

ISLAM;

A PSYCHOLOGY OF EASE OR DIFFICULTY ?



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Foreword



This small book aims to explore the following questions:

Does Islam promote ease or difficulty?

There are those in Islam who claim that the path to Allah is difficulty. Is this true?

In Islam we derive our understandings from two primary sources: The Quran and The Sunnah of The Prophet, peace be upon him. There are secondary sources of-course but this book will only focus on the primary - only because that's all that's needed.

This book is intended to be an easy read. Islam is not an academic discipline. Yes, it can be studied academically, but Islam is more than that.

Also, the sunnah (way) of The Prophet, peace be upon him, is to use easy, short and understandable words.

During my studies of Shariah (Islamic Law), my usul teacher, would impress upon us that we must look at as many of the relevant sources within a context as possible before making a ruling.

This isn't just the case for fiqh, but for aqeeda (creed) and every other discipline - Islamic or otherwise.

Don't just look at one verse and give a ruling. That would skew your perceptions and understanding. It's like looking at a jigsaw piece and claiming that you know what the bigger picture is. You might fluke and guess it correctly, but the chances are very small.

I'll be presenting different verses (Ayat) of The Quran and different ahadith (narrations) about The Prophet, peace be upon him... and looking at what each of them tell us. Each of them is a piece forming the final picture.

Introduction



The Prophet (saw) was brought up as an orphan. As he grew up, he experienced trial upon trial; he didn't know his father, his mother passes away also, then his grandfather passes away years later.

How do you expect a man who experienced all of this difficulty to be?

How about a boy who is thrown into a well by his brothers, those whom he trusted the most... left to rot and die?

Imagine being in the depth of that well and hearing voices and then seeing a rope and basket. You cling onto this rope for dear life thinking that you're not going to die!

You experience a sense of overwhelming joy.

But just then you are bound and gagged, taken into slavery! How cruel!

That moment of ecstasy extinguished suddenly. You experience days and weeks of being tied and gagged en-route to an unknown land.

Nevertheless, you are sold to a man who treats you well, so you experience a ray of light in your dark tunnel. However, the mistress of the house tries to seduce you, leading you to commit sin. But you resist and refrain.

But then the mistress brings her friends and creates an even bigger temptation, you resist but because of HER you get sent to prison. Innocently. The accusation being a crime that you did not commit.

Are these not hardships?
This was Prophet Yusuf (as).

Statistically speaking, what would you expect of someone who had experienced these hardships?

You would expect a bitter man in search of revenge. A man out to harm society, most likely a serial killer!

But we know that he was different.

Evidence That Seems to be Pro Ease



With Hardship There is Ease



Allah says:

So, Verily with THE hardship there is ease

Verily with THE hardship there is ease

(Surat Inshirah; 94:5-6)

People take these verses alone as proof of whatever they'd like to believe.

Using just the above verses, some claim that hardship should be our goal because it brings with it ease. In other words, that we should create hardship for it brings with it ease.

Others claim that these verses remind us of ease and that hardship is a passing phase. That ease is the goal that one should strive for.

Let's look at some of what these verses teach us.

The use of the term 'THE hardship' in this verse implies only ONE hardship.

Allah does not define ease or confine it by a number; this means that for every hardship there are two eases.

If there was just one hardship and one ease; they would neutralise each other. But this isn't the case.

The reality is that Allah (swt) mentions ease at a ration of 2:1. Ease should therefore flush out hardship!

So based on these verses, relatively speaking, there is NO hardship because there is twice as much ease as there is hardship!

So actually these verses don't tell us what to focus on as much as they tell us that there exists (at least) twice as much ease as there is hardship.

Also some understand the verses as if they said: IN the hardship... as opposed to with the hardship. That would stipulate that ease was nested in hardship... almost that you needed hardship in order to have ease.

The verse of course doesn't say "in hardship", it says "with hardship" so hardship is not needed in order to have ease.

Let's take the beginning Ayaat of the same surah, Surat Al Inshirah;

*Have We not expanded your breast?
And removed from you your burden
That which did blister you back?
And raised high the esteem (in which) though (art held)?*

(94; 1-4)

Here it's obvious that ease is a bounty from Allah, that CAN come after hardship. The verses don't in and of themselves stipulate that ease ONLY comes after hardship.

These verses describe perfectly what happens when a burden is removed. The chest is un-clogged. The constriction is removed. The weight that was burdening one's shoulders and back is alleviated.

The way in which Allah asks: "Have We not expanded your breast and removed from you your burden" suggests that ease is a bounty and that it is more favourable than difficulty.

Wondrous Are The Believers' Affairs



The Prophet (saw) said;

“Wondrous are the believers’ affairs.

For him there is good in all his affairs, and this is so only for the believer.

