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Fifth Hadith: Envy (Hasad)

بِالسَّنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إِلَى مُحَمَّد بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّد بْنِ عِيسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ عَنْ دَاوُدَ الرَّقِيِّ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا بْنَ عِمْرَانَ لا تَحْسِدَنَّ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَيْتُهُمْ مِنْ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا بْنَ عِمْرَانَ لا تَحْسِدَنَّ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَيْتُهُمْ مِنْ فَضَلِي وَلا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَى ذَلَكَ وَلا تُتُبِعْهُ نَفْسَكَ، فَإِنَّ الحَاسِدَ سَاخِطٌ لِنِعْمَتِي ضَادٌّ لِقِسْمِي الَّذِي قَسَمْتُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِي، فَضَلْلِي وَلا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إلى ذَلَكَ وَلا تُتُبِعْهُ نَفْسَكَ، فَإِنَّ الحَاسِدَ سَاخِطٌ لِنِعْمَتِي ضَادٌ لِقِسْمِي الَّذِي قَسَمْتُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِي، وَمَنْ يَكُ كَذَلِكَ فَلَسْتُ مِنْهُ وَلَيْسَ مِنْي

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni), from 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn 'Isa, from Yunus, from Dawud al-Raqqi, who reports from Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (A) that the Apostle of God (S) said that God Almighty addressed Musa ibn 'Imran (A) thus: "O son of 'Imran, never be envious of people concerning the favors I have conferred on them by My grace, do not glower at them, and do not succumb to your (envious) self. Indeed the envious man is indignant at the bestowal of My favor, and contests My apportioning of gifts among My creatures. Whoso is such, he neither belongs to Me nor do I belong to him." 1

Definition of Hasad

Hasad or envy is a psychic state in which a person wishes for the deprivation of a blessing, talent or merit, real or imagined, possessed by another person. It does not make any difference to the envious man whether lie possesses it or not, whether he can acquire it or not.

The term 'imagined' is used here for the reason that it is not necessary that there should be any real merits or advantage in the true sense of the word. For it has been established by observation that even things which are vices and defects, on account of their being considered by the envious as excellences and merits, he desires their destruction.

Sometimes it is also true that certain attributes, which are a defect in a human being but are bestial accomplishments are envied by the envious man on account of the significance that he attaches to such qualities. He sees them as merits on account of his animal state, and desires that the other man should

be deprived of them. For instance, there are certain persons who consider ruthlessness and brutality as virtues, and when they see a person possessing these qualities they envy him.

There are some who consider the capacity for idle talk and vulgar jokes as virtues, and they feel jealous of those skilled at them. Therefore, the criterion for identifying this psychic disease is the imagined existence of merits and the suspected presence of accomplishments in the mind of the afflicted person, not the real presence of merit and accomplishment itself. In short, whenever a person notices any merit (real or imaginary) in others and wishes for their loss and destruction, such a person is described as *hasid* or envious.

Kinds of Hasad

There are various kinds and degrees of *hasad* according to the state and condition of the *mahsud* (the one envied), the *hasud* (the one who envies), and the nature of *hasad* itself.

According to the condition of the mahsud: Qualities like certain intellectual, spiritual, and moral merits, or good and pious deeds, or outward factors like wealth, honor, and prestige can cause envy. Also their antithetical qualities, when they are imagined to be merits, can also cause envy and jealousy.

According to the condition of the envious person: The feeling of envy in the heart of the person who harbors it is sometimes caused by enmity, sometimes by pride, and at other times by fear and the like-causes which will be discussed later on.

According to the condition of envy itself: As for envy itself, the classification performed on its basis is an essential one, not those performed on the previous bases. There are several stages and grades of intensity and weakness according to their various causes and effects. God willing, we will deal with their harmful effects and the methods of curing them in several sections according to our capabilities, and hope to receive His assistance in this regard.

