

النقد والطعن

The Art of Criticism

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سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-Ulama seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

The Muslim community is plagued by a culture of harsh criticism, rebuttals and refutations, that often cross the line to become slander and calumny. In this monograph, Dr. Akram clarifies the difference and instructs us as to what honest criticism (in Arabic, naqd), a commendable quality, really is, versus calumny or censure (ṭaʿn), which can be crippling for an individual, or for a community.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

النقد والطنن

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أوكسفورد

قالوا: ما معنى النقد؟ قلت: النقد لغة: تفحص الشيء وتميز الجيد من الرديء، واصطلاحاً: إبراز وجوه الجمال والكمال والنفع، والكشف عن مواطن القبح والنقص والضرر، أو دراسة عمل علمي وفني محللاً إياه وموازناً بينه وبين غيره متوصلاً إلى تقدير قيمته، أو هو عدم قبول القول والرأي إلا بعد التمحيص والبحث والتحقيق.

قالوا: وما معنى الطنن؟ قلت: هو إصابة غيره جرحاً وكلمةً، وقد يكون الطنن في جسد الشخص، أو في عقله وفكره، وقلبه ومشاعره، وعلمه وأدبه، وإنتاجه العلمي والفني، وليس وراءه تحجّر وتنقيب، أو تحليل وتقييم.

قالوا: ما الفرق بينهما؟ قلت: الفرق واضح من التعريف نفسه، وخلاصته أن النقد علم والطعن جهل، والنقد نور والطعن ظلمات، والنقد وفاء وعدل وإنصاف، والطعن مجود وبخس وعدوان.

قالوا: فما حكمها؟ قلت: النقد واجب ديني وأمانة علمية، قال الله تعالى: "يا أيها اللذين آمنوا إن جاءكم فاسق بنبأ فتبينوا أن تصيبوا قوما بجهالة فصصبحوا على ما فعلتم نادمين"، والطعن محرم وقبيح، قال الله تعالى: "يا أيها الذين آمنوا اجتنبوا كثيرا من الظن إن بعض الظن إثم ولا تجسسوا ولا يغتب بعضكم بعضا أيحب أحدهم أن يأكل لحم أخيه ميتا فكرهتموه واتقوا الله إن الله تواب رحيم"، وقال: يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا يسخر قوم من قوم عسى أن يكونوا خيرا منهم ولا نساء من نساء عسى أن يكن خيرا منهن ولا تلمزوا أنفسكم ولا تنابزوا بالألقاب بئس الاسم الفسوق بعد الإيمان ومن لم يتب فأولئك هم الظالمون."

قالوا: هل يتجانسان متضارعين متشاكليين؟ قلت: لا، بل يختلفان غرضا ونية وعملا، قالوا: أين لنا هذا الاختلاف، قلت: الغرض من النقد هو تقدير شخص وتقييم رأيه وإنتاجه، والغرض من الطعن هو القرح والاعتياب والتعيير والانتقاص، ونية الناقد هو الإصلاح والتهديب في نصح وسداد، ونية الطاعن هو الإفساد والعيب في غش وخداع، وعملية النقد تتبع منهجا علميا واضحا معروفا لدى ذوي العلم والفن والأدب والصناعة، والطعن جهل وتجهيل، ومراوغة وتزوير، وافتراء وكذب. في

سير أعلام النبلاء: عن عباس بن محمد، عن ابن معين قال: حضرنا نعيم بن حماد بمصر، فجعل يقرأ كتاباً من تصنيفه، فقرأ ساعة، ثم قال: حدثنا ابن المبارك، عن ابن عون بأحاديث، فقلت: ليس ذا عن ابن المبارك، فغضب، وقال: ترد علي؟ قلت: إي والله، أرد عليك، أريد زينك، فأبي أن يرجع، فقلت: لا والله ما سمعت أنت هذا من ابن المبارك قط، ولا هو من ابن عون، فغضب، وغضب من كان عنده من أصحاب الحديث، وقام، فأخرج صحائف، فجعل يقول: أين الذين يزعمون أن يحيى بن معين ليس أمير المؤمنين في الحديث؟ نعم يا أبا زكريا غلطت، وكانت صحائف فغلطت، فجعلت أكتب من حديث ابن المبارك، عن ابن عون، وإنما رواها عن ابن عون غير ابن المبارك."

قالوا: هل يدخل النقد في حكم الطعن؟ قلت: نعم إذا لم يستحضر الناقد غرضه ونيته ولم يتقيد بمنهجه ملتزماً إياه التزاماً.

