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Islam and disability : perspectives in islamic theology and jurisprudence

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Chapter Three: Practical Theology

As mentioned in the introduction, three moral attitudes were presented by Muslim scholars as the main pillars of an ideal human response in the case of being afflicted with disabilities or calamities in general. A note on each moral attitude, mainly focusing on information with relevance to disability, will be elaborated now.

3.1 Servitude (*‘Ubūdiyya*)

According to al-‘Izz b. ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1066), realizing one’s servitude to God is one of the main benefits of being visited by calamities.¹ The main purport of servitude is conceding that man in this universe is but a poor servant (*‘abd faqīr*) who is always in need of his Lord (*rabb*). Al-Qushayrī quoted his master saying, “Just as ‘lordship’ is an eternal quality of God [may He be exalted], so is ‘servitude’ a quality of man that stays with him as long as he lives.”² The favoured example among scholars to explain this type of relationship is the ordinary man who is always raising objections against the precise works of physicians or engineers on the pretext that there is no point of doing this and omitting that, just because much of what they do is not understood by him.³ In such a case, a wise person has the right to investigate the efficiency of the physician or the engineer he wants to deal with but once he gets sure that such a person is trustworthy, it is no more wise, and sometimes even boorish, to raise every now and then senseless questions and objections for every detail. In the same vein, the servant (*‘abd*) should believe in God on the basis of a firm conviction that God is the only and real Lord that can run his affairs and take care of him in the best way. Once the *‘abd* acquires this belief, it is completely unwise to think that God has to explain to him the rationale of every delightful and sorrowful incidence taking place in life. It is sufficient to be sure that it is good (*khayr*). Hard times manifest clearly those living in the state of servitude and those who are not.⁴

According to al-Qushayrī, a mystical authority is reported to have said, “Worship is for those who strive, servitude is for those who excel in bearing hardships.” A mystic was asked, “When is servitude sound?” He replied “When a man surrenders himself completely to his Master and has patience with Him in the tribulations He imposes.”⁵ This all explains the intense fear of the many early pious figures (*salaf*) of falling into the pit of questioning God, out of doubt or objection, about what He has foreordained for them. In this regard, one of them is reported to have said, “To get my flesh gnawed by scissors, is more beloved to me than saying to something that God predestined, had he

¹ Qāsimī, *Jamāl al-Dīn al-* (1424/2003), vol. 1, p. 490.

² Qushayrī, al- (1990), p. 173.

³ Ibn al-Qayyim (2), vol. 1, p. 273.

⁴ Būṭī, Muḥammed Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al- (2001), pp. 193-196.

⁵ Qushayrī, al- (1990), p. 170.

better not predestined it!”⁶

This total submission to God’s will should be espoused with investigating and criticizing one’s affairs seeking for possible errors in relations with God. Once a calamity befalls a Muslim, the first charge should be levelled against his own-self and that he/she falls short to observe the Islamic instructions properly.⁷ Imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qaṭṭān⁸ (254-345/868-956) is reported to have said, “I have been visited with affliction in my eyesight as a punishment for speaking too much⁹ during the journey [of searching for knowledge].¹⁰ To avoid any further deterioration, the sinful person was always advised to start immediately serious and ongoing bids to give up such sins.¹¹ In his book *Al-Kabā’ir* (Grave Sins), Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (748/1348)¹² related a story whose purport coincides with the aforementioned thesis. The story is about an unnamed influential person who made misuse of his political position and influence by subduing a poor fisherman and taking his fish illegally. Feeling the bitterness of injustice, the fisherman supplicated God by saying, “O God! This one made use of his power against my weakness and took what you provided me with out of injustice. Show me [what] Your Power [can do] with him”. Being bitten by this fish, the unjust person suffered great pain in his thumb and thus went to the doctor who diagnosed his case as gangrene. As a remedy, the doctor said, the thumb must be amputated. Although the infected thumb was amputated, the gangrene continued spreading and consequently the man’s palm, forearm and later on the whole arm was intermittently amputated. Knowing the background story of the man’s sickness, some people advised him to go to the fisherman himself and ask forgiveness, lest the gangrene would spread throughout his whole body. This person went to the oppressed fisherman kissing his foot, crying and asking for forgiveness. Having been forgiven by the fisherman, he also declared his repentance (*tawba*) to God in order not to undergo such circumstances again in his life.¹³