The Causes and Motives of Hasad

There are numerous causes of *hasad*, and the main among them, as opposed to *kibr*, are products of a feeling of one's inferiority. In the same way as a person contemplating his own merits considers others to lack them, with a sense of elation, exultation, and rebelliousness overcoming him; in the same manner when someone perceives others to be more perfect, a feeling of inferiority and dejection seizes him, which, with the help of external factors and inner propensities, generate the feeling of envy in his heart.

Sometimes it may happen that he feels dejected on account of someone sharing his merit, such as when a person endowed with a merit feels jealous of those on an equal or lower footing than himself.

Therefore, it may be said that envy is a state of abjectness and dejection, which finds an expression in the desire for the destruction, or deprival of others' merits and advantages. Accordingly, some scholars,

like al-'Allamah al-Majlisi, have confined the causes of envy to the following seven:

1. Enmity.

2. The sense of one's supremacy: It may happen that the envious man anticipates the pride of the

envied on account of a merit and advantage that he enjoys. Not having the patience to put up with the

pride, he earnestly desires the loss of those merits and advantages.

3. *Kibr* (pride): The envious person desires to treat high-handedly the person who is conferred some

merit or favor, which is not possible unless those favors and merits are lost.

4. Wonder: The envious person is puzzled to see the great blessing enjoyed by the object of his envy.

God Almighty reports the nations of the past as saying to the prophets:

Ye are but mortals like us. (14:10)

And:

And they said: 'Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves?' (23:47)

They wondered as to how a mortal like them could reach the high station of prophethood and be inspired by God; so they felt envious on account of it.

5. Fear: The envious man is apprehensive of some hindrance on the part of the person enjoying an

advantage or merit that may, he fears, frustrate his cherished aims and objectives.

6. Love of authority: This becomes a cause of envy when one's acquiring or preserving authority over

others requires that nobody should share his advantages or merits.

7. Viciousness of nature: The man of vicious nature does not like to see others enjoying any kind of

good whatsoever.

In the view of this writer, most, or rather all, of these causes are derived from the feeling of inferiority and

dejection.

Some Evil Effects of Envy

Envy itself is one of the deadliest diseases of the heart. The mortal diseases of the heart, like pride and other vices, though each is a mortal sin in itself, produces additional vices each of which is fatal independently. We shall discuss here a few of them, which are apparent and known to this author. There may be others, which are hidden and unknown. In two *sahih* traditions Imam al–Sadiq (A) and Imam al–Bagir (A) inform us about the evil effects of *hasad*:

Mu'awiyah ibn wahab reports that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, "Hasad, 'ujb, and vainglory are a bane of faith."2

Muhammad ibn Muslim reports that Imam al-Baqir (A) said, "A man may be forgiven for something done in a fit of anger; but envy devours faith as fire consumes wood."3

It is a known fact that faith is a Divine light that illumines the human heart with the radiance of His glory, as has been related by the *hadith qudsi* quoted before:

Neither [the vastness of] My earth, nor [that of] My heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of the man of faith, which can contain Me.

The spiritual light and the divine spark, which makes the human heart greater than anything else in the world does not go along with the darkness and narrowness, caused in it by this grievous vice. This hideous quality makes the human heart so narrow and dejected that its effects become apparent throughout the realm of one's inner and outer being.

The heart becomes grieved and depressed, the chest narrow and suffocated, and the face grim and frowning.

This state extinguishes the light of faith and deadens the human heart. The more it gains in strength, the more it diminishes the brightness of faith. All the inward and outward attributes of faith are negated by the effects of envy, which are manifested within and without one's personality. The man of faith is optimistic and has a hopeful attitude towards God, and is satisfied with the way He has divided and

apportioned His bounties among His creatures. The envious person is displeased with God and is resentful of the fate apportioned by Him. As mentioned in tradition, a believer is not malicious towards other believers; he loves them, whereas the envious man acts in an opposite manner.