*When something pleasing happens to him, he is grateful, and that is good for him;
and when something displeasing happens to him, he is patient, and that is good for him.”*

(Muslim; 7138)

What is the Prophet (saw) referring to when he says the final words of the above Hadith “...and that is good for him”?

Is ‘it’ referring to ‘hardship’?

... or is ‘it’ referring to ‘ease’?

The hardship is NOT what is good for the believer, the ease is NOT what is good for the believer, BUT how they react to it is - with patience or gratitude.

Patience and/or gratitude are/is what is referred to in the statement “is good for him”.

Understand that hardship in and of itself is not necessarily beneficial. Nor is ease. In medical terms hardship alone leads to exhaustion and ease alone leads to atrophy. Both in and of themselves are not necessarily good.

Should we chase after hardship or ease?

Neither.

The hadith says; IF it (hardship/ease) BEFALLS him. The believer is passive with respects to what befalls him in this narration.

Seek Help Through Patience



“And seek you help through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing, save for those with kushoo”

(Bakarah; 45)

So Allah is commanding us to seek refuge (ie from difficulty) with patience and prayer. This suggests that patience and prayer are a form of ease. This falls in line with what we understand of The Prophet, peace be upon him, commanding Bilal to bring rest with prayer.

But then, Allah says that doing this is difficult for those without kushoo’.

So is prayer easy or difficult?

It’s clear that patience and prayer can be easy for some and can be difficult for others.

Difficulty is therefore subjective and as such it shouldn’t be our yardstick. Difficulty cannot be the yardstick if it is subjective. It would be like having moving goal posts!

Same is true of ease... except that Allah asks us to take refuge from difficulty with patience and prayer (implying that they’re easy - for those with khushoo’).

So difficulty isn’t something that we go after because it’s subjective. Ease is subjective also so it shouldn’t be our goal either... but the verse suggests that we should employ what brings us ease when faced with difficulty, not as a goal in and of itself, but as a relief from difficulty.

As a side note, tazkiyah is the process through which something difficult or disliked can be turned into something easy and liked.

If you loop this ayah/verse on itself then for those that find patience and prayer difficult, you can use (seek refuge in) patience and prayer to make patience and prayer easy!

He Always Chose The Easiest of Two Matters



Aysha (raa) narrates:

"The Prophet of Allah, upon him be peace, always chose the easiest of two matters, so long as it was not sinful."

(Bukhari)

If we are to understand the previous hadeeth mentioned in evidence #3 to mean that difficulty is the path to heaven... was the Prophet (saw) choosing the path opposite to heaven?

(Evidence #3: "Hell is surrounded by worldly desire, while Heaven is surrounded by difficulty and hardship.")

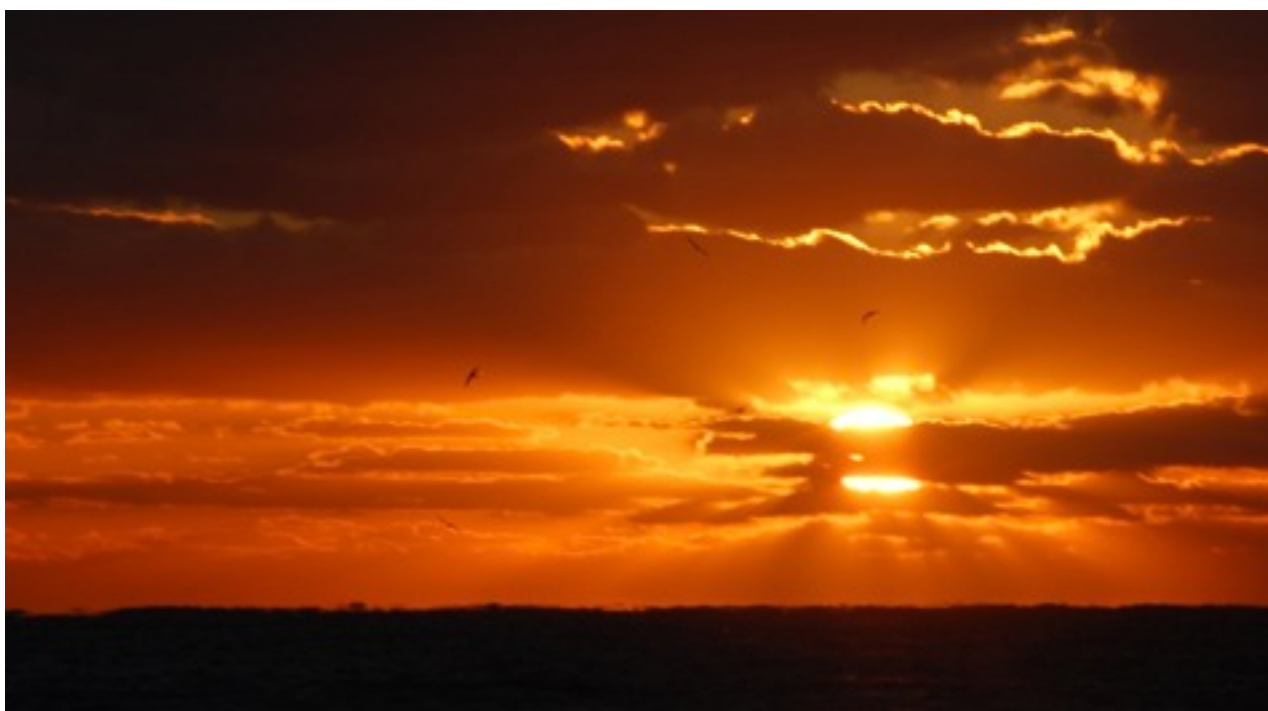
The Prophet (saw) chose the path of ease. He is one of our primary sources of derivation and he was on the path to Allah, so by following him we are by default also on the path of/to Allah.

