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مكتبة العلم
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LIGHT, KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH.

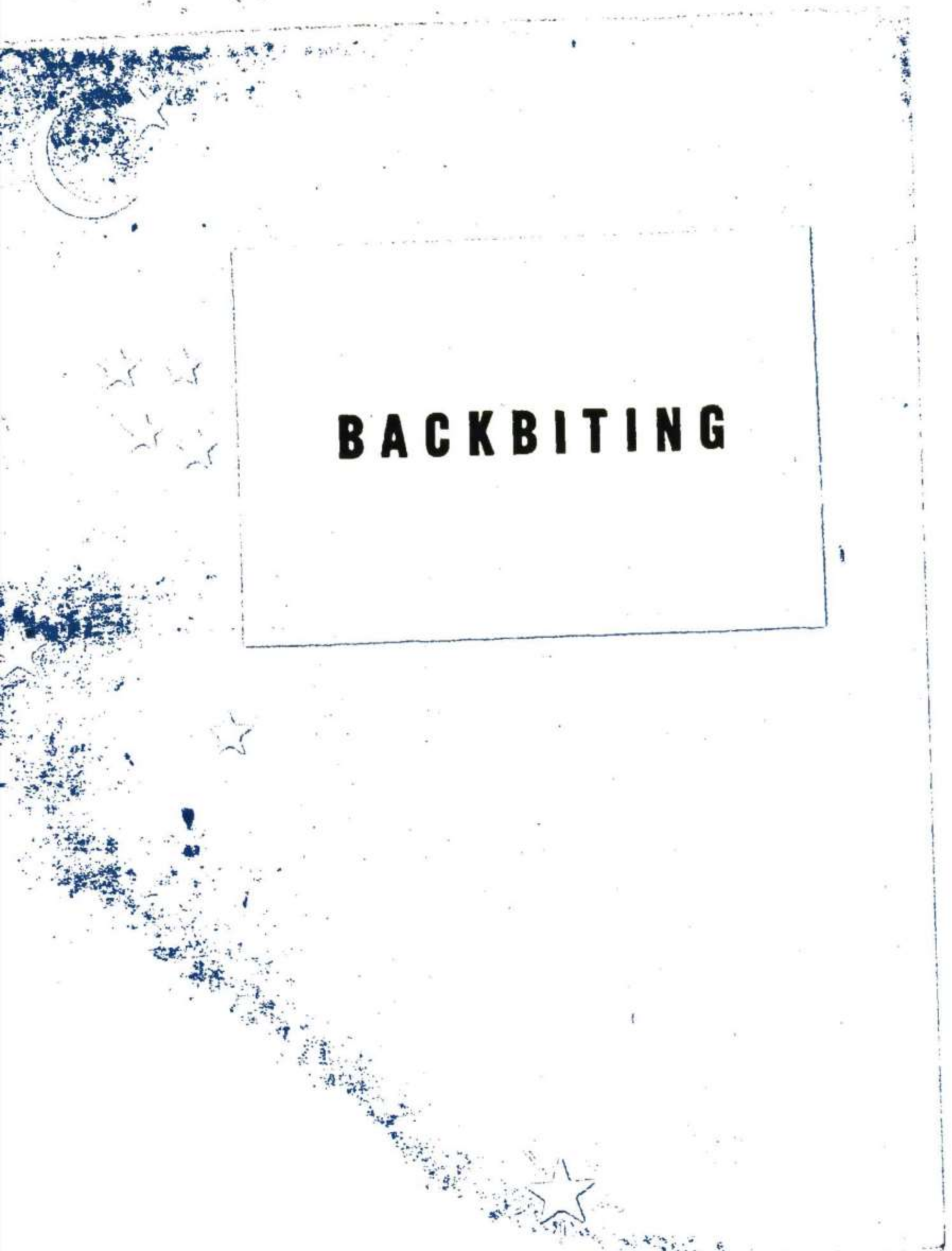


BACKBITING

العدل
٥٥٨٩

RIGHT, KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH.

BACKBITING



BISMILLA HIR RAHMA NIR RAHIM

- (i) Revile not them (the idols) whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they maliciously revile Allah without knowledge. 6:109
- (ii) There is no compulsion in religion. 2:256
- (iii) Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware, but if ye turn back then know ye all that nothing is incumbent upon Our Messenger but to proclaim. 5:92
- (iv) Call to the way of thy Lord by reasoning and likeable exhortation; and argue with them in a decent manner. 16: 25
- (v) And hold ye fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided (among yourselves). 3:103
- (vi) Verily: I am Allah there is no god but I, therefore submit to Me and offer prayers to mention Me. 20:14
- (vii) Recite from the Book revealed to thee and offer prayer. Prayer restrains from filth and evil. And remembrance of ALLAH is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt and ALLAH knows what you do. 29:45
- (viii) O my Son: Offer prayers and enjoin the good and forbid the evil and be patient whatever befalleth thee: for this is firmness in the conduct of affairs. 31:17

0019
BISMILLAAHIRRAHMAANIRRAHEEM

BACKBITING

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Remember God won't pardon this sin of Backbiting until the one who is hurt forgives him, and until he recompenses for the damage caused by him.

This nasty habit of backbiting, slandering must be shunned at the earliest and at all costs.

See what Quran says about backbiting :—

“O you who believe ! avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy not let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother ? But you abhor it ; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful”. (49 : 12)

The booklet, Backbiting, it is hoped will go a long way in eradicating the epidemic evil of backbiting prevalent in the modern times and consequently bring peace and amity to the mankind.

Dated 24-5-1970

Trustees of the
Peermohammad Ebrahim Trust
Karachi-5

BISMILLAH HIR RAHMA NIR RAHIM

B A C K B I T I N G

ISLAM AND ITS PERFECT CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Islam is not simply a religion in the western sense of the word religion. It is a way of life providing a perfect code of conduct for its votaries.

