

Chapter 6

Analysis of Selected Hadiths about Reliance (*Tawakkul*)

Introduction

One of the key concepts that Islam emphasizes on is *tawakkul* and it can be translated as reliance or trust in God. In Islamic terminology, reliance means doing all that is necessary to obtain a desired or intended result, and then waiting in expectation for the Eternally-Powerful One to bring about His Will.²⁴⁹

This concept means that Believers surrender themselves to will of God in full confidence and make commitment to fulfil His demands. They are aware that without God's help they cannot be successful therefore they entrust all their affairs to Him in order to reach tranquillity in heart. For them there is no any other source to seek refuge besides God. They have total confidence in God and never resort to any other sources of power to seek help.

There are four degrees in *tawakkul*; it starts with reliance, then surrender to will of God and then referring affairs to God and expecting the result from Him. In the final stage of *tawakkul* believers have full confidence and trust in God. They convince themselves that they are helpless and in need of God's power and wealth. God declared in the Qur'an; "and whosoever puts his trust in God, then He will suffice him".²⁵⁰ They understand the meaning of 'there is no power and strength save with God' and expect all kind of helps from this heavenly treasure. A traveller on the path of God is warned by his/her conscience, aware of the point of reliance and the point of seeking help, and in complete awareness of his or her helplessness and destitution, turns to the Unique Source of Power and Will and says: Hold me by the hand, hold me, for I cannot do without You.²⁵¹

God imprinted in the hearts of His servants two inner drives or impulses; the need for a source of help when helpless, and for a point of reliance when confronted with misfortune. They are given for human beings so they can find God with the guidance of these two impulses. The following verse in the Qur'an is an evidence for this fact;

"When you are in the ship, and the ships run with their voyagers with a fair breeze, and they rejoice in it, there comes upon them a tempest, and waves surge towards them from all sides, so that they are sure that they are encompassed (by death with no way out), they call upon God, sincerely believing in Him alone (as the only Deity, Lord, and Sovereign): 'If You save us from this, we will most certainly be among the thankful.'"²⁵²

By relying on God Believers entrust all their affairs to God and are fully aware that nothing happens without His permission for He creates everything and their results. In order to truly trust in God, one should close the doors of his/her heart to everything other than Him. Believers accept God's decree about themselves without complaining and submit themselves to His will and endure misfortunes patiently. Although Believers pay attention to means and causes in this world they know that real success comes from God alone.

God creates everything on certain preliminary conditions and it is their responsibility to meet them to achieve the desired result. They do what is required to obtain their aims, but they never attribute any creative effect to the means and causes. They combine exerting effort and

²⁴⁹ Fethullah Gülen, "Emerald Hills of the Heart : Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism," (2010). Vol.1, p. 67.

²⁵⁰ Qur'an 65: 3.

²⁵¹ Gülen, *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol.1, p. 68.

²⁵² Qur'an 10: 22.

reliance on God to reach their goals because fulfilling preliminaries is the first part of reliance on God.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) represented the highest rank of *tawakkul* in his servanthood. When the feet of those pursuing him during his emigration to Medina were seen from the cave where he was hiding with his nearest friend Abū Bakr and their pursuers' voices echoed from the cave's walls, he relied wholly upon God.²⁵³ At that moment he said: "grieve not! Assuredly, God is with us."²⁵⁴ God stated in the Qur'ān; "whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him"²⁵⁵ and the Prophet represented his trust in God at the highest level.

Fulfilling preliminaries and reliance on God are not contradictory to each other. Indeed, they are like two faces of one truth and one completes the other. Because *tawakkul* means fulfilling all preliminaries for the intended result without leaving any gap and then waiting God's will about it. In other words, Believers meet the necessary conditions but never attribute any creative effect to them for everything happens with the power and will of God. So, they expect God's help and mercy for all their affairs.