So ease is something that we need to choose when given the choice, not difficulty. This is the sunnah of The Prophet, peace be upon him.

But again, there is a sense that the choosing of ease was reactive or secondary to something else. She (raa) says that he (pbuh) chose ease when ***presented*** with two matters to choose from. (this is how he reacted)

So again, the evidence till now has suggested that ease isn't a goal that we should seek. (nor is difficulty)

Allah Wants Ease For You



There are verses of The Quran that favour ease over difficulty.

"Allah wants ease for you and does not want difficulty for you."

(Sûrah al-Baqarah: 185)

This verse comes in the context of obligatory fasting - which for most is not easy.

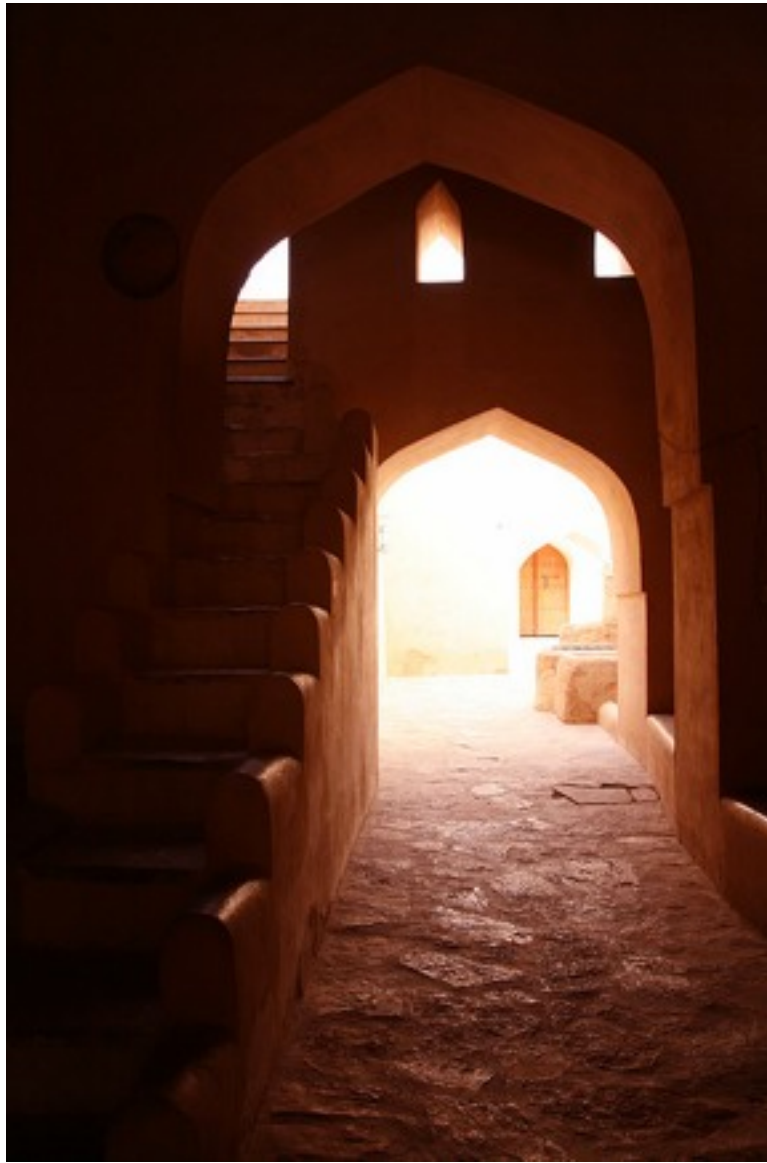
Fasting in the beginning of Ramadan is difficult, you're not used to it. But as you approach the end, it becomes easy and maybe you promise yourself to continue fasting after Ramadan, but you don't. Once Ramadan finishes, you miss fasting for a while, until you forget about it.

