

Importance and Effects of Exercising Lenience in Islamic Hadiths

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Abstract

Lenience is one of the highly repeated ethical recommendations in Islamic teachings and Muslims have been encouraged to act out and stay adherent to this ethical virtue as stated in many hadiths that express its lofty position and importance and mention its advantages.

People's differences in notions, perspectives, tastes, intellectual capabilities and so forth and their flaws are amongst the matters more revealing the necessity and high position of lenience and exercising it. Lenience means soft and mild treating of the others for such a reason as repelling their wrongdoings towards one's own self or for such a purpose as not offending them and making them go away from one's own self or even both.

Descriptions like the most admired virtue, being of the same rank as the fulfilling of the obligations, being one of the best deeds, being the fruit of the intellect, being the prelude of wisdom and so forth about lenience in the Islamic hadiths are alone reflective of the importance of this action as viewed by the religion; the followings can be pointed out amongst its effects and advantages: keeping oneself safe against the damages, evildoings and deceits of the others, keeping religion and the human world sound, attracting the opponents to the religion and emergence of friendship and brotherhood.

Keywords: Exercising Lenience, Importance of Lenience, Effects of Lenience, Islamic Hadiths

1. Introduction:

The necessity of the existence of coherence and solidarity amongst the people of a society and the importance of the existence of good socialization, kindness and sympathy with the fellow religious brothers and other society members and also the importance of establishing security, tranquility and stability in every human community are all favorable matters to a society and their values and positions are well clear to everyone. However, the existence of various and occasionally opposite perspectives, ideas, perceptions and tastes about different subjects and the differences in the individuals' spirits and their intellectual and mental competencies as well as the existence of flaws in almost all the people except the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) and the existence of more or less waxing and waning mistakes and faults in the behavior, words and thoughts of the people, on the other hand, are part of the undeniable realities and objectivities of every human community and they may set the ground for the emergence of tension and

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harsh reactions and occasionally conflict and engagement between the individuals or groups. Therefore, considering the existence of these realities in the human communities, solutions should be sought so that the aforesaid favorable issues can be actualized. It is evident that there are legal solutions for achieving these goals along with ethical solutions that can be very much effective and promising in this regard. One of the most important and wisest of these solutions is the society members, tribes and factions' exercising of lenience or having lenient temperaments and dispositions with which such wants as unity and solidarity, kindness, sympathy, security and tranquility can be hopefully acquired in the society level despite the existence of the aforementioned inevitable realities. Drawing attentions to the existence of these same realities and offering solutions for proper treating of the others in the face of them and correct management of the human beings' individual and social life affairs might be one aspect of all the great many of the emphases and recommendations made by the immaculate imams (peace be upon them) about lenience and other similar titles like having mild and temperate dispositions, forbearance, laxness and softness, controlling the anger, forgiveness and clemency, peacefulness and reconciliation, abnegation and so forth as well as notable emphases made in the Islamic teachings on the acceptance of the others' excuses and staying away from contention and dispute and other things of the like.

The immaculate religious leaders (peace be upon them) whose practical and behavioral way of conduct is replete with numerous manifestations of exercising lenience have presented valuable speeches about various aspects of lenience like its importance and position, the quality of its application, its outcomes and advantages, its boundaries, cases of deserting it and so on and it can be stated that those highnesses have actually intended to encourage Muslims to act out and remain adherent to this moral virtue by expressing the importance and lofty position of lenience and expressing its effects and advantages.

Lack of lenience means showing mutual or stinging reaction towards the annoying or unfavorable words or behaviors of the others and this is the reaction or action or utterance that can be demonstrated at the same time or, if s/he cannot or does not want to react on that time, s/he may seek for a proper opportunity to react. But, lenience means abstaining from such reaction.

In the meanwhile, lenience does not mean confirming and accepting the others' improper behavior or words rather it is a solution that is utilized for a special purpose; and, as it will be stated in this research, such an intention can be protecting one's own self or one's own subordinates against the harms, not forcing the offending person to break out, making him or her regret what s/he has done or said and warning him or her and giving him or her an ethical lesson or, occasionally, all of them and, finally, it can be for getting close to the vicinity of the God. And, beyond all these, having lenient dispositions and exercising lenience can be followed in social aspect, as it was mentioned, by good

socialization with others and actualization of unity and solidarity amongst the society members, as well.

After exploring the literal and common meaning of the term “lenience” in the present study, use will be made of the Islamic teachings so as to deal with the importance and position of lenience from the perspective of religion followed by the investigation of the most important effects and advantages thereof. The present study’s research method is purposive compiling of the relevant materials and classifying, explicating and analyzing them based on the study subject, if necessary, and, finally, summing and concluding the findings.

2. Meaning of Lenience:

Lenience is equivalent in Arabic to *Modāra’āt* or *Modāra’at* which are infinitives rhyming with “*Mofā’alah*” and have been derived from the root “*Dar’e*” or “*Dary*” (Ibn Manzour, 1994, 1:71 & 14: 254-255).

