

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

<u>Home</u> > <u>Imam 'Ali's First Treatise On The Islamic Ethics And Education</u> > 19) Habituate yourself to patient endurance in afflictions

19) Habituate yourself to patient endurance in afflictions

19. Habituate yourself to patient endurance in afflictions; the best of moral traits is to constrain yourself to patience in the (path of) truth.

The factor which protects man in confronting hardships or against desires contrary to the religion is called perseverance. It has different shapes which are dealt with in the following tradition:

"Patience is of three kinds; patience during calamities, patience in obeying Allah and patience in refraining from sins". 1

The important point in patience is that practice in it will broaden our capacity to stand firm in the face of hardships. On the contrary, those people who lack this asset will lose their resistance in time of difficulties. For this reason, in Islam, worship and prayer are adopted as somewhat hard, such as prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, holy wars and the like with the practice of which man becomes strong. The Holy Qur'an, which mentions the word patience more than seventy times, relates a lot of good to it. The Holy Qur'an, talking about appointing an Imam for the Israelites and fulfilling God's promises of their victory over their enemies, puts patience as the criterion for their prosperity:

"And We made of them imams to guide by our command when they were patient"2

Elsewhere, the Qur'an says:

"And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled in the children of Israel because they bore up sufferings patiently"3

In another connection, where the Qur'an mentions divine help for the holy war fighters, the issue of patience once more is raised:

"Yea! If you remain patient and are on your guard, and they come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord will assist you with five thousand of the havoc-making angels".4

The Qur'an in one occasion praises the truth-seekers and believers and mentions that these people's success is due to the fact they were patient:

"These shall be granted their reward twice, because they are steadfast and they repel evil with good and spend out of what we have given them".5

In the Surah al-Furqan, after describing the day and night schedule of the believers and after praising their behavior with God and with the people, God comes to the conclusion that

"These shall be rewarded with high places [in the paradise] because they were patient, and shall be met therein with greetings and salutations".6

And in the Surah al-Insan [Man], the Qur'an describes many virtues for the Prophet's Household and concludes that they have got these rewards because of their patience:

"Therefore, Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with ease and happiness; and reward them, because they were patient, with garden and silk".7

And in the Surah al–Ra'd [Thunder], after enumerating eight adjectives for the men of understanding [*Ulu'l albab*], the Qur'an mentions that God let them and their parents and their spouses and their children enter paradise and the angels enter upon them from every gate and send peace upon them telling them they attained this because of their patience:

"The gardens of perpetual abode which they will enter along with those who do good from among their parents and their spouses and their offspring; and the angels will enter in upon them from every gate: Peace be upon you because you were constant, how excellent, is then, the issue of the abode."8

Thus, we see that all this prosperity is due to patience. This indicates that the base for all human traits is patience. None of these traits flourishes except with patience.

In the Islamic traditions, emphasis is put on the constructive role of patience. Some of these traditions are mentioned here:

Imam 'Ali has said:

"Patience in relation to faith is like the head to the body; there is no good in a body without a head, or in faith without patience." 10

Imam Baqir has said:

"Paradise is encircled with afflictions and patience; so whoever patiently endures misfortunes in this world enters paradise. Hell is encircled with pleasures and desires. Therefore, whoever grants his self its pleasures and desires enters the Fire."11

Abu Basir says that he has heard Imam as-Sadiq saying:

إِنَّ الحُرَّ حُرُّ على جَمِيعِ اَحوَالِهِ، إِن نَابَتهُ نَائِبَةٌ صَبَرَ لَها وَإِن تَداكَّت عَلَيهِ المَصائِبُ لَم تَكسِرهُ وَإِن أُسِر وَقُهِرً وَأُسِرَ وَاللَّهِ عَلَيهِ لَم يُضْرِر حُرِّيَتَه إِن استُعبِدَ وَقُهِرَ وأُسِرَ وَالسَّبَدُلَ بِاليُسرِ عُسْراً كَما كَانَ يُوسُف الصِدِّيقُ الأمِينُ صَلَواتُ الله عَلَيهِ لَم يُضْرِر حُرِّيَتَه إِن استُعبِدَ وقُهِرَ وأُسِرَ وَلَم يُضرِرهُ ظُلُمَةُ الجُبِّ وَوَحشَتُه وَمَا نَالهَ إِن مَنَّ الله عَلَيهِ فَجَعَلَ الجبَّارَ العَاتِي لَهُ عَبداً بَعدَ إِذ كَانَ لَهُ مَالِكاً فَارسَلَهُ وَلَم يُضرِرهُ ظُلُمَةُ الجُبِّ وَوَحشَتُه وَمَا نَالهَ إِن مَنَّ الله عَلَيهِ فَجَعَلَ الجبَّارَ العَاتِي لَهُ عَبداً بَعدَ إِذ كَانَ لَهُ مَالِكاً فَارسَلَهُ وَلَم يُولِقُ المَسْرِهُ وَا وَوَطِّنُوا اَنفَسَكُم عَلَى الصَبْرِ تُؤْجَرُوا وَوَطِّنُوا اَنفَسَكُم عَلَى الصَبْرِ تُؤْجَرُوا

"A free person is free in all conditions. If an affliction befalls him, he is patient, and if misfortunes press upon him they do not break him even if he is taken captive and oppressed, and his ease is substituted with hardship – as in the case of Yusuf, the veracious and trustworthy, Allah's blessings on him. His freedom was not harmed when he was enslaved, oppressed and taken captive, and the darkness and loneliness of the well did not harm him when God favoured him and made the insolent tyrant, who had been his king, into his slave. God sent him as a Prophet and had mercy on a nation through him. Thus, patience has good results, therefore be patient, and accustom yourselves to patience and you will be rewarded."12

It is because of this constructive role of patience that Imam 'Ali orders his son "Habituate yourself to patient endurance in afflictions; the best of moral traits is to constrain yourself to patience".

The poet says:

Patience is bitter, but later

Will give you the fruit of importance.

In this nature, any nation will be miser,

Which gets used to the act of pleasure-taking.

In his letter to 'Uthman b. Hunayf, Imam 'Ali emphasizes this fact:

"Be aware that the trees of the desert have harder wood, and the green trees on the river have more delicate barks. Desert vegetation burns more fiercely and its embers die down more slowly". 13

- 1. . Al-Mahjjah al-Bayda', Fayd al-Kashani, vol.7, p. 126.
- 2. . Qur'an 32:24.
- 3. . Qur'an 7:137.
- 4. . Qur'an 3:125.
- 5. . Qur'an 28:54.
- 6. . Qur'an 25:75.
- 7. . Qur'an 76:11–12.
- 8. . Qur'an 13:23-24.
- 9. Tafsir Namunah, vol. 10, p. 193.
- 10. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 82.

- 11. Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, p.89.
- 12. . Al-Kafi, vol..2, p.89.
- 13. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter No 45.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/imam-alis-first-treatise-islamic-ethics-and-education-zainol-aabideen-qorba ni-lahiji/19-habituate#comment-0