



## **The Misery of Envy (Hassad) Its Origin, Causes and Treatment**

### **Introduction: The Growth of Envy under the Western Civilization**

It has been observed that wherever the Western civilization has influence, in the Western world or the Muslim World, there is the development of a set of institutions, including social media and large-scale advertising, that create an atmosphere of materialism, in which people feel envious and inadequate, triggering anxiety, sadness and anger. Teachers, doctors and parents alike feel helpless against the rising tide of envy that is afflicting young men and women, as they are miserable over rivalry regarding beauty, status, position, educational achievements and material possessions.

As early on in the dominance of the Western civilization as 1930, in the "The Conquest of Happiness," the Western philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell cautioned, "Of all the characteristics of ordinary human nature envy is the most unfortunate... Whoever wishes to increase human happiness must wish to increase admiration and to diminish envy." Since 1930 thousands of Western psychological studies have shown a surge in envy, particularly amongst the young. However, Western civilization is helpless because it itself is the cause of rising envy, through its commitment to utilitarianism, as a basis for human happiness.

### **Western Utilitarianism is the Origin of Envy, Not Happiness**

After separating religion from life through its miserable experience with the Church, the West characterized life as benefit and making utilitarianism the criterion for actions. In his book "Utilitarianism," the Western philosopher John Stuart Mill said, "Virtue, according to the utilitarian conception, is a good of this description. There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain." However, utilitarianism itself brought new miseries to the Western world, as well as wherever the influence of utilitarianism is strong.

Utilitarianism is the Western conception of life that defines the meaning of happiness as being related to material benefit, hedonism and materialism. Utilitarianism is the origin of increased envy through rivalry in worldly gains, whether in regards to wealth, knowledge, beauty or status. Adopting utilitarianism gave rise to strong feelings of envy, failure, inadequacy, resentment, guilt, despair and self-blame. As Western utilitarianism is itself the cause of envy, its treatment is not to be found within Western civilization. The treatment is not to be found in any branch of Western thinking, such as the foundational models of morals and human behavior within the disciplines of Western psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry, because the root is utilitarianism. As the Western mental health care is unable to treat envy effectively, it is then compelled to an excessive dependency on medication to suppress the raging emotions that accompany envy, whether anti-depressants or anxiolytic (anti-anxiety) medication.

However, for the Muslim parent, teacher or doctor, there is no need to seek guidance from the misguided, as the Deen of Islam is a treasure for those who learn from it. The guidance of the Noble Quran and Prophetic Sunnah has identified the various causes of envy, as well as its comprehensive treatment. The Divine Revelation gave rise to centuries of rich scholarship on the subject of envy, within the books of Tasfeer of the Noble Quran, SharH (Explanation) of the aHadeeth and Fiqh related to diseases of the heart (amraad ul-Qalb). It is the rich Islamic civilization that accurately enlightens humankind regarding the causes of envy, its harm to the envier, its sin and what positive feeling it must be replaced with.

### **The Causes of Envy (Hassad)**

Envy (Hassad) means to hope that another person loses the blessing he has been granted. The Islamic civilization further specifies causes of Hassad, including pride, astonishment, rivalry, malice, superiority and enmity.

As for envy through pride (takkabur), the envious man takes pride over the envied man, holding him in contempt for his rise. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نَزَلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ﴾ **“Why has not this Quran sent down to some leading man in either of the two cities? (31) Do they divide the mercy of their Lord?”** [TMQ Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:31-32]. It is arrogance that leads to dispute what Allah (swt) has predetermined (qadara) or has imposed as fate (qadaa'). It is the first sin of the heavens, the envy of Iblis, the Shaytan, of Adam (as), when Allah (swt) ordered him to prostrate.

As for envy through astonishment (at'ta'ajab), it is the envy of the one who whispers, 'why him and not me'? Allah (swt) speaks of the astonishment of the kuffar upon seeing Prophets (as) from amongst the men, ﴿أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾ **“Do you find it astonishing that a reminder should come to you from your Lord through one of your own, warning you, so you may beware and perhaps be shown mercy?”** [TMQ Surah Al-A'raaf 7:63]. Envy through astonishment is the case of those who disbelieved in the Prophets (saw). They envied the Prophets (as) regarding their message, revelation and closeness to Allah (swt), whilst being astonished that they are humans like them. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنَ قَوْمِهِ﴾ **“But the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, denied the meeting (with Allah) in the Hereafter, and were spoiled by the worldly luxuries We had provided for them, said to the masses, “This is only a human like you. He eats what you eat, and drinks what you drink.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Mu'minoon 23:32].

