The Story of One Who Considered Himself Forced

A certain person of incorrect belief claimed that man is a forced being and does not have a choice in any matter. He cannot exercise his will. Hence, he concluded that all his actions were due to destiny and were forced upon him. Consequently, he was not responsible and accountable for his actions. One day he entered an orchard and without permission, started picking fruit from the trees and ate it. The owner of the orchard came along and shouted at him:
"O you wicked thief! What are you doing?" He replied: "This orchard belongs to Allah Ta'ala. I am a bondsman of His. I am only eating of His gifts, so what sin is in it?"

The owner of the orchard took hold of him, tied him to a tree with a rope and started to beat him over his back with a thick stick. The thief explained: "O you unjust one, why do you persecute an innocent one in this evil manner? Have shame before Allah Ta'ala!" The owner of the orchard replied: "This stick is Allah Ta'ala's and I am His slave, who is busy beating another. I have no choice. I am forced to beat you and so is my stick and remember everything that occurs, is done by Allah Ta'ala."
The thief replied:
"I repent to Allah Ta'ala for this wrong belief of being forced. There is no doubt a choice, there is a choice, and there is a choice."

Lesson

Once a man came to Hazrat Ali and asked: "Is man forced or not?" (Meaning does he have a choice in his actions or not). Hazrat Ali told him: "Lift up one of your legs!" The man lifted his leg. Then he said: "Now lift up the other one". He asked: "How can both legs be lifted up?" Hazrat Ali replied: "Well, that is the answer to your question. Man is half forced and half free". We should continue to beg of Allah Ta'ala the ability and Divine guidance to do righteous deeds and beg Him to grant us proper understanding. The end result of some sins and the punishment, is that ones intelligence becomes defective. The punishment of being transformed to animals has been lifted from this Ummat, while the punishment of the reason becoming so affected that we behave like animals, may still descend upon us.

May Allah Ta'ala bestow us with correct understanding and the light of reason. May He protect us from the punishment of being changed in heart and reasoning to that of lower beings. The experience of the saintly ones shows that whosoever stays in their company and performs Zikrullah punctually, is protected from the punishment of defective reasoning and intellect, causing one to behave worse than animals.