

Malicious envy, decent envy and schadenfreude: Insight from religious scriptures and medical sciences

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ABSTRACT

Hasad is an Arabic word which has been used in Holy Quran with different meanings, according to context. It's widely accepted substitute in English, envy, has been discussed as two forms: (a) Decent or benign which is a morally laudable approach, with productive and motivational tendencies. It is also called Ghibtah. (b) Malicious which is a morally reprehensible approach with frustrating and negative feelings. Its Arabic equivalent is Hasad Khabees. Shamatah is malicious joy over the misfortune of others. Its English equivalent is Schadenfreude. Whereas, the actuating force or the inc-

iting factor for schadenfreude is malicious envy, there is basic difference between the two. Malicious envy causes us pain (of someone else's good fortune) while the Schadenfreude gives us pleasure (of someone else's misfortune). Both deadly sins have been condemned in the sacred texts of all the major world religions. To be saved from their detrimental psychological and spiritual outcomes one needs to embrace concept of "loving of goodness for others" and "loving of prevention of harm from others".

Key Words: *Hasad khabees; Ghibtah; Shamatah; Malicious envy; Schadenfreude*

INTRODUCTION

Hasad is an Arabic word which has been used in Holy Quran with different meanings, according to the context. It's widely accepted substitute in English is Envy, a complex and agonizing emotion, which is simultaneously fascinating and dreadful with positive and negative facets depending upon the doctrine of Khair (good) and Sharr (evil). It has been discussed as two variants: Decent (or Benign, Emulative, Admiring, White). It is a morally laudable approach, with productive and motivational tendencies. It is also called Ghibtah which has been defined by Imam Yahya An-Nawawi (1234 CE to 1277 CE), as "to desire for oneself the same blessing of another, without its possessor losing it. If it is in the matters of Dunyah (worldly affairs), it is permissible and if it is in the matter of obedience (to God) it is praiseworthy". It is also called Hasad Kareem [1]. To Feather et al, it is a blend of envy and admiration [2]. Malicious (or Invidious, Destructive, Black, Envy Proper). It is a morally reprehensible approach with frustrating and negative feelings. It is actively malevolent, being focused on pulling down the envied to own level and believing oneself to be capable of taking the good away from the envied taken as a rival. Its Arabic equivalent is Hasad Khabees. To Feather et al, it is a blend of envy and resentment [2]. The effects of malicious envy, on the envied, are detrimental, ranging from mental anguish and physical damage, whether temporary or lifelong, to taking life as is evident from the history.

For the envier, the envy, itself is a punishment both bodily and spiritually. The malice of the envier ultimately turns against its own self and destroys the personality of the envier before destroying the envied one [1]. Imam Ghazali (Algazel~1058-1111 CE) has very rightly said "The blessing does not go away from the envied by your (malicious) envy." Schadenfreude, the feeling of satisfying disdainfulness, is a compound of the German nouns Schaden, meaning "damage" or "harm", and Freude, meaning "joy". It is, therefore, joy over some harm or misfortune suffered by another (malicious delight). Its Arabic equivalent is Shamatah which means joy over the affliction of the opponent. It has been shown that the actuating force or the inciting factor for schadenfreude is malicious envy. While the impetus for malicious envy is someone else's good fortune [3] that for Schadenfreude is someone else's bad fortune. In simple words malicious envy causes us pain and Schadenfreude gives us pleasure [4].

Historical considerations

"Envy is a pan-human phenomenon, universally feared, at least subconsciously, as a particularly dangerous emotion, since it implies hostility and aggression capable of destroying individuals and even societies". Prof. George M Foster University of California [5] Irrefutably, the malicious envy, being the root of all evils, is the first sin to be committed in the celestial realm and also the first one on the face of earth.

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The Holy Quran tells us of four stories, linked to malicious envy. The first is the refusal of Satan to surrender to Almighty's command to prostrate before Adam in Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah (The Cow), and (2:34). The second is the raffish act of Satan by beguiling Adam and his wife, whilst they were in paradise, described in Chapter 7, Al-A'araaf (The Heights) (7:20). The third story is about the murder of one son of Adam by the other, as narrated in Chapter 5, Al-Maidah (The Table spread) (5:27-31). The fourth one is of Prophet Yousuf (Joseph) who fell prey to malice of his stepbrothers, as detailed in Chapter 12, Yusuf (Joseph) (12:9). According to the Ram Katha (The Story of Ram) described in the Hindu sacred text, the Ramayana, the lord Ram (also known as Ramchandra), a major deity in Hinduism, fell victim to the malicious envy of his stepmother and had to be exiled for 14 years. Critical appraisal of the five stories narrated above, reveals that, in all those cases, the malice culminated in mental anguish, physical damage (temporary or lifelong) or even taking the life of the envied one. The commentary of Psalm 137, verses 8-9, is an example of Biblical Schadenfreude. The Edomites celebrated the destruction of Jerusalem. Instead of mourning over the victims' calamity, they were rejoicing over the sufferings of the afflicted ones.

