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The Border Between "Enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil" Principle and Privacy; Society's Salvation

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Abstract: The subject of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil and protecting individuals' privacy in their personal territory is one of the issues which every now and then has encountered different and sometimes contradictory perspectives. The main reason for this contradiction which is mainly widespread among the public is lack of a clear definition and understanding regarding the border between these two issues. Because of special position of these two issues in social and religious events and increasingly great importance which outstanding sociology and religious scholars have laid on these two issues it is very important and essential to discuss these two issues deeply. In this study, the definitions for each of the aforementioned issues have been put forward and the controversies which exist are scrutinized and discussed in details.

Key words: Privacy, public domain, enjoining the good, forbidding the evil, the rights of privacy, contradiction

INTRODUCTION

When Ms. Zareb Rouhani Pirnahi was asked why she avoided forbidding the evil (in the case of bad Hijab) she would probably consider the style of clothing a personal matter and something which others have no right to interfere. It is not difficult to imagine why she would answer: "it is none of others' business how I dress when I go out" we want to analyze the reason behind this attitude to "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" principle and scrutinize the root.

In this study by taking a scientific approach to these two issues, i.e., "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" principle and protecting individuals' private domain we are going to discuss the definitions and see where these two principles contradict and find the reasons behind these contradictions.

Concepts: This study aims at finding the root of contradictions between privacy and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil principle. But the existing conceptual and territorial ambiguities regarding the rights of private domain prevent the availability of a clear assessment. Therefore, it is essential to analyze and scrutinize the meaning, base and territory of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil principle.

The definition: The definitions and insights which are given for enjoining the good and forbidding the evil are different; firstly because of the different meanings attached to goodness and evil and secondly because enjoining the good and forbidding the evil are interpreted differently and thirdly because they are different stages of practicing them and finally because the executive powers who are obliged to enjoin the good and forbid the evil can be different. Having said that a wholesome collected definition which can be provided is as follows:

- The Arabic word Amr literally means "enjoin" which implies that an order is presented from a higher power to its subordinates
- The Arabic wordma' roof (goodness) is derived from the wordorf which means desirable or honorable (Abjadi. 874)
- Amr as a term connotatively means any act which is known religiously and wisely honorable and thus praisewor thy from the wisdom or Sharia's (Islamic law) perspective (Volume 2. 587)
- The opposite of Amr is Nah'y which literally means to forbid or prevent (alAin, Volume 8.298) and the opposite of Maroof is Monkar which is derived from Nakr which literally means unknown and unpleasant
- Nah'y as a term indicates to forbid and prevent and Monkar means any act or deed which is repelled by wisdom and sharia (Taryhi, 1975). In other words, any act which a shrewd and wise person considers unpleasant and repulsing or in case the wisdom of a human being is uncertain about its goodness but nevertheless the sharia considers it to be evil (Isfahani and Muhammad, 1996)

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THE DOMAIN OF ENJOINING THE GOOD AND FORBIDDING THE EVIL PRINCIPLE

Some religious scholars interpret the word Maroof as to be used for the obligatory religious practices and Monkar for the religiously forbidden actions and some others have included the mostahebat (unobligatory but highly recommended practices) and makroohat not forbidden but unpleasant and abhorrent actions) to the meanings Kanz alErfan). Beside that in recognizing the meaning of these two concepts wisdom and sharia (Islamic law) have been taken into consideration (Isfahani and Muhammad, 1996).

The deceased Allameh Tabataba'e considers Maroof as something which is appealing to the people of a society and is common and customary among them and says in addition to wisdom and sharia, the assessment reference for Maroof is social norm (Tabatabai, 1997).

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil from Quran's perspective: In Quran, there are many verses in which God has clearly expressed the practice of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil principle and reiterated its importance.

Here, we have provided some verses in accordance to their importance and relevance to the principle. Firstly, God has mentioned himself as the ultimate power who enjoins the good and forbids the evil and says: "truly God orders to justice, generosity and kindness to relatives and forbids prostitution, evil and injustice. God gives advice to you; so, you may understand and learn your lesson" (Nahl, 90).

In the second stage, God declares the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil as one of the traits of his messenger (Saint Mohammad) and asks him to invite people to goodness and meanwhile deal with them tolerantly: "those who obey the unlettered messenger a messenger whose traits they find in their own Scriptures, the Taurat and Injil will see that this messenger enjoins people to what is good and forbids them from what is evil. Oh messenger treat people tolerantly and accept their excuses and invite them to righteousness and turn away from the ignorant people and do not quarrel with them" (A'raf 157 and 199).