قالوا: أين يقع جرح المحدثين للرجال؟ قلت: هو نقد، يهدفون به إلى تمييز الصحيح من السقيم في الأخبار والآثار، قالوا: فلم سموا علمهم هذا النبيل "الجرح"؟ ولم يتحدثون عن الطعن ووجوهه؟ قلت: قصدهم هو تنزيه السنن من الوضع والغش والانتحال والتدليس سابرين أحوال الرواة والنقطة وصفاتهم، فأصل هذا العلم هو النقد تعديلاً وجرحاً، والاسم الكامل لعلمهم هو الجرح والتعديل، وهو النقد والتمييز.

قالوا: هل صدر من بعض المحدثين طعن؟ قلت: لا، إلا نذرا يسيرا في غير تعمد، كالخطأ يقع فيه الرجل والزلة تحدث منه، والله يغفر لهم ويعفو عنهم، وقد تسرب إلى صفوف أهل الحديث من تعمد الطعن، فدخل في حد الغيبة والإثم، وهم في ذلك مثل غيرهم من المغتابين والآثمين، لا منجى لهم إلا أن يتوبوا إلى الله تعالى ويحللوا ذمهم مبرئين إياها.

قالوا: ما للعلماء وطلبة العلم والدعاة والمصلحين في عصرنا يتطاعنون مغتابين خراصين وأفاكين؟ قلت: هذه غائلة واقعة ورزينة فاجعة، وقد يتخذون لذلك الطعن وسائل يبثون بها الزور والباطل ممتقين ومزيقين في العالم من أقصاه إلى أقصاه.

قالوا: ما المطلوب من الطاعنين والمطعونين؟ قلت: المطلوب من الطاعنين تقوى الله تعالى، وأن يتوبوا إليه توبة نصوحا، وأن يتقربوا إلى المطعونين معتذرين إليهم نادمين، والمطلوب من المطعونين الصبر لله عز وجل، وترك الضغائن وعدم الانتقام بشغب أو لسان تيحان.

قالوا: يقع فيك أناس بين فينة وأخرى، فأين أنت منهم؟ قلت: يؤلمني ذلك إيلا ما يشتد مرة ويخف أخرى، ثم أتذكر أمر ربي جل وعلا بالصبر، فأكره نفسي عليه رادعا إياها من الانتقام، وناهيا غيري من أصحابي من التصدي لهم ردا أو إنكارا.

قالوا: ما الذي يسر لك الصبر تيسيرا؟ قلت:

1- ما في الصبر من ثواب عظيم، ومن معية الله تعالى، إذ قال: "إن الله مع الصابرين"، وما أبلغه من ثواب! وما هتمي إذا كان الله معي؟.

2- ونعمة الله علي إذ شغلني بالعلم والأدب، وشغل الطاعنين بالمكروه والمستقدر.

3- وأن ذلك يكسر الكبر والرعونة في نفسي، فإذا أثنى الناس على رجل أعجب بنفسه، ثم تكبر وطمع ومشى في ثياب مخيلة، وفي ذلك من الهلاك ما فيه. أخرج البخاري عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه، قال: قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: "بينما رجل يمشي في حلة تعجبه نفسه مرجل جمته إذ خسف الله به فهو يتجلجل إلى يوم القيامة". وقال الحسن البصري: لو كان كلام بني آدم كله صدقاً، وعمله كله حسناً، يوشك أن يخسر! قيل: وكيف يخسر؟ قال: يعجب بنفسه.

4- وأن حسنات الطاعنين تحول إلي، وأن ذنوبي تحمل عليهم، أخرج مسلم والترمذي عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "أتدرون ما المفلس؟" قالوا: المفلس فينا من لا درهم له ولا متاع فقال: "إن المفلس من أمتي من يأتي يوم القيامة بصلاة وصيام وزكاة، ويأتي وقد شتم هذا وقذف هذا وأكل مال هذا وسفك دم هذا وضرب هذا فيعطى هذا من حسناته، وهذا من حسناته فإن فنيت حسناته قبل أن يقضي ما عليه أخذ من خطاياهم فطرح عليه ثم طرح في النار."

قالوا: إذا كانت حسنات الطاعنين تحول إليك فهل تحرص على أن يكثروا من الطعن فيك فترداد حسنات؟ قلت: لا، قالوا: لماذا؟ قلت: لأن الطعن غيبة ومعصية، وحرام على العباد أن يجبوأ أن يعصى الله، وفي حلية الأولياء في ترجمة الإمام عبد الرحمن بن مهدي، قال: لولا أني أكره أن يعصي الله لتمنيت أن لا يبقى في هذا المصر أحد إلا وقع في واغتابني، وأي شيء أهنأ من حسنة يجدها الرجل في صحيفته يوم القيامة يعملها ولم يعلم بها.