Again difficulty is SUBJECTIVE and you see with the example of fasting in Ramadan how something that was hard can turn into something that is easy.

So Allah wants ease for us not difficulty. This reaffirms that the path to Allah is not the path of difficulty. Alone it doesn't prove that the path to Allah is ease either.

But this ayah brings another factor to our attention. I'll mention what it is with the next evidence.

Allah Wants To Alleviate The Burden



“Allah wants to alleviate the burden from you”

(Al-Nisa: 28)

The new factor brought to our attention in the last verse is also brought to our attention here. The factor that Allah should be our goal. It's an implied factor.

I kept mentioning previously that difficulty is not a goal and that ease is not a goal either. This ayah tells us that Allah is a goal. He 'wants' from us something... meaning that He is in a position to be obeyed.

Does He want ease FROM us?

Not necessarily and again this doesn't mean that He wants difficulty from us either... But He does want ease FOR us.

So how are we to understand ease? I have to put the answer to this question on hold for now.

Evidence That Seems to be Pro Difficulty



Thus far, 7 evidences that suggest that the path to Allah is not difficulty have been mentioned, but this isn't a numbers game. If there's even 1 proof that contextualises all the previous evidences such that they point towards difficulty as the path to Allah then we must submit to it.

We Shall Test You With Something of Fear



Doesn't Allah (swt) mention testing us with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and other things?

Yes, He does... and we have to look at these verses too before we come to a conclusion about anything.

And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones.

(Al Baqarah: 155)

Wow. This seems to totally contradict the verses about Allah wanting for us ease.

We also know that Allah is testing us to see if we will succeed or fail... and based upon that either we go to heaven or hell... so this implies that tests of difficulty are the path to heaven.

Huge contradictions it would seem... how can we understand both verses without nullifying or negating either?

Well, firstly... Allah doesn't say: "We shall test you with fear..." No He says: "something of", meaning a small portion of.

Also, Allah doesn't say: "We shall test you with fear..." - no He says: "of fear" - which actually means "from fear" ... the Arabic term min is used which means a small part of/ from.

So it's like saying: "We shall test you with a bit of a portion of fear, {with a bit of a portion of } hunger, {with a bit of a portion of} loss of wealth, {with a bit of a portion of} lives and {with a bit of a portion of} fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones."

Do you see how different that is to just saying: "We shall test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones" ...?

It's a huge difference. You are tested with PART OF A PART of something, instead of the whole thing !

So from afar or at first glance, yes it does seem that this verse supports difficulty as a path to Allah, but at closer inspection it's clear that it doesn't.

All the verse is saying is that you'll be afflicted with small amounts of difficulty.

Hell is Surrounded By Worldly Desire



“Hell is surrounded by worldly desire, while Heaven is surrounded by difficulty and hardship.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

In another version of this narration the Prophet (saw) says that

“heaven is camouflaged by hardships and that hell is camouflaged by ease”

This Hadith seems to suggest that the path to heaven is hardship and the path to hell is ease. Is that true ?

So now we’re looking into the question of what we should aim to attain.

Let’s explore the matter of prayer with relevance to difficulty or ease.

We all know that Salah/prayer is a necessary act to attain Paradise. Many people find prayer difficult. This would seem to support the (above) understanding of the above hadith - that difficulty is the path to Heaven.

But we also know that The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to say to Bilal (raa):

‘Arihna bihaa yaa Bilal!’ O Bilal, give us rest with it (ie prayer) (Abu Dawud)

The Prophet (saw) is saying that prayer is ease, it gives us rest, it soothes us.

There seems to be a contradiction here. The hadith mentions that heaven is surrounded by difficulty yet prayer, which is a necessary act to attain heaven, brings (some people) ease.

When Is The Help Of Allah Due ?



So up till now, the evidence has swayed away from the theory that difficulty is the path to Allah. But the following verse can change everything:

Or think you that you will enter Paradise without the example of those who passed away before you?

They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were so shaken that even the Messenger and those who believed along with him said: "When is the Help of Allah due?"

Indeed, definitely, the Help of Allah is near!

(Al Baqarah: 214)

So I won't enter paradise till I've been shaken to the core... like those before me... that's petrifying!

This verse doesn't facilitate for us a change of understanding about the previous evidences, but alone it seems to point quite strongly away from ease. To say the least!

Question: is Allah mentioning this verse to say that every single believer will not enter heaven except that they are shaken to their core?

This can't be true because we know that this just doesn't happen... not to EVERY single believer.

Also "THE messenger and those who believed with him said" ... but our Messenger Muhammed, peace be upon him, didn't say this nor did Mussa (pbuh), nor are we told that Isa/Jesus (pbuh) said this, nor Abraham etc.