A true believer is not possessed by the love of mundane things, whereas the envious man is afflicted with this vice due to his love of the world. A believer has no fear or grief whatsoever in his heart, except for that which is associated with the Ultimate Source and End of all being. But the fears and griefs of the envious man revolve around the person of whom he is jealous. The believer has a beaming countenance, which depicts his cheerful nature. The envious man has a frowning face and a grim countenance. The believer is humble, and is (most of the time) not proud or envious.

Envy destroys faith in the same way as fire burns up wood. Therefore, there does not exist any doubt about the danger of this vice, which wrests from man his faith, the source of his salvation in the Hereafter and the life and vigor of his heart, and reduces him into a helpless wretch.

A great evil that is an inseparable ingredient of envy is indignation with the Creator and the Beneficent Nourisher and annoyance with His ordainments. Deprived of vision by the dark veils of carnal nature, our immersion in the world of senses has blinded the eyes and deafened the ears. We do not understand that we are angry with the King of kings, nor know as to what form our anger and resentment will acquire as the result of this vice in the next world, our permanent abode. We hear the words of Imam al–Sadiq (A):

Whoso is such, he neither belongs to Me nor do I belong to him.

Yet we do not understand the magnitude of the misfortune of God Almighty's disowning us, and what His disgust with us will bring for us. One who is driven out from the sphere of His *wilayah* (guardianship) and is not accepted under the standard of the Mercy of the Most Merciful, there is no hope of his salvation. He will, not be able to receive any intercession of the intercessors either:

Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? (2:255)

Who will act as an intercessor for one who is wrathful and resentful towards God, outside the pale of His *wilayah*, and whose bonds of love between him and his Lord have been severed? Woe to us for the calamity we have invited for ourselves! Despite all the warnings and alarms sounded by the apostles of God to awaken us from the slumber, our neglect and our wretchedness only grew day by day.

The Punishment of the Grave

According to the *ulama*, the punishment of the grave and the darkness therein is one of the evil consequences of this vice. They maintain that the bearer of this vice, with its associated spiritual tension and gloom, is oppressed by pressure and darkness in the grave and in *Barzakh*. One's condition in the grave depends upon the spaciousness of the hearts and the narrowness thereof.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) is narrated to have said that the Prophet (S) went to attend the funeral of Sa'd. While seventy thousand angels accompanied the ceremonies, the Prophet (S) of God raised his head towards the heavens and said, "Does anyone face the squeeze (of the grave) as Sa'd faced?" The narrator of the tradition said to the Imam: "May I die for your sake, we have been told that Sa'd was not very particular of *taharah* while passing urine." The Imam said, "God forbid, his only fault was that he was harsh in his treatment of the people of his household...:'

The state of darkness, narrowness, tension and constriction that appears in one's heart due to this vice is not likely to occur in other moral vices. In any case, the person possessing this vicious trait suffers torments in this life, then the oppressive darkness and constriction in the grave, and will ultimately be helpless and wretched in the Hereafter. All these are the evil effects of envy alone, on condition that it does not breed any other vice or induce any other evil deed. But it rarely happens that it does not generate some other affliction. Rather, it often begets many other moral vices and misdeeds, such as pride, as mentioned earlier, and other sins like backbiting, slandering, abusing, and torturing, etc., each one of which is a deadly and mortal sin.

Therefore, it is necessary for a wise person to make up his mind immediately and strive to get rid of this shame and indignity, saving his faith from the blaze of this fire and its disaster lie should rid himself of this mental torture and narrow–mindedness, which is it perpetual lifelong punishment in this world, followed by distress and darkness in the grave and the Purgatory, and incurs Divine wrath. One should consider that a malady, which has so many, harms needs to be treated urgently. His envy does not harm the person of whom he is envious. It does not make him lose any of the favors and merits either. It may even give him some satisfaction, in this world as well as in the other, to see the distress of one who is jealous of him and is his enemy.

