

## An Analysis of Civilizational Vices: Focusing on Envy and Its Macro-Social Consequences in Sūrat al-Baqarah

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### Introduction

Civilization represents the highest order of human relational systems among diverse social groups. A civilization grounded in the human fiṭrah (primordial disposition) aims at self-mastery and moral refinement-unlike civilizations built upon instinct and material domination. Such a civilization requires a society founded on ethical virtues. Inner purity and moral excellence are of greater importance than merely external legal systems, as only through adherence to ethical principles can corruption and injustice be prevented.

While taqwā (piety) prepares the human heart for constructive civilizational participation, its absence gives rise to moral decay, anti-social behavior, and ultimately civilizational regression. Envy (ḥasad) is among the most destructive vices, capable of generating deep social rifts and widespread disunity. When left unchecked, it transcends the personal realm and undermines the social and civilizational fabric of society.

### Methodology

This study employs a theological and inferential approach to examine Qur'anic verses, particularly in Sūrat al-Baqarah, to address the following question: How does a personal and ethical vice such as envy extend into macro-social and civilizational domains according to the Qur'an and relevant traditions?

The method of inferential interpretation involves posing external questions to the Qur'anic text-questions whose answers are not explicitly embedded within the text's lexical surface. In this approach, a non-Qur'anic conceptual system is applied to the Qur'an in search of its implied response.

### Findings

Envy is presented in the Qur'an as a disease of the heart that extends into the social domain, leading to intergenerational discord and disrupting the global order that a just civilization seeks to establish. Motivated by arrogance and material desire, human beings fall into rivalry and envy-referred to in the Qur'an as baghy (2:213). Historically, societal elites-scholars, religious



authorities, and political leaders-have opposed prophets and divine law out of envy and internal corruption, perpetuating disunity and corruption across generations.

The distortion of religion, substitution of divine laws with man-made ones, and consolidation of religious and political authority (e.g., by the medieval Church) led to immense violence, such as the centuries-long Crusades. These movements catalyzed a transformation in Western thought, ultimately replacing God-centered worldviews with secular humanism (anthropocentrism).

The Qur'an and Hadith literature identify two forms of envy that threaten civilizational integrity:

**1. Envy of disbelievers toward Muslims**-aimed at inducing apostasy, obstructing Islamic unity, and dismantling Islamic civilization. Contemporary expressions of this include promoting Western cultural hegemony, vilifying Islam as regressive, instigating ethnic and sectarian divisions, and undermining Islamic brotherhood.

**2. Envy among Muslims**-resulting in internal division, distrust, and alignment with imperial powers. This has led to a lack of collective Islamic identity and fragmented responses to shared challenges. The failure of Islamic nations to collaborate on scientific, cultural, or political fronts stems largely from this internalized vice.

The study finds that envy, especially among the *khāṣṣa* (elites), constitutes one of the most serious obstacles to Islamic civilizational development.

### Conclusion

Drawing upon Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions, the study concludes that envy-identified also as *baghy*-is a destructive macro-social vice. It is the root of many social and political sins and has grave consequences at the civilizational level. Historically, envy among elites was the primary cause of opposition to prophets and divine legislation. Replacing divine law with human constructs did not bring about salvation but led instead to moral decay, the collapse of social cohesion, and the global rise of exploitative hierarchies.

The vice of envy presents both internal and external threats to civilizational progress. Internally, it leads to spiritual corrosion, social fragmentation, and the breakdown of cooperation across communities. Externally, disbelievers harbor resentment toward Muslim faith and independence, and they exploit internal envy to sabotage Islamic unity (2:105). Without heightened awareness and strategic preparedness, envy undermines social solidarity and weakens prospects for a unified and empowered Muslim ummah.

Ultimately, the civilizational spread of a psychological and moral illness like envy underscores the urgent need to cultivate spiritually upright individuals. Without confronting and managing such inner vices in the realm of human relations, a society cannot progress toward spiritual excellence or achieve the holistic goals of civilizational advancement.

### Keywords

Baghy (Aggression), Envy, Civilizational Vice, Human Relational System, Social Order.

### Ethical Considerations

**Compliance with research ethics.** The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

### Conflict of interest

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