

Slander, A Society Polluted With Sins

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There is no doubt that at the present time societies suffer from various types of spiritual deviations and psychological corruption, and have failed to develop their manners at the same pace that they were able to secure material luxuries for themselves. Such societies face a great number of acute diseases which have overwhelmed the ocean of life with pains as days go by. Those who earnestly struggle to avoid pains end up intoxicated with sins and in search of refuge in the lap of lowliness in order to their spiritual pains and anxieties. Yet, the sun of felicity shall never beam its bright rays lives.

These people have deceived themselves believing that they have become free of all restrictions and rules; and are now competing in the fields of Lowliness and failure. When we carefully examine the lives of these people who lack manners, we find that the rapid advancement of material methods the aims for which they were invented. They have made the material phenomena an axis for their hopes and wishes, and the gloominess of sins has overshadowed their societies.

It would have been more productive if they had used their vast wealth, which they spend on deviation and disarray, in the field of implementing good authentic manners, which cannot be changed. Nevertheless, the norms for their accepted behavior is constantly changing. Needless to say that unless noble traits become the judging point for good personalities in any given society the members of that society will not observe them but rather will become overwhelmingly influenced by the social mind which leads them to imitate others actions, ignoring any possible adverse affects. In the light of this we should realize that contemporary civilizations lack the ability to bring about healthy, noble characteristics, nor can they guarantee salvation or happiness for any society.

Dr. Carl, a famous French scholar, said: "We need a world where every one can find a proper place for himself without discriminating between material or spiritual needs. With this we are able to realize how we can live, for we realize then that advancing on the path of life without a righteous guide is a dangerous affair.

Now that we realize this danger, it is amazing how we have neglected the search for methods of reasonable thinking. The fact is that only a handful of people have really discovered this danger. The majority of people are overtaken by their lusts and are so intoxicated with them that, regardless of how much advanced technology offers them, they are unwilling to give up

any of their illegal joys for the sake of a decent civilization.

"Life today is like a magnificent river which runs down a steep slope, washing our hopes and dreams into the sea of corruption and deviation, for the sake of satisfying immediate desires and instant needs. Many people have devised new needs and now struggle hard to fulfill these needs. In addition to these needs, there are other things that bring temporary happiness to them, such as slander, backbiting, aimless conversation, etc. which are in fact more harmful than alcohol to their health."

One of the social deviations on which we elaborate is slander; it is unnecessary to explain the technical meaning of slander, for it is known to everyone

The Disadvantages of Slander

The most dangerous disadvantage of slander is the destruction of the spiritual personality of the slanderer's conscience. Those who violate the natural path of their thought will lose their thinking balance and their excellent behavioral system; in addition to harming people's feelings by revealing their secrets and faults.

Slander destroys the throne of human morality and deprives man of his dignity and noble qualities with amazing speed. In fact, it burns the veins of morality in the hearts of the slanderer to ashes. Slander diverts pure thoughts to the point that the gates of reason and understanding come to a dead end. When we reflect on its harm to society, we discover that it has done great damage to its members.

Slander plays a devastating role in bringing about enmity and hatred among the different members of society. If allowed to spread in any nation, slander will deprive it of greatness, a good reputation and create an unamendable dissension in that nation.

It is unfortunate that we must acknowledge the fact that slander has found its way into all social classes. This point confirms the fact just as the events of life are related, so are the spiritual and psychological deviations that may appear in a social class penetrating to all other classes.

As a result of the spread of slander, pessimism and suspicion shadow the social mind; people loose trust in each other and replace it with mistrust. With this in mind, we can safely say that unless society enlightens itself with brotherly thinking and noble qualities, it will never gain harmony or unity therein. A society which lacks the blessings of noble traits is surely distanced from life's real characteristics

What Causes Slander to Spread

Regardless of the fact that slander is a manifestation of practical sins, it is directly related to human spirituality. Slander is a sign of a dangerous underlying psychological disorder for which we must search the spiritual and psychological realms.

Behavioral scholars mention a number of reasons for the spread of slander. The most important being: envy, anger, conceit, self-righteousness and suspicion. Undoubtedly, every action by any individual stems from a certain condition lying in his conscience, and as a result of a manifestation of such conditions, which are like burning coal under cold ashes, the tongue, the translator of man's feelings, speaks out slander.

When a certain characteristic becomes deeply rooted in man's conscience, it blinds his eyes and rules his thought. One of the reasons that slander is so widespread is that slanderers are heedless of its dangerous after-effects. We see people who refrain from most other sins but don't think twice about committing this miserable crime. The repetition of slander without concern as to its after-effects deprives man of control of his ability to refrain from following his lusts regardless of his knowledge of their dangerous reality.

These people endeavor to achieve integrity and perfection. Individuals like this remove themselves from reality by refusing to bear the least bit of pain in the path of obtaining happiness. In this way, they fall prey to the rule of their lowly lusts.

Those who do not observe their own or other's dignity are not abiding by the law of ethics; and a person who makes life an arena for his lusts. encroaching upon other's rights deserves misery.

Poor quality of manners originates from weak faith, and manners are a result, of belief (faith).

