

Chapter 4

Analysis of Selected Hadiths in the Topic of Patience (Sabr)

Introduction

Sabr (patience) literally means enduring, bearing, and resisting pain, suffering and difficulty, and being able to deal calmly with problems.¹⁶³Patience is one of the most important virtues which Islam encourages its followers to obtain it. Due to its value, patience is considered as half of one's religious life. In many verses God commands patience for the Muslims some of them including;

“O you who believe! Be patient (persevere through what befalls you in the world in God's cause); encourage each other to patience vying in it with one another and outdoing all others in it; and observe your duties to God in solidarity, and keep from disobedience to God in due reverence for Him and piety, so that you may prosper (in both worlds)!”¹⁶⁴

“We will certainly test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits (earnings); but give glad tidings to the persevering and patient.”¹⁶⁵

“O you who believe! Seek help (against all kinds of hardships and tribulations) through persevering patience and the Prayer; surely God is with the persevering and patient.”¹⁶⁶

Patience is praised in many verses and God promised full reward for the patient ones;

“...Those who are patient (persevering in adversity, worshipping God, and refraining from sins) will surely be given their reward without measure.”¹⁶⁷

“...but if you endure patiently, it is indeed better for the patient.”¹⁶⁸

God advises patience as a preferable way in dealing with unbelievers while communicating God's message to them and He promises the believers His help in return for patience;

“If you have patience and guard yourselves against evil and disobedience, God will send to your aid five thousand angels with distinguishing marks, if they (your enemies) suddenly attack you.”¹⁶⁹

The prominent contemporary Muslim scholar Fethullah Gülen classifies the characteristics of patience into five groups;

“Enduring the difficulties associated with being a true servant of God or steadfastness in performing regular acts of worship; resisting the temptations of the carnal self and Satan to commit sins; enduring heavenly or earthly calamities, which includes resignation to Divine decrees; being steadfast in following the right path and not

¹⁶³ Fethullah Gülen, *Sufism Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol.1, p. 90.

¹⁶⁴ Qur'an, 3: 200.

¹⁶⁵ Qur'an, 2: 155.

¹⁶⁶ Qur'an, 2: 153.

¹⁶⁷ Qur'an, 39: 10.

¹⁶⁸ Qur'an, 16: 126.

¹⁶⁹ Qur'an, 3: 124.

allowing worldly attractions to cause deviation; and showing no haste in realizing hopes or plans that require a certain length of time to achieve.”¹⁷⁰

Patience has many aspects and degrees. It is achieved with the thought that whatever comes from God there is great wisdom in it. So, people should endure against all kind of unfortunate events patiently. Sometimes patience is required for positive things while in other times it is needed against the negative things. When unfortunate events befall on believers they do not complain about the divine decree, rather they submit themselves to will of God.

In order to resist against the temptations of carnal desires one should possess patience. Similarly, practicing religious duties continuously and being steadfast on this way can only be attained with the power of patience. When illnesses and calamities strike to them they endure them, and maintain their love for God. They continue to fulfill their responsibilities to please God and endure all the difficulties with the belief that God always watches over them.

Although one may have deepest desire to die and meet God yet they should continue to convey the message of Islam. Indeed, they should be patient against the strong desire to meet with their Lord for the sake of prophetic mission. They accept death as invitation to meet with God but they see the service in His cause more important. When they are destined to death, they see it as best reward for it is the invitation for them to the Divine Presence.

Seeking refuge in God and asking His help against hardships or responsibilities that are very hard to fulfill is not considered as a complaint against God. Similarly, if a person commits a sin he/she supplicates God for forgiveness and this is not considered as an act against patience. Indeed, the believers put their trust in God and supplicate Him. For example, the Prophets Job and Jacob implored God to ask His help against the calamities that stoke them;

“Truly distress (disease, tribulation) has seized me. But You are the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate”¹⁷¹

“I only complain of my anguish and my sorrow unto God.”¹⁷²

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Prophets and saints is their embodiment of patience in all of its manifold forms and degrees, and that without deviating from their utmost devotion to God, they do their best to communicate God’s Message to people and bear all misfortune and difficulty arising therefrom.¹⁷³

Sincerity and deepness in servanthood to God is understood by patience. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said; “Among mankind, those who are stricken with the most terrible of misfortunes are the Prophets, and then follow others according to their degree of faith.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Gülen, *Sufism*, vol.1, p. 91.