While he continues to enjoy all those advantages, which cause you distress and anguish, it is yet another gift for him. And if you are again jealous of him for the second one, it will multiply your torment and anguish, which will again be a blessing for him, and so on. Hence you shall ever remain in grief, pain, and anguish and he in a state of bliss, joy, and exuberance. In the Hereafter, also, your envy will benefit him, especially if it culminates in backbiting, slandering, and other such acts of malice; as your good deeds will be assigned to him. You will be reduced to utter destitution and he will enjoy bounties and eminence. If you deliberate upon the matter for a while, you shall of course purge yourself from this vice and save your soul from its destructive effects.

Don't think that psychic, moral, and spiritual vices are not curable; this is an erroneous notion that has been inspired in you by Satan and your carnal self, who want to keep you from treading the path of the Hereafter and to frustrate your efforts at rectifying your self. As long as man exists in this realm of transition and change, it is possible for him to transform all his attributes and moral characteristics.

However strong his habits may be, as long as he is living in this world he can quit them. The only thing is that the effort required to throw them off varies with the degree of their strength and intensity. A bad habit in the early phase of its formation, of course, requires only a little self-discipline and effort to eradicate it. It is like uprooting a young plant that has not run its roots deeply into the ground. But when a quality becomes firmly rooted in one's nature, becoming a part of one's spiritual makeup, it is not easily uprooted, but requires much effort, like the tree that becomes old in age, having sent down its roots deep into the earth; it cannot be easily extirpated. The more you delay the decision to eradicate the iniquities of the heart, the more time and effort it will require.

My dear, in the first place do not allow any moral vice, bad habit or evil deed to enter the realm of your inner and outer being. This task is much easier than that of expelling them after they enter, establish themselves, and start flourishing. And if they enter, the more you delay the action required to expel them, the more time and effort will it require, and they will corrupt your inner faculties in the mean time.

Our great Shaykh, the accomplished 'arif Shahabadi-my soul be sacrificed for him—used to say that it is better to take an action against moral vices when one's youth and its powers and vivacity are still there. At that stage one can fulfill one's responsibilities as a human being in a better way. One should not allow oneself to delay until one's powers have departed; as it becomes more difficult to achieve success in this regard when old age sets in. Even if, presumably, one succeeds, the effort required for the reform is, in comparison, much greater.

Therefore, if a wise person considers the evil effects of anything and realizes that he is not afflicted by it, he does not involve himself in it and does not allow it to contaminate him; and if, God forbid, he is afflicted he tries to get rid of it and correct himself as soon as possible, not allowing it to strengthen its roots. If, God forbid, it has taken roots, he makes every effort to root it out so as to avoid its evil consequences in the Purgatory and the Hereafter. If he is transferred in the state of affliction from this world of material change, he will no longer be able to do anything about it. Woe to the man who is such, for it will take ages of the *Barzakh* and the Hereafter to transform a single moral characteristic.

In a tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) has been reported to have said that every inhabitant of Paradise or Hell is consigned to it eternally on account of his or her intentions and aims. Bad intentions, which result from evil morals, cannot be shed unless their source and origin is destroyed. In that world human qualities will manifest themselves with such an intensity and power that either it is not possible for them to perish at all–in which case one is lodged eternally in the Hell—or it is possible to purge them only through torment, distress, and flames—in which case it will take a time of several centuries of the Hereafter.

Therefore, O wise man, do not allow a vice which can be removed by little effort of a month or a year or two, and whose removal is fully within your capacity and means, to linger on and cause the distresses of this world and the Hereafter and ultimately destroy you.

The Source of Moral Corruption

It was mentioned earlier that faith, which is the joy and fortune of the soul, is different from knowledge, which is the pleasure and satisfaction of the intellect. All moral and behavioral corruptions ensue from the absence of faith in one's heart i.e. whatever the intellect and reason have comprehended through rational proofs or the reports of the prophets fails to enter the heart, and the heart is unaware of their truth.