If a person has no faith, he has no motive to behave well or observe moral excellence. Everyone has an opinion as to the best method of rescuing people from deviation and moral corruption. In my opinion the most effective way is to encourage the qualities of good will in people by awakening the calls of goodness and human instincts in them and leading them to exploit the treasures of their minds on the path of obtaining happiness. By bringing people's attention to the effects of ill manners and strengthening their will, we may become victorious over all evil characteristics, and replace the rails of darkness with noble traits.

Dr. Jago writes: "When we intend to fight an undesirable habit we must first recognize its evil results. Then we should acknowledge the habit and finally reflect on the incidents which made us victims of such a habit. If we acquaint ourselves with the stages of this habit, we will become triumphant over the inspiration of that habit by feeling the joy of eradicating it."

With the existence of the seeds of integrity in the human soul and by providing it with the

methods of defense, we are able to recognize the reasons behind misguidance and confusion and eradicate them from our souls and consciences, erecting a strong barrier in the face of our endless wants and lusts.

Actions present the actuality of people to us and therefore are reflections of their honor and reality. For this reason, if a man desires happiness he must select his righteous actions in order to transform them into valuable seeds of happiness. Men must also keep in mind that Allah is aware of all his actions no matter how minor they might seem.

According to one philosopher: "Do not say that the universe has no reason nor sense, for by saying so you accuse yourselves of lacking reason and/or senses. Thus, if the universe had no reason or sense, you, too, would be senseless and unreasonable."

In the same manner that a society needs material essentials to be able to continue living, it needs a certain amount of harmony required to maintain spiritual ties between its various members. A society which strictly observes the heavy burden of its social duties can greatly benefit from them in obtaining integrity.

In order for us to bring our souls out of the darkness into light, we must strengthen all noble thoughts in our minds to counter any destructive ideas or inspirations. By guarding our tongues against slander, we take the first step towards happiness. In order for us to counter the wide spread of corruption, it is incumbent on us to create a psychological revolution among the people. We can do this by observing the rights of others which in turn will cause the roots of humanity and spirituality to grow, thus taking another step towards the advocacy of noble traits .on which the survival of every society depends

Religion Verses ill Manners

The Holy Qur'an manifests the reality of slander in one short but eloquent verse: "Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it..." (The Holy Qur'an, 49:12) Therefore, in the same way that it is natural for a human to reject eating the flesh of a dead person, his reason should resent slander. The religious, leaders gave as much attention to correcting the feelings and psychological characteristics of people as they gave to their struggle to eradicate polytheism and atheism.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "I have not been sent save to perfect noble manners". People have been guided to morality by the great Islamic school, backed by strong and logical understanding. Islam considers any encroachment on the borders of morality a great and reprehensible sin.

In fact, Islam did not stop at categorizing slander as a grave sin, but has made it the duty of all

Muslims to defend the honor of one who is being slandered.

"If a man is slandered while you are present, be a helper to the man, reprehend the slanderer, and depart the group."^[1]

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "He who defends his brother's honor in his absence, then it is his right upon Allah to safeguard him from the Fire."^[2]

The Messenger (S) also said: "He who slanders a Muslim during the month of Ramadan, will not be awarded for his fasting."^[3]

The Messenger (S) also described the Muslim as follows: "A Muslim is one who from whose hands and tongues other Muslims are safe."

It is clear that if an individual allows his tongue to slander his Muslim brother, then he has certainly violated the rules of morality, and becomes a criminal in the eyes of humanity and Islam. All Islamic schools have unanimously agreed that slander is a major sin; for the slanderer violates the Divine commands and crouches upon the rights of others, heedless of the Creator's commands.

Just as an absent person cannot defend his honor and dignity, a dead person is unable to defend himself; therefore, it is the duty of every one to respect the rules concerning the dignity of the dead.

Slander and backbiting are one sort of spiritual pressure. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Slander is the strain of the weak".^[4]

Dr. H. Shakhter said: "Disappointment in obtaining one's needs results in spiritual torture. This spiritual torture instigates us to depict a form of defense. People differ in the kind of action they take in such situations. If a man feels that others do not give him the kind of attention he expects, for fear of being rejected, he chooses isolation and loneliness over socialization. He may sit in the corner of a gathering silent and secluded, not speaking to anyone, criticizing them; or laughing by himself for no reason. Or he may argue with others, slander the absent, and criticize the rest until he proves his presence in this manner."^[5]

Dr. Mann, in his book entitled The Fundamentals of Psychology, writes: "In order to preserve our honor, we may try to substitute our defeats or shortcomings by blaming others for them. For instance, if we fail an exam we blame the teacher for the questions given; or if we cannot get promoted to a position, we put the position down or slander those who occupy it. Or we may hold others responsible for our inability while in fact they are not."

In conclusion, in order to develop good traits, we must observe ourselves and maintain pure intentions. We should start with ourselves, so that we can obtain appropriate grounds for our happiness and the happiness of our society in all fields

Notes:

[1] Nahj al- Fasahah p. 48

[2] Nahj al- Fasahah p. 613

[3] Bihar al- Anwar v.16, p. 179

[4] Ghurar al-Hikam p.36

[5] Rushde Shaksiyyat