As for the envy through rivalry (tazaaHum), it is when there are two or more parties competing over one purpose. It is the envy to help in singling out his purpose, by envying the competition. It is the first sin of the earth, when Qabeel (Cain) envied Habeel. It is the envy of two men competing for the same woman in matrimony. It is the jostling between two wives joined in marriage to one man. It is the sibling rivalry between two brothers, jostling for status in the hearts of the parents, leading to envy. It is the envy of the two students for one teacher to gain respect. It is the envy between two doctors in gaining patients to their respective practices. It is even the envy of two alims competing for a following amongst the people, rather than the pleasure of Allah (swt) Alone.

Then, there is the envy of malice (shamaatah) as well. One becomes glad to see the loss of fortune of another and wishes that all blessings and gifts should be bestowed on him alone. It is as if the blessings and gifts were given to others from their own personal treasury, even though Allah (swt) Alone is the One who grants and there is no limit to His granting. Allah (swt) said, ﴿إِن﴾ **“When you are touched with good, they grieve; but when you are afflicted with evil, they rejoice”** [TMQ Surah Aali Imran 3: 120]. The Prophet (saw) said, «لَا تُظْهِرِ السَّمَاتَةَ لَأَخِيكَ فَيَرْحَمَهُ اللَّهُ وَيَبْتَئِكَ» **“Don't express joy at the sorrows (shamaatah) of your brothers, perchance Allah may relieve him and put you in that calamity.”** [Tirmidhi]. The Germans, after their strong contact exposure to the Ottoman Caliphate, spoke of Schadenfreude, which they defined as the experience of pleasure, joy, or self-satisfaction that comes from learning of or witnessing the troubles, failures, or humiliation of another.

As for superiority (ath'azaz), the envious man greatly dislikes the welfare and good of another, causing him mental anguish. He cannot bear when the person that is envied is bestowed any wealth, power, recognition and honor. So it arises from the instinct of survival, manifesting in the desire for dominance, precedence and superiority. Imam Ghazali said, التّعزّز وهو أن يتقل عليه أن يترفع عليه غيره فإذا أصاب بعض أمثاله ولاية أو علما أو مالا خاف أن يتكبر عليه وهو لا يطيق تكبره ولا تسمح نفسه باحتمال صلفه وتفاخره عليه وليس من غرضه أن يتكبر بل غرضه أن يدفع كبره فإنه قد رضي بمساواته مثلا ولكن لا يرضي بالترفع عليه **“Being superior which is that it weighs him down that someone else will rise above him. If someone like him befalls him with authority, knowledge, or wealth, he is afraid that he will be arrogant over him. He cannot bear another's arrogance. He does not allow himself to bear his arrogance and his bragging about himself. His goal is not to be arrogant. Instead his goal is to repel his arrogance, for he is satisfied with him being equal, for example. However, he is not satisfied with him becoming higher.”**

As for enmity ('adaawah), it is the hatred of the one who wishes that the enemy does not have riches and gifts and they go away from him. It includes the envy arising from enmity of the

﴿وَإِذَا لَفُوقُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خُلُوا عَضُّوا عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَئْمِلَ مِنَ الْغِظَةِ قُلْ مَوْتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ﴾ believers. Allah (swt) said, **“And when they meet you, they say, “We believe.” But when they are alone, they bite their fingertips at you in rage. Say, “Die in your rage. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of that within the breasts.”**” [TMQ Surah Aali Imran 3:118]. Allah said, **﴿وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوكُمْ﴾** **“Many among the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief because of their envy, after the truth has been made clear to them.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah 2:109].

There are those who afflicted by one cause of envy alone, whilst there are others who are afflicted by all of them. May Allah (swt) secure us in goodness.

### The Beneficial Knowledge and Beneficial Action Regarding Envy

Envy is a disease of the heart that cannot be cured without knowledge of Islam and acting in the opposite way that envy incites.

Regarding beneficial knowledge, Imam Ghazali says, **والعلم النافع لمرض الحسد هو أن تعرف تحقيقاً أن** **“The beneficial knowledge for the illness of envy is that you know in reality envy is a harm for you in the worlds life and in the Deen and that it there is no harm upon the maHsud (envied) in the worldly life and the Deen, instead he benefits in both of them.”** Indeed, envy is understood as it is, it will be understood as an enemy and abandoned.

