

Story Title: The Vicious Circle

“Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the falsest of speech. Do not eavesdrop; do not spy on one another; do not envy one another; do not forsake one another; do not hate one another. Be, O slaves of Allaah, brothers.”

(Hadith of Prophet SAW recorded in Bukhari and Muslim)

It is a regular day's work. Juni is busy at the office of his boss, Consultant in Medicine, serving tea to his friends that have visited him. As he continues to serve tea, he overhears his boss making burlesque of the way the Head of Department of Medicine was chided by his wife for yet again forgetting to pay the electricity bills. Showing an absolute disregard to this private matter of his colleague, the doctor and his friends seem to be having a great time gossiping at their tea time.

Juni, on the other hand is no exception to this behaviour. He follows the footsteps of his boss and commits the details to memory, relishing the gossip and musing. “What an entertaining chit chat it would be to discuss with his intimate hospital fellow workers, Buni and Huni!”

A worker at the hospital cafeteria, Huni is busy cleaning the furniture when he hears roars of laughter from the corner of the room where three trainees of the medicine department are having a hilarious discussion. On listening a little carefully, Huni discerns that the joke is actually directed towards a patient that one of the interns had attended and resuscitated. They continued to jeer at how hilarious and absurd the entire scene had been.

Huni feels a pinch of discomfort, but following suit, he too makes a mental note of the event, as it will make good gossip over teatime.

Buni, a ward boy in the Female Surgical Unit, is waiting for the nurses' long and unending conversation to finally cease so that he may be given the list of medicines to be fetched for the ward. He is fretting over just how much women talk when a sentence catches his ears,

“You just should have seen me when I injected the syringe, she seemed to be so horrified as if she had seen a ghost and the shrieks that followed! Even a one year old would have cried less!”

The conversation got interrupted by fits of chuckles and laughter by the other nurses. Buni, quite expert a gossipmonger, saved the details of the event for the time off.

Time flew quickly, and finally came the much awaited downtime. The three friends Buni, Juni and Huni excitedly exchanged the 'crisp news' of the day revealed to them by their seniors at work. Tea time was definitely made savory by the hottest gossips.

Later during the day, Juni happens to visit the Medical Ward. He is reminded of the event described to him by Huni about the patient and the medicine trainee. He easily recognises the patient from his whereabouts and turns to another worker at the ward, the two of them together jeer at the patient discussing the event.

Huni, on the other hand visits the Female Surgical Ward to run an errand. He chuckles as he is reminded of the patient being administered the injection, narrated to him by Buni, and amusingly shares the details with a fellow worker.

At off-time, Juni is on his way to his home when he encounters the Head of Department of Medicine and his wife. Immediately, he reminisces of the conflict of the couple narrated by his boss.

Tired of the days work Juni enters home where he finds his wife making chappatis, engrossed in an exciting conversation with Masi Rasheeda about the nuptial issues of Masi Hameeda, the nextdoor neighbour. The two apparently seem to be thoroughly enjoying the scandal. On the arrival of Huni, Masi Rasheeda quickly bode farewell to depart. As Masi Rasheeda was about to cross the threshold, she froze at the sounds of yelling from the house. Juni seemed to be cross at his wife for making a burnt chappati and a choleric dispute followed. Masi Rasheeda attentively memorised the minutiae to broadcast it as far and wide as possible.

Later in the evening, Juni was on his way to the market to buy groceries when he spotted Masi Hameeda and Masi Rasheeda immersed in light talk and his ears caught his name 'Juni' being pronounced. He turned to stone. The two of them were intently buzzing about the row Juni had with his wife in the afternoon!

Juni was shocked and downcast. "How could they! Just how can they go on rambling in public about a private matter between me and my wife! What a breach of trust of someones' privacy" Juni continued to ruminate. At the very moment, an insight hit and Juni was aghast. He and his friends had been the culprits of the same despicable behaviour over the entire day. The same violation of trust and gossip mongering that he had just fallen a victim to, was a light and routine affair for him and his friends. It was just his turn to become a victim in this vicious cycle!

The next Sun rose with new resolutions for Juni. He had made firm intention to rectify his behaviours, quit eavesdropping and tittle-tattling for good. He even went on to converse about the issue with his friends Buni and Huni. They realised that this behaviour of theirs, no matter how trifling in their own sight, must have caused a lot of hurt to the other patients. Buni even reminded them of an ayat he just heard yesterday at the Friday Sermon and that had moved him to contemplation over his own behaviour too.

“O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames...”

(Surah Al Hujarat: Ayat 11)

This marked the end of all gossip in the hospital where Juni, Buni and Huni worked. Not only did they rectify their own behaviour, but they actively advised anyone whom they found indulged in it and enlightened them of the evils of this conduct. In short, the hospital became a place where the patients' privacy was well guarded: their trusts, respected; and gossiping, nonexistent.

Reflection: *Respect for the privacy of the personal affairs of another person is a matter of highest priority for any civilised human being; and in the field of medicine, its importance cannot be overemphasized. It is due to the detestable acts of eavesdropping and gossiping that such irreparable damage is done to patients' dignity, respect, privacy and confidentiality. Moreover, the unnoticed acts on part of senior doctors play a great role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of people working under them. Thus, in true conformity to the spirit of Islam, medical ethics and human morality, we all must pledge ourselves to maintain the highest code of privacy and respect not only for our patients but for anyone and everyone that we deal with. The moralistic example set by the doctors will then serve as paragons for the entire society to follow suit.*