Lying and Hypocrisy

Lying

The Position of Manners in Society

Manners are an essential factor in societies and in the perfection of nations. Manners were born as a part of humanity. No one denies the vital role that manners play in bringing peace, happiness, and felicity, to man's spirit; nor does anyone doubt their useful and decisive influence in strengthening the fundamentals of the integrity of conduct and thinking on both the social and public levels. Can you find anyone who suffers from honesty and truthfulness and searches for happiness in the shadow of treachery and lying?

Manners are so important that even the nations that do not believe in religion respect them and feel that it is essential for them to abide by some set of ethics to be able to advance on the winding path of life. Everywhere societies are found and under all conditions manners share some similarities.

The famous British scholar Samuel Smiles says:

"Manners are one of the powers that move this world. In their best senses manners are a manifestation of human nature at its highest peak, for manners are a presentation of human nature at humanity. Individuals who excel in any field of life endeavor to attract the people's attention to them with every means of honor and respect. People trust these individuals and imitate their perfection, because people believe that they possess all the gifts of this life, and that if it had not been for the existence of such individuals, life would not be worth living.

If inherited genetic features attract the attention and appreciation of people, then manners necessitate gratification and respect of all well-behaved people. This is so because the first set of characteristics is the work of genes and the second set, the fruit of pragmatism and the power of thought's and it is the mind that rules us and manages our affairs throughout our lives.

"Those who have reached the peaks of excellence and greatness are like bright lights clearing the way for humanity and guiding people toward the paths of morality and piety. If the members of a society anywhere lack good behavior, they will be unable to reach excellence regardless of how much freedom and political rights they enjoy. It is not essential for nations to possess vast areas of land to live honorably; for there are many nations with large populations who own vast areas of land yet lack all the necessities of perfection and greatness. Thus, if the morality of a nation becomes corrupt, that nation will eventually vanish."

All agree with what this scholar has said; yet. there is a great difference between knowing the facts and acting on them that matters here. There are many people who substitute their animalistic inclinations in the place of good conduct. They substitute excellent morals for lusts which appear in life like bubbles appear sparkling on the water's surface.

Man has undoubtedly come out of the factory of life bringing with him completely contradicting instincts. Now man is constantly the subject of a fierce struggle between the traits of evil and goodness: the first step to eradicate man's evil traits is to capture his lusts and anger in this battlefield for they are the cause of his animalistic power, envy.

It is incumbent on anyone who wishes to achieve perfection to avoid extravagance on either side and to rid himself of his harmful inclinations that stem from such traits and change them into useful and beautiful feelings. The reason for this is that man benefits greatly from his feelings, but such feelings can only appear good if they are obedient to the commands of reason.

According to one psychologist: "Human feelings are like a container that is divided into two sections. The first section being offensive and the other defensive., If man can direct his defensive feelings to become victorious over the offensive ones, then he will gain control of his existence and lead it as he desires not as they desire."

Those who have balanced their internal powers with their lusts and that which their dreams prefer, and have created a sense of peace between their minds and hearts, have undoubtedly followed the path of happiness between the problems of life with a will free of weakness, failure or defeat. It is true that man's abilities have reached a very advanced level of practicality, movement and speed, which give mankind the chance to reach deep into the depths of seas and oceans using his thinking powers.

Yet, what we observe today of the continuous misery and fluctuation in the heart of civilization has reached the point that it has become like a toy in the hands of problems and inflictions. This can only be blamed on the diversion from the path of noble traits and spiritual values.

Dr. C. Roman writes:

"Science has advanced in this era but manners and feelings are still in their primitive stages. If manners and feelings had advanced along with reason and mind, then we could possibly state that mankind advanced in their humanity too."

According to the laws of balance and equality, the fate of a civilization that lacks noble traits faces destruction and extinction. The reason for the persisting miseries and imperfections in various societies is a phenomenon of people's needs for moral values. Values that would spread the spirit of life in the flesh of the dying civilization and grant it the powers it righteously

.deserves

The Disadvantages of Lying

There are as many advantages for truthfulness as there are disadvantages for lying. Truthfulness is one of the most beautiful traits and lying one of the ugliest. The tongue translates man's internal feelings to the outside, therefore if lying stems from envy and or enmity it is one of the dangerous signs of anger; and if it stems from stinginess or habit, it is from the effects of the burning lusts of man.

