

## **Power of Patience**

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## Introduction

Patience is the exercise of restraint in trying situations. It is a virtue, which enables the individual to proceed towards worthy goals, undeflected by adverse circumstances or repeated provocations. If he allows himself to become upset by opposition, taunts or other kinds of unpleasantness, he will never reach his goals. He will simply become enmeshed in irrelevancies. Patience in fact is man's greatest strength. It is not merely a philosophical or religious idea, but the law of nature. Emphasizing the importance of patience, a verse in the Quran states

**God is with the steadfast (2:153)**

According to a tradition, a Hadith is as follows

**Success is with patience and there lies ease in every difficulty (Musnad Ahmad)**

## Prominent Figures

Newton (d.1727) is considered to be the Founder of Modern Science. In his young days, Newton was nicknamed, 'wool-gatherer' because of being endowed with an exceptional power of singular concentration. Exercising concentration demands patience because it saves one from every other distraction and paves way for undeterred concentration. Newton is recorded to have said

*I have no special sagacity, only the power of patient thought.*

In saving from distraction, patience becomes man's greatest strength. A review of history illustrates that super achievers were the ones who exercised super patience. Let us consider some more examples.

Prophet Muhammad was born in the city of Mecca in 570 A.D. and declared prophethood in 610 A.D. At that time, Kaaba (Baitullah) was considered as the sacred place of worship by idol-worshippers. Kaaba was originally constructed by Prophet Abraham for the worship of One God but the decline in succeeding generations made them idol worshippers and this House of Monotheism came to house as many as three hundred and sixty idols inside it. But the Prophet did not react. Neither he made fiery speeches nor did he speak the language of protest. In fact the verses revealed to the Prophet during this period sought purification of mind. The verse reads,

**Purify your garments (mind). (74:4)**

Instead of ordaining the Prophet to purify the Kabah of the idols, the verse sought purification of mind of individuals. The focus was on purification of the hearts of people so that they can be freed from negative thinking.

Let us compare this with the situation that arose at Ayodhya in 1949, when three idols were recovered from the premises of the Babri Mosque. In contrast to Prophet Muhammad's patient approach to the idols in the Kaaba, this incident triggered violent reactions from Muslims all over. Huge resources were spent to popularize the issue but what did all this result in? The mosque was demolished. Unlike the present-day Muslims, the Prophet never reacted against the idols placed in Kaaba. He ignored the idols and continued to do dawah work. His patient efforts led to Kaaba regaining its status as the House of One God.

The example clearly **differentiates between the result of patient action and reaction**. Success favours the patient because when man becomes tolerant, nature takes charge of streamlining the issue; all forces of nature unite in favour of the one who endures. By reacting, instead, man meddles with the process of nature and allows it to go awry. For example, the instant a negative thought springs up in mind, man's nature tries to convert this negative into positive. Psychological studies claim that when man sleeps, the mind converts negative thoughts into positive, if the former had been earlier been ignored. Because if man reacts, his nature does not get an opportunity to convert the reaction into a positive thought.

## Japan and Kashmir

In August 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allied powers and accepted the Potsdam Declaration. Following the war, the United States Occupation government took over control of Okinawa. Japan had two options to choose from – reconstruction of Japan or fighting to regain control over Okinawa. The Japanese Emperor, Hirohito, chose to ignore the annexation of Okinawa and instituted a thirty-year education plan for Japan. This is a clear example of following the De-linking policy. In remaining patient over Okinawa, Japan could utilize all her energies into nation building. In thirty years' time, Japan became an economic superpower and in 1972, the U.S. government returned the islands to Japanese administration.

Parallely exists, the example of Kashmir. Pakistan could never apply de-linking policy in relation to Kashmir. Instead of disputing possession, Pakistan should have left the problem of Kashmir on the negotiation table and peacefully availed trade opportunities that existed in its neighbourhood. But Pakistan did not do so. Contrary to the patient approach of Japanese, who did not retaliate even once, Pakistan left no opportunity to react but only to its own loss.

### **Queen of Sheba**

The Queen of Sheba was a monarch of the ancient kingdom of Sheba (near Yemen). The subjects of the Queen belonged predominantly to the tradesman class. According to the Quran, Prophet Solomon invited her to submit fully to the One God. The Queen of Sheba remained unsure whether to accept his invitation but she could foresee the repercussions. She could envisage that upon entering their country, the army would despoil it and make the most honorable of its people, it's lowest. As events unfolded, she eventually declared her submission with Solomon to the One God. In accepting the political surrender, the Queen ensured that their trade and business remained intact. (*Quran, Ch: 27*)

Contrary to this, the invasion and subsequent annexation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein was inspired by his desire to expand the territory of Iraq. Muslims worldwide were overjoyed at this development because they thought it would help them gain an upper hand in the conflict against Israel. But things did not go quite as planned. United States emerged on the Arab-Israel stage and began proposing arrangements. America gave Saddam the option of relinquishing his dictatorial rule so that free elections could be held in Iraq and a democratic government could be instituted but Saddam refused to acquiesce. He failed to foresee his future without being in power. He could not think of pursuing opportunities that lay outside his dictatorial rule. For instance, Saddam possessed eight palatial houses, which could have been converted into eight varsities. Such an act would have immortalized Saddam as the "Jefferson of Iraq". But Saddam did not yield. America attacked Iraq, arrested Saddam and he died in captivity. While exercising patience helped the Queen of Sheba restore peace in her land, Saddam's reactive mindset, yielded nothing.

