

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# LIKE THE BIRDS

Chances are that you have not heard of people whose hearts are like that of the birds. Whatever the case may be, Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* spoke of them. He said, "Some people will enter *Jannah* (because) their hearts resemble the hearts of the birds".<sup>1</sup>

## Who are These People?

'Exceedingly softhearted people' is the opinion of some commentators. Others aver that they are people who are extremely fearful of Allah. However, in another *hadith* Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, "If you rely in Allah in the manner you ought to do so, He will sustain you just as He sustains the birds. They leave in the mornings with empty stomachs, yet they return in the evenings with full stomachs."<sup>2</sup> In the light of this *hadith*, we could conclude that the people who will enter *Jannah* (because) their hearts resemble the hearts of the birds are people who have absolute *tawakkul* (total reliance) in Allah.

## Why *Tawakkul*?

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

*In Allah (alone) should the Believers have tawakkul.*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Saheeh Muslim Hadith 7341

<sup>2</sup> Sunan-at-Tirmidhi Hadith 2344

<sup>3</sup> Surah Ali 'Imraan Aayah 122

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

*Whoever has tawakkul in Allah, He will be sufficient for him.*<sup>4</sup>

Why are Muslims required to have *tawakkul* in Allah? Why is so much of importance and reward attached to *tawakkul*? The answer to these questions is in the word *tawakkul* itself. You do not have to be professor of the Arabic language to realise the relationship between the words *tawakkul* and *wakeel*. The former is derived from the latter. Put differently, a person who has *tawakkul* in Allah is making Allah his *wakeel*.

The word *wakeel* rings wedding bells in many minds. Its meaning, however, is much broader than the bride's representative. When a person appoints another to do something on his behalf, the latter is his *wakeel*. For example, if you appoint him to sell your house, he is your *wakeel*.

When appointing a *wakeel*, three qualities are considered:

1. Is the *wakeel* knowledgeable regarding the issue at hand? You would not appoint him to sell your house if he has no knowledge regarding the real estate market. He may sell your house for an unreasonably low price.
2. Does he have the ability to discharge the task entrusted to him? You would not make him your *wakeel* to sell your car if he were bedridden. Confined to his bed, he does not have the ability to fulfill the task entrusted to him.
3. Does he have any concern for your welfare? Would you entrust a person who is not bothered if you suffer a loss?

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<sup>4</sup> Surah-at-Talaaq Aayah 3

Would you entrust a person who may very well deceive you?

Now, the reason for commanding the Muslims to have total *tawakkul* in Allah is that:

1. Nobody is more knowledgeable than Allah. In fact, Allah is All Knowing.

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ

*Would the one who created (everything) not know?*<sup>5</sup>

2. Nothing is beyond the *qudrat* (ability) of Allah.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

*Certainly Allah has ability over everything.*<sup>6</sup>

3. Allah is *Ar-Rahmaan* (The Most Merciful), *Ar-Ra'oof* (The Most Compassionate) and *Al-Barr* (The Most Kind). Nobody can be more sympathetic towards man than Allah.

### Another Reason

*Qadr* (belief that everything is preordained by Allah)<sup>7</sup> is another reason why *tawakkul* in Allah alone is imperative for Muslims. Put differently, Muslims are required to have *tawakkul* in Allah alone because nothing happens contrary to the desire of Allah.

### Tawakkul and Worldly Means

Any discussion on *tawakkul* inevitably leads to the question of worldly means. Does *tawakkul* demand renunciation of worldly means?

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<sup>5</sup> Surah-al-Mulk Aayah 14

<sup>6</sup> Surah-al-Baqarah Aayah 20

<sup>7</sup> Commonly referred to as *taqdeer*.

The answer to this question lies in the definition of *tawakkul*. Imaam Ahmad bin Hambal described it as '*amal-al-qalb* (an action of the heart). What he meant is that it is neither verbal nor physical; it cannot be achieved by using ones tongue and limbs. On the contrary, renunciation of worldly means is physical.

Furthermore,

- Adoption of worldly means has been alluded to in the Qur'aan.
- It was the *sunnah* of the previous ambiyaa *alaihim-us-salaam*.
- It was the *sunnah* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

### **The People of Yemen**

Claiming that they exercised *tawakkul*, the people of Yemen would not take with them any provisions when they travelled to Makkah for *hajj*. Upon reaching Makkah, however, they would resort to begging. Thus, Allah revealed:

وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى

*Take your provisions although the best provision is taqwa . . .*<sup>8</sup>  
Commanding the Yemeni *hujjaaj* to take their provisions even though they claimed to exercise *tawakkul* is testimony that *tawakkul* does not require abandonment of worldly means.