If man's tongue becomes poisoned with lying and its filth appears on him, its effects are like the effects of the autumn wind on the leaves of trees. Lying extinguishes the light of man's existence and lights the fire of treachery in him. It also has an amazing effect in terminating the ties of unity and harmony between men and spreads hypocrisy. As a matter of fact, a great deal of misguidance springs from false claims and empty words. For men with evil intentions, lying is an open door to help them reach their selfish goals by concealing the facts behind their magical words and capturing innocent people with their poisonous lies.

Liars leave no time for themselves to think or reflect. They rarely think about the possible conclusions, claiming that "no one will ever discover their secrets." In their words we find many mistakes and contradictions, liars will eternally become covered with shame, failure and disgrace. It is true, therefore, to say that "liars have bad memories".

One of the factors which spread this resentful trait which poisons social manners is the saying: "Constructive lying is better than the painful truth."

This saying has become a veil to cover this lonely trait, and many people resort to it in order to justify their resentful lies. These people ignore what reason and jurisprudence say about this issue. Islam and reason command that if a Muslim's soul, honor or essential belongings are endangered it is his obligation to defend them by any means possible, including lying. It is a valid maxim that say, "Necessities legalize the prohibited".

Necessary lying has its limitations, it must stop on the border of necessity. If men widen the circle of "constructiveness" to include their personal wishes and lusts, there would not be a lie without a so-called need behind it. One of the great scholars says in this regard:

"There is a reason for everything. It is possible for us to invent factors and reasons for all actions. Even the professional criminals have excuses for their crimes. Therefore, there are advantages and needs for every lie ever uttered. In other words, every lie that is told serves a purpose and the liar is good: if a liar gained nothing from lying there would be no reason to hide the facts. This stems from the fact that it is man's nature to consider everything that may

be advantageous to him to be good. If man suspects that his personal benefits may be endangered by the truth, or imagines there is goodness in lying, then he lies without any hesitation for he sees evil in the truth and goodness in lying.''

We should not ignore the fact that lying is a great evil, and that if some harm is removed by lying (when permitted), it is with the view of countering the greater evil with a lesser one.

The freedom of speech is more important than the freedom of thinking because if someone makes a mistake when exercising his freedom to think, only that individual is harmed. One the other hand, when exercising the freedom of speech, the welfare of the society is at stake. The advantages and disadvantages of freedom of speech affect the whole society.

Ghazali has said:

“The tongue is a beneficial gift. It is a delicate creature, which regardless of its small size performs an extremely important job when it comes to obedience and disobedience. Both disbelief and faith are manifested with the tongue, and they are the ultimate worship or disobedience.”

He then added:

“Only those who can confine their tongues to religion are able to avoid evil. These people never set their tongues free unless it is beneficial to their lives, faith, and eternal place of rest.”

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. Kimiyaye Sa’adat

It is important to avoid lying and contradicting the truth in front of children so that this evil trait does not enter their hearts. Children learn how to act and speak from their families and those around them. Therefore, if lying and/or contradicting the truth penetrates the family atmosphere, children will be affected and in turn be inflicted with the same illnesses.

Morris T. Yash said:

“The habit of thinking, speaking, and endeavoring to find the facts is only practiced by those who were brought up surrounded by it as children”.

Lying is Prohibited by Religion

The Holy Qur’an explicitly categorizes liars as disbelievers:

“Only they forge the lie who do not believe in Allah’s communications, and these are the liars.”

It is understood from this verse that believers do not subject themselves to the filth of fabrication.

The Messenger of Allah (S) stated:

“Adhere to truthfulness; for truthfulness guides to Paradise. Surely a man continues to tell the truth and searches for it until he is written as truthful near Allah. And avoid falsehood; for it

leads to the Fire. Man continues to lie until he is written as a liar near Allah."[1]

Among the characteristics of liars is that they only believe after annoying insistence. The Messenger (S) said:

"Surely those who are most frequent in believing people are most frequent in telling the truth; and those who mostly doubt people are the most frequent liars."