Fearing that servitude would be restricted to passive acts, the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya stressed that making use of all possible means in life to combat afflictions in life is an essential element of paying service to God (*‘ubūdiyya*).¹⁴ This notion was further elaborated by modern scholars who stressed the importance of positive acts as an essential element of servitude. Speaking about accepting God’s predestination of illnesses and afflictions, al-

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī (1399/1979), vol. 4, p. 229.

⁸ He is Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Salama al-Qazwīnī al-Qaṭṭān. On him see Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol. 15, pp. 463-466.

⁹ “Speaking too much” in this context could mean being over proud of one’s knowledge and hence speaking too much about one’s scholastic abilities.

¹⁰ Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol. 15, p. 464.

¹¹ See Ibn Taymiyyah (I), vol. 2, p. 109. See also Zidān, ‘Abd al-Karīm (1414/1994), pp. 213 & 216.

¹² On him, see Bencheneb, M. & J. de Somogyi (2003), vol. II, pp. 215 & 216.

¹³ Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (I), pp. 113 & 144.

¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya (1401/1981), p. 12.

Būṭī reproached those who think that this acceptance of and surrender to God's will would imply passivity. Adopting a passive attitude towards afflictions and ignoring means of resisting them or minimizing their repercussions is actually, according to al-Būṭī, a rebellion against God's predestination and disrespect for the universal norms and natural laws He has enacted in life.¹⁵ According to al-Qaraḏāwī, one of the fruits of belief in God's predestination is moving towards performing more fruitful and constructive activities in life instead of just experiencing passive regret and sorrow.¹⁶ In order to simulate people with disabilities to remain positive and to overcome their disabilities, modern scholars frequently recalled the prominent figures whose disabilities did not hinder them to participate in the development of their societies. The Moroccan scholar Muṣṭafā b. Ḥamza said, "So were the disabled Muslims peerless. They gained science, literature, wisdom and virtue and left behind them a good reputation and excellent stories."¹⁷ The Syrian scholar Sa'ḏī Abū Jayb said that the number of such prominent figures throughout Islamic history is countless.¹⁸ Recently a separate genre on those figures, depending heavily on a number of early sources in Islamic history,¹⁹ came to exist.²⁰

3.2 Patience (*Ṣabr*)

Ṣabr is usually rendered as "patience, endurance." The significance of this concept can hardly be conveyed in a Western European language by a single word. According to the Arabic lexicographers, the root *ṣ-b-r*, of which *ṣabr* is the *nomen actionis*, means to restrain or bind.²¹ There is an expression in Arabic, "so and-so was killed *ṣabran*," which means that he was captured and detained until he died. In the spiritual sense, patience means to stop ourselves from despairing and panicking, to stop our tongues from complaining, and to stop our hands from striking our faces and tearing our clothes at times of grief and stress.²²

Practising *ṣabr* at the time of being afflicted with disability or any other sort of calamity is seen not only as one of the noble ethics that man can practise out of showing his chivalry or manliness. It is also a religious duty that every Muslim has to observe.²³ According to Ibn al-Qayyim, as patience is *farḍ*

¹⁵ See Būṭī, Muḥammed Sa'īd Ramaḏān al- (2001), pp. 207-215.

¹⁶ Qaraḏāwī, Yūsuf al- (1421/2000), pp. 99-101

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥamza, Muṣṭafā (1414/1993), p. 54.

¹⁸ Abū Jayb, Sa'ḏī (1402/1982), p. 33, note 4.

¹⁹ Ḥusayn, 'Abd al-Razzāq (1420/1999), p. 16-29.

