346622 - What is the ruling on reading news of celebrity scandals?

the question

What is the ruling on reading news about the scandal of a particular individual, without the reader sharing it or spreading it? Does it come under the heading of seeking out faults if the reader looks for this matter for himself on social media websites to find out more details?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Part of the media corruption that the West has planned is that they have made it one of the jobs of the media to find out about the personal lives of famous people and spy on them, on the grounds that the masses have the right to know about the secrets of their lives, because they are famous.

Some groups of journalists in Muslim societies have imitated them in that corruption, then this evil spread to social media websites. But they did not stop at spying on them; rather the matter got worse, as some of them have fabricated stories and photographs for any person they hate and take as an enemy.

The Muslim should err on the side of caution for the sake of his faith, and avoid looking at such websites, because:

Either they will speak of someone whom it is not permissible to backbite, so looking at whatever is published of scandals about him will be a kind of approving of that backbiting, which is not permissible.

It was narrated from ‘Adiyy ibn ‘Adiyy, from al-‘Urs ibn ‘Ameerah al-Kindi, that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “If sin is committed on earth, the one who sees it and hates it – or denounces it – is like one who did not see it, and the one who does not see it but

approves of it is like one who sees it.” Narrated by Abu Dawood (4345); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in *Saheeh Abi Dawood*.

What is required of the Muslim is to denounce evil, even if that is only in his heart, but following news of scandals and seeking out their details is contrary to denouncing evil in one’s heart; rather the Muslims should shun these reports that invade people’s privacy.

Or they will speak of someone whom it is permissible to backbite because he commits sin openly and boasts about it. In this case too, the Muslim should avoid reading about these scandals, because of the evils that that involves.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a major principle of sharia, as we explained in our discussion on the principle of barring the means (that lead to evil), and we explained that every deed that leads to a great deal of haraam will be the cause of much evil and corruption. So if there is no obvious shar‘i interest to be served by that action, and its evil consequences will outweigh any interest served, it is forbidden. In fact, every cause that leads to mischief is forbidden if there is no clear benefit that outweighs the negative consequences. So what about that which very often needs to mischief? "A*l-Fataawa al-Kubra* (4/465)".

Scandalous topics lead to obvious mischief:

1.. It leads to people becoming desensitised and regarding mischief and corruption as nothing serious, and spreading news of these things and broadcasting them among the people, to the point that they gradually become accustomed to such things happening, and they no longer feel resentment towards them or feel that they are abhorrent. That is if they do not find these things entertaining and feel inclined to follow these scandals and seek them out.

2.. It mixes truth with falsehood.

It was narrated that Abu Qilaabah said: Abu Mas‘ood said to Abu ‘Abdillah – or Abu ‘Abdillah said to Abu Mas‘ood: What did you hear the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon

him) say about saying, they said? He said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “What a bad habit, for a man to say, they said.” Narrated by Abu Dawood (4972). He said: This Abu ‘Abdillah is Hudhayfah. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah* (2/522).

It was narrated that al-Mugheerah ibn Shu‘bah said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah has forbidden to you defiant disobedience of mothers, burying daughters alive and withholding the dues of others whilst taking that which is not your right; and He dislikes for you gossip, asking too many questions and wasting money.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2408) and Muslims (593).

3.. There are some about whom it may be permissible to backbite, and that may be prescribed if it is done for a good purpose.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars said: It is permissible to backbite when it is for a purpose that is legitimate according to Islamic teachings, when it is the only way to achieve that purpose. "*Fath al-Baari* (10/472)".

But if there is no sound purpose to be served by it, then it is not prescribed, as in the case of those who like to propagate scandals, because in that case it causes mischief and serves no purpose.

As-San‘aani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Most of the scholars say that it is permissible to say to an evildoer: O evildoer, O mischief-maker, and it is permissible to refer to him in such terms in his absence, on condition that it is said for the purpose of sincerely advising him or alerting others to his situation, or to deter others from doing the same as he does, not for the purpose of gossiping. So it is essential that the intention be sound. "*Subul as-Salaam* (8/294)".

And Allah knows best.