Nor did the companions of The Prophet, peace be upon him, say words of a similar tone, except very few like Ammar ibn Yassir when he was being tortured and his

mother had been killed with a spear in between her legs. Only a few were shaken to their core the way that the verse explains it.

So this verse isn't a condition for the entry of each and every Muslim into heaven. Rather it is a poetic way of saying that the higher your goal, the more the stairs and the effort that is required to reach that goal.

We know this to be true. Getting a doctorate is not the same as watching a movie. The loftier the goal, the greater the price. That's normal and to be expected.

So we will be tested, but not because hardship is the path to Allah. Instead, it's because the goal is lofty.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says that:

'Indeed the commodity of Allah is expensive, indeed the commodity of Allah is jannah'

(tirmidhi)

So it's not that the path to Allah is the path of difficulty. No the path to Allah is the path to Allah. On the way you will be afflicted with difficulty, but you'll also be afflicted with ease.

Remember the hadith I presented before: "if ease befalls him... if hardship befalls him"

It's not that either of them is a path or goal that we chose, rather they befall us on our paths, on our way to our goal(s).

Allah Tests What Is In Your Breasts



There are a pair of verses that come separately from one another but within close proximity that can also be misunderstood to favour difficulty as a path to Allah.

These verses use the term: “li yumahisa” which literally means “to purify”.

And that Allah may purify the believers and eliminate the disbelievers

(Al Imran: 141)

... but that Allah tests what is in your breasts; and to purify that which was in your hearts and Allah is All Knower of what is in your breasts.

(Al Imran: 154)

When reading The Quran, you have to read before and after the particular verse to see if there’s a specific context that the verses are referring to. In this case, the verses surrounding these two verses are talking about fighting and Jihad.

In verse 141, the meaning of “purify the believers” is very closely related to “eliminate the disbelievers”. In other words, Allah is purifying the believers BY eliminating the power of those who hold onto impurity (the disbelievers).

When truth overpowers falsehood, it cleanses it. What is left is only truth, purity.

(or that falsehood is so weakened, such that it’s as if there is only truth)

You see the same meaning in verse 154.

So That They Might Return To Allah



The following piece of evidence can't really be used as evidence for the claim that difficulty is the path to Allah, but I heard it quoted by a speaker. So in the interests of covering all bases:

And We sent not a Prophet unto any town but that We seized its people with suffering from extreme poverty and loss of health and calamities, so that they might return to Allah.

(Al A'raf: 94)

It's very very VERY clear from the verses before and after this one that Allah is only talking about towns that turned away from the truth, towns that were arrogant.

It's very clear that Allah doesn't send with his messengers affliction, courtesy of the truth !

The Misunderstood Hadith



Let us narrate one of the most misunderstood occurrences and Hadiths of the Prophet (saw):

The Prophet (saw) is looking for a tribe or city to accept Islam and to protect him (pbuh), so he goes to Tai'if. It's a town where his maternal relatives reside and he (pbuh) invites them to the path of Allah.

They reject him and set their slaves, the downtrodden and the children of their town to humiliate and stone The Prophet, peace be upon him.

His injuries were such that his blessed body was flowing with blood and by the time The Prophet, peace be upon him, sat down to rest after fleeing, his slippers were stuck to his feet because of the extent of his wounds.

Was this an easy experience ?

NO. For sure, this is the definition of difficulty.

What does the Prophet (saw) do? He raises his hands to make Dua:

"O my Lord, to you I complain of my weakness of strength and my lack of resourcefulness (that I couldn't attain what I set out to get).

O most Merciful.

... if you are not angry with me, then I don't care! (ie if the stoning that I received was because of your anger then I do care yet if it wasn't then I am content!)

... except that I would prefer that you would make things smoother."

Many would misunderstand this hadith to show that the Prophet (saw) was feeling sorry for himself.

Re-read the prayer he makes to Allah and ask yourself: Is this a man wallowing in sorrow and self pity ?

"O my Lord, to you I complain of my weakness and strength and my lack of resourcefulness (that I couldn't attain what I set out to get). O most Merciful.

When you complain of your weakness, you are asking for more strength. One wallowing in self-pity wouldn't ask for that. One pursuing difficulty would not ask for strength either, he/she would ask for weakness, for weakness would increase the difficulty.

... if you are not angry with me, then I don't care!

Understand this literally. The Prophet, peace be upon him, actually doesn't care about what happened, it's as if it didn't happen... so long as it wasn't a sign of Allah's Wrath upon him (pbuh).

... except that I would prefer that you would make things smoother."

I don't think that these can ever be the words of a broken man. I don't think that these can ever be the words of a man wallowing in self-pity nor are they the words of one who would prefer hardship over ease !