Theological considerations

"There is no greater wealth than the possession of a mind that is free from Malicious Envy". Thiruvalluvar (fl 31 BCE) -Tamil Saint-Thirukkural (Sacred Couplets) All the five major religions, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism, condemn malicious envy. The theologians rate it among calamitous emotions, detestable sins and hateful vices. Malicious envy is taken as a disastrous emotion in Hinduism. In Buddhism, it is a negative emotion which makes the life miserable. The Book of Proverbs, examples of traditional Biblical Wisdom, says:

1. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before Envy?" - Proverb 27:4 AKJV
2. "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but Envy rots the bones" - Proverb 14:30 NIV

In the Holy Quran, the word 'Hasad' has been used, for benign and malicious types with different meanings, according to the context. Whereas Chapter 16 "al-Nahal" (The Bee) makes it clear that "God has caused some of you to excel in earning livelihood over others" (16:71), the envier, under satanic influence, refutes the divine power of Almighty. This is an example of Malicious Envy. What is the difference between Hasad Kareem or Ghibtah (Decent Envy) and Hasad Khabees (Malicious Envy)? The rational answer from Abu Bakr Ar-Razi (Rhazes - c854-c935 CE), celebrated physician and theologian, is: "When God has blessed your brother with a blessing, if you want it to be lost, then this is (malicious) envy, whilst if you desire the like of it for yourself, then this is Ghibtah. Shamatah is to rejoice on the afflictions of the enemy. Its corollary, in English, is Schadenfreude. When misfortune befalls others, the emotions can manifest themselves in diverse ways. The Holy Bible teaches, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." (Romans 12:15 -KJV). However, when one maliciously envies, the reverse becomes true, by rejoicing when others weep and weeping when others have cause to rejoice. The resultant "When your Gain is my Pain and your Pain is my Gain" has been mentioned in Chapter 3 Aalee-Imran of the Holy Quran, "If you (believers) are blessed with good fortune, it grieves them (non-believers), and if a calamity befalls you (believers) they (non-believers) rejoice in it" (3:120). It appears that the first part of this verse, regarding the good fortune of others, denotes Hasad Khabees, while the second part, regarding the bad fortune of others, is an example of Shamatah. The Holy Bible condemns Shamatah as, "Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble do not let your heart rejoice, or the Lord will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them." (Proverbs 24:17-18). In a Hadith (a narrated saying of the Last Messenger), it has been commanded, "Do not rejoice over the misfortune of your brother (envied), lest Almighty God has mercy

upon him and subject you to trials," (Sunan Tirmidh 2506).

Moreover, the Last Messenger also advised to ask refuge from the Almighty for the difficulties of severe calamities, having an evil end and a bad fate and from the malicious joy of the "Take refuge with God from the difficulties of severe calamities, from having an evil end and a bad fate and from the malicious joy of your enemies". Mudita is a word found within Pali, the classical and liturgical language of the Theravada Buddhist canon. It has probably no counterpart in English. It means sympathetic or unselfish joy, or joy in the good fortune of others. In Buddhism, mudita is significant as one of the "Four Immeasurable" (Brahma-vihara). Defining mudita, we might consider its opposite: schadenfreude. In the Mettam Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 46.54) the Buddha is reported to have said: "I declare that the heart's release by sympathetic joy has the sphere of infinite consciousness for its excellence" [6]. Islam commands the opposite of both malicious envy schadenfreudes. It calls for the 'loving of goodness' for others and 'loving of prevention of harm' from others. The Last Messenger said, "Love for people what you love for yourself, and you will be a believer" [Hadith-Ibn Majah].

Anatomical and physiological considerations

"Envy and schadenfreude are fortune-of-other emotions, evoked during social comparison". Jankowski and Takahashi [7] The identification of the 'envy spot on the brain' is a historical scientific discovery [8]. The pre-frontal cortex has been identified to play a major role in processing of envy, as is evident from neuroimaging and neurobiological studies [9]. Takahashi et al demonstrated a positive correlation between stronger (dACC) Dorsal Anterior Cingulate Cortex activation and degree of envy experienced during a (fMRI) Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Task [8]. Schadenfreude has been associated with activity in the ventral striatum, as assessed with fMRI [7]. Lesion-based evidence for the multidimensional nature of the emotional experiences of envy and Schadenfreude was found, in a study conducted by Santamaria-Garcia et al [10]. It is tempting to postulate that the surgical procedure of 'deep brain stimulation,' presently employed successfully to treat a variety of disabling neurological illnesses, mainly Parkinson's Disease, will be able to successfully manage malicious envy and its resultant malady, the Schadenfreude.