²⁰ See for instance, Sharabāshī, Aḥmad al- (1), vol. 2, pp. 130-265; Jamjūm, Zuhayr (1410/1990); Shakūr, Jalīl Wadī' (1); Suwaylīm Aḥmad (1992); Qubaysī, Muḥammad (1996); Ṣādir, Karīm (1996); Ḥusayn, 'Abd al-Razzāq (1420/1999), esp. 169-306.

²¹ Wensinck, A.J. (2003), vol. VIII, p. 685.

²² Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 7. For further information on the linguistic denotation of *ṣabr* in Arabic, see Ringer, H. (1952), pp. 75-83; Wensinck, A. J. (2003).

²³ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), pp. 11, 16 & 19; Ibn al-Qayyim (1393/1973), pp. 112 & 113.

(obligatory) in that case,²⁴ God has provided people with ways and means of obtaining and strengthening the quality of patience, for He has never instructed them to do something without providing them with ways and means of achieving it.²⁵ Here two main means are to be quoted from Ibn al-Qayyim:

The first means is, if one does not naturally possess the characteristic of patience, to act as if you do possess it, until it eventually becomes your second nature.²⁶ The Prophet is reported to say, “Whoever tries to be patient, God will help him to be patient.”²⁷ **The second** means is to seek the help of God. To possess the characteristic of patience especially “patience for the sake of God” which is one of the highest grades of *ṣabr*, one has to seek the help of God. The Qur’ān says, “And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from God[...].” (16: 127).²⁸ Thus man should realise that he has no patience himself and no power to acquire patience. Rather he knows that, “there is no power and no strength except by (the help of) God.”²⁹ It would be felicitous to quote here Ibn al-Qayyim’s advice of how to maintain patience at times of trial and adversity. According to him patience during difficult times may be achieved by:

1. Thinking of the good reward that lies ahead. The more one believes in the rewards that are waiting for him, the easier it becomes to have patience. If it were not for the anticipation of the rewards, no goals or objectives pertaining to this life or the Hereafter would have been achieved. Human nature loves instant gratification, but reason and maturity make one think of the long-term outcome, which helps to strengthen patience in enduring whatever one faces, whether there is no choice or otherwise;
2. Expecting and hoping for a time of ease. This hope in itself offers a measure of immediate relief;
3. Thinking of God’s countless blessings. When one realizes that one cannot enumerate the blessings of God, it becomes easier for a person to exercise patience in facing the current adversity, because the present troubles are like a raindrop compared to the vast ocean of God’s blessings and favours;
4. Thinking of previous blessings of God. This will remind one of God’s care, and strengthen his hopes and expectations for a time of ease to come.³⁰

Practising patience in general has been elaborated and extolled in myriads of Qur’anic verses³¹ and Prophetic traditions.³² Great and matchless rewards are dedicated to those who endure patiently when befallen by specific sorts of

²⁴ Manbijī, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al- (1347/1929), pp. 116-118; On the ruling of *ṣabr* on different occasions, see Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1410/1989), pp. 29-32.

²⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 26; Ibn Taymiyyah (1), Vol. 8, p. 191.

²⁶ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 10.

²⁷ Bukhārī (1407/1987), Ḥadīth No. 1400, vol. 2, p. 534 & ḥadīth no. 6105, vol. 5, p. 2375; Ibn Ḥibbān (1414/1993), Ḥadīth No. 3400, vol. 8, p. 193; Aṣbahānī, Abū Nu‘aym al- (1996), Ḥadīth No. 2347, vol. 3, p. 117.

²⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), pp. 21 & 22.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 58 & 59.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 18.

³¹ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal stated that *ṣabr* has been mentioned in the Qur’ān in ninety places. See Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), pp. 39-42. Cf. Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1410/1989), pp. 7 & 8.

³² Ibn al-Qayyim (1), vol. 1, pp. 44-47.

illnesses that could be counted as disabilities such as epilepsy and blindness.

