

Hasad, the Envy: Some Psychological, Spiritual and Social Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

When moral conduct among the individuals gets deteriorated, its bad effects are not confined to them only but extend to others as well. The entire community and the whole society face the consequences of its adverse effects resulting in the degradation of social well-being, solidarity, and tranquility. Moreover, there are some moral vices which give rise to numerous other evils as they are contagious in their nature, i.e., evil has a natural tendency to give rise to other evils. For example, tale-bearing gives rise to backbiting, slander; miserliness to selfishness, hard-heartedness, unkindness; arrogance to belligerence, despising others, accusing others of imperfections, denial of truth, no appreciation for the good qualities of others, and so on. In the same way, envy gives rise to hatred, enmity, hostility, slander, backbiting, theft, murder, resentment, miserliness, etc. In this background, the present paper attempts at explaining the nature, essence, and kinds of envy. The harms and evils of this moral vice will also be explored. The ways and methods of curing this moral disease are also taken care of in this paper. A list of habits that should be cultivated and given currency is given at the end of the paper in order to eradicate envy from selves (*nufūs*) so as to make individual as well as social life happy, prosperous, and peaceful. The tips and methods used to eradicate moral vices like rancor, hatred, enmity, and evil intentions from the individual and collective human life, will be deliberated upon along with the ways and means to cultivate moral virtues like love, compassion, sympathy, and sincerity to create an atmosphere of peace and cordiality.

Keywords

Envy, Generosity, Self-sacrifice, Mercy, Sympathy, Peace, Tranquility, Peaceful Life, Prosperous Life

Envy (Ḥasad)

1.1 Meaning and Grades of Envy

When God bestows gifts upon a person, such as knowledge and excellence, the abundance of wealth, or vouchsafes to him the honor and dignity among the mankind or bestows on him any kind of worldly or religious blessing; these things may impress the heart of the others and they might wish to possess the same without intending any harm to the former, this is called *ghibtah* [1] (harmless envy) or *munāfasah* / *musābaqah* (emulation). This type of envy is not detestable nor is it considered a moral vice, rather it is commendable in some particular matters, since it is an effort towards further progress and advancement without harming anyone. The Qur'ān says: "...to this end (i.e., for eternal happiness) let the aspirers aspire." (Al-Qur'ān 83:26, Daryābādī, A.M.). At another place God says: "Strive with one another in hastening towards forgiveness from your Lord and towards a Garden of which the width is as the width of the heavens and the earth (so unimaginable is its vastness!)" (Al-Qur'ān 57:21).

It means that in many cases to aspire of the excellences and favors which others possess is

permissible with the condition that there is not the slightest intention to harm the possessor or wish his / her failure. Some philosophers call it as 'White Envy', 'Decent Envy', or 'Noble Emulation' and it is considered as a healthy quality which leads to the improvement of one's qualities. In it, one strives harder to achieve more than he / she possess at the present. (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

Indicating the permissibility and/or desirability of *ghibtah* (emulation), Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "Ḥasad (in the meaning of *ghibtah*) is permissible only in two cases: (i) towards a person whom God has granted wisdom, and who rules by it and teaches it to the people, and (ii) towards a person whom God has granted wealth and property and he spends it righteously in the cause of the truth." (Al-Bukhārī: 73).

Almost same message is given in the Old Testament: "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but in the fear of the LORD continue all day long. For surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off." (Proverbs 23:17-18, New King James Version).

But if it is unpleasant to you that a desirable object or quality is possessed by other person and

you wish that the possessor should lose it, it is called *ḥasad* (envy). It is named as malicious / invidious / destructive / black envy as well. Envy is regarded as the worst kind of moral evil, and a major sin in the religious as well as ethical systems. [2] This is the established definition of *ḥasad* (envy). [3] *Ḥasad* can exist among the individuals, communities and even nations and countries; the reasons of which will be discussed below. History bears witness that there were people who even envied the spiritual and temporal gifts that were bestowed upon the Prophets of God. They wished that these gifts should be taken away from them (i.e., from the Prophets). They developed such a grave enmity – on account of their envious nature – against the Prophets that they not only rejected their call of truth but didn't even desist from killing them. [4] The Qur'an says:

Have they a share in the Kingdom? If so, they will not give mankind (i.e., their fellow-men) a speck (so niggardly are they of spirit!). [5] Or do they envy the people on account of what God has granted them out of his grace? (Al-Qur'an 4:53-54).