2. Freedom of speech and thought is now universally recognized as the fundamental right of a human being, Islam has never denied such a right. Under the Charter of Human Rights framed by the United Nations in the later part of the first half of this century one is surely guaranteed the Freedom of Thought and the Freedom of Speech. But the results of a Freedom, unrestricted and unchecked, may be as disastrous as the rash and negligent driving of a motor car or anyother automobile are. So the Lawgiver, while revealing His Will, through His Last Messenger Muhammad (S.A.) prescribed a certain code of conduct in the matter of speaking about others and discussing their affairs.

3. Says Quran :

(i) O ye who have believed, let not one group make mock of another, who are possibly better than they, or women (make mock of) women who are possibly better than they; do not scoff at each other, or revile each other with nicknames; reprobate conduct (fisq) is a bad name after

belief and those who do not repent they are the wrong doers.

(ii) *O ye who have believed, avoid much suspicion, verily suspicion is sometimes sin: do not pry into each other's affairs and let not some of you backbite others; would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye loathe it! Show piety towards Allah, Verily! Allah is Relentant, Compassionate.* 49: 11,12

4. The above are Words of God, the Words, with a challenge that, the like of these **can not be** produced by genii and the men even if they pool their efforts together in this direction. According to a proverb of the Persian language :

5. Mushk aanast ke khud bebooyad na ka 'attar' begooyad. (Mushk is that which emits out its scent and not the vendor praises it).

STANDARD OF THE SECULAR LAW

6. So we say about the Holy Book Quran, that Last revealed Word of Allah. Let all the civil codes of the world hitherto framed by we the human beings, from the earliest times of history down to the modern age, be collected and their gist taken out. None will be able to put forward even one out of the so many moral principles laid down here. This is the standard of the Secular law. The same is true in the case of Laws framed by other religions.

THE OCCASION OF THE REVELATION

6. A The First Holy Imam Ali-ibne-Abi Talib said, "Have a good opinion about your brother-in-faith unless

“otherwise it is proved.” One some companions sent Salman-e-Farsi to the Holy Prophet (S.A.) to fetch some food. The Prophet (S.A.) sent Salman-e-Farsi to Usama bin Zaid who held the charge of the kitchen of Prophet (S.A.). Usama, unfortunately, had to apologise to Salman for there was nothing eatable available in the kitchen. When Salman returned empty hand the companions commented that Usama and Salman are close-fisted fellows (misers). When these companions appeared before the Holy Prophet (S.A.) the Prophet surprisingly inquired, “What is the reason, that I perceive particles of flesh stuck to your teeth.” The companions responded, in utter amazement, that how it was possible when they have had not eaten any animal food. The Prophet replied, “It is the flesh of Salman and Usama.” It was at this occasion this verse was revealed. Hazrat Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.), the seventh one in series, said, “The mention of anything evil about any one among the people who did not know it, is backbiting.” The Holy Prophet (S.A.) have warned the people against indulging into this heinous evil and unpardonable sin, saying, “Abstain from backbiting for it is worse than adultery for after committing adultery, if one seeks God’s pardon. He grants it, but the forgiveness for backbiting is not granted, until the one backbitten forgives him.”

EATING HUMAN FLESH

7. Eating human flesh or cannibalism is forbidden in Islam and taken as a ghastly crime in the law of modern civilization. Apart from the physical injuries harmful effects

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 that it does have on the various organs of a human being it surely moulds his character. A cannibal can never be just and moderate. A child born in the family of cannibals may not be so stone hearted but child cannibal when grow into a man will be devoid of all aesthetic sense. He will be cruel in his treatment, oppressive in his behaviour and aggressive in his manners, and style. Softness of heart, gentleness of character and sobriety of nature will be alien to him.

8. But this was the case of a man-eater in general. According to history even cannibals do not eat the flesh of their relations-neither by killing them for this purpose nor when they are dead. So when judged according to these standards of cannibalism it is crime and act of utmost cruelty to eat the flesh of ones brother. Now Gheebat is an act similar to the eating of one's brother's flesh.

ANALOGY AND NUISANCE

9. Instituting gheebat as a sin of this nature Allah has drawn an analogy which might deter a person from back biting. As a matter of fact the analogy is very very correct and realistic. The **nuisance** and harm done by the flesh of dead brother is analogous to the mischief and fowl play done to himself an individual when he backbites some one. So let us never nibble at his reputation when he is absent.

10. Let us discuss some of the points mentioned in the above verses of the Holy Book.

11. Making mock of others or laughing at others or **MOCKERY** : mutual ridicule may appear to be a fun. **But**

P R E F A C E

B A C K B I T I N G

Abu Zar Ghaffari relates, the Holy Prophet (S.A.) said, 'Oh Abu Zar, a slanderer will not enter Paradise', I asked, 'who is a slanderer'? The Prophet (S.A.) replied, "He is a backbiter. O Abazar, a backbiter cannot be safe from chastisement of Almighty Allah, in the next world."

Let the slanderers and backbiters take a serious note of their fate as envisaged in the above quotation as related by Abu Zar. None can doubt the authenticity of the above Hadis, for it has been related by Abu Zar who was regarded "Truthful" by the Prophet (S.A.) himself.

Backbiting is a vicious vice, it is the sole cause of unwarranted enmity, hatred, dissension and disunity in a family, an institution, a community, etc. The Backbiter in the heat of his malignant and malicious activity, goes on sowing the seeds of discord, depise and discontentment in the minds of every person, he meets, by ill speaking of one to the other. Little does he realize that these seeds on germination and on taking deep roots will cause a collective and colossal damage to all including himself.

it ceases to be fun when there is arrogance or selfishness or malice behind it. We may laugh with people, to share in the happiness of life but we must never laugh at people in contempt or riddicule. In many things they may be better than ourselves.

12. Scoffing or defamation may consist of in **SCOFFING** : speaking ill of others by the spoken or written word, or in acting in such a way as to suggest a charge against some person whom we are not in a position to judge. A cutting, biting remark, or taunt or sarcasm is included in the word lamaza used in the verses quoted above (49 : 11,12). An offensive nickname may amount to defamation, but in any case there is no point in using offensive nicknames, or names, that suggest real or some fancied defect. They ill accord with the serious purpose which the muslims should have in life. For example if a man is lame, it is wrong to address him as "O lame one!" It causes him pain and it is bad manners. So is the case of the rude remarks "the Blackman."