As for epilepsy, there is the famous story of the epileptic woman who asked the Prophet for his supplication (*du'ā'*) for her healing; he replied to her that, if she refrained from her request and exercised *ṣabr*, paradise would be her portion.³³

As for the virtues and rewards of enduring patiently the affliction of blindness, compilers of prophetic traditions dedicated specific sections to that topic.³⁴ To mention one of the most famous texts in this respect: “If I test My servant (*‘abdī*) by depriving him of his two precious ones [meaning his eyes or eyesight] and he faces that with patient perseverance, I shall compensate him with Paradise.”³⁵

It is to be pointed out in this regard that the laudable *ṣabr* in Islam was seen as the patience practised on time and not after it is too late.³⁶ At any rate, every person has to exercise patience in order to face difficulties, whether he does so willingly or unwillingly. The noble person, Ibn al-Qayyim elaborated, exercises patience willingly, because he realizes the benefits of patience and he knows that he will be rewarded for his patience and will be criticized if he panics. He is aware that if he does not have patience, panicking and impatience will not help him to regain missed opportunities, and will not take away things he dislikes. Whatever is decreed by God cannot be prevented from happening, and whatever is decreed not to happen cannot be made to happen. So an attitude of impatience and panic actually causes harm. A wise man said: “A man with wisdom does, as soon as adversity appears, that which a foolish man does after a month (i.e. he resorts to patience).”³⁷ On the other hand, the ignoble man exercises patience only when he realizes that he has no choice. After wasting a lot of time and energy in panicking and struggling, he realizes that his impatience will not help him. Then he exercises patience in the same way a person who has been tied up to be whipped exercises patience.³⁸ Patience of such people is as useless as the patience of those people screaming and crying out in Hellfire, “[...] To us it makes no difference (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience: for ourselves there is no way of escape.” (Qur’ān 14:21)³⁹

Within the context of practising patience at times of afflictions and

³³ Bukhārī (1407/1987), ḥadīth no. 5328, vol. 5, p. 2140; Muslim, Abū al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥajjāj (I), ḥadīth no. 2576, vol. 4, p. 1994.

³⁴ See for example Bukhārī (1407/1987), vol. 5, p. 2140, *Bāb faḍl man dhahaba baṣaruh* (section on the merit of one who lost his eyesight); Ibn Abī Usāma, al-Ḥārith (1412/1992), vol. 1, p. 351, *Bāb fī man ibtulīya bi baṣarīh* (Section on one who has been afflicted with [losing] his eyesight. See also Mundhirī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīm b. ‘Abd al-Qawī al- (1417/1996), vol. 4, p. 139.

³⁵ Bukhārī (1407/1987), ḥadīth no. 5329, vol. 5, p. 2140; Bayhaqī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al- (1414/1994), ḥadīth no. 6344, vol. 3, p. 375; Mundhirī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīm b. ‘Abd al-Qawī al- (1417/1996), ḥadīth no. 5228, vol. 4, p. 154.

³⁶ Qaradāwī, Yūsuf al- (1410/1989), p. 34.

³⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 24.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 24.

³⁹ Ibid.

adversities and rewards attached, Ibn al-Qayyim spoke about two main misunderstandings that should be pointed out and corrected:

The first misunderstanding is that there is no contradiction between being patient on one hand and crying out and complaining to God on the other.⁴⁰ This is not going to diminish the reward of patience. Complaining to God at times of afflictions has been demonstrated by several of the Prophets. Jacob (*Ya'qūb*) said “*ṣabrun jamīl*,” which means “patience is most fitting for me”, then he said, “I only complain of my distraction and anguish to God.” (Qur’ān 12:86). The Qur’ān says also about Job (*Ayyūb*), “And (remember) Ayyūb (Job), when he cried to his Lord, “Truly distress has seized me [...]” (21:83). Ibn al-Qayyim said that even the Prophet Muḥammad, the epitome of patience, prayed to his Lord: “O God, I complain to You of my weakness and helplessness.”⁴¹ However, complaining to people, either directly, through words, or indirectly, through the way we look and behave, is contradictory to patience.⁴²

