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Part 24

We have discussed about backbiting. Now an explanation of the Holy verse and its application to what we talked about. This Arabic word 'gheebat' (backbiting) should be pronounced with vowel 'ee' after the first letter 'g'. If it is read with vowel 'a' after 'g' it becomes 'ghaebat' meaning 'disappearance'.

﴿وَلا يَغْتَبْ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا﴾

***"...nor let some of you backbite others.* (*49: 12*)"**

This is a negative command. None of you should backbite some of you. This style of ordering is for stimulation, meaning you are one. O Muslims! Do not backbite your own selves.

﴿أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا؟﴾

***"Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?* (*49: 12*)"**

A strange comparison is made so that man may hate backbiting to the utmost extent. Does anyone of you like to eat the flesh of his brother who had died? Would he like to cut his dear brother's flesh with a knife or with his own teeth and chew it or devour it? Imagine this scene. Can anyone ever like this gruesome deed! Doubtlessly, it is an extremely abhorring thought. Eating corpse is the deed of a vulture and of a dog. God desired that no corpse should remain lying on the surface of the earth so that the earth may be clean for habitation of mankind. A man does not do this. This is an example for making people detest backbiting and for explaining the facts of the other world.

Comparing backbiting with eating of dead

God says that backbiting is like eating the flesh of a corpse. To deprive one of his honor or respect is just like snatching his flesh. It is mentioned in a narration that if someone disrupts the talk of others and

does not allow him to speak a word, it is just like piercing claws into someone's face and scratching flesh off his face. The honor, which you snatched is like blood, flesh and skin. By backbiting him you have snatched flesh from his face.
Being dead is in the sense of being unaware. The poor fellow is sitting in his house and does not know that you are snatching away his honor. He is in the dark. He does not know so that he may defend himself. He is just like a dead person who cannot defend himself!

Collective benefit

Another comparison is with "brother's flesh." God says: O People! Do not harm yourselves by yourselves. Do not clash with one another in this wild way. This snatching of the flesh of one another! It is like eating corpses of one another! There is a subtle aspect in this comparison to which I had hinted a few days back. It has a logical proof. It exposes the impermissibility of backbiting.

The logic is this. God has made this mankind in such a way that everyone benefits everyone so that the system of the world may work nicely. In other words, every person (whoever he or she may be) has his or her own influence or effect. It must become manifest and he or she should also get benefit of the influence of others. I will give an example. One knows how to bake bread nicely. He should continue working and bake bread for the benefit of people with the influence of his existence. He must also buy oil and rice etc. from the one who sells provision. He should also take the services of a tailor for his clothing needs. Thus one must benefit from others and benefit others.

This world's face is like the eye and the skin and the eyebrow. Everything is good in its place. (Persian couplet)

Here, everyone should benefit from one another. This is possible when they are together and in unison. It should also be the same with the class of spiritual leadership. The scholar should also benefit others and get benefit from others. He must correct the religion of the people and it can be so only when they are joined with one another. If they have relations with the people they get benefit from them. If there is no unison, benefit will not be available.

Backbiting is the cause of creating disunity between the organs of human society. It is like killing one and throwing him away from society. They have thus made him useless. The one who backbites anyone from a pulpit or from any place wants to prevent people from taking any benefit from him.

This is why God had prohibited backbiting and so also He has prohibited spying. Such spying and peeping into the affairs of others becomes a prelude to disunity. Disunity causes non-availability of one another's benefit. If this ruthless fellow had not backbitten about him, people would have continued to go to him and take benefit of his knowledge. But the backbiter killed him and disconnected him from society, cut off his relation with the Islamic society and religious brotherhood and thus he (the backbiter) became the cause of depriving both the society and the individual from the benefit of each another.

Pious Shaykh, yet known as unclean

About fifty or sixty years ago, there was a man with knowledge living in Shiraz. No one prayed behind him and it was alleged that this Shaykh does not purify himself, though he had all the niceties and virtues of being a scholar and a just man. Despite all these specialties he was alleged to remain unclean so much so that no one was prepared to pray behind him (in his leadership or Imamat). Formerly he was being very much respected and honored. Due to this when he decided to go to Mashad for Ziyarat a number of people arrived with him. They had prayed behind him earlier.