Malicious envy

"God's truth judges created things out of love, and Satan's truth judges them out of envy and hatred". Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945 CE) - German theologian Envy, as defined by the American Psychological Association is: "a negative emotion of discontent and resentment generated by desire for the possessions, attributes, qualities, or achievements of another (the target of the envy)" [11]. 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 excellent belonging to him, for which the envious person judges him unworthy and which for the most part, he wants himself" [12]. According to Susan Fiske, the human beings are "comparison machines," we envy only those who are similar to us in some relevant sense [13].

Whereas Austrian writer Hilde Spiel (1911 CE to 1990 CE) puts it as, "Malice is like a game of poker or tennis; you don't play it with anyone who is manifestly inferior to you", American writer Gore Vidal (1925 CE to 2012 CE) expresses it as "It is not enough to succeed; others must fail." [14]. The results of the research of Van Dijk et al suggest that envy predicts Schadenfreude when people are confronted with the misfortune of a relevant social comparison other [15]. In the past, envy, even with varied symptoms, was considered as one emotion, referred to here as the unitary approach. In the recent past a dual approach (benign and malignant) has gained significant popularity [16]. These types have already been discussed. However, there is another interesting typology. In her research, Sara Protasi [17] has described four varieties of envy:

1. Emulative Envy: It is identical to "Benign Envy" (described above).
2. Inert Envy: It is the result of being focused on the good but believing oneself to be incapable of getting that good for oneself. Due to the frustration that the good is unobtainable, there is no motivation to self-improvement. It is a painful emotion where the envier experiences despair and, at times, shame, and guilt for being envious.
3. Aggressive Envy: It is actively malevolent, being focused on the envied, and believing oneself to be capable of taking the good away from the envied taken as a rival in a duel. This model closely resembles the traditional conception of malicious envy.
4. Spiteful Envy: It is the most malicious of all, being focused on the envied like a shooting target. Since the envier believes he is unable to get the good, he is aimed at destroying both the envied and the good. It is closest to the description of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400 CE), known as the Father of English Literature, "all other sins oppose virtue, but envy is against all virtues and all goodness".

The detrimental effects of the malicious envy are not limited to individuals; rather extend to the organizations by damaging relationship of the working team and subverting overall performance [18]. In a Harvard Business Review of the malicious envy at workplace, Menon and Thompson found that it intensifies at the times of economic crises making the workers, at all levels of the commercial organization, feel that they were in jeopardy and grow to resent successful colleagues [18].

Schadenfreude and its antecedents

"What a fearful thing is it that any language should possess a word (Schadenfreude) to express the pleasure which men feel at the calamities of others, for the existence of the word bears testimony to the existence of the thing. And yet such in more languages than one may be found. Nor are there wanting, I suppose, in any language, words which are the mournful record of the strange wickedness which the genius of man, so fertile in evil, has invented. What whole processes of cruelty are sometimes wrapped up in a single word!" Richard Chenevix Trench - Archbishop of Dublin (1807-1886 CE)

Schadenfreude, the feeling of satisfying disdainfulness, is a compound of the German nouns Schaden, meaning "damage" or "harm," and Freude, meaning "joy." In German, it was first attested in the 1740s and mentioned, for the first time in English text, in 1852 CE. [19] Many cultures have coined terms to describe Schadenfreude, pronounced as Shah-den-freud-uh. In Hebrew enjoying other people's catastrophes is "Simcha la ed," in English "Epicuricity," in French "joie maligne," in Danish "skadefryd," in Dutch "leedvermaak," in Italian "gioia maliziosa," in Greek "Epikairekakia" and in Russian "zloradstvo". In Arabic, its most accepted substitute is "Shamatah". The Japanese have a saying: "The misfortunes of others taste like honey." German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860 CE) called it "an infallible sign of a thoroughly bad heart and profound moral worthlessness", as the very worst trait in human nature [14]. Aaron Ben-Zeev argues: "it would appear to be morally more perverse to be pleased with another person's misfortune than to be displeased with another person's good fortune" [20]. According to the researchers at Emory University, at the core of Schadenfreude is dehumanization, the process of perceiving a person or social group as lacking the attributes that define what it means to be human [21]. Although it is a poorly understood emotion, it may provide a valuable window into the darker side of humanity [22]. As the people experience schadenfreude to different extents, it can also be considered a trait [23]. In a Turkish study, it was found that individuals who have "dark" personalities were likely to disengage morally and had tendency of relational aggression and expressed more schadenfreude [24].