The second misunderstanding is that time of wellness and ease is better than that of illness and adversity. This does not contradict the prophetic tradition that “no-one has ever been given a better gift than patience,” because this refers to the case after a trial has befallen a person. But ease is still better.⁴³ The real spirit of Islam is to ask God to provide you with wellness (*al-‘āfiya*) in this world and the Hereafter. In concrete incidents the Prophet guided people to this spirit of Islam. It was related that he paid a visit to a man who was so sick that he looked like a nestling bird. The Prophet asked him, “What was your supplication [to God]? Did not you ask your lord for wellness (*al-‘āfiyah*)?” The man said, I used to say, “O God, what you are going to punish me with in the Hereafter, make it happen rapidly in this world.” The Prophet said, “Glory to God! You cannot stand it. Would not you say ‘O God! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter.’”⁴⁴ According to some narrations of this ḥadīth, after having performed this *du‘ā*, it took only a few days for the man to be restored to health.⁴⁵

We conclude the discussions on patience, by citing the story of ‘Urwa Ibn

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 8 & 23.

⁴¹ Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr al- (1407/1986), vol. 1, p. 554; Ibn Hishām (1411/1990), vol. 2, p. 268; Baghdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ‘Alī b. Thābit al-Khaṭīb al- (1403/1982), vol. 2, p. 275.

⁴² Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 8.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Tirmidhī, al- (1), Ḥadīth No. 3487, vol. 5, p. 521.

⁴⁵ Muslim, Abū al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥajjāj (1), ḥadīth no. 2688; Mubārakafūrī, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al- (1), vol. 9, p. 323; Munāwī, ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al- (1356/1937), vol. 2, p. 151; Ibn Ḥibbān (1414/1993), ḥadīth no. 941; Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad (1), ḥadīth no. 12068; Nasā’ī, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shu‘yab al- (1406/1985), ḥadīth no. 1055; Ibn Abī Shayba (1409/1988), ḥadīth no. 29340; Mawṣilī, Abū Ya‘lā al- (1404/1984), ḥadīth no. 3511, 3759, 3802, 3837& 4010; Kissī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd b. Naṣr b. Ḥumayd al- (1408/1988), ḥadīth no. 1398; Ḥanafī, Abū Al-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf b. Mūsā al- (1), vol. 2, p. 305; Ibn al-Mubārak, ‘Abd Allāh (1), ḥadīth no. 973; Ḥusaynī, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al- (1401/1980), ḥadīth no. 394. See also Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr al- (1405/1984), vol. 2, p. 300; Ibn Kathīr (1401), vol. 1, p. 245.

al-Zubayr (d. ca. 93/711),⁴⁶ always regarded as one of the most moving stories in the context of showing patience in the case of calamities. It has been chosen here because it has also something to do with disability in particular.

‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubayr got gangrene in his leg, and the doctors suggested that the leg should be amputated, lest the gangrene would spread to the rest of his body and kill him. ‘Urwa agreed and the doctors asked him whether he would drink intoxicants to ease the pain. He said, “God is testing me to see the extent of my patience. How could I go against His commands?”⁴⁷ The doctors began to amputate his leg, using a saw. When the saw reached the bone, ‘Urwa fainted, and when he came around, sweat was pouring down his face, and he was repeating, “There is no god but Allah. Allah is the Greatest.” When the operation was over, he picked up his leg and kissed it, then said, “I swear by the One Who mounted me on you, I never used you to walk to any place of wrong action or to any place where God would not like me to be.” Then he gave instructions that the leg should be washed, perfumed, wrapped in a cloth and buried in the Muslim graveyard. When people went to offer him their condolences, the only reply he made was to quote from the Qur’ān, “[...] truly we have suffered much fatigue at our journey” (18: 62) Later on, one of his friends came to visit him and said, “may your enemies’ lathers perish!” and asked him, “show me the affliction for which I have come to console you.” ‘Urwa uncovered his stump, and his friend said, “By God, we were not preparing you to wrestle! God has saved most of you: your sanity, your tongue, your eyesight, your two hands, and one of your two legs.” ‘Urwa told him, “Nobody has consoled me as you have.”