Dr. Samuel Smiles writes:

"Some people assume that their own lowly characteristics are normal to other's natures while, in fact, we know that people are mirrors of their own manners. Hence, the good and bad that we see in others is not but a reflection of that which is in our consciences."

Courageous people with good manners and conduct cannot bear falsehood nor can they accept to be polluted by such filth. Liars suffer from a mental disorder which keeps them from speaking the truth. Those who resort to lying subconsciously feel weak and humiliated, for lying is the front of the weak and the cowards.

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) is quoted as saying;

"If entities were materialized, surely truthfulness would stand with courage and cowardice would stand with lying."[2]

Dr. Raymond Peach said:

"Lying is the best defensive weapon of the weak and the quickest way to avoid danger. Lying in most cases is a reaction to weakness and failure. If you were to ask a child, 'Did you touch this candy?' or 'Did you break this vase?' If the child realizes that admitting the mistake will result in punishment, his instinct tells him to deny it."[3]

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) stated the clear benefits of truthfulness in a clear narration:

"The truth teller achieves three things: (other's) trust, love, and respect."

"Be not mislead by their prayers and fasting, for a man can become fervently used to prayers and fasting so that if he would abandon them he would feel lonely. Rather, try them when it comes to telling the truth and fulfilling trusts."[4]

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said on this subject: "Lying is the most abominable trait."[5]

And Dr. Samuel Smiles writes:

"Lying is the ugliest and the most disgusting trait among all lowly characteristics. It is important that man makes his only goal throughout the various stages of life to be truthfulness and honesty, and not to give them up in any case for any other cause or goal."[6]

Islam based all. Its behavioral and correction processes on faith, and made faith the basis for man's happiness. "Manners without faith are like a palace built on mud ice."

Or, as another scholar explains:

“Manners without faith are like seeds planted on rock or between thorns; they eventually wither away and die. If the most noble traits are not motivated by faith, they are like dead crops near a living person.”

Religion rules the heart and mind together, it is the arena for bringing harmony to them. Religious feelings reduce material wants, and create an impenetrable barrier between the believer and lowliness. Those who are comfortable by belief always have assigned goals and feel at ease.

“Surely with the remembrance of Allah the hearts feel at ease.” (The Holy Qur’an, 13:28)

Islam judges man’s character by the degree of his belief and his favorable traits, and fervently struggles to strengthen these two factors. For instance, Islam has made man’s faith a guarantee for the credibility of his statements when he executes an oath. According to the Islamic penal code, a Muslim’s oath can replace evidence, under certain circumstances. and is therefore decisive in settling disputes. Islam has also made man’s testimony a method for proving rights.

Thus, if lying appears in its red fearful shape-in any of the above mentioned cases, than it is clear how great damage can result form such behavior.

In the Holy Qur’an lying is considered to be an unforgivable sin.

“And never accept a testimony from them.” (The Holy Qur’an, 24:4)

The basis of the intensity of the sin of lying is distinctly related to how much damage is done by such a sin. Hence, because lying under oaths and in testimonies is more damaging, the punishment for such a sin is more severe.

Lying is a technique leading to all other evil traits.

Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) said:

“All spiteful traits are placed in a house and the key to this house is lying”. 7

In order to further clarify what Imam al-Askari (a.s.) said, we bring your attention to the following prophetic narration.

A man came to the Messenger of Allah (S) and asked him for some advice. The Prophet (S) replied:

“Abandon lying and equip yourself with truthfulness.”

The man, who was an invariable sinner departed promising to never again commit another transgression.

Indeed, those who keep company with the honest and are habitually truthful, both verbally and practically will surely live a life free of sorrow and deprivation; their minds and spirits will shine with belief far from instability and fear, and far from vague thinking.

The slightest reflection on the result of lying whether related to religion or material gains will teach a most valuable lesson to anyone who craves to lead a life of honor and dignity. The after effects of lying are but lashes of warning.

Truthfulness can only be achieved under the shadow of manners and belief. Whenever these conditions are weak, human happiness does not have a chance of surviving.