Three Types of *Ḥasad* (Envy)

Generally, there are three types of envy which are discussed briefly in the following lines:

1.1.1 Envy of Collateral Damage

The first type of envy is that in which the envious person wishes and/ or intends that the wealth and the gifts possessed by other people should be taken away from them. In this case, the envious person does not necessarily wish that these things should come to him, but it only displeases him to see others enjoying the goodness and blessings of God. He wishes that the possessors should lose everything. Its sole aim is to lower the envied person to the lowest possible position. This is the worst type of envy and consequently unlawful in the religions. The hypocrites, ungodly and licentious people are mainly afflicted with this kind of envy. They wish that those who are pious and upright should lose their piety and uprightness so that all should become alike in ungodliness. This is what the Greek word "epichairekakia: (taking pleasure in others' misfortune)", and the German word

"schadenfreude (a feeling of joy that comes from seeing or hearing about another person's troubles or failures)" stand for. (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

1.1.2 The Wish to Possess

The second type of envy is that in which the envious person wishes to possess the things which the other people (i.e., envied ones) possess. In this case, his main aim is to possess the gifts which others enjoy, but sometimes the possession does not become possible unless the gifts are taken away from the envied person, so in such situation he wishes the decline and extermination of the gifts which the other people are in possession of. Keeping all these things in view, it can be said that this type of envy may sometimes be lawful but can never be commendable. In Islam, however, hoping for an equivalent gift that others are receiving without acknowledging the needs and merits of the recipients, as well as God's wisdom in the apparently unequal distribution of these bounties, is also detestable, as God says: "And do not covet (O men and Women!) that wherewith God has excelled one of you above another." (Al- Qur'an 4:32).

In the explanatory note to this verse of the Qur'an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali writes:

Men and women have gifts from God – some greater than others. They seem unequal but we are assured that God has allotted them by a scheme by which people receive what they earn. If this does not appear clear in our sight, let us remember that we have no full knowledge but God has. We must not be jealous if other people have more than we have –in wealth or position or strength or honor or talent or happiness. Probably things are equalized in the aggregate or in the long run, or equated to needs and merits on a scale which we cannot appraise. If we want more, instead of being jealous or covetous, we should pray to God and place before Him our needs. Though He knows all, and has no need of our prayer, our prayer may reveal to ourselves our shortcomings and enable us to deserve more of God's bounty or make ourselves fit for it. ('Alī, 1989, p. 194).

However, as God teaches mankind to ask Him for His grace and favors, one may wish for other gifts (similar or equivalent, appropriate and suitable for

his / her condition while submitting to the decree of God). The Qur'ān says: "And ask God for some of His grace; verily God is knower of everything." (Al-Qur'ān 4:32).

1.1.3 The Permissible Envy

The third type of envy is that in which the envious person wishes to possess the things which are possessed by others but does not wish that the possessor should be deprived of them. This type of envy is not contemptible at all, rather, it is commendable in many cases as discussed above. This type of *Hasad* is named as *ghibṭah* (harmless envy) or *munāfasah / musābaqah* (emulation).

1.2 Causes of *Hasad* (Envy)

There are seven main causes of why envy arises in the hearts of some when they see others in good condition and good fortune, enjoying the gifts of God. Each of these seven causes is discussed in the following lines.