In fact, verbatim, The Prophet, peace be upon him, says that he doesn't care so long as this isn't indicative of Allah's Wrath upon him. This isn't a man that is broken.

I heard a speaker once say that this hadith teaches us that Allah gives us difficulty to break us so that we turn back to Him. How does this hadith teach us that ?

That is to imply that The Prophet, peace be upon him, was looking away from Allah to start with ! Find me one occurrence in his blessed life where he strayed from Allah (swt).

The ONLY reason this happened to him was because he went to Ta'if on the path of dawah, calling to Allah !

From the words of The Prophet, peace be upon him, it's clear that difficulty wasn't even on his RADAR !

Allah (swa) and the angels cared that this occurred to the Prophet (saw), so Allah (swa) gave him the power to avenge this tribe. Allah sent the angel of the mountains:

"... If you wish I will bring down the two mountains surrounding the people of Ta'if upon them."

But Messenger of Allah (PBUH) responded:

"No, I hope that Allah will raise from amongst their descendants people that will worship Allah the One, and will not ascribe partners to Him (in worship)."

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This story illustrates many lessons:

To the untrained eye it would seem that The Prophet, peace be upon him, just went through a harrowing experience. But his words refute this.

How is it that The Prophet, peace be upon him, can say that he doesn't care ?

Simply put: Allah is His only goal. Not ease and not difficulty. And with such a huge goal, one doesn't feel the nuances of pain or difficulty.

An example for the purposes of clarity: if you paper-cut your finger whilst being bored then you will instantly feel the pain.

However if you obtain a paper cut doing something fascinating you will only realise later that you sustained this injury. Why ?

The goal nullifies the pain!

If you keep in mind why you are doing something then the so called difficulties that you come across will seem totally insignificant.

If you feel difficulty it's because you are chasing after ease or chasing after difficulty. Make your goal Allah so that you will not feel difficulty.

Realise that the bigger goal the greater the nullification of pain!

The bigger your goal, the more insignificant the challenges. There is nothing bigger than Allah. We say Allahu Akbar - Allah is Greater (than anything).

Yusuf (as) did not feel bitter in prison as people asked him for advice!

Had he focused on his 'hardships' and 'difficulties', he would never have interpreted the dream for the fellow prisoners.

His bigger goal nullified any pain, challenge or difficulty faced by him in his life - of which there were many !

Difficulty or Ease or Something Else ?



If you are going through difficulty then your goal is not big enough and the biggest goal is Allah (swt).

Surah Iklaas is the surah of sincerity. Allah, as described in Surah Ikhlaas, is the 'Ahad' meaning the ONE.

All of creation is in pairs. If it is not Allah it is creation and it has a pair.

To achieve the outcome of a goal you need to set the goal and fulfill the means to attaining the goal. You'll notice that the means are always different from the goal.

For example if 'getting to the door' is your outcome then 'walking to' the door it is different than 'being at' the door.

With Allah it is different; the means to getting to Allah is Allah. By remembering Him (the means) you attain Him. When you attain Him, you are remembering Him. Allah is the goal and the means.

Remember that if the goal is big enough; you won't feel the paper cut. Realise also that the easiest goal to attain is Allah, because the means equals the goal.

Finally the terms difficulty and ease are used by The Prophet, peace be upon him, in the sense of them being tools... The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to choose ease over difficulty when he had a choice.

In other words he chose to do things easily when that was an option.

The terms are also used as description of circumstance... that ease and difficulty befall a believer.

Allah reminds us that any pain felt in His way is insignificant:

...If you are in pain then surely they too are in pain, but you have a hope from Allah that they do not have...

[Al Nisa: 104]

It's important to mention that this verse is in the context of war. It's important to mention that because ease is the usual status quo. Pain and difficulty only come by rarely.

It's good that pain and difficulty isn't the path to Allah, we wouldn't have been traveling much !

A word on Sacrifice



I mention this because sacrifice is a form of self inflicted difficulty.

The term 'sacrifice' is not even stated once in the Quraan. 'Dhabh' is stated in the Quran, which means 'to slaughter', not to sacrifice. Sacrifice is a loss/giving-up of something i.e. to give with no return.

In Islam we are asked to INVEST. Not sacrifice.

Just think about Ibraheem (as). Allah asked him to slaughter his son. (the English translation is sacrifice, it's inaccurate)

How does he do it? After the third night he tells his son about the command.

Why does he tell his son? Is it with the hope that Ismail will say 'no, I do not wish to be slaughtered'. Is Ibraheem (as) looking for an excuse?

No. Ibraheem (as) could have just ignored the dream and not told his son.

Why did Ibraheem (as) tell him then ? Why didn't he just cut his throat in the middle of the night, whilst his son was unaware ?

It is because Ibraheem (as) wants his son to partake in the investment. He loves his son so he wants to allow him to gain reward through this act of worship.

