



DISABILITY, DIGNITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EASTERN INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE

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Abstract. This thesis examines the problem of social support for persons with disabilities in the intellectual heritage of Eastern thinkers, jurists and statesmen. The material shows that care for vulnerable groups was regarded not as a secondary act of charity, but as an important measure of justice, moral responsibility and good governance. The study focuses on ideas reflected in Islamic jurisprudence, moral philosophy and public administration: recognition of legal capacity, compassion, material assistance, labor inclusion, tax relief and protection from oppression. The central conclusion is that Eastern intellectual thought viewed persons with disabilities as individuals whose dignity, rights and social participation had to be protected.

Keywords. disability, dignity, social justice, Eastern thinkers, social protection, Hidaya, al-Farabi, Nizam al-Mulk, Temur Tuzuklari, charity, public administration.

Introduction


The attitude toward persons with disabilities is one of the most important indicators of a society’s moral level and its understanding of social justice. The state and society reveal their approach to human dignity through the way they support those who are most in need of protection. In the Eastern intellectual tradition, especially within Islamic civilization, such people were not treated merely as objects of pity. Their situation was connected with legal responsibility, moral duty, social solidarity and the obligation of rulers to protect the weak.

The source material shows that the question of disability was closely related to a broader circle of vulnerable groups: the poor, the needy, debtors, travelers in distress and people with limited opportunities for labor. Therefore, the study of this topic is not limited to medical or charitable assistance. It also reveals historical ideas about law, ethics, labor, governance, taxation and the ruler’s responsibility before society.

The purpose of this thesis is to summarize and edit the main ideas found in Eastern intellectual heritage concerning social support for persons with disabilities. The analysis is based on the works and traditions connected with Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, Nizam al-Mulk, Amir Temur and later Central Asian authors.

Main Part

First, Eastern juristic thought recognized the legal status of persons with disabilities. In Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani’s Hidaya, a person’s physical or mental condition is taken into account when legal responsibility is determined. This means that the law was not understood only as punishment; it also required correct assessment of circumstances, capacity and



intention. Such an approach reflects a humane legal culture in which justice is connected with the real condition of the individual [1].

A particularly important example is the treatment of mute persons in legal transactions. Hidayat explains that their actions, including marriage, divorce, buying and selling, may be expressed through writing or gestures [2]. This rule does not deny their legal capacity. On the contrary, it recognizes their specific forms of communication and confirms that physical limitations do not remove a person from the sphere of law. In this sense, Eastern legal thought protected the status of the individual as a subject of rights.

Second, social support was interpreted as both a public duty and a moral obligation. Islamic teaching connected help for vulnerable groups with institutions such as zakat, fitr, ushr and sadaqah. Through these practices, assistance to the poor, the needy, debtors, travelers and other groups in need became part of regular social life [3]. Hadith literature also strengthens this idea: guiding a blind person on the road is described as an act of charity [4]. This example shows that support includes not only money, but also everyday attention, assistance and solidarity.


Third, Eastern philosophy linked justice with inclusion and with the fair distribution of social goods. Abu Nasr al-Farabi's doctrine of the virtuous society interprets justice as giving each person his or her due share and preserving that share [5]. For al-Farabi, the balance of wealth, health, honor, rank and other benefits was one of the main conditions of a just society. Applied to persons with disabilities, this idea means that they should not be isolated, but should receive the support necessary for a dignified life.

Al-Farabi also emphasized that each person should engage in work appropriate to his or her abilities [6]. This idea has special importance for the problem of disability. It does not present vulnerable people as passive recipients of aid; rather, it encourages society to create conditions in which every person can take part in useful activity according to capacity. Thus, social protection is connected with dignity, labor and participation in community life [7].

The ethical tradition of the East developed similar ideas. Nasir al-Din al-Tusi paid special attention to humanity, mercy, forgiveness and compassion toward the weak [8]. In this view, the moral maturity of society becomes visible in its treatment of those who cannot fully protect themselves. Therefore, care for persons with disabilities is not only a practical measure, but also a test of public morality.

Fourth, the tradition of public administration also treated protection of the weak as a sign of just rule. Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnama* connects the justice of the ruler with the protection of the rights of the population, supervision of officials and prevention of oppression [9]. The wise ruler should know the needs of the people and pay special attention to defenseless groups. This shows that social protection was not only a private act of mercy; it was also considered a function of governance.

The same direction is visible in the political heritage associated with Amir Timur. In the *Temur Tuzuklari*, protection of the population's property, security and living conditions is presented as an important part of state policy [10]. The source emphasizes moderation in



taxation and the need to prevent oppression that could force people into poverty. It also mentions material support for the blind, the poor and people whose opportunities for labor were limited, as well as the creation of conditions for suitable work [11].

The instructions connected with mosques, madrasas, guest houses, hospitals and soup kitchens show that social support had organized forms during the Timurid period. The aim was not simply to keep the needy dependent on charity, but to help them live with dignity and participate in social life as far as possible [12]. This approach makes the *Temur Tuzuklari* an important source for understanding the historical roots of social protection in Central Asian governance.

Later Central Asian authors also preserved the idea that the ruler and society must consider the condition of vulnerable people. In *Dastur ul-Muluk*, Samandar Termizi notes that the social situation of the population should be taken into account when taxes are determined [13]. Historical and prose works by Ahmad Donish, Mahmud ibn Vali, Mir Muhammad Amin Bukhari, Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, Abulgazi Bahadurkhan and others also describe the just ruler as one who cares for the poor, the distressed and the needy [14].

Synthesis of Findings


The reviewed material allows the issue of support for persons with disabilities to be understood on three connected levels. The first level is legal: a person with physical or mental limitations remains a bearer of rights and responsibilities, but the assessment of his or her actions must take real capacity into account. The second level is moral: assistance to vulnerable groups is presented as mercy, charity and social solidarity. The third level is administrative: the ruler and the state are expected to prevent oppression, regulate taxation fairly and organize support for those who cannot fully provide for themselves.

These levels show that Eastern intellectual heritage did not reduce disability to personal weakness or private misfortune. The main emphasis was placed on human dignity, social attention and the duty to create suitable conditions. The examples from *Hidaya*, hadith literature, al-Farabi's philosophy, *Siyasatnama* and the *Temur Tuzuklari* demonstrate that social protection was understood as a combination of law, ethics and governance. This combination gave the problem of disability a public meaning and connected it with the broader question of justice.

Another important feature of this heritage is the idea of inclusion through useful activity. Material assistance was necessary, but it was not the only form of support. The analyzed texts also emphasize suitable labor, public participation and the protection of a person's place within society. For this reason, the Eastern tradition can be interpreted as a source that connects compassion with responsibility and charity with dignity.

Conclusion

The analysis of Eastern intellectual heritage shows that support for persons with disabilities was not an accidental or marginal theme. It was closely connected with justice, mercy, legal recognition, material provision, labor inclusion and state responsibility. In Islamic jurisprudence, persons with disabilities were recognized as subjects of law, and their



specific forms of communication were accepted. In philosophy and ethics, their protection was linked with dignity, compassion and the moral maturity of society. In public administration, care for vulnerable groups was treated as one of the signs of just rule.

Thus, the Eastern tradition offers an important historical and moral foundation for the idea of an inclusive society. Its main message is that persons with disabilities should not be excluded from social life. They must be supported, protected and involved in useful activity according to their abilities. This heritage remains valuable for strengthening humane social protection and for understanding justice as practical care for human dignity.

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