One of the doctrines which every 'arif, Hakim, mutakallim, as well as the laity and the legists, affirm and regard as indubitable is that whatever has come into existence as the result of the stroke of the Pen of the absolutely Wise Creator, from the viewpoint of being and perfection to the apportioning of the means of sustenance among creatures and the ordination of their terms of life——everything demonstrates the utmost beauty of design and the utmost perfection of a system which is in complete accordance with the *sumum bonum* of the creatures and the most complete and perfect system imaginable.

However, each one of them describes this graciousness of God and His absolute wisdom in his own specific language and in accordance with the terminology of his discipline. The 'arif says, "It is the shadow of the Absolute Beauty." The *Hakim* says, "The system of the real world is in accordance with a scientific scheme free from any defect and evil; that which is presumed to be evil in particular instances is nothing but a means for the creatures to acquire their deserved degree of perfection." The *mutakallim* and the legist believe that God's Acts are based upon wisdom and the general good, and man's limited intellect is incapable of comprehending the higher good intrinsic in Divine ordainments.

All subscribe to this idea and everyone sets forth an argument to prove it according to his own knowledge and intelligence. But since they do not go beyond words and have not entered the heart, voices of protest and objection can still be heard, and yet the same man, not enjoying the bounty of faith, counters his own words and confutes his own arguments. Moral vices, too, are rooted in this weakness of faith.

The one who feels jealous of others and desires for the loss of a good enjoyed by another and harbors spite against those who possess it in his heart, should know that he does not believe that it is in his own interest that God Almighty has not bestowed upon him that favor. Our limited understanding fails to comprehend the wisdom of His determinations. He should realize that he does not have faith in Divine Justice and the justness of His apportioning.

Verbally he may declare his belief in the doctrine of Divine Justice. But his declaration is mere words; for the belief in the justness of God is contrary to envy. If you deem Him just, then consider His ordainment to be just too, for the *hadith* says expressly that the envious man is resentful at God's apportioning of gifts among His creatures and indignant at the favors conferred by Him. In accordance with the Divine instincts inherent in him, man by nature is a lover of justice. Modesty and reverence before justice and hatred and rebellion before injustice are rooted in his nature. However, if an opposite attitude is observed, it is because of a defect in his premises.

If he is indignant at the advantages enjoyed by others and is contentious about the Divine apportioning of bounties, it is on account of the fact that lie does not consider it as just, but, God forbid, regards it as unjust and cruel. It is not because he considers the Divine apportioning as just and is yet resentful of it. It is not that he considers the Divine plan to be a perfect system and absolutely good and yet is displeased with it. Alas, our faith is not complete and the intellectual proofs have not crossed the limits of reason and intellect to enter the realm of the heart. Faith is not [solely] a matter of utterance. It is not mere reading, discussing, or quoting others; it requires sincerity of intention. One who seeks God succeeds in finding Him. Those who are interested in Divine knowledge, seek it:

Whoso is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, and yet further front the road. (17:72)

And he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light. (24:40)

The Practical Remedy for Envy

Besides the theoretical cure that has been mentioned above, there is a practical remedy also for this hideous vice. It consists of this: Try, forcibly, to be affectionate with the person of whom you are jealous. By making a display of your affection, your purpose should be to cure yourself of this internal malady. Your inner self will ask you to hurt him and malign him. It will demand that you treat him like an enemy and recount to you his vices and mistakes. But you act against the inclinations of your self and be friendly with him. honor him and respect him and force yourself to speak in his praise. Try to see his virtues yourself and make them known to others too, concentrating upon his good qualities.

Though your behavior will be affected and unnatural in the beginning, being artificial and feigned, but since your aim is self-rectification and curing of this vice, your behavior will gradually become less artificial. Day by day this affectation will be lessened and your self will become accustomed to it and that which was affectation will become reality. You convince your self and make it understand that he is a creature of God; perhaps it is God's grace, which has selected him for the advantage that he enjoys.

