

THE DIMENSIONS OF HOPE

In the days when the Arabs travelled on camels, the camel driver would urge the camels forward by singing a simple song. This song was called *حدااء* (*huda*) and hence, the camel driver was called *الهادى* (*al-haady*). In the worldly life, man is on a journey - a lifelong journey to the Hereafter. In the course of this journey, he too requires a *haady*. This *haady* is called *raja* (hope in Allah).

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

*Whoever hopes in meeting Allah, surely the time fixed by Allah is approaching - and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.*¹

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

*Whoever has hope in meeting his Rabb should do good and refrain from ascribing anybody as a partner to Allah.*²

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*Those who brought Imaan and those who migrate and strive in the path of Allah, those are the ones who hope in Allah's mercy, and Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*³

¹ Surah Al-Ankaboot, Aayah 5

² Surah Al-Kahf, Aayah 110

³ Surah Al-Baqarah, Aayah 218

*O son of Aadam! So long as you call me and have hope in me, I will forgive you for whatever you have done and I will not bother.*⁴

The Benefits

Ibn-ul-Qayyim *rahimahullah* mentioned eleven benefits of *rajaa* (hope in Allah) in his *Madaarij-us-Saalikeen*.⁵ Some of them are:

1. Being the *'ibaad* (bondsmen) of Allah, we have to continuously express our *'uboodiyyah* (bondage) to Him. *Rajaa* is an excellent form of accomplishing this.
2. The most desirable trait to a generous man is that people have hope in his assistance and do not hesitate seeking it. However, Allah is more generous than all the generous people in His creation. Nobody can be more generous than Him. Thus He too desires that His servants hope in His mercy and do not hesitate in petitioning His assistance. This is taken one step further in the Hadith: *Allah gets angry with the person who does not ask Him*.⁶ Since the one who asks has hope that his request would be fulfilled, we conclude that: *Allah gets angry with the person who does not have any hope in Him*.
3. Awareness of Allah's attributes could lead to extreme fear and consequent despondency. The result would be

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⁵ *Madaarij-us-Saaliheen*, Pg. 407-408

⁶ *Jaami-'ut-Tirmidhi*, Hadith 3373

abandonment of Allah's commands. Man would think to himself: *I am not going to make it anyway*. However, *rajaa* balances the equation. It reminds man of Allah's mercy and encourages him to engage in good actions. In the words of Abu Isma'il Al-Harawi, *rajaa* 'cools the heat of fear'. Ibn-ul-Qayyim *rahimahullah* writes: *Rajaa* is a *haady* which urges man forward in his journey to Allah. It makes him enjoy the journey and it encourages him to be steadfast. "If it was not for *rajaa*, nobody would have advanced because fear on its own does not motivate man . . ."

4. *Rajaa* increases man's love for Allah. In the words of Ibn-ul-Qayyim, it "places him on the doorstep of *mahabbah* (love)." The reason for this being that the more he places his hopes in Allah and those hopes are fulfilled, his love for Allah naturally increases.
5. Fulfillment of man's hopes also leads to *shukr* (gratitude) which is another noble quality of the pious.
6. In the worldly life the *Mu'min* is supposed to live 'between *khawf* (fear) and *rajaa* (hope). Another benefit of *raja* is that it supplements one's *khawf*. The reason for this being that a hopeful person always fears the possibility that his hopes may not be fulfilled.
7. *Rajaa* results in anticipation of Allah's bounty. Anybody who anticipates the bounty of Allah would sincerely turn to Allah in *du'aa* and remember Him more frequently. Hence, increased remembrance of Allah is another benefit of *raja*.