The term "Dark Triad", a trio of negative personality traits, refers to three distinct but related personality traits:

1. Narcissism: Such people are selfish, proud, arrogant, lacking in empathy, and hypersensitive to criticism.
2. Machiavellians: The characteristics of such manipulative individuals include duplicity, self-interest, and a lack of both emotion and morality.
3. Psychopathy: The characteristics of such manipulative and volatile individuals include duplicity, self-interest, and a lack of empathy or remorse.

James et al, while examining the associations between the Dark Triad traits and schadenfreude, found that those with higher levels of the Dark Triad were associated with higher levels of schadenfreude [25]. However, Paulhus and Williams have argued that these traits are not equivalent in normal populations. Instead, they are distinctive enough to warrant separate measurement [26]. While interpreting Chapter 113, al-Falaq, of the Holy Quran (113:5), "when the envier, envies," Shaykh Mufti Shafi Usmani comments, 'Envy may not cause harm to the object until the envier takes a practical step with word or deed to satisfy his heart' [27]. What is the actuating force or the inciting factor? This is a researchable question.

Let us try to answer.

The link between malicious envy and schadenfreude is regularly found, the four related variables being:

1. Perception that the targeted person is unworthy of the advantages he is enjoying.
2. Resentment (bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly) or personal anger towards the target person.
3. Personal dislike towards the target person.
4. Feeling of inferiority.
5. Perception of deservedness of the misfortune is an important predictor of schadenfreude, which is evoked when another's misfortune is perceived as deserved [28]. It might have an effect via anger or resentment. Van Dijk et al found that participants experienced more schadenfreude toward high achievers with undeserved achievements, as opposed to those with deserved achievements [29]. In simple words, people argue that an unfairly advantaged person deserves a misfortune.

Dislike towards the person whom a misfortune falls is an important determinant of schadenfreude. It could be an antecedent of envy, people envy those they dislike more. It could also be a consequence, if we envy people, we start disliking them [30]. Feeling of inferiority is another antecedent of schadenfreude. Leach and Spears conclude that "schadenfreude has more to do with inferiority of the self than the success of others" [31]. Despite the long-standing debate, contemporary studies, as summed by van de Ven, et al conclude that schadenfreude is independent of other known antecedents such as perceived unreservedness of the other's advantage, disliking of the other, anger and inferiority [32]. In the recent past, "Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS)" has been linked with schadenfreude. In Australia and New Zealand, the term refers to the expectation that poppies should grow together and "If one grows too tall, it is cut down to size." Usually, "cutting down the tall poppy" is used to describe those who, because of their inferiority complex, belittle others for latter's achievements. In a scenario used in a study, conducted in Flinders University Australia, in which either a high achiever (tall poppy) or an average achiever was caught cheating during an examination, the results were interesting.

The participants felt more happy when the former was caught as compared to the latter facing the same misfortune. The schadenfreude about being caught and expelled was positively related to perceived deservingness, certainly for the high achiever [33]. In another study, the college students reported feeling more Schadenfreude in response to another student's academic failure when the target was an overachiever as opposed to an average [15]. An fMRI study demonstrated that the mishap occurring to an already envied person results in greater brain activation, associated with schadenfreude, than the same happening to a person who is not envied [8]. In a laboratory study, conducted in Würzburg in 2015, electromyography pads were attached to the faces of 32 footballers to measure their smiles and frowns while watching TV clips of successful and unsuccessful football penalties by the German and Dutch teams. It was found that when the Dutch missed a goal, the German fans' smiles appeared more quickly and were broader than when the German team scored a goal themselves. It was concluded that the smiles of Schadenfreude and joy are indistinguishable except in one crucial respect, we smile more with the failures of our enemies than at our own success [34].

CONCLUSION

"What is destined (for you) will reach you, even if underneath the two mountains. Conversely, what is not destined (for you), will not reach you, even if between two lips". Imam Abu Hamid Ghazali (Algazel—c 1058-1111 CE) - Philosopher, Theologian. The major cause of malicious envy and the resultant schadenfreude is dissatisfaction and protest towards the discretion and distribution of bounties by the Supreme Bestower. The envier, by his malice, challenges the Decision-Making Attribute of The Almighty, the All-Giver and the All-Wise. To be saved from the detrimental psychological and spiritual outcomes of the deadly sins: malicious envy and the resultant schadenfreude, one needs to embrace concept of "loving of goodness for others" and "loving of prevention of harm from others". To be contended with what one has and to enjoy the God-gifted blessings and to appreciate the achievements of others is the healthiest approach. Moreover, we should resist the urge to gloat over others' misfortune.

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