3.3. Gratitude (*Shukr*)

Shukr denotes a state of feeling gratefulness because of a benefaction or favour (*ni‘ma*) and showing the effect of having that *ni‘ma* (blessing).⁴⁸ Thus originally *shukr* is shown for blessings and that is why its opposite is called *kufr* (ingratitude).⁴⁹ Consequently, practising *shukr* at times of enjoying luxuries should be done by everybody. However, giving *shukr* in the case of calamity is something to be practised by those of real piety and real understanding (*fiqh*) and is thus of a higher status to be aspired. A well-known conversation between two Muslim scholars known for their piety and deep sincerity could add more elaboration on this point:

Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/809)⁵⁰, came from Khurāsān to pay a visit to Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 162/778)⁵¹ in Iraq. On seeing Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Shaqīq al-Balkhī asked him about the current state of his poor fellows. In a bid to praise his fellows, Ibrāhīm b. Adham replied, “When God sends them

⁴⁶ On him see, Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol., 4, pp. 421-437.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), pp. 48 & 49; Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1416/1996), p. 189.

⁴⁸ See Aṣḥāhānī, Rāghib al- (1), vol. 1, p. 256

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ On him see, Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol., 9, pp. 313-316.

⁵¹ On him see, Ibid, vol., 7, pp. 387-396.

something they eat it and are grateful, if not, they endure patiently and refrain from begging.” Whereupon Shaqīq replied, “This is how I left our dogs in Balkh.”⁵² Thereupon Ibrāhīm b. Adham asked him about the state of poor people in Khurāsān. Shaqīq answered, “When they have anything they prefer others to themselves [i.e., then give it away]. If not, they occupy themselves with giving thanks.” On hearing this answer, Ibrāhīm b. Adham kissed Shaqīq’s head and said, “You are right, master!”⁵³ This story clearly shows the higher rank of those who offer thanks at times of adversity or calamity.

Although practising gratitude in the case of afflictions is described as a wild bird that one can hardly catch and fetter, Ibn al-Qayyim confirmed that it can still be made possible by two main means.

Firstly, remembering the other untold blessings provided by God that one is rolling in. This principle is experienced in the following story retold by the Companion Salmān al-Fārisī (d. ca. 36/656),⁵⁴ “There was a man who was given many of the luxuries of this world, and then they were taken away from him. But he continued to praise and thank God until everything had been taken from him, even his bed. He then still praised and thanked God. Another man, who had also been given many of the luxuries of this world, asked him, ‘What are you praising and thanking God for?’ The man said, ‘I am praising and thanking Him for blessings which, if others asked me to give them in return for all that they have, I would never give them up.’ ‘What can they be?’ asked the second man. ‘Can’t you see?’ asked the first man. ‘I have my eyesight, my tongue, my hands, my feet [...]’⁵⁵ Muslim scholars also state that man should firmly believe that one’s deeds cannot pay for even one of the blessings of God, because even the smallest of God’s blessings and favours far outweigh the deeds of man.⁵⁶

The second means to help man practise gratitude during afflictions is to keep in mind that blessings always assume the guise of afflictions. In this sense, one of the scholars defined gratitude as follows, “To imagine the rose from the thorn and to imagine the non-visible part to be the whole.”⁵⁷ Those who knew this fact and instilled it into the depth of their hearts did not see much difference between those times when they enjoyed luxuries and other times when these luxuries were kept away from them. That is why Sufyān al-Thawrī (97-126/715-743)⁵⁸ said, “He does not understand religion properly who does not count affliction as a blessing and ease as a disaster.”⁵⁹

⁵² A city in Khurasan at the time. On this city, see Ḥamawī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Yaqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al- (1), vol. 1, pp. 479 & 480.

⁵³ Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid, al- (1), vol. 4, p. 215. Cf. Schimmel, Annemarie (1975), p. 125 quoting from Ṣanā‘ī, ‘Abd al-Majdūd (1950), p. 495.

⁵⁴ He is one of the Companions of the Prophet of Islam. On him see Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol. 1, pp. 505-557.