¹⁷¹ Qur’ān, 21: 83.

¹⁷² Qur’ān, 12: 86.

¹⁷³ Gülen, *Sufism*, vol.1, p. 92.

¹⁷⁴ Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, Zuhd, 56; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, Fitan, 23.

Patience is a source of power to mature in belief, spirituality and good characters. Patience is required to guide others to the straight path. If a guide hastens to teach the truths to his/her followers he/she never achieve the desired aim. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) waited for long time for his message to be accepted by his first addressees. The most perfect people experience the most difficulties.

Human beings mature with patience. This fact is expressed by the Prophet as; “If God Almighty has destined one of His servants a rank or position which they cannot reach through their religious actions, He causes them to suffer from their own selves and families, and equips them with patience to endure all their sufferings. He elevates them through patience to the rank destined.”¹⁷⁵

Sufi master Jalal al-Din Rumi explains the meaning of patience and its degree with his poetic expressions as follows;

“In order to be sustenance for man, a source of strength for his knees, a “light” for his eyes, and a substance for the maintenance of his life, a grain of wheat must be buried in the bosom of the earth, germinate under it, and grow to emerge into the air. It must come into the air after a fierce struggle with the earth, and then be sown and threshed, and ground in a mill. After that, it must be kneaded, baked in an oven, and, finally, chewed by teeth, sent into the stomach, and digested.”¹⁷⁶

Human beings can only attain their true essence and humanity by passing through many hardships and enduring them patiently. In order to actualize one’s potential to its fullest he/she should experience patience against different types of calamities. So, patience is pivotal and very important dimension of servanthood to God.

¹⁷⁵ Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol.3 no: 6822.

¹⁷⁶ Gülen, *Sufism*, vol.1, p. 103.

Hadiths about Patience and Their Analyses

First hadith

وَعَنْ أَبِي يَحْيَى صُهَيْبِ بْنِ سِنَانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ لَهُ خَيْرٌ، وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ: إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ، وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ

Abū Yahya Suhayb bin Sinan reports: The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, “How wonderful is the case of a believer; there is good for him in everything and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity attends him, he expresses gratitude to God and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him.”¹⁷⁷

Suhayb al-Rūmī

The narrator of this hadith is the Companion known as Suhayb al-Rūmī. In his childhood he was captured by people of Rome and then sold to Arabs as a slave. While in Makka he met Ammār bin Yasir and learned Islam from him and became a Muslim. He was one of the first Muslims who suffered for the sake of their religion. The Quraysh tortured him a lot to denounce his belief but he endured all persecutions patiently. He left all his possessing to the unbelievers in Makka and immigrated to Medina. When the Prophet was informed about his case he recited the following verse;

“Among the people one who sells himself in pursuit of God’s good pleasure. God is All-Pitying towards His servants.”¹⁷⁸ After that the Prophet said; “O Abū Yahya (Suhayb)! You made great profit with this trade”.¹⁷⁹

He was an expert in archery and attended all the battles together with the Prophet. When ‘Umar, the second Caliph, was assassinated he carried out the mission of caliphate for three days until ‘Uthman was chosen for this position. Suhayb was in middle height with reddish complexion. He had light stammer on his tongue. He was very generous. Once ‘Umar teased with him saying that ‘you do not have son but you are called with the title Abū Yahya (the father of Yahya), you are not Arab but introducing yourself as Arab, you entertain your guests with abundant food. Isn’t it waste of wealth?’ Suhayb would answer saying; ‘The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) gave me the nickname ‘Abū Yahya’. I am from the tribe of Namir ibn Kasit in Mosul but I lost my family and tribe for I was captured in my childhood. I heard the Prophet saying ‘the best of you is the one who offers meals to his guest and greets people’ therefore I entertain my guests with best food.’¹⁸⁰

Suhayb spent his life in God’s cause and sacrificed many things in this way. He died in the year 38 of *hijrah* when he was 73 years old and was buried in Baqī cemetery in Medina. May God be well pleased with him.

