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Reminder

Suspicion and mistrust

Immunity from mistrust is the requisite of a safe community

For making a safe community, first of all security is required, because without security, freedom is not possible, and in this case, mental, corporeal, material and spiritual capitals are not activated, as capitals always take refuge to secure points and escape unsafe environments.

However, the limits of security are not restricted to life and property, and more important than that is security in view of reputation and protection of individuals' social personality.

On the other hand, another security is needed for completion of above triple securities that unfortunately, material rules are not able to provide it, that is, "mental security" as the most important one in some aspects.

Mental security has two parts:

- 1- Security of everybody in his own mind setting, and in other words "mental tranquility": that is to say in mental and spiritual view, a man is in a position that disturbing forces do not press upon him from each side, and he is not supposed to rush of various disturbing thoughts and serious mental storms. Rather, he may have a tranquil spirit free from any anxiety, discomfort and confusion.
- 2- Security in viewpoint of others: that is to say others do not lay rush of their thoughts as well as bad and inappropriate judgments on a man in their own mind's setting, and one's respect and reputation is preserved even in the setting of others' mind. Of course, discussion about each of these securities needs long talks. Herein, we only want to discuss about the latter type that is security in view of judgments of others.

It goes without saying that what is possible to provide in view of rules and materialist governments, with connivance of their other faults, is security in life, financial and somehow social reputation respects (of course as far as it is possible to assess the effects of its damage in view of materialistic and legal rules).

But, mental security in both parts, specially being safe from bad judgments of others is only possible through divine doctrines and heavenly religions, as we know the areas of heart and mind are out of access of such rules and executive forces generally having a material aspect, and lacking the least impression on these parts.

Only religious beliefs and ethical principles, particularly in Islam, containing extensive and considerable instructions for achieving this objective, as one of its great privileges, can penetrate into these areas and make it safe.

Qur'an explicitly instructs the believers:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a crime. (49: 12)

The phrase "most of suspicion" may indicate that a major part or most of the suspicions of people about each other are "evil ones", and thereby Qur'an warns people about the great risk threatening their security in the minds of others, and has introduced it as a "general affection site".

However, the phrase "some suspicion is a sin", considering its previous phrase, may indicate that suspicions of people about each other may be partly based on the reality, but surely a part of them is against reality, as a sin and disobedience. Thus, intellect orders to avoid all types of suspicion for not being affected to this part.

In the Islamic traditions too, it is so emphasized on avoidance from suspicion on the believers that we read in a tradition from Prophet (S):

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِ دَمَهُ وَ مَالَهُ وَ عِرْضَهُ وَ أَنْ يُظَنَّ بِهِ ظَنٌّ السُّوءِ».

God has forbidden blood, wealth, reputation and suspicion about a Muslim.^{[1](#)}

This tradition is particularly noteworthy since it has placed security in four aspects (financial, life, reputation, and mental) besides each other, and has forbidden all of them in a single phrase.

Sources of suspicion and pessimism

Suspicion and pessimism in mental view may appear sometimes lightly and sometimes acutely and severely, that is as a mental disease , and anyway it could be the effect of various causes, including:

1– It often happens that source of suspicion is the sense of revenge and malice and envy, and since a man can not take vengeance practically on the other person, and or express it by his tongue, so he

retreats to the areas of mind and heart, and causes a sedition there, trumps up him, and judges and rebukes and blames him, and thereby seeks relief of his mind. That is to say whatsoever he could not find outwardly, he seeks in his mind and imaginations, and on this account, and he feels a sort of false enjoyment and tranquility from his action.

This originates from a sort of "subjectivism" and "mental escape from realities" and "resorting to fancy" which is proved today in psychoanalysis. The sense does not appertain to this case. Rather, all cases in which man's desires are not satiated outwardly, and retreat to unconscious inner sense as repressed, man seeks for visionary and fanciful substitutes in order to fill the vacuum created in that respect. Sometimes, he seeks them in the dreamy world (a part of dreams are the effect of this cause).

And sometimes he seeks them in the world of "poetic imaginations" and "dreams in wakefulness", and for this reason, the able poets in whose poems there are affection, enthusiasm, influence and mirth, are those who in addition to poetic talent, have faced disappointments, loss and failures, fiery kindness¹ and unsuccessful loves, and have sought their lost and beloved one in the world of imaginations among the poetic masterstrokes and literary niceties, and thereby their imagination power has extremely developed.