⁵⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 67.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 67 & 68.

⁵⁷ Schimmel, Annemarie (1975), p. 126.

⁵⁸ On him see Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol.7, pp. 229-279.

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Qayyim (1998), p. 68.

Attaining such a grade of *shukr* was seen as closely connected with two other highly praised Islamic moral principles, that is, *riḍā*⁶⁰ and love for God. *Shukr* is related to *riḍā*, which is not a patient bearing of all the vicissitudes of life but happiness in the bitterness of the affliction. The well-known mystic, Dhunnūn (d. 859)⁶¹ said, “*Riḍā* is the joy of the heart in the bitterness of the divine decree.”⁶² However *riḍā* itself, as stated by ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al-Hujwīrī (d. ca. 1071), is the result of love inasmuch as being content with what is done by the beloved.⁶³ In their love for God, people practise two main types of love, namely, purposive love (*ḥubb gharāḍī*) and pure love (*ḥubb ḥaqīqī*).⁶⁴ As for the first type, people love God for the divine beneficence and favours that people can not even fully count. Ibn al-Qayyim elaborated on this type of love by saying, “How then such a one [God] would not be loved, and how should man not blush to direct a particle of his love to an object other than Him? Who is more worthy of praise and love than He? This unmerited kindness of which man is the recipient is visible to all and it is the gate through which one must pass to enter into a relationship of love with God.”⁶⁵ However, to love God as a benefactor is only a first step on the way and never a destination. That is because love for beneficence alone is inherently inadequate since it comes to an end when the benefactor ceases to bestow his favour.⁶⁶ By extension, those who love God only because He provided them with good health will cease to love Him once they fall sick or get afflicted with disabilities.

Hence this purposive love should be seen only as a gate to the pure love. Based on what he has known from the goodness of the Creator, the lover may infer what he does not know. “God calls men to Himself through this gate. So that when they enter it, they are called through the other – the Gate of Names and Attributes through which pass only the elite.”⁶⁷ There is no doubt that love for God as Perfect and Beautiful is a higher stage than love in response to His kindness.⁶⁸ Furthermore, God alone may be rightly loved as an end in Himself. All other objects of love, therefore, must be loved only for the sake of God.⁶⁹

Those who practise this type of love – pure love – are also those who give thanks and show gratitude even at times of afflictions because they believe that

⁶⁰ Usually rendered in English as acquiescence, contentment or approval but in the general sense the significance of this conception can hardly be conveyed completely or precisely in English by a single word. See Watt, W. Montgomery (1979), pp. 17 & 18.

⁶¹ His name is Thawbān b. Ibrāhīm and it is said that it is Fayḍ b. Aḥmad or Fayḍ b. Ibrāhīm, on him see Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al- (1413/1992), vol. 1, pp. 532-536.

⁶² Ṭūsī, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, al- (1380/1960), p. 80; Schimmel, Annemarie (1975), p. 126.

⁶³ Hujwīrī, ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al- (1911-1959), p. 180; Schimmel, Annemarie (1975), p. 126

⁶⁴ For further elaborations on these two types of love see, Ibn al-Qayyim (1375/1956), pp. 18-52 esp. pp. 45-47, 51 & 52; Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid, al- (1356/1937-1357-1938), vol. XIV, p., 51; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), pp. 148 & 149.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), pp. 410 & 411; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), pp. 415; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.

⁶⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), pp. 412; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim (4), vol. 2, pp. 89-91; Muḥāsibī, al-Ḥārith b. Asad al- (1), pp. 94 & 95; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.

⁶⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, (1346/1927), pp. 77 & 78; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 84.

whatever comes from the lover is something to be loved. The well-known Companion, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. 55/675) was famous for his accepted supplication to God (*al-du'ā' al-mustajāb*) and people used to ask him to pray for them. Being blind, people deemed it strange that he did not pray God to give him back his eyesight. Asked about this seemingly eccentric behaviour, he smiled and said, "The divine predestination is more beloved to me than my eyesight."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Qayyim, (1393/1973), vol. 2, p. 227.