



ILLNESS

A Blessing in Disguise

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at-tazkiyah

Innumerable Favours of Allāh ﷻ

Allāh ﷻ states,

If you were to enumerate the Favours of Allāh, you would not be able to count them. Surely, Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most-Merciful. (16:18)

Allāh ﷻ has bestowed us with so many bounties that our minds are unable to encompass them and we would never be able to enumerate them. Rather, often we fail to realise a bounty to be a blessing being showered upon us. Furthermore, many times we regard a certain bounty to be an adversity!

Illness – a Bounty from Allāh ﷻ

Illnesses have always been around and will continue to be. Various forms of illnesses are prevalent throughout the world. At times people become ill in large numbers; the current Coronavirus pandemic being a prime example of this. It would be unintelligent to believe that we can completely eradicate every illness and have an ‘illness free’ world. However, as Muslims we need to understand what our thinking should be with regards to illnesses; we need to contemplate and realise whether illnesses are in reality adversities or actually blessings in disguise.

Generally, health is perceived to be a bounty from Allāh ﷻ and rightly so. However, illness is also a bounty from

Allāh ﷻ. Fundamentally, health and illness are no different for a believer; both are a bounty and blessing from Allāh ﷻ. Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

How wonderful is the situation of a believer! Every situation of his is 'khayr' (goodness) for him, and this is for no one except the believer; if he finds himself in a favourable situation, he expresses gratitude and this is good for him; and if he is afflicted with adversity, he exercises patience and this is good for him. (Muslim)

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has explained in this Ḥadīth that both situations of adversity and ease are 'khayr'. Accordingly, a believer's attitude should be that he does not act according to circumstances, but rather according to his objective, i.e. the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ. Therefore, in reality, no situation should be adverse for him because his focus will be to acquire Divine Pleasure by remaining within the parameters set by Allāh ﷻ and His Rasūl ﷺ for those circumstances. In a favourable situation, he will ensure he is grateful to Allāh ﷻ by not violating any of His Commands, whilst in adversity, he will exercise patience and act accordingly. As a result, he will acquire the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ in both situations, hence the adversity will also prove to be a blessing for him.

Positive Aspects of Illness

If we analyse the situation of a person afflicted with

illness, we do not find him at any disadvantage in the pursuit of his objective, the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ. Rather, we will conclude that he has a greater advantage than those in privileged circumstances. Let us look at some of the benefits that a sick person acquires when he becomes ill.

1. Special Blessings, Mercies and Guidance from Allāh

Allāh ﷻ states,

...And give glad tidings to those who exercise patience, those who, when any difficulty befalls them, say, "Indeed, we belong to Allāh, and to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom there are (special) blessings from their Rabb, and mercy; and those are the ones who are rightly guided. (2:155-57)

As is apparent from the above verse, one who exercises patience during illness or adversity and says *إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ*, he will receive special blessings from Allāh ﷻ as well as general mercies and Allāh ﷻ will increase him in hidāyah (guidance) too.

2. Expiation of Sins

In one Ḥadīth, Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

Do not speak ill of fever, for it gets rid of the sins of the children of Ādam just as the furnace gets rid of the impurities from iron. (Muslim)

In another Ḥadīth, a Ṣaḥābī رضي الله عنه commented regarding a

person who had passed away, ‘Glad tidings for him that he died without becoming ill.’ Rasūlullāh ﷺ replied,

Woe to you! What do you know? It is possible that had Allāh afflicted him with an illness, He would have forgiven his sins through its medium. (Al-Muwattā, Imām Mālik ﷺ)

3. A High Status in the Court of Allāh ﷻ

Many virtues have been mentioned with regards to those people who visit the sick. Rasūlullāh ﷺ has said,

No Muslim visits another sick Muslim in the morning except that seventy thousand angels pray for his forgiveness until the evening, and he does not visit him in the evening except that seventy thousand angels ask for his forgiveness until the morning. And for him will be an orchard in Jannah. (At-Tirmidhī)

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has also said,

Whoever visits a sick person, a caller (angel) calls out from the heavens, “You are pure and pure is your walking, and you have made for yourself an abode in Jannah.” (Ibn Mājah)

If such are the virtues for those who visit the sick, then what status must the sick person hold in the Court of Allāh ﷻ?

4. A Sign of Goodness

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

The person for whom Allāh desires goodness, he is afflicted. (Al-Bukhārī)

5. Award of Jannah

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

Allāh ﷻ states, “When I test my servant by (taking away) his eyesight and he remains patient, I give him Jannah in return.” (At-Tirmidhī)

6. Martyrdom

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

The one who dies due to an illness in the stomach is a martyr, and the one who dies due to a plague is a martyr. (Al-Bukhārī)

7. Proximity to Allāh ﷻ

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

Indeed, Allāh ﷻ will say on the Day of Judgement, “O son of Ādam! I was ill and you did not visit me?” He will say, “How could I have visited you when you are the Rabb of the all the worlds?” (meaning how could You have become ill?) He will say, “Did you not know that a certain servant of Mine was ill and you did not visit him? Did you not know that had you visited him, you would have found Me by his side?”... (Muslim)

8. Reward Beyond Measure

Allāh ﷻ states,

Indeed, those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure. (39:10)

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated,

When those who endured difficulties (in the world) will be given (their) reward (for exercising patience), those who were given safety will wish that their skin was cut up with scissors in the world (so that they too would have become deserving of that reward). (At-Tirmidhī)

If one is ill himself or if someone in his family is ill, then he should make du‘ā for the removal of the illness, spend in charity and also resort to medicine, but one should not fear illness or have a disliking for it. When there are so many Dīnī benefits for those who are afflicted with adversity or illness, then surely, it should be recognised as a blessing in disguise.

Making Du‘ā for the Removal of Illness

A question may arise in a person’s mind that if illness is such a great blessing, then why should we want to make du‘ā or resort to medicine for its cure? In this regard, I would like to mention an incident:

Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī رحمه الله narrates that the great spiritual mentor, Ḥaḍrat Ḥājī Imdādullāh رحمه الله was once discussing the positive aspects of illnesses. Coincidentally, a person came to request Ḥaḍrat to make du‘ā for his wife who was ill. Ḥaḍrat Thānwī رحمه الله mentions

that I thought to myself, ‘How will Ḥaḍrat make du‘ā for the lady as this will entail asking Allāh ﷻ to take away a blessing granted by Him?’

Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī ﷺ says that Ḥaḍrat Ḥājī Imdādullāh ﷺ supplicated: O Allāh! Health is a blessing and illness is also a blessing; however, we are incapable of enduring the blessing of illness, so change it with the blessing of health which we are able to endure (happily).

In conclusion, a believer should always keep acquiring the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ in mind and regard every situation and circumstance a blessing from Allāh ﷻ. Surely, no situation will be an adversity for him if he learns to face it in the correct manner. Hence, the current pandemic of Coronavirus should also not over-concern a believer. A person should take all preventive measures and thereafter if he remains safe, alḥamdulillāh, and if he is afflicted then too, alḥamdulillāh, as he will be blessed with numerous Dīnī benefits that he will reap in this world and the Hereafter.

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