13. Is there any thing more poisonous than the **SUPICION** : poison? "Suspicion" is the spontaneous reply.

14. Most kinds of suspicion are baseless and to be avoided, and some are crimes in themselves for they do cruel injustice to innocent men and woman.

15. Spying, or enquiring too curiously into other **SPAYING** : people's affairs means either idle curiosity, and is therefore futile, or suspicion carried a stage further, which almost amounts to sin.

T 16. **K** **BACKBITING:** To speak ill of each other behind their backs is called backbiting. Now Backbiting is also a brood of the same genus. It might be either fratricidal but all the same mischievous, or it may be poisoned with malice, in which case it is a sin added to sin. No one would think of such an abomination as the eating of the flesh of his brother. But when the brother is dead and the flesh is carrion, abomination is added to abomination in the same way we are asked to refrain from hurting people's feelings when they are present, how much worse it is when we say things, true or false, when they are absent.

DIVIDE AND RULE

17. Personal bitterness and animosity is caused by backbiting, false reports and baseless accusations which are the stock in trade of the flatterers and tale bearers. Certain offices and institutions are the arena for contending groups of employees. This evil practice may be employed as a tool for the abominable policy of "Divide and Rule." in such cases it is considered as an administrative success by the officers if their subordinates, instead of doing their duty and pulling their weight together, keep flying at one another's throat. The relations between those "tin-gods" and their subordinates as well as co-workers always remain strained. Their conduct is a curse for themselves as well as for the Institution under their ruthless rule.

BACKBITING IS A CAUSE OF ENMITY

18. Backbiting is the worst bane of human life, and makes a man the enemy of the other. It is the backbiter

and talebearer who sows the seed of bitterness, intrigue and animosity. It is he who causes disruption in homes offices social, religious and other institutions and spells the downfall and failure of heads of families and those under whose sound administration run the offices and institutions.

A TRUE FRIEND IS LIKE A MIRROR

19. One should discharge the responsibilities of friendship in his absence even more sincerely than when he is present, as a poet says, "Dost bayad kih az ma-aibe dost, Misle Aaeena roo broo goyad. Na kih choon Shanah ba hazaar zuban pase sar raftah moo ba moo goyad."

(Tr :—A friend, like the mirror, should, tell the faults to his face, and not like the comb, which going on the back of the head tells each hair with a thousand tongues.)

RIFT IN FRIENDSHIP

20. One should try to act upon the conditions anumerated before, himself above all, without waiting for the other man to implement them on his part. Any remissness on one's own part may lead to a rift in friendship. The consequences of such a rift can better be imagined than described. The harm that can come from evowed enemies is nothing as compared with the harm that may ensue from the friends turning hostile.

NOTHING SHOULD BE DONE HALF HEARTEDLY

21. (i) In relation to a friend, for that implies hypocrisy—a characteristic which is reprehensible even when one is dealing with strangers. What to say of its

baneful effects in respect of friends, in-as-much as a state of variance between the overt conduct of a person and his secret workings of the mind, is fraught with mischief. It is a state which contradicts friendship, which demands the oneness of the mind with the overt conduct. There are people who are found to be levish in their praises for the wealthy land lords and the gentry in their presence, using a language which is far from their mental complexion. There is not the least sincerity in their professions of loyalty. They are indeed transgressors.

- (ii) One should never be miserly towards one's friends. Miserliness is a vice even when one is dealing with strangers. It is especially reprehensible in respect of friends, what ever the nature of this trait, whether in regard to material goods, or in regard to any kind of knowledge of craft. Miserliness in regard to the proficiency in knowledge or a handicraft can never be justified, whether such miserliness proceeds from a dislike to share the fruits of such proficiency with others or an apprehension of competitors entering one's field of activities or sheer envy of others profiting by that knowledge. Such an attitude is very disadvantageous to the interests of real knowledge. It has been this obnoxious attitude towards knowledge that has been responsible for the suppression of knowledge in the East as

compared with the attitude of the Western nations, whose researchs are widely publicised to serve as guide lines for further and still further advancement.

SPYING

22. To keep a vigilant eye on the subversive activities of disloyal citizens of a country it is essential to have a Secret Service or Intelligence Bureau. National security demands its existence and functioning efficiently. However Allah strictly prohibits it in matters of personal interest. He does not approve of our spying other persons with the object of finding out their vices and weaknesses, or our "eating of the flesh of a dead brother" like vultures. If somebody speaks ill of us in our absence, Allah wishes that we should not be informed of it because, otherwise, all chances of our good relations with that man would be ended.

23. Just as one disease begets another, for instance constipation may cause fever which may develop into typhoid, and that in turn may be followed by pneumonia, tuberculosis and death, in the same way backbiting produces many other evils. A backbiter becomes the worst type of Hypocrite. In order to maintain his own prestige, he poses as a friend of those whom actually he undermines and destroys root and branch. When he is suspected of evil designs he deceives others by taking false oath. On the other hand he flatters his superiors lest they should expose his machinations. Thus he falls in the estimation of his superiors as well as his own colleagues. The presence of this accursed devil in human form in an institution puts an end to all progress

and betterment. This flint-hearted man damages and destroys his friends, but when he himself falls into the pit he digs for others he finds none to help or befriend him.

24. At another place says Quran :

And do not obey any swearer contemptible. A maligner who goeth about with calumny. A hinderer of the good, evil-disposed and guilty
68 : 10-13

BACKBITING IS CURSED WITH NINE EVIL QUALITIES.

25. Analysing the verse it is clear that the backbiter is cursed with some nine evil qualities, viz,:

- (i) He is ready with his oaths.
- (ii) Honey tongued flatterer.
- (iii) Slanderer, damaging others.
- (iv) One who goes about with calumnies, and bears tales to others.
- (v) Mischief-monger.
- (vi) Hindering all good.
- (vii) Transgressor. Going out of bounds. A public enemy.
- (viii) Deep in sin.
- (ix) Doing violence to others.