In our Deen, envy consumes the good actions, as if they were wood burnt up by fire. The Prophet said, **«إِيَّاكُمُ وَالْحَسَدَ فَإِنَّ الْحَسَدَ يَأْكُلُ الْحَسَنَاتِ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ النَّارُ الْأَشْجَبَ»** **“Beware of envy, for envy consumes virtues, as fire consumes wood.”** (Abu Dawood). Envy is a sin and those of Jannah are free of it, whilst those who are far from Jannah are filled with it. The accursed Shaytan refused to obey Allah (swt) with regards to Adam (as), envying his status through his arrogance.

Envy is injurious to the one who envies in worldly life, filling it with sorrow, anxiety, sadness and anger. This is whilst the envied person suffers no harm in this world and the Next. Imam Ghazali said, **فلا تزول النعمة عن المحسود بحسدك ولو لم تكن تؤمن بالبعث والحساب لكان مقتضى الفطنة إن كنت عاقلاً أن تحذر** **من الحسد لما فيه من ألم القلب ومساءته مع عدم النفع فكيف وأنت عالم بما في الحسد من العذاب الشديد في الآخرة فما أعجب من العاقل** **“The blessing does not go away from the envied by your envy. If you did not believe in the Resurrection and the Reckoning, then it would be mandatory for intelligence, if you were indeed of intellect, to beware of envy because of the pain in the heart and its harm with no benefit. Whilst you are aware of the severe torment of envy in the Hereafter, it is astonishing is that the reasoning person exposes himself to the Wrath of Allah the Almighty, without benefiting himself. Instead, it comes with harm that he bears and pain that he suffers, so that his Deen and his Dunya will perish in vain and without benefit.”**

Allah (swt) determines (qadara) properties and wealth to a person for a certain life-span (ajl) and his Rizq is determined by Allah (swt) Alone. In addition, Allah imposes certain matters and events as fate (qadaa’), that man has no control. It is futile to envy over such matters. Such envy is built on not accepting what Allah (swt) apportioned of wealth and abilities amongst the peoples. Allah (swt) said, **﴿أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ﴾** **“Or do they envy the people for Allah’s bounties?”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisaa 4:54] The Prophet (saw) said, **«كاد الفقر أن يكون كفراً وكاد»** **“Poverty was about to come near kufr and envy was about to overcome predetermination.”** (Bayhaqi, Shu’b ul Iman). It is indeed futile to dispute with Allah (swt) over His Decision.

The envier even benefits the envied in the Aakhira, gifting him his good deeds. Imam Ghazali said, **وأما أن المحسود ينتفع به في الدين والدنيا فواضح أما منفعة في الدين فهو أنه مظلوم من جهتك لا سيما إذا أخرجك الحسد إلى القول والفعل بالغيبة والقدح فيه وهتك ستره وذكر مساويه فهذه هدايا تهديها إليه أعني أنك بذلك تهدي إليه حسناتك حتى تلقاه يوم القيامة** **“And as for the envied person benefiting from him in Deen and in this world, it is clear. As for his benefit in religion, he is wronged from your side, especially if envy leads you to words and actions by backbiting, insulting him, exposing him and mentioning his faults. By all of this you will gift him your good deeds until you meet him on the Day of Resurrection deprived, deprived of grace as you were deprived of grace in this world.”**

As for beneficial action, the envier must force himself to behave correctly in order to rid himself of envy. Imam Ghazali said, وأما العمل النافع فيه فهو أن يحكم الحسد فكل ما يتقاضاه الحسد من قول وفعل فينبغي أن يكلف نفسه نقيضه فإن حمله الحسد على القدر في محسوده كلف لسانه المدح له والثناء عليه وإن حمله على التكبر عليه ألزم نفسه "As for the beneficial action regarding envy, it is to dominate over envy through both word and deed. The envier must charge himself with the opposite, for if envy drives him to slander the envied one, his tongue must compliment him and praise him. And if envy made him arrogant about the envied, he must commit himself to humility before him and apologize to him. And if envy pushed him to obstruct his favors, he must commit himself to increasing the favors upon him."

### The Islamic Ruling Regarding Envy

Envy means to hope that another person loses the blessing he has been granted. Allah (swt) said, ﴿أَمْ يَحْسَدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ﴾ **"Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His Bounty?"** [TMQ Surah An-Nisaa 4:54].