### ***Travel throughout its Length and Breadth***

Reminding man that the Earth and all its contents were created to fulfill his needs, Allah then tells him to travel in pursuit of livelihood.

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<sup>8</sup> Surah Baqarah Aayah 197

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ . . .

*He is the one who made the earth subservient to you, therefore travel throughout its length and breadth and eat from His sustenance . . .<sup>9</sup>*

Allah did not tell man to *wait* for his sustenance. Instead, he told him to *seek* it. This is another proof from the Qur'aan that *tawakkul* does not require abandonment of worldly means.

### **After Salaat-ul-Jumu'ah**

The following *ayah* is yet one more proof in this regard.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ . . .  
فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ . . .

*O those who have Imaan, when the call is made to salaah on the day of Jumu'ah, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave all trade . . . Then, when the salaah is completed, disperse in the land and seek the bounty of Allah . . .<sup>10</sup>*

### **Salaat-ul-Khawf**

This refers to a special method of performing *salaah* that is only observed on the battlefield when the Muslims fear being attacked by the enemy while they are in *salaah*. Discussed in Surah-an-Nisaa as well as a number of *ahaadith*, the *fuqahaa* (Muslim jurists) differ regarding its procedure. Nevertheless, its ordainment also shows the status of adopting worldly means.

### **Back to the Birds**

Let us go back to the *hadith* of the birds: "*If you rely in Allah in the manner you ought to do so, He will sustain you just as He*

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<sup>9</sup> Surah-al-Mulk Ayah 15

<sup>10</sup> Surah-al-Jumu'ah Ayah 10

*sustains the birds. They leave in the mornings with empty stomachs, yet they return in the evenings with full stomachs."* The last sentence ("*They leave in the mornings . . .*") indicates that although the birds rely in Allah for their sustenance, they make an effort to earn it. The same applies to man. Allah will sustain him just as He sustains the birds, but man has to make some effort. Hence, the meaning of the *hadith* is that if man has true *tawakkul*, Allah will sustain him with minimum effort on his behalf.

### **A Moderate Search**

Man's lifespan and his sustenance are preordained by Allah. He will definitely complete the lifespan that Allah had ordained for him. Nobody can live longer or shorter than that. Similarly, man will definitely receive all the sustenance that Allah had ordained for him. It is impossible for him to earn more or less than that. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, "*No soul dies until it gains its full sustenance and completes its entire lifespan. Therefore, fear Allah and be moderate in your search (for sustenance). Take what is permissible and leave what is prohibited.*" The important point in the context of our discussion is that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* did not say that since our sustenance is preordained, we must not seek it at all. Instead, he said, "*Be moderate in your search*".

### **Fasten Your Camel . . .**

"Fasten your camel and have *tawakkul*" is a commonly cited *hadith*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Sunan-at-Tirmidhi* Hadith 2517

## Be Intelligent

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* passed judgement between two people. As the person against whom judgement was passed walked away, he said *حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ* (“Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best helper”). Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* responded, “Allah blames people who do not help themselves. You must be intelligent. Then if you are defeated, you should say *حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ*”

## Two Steel Armours

In the battle of Uhud, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* wore two steel armours. The reason for doing so was to demonstrate that *tawakkul* does not require Muslims to discard all worldly means. Instead, they are required to utilise the same but trust in Allah.

## The Explanation of Sahl At-Tastari (ra)

Explaining the above, Sahl At-Tastari (ra) said, “Whoever criticizes activity (for the sake of earning a livelihood etc.) is criticizing the *sunnah* and whoever criticizes *tawakkul* is criticizing *imaan*. *Tawakkul* is the *haal* (spiritual condition) of the Nabi *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and activity is his *sunnah*. A person who emulates the *haal* of Nabi *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* must definitely not discard his *sunnah*!”<sup>12</sup>

## Three Levels of *Tawakkul*

At this juncture, you could question me about Ibrahim *alaihi-salaam*’s response to Jibreel *alaihi-salaam* when, just before he was flung into the fire, the latter asked him: “Do you need

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<sup>12</sup> Jaami-‘ul-‘Uloom Wal-Hikam Pg.472 and Madaarj-us-Saalikeen Pg.454

anything?" Ibrahim *alaihi-salaam* replied, "Not from you!" ("I do not need your help, but I do need the help of Allah.")<sup>13</sup> Was this not a rejection of worldly means and, according to the preceding discussion, inconsistent with *tawakkul*? The answer to this question is that there are three levels of *tawakkul* viz.

