

Danger of rumours in Islaamic legislation

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: The affair of rumours is dangerous. Some of the people pursue these rumours and transmit them publically on forums, in gatherings, and on the internet, and they do not think much of it. Speak to us regarding the danger of rumours in the Islaamic legislation.

Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (حفظه الله)¹: In the Name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy. The praise is for Allaah, the Lord of all that exists. May Allaah bestow prayers and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions, all together. As to Proceed:

It is upon the Muslim to preserve his tongue from speech which contains no benefit, or which contains harm for himself or for others. From that is rumours; whether they be evil rumours; whether they be connected to individuals or the Ummah, it is upon the Muslim to verify and not speak with them except out of necessity. Allaah, (سبحانه)², has said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

[O you who believe! If a rebellious evil person comes to you with news, verify it, lest you harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful to what you have done.]³

So it is upon the Muslim that if there reaches him, regarding his brother, something evil then he should conceal it and not spread it, even if it be the truth; even if that which was transmitted to him is the truth and it contains something harmful to his brother (i.e., the one whom it is about) then he should cover his brother and advise him between themselves, and he should not spread evil information about him even if it is true. This is because this also enters into backbiting. Allaah, (سبحانه), has said:

وَلَا يَغْتَابَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْنُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ

[Do not backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allaah. Verily, Allaah is the One Who accepts repentance, Most Merciful.]⁴

¹ (حفظه الله) May Allaah the Most High preserve him

² (سبحانه) (Subhanahu) The Exalted

³ سورة الحجرات - Soorah al-Hoojooraat [49:6]

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The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)⁵ explained backbiting as being:

ذَكَرَكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ

“Mentioning your brother with that which he dislikes.”

They said: “O Messenger of Allaah, what if what I say is true?” He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ مَا تَقُولُ فَقَدْ اغْتَبْتَهُ ، وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ مَا تَقُولُ فَقَدْ بَهْتَهُ

“If it is true then you have backbitten him. If it is not true then you have slandered him.”⁶

Meaning, you have lied upon him slanderously, so you are sinning in either case; whether that which you say is true or that which you say is not true. This is because you will not escape either backbiting or lying. Both are a crime. This is as it relates to the individual as well as the society; as it relates to security and that which disturbs the security (of the society). Therefore, it is upon the Muslim to conceal that which occurs from incidents and rumours and not to strike fear into the people by way of them or spread them. This is the way of the hypocrites. They are those who circulate rumours and spread them in order to frighten the Muslims and strike fear into them. Allaah, (سبحانه), has said:

لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَأَوْضَعُوا خِلَالَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ وَفِيكُمْ سَمَّاعُونَ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
بِالظَّالِمِينَ

[Had they marched out with you, they would have added to you nothing except disorder, and they would have hurried about in your midst (spreading corruption) and sowing sedition among you, and there are some among you who would have listened to them.

And Allaah is the All-Knower of the Zaalimoon (wrong-doers).]⁷

Allaah, (سبحانه), also said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

[Verily, those who like that (the crime of) illegal sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful torment.]⁸

This is a severe threat. So the Muslim is not one who spreads rumours and evil information which frightens the Muslims. If this information or this occurrence poses a danger to the Muslims and it needs to be treated then its treatment is not by way of spreading it amongst the people who are not able to remedy it. This is to be referred to those in authority. It should be referred to those in authority so that they can remedy it and repel its danger. Allaah, (سبحانه), said:

⁴ سورة الحجرات - Soorah al-Hoojooaat [49:6]

⁵ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

⁶ Saheeh Muslim

⁷ سورة التوبة - Soorah at-Tawbah [9:47]

⁸ سورة النور - Soorah an-Noor [24:19]

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وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدَّعَوْا بِهٖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

[When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people), if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly). Had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allaah upon you, you would have followed Shaytaan (Satan), save a few of you.]⁹

At any rate, the Muslim must preserve his tongue and not speak with rumours nor should he spread scandal. He should utilise silence and concealment; and he should utilise Du'aa for the rectification of Islaam, the Muslims, and the affairs of the Muslims. This is how the Muslim should be.

⁹ سورة النساء - Soorah an-Nisaa [4:83]