DEFINITION OF BACKBITING

26. At this stage we would prefer to deal with the definition of backbiting in detail. A man may have certain qualities which we may like while he may have some others which we may not like. Now if we express politely and sincerely and not in Presence of others, our dislike to him on his very face he may take it in a spirit of friendship and it will do no harm but do good. But per chance if some one is not sincere enough to point out the defects of a man or woman on his or her very face in the above manner then he may resort to the tactic of saying in his absence. Now this particular form of uttering about others what they would never like even if said in their presence is termed as backbiting. Moreover this is subject to the condition that the person passing these remarks or offering his comments in absentia has the intention or motive to defame the individual concerned. The condition is essential while judging the speech whether it was gheebat (backbiting) or not? By a practical example we may explain it. A man lies sick. His disease will have to be mentioned to the Doctors. The causes and their effects all that lead to the disease will have to be explained to the physician. Moreover if he is reluctant to remain on diet or hesitant to take the medicine even then the matter will have to be reported to the physician. And this when said in his absence will not fall in the category of gheebat, because this reporting is in the interest of the safety and good health of the individual.

27. Similarly a man may be poor and helpless. If he is introduced to a person, with riches or authority or both at

his command, so that the latter could help him then the mentioning of his weaknesses, short comings or handicaps will not be counted as gheebat. The reason being simple that the intention of the man was not to degrade or insult him, so it was rather in the best interest of the person.

28. Criticism rather finding faults with others is a familiar talk with many a people. But a number of people may not like it. However they may be placed in a situation where they may find it difficult to keep away from backbiting or abetment in backbiting. As the punishment for murder and abetment in murder is same so is the case with the sin of backbiting and abetment of backbiting. Hence in the best interest of one's life both here and in the Hereafter one must not indulge even in the abetment of backbiting. But Satan the arch-enemy of man is always on the vigil. He is constantly endeavouring to play mischief with the human beings. That is why we should always be on our guard and never let the Tempter succeed in his evil designs.

29. On the definition of backbiting says the Prophet (S.A.): *To speak about such a quality of his brother which he would dislike to be discussed.*

30. Hazrat Abu Zar Ghaffari asked the Prophet (S.A.): *“Will it be classed as gheebat if the quality is really present in his person?”*

31. Replied the Holy Prophet (S.A.): *“If you narrate that defect of his which exists in him then it is gheebat however if you say that is not a fact then it will be calumny.”*

FORGIVENESS OF ILL SPOKEN

32. Allah is no doubt the Forgiver of all sins. But one who talks ill of a person commits a sin against the person and against Allah. So according to Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.) the Last Messenger of Allah : *The sin (of backbiting) is to be forgiven by Allah only after the person about whom something ill is spoken does forgive.*

KINDS OF BACKBITING

33. Here we may discuss some of the kinds of backbiting :—

- (i) Backbiting about lineage as to say that the father of that man is wicked, corrupt or tight fisted person or a cobbler, a weaver etc. etc.
- (ii) Backbiting in connection with the nature and temperament of a man as to say that he is bad tempered, a trickster, proud, sophist, very touchy, timid etc. etc.
- (iii) Backbiting in connection with bad habits as to say that he is a drunkard, a liar, a thief, dishonest, transgressor; that he is not prompt in offering prayers, that he does not perform Ruku' (genuflection) and Sujood (obeisance) properly etc. etc. In this connection if we are thinking of advising for ma'roof (reputable) and restraining from munkar (disreputable), then we must tell these things to the person concerned because relating these things to others amounts to backbiting.

- (iv) Backbiting concerning the material life, as to say that he is uncivilized, he does not know manners he does not acknowledge any body's favour to him, he insults others, he talks too much, he eats too much etc. etc.
- (v) Backbiting in connection with dress, as to say that he wears clothes with wide kirts, his dress is always shabby and dirty and so on and so forth.

34. The backbiting is not restricted to statements but even to draw the attention of others to the defects of any person by way of mere gesture is also included in the definition of backbiting.

35. Likewise backbiting may be done through the medium of writing as well. They say: "Writing is also a tongue."

EVIL EFFECTS OF BACKBITING

36. The Momeneen, in order to attain the pleasure of Allah, must be friends of each other and must have mutual love.

SAYS ALLAH

“And the believer men and the believer women, they are friends to one another; they enjoin good and forbid evil and they establish (the regular) prayer and pay the poor-rate and obey God and His Apostle (Muhammad S. A.), These, God will bestow on them His mercy; Verily God is All Mighty, All-Wise” (11: 71)

Likewise, for the pleasure of Allah, we may hear malice as well, i. e., if we love each other the pleasure of Allah must be our objective. This is the love of a Momin-e-ba-amal (practical believer) and likewise if we bear enmity to any one this too, must be for the pleasure of Allah, e. g. our keeping away from the person who does not offer Prayers, or a person who has evil habits. The fact is that except the Ma'soomeen (infallibles) no body is free from defects. Now, if we come to know the defects-of any person and we publicise it, then instead of love towards that “Momin” we have drifted to hate, and as such the purpose of love for the pleasure of Allah shall be defeated. It is natural that

when the concerned person will hear about the backbiter he will hate him, love and affection will change into hatred and contempt and the contact will be broken, which will be quite contrary to the above principle.

THE PUBLISHING OF THE DEFECTS IS AGAINST THE MORAL VALUES

37. How factual is it that we do not like that our defects are exposed! Then if we ourselves publish the defects of others, this will be quite against the moral values. Rather to popularise, some one else's defects while covering one's own defects is highly immoral which has been prohibited by the Holy Quran:

38. Says Quran :

Do you enjoin the people to righteousness and forget yourselves though ye recite the Book? Have ye then no sense ? (2:44)

39. The verse makes it clear that we should not do wrong specially when we are asking others to be righteous in their conduct.

40. Further, says Quran :

Those who love to see that scandal is publicized among the believers surely will have grievous penalty in this life and in the life to come : Allah knows and ye know not. 24 : 19

41. So candidly the Quran prohibits scandalization of the believers. So the backbiter will add to his sin.

LIKE FOR OTHERS WHICH YOU LIKE FOR YOURSELF

42. According to a hadeeth (Tradition).

Like for others which you may like for yourselves and do not like for others which you would not like for yourselves.