Ibraheem (as) moves the knife on his son's kneck. The knife won't cut.

So Allah preserves Ismail. Moreover, Allah sends a ransom even though the parent should be the one paying the ransom, in the effort to reacquire his son.

Did Ibraheem loose anything?

NO, he didn't lose his son. He doesn't even have to pay a ransom!

He actually GAINS so much from this. Allah sends him a ransom. Allah keeps for him his son. Allah asks that they BOTH build His house (The Kaba) together for Him (swt). Allah makes us remember their act of submission till the day of judgement.

Was there any loss in this whatsoever ?

A Practical Example of Pro Difficulty Thinking



I'm giving this example so that you can begin to analyse what you see and hear. So that you can distinguish.

One of the disciplines I do is hypnotherapy... and one of the most prevalent things I see is people hypnotising each other with words and sentences - without them being aware that this is what they're doing.

The problem isn't that they're hypnotising one another, the problem is what they're hypnotising one another to do / think / believe !

So with that said, I want to show you how I analyse one of Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rumi's statements that I don't agree with.

But first a word about what I think of Rumi. He's very poetic. Many of his sayings are extremely ambiguous. Out of context, many of his sayings can be misunderstood. Sometimes you're not actually sure who he's talking to, never mind what he means.

So I analyse his words, not by what he meant because only Allah and him would know that... and I can't ask him because he's dead (more than 7 centuries ago).

... And just because I disagree with this particular saying doesn't mean that he's a bad person at all, or that he doesn't have other sayings that are good. Maybe he meant by it something completely different and just wasn't able to convey that meaning.

He says what I'm about to share with you. As you read it, imagine it was someone else who was saying it, a normal person you just met and didn't know much about:

Don't turn your head.

Keep looking at the bandaged wound.

That's where the light enters you.

And don't believe for a moment that you're healing yourself.

What would you think if someone whom you had just met told you that ?

How would you feel ?

Hearing that saying and assuming that the word light is used to refer to spirituality or something good... this leads me to ask the following questions. Some of these questions might sound silly, but bear with me, they all come from what is implied within the above statement:

- Why are you assuming that the light enters through a wound ?
- So the light doesn't enter except through the wound ?
- Can't the light enter through my eyes or mouth or my pores or my nostrils... or any other opening for that matter ?
- Will the light only enter the wound if I'm looking at the wound ?
- What if the wound gets infected ?
- What is the relevance of telling me that I don't heal myself after telling me not to look away from the wound ?
- What if I don't have any wounds, will the light not enter me ?
- If I don't have a wound, should I create a wound so that the light can enter me ?
- How is the light entering if there's a bandage covering the wound ?
- Is the bandage transparent ?
- If I have a wound, shall I make more wounds so that more light can enter ?
- If I have a wound, shall I stop it from healing to ensure that the light doesn't stop entering me ?
- Is it wrong to seek-out healing ?

Again, I'm not judging Rumi. I'm judging these words. There are many things that he said that are just fine. Many.

In essence my disagreement with this saying of Rumi's is that it implies that growth can only happen through pain. This isn't true.

It also assumes that pain should be celebrated; that's not right. Pain should be met with patience, not jubilation. This is what The Prophet, peace be upon him, taught us:

"... When something pleasing happens to him, he is grateful, and that is good for him; and when something displeasing happens to him, he is patient, and that is good for him."

If we celebrate difficulty then we flip things around. This is opposite to the teachings of The Prophet, peace be upon him.

Practical Examples of Pro Ease Thinking



Again, these examples are saying of Rumi – I did say that I agree with some of his sayings (!), but you’ll notice a stark contrast. The following saying, for example, is truly upbeat:

“You were born with wings, why prefer to crawl through life?”

And this one is quite positive too:

“Don’t grieve. Anything you lose comes round in another form.”

Do You Deserve Punishment ?

(this is an article of mine published by SuhaibWebb.com)



In a tazkiyah (heart purification) consultation meant to help change major misconceptions held by Muslims today and survey how people perceive Islam and their relationship with Allah, the results were telling.

With 16 questions and over 100 applicants, patterns emerged. The answers for two of those questions really stand out.

The first question:

Do you feel like you deserve difficulty or punishment?

18% said hardly. 72% replied with either often or sometimes.

The second question:

Do you feel undeserving of Allah's bounties upon you?

15% replied with hardly. 75% replied with often or sometimes.

This really is quite sad and it points to an underlying misunderstanding of our relationship with Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He). In fact, it's proof that too many people are ignorant of Allah (swt) and what He teaches us about Himself.

Deserving Difficulty

In a hadith qudsi, Allah (swt) says:

“I am as the perception/assumption of My slave.”

Narrated in Sahih Bukhari and Muslim.