قالوا: بماذا توصينا؟ قلت: أوصيكم ونفسي بتقوى الله تعالى، وأن لا نحمل ضب ضعف، وأن نتجنب الطعن والجرح والغيبة، نافيةً أساعنا الفواحش، وسليمةً دواعي صدورنا، وأن نلزم أنفسنا التبصر والانتقاد في العلم والنظر، فلا نقبل إلا الصحيح المميز، ولا يحملنا الشره على التقاط الرديء والخبث، وفي سير أعلام النبلاء في ترجمة الأعمش قال: جلست إلى إياس بن معاوية بواسطة فذكر حديثا. فقلت: من ذكر هذا؟ فضرب لي مثل رجل من الخوارج. فقلت: أتضرب لي هذا المثل، تريد أن أكس الطريق بثوبي، فلا أمر ببعرة ولا خنفس إلا حملتها؟

The Art of Criticism

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They asked: What is the true meaning of critique?

I replied:

Critique¹ linguistically means to examine something and distinguish its good from its bad, and lexically refers to highlighting the dimensions that are beautiful, complete or beneficial, while exposing those that are detested, deficient or harmful. It is also to study an academic or artistic enterprise in order to analyze it and place it in proper perspective, arriving at its true value and estimation. It is also to reject a view or position, but only after proper examination, study or research.

They asked: What is the meaning of censure?²

I replied:

It is to wound or injure another, which could be in the physical body of a person, in his intellect or thought, his heart or emotion, his knowledge and writing, or in his academic or artistic output. There generally does not lie any inquiry, investigation, analysis or study behind it.

They asked: What is the difference between them?

I replied:

The difference is explicit from their definitions themselves, but the summary of it is that critique is a form of knowledge whereas censure is ignorance;

¹ In Arabic *naqd*.

² In Arabic, the term is *ṭa'n*, which refers to a deeper and more negative type of criticism, censure, or reproach, that approaches complete dissection, breakdown or exposition.

critique is light while censure is darkness; critique faithful, just and balanced while censure is rejection, depreciation and enmity.

They asked: What is the ruling on them?

I replied:

Critique is a religious obligation and a responsibility that comes with knowledge. God the Exalted stated: O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.³ Censure, on the other hand, is forbidden and evil. God the Exalted stated: O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.⁴ He also stated: O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.⁵

They asked: Are they not very similar and comparable?

I replied:

No, they differ in their aims, intent and function.

They asked: Explain to us this difference.

I replied:

The aim of critique is to appreciate an individual, and assess and bring forth his true stance or position, while the purpose of censure is to rebuke, denigrate, condemn or belittle someone. The intention of the one involved in critiquing is reform, instruction, counsel and truth, whereas the intent of

³ Qur'ān 49:6.

⁴ Qur'ān 49:12.

⁵ Qur'ān 49:11.

the censurer is corruption, blame and deceit. The work of critique follows a clear academic methodology known to scholars and experts of the discipline and science. Censure is pure ignorance and folly, deceit and falsehood. It is narrated in *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'*:⁶

From 'Abbās b. Muḥammad: from Ibn Ma'īn, who said: We attended the circles of Na'īm b. Ḥammād in Egypt, and he began to read one of his own works. After reading for one hour, he said: "Ibn al-Mubārak narrated to us: from Ibn 'Awn: some ḥadīth." I said to him, "That is not from Ibn al-Mubārak." He became angry and said, "Are you refuting me?" I replied, "Yes, by God, I am. But I only want to raise you." But he refused to recant. So I said, "No, by God, you have not heard this from Ibn al-Mubārak at all, nor did he hear it from Ibn 'Awn." He became angry, as did some of the people of ḥadīth around him. He got up, brought some pages and proceeded to say, "Where is the one who claims Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn is not the *Commander of the Faithful*⁷ in ḥadīth? Yes, Abū Zakariyā,⁸ I have made a mistake. The pages contain the error. I was writing the ḥadīth of Ibn al-Mubārak from Ibn 'Awn, but it was narrated from Ibn 'Awn by other than Ibn al-Mubārak."

They asked: Can critique fall under the ruling of censure?

I replied:

Yes, if the one doing the critique does not have the right aim or intent, or does not confine himself to its right methodology.

They asked: Where do the disparagements of the ḥadīth scholars regarding weak transmitters fall under?

I replied:

It is critique, which they used to distinguish the sound from the unsound reports and traditions.

⁶ The monumental biographical and historical work of Imām Dhahabī (d. 748/1348).

⁷ *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, an honorary title for a scholar of ḥadīth who has attained supreme proficiency in ḥadīth scholarship.

⁸ The title of Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn.

They asked: Then why did they name this noble science *al-jarḥ* (“impugment”)?⁹ And why did they speak about censure and its various aspects?