Analysis of the hadith

This hadith is authentic according to the criteria of Muslim therefore he recorded it in his *saḥīḥ* collection. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated that Muslims will gain reward in

¹⁷⁷ Muslim, *Saḥīḥ*, Zuhd, 64.

¹⁷⁸ Qur’ān, 2: 207.

¹⁷⁹ Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, vol.3, no: 398.

¹⁸⁰ Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol.1, no: 16.

every case. If they achieve prosperity they express gratitude to God and this is good for them; and if adversity befalls them, they endure it patiently and that is better for them. So, Muslims are encouraged to be thankful and patient all the time.

Human beings are inclined to seek happiness but sometimes they may experience adversity. Actually, people meet many difficulties, hardships and misfortunate events in this world. This is part of their trial. So, believers should endure calamities patiently. With sincere faith people attain power of patience and use it against negative situations. Without faith, people are more fragile therefore; they should protect their connection with God. Sometimes they experience happiness and joy and in other times sadness and sorrow. The proper conduct in both cases is as explained by this hadith. So, expressing gratitude to God for the favors and enduring adversity patiently are good merits.

In order to avoid extreme joy or extreme sadness the feeling of gratitude and power of patience are required. Real happiness lies in balanced life. People should recognize the value of favors to thank God. Similarly, in order not to be hopeless when facing misfortunate events they should trust God and expect from Him the reward for their patience.

People have various reactions for the events of life. Some show extreme joy when achieving prosperity and forget God's help in this success therefore they do not thank Him. In other times they feel extreme sadness and fall into hopelessness by being oblivious from God's mercy. Even, they may attempt to suicide due to small problems. However, Believers have a balanced life for they avoid extreme reactions in positive and negative situations.

Thankfulness and patience are the essentials of balanced life and also for real happiness.

Second hadith

وَعَنْ أَبِي زَيْدٍ أَسَامَةَ بْنِ زَيْدٍ حَارِثَةَ مَوْلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَابْنَ حَبِّهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، قَالَ: أَرْسَلْتُ بِنْتَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: إِنَّ ابْنِي قَدْ احْتَضَرَ فَاشْهَدْنَا، فَأَرْسَلَ يَقْرَأُ السَّلَامَ وَيَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَا أَخَذَ، وَلَهُ مَا أُعْطِيَ، وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى، فَلْتَصْبِرْ وَلْتَحْتَسِبْ فَأَرْسَلْتُ إِلَيْهِ نَفْسُ عَلَيْهِ لِيَأْتِيَنِيهَا. فَقَامَ وَمَعَهُ سَعْدُ بْنُ عُبَادَةَ، وَمُعَاذُ بْنُ جَبَلٍ، وَأَبِي بِنِ كَعْبٍ، وَزَيْدُ بْنُ ثَابِتٍ، وَرِجَالُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ، فَرَفَعَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الصَّبِيَّ، فَأَقْعَدَهُ فِي جِجْرِهِ وَنَفْسُهُ تَقَعُّعُ، فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ، فَقَالَ سَعْدُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا هَذَا؟ فَقَالَ: هَذِهِ رَحْمَةٌ جَعَلَهَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِي قُلُوبِ عِبَادِهِ

Usama bin Zayd narrates: “The daughter of the Prophet sent for him as her child was dying, but the Prophet (pbuh) returned the messenger and sent her good wishes saying, ‘whatever God takes away or gives, belongs to Him, and everything with Him has a limited fixed term (in this world), and so she should be patient and anticipate God’s reward.’ She again sent for him adjuring him for the sake of God to come. The Messenger of God, accompanied with Sa’d bin ‘Ubāda, Mu’adh bin Jabal, ‘Ubayy bin Ka’b, Zayd bin Thabit and some other men went to see her. The child was lifted up to the Messenger of God while his breath was disturbed in his chest. On seeing that, the eyes of the Prophet streamed with tears. Sa’d said, ‘O Messenger of God! What is this?’ He replied, ‘It is compassion which God has placed in the hearts of His slaves, God is Compassionate only to those among His slaves who are

compassionate (to others)’. Another version says: ‘God shows compassion only to those among His slaves who are compassionate.’¹⁸¹