43. How obvious is it that we would never like if somebody defames us by exposing our defects in our absence. So continues the hadeeth:

“Then what right one has to backbite a person when he does not like to be backbitten.”

44. When we speak ill about some one to a person the latter may communicate it to the former. And he in turn instead of being ashamed of his negative virtues may get enraged. He may retaliate and the result will be fight and faction. Allah never likes those who quarrel. Allah hates the mischief mongers. Thus we can see how this one wicked act or ill-speaking of persons if avoided may help restore peace and friendship on this earth. Indeed the Law of Quran is from the Wise and Merciful.

RE-ACTION TO BACKBITING

45. As a result of backbiting we may come across a person who as a re-action to backbiting may become obsti-

nate in his evil deed and continue to do the same. Moreover he may commence doing the same openly. This open act may encourage others to follow suit. And Amr bil ma'roof (Command for the reputable) is thus defeated. Instead nehi 'anil munkar (Forbiddance of the disreputable) is expedited. It is easy to understand that committing of one sin namely gheebat results in other sins as well. In short gheebat is the source fountain for the multiplication of sins and evils.

46. So far we have seen what is mentioned in the Holy Quran, the Word of Allah, revealed to His Last Messenger and in the sayings of the Prophet (S.A.) himself regarding backbiting. Now we quote the first Imam of the Momeneen (Believers) Ali son of Abu Talib on the subject :

47. "Verily those who are (created) Infallible and are well protected (against sins) are worthy of taking pity on the sinful persons. The thanksgiving of these person is the virtuous conduct and the abstention from making mention of the sinful persons. (Such being the sense of moral values) what is binding upon a slanderer who back-bites his fellow-brother and admonishes him for his sins? (He himself being a sinful person must avoid the slandering of the other persons). Does the slanderer not remember that Allah the Most High has covered his sin greater in magnitude. The person does not deserve to defame a person due to a sin which he himself has committed. He might not have committed the very sin. However he might have done one sin or the other greater in magnitude than that of the person whom he slanders! By Allah! Even if he has

not committed a greater sin, his defaming others, a daring deed, is definitely a major sin. O servants of Allah! do not make haste in speaking ill of others. May be he is already forgiven. Do not be unmindful of your sin however minor it may be. May be thou receiveth thy chastisement because of it. So (listen!) who-ever of you is aware of some weakness or defect of another person must not mention it because he is (definitely) aware of his personal evil. Rather he must be always grateful to Allah for being free from the defect inherent in his fellow-brothers."

48. From the above exhortation follows :

- (i) Backbiting is a major sin.
- (ii) This can be avoided provided a person expresses gratefulness for the sins he had been able to avoid to commit.
- (iii) Backbiting is one sin and speaking ill about a person, specially when the very ill is inherent in the speaker, is the sin multiplied. Even from the psychological point of view it is highly immoral.
- (iv) Per chance if the backbiter is free or the defect he finds in the person about whom he speaks evil then he may have committed some other sin. They say :

TO ERR IS HUMAN

49. Hence instead of backbiting it is more suitable for

the person to be repentant. Backbiting is the worst for him.

50. May be the sin of the other person is already forgiven by Allah while the sins of the backbiter still remain to be forgiven hence seeking pardon for one's sins is the best.

51. The Imam has very rightly asked his followers who have the moral courage to avoid sins to offer thanks for the same whereas he finds others committing the same.

52. Says Imam Ja'farus Sadiq (A.S.) :

(i) *The person who speaks that ill of a momin which he has seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears will be grouped with those about whom says Allah :*

(ii) *Those who love to see that scandal is publicized among the believers surely will have grievous penalty in this life and in the life to come."*

(24 :19)

(iii) *Here a point is worth considering. The Quran has graded backbiting as the sin of greatest magnitude i.e. analogous to eating the flesh of one's dead brother.*

THE FLESH OF BROTHER

53. In the first place eating a man's flesh is worst both sentimentally and rationally. The light of wisdom shall not lead to this heinous crime until the man has lost his senses. Now we know that meat is permitted of certain animals only when it is performed zibha (i.e. slaughtered according to the

Islamic way). **Non-zibha** is prohibited in Islam. The reason is that it is injurious for health. And the poison administered in the body through the eating of non-zibha may lead to the decay and detriment of both body and soul of the individual. Now the flesh of one's brother is as good as his own. Both are formed out of the seed of the same man and the blood of the same woman. The harmful effects in eating such a flesh are manifold. We know that so long as the senses are intact none of us will tolerate such a heinous act—some thing ultra cannibalism. Drawing the analogy Allah has roused the human nature. The Ma'soomeen (The Holy Prophet and the Pious Imams) have elucidated the very point.

ACCOMPANYING WITH THE BACKBITER

54. A question arises, suppose we do not like to backbite but are present in a company where some one else is backbiting then what should we do? Ma'soomeen have elaborated this point as well. Under the circumstances we should tactfully and politely handle the situation. In the first place we should see if there is any danger of clash in the company or not? If there is some then we should abstain. But if there is none then we should refute the backbiting, however, this should be done politely and in a likeable manner. We may :

- (i) Counter the backbiting.
- (ii) Not approve backbiting.
- (iii) Leave the company wherein backbiting is being done.

(iv) Even if none of the above three, in descending order, is possible then go on praying for the salvation and forgiveness of the person who is being backbitten.

55. And this is the last alternative for the person who might have backbitten someone and later on becomes ashamed of his evil deed and wanted to get the remission but could not get the chance, so he should go on doing *istighfar* (seeking pardon) for the person.

COMPENSATION OF BACKBITING

56. Says Imam Ja'farus Sadiq (A.S.) :

People asked the Prophet (S.A.) regarding the Kaffara (compensation) of gheebat, replied the Prophet (S.A.)

Whenever you recollect a person whom you have backbitten then seek pardon for him."

NAFS-E-AMMARAH.

57. There is not the least doubt in that backbiting is a source of great pleasure. Really one relishes it. The mind becomes familiar with criticism. By nature man becomes more creative. The memory gets stronger. One fact after the other is released from the store of one's mind. And all this is at the beck and call of *nafse-ammarah* (the self commanding evil).