I replied:

Their aim was to purify the sunnah from forgery, deceit and plagiarism, by investigating the states and characteristics of transmitters. The basis for this science is critique (naqd), either by way of validating or invalidating someone. The complete name for this science is *al-jarḥ wa al-ta’dīl*, which is basically critique and differentiation.

They asked: Has censure come from any ḥadīth scholar?

I replied:

No, except for a small amount that was not deliberate, like a mistake a person happens to commit or a slip that happens to emanate from him, which God forgives and overlooks. However, those who deliberately engage in censure have crept into the ranks of the people of ḥadīth and entered the realm of slander and sin, which is as serious of a sin here as it is in any other case. There is no escape for them except to repent to God the Exalted, and relieve themselves of this liability and become innocent of it.

They asked: What can the scholars, students of knowledge, callers and reformers of our time do about the attacks of the slanderers, gossip-mongers and liars?

I replied:

This is a real calamity and painful loss. They have adopted for their censure specific means, using them to transmit lies and falsehood, well-formulated and well-forged, into the world from one end to another.

They asked: What is demanded from the perpetrators and victims of censure?

⁹ The science of judging the ḥadīth transmitters was termed *al-jarḥ wa al-ta’dīl*, meaning “discrediting and accrediting,” or “impugment and validation.”

I replied:

What is demanded from those who censure is the reverential fear (taqwā) of God the Exalted, to repent to Him with sincere repentance, and to become closer to their victims in apology and regret. What is demanded from those who are its victims is that they be patient for the sake of God and leave off malice or revenge.

They said: Many people from one time or another have fallen into this with you.¹⁰ What is your stance regarding them?

I replied:

It pains me greatly—more so on some occasions than others—until I remember the command of my Lord to have patience and force myself to do so, stopping myself from considering revenge and forbidding my companions from confronting or refuting them.

They asked: What makes it easy for you to practice patience?

I replied:

There are several things:

1. The great reward that lies in patience, and the company of God the Exalted, that comes with it, as He has said: And indeed God is with the practitioners of patience.¹¹ And what a great reward that is! What should bother me if God is truly with me?
2. The great favor of God upon me when He made me preoccupied with knowledge and writing, while He made the slanderers occupied with that which is evil and detested.
3. The fact that it breaks the arrogance and carelessness inside me, for when people praise a person he becomes pleased with himself,

¹⁰ i.e. they censure or slander you.

¹¹ This appears in the Qur'ān in multiple verses.

which leads him to become proud, to transgress limits and to walk with borrowed clothes. And that contains the destruction it contains. Bukhārī relates from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: While a man was walking, clad in a two-piece garment and proud of himself with his hair well-combed, suddenly Allah made him sink into the earth and he will go on sinking into it till the Day of Resurrection. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: Were all of the speech of human beings to be true and all their actions good, they would nearly perish. It was asked: How would they perish? He replied: By becoming proud of themselves.

4. Because of the fact that the good deeds of the slanderers become transferred to me, while my sins transfer to them. Muslim and Tirmidhī relate from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, asked: Do you know of the bankrupt one? They replied: The bankrupt ones for us are those with no money or goods. He then said: The bankrupt one from my nation is the one who comes on the Day of Judgment with much prayer, fasting and charity, but others will also come who were the victims of his slander, calumny, his misappropriation of their wealth, his violence and his shedding of their blood. The victims will be given from his good deeds until they run out, in which case their bad deeds will be transferred to the perpetrator, until he is cast into the Fire.

They asked: If the good deeds of the slanderers are indeed transferred to you, would you like them to increase their censure for more deeds?

I replied: No.

They asked: Why not?

I replied:

Because censure is backbiting and sin, and it is forbidden for servants to wish that God is disobeyed. In *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*¹² there appears the biography of

¹² Famous work of Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038).

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī who said: Were it not for the fact that I hate that God is disobeyed, I would wish that none remained in this city except that they slander me. What could be more joyous than a good deed that a person unexpectedly finds in his register on the Day of Judgment, which he performed but forgot about?

They asked: What would you advise us?

I replied:

I advise you and myself with the fear (taqwā) of God the Exalted, not to carry any malice, to avoid all censure, reprimand and backbiting, to deny for our ears any evil, to protect the motivations of our hearts, to mandate on ourselves deliberation and critique of knowledge and thinking, that we accept only that which is sound and distinguished, and to not let our greed allow us to accept that which is vile and base. In *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'*, the author relates the biography of A'mash who said: I sat with Iyās b. Mu'āwiyah in Wāsiṭ, Iraq, when he mentioned a ḥadīth. I asked: Who related this? He mentioned a man from the Khārijite sect. I asked: Do you mention this person? Do you wish that I sweep the road with my clothes, such that I begin to carry whatever dung or beetle I come across?