Human beings are created in the sphere of means and causes. They need oxygen, water, food, sleep and many other things. So, they cannot ignore the realities of life. God operates the universe according to His laws which He set in there. Ignoring causes and preliminaries mean ignoring God's laws in nature. The causes and means are veils before God's majesty and they are set to trial human beings. So, ignoring causes is meant to be disobedience to God's decree and commands. Complying with preliminaries is required to be sensitive in servanthood to God. In order to achieve God's pleasure and content one should act in consideration of causes and means. However, giving creative effect to them is considered as associating partners to God. So, although believers fulfil causes to obtain the result they never see them as real doer. They rely on God but never ignore the realities of life. There are many verses about reliance in the Qur'an;

"Those to whom some people said: 'Look, those people have gathered against you, therefore be fearful of them.' But it increased them only in faith, and they responded: 'God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Guardian He is!'"²⁵⁶

"When the (true) believers saw the Confederates before them, they said: 'This is what God and His Messenger promised us, and God is true and so is His Messenger'. This has but increased them in faith and submission."²⁵⁷

"The true believers are only those who, when God is mentioned, their hearts tremble with awe, and when His Revelations are recited to them, it strengthens them in faith, and they put their trust in their Lord."²⁵⁸

Taking necessary cautions and fulfilling preliminaries is required at the beginning of acts but supplication to God and asking His help should not obliterated. If people constantly implore God and seek refuge in Him He will accept their supplications. The Prophet said; "The

²⁵³ Gülen, *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol.1, p. 70.

²⁵⁴ Qur'ān 9: 40.

²⁵⁵ Qur'ān 39: 38.

²⁵⁶ Qur'ān 3: 173.

²⁵⁷ Qur'ān 33: 22.

²⁵⁸ Qur'ān 8: 2.

invocation of anyone of you is granted by God if he does not show impatience by saying, ‘I invoked God but my request has not been granted’”.²⁵⁹

Muslims were permitted to defend themselves against the unbelievers with the following verse; “The believers against whom war is waged are given permission to fight in response, for they have been wronged. Surely, God has full power to help them to victory.”²⁶⁰ Although God promised to help Muhammad (pbuh) and give him the victory against his enemies the Prophet opened his hands implored God for long time. While supplicating to God his cloak was falling down and Abū Bakr was putting it back. He was saying; “O my Lord! Please fulfil Your promise and give me the victory. O God! If You let these small number of believers to be perished no one would worship You in the earth”. Thereupon, Abū Bakr said; “O Messenger of God! Why you hurt yourself (by holding hands open for long time) assuredly God will give you the victory”.²⁶¹ The Prophet’s every act is good example for Believers. He took all necessary cautions before the battle and then invoked wholeheartedly to God to ask the victory. This is the meaning of *tawakkul* in the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

²⁵⁹ Bukhari, *Sahīh*, Invocation, 22.

²⁶⁰ Qur’ān 22: 39.

²⁶¹ Muslim, *Sahīh*, Jihad, 58.

Hadith about reliance and their analyses

First hadith

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ: عُرِضَتْ عَلَيَّ الْأُمَمُ، فَرَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ وَمَعَهُ الرَّهَيْطُ وَالنَّبِيُّ وَمَعَهُ الرَّجُلُ وَالرَّجُلَانِ، وَالنَّبِيُّ وَلَيْسَ مَعَهُ أَحَدٌ إِذْ رَفَعَ لِي سِوَادَ عَظِيمٍ فَظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُمْ أُمَّتِي، فَقِيلَ لِي: هَذَا مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ وَلَكِنْ انظُرْ إِلَى الْأَفَقِ فَإِذَا سِوَادٌ عَظِيمٌ فَقِيلَ لِي انظُرْ إِلَى الْأَفَقِ الْآخَرَ فَإِذَا سِوَادٌ عَظِيمٌ فَقِيلَ لِي: هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكَ، وَمَعَهُمْ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفًا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ وَلَا عَذَابٍ ثُمَّ نَهَضَ فَدَخَلَ مَنْزِلَهُ، فَخَاضَ النَّاسُ فِي أَوْلِيكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ وَلَا عَذَابٍ، فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ: فَلَعَلَّهُمُ الَّذِينَ صَجَبُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ: فَلَعَلَّهُمُ الَّذِينَ وُلِدُوا فِي الْإِسْلَامِ، فَلَمْ يُسْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَذَكَرُوا أَسْمَاءَ فَخَرَجَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: مَا الَّذِي تَخُوضُونَ فِيهِ؟ فَأَخْبَرُوهُ فَقَالَ: هُمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يِرْفُونَ، وَلَا يَسْتَرْفُونَ، وَلَا يَبْطِئُونَ، وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ فقامَ عَكَاشَةُ بْنُ مُخَصِّنٍ فَقَالَ: ادْعُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَني مِنْهُمْ، فَقَالَ: أَنْتَ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ قامَ رَجُلٌ آخَرَ فَقَالَ: ادْعُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَني مِنْهُمْ فَقَالَ: سَبَقَكَ بِهَا عَكَاشَةُ