They were traveling on donkeys and mules. The Shaykh felt the urge to urinate but it was not possible to urinate in the middle of the road. So he came down from his donkey, distanced somewhat from the people and went to a corner in the forest. There was no water for purification so he dried himself after urinating with the intention that when water is available he would purify the private parts with water as required by Islamic Law. (Sometimes, when it is harmful for health it is prohibited to restrain urine). But no one ever saw him cleansing himself. T

hen he saw that people praying behind him were decreasing by and by. O God! But what should we do? Then they returned to Shiraz. But then no one from those who had prayed behind him came to pray behind him in the mosque. This situation continued till the last part of his life. Those reckless fellows who had traveled with him had brought about this adverse change.

They said that this Shaykh does not purify himself and the masses that do not make any inquiry after hearing anything believed the talk. They blindly accepted whatever was said. It is the case with masses that if it is said he is good they also say he is good. If it is alleged that he is bad, they also say he is bad. They say what the whole town says that the Shaykh does not purify himself. As a consequence they cut off an existence, which was beneficial to the society. Then no one offered prayers behind him till he lived. Formerly, a number of people used to benefit from his knowledge. Woe unto one who backbites a scholar. There is quite a difference between backbiting about a scholar and a grocer. The difference is on the basis of giving and taking of benefit to and from one another in the society.

Refer a definite sin to yourself

You are told that if you have seen a defect in any Muslim, you have no right to talk about it. First, you think about the matter positively and in a nice manner. Think and imagine that perhaps there is no defect in him. But if the sinning is definite then it is obligatory for you to address yourself from the viewpoint of “Nahy Anil Munkar” (stopping evil). Make a decision to make him give up this sin. Do not stand up and begin to degrade and disgrace others. For example, you say: I have seen him walking behind a woman. May be she was his wife.

You do not know him. She may be his mother or sister. Even if you are sure that she was a stranger lady, it is obligatory for you to tell him: What is this deed that you did? And not that you may disgrace

him. Yes, I saw him going to the house of an ill-famed woman. Whatever sin you see in anybody, you have no right to expose it, so that the society may not be disintegrated and its parts may not get separated. The system of taking and giving benefit to one another may not be paralyzed. With the opening of the gate of backbiting the door of corruption, dishonesty and unfaithfulness also open wide.

Corruptions resulting from backbiting scholars

Most dishonesty and faithlessness seen in the masses is due to their being distanced from scholars, due to backbiting, rather by making false allegations against them. Take some trouble, bring a man for attending sermons and for attending congregation prayers in the mosque. But these things are against selfish desires. However for giving it up, it is enough to say a word. If you are a man then pick up one and bring him to the sermons, not that you drive away one who is attending the sermons. It is a devilish deed. Instead of bringing one who does not pray to the mosque. You make the worshippers leave the mosque. For example, you ask one: In which mosque do you pray? There? O Man, there is a talk about that Imam.

Did you not hear? Now due to this, one who used to attend a mosque not only leaves attending that mosque but also does not go to any other mosque. He becomes free and loose. It takes a long time for that man to find someone whom he may trust and follow. Curse of God on one who, by his backbiting, creates disunity in Muslim society and comes in the way of those who want to turn their face towards God in prayers. Such a fellow becomes:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الآخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا أُوْلَئِكَ فِي ضَلالٍ بَعِيدٍ﴾

"(To) those who love this world's life more than the hereafter, and turn away from Allah's path and desire to make it crooked; these are in a great error."[1]

He says: I do not lie. I am telling truth. If you tell a lie, it is allegation. Backbiting means to say a thing, which you know, a thing, which you saw with your own eyes. If you relay it to others it is backbiting. What you are ordered is: Not only do not say what you do not know, but also do not say what you know. Many narrations show that whatever a man does in this world has two aspects: Apparent and hidden (bodily and spiritual). When you describe someone's defect what is apparent is the deed of your tongue and mouth etc. What is hidden is the eating of a corpse.

Abu Bakr and Umar backbite Salman and Usamah

Abu Bakr and Umar sent Salman to the Holy Prophet for getting some food. The Messenger of God sent him to Usamah, the son of Zaid, who was the treasurer or accountant of the Prophet. Usamah said, "I do not have anything." So Salman returned to Abu Bakr and Umar. These two persons said, "Usamah has shown stinginess." Then said to one another, "If we send Salman to a well which never dries, its water

will dry up."

