

The other side of the story

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WHAT TO DO WITH 'HEARSAY'?

A woman once brought a claim against another woman before Qadi Shurayh (rahimahullah). After some time, she began to cry bitterly. Those who were present were convinced that the woman was wronged. Qadi Shurayh replied: "Indeed even the brothers of Yusuf ('alaihi salam) cried by their father."

i.e, Despite their sobbing, they were still guilty. (Kitabul Adhkiya, pg.63)

Moral

Therefore, no matter how convincing one side of the story seems, one is still duty bound to hear the other side before drawing a conclusion. The act of passing judgement on mere assumption is quite common and certainly very destructive. The consequences are also far reaching, long lasting and in some cases: regretful. This is the message in the verse:

“O you who believe! If a sinful person brings a report to you, then verify its authenticity before you harm a people unknowingly and then become remorseful over what you did”

One is often face with these kind of situations where one is made to hear one side of the story only. Due to the fatal consequences of this, the Shari'ah cautions us to remain calm, and to verify that piece of information. Haste generally leads to bitterness and remorse. Carefully read the words of the above verse again:

...then verify its authenticity before you harm a people unknowingly and then become remorseful over what you did

There are several kinds of such situations, like hearing one side of the story regarding one's spouse, business partner or colleague. It could even be a general piece of information which has no direct link to any particular individual. Many of the emails, sms', broadcast messages and social media posts that are freely shared fall under this category. Many of these messages sometimes contain false information or baseless claims about Islam. Such misinformation causes unnecessary confusion.

The correct procedure in all of the above is to avoid what does not concern us and to avoid implicating somebody on mere hearsay! Failing in this will result in back-biting, gossip, unnecessary ill feelings and spitefulness etc. Innocent people become victims of '**information oppression.**'

One should avoid being an instigator, or even succumbing to instigation. Most importantly, if it doesn't concern you, ignore it.

Rasulullah (sallallahu'alayhi wasallam) said:

“Shunning what doesn't concern a person is a sign of the beauty of his faith.”

(Sunan Tirmidhi, hadith: 2317-2318)

Think before you...

Before sharing such hearsay, one should think to himself: what would've been my response if that misinformation was concerning me or my close family?

Ponder over the drastic effect of the touch of a button, where hundreds of people may be misinformed. How will we make up for this?

One will be the cause for all of those with whom he shared that 'wrong/unverified information' getting involved in gossip, backbiting and many other sins... Even if that allegation was true, it could lead to backbiting and carrying of tales, both of which are haram.

What to do?

Faqih Abul Layth Samarqandi (rahimahullah) has offered the following beautiful suggestions: "If anyone brings a bad report to you concerning somebody else, do the following 6 things:

1. Don't believe him, for those who carry tales are usually liars.
2. Stop him from relaying such allegations. You are duty bound to stop the wrong. (Nahy 'anil munkar)
3. Detest this act from the depth of your heart.
4. Don't entertain evil thoughts about the third person (the one against whom the allegations were made)
5. Don't probe in the matter.
6. Don't share that information with others.

(Tambihul Ghafilin, pg.131)

Avoiding the above Islamic guidelines on hearsay, has led to too many unsavoury endings...

May Allah Ta'ala guide us all. Ameen.