1.2.1 Hatred and Enmity

It is almost impossible that the prosperity and disaster of any of a person's adversary be the same in one's eyes. Therefore, one wishes that his/ her enemy should always be caught by the calamities. Thus, when the enemy suffers from afflictions and distresses, he/ she becomes happy and when any good reaches the enemy, it is unpleasant to the other. This is the *hasad* (envy) which arises out of hatred and enmity. This type of envy is mostly found in the hypocrites and ill-natured people. God says: "If there happens to you any good, it grieves them (so spiteful are they!), and if there befalls to you an ill, they rejoice at it (so malicious are they!)." (Al-Qur'ān 3:120).

For this type of envy, it is not necessary that the envious and the envied should be equal in rank rather an ordinary person can be malicious of a great personality or vice versa.

1.2.2 Pride and Arrogance

The second cause of envy is the sense of false self-pride. When a person attains some good qualities and a place of honor, other aspirants feel envious of him. They dislike his high rank (and position). God says about the attitude of the

people of Makkah at the time when the Qur'ān started descending upon Prophet Muḥammad: "And they say (in their pride and arrogance): why has not this Qur'ān been revealed to a man of moment in the two cities (i.e., Makkah and Ṭā'if)." (Al-Qur'ān 43:31).

1.2.3 Greed of Leadership and Authority

A man may desire to make someone obedient and subservient to him, but the latter, by the grace of God, rises to a high position (and post) and becomes independent of the former. When the former sees the latter gain a high position and independence, he feels envious of him.

1.2.4 Surprise

The fourth cause of envy is that some people consider others as ordinary and lowly; however, when the latter acquire some exceptional rank or position, the former feel astonished, and on the basis of their astonishment they deny recognizing the formers' power and influence, and become envious of them. The disbelievers denied the Prophethood of the prophets on the basis of this type of envy and used to say as is quoted in the Qur'ān: "And naught has prevented men from believing when the guidance came to them except that they said: has God sent forth a human being as messenger?" (Al-Qur'ān 17:94).

1.2.5 Fear of the Failure in Achieving an Object

The fifth cause of the envy is that where two persons work for the same goal and both of them feel envious of the each other. If one of them succeeds in his target, the other is likely to be envious. This aspect induces envy among many wives of the same husband and many sons of the same father, since both groups have the same aim in mind: to gain the pleasure of the husband in the first case and the father in the second. The brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) plotted to kill him on the basis of this type of envy. The Qur'ān states:

Recall when they said: Surely Yūsuf and his brother (Benjamin, the brother of Joseph on both sides) are dearer to our father than we, whereas we are a band (of robust and powerful men, and so

considering our strength and number we are entitled to a greater regard). (Al-Qur'ān 12:8).

The Qur'ān also explains Satan's treacherous act of beguiling Adam and his wife when they were in Paradise. [6]

1.2.6 Malignity of Self / Nature

The sixth cause of envy is the malignity of the self, and the evil-mindedness. Some people are naturally cruel and evil-minded, and they cannot stand seeing others in happiness and affluence, enjoying God's gifts. The welfare of others grieves them much and they cannot bear to see others enjoying power, recognition and honor. They feel pleasure only when others are caught by calamities and distresses. Such malignant and evil-minded people are malicious and envious of all those who possess some good qualities.

Some scholars have expressed this type of envy in these words: "When your Gain is my Pain and your Pain is my Gain" (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

1.2.7 Fear of Losing Fame and Power

The seventh cause of envy is the desire for fame and power, which happens when certain people who are always greedy and desirous of high place and rank see others pursuing the same aim and fear that they will fall behind and be defeated. It is for this reason that they are envious of the latter.

1.3 Evils and Harms of Envy

Religion as well as human reason show strong condemnation towards malicious envy that is why we see the Prophets of God condemning it most strongly, and teaching their followers to keep the selves (*nufūs*) free from it.

Prophet Muhammad has condemned envy in his sayings in the strongest terms, and guided his followers to develop the qualities of generosity, well-wishing and love for other fellow beings. He is reported to have said: "Avoid envy, for envy devours good deeds just as fire devours wood" (Ibn Al-Ash'ath: 4903).