In brief, "mental escape towards fancy" is the source of a lot of mental events, including suspicion, pessimism and mistrust.

2- Sometimes, the source of suspicion is impurity and taint of man, as too much optimism originates from the purity and serenity of a man. That is to say a man assumes the others good or bad based on the principle of "self comparison". This is particularly apparent in low knowledge and simple persons.

3- Excusing or reducing one's own punishment in the court of conscience is also one of the other causes of suspicion, because in this way he tries to create some partners for his offences, and suspects on the others for justifying his own ill deeds, and showing them less effective and more usual, and saying that I am not the only one being involved in this state.

4- Suspicion may originate from pride and selfishness, because such people intend to show themselves superior to the others in any way, and so try to create some weak points for the others in the environment of their mind, and devalue them through different probabilities, and elevate their own value.

5- Educational environment and suggestions of parents and teacher are also important causes of pessimism and suspicion.

6- Association with unrighteous individuals too is one of the causes of suspicion, because the criterion for general judgements of man is often a defective induction which he makes about the individuals dealing with them, as judgements of persons about the people of a city or a village or a country is based on the special individuals having contact with them.

If the associates of a man are unrighteous, he will naturally become pessimistic to all people.

It is mentioned in Islamic traditions:

«مُجَالَسَةُ الْأَشْرَارِ تُورِثُ سُوءَ الظَّنِّ بِالْأَخْيَارِ».

Association with evildoers causes suspicion in the righteous. [2](#)

7- Sometimes suspicion has a real source that is when corruption dominates on the people of a certain time or place, so that a man becomes suspicious to every thing based on this intellectual principle that "Suspicion connects everything to its popular sample"

«الظَّنُّ يُلْحِقُ الشَّيْءَ بِالْأَعَمِّ الْأَغْلَبِ».

Social losses of mistrust

Social losses of this moral vice are too much and its undesirable effects are widespread and extensive, such as:

1- Suspicion causes social misunderstanding, as those suffering from this condition, look everything pessimistically, and involve in numerous mistakes in recognizing the situation of individuals, events and incidents, real causes and motives of the activities occurring in the society, and live in an dreamy world against what really exist, and this "misunderstanding of realities" certainly causes retardation, non exploitation of opportunities and valuable individuals and failure before the events.

2- Suspicion and pessimism are the greatest hindrance for social cooperation as well as unity and solidarity of hearts, and lead man to an individual life, solitude, isolation and individualism and the vices caused by these attributes. Suspicion does not let man trust on the other and find the basis of cooperation with him, and solve the problems with his assistance.

3- Suspicion causes man to spy about the others and as we already referred, spying is the source of slander and its related vices. Holy Qur'an too has indicated to this reality in verse 12, Chambers Surah.

4- Mistrust is the source of enmities, and sometimes, it is the main cause of bloody wars and battles. There are a lot of families, which are dissociated by mistrust, and there are a lot of competent and dignified men who are killed for mistrust about them. And sometimes suspicion has illuminated the flame of great wars. We read in the occasion of revelation of the noble verse:

إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

If an evil-liver bring you tidings, verify it, lest ye smite some folk in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did. (49:6)

When suspicion and pessimism of "Valid Ebne Aghabeh" was about to cause destruction of a tribe, and Holy Qur'an prevented this great tragedy through instructing for clarification and investigation.[3](#)

5- Suspicion extinguishes kindness and friendship, and develops hypocrisy and dissimulation among friends, because such person has to affect friendship with his friends apparently, while his interior is not so, and has a mistrust on them, and this behaviour leads to development of spirit of hypocrisy and dissimulation in him.

Summarizing this, the social vices and losses of suspicion and mistrust are more than what are usually supposed, and what we have mentioned above is actually a part of these vices.

Individual losses of suspicion

In addition to social losses, suspicion and mistrust have a lot of irrecoverable losses. Mentioned below are some of important points:

1- Mistrust is the source of spirit distress and torture of body, as well as anxiety and worry. Pessimistic people are often worried, and suffer for their imaginations about the individuals and events. They escape association with individuals, which is one of the normal and effective means of spiritual mirth, because they assume utterances or actions of people as jests and quips for themselves.

They fear of confabulation, which is a useful means for relieving pains and distresses, because they think that it may cause disclosure of their secrets and or other problems. And on this account, they are often depressed, mirthless and sad, and gradually become a useless and idle being.