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, ﴿لَا تَقَاطَعُوا وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا وَلَا تَبَاغَضُوا وَلَا تَحَاسَدُوا وَكُونُوا إِخْوَانًا كَمَا أَمَرَكُمْ﴾ **"Don't sever relations of kinship, don't bear enmity against one another, don't bear aversion against one another and don't feel envy against the other and live as fellow-brothers as Allah has commanded you."** [Muslim]. The Prophet (saw) said, ﴿سِتَّةٌ يَدْخُلُونَ النَّارَ قَبْلَ سِتَّةٍ أَلَمْرَاءُ بِالْجَوْرِ وَالْعَرَبُ بِالْعَصْبِيَّةِ وَالذَّهَاقِيُّ بِالْكِبَرِ وَالشَّجَارُ بِالْخِيَانَةِ وَأَهْلُ الرُّسْتَنِاقِ بِالْجَهْلِ وَالْعُلَمَاءُ بِالْحَسَدِ﴾ **"Six persons will enter Hell before accounts are taken each for one sin. A ruler for his oppression, a desert Arab for his tribal partisanship, a rich man for his pride, a trader for his betrayal, a village man for his foolishness and a learned man for his envy."** It was narrated that 'Abdullah bin 'Amr said, "It was said to the Messenger of Allah (saw), 'Which of the people is best?' He said, **"كُلُّ مُخْمُومٍ الْقَلْبِ صَدُوقِ اللِّسَانِ"** **"Everyone who is pure of heart and sincere in speech."** They said: 'Sincere in speech, we know what this is, but what is pure of heart?' He (saw) said, **"هُوَ النَّقِيُّ النَّقِيُّ لَا إِنْهُ فِيهِ وَلَا بَغْيٌ وَلَا غِلٌّ وَلَا حَسَدٌ"** **"It is (the heart) that is pious and pure, with no sin, injustice, rancor or envy in it."** [Ibn Maajah].

Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ﴾ **"And from the evil of the envier, when he envies"** [TMQ Surah Al-Hassad 113:5].

Imam Qurtubi stated in his Tafseer regarding this ayah, والحسد مذموم، وصاحبه مغموم، وهو يأكل الحسنات كما تأكل النار الحطب... ويقال: الحسد أول ذنب عصي الله به في السماء، وأول ذنب عصي به في الأرض، فأما في السماء فحسد إبليس كما تأكل النار الحطب... And envy is reprehensible, whilst the envier is distressed and it eats good deeds as fire eats wood... It is said: envy is the first sin with which Allah was disobeyed in the heavens and the first sin with which He (swt) was disobeyed in the earth. As for the heavens, Iblis envied Adam (as), whilst on the earth Qabeel (Cain) envied Habeel (Able)."

Imam al-Husayn bin al-Fadl (died 282 AH) commented on the same ayah, إن الله جمع الشرور في هذه الآية وختمها بالحسد ليعلم أنه أخس الطباع envy to make known that it is the lowest of natures."

Imam Ar-Razi commented on the same ayah, saying, كما أن الشيطان هو النهاية في الأشخاص المذمومة، ولهذا السبب ختم الله مجامع الشرور الإنسانية بالحسد، وهو قوله: وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ **"Satan is the worst of reprehensible persons. For this reason, Allah (swt) concluded the collection of human evils with envy, in His saying: And from the evil of the envier when he envies."**

Abu Mansur Al-Tha'alibi commented on the same ayah saying, وقيل: إن هذه الآية تابعة في المعنى لما تقدم من نهي الله عز وجل عن متابعة أقوال اليهود في: رَاعِنَا [البقرة: 104] وغيره، وأنهم لا يؤذون أن ينزل على المؤمنين خير، ويؤذون **"And it has been said: This verse is related in meaning to what was presented above regarding the prohibition of Allah Almighty from following the sayings of the Jews in: Ra'ina [Al-Baqarah: 104] and others, and that they do not wish that goodness (khair) should be sent down upon the believers and they wish that they turn back to being kuffar after the truth became clear to them. The truth is the prophecy of Muhammad (saw)."**

The Hanifi Ottoman Imam, Mehmed Ebüssuûd Efendi, commented on the same ayah saying, "it is beneficial to move on from reprimanding them for the aforementioned, to rebuking them with envy, which is the worst and ugliest of vices."

Indeed, it is forbidden to hope for the loss of the blessing of another, whilst envy leads to other forbidden acts, such as backbiting (gheebah), spreading calumnies (nameemah), lying, cutting relations, withholding rights and even causing physical harm.