While exhorting the people to save themselves from the menace (or practice) of envy, Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "Beware of

suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales; and do not look for the others' faults and do not spy, and do not be jealous (envious) of one another, and do not desert (cut your relation with) one another, and do not hate one another. O God's worshipers (O God's slaves)! Be brothers (as God has commanded you)!" (Al-Bukhārī: 6066).

It means that in matters of mercy and kindness, sympathy and softness, love and affection, help and solicitude, people should be as close to each other as real brothers are. It is obvious that such kind of brotherhood is possible only when the community is free from all moral evils. And *ḥasad* is one of the worst and most dangerous evil since there is hardly anyone free from this moral evil. There is a tradition (*ḥadith*) in which the Prophet said: "No one can be free of taking evil omens, suspicions and envy." He was asked: "What is the way out?" The Prophet said: "If an evil omen occurs to your thought, you should still continue to do what you wanted to; when you become suspicious of someone, don't deem it true; when you feel envious of some, don't be aroused to oppression and transgression."

The Prophet said: "The disease of the peoples before you, namely envy and hatred, has crept to you, and it is the unhappy thing. I do not say that it shaves off the hair, but it shaves off the religion" (Al-Mundhirī: 4257).

It is recorded that Prophet Muhammad was once asked: "O Messenger of God! Who is the best among men? He said: 'Everyone who is pure of heart and sincere of speech.' They said: 'Sincere of speech, we know what is the meaning of it, but what is pure of heart?' He said: 'It is (the heart) that is pious and pure, with no sin, injustice, rancor or envy in it.'" (Ibn Mājah: 4216).

Some Muslim ascetics (*Sufis*) are reported to have said: "The envious person gains nothing but humiliation and condemnation from the gatherings; receives nothing but curse and rancor from the Angels; receives nothing but anger and enmity from the mankind; at the time of death he suffers from severe agony; and finally on the Judgment Day, he will receive nothing but disgrace and punishment."

Al-Ghazzali (2001), describing the harms of envy, says: “Beware that the (malicious) envy is one of the most dangerous diseases of the heart.” (Al-Ghazzali, Vol. 3, p. 309).

Carlson Ruiz Zafon (Spanish novelist) says: “Envy is the religion of the mediocre. It comforts them, it soothes their worries and finally it rots their souls, allowing them to justify their meanness and their greed until they believe these to be virtues” (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

The words of Balgrave on the psychological aspects of envy preached in his sermon before the Queen of England are related by Khan & Ghani (2018) in their research paper as: “Envy is its own punishment, a punishment so great, that when a man becomes extremely envious, it even pines him away, it wastes his flesh, consumes his bones, eats his very heart so that no man can find a greater torment for a very envious man, than (that which) he inflicts upon himself.” The evil consequences of envy are self-evident. The envier begins to resent others for having good fortune and blessings, and wishes for their destruction to alleviate his own sense of deprivation. On the one hand, he demonstrates his wretched self, which has lost all sense of appreciation for goodness, and on the other hand, all of his efforts, practical or otherwise, prove to be futile. According to Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918- 2013 CE), renowned politician, “resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies”. This is how the envy of the envier, although unintentional, ultimately turns against his/ her own self (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

In psychological terms, it can be said that malicious envy is one of the major illnesses of human health that destroys a person’s (envier’s) mental peace and happiness. Envy that is malicious is arguably detrimental to the person who is envied. It may cause him mental anguish, physical harm (temporary or permanent), or even sometimes may cause his/ her death. The relevant stories described in the Qur’ān testify to its detrimental consequences. Due to Satan’s deceit, both Adam and his wife were expelled from Paradise. Habil (Abel) was assassinated by his envious brother Qabil (Cain). When Yusuf (Joseph) fell prey to his brothers’ evil eyes, he had

to suffer physical and mental miseries for a long time.