If this condition of "mistrust" is intensified in man, it will become so serious that he is afraid of everything and everyone, sees all events harmful, assumes normal deeds of individuals as plans against himself, and supposes everybody determined in destruction or trouble of himself.

Obviously, this condition should be included among the mental diseases and out of ethics.

Basically, all moral vices are related to ethics until they have not passed the normal limits, and only moral trainers should treat them. But when they are abnormal, they are considered as a disease, and out of subject of ethic. Excessive envies, excessive prides, excessive spites, excessive blatancies, and such like are all included in this part.

It is interesting that in the Hypocrites Surah, while mentioning the conditions of hypocrites, the issue of suspicion and mistrust are accounted among their attributes and it says: they are so suffering from suspicion that:

...يَحْسِبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ

They deem every shout to be against them. (63:4)

And this is one of their worldly punishments.

Of course, this type of suspicion is normal for evil doers, as based on the principle of "self comparison", they suppose the others are aware of their situation, and are going to punish or take vengeance on them, and consequently they always fear.

2- Mistrust about the "people" sometimes leads to mistrust and suspicion on the Creator, and also is transmitted to the basis of man's religious beliefs. Sometimes, they suspect on "Divine Justice" and sometimes in "Divine Power".

They may also doubt in invitation of divine prophets, and in the depths of their heart, assume their invitation as a sort of histrionics for domination on people and attraction of commons, although they may apparently be faithful to the religious principles.

Non submission of most of evil doers and hypocrites to the invitation of prophets may have been caused thereof.

3- Pessimistic people are often deprived from the inner purity, because they are always slandering about the others in their heart, and thereby some of ethics scholars have called suspicion "slander with heart".

This was a part of individual losses of suspicion and pessimism.

Ways of countering with suspicion

First of all, there is a problem in this discussion which should be solved, that is:

Most often, suspicion is not a freewill affair to be avoided. Rather, in most cases, when observing a vision, or hearing an utterance, or remembering a memory (with special mental backgrounds about the other person), a suspicion appears unwillingly in man's mind. So, how is it possible to avoid it?

The following well-known tradition too proves this sense:

«ثَلَاثٌ لَا يَسْلُمُ مِنْهَا أَحَدٌ: الْطَّيْرَةُ وَالْحَسَدُ وَالظَّنُّ».

There are three things that no one is secure from them: forebode, envy and suspicion.

The researchers have paced different ways for solving this problem:

1- Some believe that suspicion is not forbidden instinctively, and express the famous prophetic tradition as their proof:

«ثَلَاثٌ فِي الْمُؤْمِنِ لَا يُسْتَحْسَنُ وَ لَهُ مِنْهُنَّ مَخْرَجٌ، فَمَخْرَجُهُ مِنْ سُوءِ الظَّنِّ أَنْ لَا يُحَقِّقَهُ».

There are three unfavourable things in the believer, and it is possible for him to escape them, and it is possible to escape suspicion through not giving a follow-up to it. [4](#)

2- Some others say avoiding suspicion refers to not giving a follow-up to it heartily and outwardly. In other words, he shall not establish "heart conclusion", which is freewill, in his heart, and not to feel a hate and disgust to the suspected person, and not to change his relations and behaviour with him outwardly. Thus, non-realization of suspicion refers to the same wide sense of word including mind and outward.

There is no doubt that these two are both against the appearance of the verse for avoiding suspicion and the traditions mentioned in this part, because they have forbidden suspicion itself, and there is not any hearty establishment aspect to be evitable.

But the issue of belief and hearty establishment is a freewill affair (because belief and faith is something else than knowledge, as it has been already proved), but hate and disgust are not so.

3- The reality is that although suspicion is not voluntary at the beginning, but its continuation is optional, because it usually originates from a series of unreal factors that cause such a supposition due to precipitancy and hurry in judgement. Hence, one can soon avoid it through thinking and studying about the matter, and subtilizing in different probabilities, and thus it is greatly emphasized in the narrations and traditions that a man should try and do his best for finding correct probabilities in the Muslims affairs, and avoid primary perspectives.

Imam Ali (A.S.) says:

«وَلَا تَظُنَّنْ بِكَلِمَةٍ خَرَجَتْ مِنْ أَخِيكَ سُوءاً وَ أَنْتَ تَجِدُ لَهَا فِي الْخَيْرِ مَحْمِلاً».