## Palestine

Muslims worldwide lament the crisis prevailing in Palestine. An objective analysis of the situation reveals that the Muslims in Palestine are actually paying the price of adopting a wrong policy - by abrogating the Treaty which governed the Suez canal and by declining to accept the division of land as was in the Balfour Declaration.

During 1850s, Ferdinand de Lesseps obtained a concession from Sa'id Pasha, the viceroy of Egypt, to create a company to construct a canal open to ships of all nations. The company was to operate the canal for 99 years from its opening. The canal opened to shipping on 17 November 1869 after overcoming numerous technical, political, and financial problems. But in October 1951, the Egyptian government unilaterally abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the terms of which granted Britain a lease on the Suez base for 20 more years. As part of Egyptian President General Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalist agenda, he took control of the Suez Canal zone away from the British and French companies which owned it. This idea, which was against both Islamic teachings and International bylaws, received instant support from the entire Muslim world. This was despite their being a clear verse in the Quran, which states:

**Keep your promises; you will be called to account for every promise which you have made**  
**(17:34)**

The abrogation of the lease arrangement led up to the Suez Crisis, in which the UK, France and Israel invaded Egypt in order to reassert control of this vital waterway to the British and French companies stung as they were by Nasser's bold nationalization.

Yet another mistake committed by the Arab leaders was non-acceptance of the division of Palestine, as prescribed in the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration (1917) was exactly in accordance with the teachings of the Quran. In this declaration the Jews in Diaspora were given permission to return to Palestine under a limited quota system. The Arab leaders should have accepted this as a legitimate decision. But they refused to accept it and showed their strong reaction to it. This was the beginning of the present Palestinian movement. To my way of thinking, this was a very unwise decision on the part of the Arabs, because this movement proved to be counterproductive. The Arab-Israel controversy,

which started in 1948, led directly to the total disturbance of peace in the Middle East and indirectly to disturbances all over the world. This 60-year old bloody struggle, far from solving any problems, has created grave, unsolvable problems. Now the time has finally arrived for a reassessment of the whole issue in a purely realistic manner, and for a search for a new strategy which could ensure peace in the region.

## **Hong Kong**

Hong Kong, a strategic city of the People's Republic of China was occupied by British forces in 1841, and was formally ceded to Britain under the Treaty of Nanking. In 1898, under the terms of the Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory, Britain obtained a 99-year lease of Lantau Island. In 1983, Hong Kong was reclassified from a British crown colony to a dependent territory. However with the lease due to expire within two decades, the governments of Britain and China continued to discuss the issue of Hong Kong's sovereignty. In 1984 the two countries signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration, agreeing to transfer sovereignty to the People's Republic of China in 1997. China wisely restricted the issue to the negotiation table and did not break the agreement. Finally, in 1997 she regained sovereignty upon Hong Kong.

While the impatience of Arabs made them face such dire failure, the policy of exercising patient created situations favourable to China at no loss of theirs.

## **Reactionary approach in daily life**

Reactionary approach proves very harmful even in daily life. For example, a man saying triple talaq to his wife, in a row is considered to lead to divorce. This is entirely unislamic. Islam regards marriage as an extremely desirable institution, hence its conception of marriage as the rule of life, and divorce only as an exception to that rule. When a man and a woman live together as husband and wife, it is but natural that they would have their differences. That is why the sole method of having unity in this world is to live unitedly in spite of differences. This can be achieved only through patience and tolerance.

Similarly, whenever man is faced with a problems, he need not react but must start thinking because with every problem, exists an opportunity. He must identify the opportunity and make a deliberate plan to avail it.

## **Towards the end**

Anger blinds man's senses and inculcates hatred within him. Such a person becomes blind to opportunities. For instance, India has a huge demand for natural gas, which incidentally is a natural reserve in Pakistan, and similarly, Pakistan requires coal, which exists in huge quantities in India. If Pakistan had adopted objectivity in their outlook, they would have seen India as a strong business partner. But they did not do so. On the contrary, Pakistan waged war at India, more than once and despite losing them continues to oppose India.

Success is a function of deliberate planning and only patience allows one to do wise planning. Anger on the other hand spoils relationships and does not let one avail opportunities that exist.

Dr. Michael H. Hart, in his now famous book, called *The Hundred – A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, has held the Prophet Muhammad to be the most supremely successful man in history. But if the Prophet occupies this top-ranking position, it is not as a hero although he had many heroic qualities – but as a guide to humanity. Prophet's life was based on the formula of patience. It ensures that whenever one has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. Patience enables one to absorb shocks and to continue, undeterred, on one's onward journey. Citing the importance of patience, the Quran says:

**Truly, those who persevere patiently, will be requited without measure. (39:10)**

Patience and avoidance are not signs of cowardice or a defeatist mentality. When one opportunity ceases to exist, some other opportunity always arises elsewhere. When one stage in a man's career comes to an end, there will always be the opportunity to enter a new phase. According to a tradition, Caliph Ali is recorded to have said:

**Whatever happened; happened for good (Nahjul Balagha)**

Most personal problems are the result of a limited outlook on life. If people were to broaden their perspectives, they would soon realize that there are many different ways of approaching the same problem. Where provocation and retaliation have failed, patience succeeds.