The hideousness of envy can also be estimated from the following sayings of some prominent psychologists, sociologists, thinkers and writers. A Dutch psychologist says: “When studying (malicious) envy, one has to realize that it is such a widely condemned emotion that we often hide the experience not only from others but also even from ourselves.” Francois Rochefoucauld, French author, speaks of the same idea in his words as: “We can often be vain of our passions, even the guiltiest ones; but (malicious) envy is so sneaking and shameful that we never dare confess it”. Helmut Schöck Austrian-German sociologist, has expressed the same philosophy as: “The envious man will confess to almost every other sin or emotional impulse before he will confess to his own (malicious) envy” (Khan & Ghani, 2018). It means that the evil of envy is heavier than that of other faults that is why the person can disclose his other faults but cannot dare to disclose of his feelings of maliciousness.

Harun Yahya explains another aspect of its evil. He states that ‘envy’ also hinders envious people from loving others as they are incapable to recognize or appreciate other people’s good qualities, even if they were to recognize them, they expressly avoid mentioning them. The presence of someone else with better qualities than they possess, makes them feel uneasy. Consumed with envy, they are malicious and hostile, and not loveable and affectionate at all. (Yahya, 2002, p. 33).

From the above discussion it is clear that in the Islamic moral teachings ‘envy’ is regarded as the most dangerous and most detestable evil. It is the reason that God Himself taught His Messenger, Muḥammad and through him the whole humanity, to seek refuge with Him from the mischief and harms of enviers (jealous people). God says: “Say thou (O Prophet!): I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak and from the mischief of the envier when he envies.”[7] (Al-Qur’ān 113:1 & 5).

1.4 Methods for Preventing and Treating Envy

Envy is a serious and deadly spiritual disease. It is compulsory to cure it. Broadly, it has two types of remedies; one is related to the reason – theoretical remedy, and the other is related to the practice –

practical remedy. Both types of remedies are discussed in eight points in the following lines. They can prove immensely helpful in curing this destructive moral disease.

(i) One should try to realize that *ḥasad* (envy) is injurious to him, both in this world and in the Hereafter. The spiritual injury caused to the envier is that he is displeased with the decree of God, and is displeased to see others receiving the gifts of God. This is a great sin and a cause of severe torment in the Hereafter. The worldly injury is that the envier knows no rest; he always remains in a state of distress because God continues to bestow His gifts upon whom He wishes. The envy of the envier will not stop God bestowing His gifts upon His slaves (bondsmen). On the other hand, the envied gets no harm, instead he is benefited doubly. The benefits of envied person in this world and in the next are obvious. In a sense, the envied person is oppressed by the envier, and if the envier crosses the limits, he starts backbiting, mocking, despising, and feeling ill of the envied. In this way, the envied person will be given, in compensation of the oppression done to him by the envier, the virtues of the envier on the Day of Judgment. The worldly benefits of the envied are that his adversary, the envier, is always sorrowful and restless while the other is enjoying the gifts of God.

(ii) One should think that his envious approach towards his brothers delights his eternal enemy, the Satan (*Shayṭān*). It is because, when God bestows His bounties on one of his slaves and restricts them on the other, Satan fears that if the deprived one begins to love the gifted one, they will both be given equal reward (*thawāb*) as is mentioned in a tradition of Prophet Muhammad: “a person will be with the one whom he loves” (Al-Tirmidhī: 2386). Therefore, the Satan – who is always in pursuit of letting people away from any reward (*thawāb*) of God – induces a sense of envy, instead of love and affection, in the hearts of the deprived ones against the gifted ones.

(iii) One should think that whatever happens in this world happens only by the will of God, as it is stated in the Qur’ān: “He regulates all affairs.” (Al-Qur’ān 13:2). At another place, the Qur’ān says: “Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge.”

(Al-Qur’ān 6:59). It is God who creates and directs all events; how they will begin and how they will end. Thus, if one enjoys the gifts and the other is deprived of them, it is all by the will of God. The envier should understand that no one has any power to snatch something from the blessed one (i.e., envied), or prevent it from reaching. The believers should be aware of this great reality. They should not act ignorantly as those who disbelieve in these realities. They should have confidence that “what is destined (for them) will reach them, even if it is underneath the mountains,” and that “what is not destined (for them) will not reach them, even if it is between the two lips.” They should always remain subservient to the will of God and seek His pleasure in all the circumstances; affluence as well as poverty and afflictions. Having understood that the life is just “following destiny”, they never become disappointed or feel envious of anyone. This realization is the most effectual elixir (the best medicine) which repels away the envy from the *self*.