The third stage of this principle reaches to Muslims and people of an Islamic society. This principle is so important that God introduces the Islamic nation as the best of nations because they are committed to enjoining the good and forbidding the evil; "you are the best nation ever emerged to the good of mankind because you enjoin the good and forbid the evil" (Al-e-Imran 110).

In another verse God considers this principle as a symbol of unity of believers and a display of unanimity of an Islamic society: "the believers men and women are supporters and helpers of each other and they enjoin good and forbid evil" (At-taubah, 71). And finally, if people do not pay attention to this principle and are careless about the presence of evil in the society, God considers this as a sign of mankind's misdeed and his ruin "why don't the knowledgeable priests and rabbis do not forbid people from uttering sinful words and eating forbidden things? How abhorrent is their deeds (Alma'idah 63 and 79).

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil in the quotations of the saint Prophet and Imams: From the narratives and quotations received from the saint Mohammad and his successors (the 12 Imams) many quotes have emphasized this principle which shows the importance of it. Saint Mohammad said:

> "Oh people, repent before you die,... enjoin to what is good so you will be protected and forbid from what is evil so you will be helped" (Tabatabai, 1997)

THE NECESSITY OF ENJOINING THE GOOD AND FORBIDDING THE EVIL

Human beings are social creatures whose fates are connected to the fate of the society where they live. The loss and gain received from the deeds of an individual affects himself in the first place and in the second place the society where he lives. Furthermore, the deeds of others also have effects on his life less or more. Therefore, not only is an individual accountable for what he does but also for what the others do. In Islamic ethics while a Muslim is trying to cleanse himself from evil he should try to cleanse the society from the evil as well. Being careless about the wrong deeds and fate of others is to be careless about one's own fate. And if corruption, sin, prostitution and misdeed get widespread in the society, the horrible effects of evil will affect everyone in the society and even the believers and the pious ones will not be protected from the harmful flames of evil.

From Islamic perspective the social aspect of this principle in fact is about the general public's surveillance on society's social conditions and feeling responsible for the acts of others. This duty is a strong force in protecting religion and continuity of God's mission because it is by means of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil which God's other orders and obligations can be fulfilled and unlawful and forbidden acts can be prevented.

One of the other great effects which can be gained if this duty is practiced well in society is security and safety in the society. To develop and improve a society, first of all, the society needs to be safe and secure from the threats and dangers inside the country as well as outside the country. Other social benefits of this principle such as the survival of the country, unity, law enforcement, development and growth of the society are in parallel with safety and security in the country and they are in one way or another connected to it (Oura, 1356, p.73).

WHAT IS PRIVACY?

The concept of privacy has philosophical, legal, political, anthropological and sociological roots. There are two approac hes to privacy. One is a descriptive approach which describes the meaning and another one which is a legal approach which talks about the value of privacy. In each of the approaches some consider privacy as a benefit and others consider it as an ethic or legal right.

The concept of privacy is composed of three independent but connected elements. They include: confidentiality, anonymity, solitary and solitude (Ansari, 13863).

So from the different definitions of privacy two concepts can be gained. First the intrinsic concept of privacy which is about personality and human dignity and the other one which is about the relativity of this concept from social aspect which can be supported in relation to the culture and structure of each society.

The important point is to have involved the concept of solitary and solitude in the domain of privacy. In other words, privacy includes being on your own and have solitude (the meaning of privacy right) (p 4-5).

In fact privacy is an individual's self-residing territory which with previous declaration within the law the individual expects not to be entered or peered through or any information within it to be accessible by others without his permission. In this definition body, clothes, personal stuff, cell phone, private places and houses, working places, personal information and private communication with others are included in this private domain (the concept of privacy p.8).

ATTENTION TO THE POSITION OF PRIVACY IN ISLAM

Privacy is one of the most valuable concepts of developed legal systems. Having right in privacy is one the most important rights which has deep connection to the dignity of human beings. Its aim is sublimation of personality of a human being; in other words, honoring material and moral integrity of human beings. Privacy has close connection with the independence and freedom of human beings and the right to decide about one's own fate. This is because privacy provides the necessary atmosphere for growth and evolution of personality and prevents the exploitation of human beings. It gives individuals the opportunity to pursue their goals and ambitions and have a domain to express their emotions and inner feelings.

The necessity of protection of privacy and not interfering in others' private affairs is one of the teachings of Islam. In various versus in the Quran the necessity of respecting the privacy of individuals is emphasized. The tradition of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and his successors (the Imams) and the customs of Muslims is full of advice regarding respecting individuals' privacy.