Thereafter Abu Bakr and Umar came to the Prophet who asked them, "What is the matter: I smell meat in your mouth?" They said, "We did not eat meat today." The Prophet said, "Why? You did eat the flesh of Salman and Usamah (You did backbite about them)."[2]
That is the spiritual effect of the deed of Abu Bakr and Umar; same as eating carrion, and it was detected by Muhammad.
He also is reported to have said, "I can see the flesh of Salman and Usamah in your teeth."

Man does not understand this now. At the time of his death, he himself sees that dead body and smells its offensive smell.

Once, in the gathering of the Holy Prophet, an offensive smell came out without any apparent reason. It was the offensive smell of a corpse. It made the Holy Prophet restless. He said, "This is the smell of backbiting" and added that some hypocrites have backbitten the faithful, which created this stench.[3]

Amazing effects of five things

We have said that every word and every deed of man has a spiritual effect, other than its apparent effect. As narrated by Imam Sadiq, the Prophet said, "Angels told an earlier messenger,[4] 'Tomorrow eat the thing which you see first, bury the thing which you see next, preserve the third, do not disappoint and deprive the fourth and run away from the fifth." The messenger said, "All right, I will do so." Next morning, the angelic or spiritual world came before him. He exclaimed, "I have been asked to eat the thing which I see first. O God! This is a mountain. What should I do?" Then he satisfied himself saying, "I have been asked to eat it so it must be possible. Let me approach it."

So he went towards the mountain and found that with every step, the mountain got smaller and smaller until it became the size of a morsel. So he swallowed it to find that it was as sweet as sweetmeat. Now, here is a hard and rocky mountain, which turns into delicious eatable. Spiritual taste is different from material taste. It has a hundredfold effect. Then he moved forward. He was asked to bury the next thing. He saw a golden plate and he at once buried it. As he turned to go, the ground quaked, earth went back and the golden dish dazzled. He said, "I have nothing to do with this gold. I have been asked to bury it and so I did. That's all."

The third thing, which he saw was that an eagle was pursuing a pigeon. The pigeon came directly to the messenger and got his refuge as he was asked to preserve or protect it, he at once hid it under his sleeve. The fourth thing, which he came across was the hunter eagle. He told to himself, 'I have been asked not to disappoint it.' So he gave it a piece of mutton. The fifth thing to be seen was to be fled from. He saw a foul smelling corpse (Most foul smelling is the human corpse. Hence it has been ordered to bury it so deep that its smell may not rise and spread out). So when he saw that it was a dead body, he ran away from it. (But, O my friend! Be sure that after you die, you cannot flee from yourself. The

Holy Qur'an states:

﴿يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا﴾

"On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long duration of time;"[5]

You will strongly wish to get away from it but that would not be possible. God forbid, wherever you go, your body is with you). Now, after observing the five spiritual scenes the messenger asked for the wisdom behind it all. He was then given to understand that the mountain stands for anger. When a man becomes angry, if he wants to control himself, it is very hard as if he were asked to eat up a mountain. But if he suppresses anger for the sake of God, the result is that he feels a sort of peace and then he says to himself: It is good that I did not say anything and did not hit out at anyone. May God save us! Sometimes an angry person tears up his clothes, sometimes he faints, gets paralyzed beyond treatment. But if he controls himself and does not show his anger, it is like eating a tasty morsel.

Second: A pure and selfless deed – O Muslims! If you have done anything for the sake of God, keep it secret. Do not tell about it to anybody. Do not say: Praise be to Allah! I have done a good deed. Sometimes you fool yourself by telling yourself: I am doing this so that others may be encouraged. You are fooling yourself. You are showing off. Hide it. God will make it apparent. God will make people praise it. Do not wish for it yourself.

Third: The pigeon. I told you to catch admonition. If anyone gives you any advice, do not turn away from it. Do not say: Who are you to advise me. Whoever and whatever he may be, may be elder than you or younger and weaker, may even be a greater sinner. Hear and listen to his advice, whomsoever it may be.
The fourth thing, which we asked you not to disappoint is a beggar or anyone who asks from you anything, whoever he may be. Do not disappoint and deprive him.

