allāh Almighty will overlook His wrath against me because of speaking ill of others behind their backs, for He has prohibited me from doing it, yet I dared to defy his prohibition, taking His prohibition lightly." He (ع) has said, "There is a gate to hell which is entered only by those who satisfied their personal anger by angering Allāh Almighty through committing a transgression" (*Tanbīh al-Khawātir*, Vol. 1, p. 121). In one of the Books which Allāh Almighty has revealed, it is stated: "O son of Adam! Remember Me when you are angry so I may remember you when I am angry, perhaps I will not include you among those whom I obliterate" (*Tanbīh al-Khawātir*, Vol. 1, p. 121)
- Regarding agreeing with others, you must come to know that Allāh Almighty is angry with you if you seek to anger Him by thus pleasing others. So, how can you honor others while dishonoring your Lord? How can you avoid pleasing Him by seeking to please them, unless your anger is solely for the sake of pleasing Allāh Almighty, and this requires you not to speak ill of one with whom you are angry? Rather, you ought to feel angry for the sake of Allāh: If your fellows speak ill of Him, they commit the most foul of all sins: backbiting.
- Regarding one trying to raise his status at the expense of that of others, without mentioning the name of those others, this situation is treated by knowing that if you expose yourself to the wrath of the Creator, it is much more severe than being exposed to the contempt of His creation. If you backbite, you are for sure exposing yourself to the wrath of Allāh Almighty while not knowing if you will get rid of people's wrath or not. So, you save yourself in this life by your whim while permitting yourself to perish in the hereafter. Or you for sure lose the rewards of your good deeds while earning the contempt of the Almighty, expecting people to remove their speaking ill of you, which is the utmost ignorance and loss of all.
- Regarding your statement that you consume what is prohibitive because so-and-so does it, and if you do such-and-such, someone else is doing the same, or if you fall short in an act of obedience to the Almighty, someone else is likewise guilty of the same..., it is an indication of your ignorance because you are seeking to emulate those whom you are not supposed to emulate. Anyone who violates the command of Allāh is not to be emulated whoever he may be.

If someone else is hurled into the fire while you are able not to avoid entering it, you should not be in

agreement with that person. Had you agreed with him, you would have lost your wits. What you state is backbiting and an additional transgression which you piled up on that from which you sought an excuse for yourself. The Almighty will then have recorded your name as having combined two sins due to your ignorance and stupidity. You were like a she-camel looking at a goat that fell from the mountain, so it, too, throws itself from up high. Had she had a tongue and articulated an excuse, she would have said, "The goat was wiser, yet she perished, and so did I." You would then have laughed on account of her ignorance. But your condition is similar to hers, yet you do not wonder, nor do you laugh at yourself.

- When it comes to your objective behind bragging and praising yourself in order to gain more recognition by speaking ill of others, you ought to know that due to what you stated, you lost your status with Allāh while jeopardizing your status among the public: People may think less of you if they come to know that you speak ill of others. You will then have sold what the Creator has for sure in store with Him, trading it for what people have with them due to your own whim. If people think well of you, it will not help you win favor with the Almighty at all.

- Backbiting someone because of envy combines two types of penalties: You have envied him for a worldly blessing while your envy torments you. Yet you were not satisfied with all of this till you added to it a torment in the hereafter, thus losing in the short life as well as in the hereafter; hence, you combine two punishments. You targeted the one whom you envied while harming your own self. You have given him by way of a gift the rewards of your own good deeds; thus, you are his friend and the enemy of your own self!

Your act of backbiting him does not harm him but harms you while benefiting him! It shifts your own good deeds to him or shifts to you his wrongdoings which do not benefit you at all. You thus combine the ugliness of envy with foolish ignorance. Your envy and speaking ill of him may become the reason for the individual whom you envy gaining more prestige. It has been said that if Allāh wants a forgotten virtue to be disseminated, He permits an envious tongue to propagate it.

- You mean by ridiculing someone to demean him by actually demeaning your own self in the sight of Allāh, His angels and prophets. Had you contemplated upon your shame, infamy, sigh and sorrow on the Day when you bear the sins of the person whom you ridiculed and when you are led to the fire, this would have shocked you and distracted you from shaming your fellow. Had you come to know your condition, you would have preferred to laugh at its account, for you ridiculed him before a small number of people while exposing yourself to your hands being taken on the Judgment Day and led away before a huge crowd of people. You will be led away under the burden of that person's own sins like a donkey led to the fire, while he ridicules you and is pleased at you being thus shamed, happy because Allāh supports him against you and seeks revenge against you for his own benefit.

- As regarding pleading to Allāh to have mercy on him on account of his own sin, it is something good, but Eblis envied you and made you articulate something because of which the rewards of your good deeds are shifted to someone else. And it is more so than the rewards which you gain for having

pleaded to Allāh to have mercy on him. Thus, the one for whom mercy is sought gets out of the category of one in need of mercy while you yourself become worthy of being stoned: Your [hypocritical] plea foiled your rewards and diminished your good deeds.

- Feeling angry for the sake of Allāh does not necessitate backbiting. Satan made backbiting look good to you so the rewards for your anger are voided, and you become the target of the wrath of Allāh Almighty because of being guilty of backbiting.

As a whole, the treatment for all of this comes through knowledge which is achieved by considering these matters that are among the divisions of conviction (*imān*). One whose conviction is strong through combining all of the above prevents himself from committing the sin of backbiting, that is for sure.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/kashf-al-reeba-ahkam-al-gheeba-removing-doubts-gheeba-rulings-sheikh-taqi-ad-d%C4%ABn-ibrahim-son-ali-a-3#comment-0>