Do not suspect on the utterance, which you hear from your brother as far as you find a proper way for it. [5](#)

Therefore, only sudden hearty perspectives are out of will, but stable and durable suspicion is a freewill affair, and this sense is completely compatible with the appearance of the noble verse, traditions concerning forbiddance of suspicion.

Seemingly, the phrase:

«كَذِّبْ سَمْعَكَ وَبَصَرَكَ عَنْ أَخِيكَ».

Deny your eye and ear about your brother.[6](#)

Which is narrated from Imam As-Sadiq (A.S.) addressing Mohammad Ebne Fosail, may refer to attempt for finding proper senses and avoiding primary perspectives.

Methods of treating suspicion

Now that the meaning of forbiddance of suspicion is made clear, it is the time of referring to the methods of treating it.

As we have repeatedly said, we shall always seek the way of treating mental, physical and moral diseases in the causes of their appearance.

On this account, considering the discussion we made in respect to the sources and factors of suspicion, we conclude that:

1- For removing suspicion, first of all we shall engage in correcting ourselves so that if we compare others with ourselves, it does not cause assuming them vicious and evil doer, and also when we are correcting ourselves, we shall be reminded always that it is not correct to assume the others like ourselves. They may possess mentalities much superior and better than us. We shall pay attention that self-comparison which may be one of the aspects of man's self-love, has no logic and scientific foundation, and should not be considered as the basis of our judgement about the others.

2- We shall purify our environment which may be the source of our suspicion and mistrust, and not associate with the evil doers which may be the source of suspicion on good doers, and note that such poisonous associations, in addition to their other numerous disadvantages, darken the environment of our mind in evaluation of personality of others, and lead us to great mistakes in identification of individuals. These mistakes not only cause moral and spiritual losses, but also deprive us from exploitation of mental and moral resources of competent individuals due to suspicion.

If our educational environment in the childhood has been unhealthy in this respect, we shall wash away the effects of childhood period from our mind through suggestion and studying the conditions of good doers, and association with the pure persons, for compensation of the suggestions causing our present pessimism.

3- We shall regularly envisage the individual and social losses of mistrust and the great dangers threatening us and the society in this way, and repeatedly remember the previous discussions which we had in this respect, and consider this reality that if mistrust is temporarily effective in relieving our "sense of vengeance" or "selfishness", and creates a false transitory peace in us, it has also irrecoverable losses

for us which are not comparable with its assumed advantages.

4– If the source of our suspicion and pessimism is moral deviations of others, malice and selfishness, justification of our evil deeds and escaping the chastisement of conscience, we shall become aware of these sources in our mental analysis, and transfer these factors from the mind's unconscious stage to conscious stage.

Since this point is very important in treating moral deviations that when incentives from mind's unconscious stage influence on the deeds and thoughts of man, we shall transfer them to conscious stage through psychoanalysis. It has a deep impression in improvement of our status, and pay attention that this issue is greatly discussed and concerned in the present psychoanalysis.

Reminder

At the end of this discussion about suspicion, it is noteworthy that suspicion and mistrust is logical only when majority of individuals are deviated and corrupted in an environment. In such case, one cannot have good opinion on the dubious person based on probabilities; because the possibility of corruption about each person is more, but it should be notified that in such environments too, man shall not take into consideration his suspicion save in what is concerned with precautionary aspects.

In other words, while observing necessary precautions, one shall avoid affectation to the deeds with the savour of suspicion and mistrust on the individuals, and this possibility should never be neglected that the suspected person may be one of the righteous minority of the society, and this attitude should be restricted to those vices which have involved majority of society. But, in other cases, good opinion should be completely observed.

The famous tradition narrated from Imam Ali (A.S.) may refer to the same reality, where it says:

«إِذَا اسْتَوْلَى الْفَسَادُ عَلَى الزَّمَانِ فَأَحْسَنَ رَجُلٌ الظَّنَّ بِرَجُلٍ فَقَدْ غَرِرَ».

When corruption breaks out at a time, good opinion of individuals to each other causes being deceived.

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1. Feise Kashani, Mohajjatol Beisae, 268/5

2. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 197/74, narration 31

3. Please study the occasion of revelation under verse 6, Surah 49, in the Example Commentary (Tafsir Nemouneh)

4. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 201/75

5. Kelini, Kafi, 362/2

6. Kelini, Kafi, 147/8

7. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 197/75, narration 18

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