

Adjustment is the only option

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Introduction

Adjustment is the only option for man. This fact can be understood through conscious deliberation because neither does another option exist, nor can it be created. The only other choice is to opt for disaster. A similar situation arises when man is hungry, he has two choices - either to eat the food that exists or perish. It is therefore important to understand that this world has been created by God and He has a Creation Plan for it. God ordained a law for man at the time of creation and there has been no change in it since then. This is evident from the Quran.

The functioning of this universe is governed by Divine laws that change for no one. In order to lead his life successfully, man must discover these laws and follow them. Reflecting further, it becomes clear that man's life has two aspects – individual and social. There exists a principle for both these aspects.

Principles of life

God established certain immutable laws for man to abide by. For his individual life, man must follow the principle of idealism and for societal life the principle to abide by is, pragmatism. In other words, while in his personal life, man must strive to become an idealist but in the case of societal life, man must opt for pragmatism because adjustment is the need for peaceful existence.

On the contrary, people try to reverse the application of these principles. They are pragmatic as far as self is concerned and wish to be idealists when it comes to social life. Unfortunately, they do not realize that this is an unfeasible approach. It makes man a hypocrite as he wishes to translate in lives of others, a principle (idealism) that he himself does not abide by.

Principle of reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to the espousal of patience, adjustment and compromise so as to develop a pragmatic outlook towards the affairs of life. It is important to clarify that there is no duration of exercising patience. It is a way of life, one that must last a lifetime. Patience is the law of nature and shall continue so long as our requirement of food and air. Those who confine patience to timelines, make evident their lack of understanding of the creation plan of God.

Principle of thankfulness

I often come across people whose children are their centers of happiness. While talking to one such person, I asked him if he had ever thanked God for his speech, or for the fact that he could chew and digest food, or for being granted the faculty to think when he wanted to or for being given the eyes through which he could see the world. Unfortunately, most men take these blessings for granted and do not realize their value until they are lost. Recently, I was informed about the demise of an acquaintance. He was on dialysis for six months before he passed away. This triggered me to think about the blessing that my physiological systems were – how they digest and extract the useful ingredients from food and throw out that which is unwanted. *What if they became dysfunctional? What will happen to me?*

This led me to understand that God created everything, imaginable and unimaginable; great and small, in the most perfect form and gave all this to man free of cost. The only price to be paid for these endless blessings is thankfulness; it is Man's recognition, from the depths of his heart, that God is the Giver and Man the receiver. In the context of “*Alhamdulillah*” (All Praise is due to God), I was once asked, “*Why does God need praise?*” This I said was not the correct interpretation of “*Alhamdulillah*”. ‘*Hamd*’ here refers to acknowledgment, not praise. If despite availing countless blessings, man still refuses to acknowledge his Benefactor, he proves himself to be an insensate being.

Concept of paradise

Just some days back, I contracted viral fever and could barely eat or drink. I wondered what if I possessed all palaces of the world but my illness continued; nothing would provide me happiness. Here, I was reminded of the following verse of the Quran, which portrays paradise. Those in paradise will say,

Praise be to God who has taken away all sorrow from us. (35:34)

This remark greatly moved me. It made me understand that paradise would be so because it will be free of all pains. It is very important to realize the specificity and precision of this statement. The inhabitants of paradise could have acknowledged God for any of His countless blessings but they specifically refer to the absence of pain or sorrow. This is because even the smallest form of pain can render all the blessings meaningless and only a pain-free soul can truly enjoy. Unfortunately most men choose animalistic existence and live without exercising their thinking faculty – their most prized possession.

Principle of scrutiny

It is common for man to form opinion basis preliminary information. This is a very dangerous practice. According to a Hadith

He is a liar who agrees to whatever he listens. (Sahih Muslim)

Such a person, though not a liar literally forms an opinion without an in-depth understanding of the matter. Ignoring scrutiny can be very harmful because majority of the people do negative reporting and until one scrutinises, he will not be able to separate falsehood from truth. In other words, one who fails to scrutinize, would live in a world of complaints.

It is unfortunate that while man scrutinizes matters of personal importance, he does not apply it as a principle in all other circumstances. As a result, he chooses to remain in a jungle of complaints thereby halting the process of his intellectual development. It is for this reason that those who live in complaints become intellectual dwarfs.

Principle of appointing a boss (Qawwam)

The Quran prescribes the principle of appointing a boss in the following verse,

God has made some of them excel others (4:34)

The principle of appointing a boss has universal application. Organisations popularized the concept of '*Boss is always right*', for a salesman the '*Customer is always right*' and for a dai the '*Madu is always right*'. In fact, this formula can be used to manage almost every situation. For example, while talking to someone, I said that the simplest formula to make married life pleasant is – *Wife is always right*.