The approach of Islam regarding privacy is referential (referring to the legal system of the country). Privacy in a frame assignable to other rights and freedoms such as the right to ownership, the right of freedom from surveillance, the right to be presumed innocent, the right of not to be aggressed are the rights of a protected individual (Motameni, p186).

God in the Quran mentions the issue of surveillance and spying and prohibits it oh believers, avoid much suspicion since some suspicions are sinful and do not be inquisitive about other people's life and do not backbite about one another would any of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother? Surely you would abhor it? (Farahidi, 1985).

Suspicion about others is entering into their privacy and disgraces the dignity of a human being. The above mentioned verse forbids any sort of spying because it will reveal to people many things which are in contradiction with the outer personality of the individual. And in the view of others that individual will be disgraceful and worthless. The saint Prophet said:

> I am not to seek out what is veiled and hidden in people

Imam Sadegalso said:

> Do not seek out people's creed and belief or you will be left alone and without companion (Almonhaj, p. 298)

Also, the below-mentioned cases are some examples of Islam's perspective to the issue of privacy: the necessity of asking for permission before entering someone's house (Nour, 24-27), the owner of the house not being responsible for the intruder (in case of a natural injury), the prohibition of suspicion, considering suspicion as the worst kind of lying (Hojorat 49), etc.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "ENJOINING THE GOOD AND FORBIDDING THE EVIL" AND PRIVACY

Believing in God and above that believing in the orders which are sent by God has made Islamic thought and principles to have special features such as accepting God as the sole ruler and being God-oriented, responsibility oriented and perfection-oriented which are considered unchangeable principles. In determining the private domain of individuals by taking into consideration the above mentioned principles, the private domain is limited to that behavior of a person which is completely personal and will not have social effects. With this definition an individual no longer can see himself free to do anything, not only in the society but also in his own solitude. If an individual by doing something will harm the society in any imaginable way, the society has the right to stop this person in his act.

Accepting this thought is in fact to truly acknowledge these three rights: God's right, individuals' rights and public's right. It should be said that God's right is prior and preferred to the two other ones, since it is completely in parallel with realization of human beings' personal excellence and that in turn will lead to the excellence of the society. And thus, in any contradictory issue God's right will be considered the criterion. All in all it can be said that determining the private domain should be done by taking into consideration the concepts such as ideas, religion, place, time and the proper beliefs of the individuals and the society.

The fundamental difference between Islam and humanist thought of human beings has brought about the completely different rules in two different societies (i.e., Islamic and secular societies). Of course as it is said before these different perspectives have penetrated into the individuals in the society but what can be said without any favoritism is that Islam with its aforementioned definition of privacy and providing enjoining good and forbidding evil principle has opened a new way for the salvation of the society in a way that it does not contradict the privacy right of human beings.

As it is clarified if the theoretical base for determining the private domain is taken from humanist thought, the privacy domain will be too open and it will not leave a place for "enjoining good and forbidding evil" principle. Since an individual's private domain will overshadow others' freedom and domain and it will be impossible to protest and say that one's privacy right is breached based on enough reasons; even though the performed action is in complete contradiction with norms and the salvation of the society.

If the theoretical foundation for deciding on the domain of privacy and acceptance of enjoining good and forbidding evil principle is the Islamic perspective an individual will not feel himself free from all bounds and limitations and from another angle the other people in the society will feel that they have a share in salvation of their society and will not be careless about the events in their surrounding and will do their duty within law and principles even though theses duties sometimes may reach to a position where the others may consider as their private domain.

Therefore, the efforts of individuals in practicing" enjoin and forbid" principle in accordance with the teachings of Islam is accompanied with knowledge and wisdom and this wisdom has no intention of breaching into and harming someone's private territory (Mokarram *et al*., 2009).

Now there is a question about people who basically do not accept religious perspective in this issue; where do they fit in this discussion? Do they have to oblige with Islamic rules and regulations? At first we may come to a contradiction, i.e., the individual who does not believe in Islam at all has to oblige with the Islamic rules. Here, we should state that it is the will of the society. Since, the society has chosen a Islamic government, it has the right to implement Islamic rules and regulations.

CONCLUSION

To some up the discussion we can say that the two issues of privacy and enjoining good and forbidding evil principle are two important and emphasized cases in Islam and another more important point is that these two are not in contradiction with each other. They are both respected and required.

And it is interesting to say that they are both needed to increase security and safety in the society and consistent security will lead to the development and movement of the society on the way to perfection.

In case of the contradictions mentioned in the society, it should be said that the main reason for these contradictions is that the general public are not well acquainted with these two issues, neither with their borders and limits and as we mentioned privacy and enjoining good and forbidding evil principle do not have any contradictions with eachother.

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