Usama bin Zayd

The narrator of this hadith is the Companion Usama bin Zayd and he was known as the beloved of the Prophet (pbuh). The Messenger of God would put him on his lap together with Hasan when they were child and told ‘O God, I love them, please You do love them’. Usama was born into a Muslim family therefore he was never affected with the customs and traditions of pre-Islamic term. He could not attend the first battles of the Prophet due to his small age. He was with the Prophet at the conquest of Makka. During a military campaign he caught an enemy soldier and when he was about to kill him, the man declared his Islam but Usama killed him thinking he was fake in his testimony. When informed of the incident, the Messenger reprimanded Usama severely that Usama said later: “I wished I had not yet become a Muslim on the day I was scolded so severely.”¹⁸²

The Prophet made ‘Usama ibn Zayd commander when he was approximately 17-year-old over a great army containing such leading Muslims as Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, Talha, and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās.¹⁸³ He told “advance only as far as the place where your father was martyred, and strengthen our rule there.”¹⁸⁴ Before sending him to the military expedition The Prophet prayed for him.

During his caliphate, ‘Umar paid Usama a higher salary than his own son ‘Abdullah and explaining its reason as ‘I do so because I know that the Messenger loved his father more than me, and that he loved Usama more than you (his own son).’¹⁸⁵

Usama stayed away from the seditions that appeared when Caliph Uthman was martyred. He spent 20 years of his life with the Prophet and he narrated 128 hadiths from him. He died in the year 54 of hijrah when he was 60 years old. May God be well pleased with him.

Analysis of the hadith

Bukhari and Muslim agreed on the authenticity of this hadith and recorded it in their *ṣaḥīḥ* collections. Additionally, in other hadith books this incident is reported more in details. Ibn Abī Shayba mentions in his *Musannaf* that the daughter of the Prophet which is mentioned here was Zaynab. She lost her son named Ali ibn Abī al-As. The reason for the Prophet did not accept the invitation of his daughter at first time can be explained from different aspects.

¹⁸¹ Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Janāiz, 33; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Janāiz, 9.

¹⁸² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Īmān, 148.

¹⁸³ Gülen, *The Messenger of God*, p. 261.

¹⁸⁴ Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol.2, p. 190.

¹⁸⁵ Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol.4, p. 70.

Commentary on Unforgettable Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad

Firstly, it is possible that the Prophet was busy with something else in that moment. Secondly, he wanted to educate his daughter for this type of situations by advising her to trust God and submit to His will.

In other narration of this hadith Usama informed the Prophet with emotional expressions and thereupon the Prophet shed tears. The daughter of the Prophet desired his father to be present at the time of her child's death so that the agonizing process of death would be easy by his prayers. The hadith indicates that it is permissible to take an oath to express the significance of some events and it is recommended for Believers to grant those wishes.

Weeping on someone's death is permissible for the Prophet shed tears for the death of his grandson. Sa'd bin Ubāda was surprised, thus, asked if it is permissible to cry because of someone's death. Indeed, the Prophet prohibited screaming, tearing the dresses and hitting oneself at the death of beloved ones. However, being upset when losing someone is human nature and Islam did not prohibit it. The Prophet only forbade the extreme emotional reactions for they are considered as complaint about Divine Destiny. Indeed, the tears of eyes are indication of God's mercy in human heart. However, even if the eyes cry the tongue should not say anything against God. Expression of mercy and love is a gift from God and means to gain His mercy. Opposing to this, deprivation from this gift is indication of hardness of heart.

The expression 'whatever God takes away or gives, belongs to Him, and everything with Him has a limited fixed term in this world, and so she should be patient and anticipate God's reward' is an example for Muslims concerning their attitude in the moment of calamities. Lastly, visiting patients or dying people is Sunnah.