Accepting someone other than self as boss has a great advantage. It allows one to leverage the strength of patience and divert his towards developing high thinking. In other words, it allows a person to optimally utilize the available opportunities to enable his personality development.

Patience is a virtue

Patience refers to the ability to think beyond the problems. It is neither a sign of cowardice, nor passivity or retreat. Exercising patience save man from reaction and allow him to think objectively. In the words of George Bernard Shaw

The most uneducated person is one who has nothing to forget.

In other words, patience is stepping stone to learning the art of high thinking. Without patience, high thinking cannot be inculcated. This is because living in reaction and negative emotions does not allow man to think. Unfortunately, people do not recognize the importance of exercising patience. Upon being asked about the special ability that led Newton to uncover the mysteries of universe, he replied

I have no special sagacity, except the power of patient thought

Islam attaches immense importance to patience as one who is patient is able to inculcate wise thinking. Giving the description of such a person, a Hadith states

Fear the wisdom of a believer as he sees through the light of God. (Tirmidhi)

‘Seeing through the light of God’ refers to saving oneself from reaction and subscribing to well considered response. Despite the Hadith ordaining patience, Muslim leaders exhibited impatient response. Because of their failure to recognize the importance of patience, they gave into reaction at every occasion. A verse in the Quran says,

Whoever is patient and forgiving, acts with great courage and resolution.

This verse clearly equates patience to courage. This is because being steadfast on truth is a test of man’s resolve and courage, which only the brave endure. I once saw a documentary on the tiger where the tiger hunted a prey. After the kill, the tiger moved to a close by pond to drink water, leaving the dead prey behind. In the meanwhile, a crocodile appeared from the swamp and dragged the prey into water. While he was engaged in doing so, the tiger returned. Contrary to my expectation, the tiger did not get enraged. It stood there staring, patiently. This scene made me realize that even a powerful animal like the tiger prefers to adopt the culture of patience. In other words, patience is also the culture of a tiger.

What is tazkia?

Since spiritual development is to do with the mind, spiritual progress is just another name for intellectual progress or intellectual development, which is the main target of man. The process of spiritual or intellectual development in fact begins with the de-conditioning of this conditioned mind or the purification of the mind – *Tazkia* as mentioned in the Quran. The more one de-conditions the mind, the more one will gain in spiritual or intellectual development. Spiritual or Intellectual progress is just not possible without taking such a step.

I once read an article about Japanese language which highlighted that while there exists just one word for ‘*confrontation*’, Japanese lexicon had more than a dozen words for ‘*adjustment*’. Patience is the pre-condition for attaining *Tazkia*. This coupled with a sincere approach lead man to high thinking. On the contrary, indulging in frivolity and vain talk cast man away from the deeper truths of life. According to a verse in the Quran

Islam gives utmost importance to intellectual development (*tazkia*) (30:76)

Avoiding distraction therefore becomes extremely important for inculcating high thinking. An example of this is Newton who did not have a single friend. Without his contributions, science would not have been where it is. Losing time in light talk therefore cannot be afforded by man because his life is not forever.

Those who ridicule patience thus, in effect, shut upon themselves the door to success. Social life shall always have differences, but it is not in man’s stead to fight these differences forever. The only viable option for him is to learn to manage these differences and avail the opportunities that exist.

It is important to understand that in reality, patience alone can be *summum bonum*. Considering the idea of ‘*freedom*’ to be so is an erroneous belief. This is because today freedom has become synonymous with levity or lack of seriousness. Here I am reminded of an article I read when I was at Azamgarh. Authored by *Sajjad Hyder Yaldurum*, the article was entitled, *Mujhe mere doston se bachao*. In it, he wrote that friends only kill time – that which is already running out of man’s hand like quicksand. I held this principle assiduously and I have no friends to date. I have companions in the mission but no friends.

As I thought about the writing of *Sajjad Hyder*, I realized that spending frivolous time with friends' take away deep thinking from us and make us a superficial thinker. Bereft of either the benefit of criticism or providing experience, these 'friendly' moments lead man to a lower level of thinking and do not let him return to the plane of serious thinking which unveils truth before man.

Conclusion

Failure to exercise patience leads man to doom. Just like people become alert at the time of announcement of namaz and run towards the mosque, similarly when someone hurts, it is an announcement telling man that it is time now for biggest worship – sabr. The Quran reads,

Truly, those who persevere patiently will be requited without measure. (39:10)

Every unpleasant experience is therefore an opportunity for man to earn a bigger reward by exercising patience. This is because patience can be exercised only when the circumstances are not to man's liking. Because man is habitual of reacting without due thought, it assumes great importance that man may train himself to exercise restraint and save himself from reaction.