Hypocrisy

Endeavor to Cherish Your Personality

The most important element in happiness and the most exalted characteristic that man can enjoy is perfection. This valuable spiritual jewel grants life greatness and authenticity, and guides man to the peak of honor and dignity. All men are humanly equal. Yet, they vary and differ just as their ability to reason and think do. Man's spiritual habits and behavioral characteristics also differ. The characteristics of a person are all that which distinguishes individuals from each other and define everyone's abilities and social positions. Moreover, the human character directly influences us more than any other factor.

Man was placed in this universe to endeavor to develop his capabilities and widen the horizons of his thinking and real realization; thus, improving his knowledge and strengthening his spirit in order to achieve perfection. In other words, man is in this world to qualify himself for the fulfillment of his specific duties. With this in mind, it is the responsibility of every individual to establish a healthy and honest personality, and to work in the path of happiness. The harder man works in this path the more he realizes the true meaning of success. There is nothing more capable of giving him the strength to venture into the rough sea of like than healthy personality.

According to Schopenhauer:

"The variations between personalities are natural and their role in bringing sorrow and happiness into man's life is more than that which is brought by the difference between various human differences. This is because the characteristics of a personality (such as productive reasoning and pure affections) can never be compared to what man can gain from material belongings.

For a reasonable individual is able to create an enjoyable living for himself even if he is secluded. On the other hand an ignorant person cannot rid himself of laziness although he could have all the luxuries of life, even if he were to spend large sums of money to do so. Reason, management, and the ability to be affectionate, are among the vital factors which bring man closer to reaching the goal of his life and open the gates of happiness towards him.

Therefore, it's our duty to give special importance to the development of these factors more than the development of material gains.

All characteristics and habits share a position in deciding man's future, and every thought and feeling greatly affect these characteristics and habits. It is notable to mention that the manners and conduct of every person are constantly changing towards perfection or otherwise.

The first steps towards developing and perfecting the personality is to learn the methods of exploiting the hidden powers and capabilities of one's self, and prepare the self to eradicate all the factors which may pose problems in the path of perfection. Man can then purify himself from all lowliness. If a person does not know his own value, he or she will never be able to bring life to it, nor will he be able to create any fruitful changes therein.

Words and actions hold no real value unless they stem from the depth of one's own existence. Words manifest the holdings of the mind, it is as if they were translations of the otherwise hidden secrets therein. When Words contradict one's actions this speaks of an unstable .Personality and consequently has devastating effects on the individual's life

Hypocrisy: The Ugliest Trait

Hypocrisy is Undoubtedly one of the most detestable qualities. It is in man's nature to accept happiness and freedom; and to upgrade itself to the highest degree of dignity. Yet when man becomes polluted with lying, violation of promises and breaching of agreements, hypocrisy finds itself a wide arena and is ready to penetrate such polluted natures.

Hypocrisy advances in these circumstances until it eventually becomes an acute disease. Hypocrisy not only prevents individuals from reaching the truth or even attempting to discover it, but it also becomes an indestructible dam placed on the path of acquiring noble characteristics. Of course, all that stands in the path of sensible conduct and psychological integrity; and contradicts the life of happiness which relies on spiritual perfection.

Hypocrisy is a dangerous epidemic which threatens man's honor and dignity, leads to irresponsibility and lowly traits, and replaces his self-confidence with Suspicion, pessimism and anxiety.

Those who reach the dangerous point in their behavioral misconduct convince themselves that they want the best for all people. When this troubled person (hypocrite) deals with an unharmonious couple he presents himself as a dear friend and faithful advisor and then turns around and puts the other down, greatly criticizing him, while in fact he feels no spiritual or moral relations to either of them.

False compliments, unconditional acceptance of other ideologies, and refraining from the

defending righteousness when it is essential, are all characteristics of hypocrites.

According to a great scholar, hypocrites are more dangerous than archenemies:

“Enemies have the characteristics of being both covert and overt enemies; for animosity have just one color. I wish that friends were like enemies as far as pretence is concerned. Undoubtedly friends that are hypocrites are worse than the common hypocrite.”