58. But for the inordinate desires says Quran:

Verily the self habitually urges to evil.

12:53

'SELF' MUST BE CONTROLLED BY WISDOM

59. Now, it is this 'self' that inspires man to backbite. While the 'self' is inspired by the Devil to commit the evil. Hence we must be on the watch and see that the Devilish tricks fail. So let us tame or subjugate the 'self'. As a matter of fact the 'self' must be within the control of one's wisdom. Says the Prophet (S.A.): *Your greatest enemy is the 'self' that lies in between the two sides.*

60. Hence it is expedient that we should oppose the inordinate desires. Following the same will lead us astray.

61. Jihad (struggle) may be with the sword and it may be with our 'self' as well. Not to backbite is also a jihad, the struggle with one's self.

GREATER BACKBITERS

62. As regards the persons who backbite it is seen that usually the more talkative persons are greater backbiters. Those who are jobless or have plenty to eat and to do nothing also find it as a favourite pastime. People who are parasites and live on the earnings of others also freely indulge in backbiting. Because of this Islam has laid great emphasis on earning bread. Every one (male member of the muslim society) is enjoined to earn wage. And one is allowed earning through legitimate sources. Next, a muslim is not allowed to talk aimlessly. They says:

SILENCE AND SPEAKING

63. Give more to thy ears and less to thy tongue. Keeping quiet is praised in Islam. Only where speaking is of necessity one is commanded to speak out. Hazrat Luqman (A.S.) is said to have exhorted his son: "*O son! if you take speech equal to the weight of silver, then observing silence is worth the weight of Gold.*"

WORSHIP IN ISLAM

64. Let us say it again, Islam does not permit any person to remain idle. As a religion it is only Islam and Islam that has enjoined its followers to spend their time in one thing or the other as prescribed by the shari'a (Canonical law). Each and every act approved by the Shari'a is taken as 'Ibadat (Worship) in Islam. Earning a wage is also a form of worship according to Islam. Those who have sufficient to eat and need not work are commanded to perform a number of 'Amaal' (Practices) and are enjoined to recite Do'as (Invocations). In short the religion will not permit its votaries to while away their time in absurdities. Frequently muslims are enjoined to think in the system of the universe etc. Why? Simply one who is engaged in some useful task will never indulge in loose talk and backbiting.

SYMBOLS OF WEAKNESS AND COWARDICE

65. Backbiting is a symbol of weakness and cowardice. Says Hazrat Ali (A.S.).

66. Backbiting is the best effort of a weak person. The backbiter intends to harm the person. He aims at his defamation. He wants his prestige reduced. He wants to hamper in his steady progress. But the backbiter himself has no access to such means which may impede his progress. As the last resort he finds satisfaction of his inordinate self and makes it a means of bearing malice.

67. Backbiting is cowardice because one does not have the courage to say all that on the very face of the person. He does not have the ability to equip himself with the qualities and virtues that the other person has. Had he possessed a sincere desire to rise and progress then he would have seriously tried his level best to attain those heights of moral standards and material resources. Then the question of defamation and bearing malice would not have arisen.

WOMEN AND BACKBITING

68. Even this is a reality that women do indulge more in the evil of backbiting. Usually we find when a couple of women sit together they start backbiting. Once they are free of their domestic duties they become free to speak and backbiting may be the main point of their speech. For the women we muslims are proud to have the life and character of an ideal woman. Hazrat Fatemah (A.S.), the daughter of the Prophet (S.A.) and the Chief of the women of the worlds, our Lady of Light having finished her domestic work used to devote her time in prayer and other rituals connected

with worship. She was found busy in swinging the cradle of her sons Hasnain (Hasan and Hussain (A.S.)). Caring and upbringing of children, according to Islam is worship. And while rocking the cradle she used to recite praise of Allah. She also used to offer Sunnati Namaz. At other times she was busy in spinning with her spinning wheel while at some other times she was engaged in running her handmill to grind the flour which was usually of barley. All this has been sacred domestic duty of women in the past. The women who aspire to join the ranks of her maids must follow in her footsteps and automatically the evil will be warded off.

SINS OF THE BACKBITTERS TRANSFERRED TO THE BACKITER

69. This is not to be forgotten that the virtues of one who backbites are transferred to the account of one whom he backbites while the evils of one who is backbitten are written in the book of A'maall of one who backbites. This has come down to us through authentic hadeeth. This may also help us in judging the magnitude of the sin called backbiting and the extent to which a person will be black-listed so far as his Nama-e-A'maall (Book of Deed) is concerned.

SINS OF ENORMITY

70. From all that we have said in the above it becomes evident that ghcebat is a sin, of enormity. The more sanguine is its commitment. And what a devilish nature it is

that we try to find excuses and please to carry on with the favourite pastime. It is seen that people are confused and confounded and made to do the backbiting. Some canonical excuse is found out and the trend of talks is directed towards ghebat.

71. Satisfaction is sought only when full freedom of backbiting is attained.

72. Once again we say with all the emphasis at our command that it is a very wicked act. But many of the assemblies and associations are packed with it. So much so that those who wish to avoid it become helpless. May be, the person backbiting is a man of influence and status so he can not be prevented. Moreover there might not be anyway out to leave the meeting. Under such circumstances the best way is to recite Istaghfar (seeking pardon) for the person who is backbitten.

BACKBITING

ALLOWED AS AN EXCEPTION

73. However backbiting, as an exception, is permitted in the following case :

(i) Complaint of an oppressed.

If any one speaks about the injustice of a Qazi (Judge etc.) or of his dishonesty and bribery he will be a backbiter. However if the oppressed speaks of the injustice, dishonesty and bribery to the one who could desist the Qazi from so doing then in that case it will not be backbiting.

(ii) To seek help for removing Munkar (evil) and sin.

If someone unfolds before a Mufti (jurisconsult) that injustice is meted out to him by his father, brother or any other person and so the way of redress is sought then it will not be backbiting.

(iii) To save a muslim from being cheated and to exhort the seeker of truth.

In such a case if someone is defamed then it will not be backbiting.

(iv) Scrutiny of the veracity and authenticity of hadeeth.