1. Exercising *tawakkul* in Allah, man adopts a worldly means that he constantly focuses on. This could be likened to the appointment of a lawyer. Although the client has confidence in his lawyer, he maintains continuous contact with him, enquiring about developments regarding the case.
2. Exercising *tawakkul* in Allah, man adopts a worldly means but, due to his *tawakkul*, he only focuses on Allah (and not the means that he adopted).
3. Exercising *tawakkul* in Allah, man does not even adopt a worldly means.

Considering the essence of *tawakkul*, the first level is the lowest and the third level is the highest. However, the third level is that of the *ambiyaa* and a selected few among the pious. It is not demanded from the average Muslim. The *tawakkul* demanded from them is of the second level.<sup>14</sup>

## Two Types of *Asbaab*

Moreover, *asbaab* (worldly means) are of two types:

1. يقينية – Means that definitely result in the desired effect. For example, drinking cold water definitely quenches a man's thirst and eating food fills a hungry man's stomach.

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<sup>13</sup> *Shu'ab-ul-Imaan* Hadith 1077

<sup>14</sup> *Majaalis Mufti-e-A'zam* Pg.456-457



Omission of such means is foolish and impermissible in the *sharee'ah*.

2. ظنية – Means that do not necessarily result in the desired effect, although they generally do. For example, commerce and agriculture are means of livelihood. Although they generally do result in livelihood, there is no certainty that they always do so. Omission of such means are of two types:
  - a. When a person intentionally chooses to live in the absence of worldly means – in a desert, for example. This type is also impermissible in the *sharee'ah*.
  - b. When a person discards the worldly means despite its availability. For example, he refuses to make an effort to earn a livelihood although he lives in a city wherein there are ample job opportunities. Under normal circumstances, this type of omission is impermissible. However, it is permissible in the presence of the following conditions:
    - ~ The person concerned should not have any dependants. He must not be responsible for the needs of anybody else.
    - ~ He must have firm resolution.
    - ~ He must always be content with whatever Allah ordains for him.
    - ~ He must never beg from anybody, neither directly nor indirectly.

In the absence of any one or more of these conditions, omission of the worldly means is impermissible. In addition, it must be done with the intention of *ilaaj-un-nafs* (treatment of the spiritual self) or fulfillment of some other need. Narrations of certain Sahaabah (ra) and other pious

people who discarded the worldly means should be interpreted in this manner. Nevertheless, adoption of the worldly means is best for the average Muslim.<sup>15</sup>

**Note:**

Whatever has been mentioned above is regarding apparent *asbaab* (worldly means that have an apparent relation with the desired result). It does not apply to obscure, far-fetched *asbaab* (means that do not have any apparent relation with the desired result). Adoption of such means contradicts the *hadith* “. . . be moderate in your search (for sustenance)”. Hence, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* would utilise the apparent means and thereafter say:

اللهم هذا الجهدُ ، وَعَلَيْكَ التَّكْلَانُ

*O Allah, this is our effort, now we rely in you.*<sup>16</sup>

**Another Type of Tawakkul**

This is the *tawakkul* that is observed when fulfilling the commands of Allah, which are the means of safety from Jahannam and entry into Jannah. While implementing such actions he must have *tawakkul* in Allah regarding his safety in the Hereafter. Yusuf bin Asbaat (ra) said in this regard, “Do the actions of a man who can only be saved by his actions but exercise the *tawakkul* of a man who can only be afflicted by what has been ordained for him.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Majaalis Mufti-e-A'zam* Pg.458-459

<sup>16</sup> *Majaalis Mufti-e-A'zam* Pg.461-462

<sup>17</sup> *Jaami-'ul-'Uloom Wal-Hikam* Pg.472

## The Important Question

'How do we inculcate *tawakkul*?' is the important question. In the light of the reasons for the importance and virtue of *tawakkul* in the *sharee'ah*, we could conclude that *tawakkul* is inculcated by recognising the attributes of Allah in contrast with human weakness. Added to this, contemplation of the virtues of *tawakkul* and anecdotes of those who adopted it will prove extremely beneficial.

و آخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العلمين  
و صلى الله على النبي محمد و على آله و أصحابه أجمعين

*Abu Hudhaifa Muhammed Karolia*  
*14 Sha'baan 1433 / 04 July 2012*  
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