Two Types of *Rajaa*

Rajaa is of two types:

1. The *rajaa* of a person who fulfills the commands of Allah and then hopes for reward from Allah.
2. The *raja* of a person who makes *tawbah* after sinning and thereafter hopes for the acceptance of his *tawbah*.⁷

The scholars of *tasawwuf* differ with regards to which type is more virtuous. Some prefer the first type because of the strength of the *asbaab* (reasons) for such *raja*. Others prefer the second type because, due to the thought of one's sin, such *rajaa* is accompanied with humility. Hahya bin Mu'aadh *rahimahullah* would explain that acceptance of good actions requires *ikhlaas* (sincerity). *Known for my mistakes, can I claim complete sincerity in my actions?* On the contrary, the sinner who repents and then hopes for his repentance to be accepted relies on nothing but Allah's forgiveness. *Why would Allah not forgive whereas He is the All-Forgiving?* The latter types is hence more virtuous than the first.

***Rajaa* or Deception**

What about the *rajaa* of a person who hopes in the *rahmah* (mercy) of Allah but does no good deeds and engrosses in sin? As explained by the *'ulamaa*, this is actually *ghuroor* (deception) instead of *rajaa*. It could also be called *rajaa*

⁷ When a sinner repents, Shaytaan tries to deceive him by making him despondent and doubtful of the acceptance of his *tawbah*. 'You have sinned so much, do you think Allah will forgive you?', he insinuates. The means of combating this trickery of Shaytaan is *rajaa*.

kaadhib (false *rajaa*) or *tamanni*. *Tamanni* also means hope. However, the difference between *rajaa* and *tamanni* is that the former is a hope for something possible whereas the latter is a hope for something impossible.

Ibn-ul-Qayyim explained the difference between true and false *rajaa* by means of an effective example. He compared the person who exercises true *rajaa* to a farmer who ploughed his land, sowed the seeds and thereafter hopes for a successful crop. On the other hand, the person who exercises false *rajaa* is like a person who desires that he had a piece of land which he could cultivate and later harvest its crops.

Two More Examples

If a person is hired to repair some utensils for a fixed wage and he fulfils his task, his anticipation of being payed is justified. However, even if the person who employed him has a reputation for fulfilling his pledges, if he fails in his task and causes more damage to the utensils, his anticipation of being payed because his employer is very generous and never renegades on his promises is laughable. Imaam Ghazzaali *rahimahullah* compared true and false *rajaa* to the hopes of the above two employees.⁸

Hasan Al-Basri *rahimahullah* said about false *rajaa*:

من رجا شيئا طلبه

“Whoever desires something will make and effort to achieve it.”

Commenting on this statement, Imaam Ghazzaali says: *A person who desires to have children but does not get married is*

⁸ *Maw'idhat-ul-Mu'mineen min Iyhaa 'Uloomid-Deen*, Pg.187

a fool. Similarly, a person who desires the mercy of Allah but neither does good actions nor abstains from sin is in deception.

A poet aptly said:

ترجو النجاة و لم تسلك مسالكها - ان السفينة لا تجرى على اليبس

*You desire salvation but you have not followed it's path
Surely the ship does not sail on dry land.*

It is in this context that Shah Al-Kirmaani *rahimahullah* said:
“The sign of the soundness of *rajaa* is good actions.”

Textual Proof

Consider the *aayah*:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

*Surely those who bring imaan and those who migrate and strive the path of Allah, those are the ones who hope in Allah's mercy; and Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*⁹

Imaam Ghazzaali explains that the meaning of this *aayah* is that only those who bring *imaan*, undertake the *hijrah* and strive in the path of Allah deserve to hope in Allah's mercy. The *rajaa* of those who do not do these actions is therefore *false* and *invalid*.

Similarly, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said:

الكيس من دان نفسه و عمل لما بعد الموت و العاجز من أتبع نفسه هواها
و تمنى على الله الأمان

⁹ Surah Al-Baqarah Aayah 218

*The intelligent person is one who takes a reckoning of himself and the helpless person is one who follows his desires and then hopes in Allah.*¹⁰

This *Hadith* also proves the difference between true and false *rajaa*.

Conclusion

We conclude this discussion on *rajaa* with the following quotation from Yahya bin Mu'aadh *rahimahullah*:

O Allah! The sweetest gift in my heart is hoping in you, the most delightful speech on my tongue is praising you and the most beloved hour to me is the hour in which I will meet you.

May Allah guide one and all to a correct understanding of His *deen*, aameen.

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