If the object of your envy is a scholar endowed with knowledge and piety, and you are jealous of him due to these merits, your envy is all the more abominable and this enmity will bring you greater harm in the Hereafter. It is for you to make your self understand that they are chosen servants of God, who, through Divine grace, have been distinguished by that great merit and favor.

Such a gift ought to make one feel affectionate and kindly towards its possessors, inclining one to respect them and to be humble towards them. Hence, if one perceives that anything that should stir up love and respect in his heart is causing something that is contrary to it, he should know that the baser emotions have overpowered him and their darkness has conquered his inner self. Now it is time for him to positively resolve to get rid of it by all theoretical and practical means.

If he tries to stimulate the feelings of love and friendship in his heart, he will succeed soon, since the light of love conquers the darkness of hatred. God Almighty has promised that He will guide those who struggle and help them through His invisible grace and increase their capacities:

'Indeed He possesses the authority to grant ability and to guide.'

The Tradition Regarding Remission of Envy

In some of the holy traditions, it has been reported from the Prophet (S) that he enumerated nine things from which his Ummah have been granted remission; *hasad,* in case it is not expressed in one's words or deeds, is one of them. This tradition, and others similar to it, should not, of course, prevent one from seriously uprooting the vicious tree of envy from the self and freeing the soul from this faith– consuming fire. Because, it rarely happens that this vicious thing enters the soul without breeding diverse abominations there, without its signs becoming visible, and without harming one's faith.

It is mentioned in *sahih ahadith* that envy devours faith and is baleful to it, and that God Almighty disowns the envious person and would have nothing to do with him. Therefore, a thing, which is a major source of corruption and endangers all that matters to a human being should not be taken lightly due to misunderstanding the Prophetic *hadith* about remission of the sin of *hasad*.

Therefore, it is for you to take the matter seriously and snip off its branches and try to rectify yourself. Do not allow its venom to spill over in your outward behavior, as it will weaken its roots and stop its growth. And if you die during this period of spiritual reform and struggle, you will be blessed with Divine Mercy. With His infinite mercy and the boon provided by the spiritual station of the interceding Holy Prophet (S), you will be granted forgiveness. The spark of Divine beneficence will burn up any remaining traces of it, and the soul will be purged and purified.

As to the following tradition narrated by Hamzah ibn Humran:

Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (A) said, "There are three things from which neither any prophet nor others below his rank are Immune: doubts about the creation, anticipation of misfortune for others, and envy, although a believer does never make use of them."4

Either the statement is hyperbolic, the intention being that these form the most frequent basis of their tribulations, without their being actually subject to these vices; or *hasad* is used here to connote *ghibtah* (envy which is free of ill will); or what is meant is the inclination to wish for the loss of some of the advantages enjoyed by infidels who propagate false beliefs. Otherwise, the prophets of God and the saints are free from any taint of *hasad* in the real sense of the word.

A heart, which is defiled with moral evils and inner impurities, cannot receive Divine inspiration and revelation. Such a heart does not become a mirror of the light of Divine Attributes and the radiance of the Essence. Therefore, this tradition ought to be interpreted in the manner indicated above or in some other fashion, or it should be referred back to its speaker (S):

And Praise is God's, in the beginning and the end.

- 1. Usul al-Kafi (Pub. by Intishirat-e'ilmiyyah Islamiyyah, Arabic text with Persian translation by Hajj Sayyid Jawad Mustafawi), vol. III, p. 418.
- 2. Usul al-Kafi (Pub. by Intishirat-e'ilmiyyah Islamiyyah, Arabic text with Persian translation by Hajj Sayyid Jawad Mustafawi), vol. III, p. 418.
- <u>3.</u> Usul al-Kafi (Pub. by Intishirat-e'ilmiyyah Islamiyyah, Arabic text with Persian translation by Hajj Sayyid Jawad Mustafawi), vol. III, p. 416.
- 4. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Bab 'al- amr bi al-ma'ruf'.

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