Because the hypocrite is unable to win the hearts of those he deals with or gain love and respect, his life is full of humiliation and disgust. His attempts to conceal the facts prevent him from living a secure, stable, and anxiety free life; for he is in constant fear of the inevitable discovery of what he really is.

One of the elements of social sorrow is the way hypocrisy is spreading and the lack of honesty and sincerity among various classes of society. If hypocrisy penetrates the structure of a community and overwhelms the hearts of its members, then in addition to the deceit and lowliness which become apparent among them; such a community will face an inevitable downfall.

The British scholar S. Smiles said:

“The conduct of contemporary politicians is on the path of corruption and disorder. The opinions which they give in their reception rooms varies from those they give in public speeches. For instance, these politicians praise the people for their patriotic feelings and then turn around and laugh at the same in their private meetings.

“Fluctuations of thought exist in our era more than at any time in the past, and principles change and vary as interests do. I believe that hypocrisy will gradually crawl out of its lowly shell and eventually become a praiseworthy quality; for if the upper class of a society becomes used to hypocrisy, all other class will follow adopting the same views, for they derive their habits and conduct from the higher classes.

“The fame which is gained today is earned when the evil traits of the people are exposed, ignoring the noble qualities of ally

There is a Russian proverb that says:

“He who has a strong spine can not be promoted to higher position.”

The spines of men who adore fame eventually become weak and flexible so as to follow the tides of reputation by deceiving people, concealing the facts from the public and speaking exactly as the lower classes long to hear. Worse yet is to exploit the dissention and hypocrisy which might exist between the different classes of society. Such fame cannot be viewed by righteous save with disgust and resentment, and its advocates have no respect or honor.

Sincerity and honesty are manifestations of a pure conscience and are the most honorable

traits of life. These traits, which are found in those with truly pure souls, harmonize personalities and bring peace, unity and strength into the community. It is natural for man to love his faithful friends more than those he doubts, and as the love of the faithful increases, the hatred for the hypocrites also increases.

Burn Down the Dwellings of Hypocrisy

When Islam started advancing rapidly, the party of hypocrites who felt that they were threatened more than all other opposition parties attempted to destroy the pillars of the Islamic government. They made oaths to the Prophet (S), then declined to fulfill their duties when the time came for them to execute them. They also criticized the believers.

This destructive and corruptive minority was not able to tolerate the people's faith and devotion to the Messenger of Allah (S). The leader of these hypocrites was Abu Amir (the priest), who was the chief of the People of the Book in Medina, where he gained a reputation among the people for being a religious man. He prophesied the advent of the Prophet (S) prior to his Message and during the first stages of his Prophet hood. Later he was unable to tolerate the loss of his reputation because of the spread of Islam, so he migrated to Mecca and joined the polytheists war against the Prophet (S) at Badr and Uhud.

Abu Amir then fled to the Romans where he began plotting to eradicate the tree of Islam. It was with his instigation that his companions built the "Mosque of Dissension in Medina. At the time this Mosque was constructed no one was allowed to build a mosque without the consent of the Holy Messenger (S). The Prophet (S) granted them permission to build the mosque and when he returned from the battle of Tabuk, the people of the mosque called the Prophet to honor the opening.

Beforehand, Allah, the Almighty, had revealed to His Messenger the men's evil intentions and the Prophet refused to go and commanded the army to destroy the mosque.

"Only he shall visit the mosques of Allah who believes in Allah and the latter day, and keeps up prayer and pays the poor rate and fears none but Allah; so (as for) these, it may be that they are of the followers of the right course." (The Holy Qur'an 9:18)

In this manner their treacherous plotting was foiled, and the first place of hypocrisy was burnt.

The Holy Qur'an greatly criticizes this group and condemns them in many verses:

"And there are some people who say: 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day'; and they are not at all believers.

"They desire to deceive Allah and those who believe, and they do not perceive.

"There is disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease and they shall have a painful

chastisement because they lied.

“And when it is said to them. ‘Do not make mischief in the land’, they say: ‘We are but peace-makers’.

“Now surely they themselves are the mischief-makers, but they do not perceive.”