(iv) The envier must know that malicious envy, as a sly and shameful emotion, is its own punishment, undermining the envier’s ability to appreciate goodness and having severe psychological, spiritual, and social implications. He should be assured of the truth of “Be happy for other people’s (envied) success and at the right time God will bring your dream to pass”. This message contained in the Qur’ānic verse: “Such (vicissitudes of success and defeat) are the haps (days) that We change about among mankind” (Al-Qur’ān 3:140) is a source of enlightenment to all.

(v) The envier should be cautioned not to gloat over the misfortune of others (i.e., envied) because it has been condemned in a tradition of Prophet Muhammad “Do not rejoice over the misfortune of your brother (envied), lest Almighty God has mercy upon him and subject you to trials” (Al-Tirmidhī: 2506).

(vi) What you have to do practically to save yourself from the menace of envy is that you should act contrary to the demands of envy. For example, if envy urges you to mention the defects and faults of the envied person, then the remedy to

counter it is to start praising him; and if it demands you to treat him arrogantly and harshly, then try to treat him with humility. If envy urges you to cut (sever) relations with him, then you should start visiting him more than before to make your relations strong. Try to show reverence to him whenever he happens to meet you, and so on. If envy urges you to deprive him of something, then try to give him more gifts. When you act upon these guidelines – though unwillingly in the beginning – and the envied learns about your conduct, he will definitely be pleased with you, and a sense of affection will develop in him. In this way, the envy will disappear from you, and hearts will incline towards mutual love, compassion, kindness and sympathy (Thānavī, p. 209).

(vii) Another important thing that one should do to save oneself from the ill effects of envy and evil eye is that he / she should not unnecessarily publicize the blessings and divine gifts to all and sundry. The good fortune of the possessor of blessings and properties provokes harmful feelings in the minds of the enviers. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “Resort to secrecy for the fulfillment and success of your needs for, verily, everyone who has a blessing is envied.” (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

(viii) *Hasad* (envy) is a hidden emotion, in the sense that the envious person conceals it from others. It can neither be detected by any tool nor is the envier bold enough to expose his malicious intentions – neither to others nor to his target (i.e., the envied). Moreover, the envier doesn’t come to the envied with any provocation. There isn’t any apparatus invented yet which could be used to check who is harboring envy against whom. It is apparent that the envied is utterly helpless. It is for this reason that God teaches His bondmen the best way to save themselves, in such situations, from the harmful effects of envy and destructive motives of the envier. It is to take recourse to seeking God’s refuge from the evils (*sharr*) of darkness, sorcery, and envy (*hasad*). God says:

Say thou: I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak, from the evil of what He has created (that He may deliver me from its mischief), and from the mischief of the darkening when it comes

(with its dreary fear inspiring hours), and from the mischief of the women blowers upon the knots [8], and from the mischief of the envier when he envies. (Al-Qur’ān 113:1-5).

This chapter of the Qur’ān also gives us important message that the envied is incapable of coping with the envier and is in desperate need of authoritative control, which could only be the Most Exalted, Supreme Dictator of the universe, whose limitless authority no one can resist. The last part “when he envies” also implies that: “envy may not cause harm to the object (i.e., envied one) until the envier takes a practical step with word or deed to satisfy his heart.”

These are some important remedies and methods that can help one to root out envy from the self (*nafs*). One who adopts these methods of treatment will definitely attain satisfaction of heart and mind with the result of which each member in the society will be able to live a peaceful and satisfied life.