Muslims could justly be proud of inventing the Science of Traditions. *Ilmul-Rijaal*-Science of character of persons, is one of its branches. This consists of the scrutiny of an Individual regarding his character, veracity authenticity and other qualities such as integrity of character; height of moral standards, strength of memory etc. Factual statements in such cases will not be counted as gheebat.

(v) Popularity based on physical defects.

Any person who achieves fame and is widely known due to his personal defects viz. people call him as "O blind man," "O the lame one," "O deaf one," "O the crippled one." It falls out of the scope of backbiting because of popularity.

(vi) Evidence in regard to a sin.

To give evidence against a sinner is lawful in his absence so that justice is done and the sin being established the sinner is punished. Thus the limits of Allah are preserved.

(vii) Simultaneous knowledge.

If two persons have the knowledge about the defect of a particular person they may talk about it as it will not amount to backbiting.

(viii) Uncertainty.

If it is unknown with certainty the person about whom something ill is being spoken, then it is not necessary to stop the speaker unless it is established that the utterance was forbidden because of being backbiting.

WORDS OF WISDOM.
EXTRACT FROM NEHJULBALAGHA

74. Hazrat Ali (A.S.) said :

- (i) I cannot understand how a person can slander and asperse another man for vices and sins? Does he not remember how the Merciful God has covered and concealed his sins and vices which were of greater enormity than those of the persons whom he is exposing? How can he vilify another man for sins when he himself is guilty of similar ones? And if he has not committed the same kind of sins his wickedness and offences may even be of greater magnitude in another field. Granted that he has not committed major sins and his offences against God and religion are of minor kind he must remember that vilification, slandering and back-biting others are major sin.

contended with what he gets ; spends his time in the service of God and religion ; is sorry over the sins and vices committed by him, and so spends his time that none is injured or harmed by him. (Ex-k-181)

75. Imam Hasan (A.S.) said :

- (i) When a nation has mutual consultations it receives proper guidance.
- (ii) The virtue that has no tinge of evil is thanksgiving for blessings and to be patient during distress.

76. Imam Husain (A.S.) says :

- (i) Goodness is like the rain which reaches good and bad alike.
- (ii) Beware ! Do not be unjust to a person who has no supporter except Allah.
- (iii) It is the proved sign of once popularity if one keeps the company of wise men.

77. Imam Zainul 'Abedeem (A.S.) said:

- (i) One who considers his self as great, considers the world low.
- (ii) And verily, God has never blessed those who sow discord they of the past or posterity.

- (iii) Says Imam Zainul 'Abideen (A.S.): The essence of all virtues lies in keeping one's own nafs (self) away from evil.
- (iv) Being good to your neighbours and living in peace with them are the causes for the increase of your wealth and happiness for your homes.
- (v) A woman cannot fulfil her duties towards Allah until she has fulfilled her duties towards her husband. Hold your children in high esteem and teach them good manners.

CONCLUSION

THE REACTION OF BACKBITING IS BOUND TO OCCUR

78. After all we are not creatures of logic. We are made of flesh and bones. We have blood running in our veins. The reaction of backbiting is bound to occur. So instead of losing friends and increasing the number of enemies it was worthwhile to behave all our life in such a way that we win friends and our enemies are as few in number as possible.

BACKBITING IS ALSO A SOCIAL CRIME

79. As we have said backbiting is not only a sin but a social crime. And when the crime is committed society is spoilt. Those who think rightly and behave nicely despise this act. Thus one who backbites increases his enemies. The enmity may result in grave consequences.

RESULT OF BACKBITING

80. Backbiting results in the increase of enmity. Now to destroy an enemy we may develop a method—the best and surest. It is of making him a friend. To illustrate it practically we may say that if some one backbites then the best thing to destroy his inimical behaviour is not to pay him in the same coin and commit greater sin. Not only that we should not backbite him

- (ii) O man ! do not make haste in libelling and reviling the other man, for his sin might have been forgiven and do not minimise the gravity and seriousness of your own minor sins because you may be punished for the same.
- (iii) When a person knows defects of other person he must abstain from calumniating him, he must remember his own defects and shortcomings (which he carefully tries to hide and conceal from public view). If he finds that he is safe from the sins committed by the other man, he must be busy in thanking God for this trait of his character (instead of disparaging other).
(k-143)
- (iv) O people ! whoever of you knows for certainty about the sincerity in religion and piety of character of his brother must not lend his ears when that person is vilified and must not encourage scandal against him. Remember that the best archer may sometimes miss his mark, but arrows of slander and aspersions very seldom miss their targets and their after effects are always ruinous. (k-144)
- (v) O people ! blessed is he who feels so much for his own shortcomings that he has no heart and no time to probe for the vices of others. Happy is the man who leads a retired life ; is

but we should make a mention of his person in decent words. Our friendly behaviour as a return of his hostile attitude will put him to shame and he will give up our backbiting and will become friend and thus the enemy is destroyed in the sense that the enemy no more exists because the enemy has become friend.

BACKBITING IS A SOURCE OF RELISHMENT

81. Nothing is spent to get this enjoyment. One may have some hitch or hesitation in entertaining himself where some payment is made but for this no expenses are to be incurred. It needs no arrangements, only a simple occasion of idle talk is required and the people get going with it. The crime being of a cankering nature the ace enemy of man the Satan - instigates and inspires people to commit it.

82. But we should be very mindful of the grave consequences and serious effects this habit has on us, individually and collectively in this world which would make us live a wretched and miserable life. Moreover because of the evil deed done deliberately despite so oft-repeated warnings from Allah, His Last Messenger and the infallible Imams our place in the Hereafter will be in one of the hottest corners of Hell.

83. Hence let us take heed and do not be amongst those who are the losers both here and in the Hereafter.

84. Instead we must strive to have a life of peace and tranquillity here and gain salvation and take rest in the Hereafter.