Ibn ‘Abbas reports that Messenger of God (pbuh) said; “I was shown the past nations. I saw a prophet who had a very small group with him, another prophet who was accompanied by only one or two men and some did not have even one. Suddenly I was shown a huge crowd and I thought that they were my followers, but I was told: ‘this is Moses and his people, but look towards the other side.’ I looked and beheld a great assemblage. I was told: ‘these are your people and amongst them there are seventy thousand who shall enter Paradise without being taken to account’. Then the Prophet (pbuh) stood up and went into his room, and the Companions began to discuss who may be those people who would enter Paradise without any accounting. Some said: ‘probably, they are the ones who kept company with Messenger of God (pbuh).’ Others said: ‘they are the ones who have been born as Muslims and have never associated partner with God.’ Then Messenger of God (pbuh) came out and asked: ‘what are you discussing?’ So they told him. He then said: ‘they are those who do not make amulet (*ruqya*) nor seek it, nor perceive omens but keep trust in their Lord.’ On this ‘Ukkasha bin Mihsan stood up and asked: ‘Pray to God to make me one of them.’ The Prophet (pbuh) said; ‘you are one of them.’ Then another man stood up and asked the same thing. The Prophet (pbuh) answered, ‘Ukkasha has passed you.’”²⁶²

Analysis of the hadith

The hadith is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas and the information about him was given previously. Bukhari and Muslim agree on the authenticity of this hadith and they recorded it in their *sahīh* collections. The last part of the hadith is related to reliance on God (tawakkul). It is not clear whether the Prophet saw the past nations in his dream or he was informed through the Arch Angel Gabriel. It seems he saw some scenes about the unseen world with his prophetic vision and that is beyond the comprehension of human intellect.

The hadith explains that each prophet had different number of followers; some had many while some less and even some did not have any. Prophet Muhammad has the most crowded followers and among them there are seventy thousand who shall enter Paradise without being taken to account. The Companions were curious about them and therefore they started to discuss right after the Prophet’s leave. This indicates their passion for knowledge and also great effort to understand the true face of the matters. When their curiosity increased the

²⁶² Bukhari, *Sahīh*, Medicine, 1; Muslim, *Sahīh*, Imān, 374.

Prophet came and gave good tidings for all his followers; ‘they are those who do not make amulet (*ruqya*) nor seek it, nor perceive omens but keep trust in their Lord.’

This hadith does not prohibit asking cure from God by reciting some supplications or verses that are informed by the Prophet. Blowing as an act of sorcery is prohibited, but to recite some of the verses of the Qur’ān and then blowing over the patient is not. There is much evidence which proves that it is permissible to recite Qur’anic verses or prayers and blow over the patient to expect a cure from God. The Modern Qur’anic exegete Hamdi Yazir relates many evidences concerning permissibility of reciting some supplications and blowing over the patients from the authentic hadith books. Some of them include:²⁶³

- The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sick and arch angel Gabriel recited ‘I recite in the name of God and make (*ruqya*) against whatever hurt you and God gives you cure’ and then blowed on the Prophet (pbuh).
- Ibn Abbas reports; “the Prophet (pbuh) taught us the following prayer to protect against all kind of pain and fever; ‘in the name of God who is Gracious, I seek refuge in God almighty from every vessel which blood flows in it and from the evil of fire of Hell’”.
- The Prophet (pbuh) said; “if one visits a patient whose death is not yet decreed and utters seven times ‘I implore to God Almighty who is Owner of supreme throne, He gives you cure’”.
- The Prophet (pbuh) prayed when he visited the patients by saying; ‘O Lord of People! Remove the pain and give him a cure which does not leave any illness for You are the only one who can cure’.
- The Prophet (pbuh) recited surahs Ikhlas, Falaq and Nās every night before sleeping and blew into his palms and then wiped over his face and whole body. Similarly, he read these surahs and then blew over his family when they were sick.