(The Holy Qur’an 2: 8-12)

Hypocrisy is a spiritual disease; this might have been what Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) was pointing out when he said:

“Be aware of the people of hypocrisy for they are the misled, the misleading, and the leaders to wrong paths. Their hearts are ill; and their appearances pure.”8

Dr. H. Shakhter said:

“There are some people who argue for no other reason except to become famous. These people are not sure about their beliefs nor do they really believe in what they argue about, yet they would rather criticize others instead of remaining silent as it is difficult for them to tolerate others indifference to them. Another type of people are those that when they notice people’s indifference to them, follow the path of hypocrisy to create dissension and hence prove their existence.”

Rushd Shakhsiyyat

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

“A hypocrite: His words are beautiful, and his inner (conscience) is ill.”9

A hypocritical person does not have a group he can rely on, therefore, he constantly lives in confusion. The Messenger (S) described hypocrisy by saying: “A hypocrite is like a sheep confused between two herds.” 10

The Prophet (S) revealed to us three signs of a hypocrite when he said:

“And there are three signs of hypocrites: When they speak they lie. When they make promises they do not keep them. And when they are trusted they cheat.” 11

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

“It is evil for a worshipper to have two faces and two tongues, praise his brother in his presence and slander him in his absence. If he gives to his brother he envies him, and if his brother is tested he fails (to help him).” 12

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) pointed out another characteristic of hypocrites when he stated that they are always defensive but critical of others: “The hypocrite is a flatterer of himself, and a defamer of other people.” 13

Dr. S. Smiles said:

“Flatterers and hypocrites always think about themselves and are never concerned with others.

They concentrate on their own actions and affairs until their minor and lowly existence becomes their universe and great idol."14

Imam as-Sadiq (S) explains Luqman's following admonition to his son:

"A hypocrite has three signs: his tongue contradicts his heart, his heart contradicts his conduct, an his appearance contradicts his inner (beliefs)."15

Man's thoughts reveal his real self. People who attempt to conceal what is in their hearts beneath hypocrisy and flattery will never be successful, for their reality and the truth will eventually be revealed.

A man said to Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.):

"When a person says to me: 'I like (or love) you.' How do I know that he is telling the truth?"

The Imam (a.s.) answered the man:

"Examine your heart, if you like him then he likes you. Look in your heart, if it refuses your companion then one of you has done something."16

Dr. Mardin said:

"If you really think that you can introduce yourself with words then you have deceived yourselves. Because others will not judge you by the norms you wish to assign. Rather they will know you by your actions, words, conditions, conscience, and your inner self. The people who you talk to will notice the strengths and weaknesses of your ideas, your hypocrisy and reality from your speech and even your silence. The people around you will discover your hopes and intentions, and then form their opinions about you; even if you object to some of their views about you, they will be unwilling to change them.

"Sometimes we hear people say: 'I can't even stand to look at a specific person.' These individuals cannot tolerate the hated ones, even though they may have some praiseworthy traits or a pleasant appearance. People who feel this way do so because they have read the thoughts and feelings of others. We also feel that Way about some people. This is the effect of thoughts. All our thoughts and feelings spread around us and others sense them with the rays of their thought"17

Imam (a.s.) said:

"Healthy consciences have more truthful testimonies than eloquent tongues."18

When we say hypocrisy, we mean it in a broader sense than just ideological, behavioral, moral, or verbal hypocrisy, for Islam has called all its adherents to a total and comprehensive unity, so as to lead them to a sincere life free of hypocrisy, dissension and treachery.

Notes

1. Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 418
2. Ghurar al-Hikam p. 605
3. Ma Wa Farzandane Ma
4. Usul al-Kafi v.1 p. 460
5. Ghurar al-Hikam p. 175
6. Akhlaq
7. Jami'Sa'adat v.2 p. 318
8. Ghurar al-Hikam p. 146
9. Ghurar al-Hikam p. 60
10. Nahj al-Fasahah p. 562
11. Bihar al-Anwar v.15, p. 30
12. Bihar al-Anwar v. 15, p 172
13. Ghurar al-Hikam p.88
14. Akhlaq.
15. Bihar al-Anwar v.15, p. 30
16. Al-Wafi v.3, p. 106
17. Pirozi Fikr
18. Ghurar al-Hikam p. 105