2. Ethical Position of Envy as Described in Hindu and Christian Scriptures

According to the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, malicious envy is included in the six major ways in which the Mind (control key of spiritual advancement) blocks spiritual progress. The remaining five are: Lust, Anger, Greed, Illusion and Madness. The most credible example, in the Hindu literature, is of Lord Ram (also known as Ramchandra), a major deity in Hinduism. He fell victim to malicious envy of his stepmother and had to be exiled for 14 years. This happened on January 5, 5089 BCE, according to planetary configuration (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

The book of Proverbs, which contains illustrations of conventional Biblical wisdom, has an uplifting effect on the readers’ intellect: “Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?” (Proverbs 27:4). “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.” (Proverbs 14:30).

In Ecclesiastes we find: “Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind. The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.” (Ecclesiastes 4:4-5).

“But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there.” (James 3:14-16).

Robert South DD (1634-1716 CE), an English Churchman, has described envy as “a depraved affection or passion of the mind disposing a man to hate or malign another for some good or excellence belonging to him for which the envious person judges him unworthy, and which for the most part he wants for himself” (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

Dr. John Townsend, American psychologist, while discussing the Green Eyed Giant of Envy reminds us of the wisdom of the Holy Bible: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). He continues by adding that when we envy, the reverse becomes true. We rejoice when others weep and weep when others have cause to rejoice (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

3. Conclusion

It is clear from the above discussion that envy is the most abominable moral vice, the evil effects of which destroy the charm of individual as well as social life. Malicious envy makes individual and social life miserable. Those who are afflicted with malicious envy cannot work satisfactorily and successfully in their lives until they change their conduct and mend their ways. On the other hand, those who have *ghibtah* are found to set higher goals and achieve higher levels in their career. It is for this reason that not only human reason considers envy to be a vice and a dangerous moral and spiritual disease, but religious teachings also condemn it strongly. The evidences for the hideousness of envy in Islamic, Hindu, and Christian scripts, as well as the sayings of saints, thinkers, and writers, are frequently cited in this paper. Moreover, it is also evident that envy is not any incurable disease. There are remedies which, when applied properly, will definitely remove it from the selves (*nufūs*), and when individuals are saved from it, the societies will naturally get rid of its harms and destructions. It is also proved that when moral vices such as envy are eradicated from human selves, many other evils will follow suit, because their existence is dependent on the existence of envy, as discussed at the outset of the paper.

Acknowledgement

I am immensely obliged to my teacher Prof. Abdul Rashid Bhat who assigned a suitable title to this paper. I am also thankful to my student Sayyid Aquib (presently PhD Scholar) for his proofreading the manuscript.

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magical formulae in order to injure their victims (Daryābādī, Vol. 4, p. 552).

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Notes

[1] “*Ghibṭah* is an Arabic word (also in Persian with similar meanings) used to express rejoicing, delight, lure, a state of happiness and of enjoyment or well-being, to be in an enviable position, to wish one’s own grace, to be the grace of others so as not to detract from the owner. It has also been translated as beatitude (supreme blessedness) which it actually is.” “*Ghibṭah* is ‘to desire for oneself the same blessing as the other has, without any idea of the latter’s losing it. This is not only permissible but also desirable’” (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

[2] Blagrave (1652- 1698 CE) has made a differentiation between “Wicked Envy” and “Noble Emulation” as “the former ought to be rooted out and the latter cherished and cultivated as much as is possible” (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

[3] Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC), the Greek philosopher, sees ‘envy’ as ‘a pain at the good fortune of others’ (Khan & Ghani, 2018).

[4] See, for example: *Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah*: Chapter 2; verse 61 & 91.

[5] Close-fistedness and envy are among the worst forms of selfishness, and appear especially incongruous in people of power, authority, or influence, from whom is expected generosity in giving and generosity in seeing other people’s prosperity or happiness (Alī, p. 202).

[6] For instance see: *Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Araaf*: Chapter 7, verse 20, & Chapter 20, verse 120.

[7] Malignant envy, translated into action, seeks to destroy the happiness or the material or spiritual good enjoyed by other people. The best guard against it is trust in God with purity of heart. (Alī, p. 1716).

[8] i.e., enchantresses who used to tie knots in a cord and to blow on them, muttering over them