85. To say it again, because the repetition is of immense value in this case, gheebat is a sin so manifest and of a great magnitude. The act is heinous. This is why Quran draws an analogy between backbiting and cannibalising one's own dead brother. (49 : 12)

86. As we have said, backbiting is a common practice. The practice is very tasteful and a source of relishment satisfying for the soul, the soul governed by an evil self. Because of the enjoyment derived in it many people do indulge in it freely irrespective of the consideration of the evil effects it has on individuals and ultimately the society and the severe punishment that awaits both the backbiter and one guilty of abetment to backbiters in the Hereafter. And by abetment here is meant listening with interest too. The condition of 'with interest' is imposed because it may happen that someone is present at a particular place and people backbite in his presence but he can neither take leave of the company, nor can he prevent the practice without causing trouble. So he, not of his free will listens to it. Rather when he listens under those circumstances he does so with reluctance.

87. Among the causes that lead to the commitment of this sin we have one called Inquisitiveness. Now it is one's curiosity to know the affairs of an individual keenly that makes him indulge in it. The inquisitiveness is a source of great pleasure and satisfaction of one's lust. So in order to have the enjoyment of inquisitiveness one may stoop the low levels of committing the sin, so severe in nature. It is best to control inquisitiveness and the taste of backbiting will

automatically disappear and thus one can save himself from the sin and the grave consequences of backbiting.

THE SINS PLEASE THE SATAN

88. Now, as we know Satan is the arch-enemy of man and will remain so till the time appointed by Him. So he does entice people to commit the sin. The sinfulness of man pleases the Satan much.

89. We are warned not only of the great chastisement that the backbiters shall receive in return of the sin analogous to the eating of dead brother's flesh but the consequences, may be grave viz. the ruination of an individual, or a number of individuals family or a collection of families, or a society or a nation or a group of nations.

90. It is, therefore, necessary to realise the gravity of the sin and the grave consequences involved therein and so try to control its commitment. May Allah help us in our determination not to indulge in backbiting otherwise it is very difficult to resist the temptation especially when instigated by the Tempter himself.

91. So let us not backbite.

1 Tempter, Satan is termed as Tempter.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

3 The Trustees of the Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, have undertaken to present to the general public good reading matter, suited to their physical, mental, moral and spiritual needs. The sensational pornographic reading material that goes by the name of literary production in the market has served to vitiate the whole social milieu, so that the restraints on social conduct are ever-more being relaxed, with resultant indiscipline in the home atmosphere, no less than in the wider fields of human activities outside the home. If such a situation is allowed to go on flourishing unchecked, a veritable hell on earth is the natural outcome, as we are witnessing in the waves of crime sweeping over some of the so-called civilised countries of the West which are already affecting us. **"BACK TO RELIGION"** is now the watch-word of the saner elements among them. It is with this sense of perturbation that the trustees have embarked on the venture of publishing books, which are calculated to offset the baneful effect of low-grade, anti-social forms of reading material, and to inculcate a taste for and appreciation of sound and healthful mental food.

No commercialisation is aimed at by this venture, as would be apparent to even the most superficial observer, from the standard of prices of the books, which are fixed below the actual cost, and that too, because free distribution of books depreciates the worth of the same in the eyes of the general reading public and are also waste.

The Trustees, are conscious of the fact that in spite of all precautions on their part to avoid errors if something goes amiss in the form of errors of judgement involuntarily for no one can be in a position to comprehend the entire field of knowledge on any subject. Of one thing they can assure the discreet readers, to wit, that the material for reading is being presented with the best of intentions for the benefit of the public and for the pleasure of the Almighty Allah. If any reader finds anything which contradicts this objective, his observations in this behalf shall receive the maximum possible care to redress any remissness that may be pointed out as having crept into the reading matter with the best of wishes for the reader, we remain.

HOLY PROPHET (S. A.) SAID :

“Shall I not let you know of the worst person among you?” The people said, “Surely, let us know”. He said, “Worst is one who often backbites, sows discord among his friends and finds faults with the faultless persons”.

Any person possessed of any one of the following three defects in the worst of all:—(1) Backbiting, (2) Causing dissension among friends, (3) Seeking defects in good persons.

Whatever mishap befall thee, it is on account of something which thine own hands have done.

The wicked man thinks no good of any one; for how should he imagine that others have what he lacks himself?

HAZRAT ALI (A. S.) SAID :

Beware of backbiting: it sows the seeds of bitterness, and separates you from Allah and men.

There is no sincerity in a backbiter.

He who listens to backbiting is a backbiter himself.

Backbiting is the food of dogs of hell and long hopes are bad cheat.

Reject all malicious speaking, be there justification for it, or be there none.

He who hears tales to you, certainly hears tales about you.

Be on your guard against abominable words: they make hearts to burn with rage.

The most detestable man is he who returns evil for good, and the most praiseworthy, he whose answer to villainy is generous deed.

The wickedest man is he who finds no excuse for anyone, nor ever pardons.

IMAM JAFARE SADIQ (A. S.) SAID :

That the Prophet (S. A.) when asked, “What is the expiation to backbiting?” Said, “Ask pardon from him whom you have backbitten whenever you remember him.”

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And spy ye not, and let not some of you backbite the others; what! liketh one of you to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But ye abhor it; and fear ye (the wrath of) Allah; Verily, Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy unto the repentants), the most Merciful (9:12)

And whoever committeth a fault or a sin and throweth it one innocent he indeed burdeneth (himself) with the calumny and a manifest sin. (4:12)

And those who annoy believing men and believing women without their having earned it, then indeed they bear the guilt of slander and a manifest sin. (33:58)

Mischief hath appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of what they have done, so that they may turn (away from evil). (30:41)

Whoever doeth good, it is for his own self, and whoever doeth evill it is against his own self; then unto your Lord ye shall be returned. (45:15)

And whoever transgresseth the limits of Allah, then indeed he doeth injustice to his ownself.

HOLY PROPHET (S. A.) SAID : **FREE GIFT OF NO COMMERCIAL VALUE.**

In the religion of a Muslim, backbiting is more pernicious a sin than the disease that ruins his stomach.

A backbiter will not enter the Heaven.

Backbiting witiateth ablutions and fasting.

HAZRAT ALI (A. S.) SAID :

Disunity is the brother of polytheism and backbiting is the worst lie. Whoever listens to slander is himself a slanderer.

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