### **Hassad (envy) is to be Replaced by Ghibtah and Competition over Good Deeds**

As for hope that one has the like of something as another has, this is ghibtah and this is allowed. In the language, ghibtah is **أن يتمنى المرء مثل ما للمغبوط من النعمة من غير أن يتمنى زوالها عنه** "For a person to wish for a favor similar to the favored one, without wishing for it to be removed from him." The Prophet (saw) said, **«إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يَغْبِطُ وَالْمُنَافِقَ يَحْسَدُ»** "A believer has ghibtah but a hypocrite envies." (Tabaqaat Shafiyyah al-Kubra). It is an effort towards further progress and advancement.

As for competition in good actions, Islam encourages such competition amongst the Muslims. Allah (swt) said, **«وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ»** "So in this let the competitors, compete." [TMQ Surah Al-Mutafifoon 83:26]. The verb and the noun are of the masdar of munaafisah (competition). Those who compete are like two servants who both try to please their master and hope to be ahead of the other in this matter, whilst their master is generous in his bounty, such that neither competitor is deprived.

The Prophet (saw) said, **«لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا فِي اثْنَتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَسَلَّطَ عَلَى هَلَكْتِهِ فِي الْحَقِّ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْحِكْمَةَ فَهُوَ يُقْضَىٰ بِهَا وَيَعْلَمُهَا»** "Do not envy except in two cases. The first is a person, whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously; the second is the one whom Allah has given wisdom (of Deen) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others." [Bukhari]. Abu Kabshah Al-Anmari narrated, **«مِثْلُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ كَمِثْلِ أَرْبَعَةِ نَفَرٍ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا وَعِلْمًا وَهُوَ يَعْمَلُ بِعِلْمِهِ فِي مَالِهِ يَنْفَقُهُ فِي حَقِّهِ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ عِلْمًا وَلَمْ يُؤْتِهِ مَالًا فَهُوَ يَقُولُ لَوْ كَانَ لِي مِثْلُ هَذَا عَمَلْتُ فِيهِ مِثْلَ الَّذِي يَفْعَلُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَهُمَا فِي الْأَجْرِ سَوَاءٌ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا وَلَمْ يُؤْتِهِ عِلْمًا فَهُوَ يَخْطُبُ فِي مَالِهِ يَنْفَقُهُ فِي غَيْرِ حَقِّهِ وَرَجُلٌ لَمْ يُؤْتِهِ اللَّهُ عِلْمًا وَلَا مَالًا فَهُوَ يَقُولُ لَوْ كَانَ لِي مِثْلُ هَذَا عَمَلْتُ فِيهِ مِثْلَ الَّذِي يَعْمَلُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَهُمَا فِي الْوُزْرِ سَوَاءٌ»** "The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, 'The likeness of this Ummah is that of four men: A man to whom Allah gives wealth and knowledge, so he acts according to his knowledge with regard to his wealth, spending it as it should be spent; a man to whom Allah gives knowledge, but he does not give him wealth, so he says, "If I had been given (wealth) like this one, I would have done what (the first man) did."' The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, 'These two will be equal in reward. And then there is a man to whom Allah gives wealth but does not give knowledge, so he squanders his wealth and spends it in inappropriate ways; and a man to whom Allah gives neither knowledge nor wealth, and he says: "If I had (wealth) like this one, I would do what (the third man) did."' The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, 'They are equal in their burden (of sin).'" [Ibn Majah]

### **Conclusion: The Khilafah Alone Will End the Global Influence of Utilitarianism and its Bitter Fruits, Such as Envy**

Allah (swt) said, **«أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ (1) حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ»** "Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you (1) Until you visit the graveyards." [TMQ Surah At-Takathur 102:1-2]. After the destruction of the Khilafah on 3 March 1924, 28 Rajab 1342 AH, the world is burdened by the Western civilization and its materialistic outlook towards value, morals and purpose. It has led to great misery and suffering for humankind, through narrowing vision to the temporary worldly life. It is the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood that will generate media, social media and education upon the noblest rivalry for humankind, which is competition for the pleasure of Allah (swt), Whose favors know no limits. Allah (swt) says, **«سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ»** "So take precedence over one another for forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers." [TMQ Surah Al-Hadid 57:21].

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Musab Umair – Wilayah Pakistan**