

# Defamation

Allah, the Almighty, says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ.

*O believers! Let no men laugh at other men who may perhaps be better than themselves; and let no woman laugh at another woman, who may perhaps be better than herself. Do not defame through sarcastic remarks about one another, nor call one another by offensive nicknames. It is an evil thing to be called by a bad name after being a believer, and those who do not repent are the ones who are the wrongdoers. (Al Hujurat 49:11)*

In these verses, social rights and inter-personal etiquettes are described. Here, Quran forbids three behaviors: laughing at someone, passing sarcastic remarks and calling someone with a defamatory nickname which (s)he does not like.

اسلام اور دور جدید کی تبدیلیاں۔ معاشرے مستقل تبدیلی کا شکار رہا کرتے ہیں۔ بے ثبات اس زمانے میں اک تغیر کو۔ موجودہ دور میں ہماری فکر میں کیا تبدیلیاں وقوع پذیر ہو رہی ہیں۔ ان تبدیلیوں کے اثرات ہمارے معاشروں پر رونما ہو رہے ہیں۔ مصنف نے ان تبدیلیوں کا اسلام کے نقطہ نظر سے جائزہ لیا ہے۔

First forbidden behavior is making fun of others in an offensive manner. Qurtabi (the famous Quranic commentator) defines this behavior as describing someone's weakness in a ridiculous manner in order to humiliate him / her. It can be done in a verbal manner or in a non-verbal manner by using body language. Similarly, after listening someone, mocking at him / her is also included in it. Some scholars describe that the ridiculous behavior includes all ways of communication which result in making fun of a person in an offensive manner. All these attitudes are prohibited by the clear verdict of Quran....

After listening this verse, our ancient pious people became extremely careful. A'mr Bin Shurhabeel said, "If I see a person drinking the milk of a goat by sucking its breasts and I laugh at it, I fear that I might be included in a forbidden act mentioned in this verse.

A'bdullah Bin Mas'ud (one of the most knowledgeable companions of Prophet ﷺ) said, "If I mock at a dog, I fear that I might be made a dog." (reported by Qurtabi)

The second attitude forbidden in this verse is called "Lamz". It means passing defamatory and sarcastic remarks on someone in order to identify his / her weaknesses. According to religious scholars, it is better for a person to think about his / her own weaknesses and must try to improve his / her weak areas. The person who will do so, will not get enough time to identify the weaknesses of other people. The last king of India, Bahadur Shah Zafar said in his poem:

*When I was unaware of my own weaknesses  
I used to see the weaknesses of other people*

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*But when I started looking at my weaknesses*

*I do not think that someone will be worse than me*

The third attitude forbidden in this verse is calling a person with a defamatory nickname which (s)he does not like e.g. calling someone as the lame duck, blind or single-eyed etc.

Ibn-e-A'bbas (the prominent scholar of the younger generation of Prophet's companions) said: In this verse, "calling with nicknames" includes the situation that: A person did something wrong. Then he repented. Calling that person with the nickname indicating that crime e.g. thief, drunkard or fornicator etc.

Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said: The person who makes someone ashamed on a repented sin, the Almighty will indulge that person in the same sin and will cause him ashamed in this as well world as well as hereafter.

*(Excerpts from "Maarif-ul-Quran" of Mufti Muhammad Shafi. Selection & Translation: Mubashir Nazir, Review: Muhammed Umar Khan)*

*It is one of the greatest sins that a man should curse his parents. The man abuses the father of another man and the latter abuses the father of the former. Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم*

Unfortunately, the attitudes forbidden in this verse are widely practiced in our society. It is not limited to our common people. The commandments of this verse are violated by the religious people as well. When we disagree on any issue, we assume that the other scholar is a heretic and is not subject to the ethics mentioned in this verse. After that, we violate the teachings of this verse in all possible manners.

We assume that now the life, wealth and respect of that person is not sacred. We start a campaign to defame that person. We start using vulgar language. His moral image is damaged. If we find a real weakness in his character, we try to publicize it through the available media. If we do not find a real weakness in his character, we associate false blames to his personality. Alas! All this activity is performed in the name of "Protection of Faith".

Remember that if we disagree with the other's point of view, we have the right to explain the weaknesses of that point of view with clear arguments by using a decent language. This is the maximum limit to do so. Quran does not allow us to derogate someone. If we are doing so in the name of religion, then remember that we will be accountable in front of Allah on the Day of Judgment. Our good deeds will be transferred to his account.

Even if that person will deserve the hell, due to our defamation, his punishment will be reduced. On the other side, we will have to lose our good deeds. It is possible that we might be punished with that person. It is also possible that our good deeds might finish as a result of transferring it to his account. After that, his bad deeds will be transferred to our account. It is possible that after getting rid of his bad deeds, that person may enter paradise whereas we face the punishment for our offence.

If we disagree with someone's point of view, our rights are only limited to explain the weakness of that point of view with clear arguments. We have to limit our criticism to the views only. Criticizing other's personality may be an enough charge to make us deserving for the punishment.

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Now we should repent on our previous offences. We should seek forgiveness from the offended people and should determine that we will not repeat this behavior in future. May the Almighty help us in improving our behavior! *Mubashir Nazir*

Let's share good things with our children and friends.

Post your questions and comments to help others. Send an email at [mubashirnazir100@gmail.com](mailto:mubashirnazir100@gmail.com)

## **Think about it!**

- Identify two reasons for defamation.
- Identify an event from your life when some people had defamed one of your friends.  
What was its impact of his personality?

Please send your answers through email to post your comments on this web page.