Giving creative effect to anything other than God is prohibited and Believers expect everything from Him. The supplications or some verses of the Qur’ān are only means to attract His mercy for He is the only one who creates the result. Believers trust in God and refer all their affairs to Him. They don’t believe good or bad omen for nothing happens without God’s permission. In order to be free from all kind of false beliefs a person should rely on God and trust in Him. The level of *tawakkul* depends on the level of faith, so first of all, people should believe and trust in God wholeheartedly.

This hadith is not evidence for not seeking medical treatment for illnesses, because the Prophet himself had medical treatment on many occasions and also instructed his followers do same in many hadiths. The essential theme in the hadith is reliance on God and accepting His decree about us without complaining. Believers should keep their good thoughts about God even in the time of calamities and misfortunes. There is much blessing, wisdom and benefits in all God’s decisions and works. People should trust in God and endure the misfortunes patiently.

There is one more point that should be discussed in this hadith; the Companion ‘Ukkasha bin Mihsan stood up and asked: ‘pray to God to make me one of them.’ The Prophet (pbuh) said;

²⁶³ Hamdi Yazir, *Hak Dini Kur’an Dili*, see the interpretation of Surah Falaq.

‘you are one of them.’ He asked his wish in the best time and in the most proper manner therefore it was granted. When the second Companion asked the same thing, the Prophet said; ‘Ukkasha has passed you’. This expression does not mean he could not be one of the seventy thousand. The Prophet simply stopped Companions from asking same thing because he already explained the characteristics of those illuminated people. So, if anyone who has same characteristics he/she will be one of them. Some hadith commentators hold that the second person was a hypocrite and the Prophet did not pray for him. However, the great hadith scholar Khatib Baghdadi holds that the second person was Sa’d bin Ubada who was one of the early Muslims in Medina and he contributed Islam a lot. So, it is not true say that the Prophet did not pray for the second person because he was a hypocrite.

The final issue concerning this hadith is the number mentioned in there. According to Arabic grammar sometimes certain numbers are mentioned but the multitude or crowdedness are meant by them. Similarly, the number seventy thousand is not exact number; rather it is the expression for multitude, abundance and crowdedness. So, there is no limit for entering Paradise without being taken to account, as long as people have same attributes which those seventy thousand have they will be included among them. In short, who has full trust in God and rely on Him wholeheartedly he/she will be one of them.

Second hadith

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ أَقْوَامٌ أَقْدَانُهُمْ مِثْلُ أَقْدَانِ الطَّيْرِ

Abū Hurayra reports that the Prophet (pbuh) said: “A group of people enter Paradise whose hearts will be like the hearts of birds.”²⁶⁴

Analysis of the hadith

This hadith is reported by Abū Hurayra and the information about him was given in the previous chapters. Imam Muslim recorded it in his *sahīḥ* collection for he holds that it has authentic report conditions according to his hadith criteria. A group of people whose hearts are like the hearts of the birds will enter Paradise, because they fully trust in God and refer all their affairs to Him.

The expression ‘hearts like the hearts of the birds’ is understood in various ways by the scholars. The great hadith scholar Imam Nawawī mentioned this hadith in the topic of reliance on God (tawakkul), so he understood this expression as people who have reliance and trust in God. The birds start their morning in full trust to God and reliance on Him. They do not have any project or plan to find food but they return their home with full belly every evening. In other hadith the prophet stated:

“If you all depend on God with due reliance, He would certainly give you provision as He gives it to birds who go forth hungry in the morning and return with full belly at dusk.”²⁶⁵

God gives the birds their daily provision. God declared:

“How many a living creature there is that does not carry its own provision (in store), but God provides for them, and indeed for you. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.”²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Muslim, *Sahīḥ*, Jannah, 27.

²⁶⁵ Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, Zuhd, 33; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, Zuhd, 14.

²⁶⁶ Qur’ān 29: 60.

Commentary on Unforgettable Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad

Some hadith commentators mention an occasion for the revelation of this verse. When the Prophet ordered the Companions in Makka to immigrate to Medina some of them expressed their fear concerning food and shelter in new place if they immigrate there. Thereupon this verse was revealed and God assured and also warned them that He provides and sustains all creation. This verse encourages Believers to have full trust and reliance on God no matter what would be the conditions. People resorts to the means and causes to obtain provision but they are not the real reason for it. God alone creates, provides, sustains and meets the needs of all His creation. So, people should not give creative effect to the causes even they resort to them to get their provision. They should reliance on God as the birds have without having any fear.