The fifth thing from which you are asked to flee is backbiting. It is a corpse–a dead body. If you see that someone is about to be backbitten, run away from that meeting. Do not hear it. If you hear it, it becomes your duty to reject it, to reply to the backbiting, to reform, to restrain. Ask the backbiter to repent. Then what is better? Before you are caught, run away from there.[6]
Every act of a human being has a spiritual effect. O Muslims! This foul deed of backbiting is like eating a dead body which becomes manifest for all after death.

Legitimacy after one year!

Haji Noori writes in *Darus Salam* that once a man backbited someone by saying to himself: This man is a burden for all, he is a parasite. Then in his sleep, he saw that there was a dead body before him and

he was told to eat it. He said, “I did not eat even permissible flesh in the world, how can I eat a dead body?” He was told that he did eat it in the graveyard. So the poor person, for one full year, visited that graveyard daily to find the one whom he had supposedly backbitten to seek his pardon and be absolved from the guilt. But he could find no one.

How restless was his heart! You and I? Do we become restless for absolvement even when we have actually backbitten someone? After one year, he saw the man who began by asking: Have you prepared yourself for sincere repentance? How strange! By coincidence, he had backbitten one who was among the friends of God. Good deeds also have spiritual effects. For example, this fasting in the form of withholding oneself from eating permissible food and to benefit from both physical and spiritual divine rewards. All this will be known at the hour of death. The Holy Qur’an says:

﴿كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ﴾

“Eat and drink pleasantly for what you did beforehand in the days gone by.”[7]

The condition of those who weep for Husain and the weepers for fear of Allah is also similar. It causes heart burning due to shedding tears. Its spiritual effect (which is hidden) is happiness, gaiety, cheerfulness and getting drinks from the Pool of Kauthar as shall be explained in the next topic. Husain has said to the effect that the happiness of the mourner would exceed his grief.

The happiness of mourners is higher than their grief

It is written in the beginning of the book *Nafasul Mahmoom* with a chain of authorities quoting *Kashaf-e-Haqaaiq Ja’far bin Muhammad as-Sadiq*. The holy Imam was asked, “Where is you grandfather Husain now?” The Imam replied, “How small is your stature and how big is your question! His (Husain’s) body is in the grave but his soul is right near those of his father, mother and grandfather near the Throne of Allah. His eye is on two matters: First on those who visit his grave and second: On those attending the mourning programs for him.” Then he said, “Husain requests his grandfather, father, mother and brother to pray for the forgiveness of his mourners so that God may pardon them.”[8]

Also there is a word for the mourners themselves: If the mourner knows how much reward is there for him from God, his happiness will be more than his grief.
Your outward, is your weeping and mourning whereas your inner is happiness as a result of God’s grace and His favors, His rewards and His compensations. Ultimately there is a curtain over deeds. It should be so. A barrier must be there so that man may pass some days properly and then get the result.

﴿وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِأَشْيَاعِهِمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مُرِيبٍ﴾

"And a barrier shall be placed between them and that which they desire, as was done with the likes of them before: surely they are in a disquieting doubt."[9]

Man fears his sins and God's wrath. He weeps but, at the same time, his interior is at peace,

﴿وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ﴾

"And whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah;"[10]

You must have experienced that whenever you pray, supplicate, cry and weep, thereafter you experience a sort of happiness. Sometimes man himself feels that there is sweetness in the remembrance of Allah. When you extend your hands in supplication you place a crown of honor on your head; you become honorable. And then at a time, my dear, you degrade and lower yourself before Almighty Allah.
I hoped to be the master so I chose to serve you. I desired kingdom, therefore I worshipped You.
(Persian couplet)

1. Surah Ibrahim 14:3
2. Tafsir Noorus Thaqlain, vol. 5, pg. 95
3. Mustadrakul Wasael
4. Layaliyal Akhbar p.184
5. Surah Aale Imran 3:30
6. Layaliyal Akhbar, p. 185
7. Surah Haqqah 69:24
8. Nafasul Mahmoom, Qummi
9. Surah Saba 34:54
10. Surah Raad 13:28

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