This means that if you think that Allah (swt) is Merciful, you will experience that Mercy. If you think that Allah (swt) is only Wrathful, then your outlook on life is dark and you feel that Wrath.

Also, too much of this can lead to depression, which can lead to a total lack of hope, which can lead to kufr (disbelief). Allah (swt) says:

“Despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

(Qur’an 12:87)

This can also be a doorway for Shaytan (Satan) to lead you astray.

Hearts come to resent the ones that show them difficulty and punish them. In this case, the perception would be that Allah (swt) is doing that. It would be very dangerous to resent Allah (swt), yet many people do.

You will also resent yourself if you do this because, ultimately, it’s your perception. Deep down you know this. This can then lead you to want to punish yourself more (for doing this to yourself). It therefore becomes a vicious self-perpetuating circle.

If deep down you feel that you deserve difficulty or punishment, then you will do that which is deserving of difficulty and punishment. That’s the primary cause for so many people sinning. They are fulfilling their own self-initiated prophecy.

Undeserving of Allah (swt)’s Bounties:

Don’t get this confused with being thankful or even overwhelmingly thankful for Allah (swt)’s bounties. It’s the exact opposite.

How can you be truly grateful of something that you think you don’t deserve? In fact, you’ll push it away or mistreat it, which is the exact opposite of gratefulness.

Also, since you can’t be satisfied with that which you don’t think you deserve, it means that you’ll continue to want more. You’ll never feel ‘full’. Always that sense of being incomplete, not good enough, wanting to ‘keep up with the Jones’—though ironically, when you get the next thing... you’ll feel like you don’t deserve it!

It’s not that we are deserving of Allah (swt)’s bounties. It is that He has willed it so. We then become grateful. It would be a lack of gratitude to think that you deserve what He has given.

So we don't deserve and we don't not deserve. We are, instead, just plainly grateful. It all happens with His Mercy. Same with entering Jannah (Paradise). We must work and attain good deeds, but ultimately we don't enter jannah because of our deeds.

Poverty vs Grace

Allah (swt) says:

"Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing."

(Qur'an 2:268)

It's really interesting that Allah (swt) doesn't mention the opposite of poverty first. It would make sense that Allah (swt) would respond to Satan's promise/threat of poverty by reassuring us that He promises grace. Instead, Allah (swt) starts with forgiveness.

There are two reasons for this that are relevant to our discussion here.

The first is that when one buys into the premise of poverty and scarcity, they perpetrate sins. They steal, they sell themselves or their children, they lie, they cheat. And so Allah (swt) reassures us against the consequences of believing in poverty (committing sins) and not just against poverty itself. He is indeed the All-Merciful.

Secondly, it is a sin in-and-of-itself to believe Satan. To believe that The Creator and Sustainer is not generous or not able enough to provide for everyone and everything. And so Allah (swt) mentions forgiveness first, so we understand this point clearly.

Part of poverty is shunning Allah (swt)'s bounties. Part of poverty is believing that you need to be punished. Think about what punishment means: isn't it the stripping away of bounties? Isn't it that Allah (swt) removes the bounty of His Mercy from you?

In actuality, the two questions asked above are the opposite sides of the same coin. How would you have answered them?

Spirituality or Depression?

There are people who think that pain is a good thing. They think that their aching heart is a sign of their closeness to Allah (swt). They have taken the path of self-impoverishment as the method for getting closer to Allah (swt).

They believe that hating themselves and feeling that they deserve punishment is a way of repentance. Repentance is the exact opposite. They think they are humbling themselves to Allah (swt) by thinking that they are undeserving of Allah (swt)'s bounties.

I read and hear famous people say things like: "O Allah (swt), my heart is bursting with pain for you." Haven't they heard the ayah (verse):

*“Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah .
Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.”*

(Qur'an 13:28)

If you're feeling pain in your heart, this is not tranquility. Don't think it's coming from your love to Allah (swt), you're very wrong. You're very likely to be sinning as well.

Read these verses:

“O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you?.”

(Qur'an 82:6-7)

When you think that Allah (swt) needs or wants your pain, you are being lured away from the Most Generous. You have been deceived into thinking that He is not Generous.

And to conclude, Allah (swt) says:

“What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing.”

(Qur'an 4:147)

Tazkiyah and austerity is the process of being so full and tranquil on the inside with love for Allah (swt) that you don't care what worldly good you have or do not have. When difficulty afflicts you, it feels like a breeze on your skin, it doesn't shake you.

If you'd like your free tazkiyah consultation, please go to <http://www.iPersonalEnrichment.com>. The experience itself will change your paradigms insha'Allah (God willing).

Let's return to the Most Merciful. Do so now. Realize that Allah (swt) is the Most Merciful. Submit your heart to His caring. Decide to shed your pains to be replaced with the tranquility of love for Allah. Decide now. That's repentance.

About The Author



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