Considering the foresaid meanings and applications for the two infinitives “*Dar’e*” and “*Dary*” and their verbal inflections as introduced in authentic Arabic lexical books, it can be stated that the main meaning of “*Dary*” is “fetching or obtaining through conception of a type” and that the main meaning of “*Dar’e*” is repelling (driving back and avoiding and forcing back) (see also Farahidi, 1989, 8: 60-61; Ibn Fars, 1983, 2: 271-274; Abu Helal Askari, 1980, 213; Raqeb, 1992, 312; Ibn Manzour, 1994, 1: 71 & 14: 254-255 and Mostafavi, 1989, 3: 208). The Arabic and Persian word “*Modārā*” has been most likely derived from the root “*Dar’e*” in regard of its common meaning; that is to say it has been actually “*Modāra’at*” and its Hamzeh [إ] has been transformed [reduced] into the letter “a” for ease of pronunciation. Moreover, as stated by the lexicographers, “*Dāra’ah*” means “repelling” and “*Dārāh*” means “deceiving” (Ibn Manzour, 1994, 1:71-72 & 14: 254-255; Ibn Fars, 1983, 2: 273 and Abu Helal Askari, 1980, 213). But, of course, these meanings are the main meanings of the two words because there are also other meanings stated in Arabic dictionaries for these two verbs (see also, Ibn Manzour, 1994, 1: 71 & 14: 255; Jowhari, 1987, 1: 49 & 6: 2335 and Toraihi, 1996, 1: 137).

Mentioning the hadith that “the perfect state of the mind is having faith in God followed by exercising lenience towards the people”, the author of *Lesān Al-Arab* says that “the hadith means that one should treat people mildly and softly and socialize with them in a good way and tolerate them so that they might not break away from you” (Ibn Manzour, 1994, 14: 255). In explaining the essence of this meaning for *Modārā* [lenience], he states that “*Modārāt* is used in two forms of “*Modāra’āt*” and “*Modāra’ah*” and means treating people with good temperaments and good behaviors; in case of being used with Hamzeh, it means trying to keep oneself immune of their wrongdoings and in case of being used without Hamzeh, it is derived from “*Darayto*” meaning “*Khatalto*” meaning “deception”; as an example “*Darayto Al-Zzab-ya*” means “I deceived the deer and hid somewhere to hunt it””(Ibid, 1:71 & 14:255). So, *Modārā*, i.e. without Hamzeh, actually means

exhibiting mild behavior accompanied with soft tricks towards the others so that they might not break away from one's own self.

Of course, it can be stated that "keeping oneself immune of one's evildoing" for the infinitive "Dāra'ah" is a sort of conceptual translation; it means that it has the very meaning of "repelling" whose result is keeping one's own self immune of one's wrongdoing. But, as it is clear from the example "Darayto Al-Zzab-ya", as well, Dāra'ah means deceiving a person or treating him or her deceitfully so as not to make him or her break away and this is the very action shown by hunters for deceitfully and hideously approaching the prey and keeping it unnoticed so as to prevent it from escaping; the lenient person, as well, treat others mildly and well so as to prevent their running away from him or her and also to keep them at his or her side.

Therefore, if exercising lenience towards the people is said to have been derived from the root "Dāra'a", it actually means repelling their evildoing and harm from one's own self [via properly behaving and speaking]. However, if it is from the root "Dārā", it actually means exhibiting mild behavior through soft tricks towards the people so as not to make them break away from one's own self.

According to what was mentioned, it can be concluded that lenience [Modārā] commonly means softly and mildly and patiently treating a person for either repelling his or her wrongdoing or keeping him or her at one's side or both.

3. Importance and Position of Lenience:

The importance of lenience and exercising lenience can be vividly understood from the descriptions presented in the hadiths by Immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) about it and, as it is perceived from these hadiths, exercising lenience is of a great importance and has reserved itself a lofty position in both individual and social domains and it can be followed by considerable and significant outcomes for the person exercising lenience and others.

It can be read in a hadith quoted by Imam Sadeq (PBUH) from the God's messenger (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) that "there are three things without which no action of a doer can be complete and perfect: continence that make a person avoid disobeying the God and perpetrating sins; disposition and temperament by which s/he can treat people leniently and forbearance with which the ignorant individuals' negligence is transmuted" (Majlesi, 1983, 72: 437). It means that his highness (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) realizes the possession of lenient dispositions as one of the three preconditions to the perfection of a human being's actions and, in other words, if a person fails to exercise lenience or falls short of creating it inside his or her own self, s/he cannot perfectly perform his or her actions and fulfill his or her duties.

In the hadiths from the immaculate imams (peace be upon them), lenience has been introduced by such expressions as "of the same rank as the fulfillment of the obligations" (Majlesi, 1983, 72: 396 & 440), "half of faith" (Ibid, 72:440), "the most extolled attribute" (Amedi, 1987, 444), "one of the best deeds" (Ibid, 445),

“fruit of intellect” (ibid, 53), “sign of intellect” (Ibid, 445 and Majlesi, 1983, 72:393), “one of the troopers in the intellect’s army” (Kolaini, 1987, 1:22), “prelude to wisdom” (Amedi, 1987, 445), “one of the perfection-bestowing properties of politeness and manliness” (Karajaki, 1974, 59) and so on. And, according to the signification of another hadith, exercising lenience towards people is followed by the elevation of the spiritual and social position and rank of the human being (see also Majlesi, 1983, 72:419).

It has been expressed in a narration from Imam Sadeq (PBUH) that Gabriel came to the prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) and said “O’ Mohammad, your God salutes you and says exercise lenience towards my creatures” (Ibid, 72: 438). This means the explicit divine command and revelation to the great prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) for exercising lenience towards the people. It has also been quoted in another well-known narration from his highness (PBUH) that the great prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) has ordered that “my God has commanded me to exercise lenience towards the people in the same way that He has ordained the fulfillment of the obligations” (Ibid, 72:440). This means, as it was mentioned, that exercising lenience towards people is of the same rank as fulfillment of the obligations. And, based on a narration from Imam Baqer (PBUH), “one of the God’s commands to His Highness Moses (PBUH) as written down in Torah is that ‘O’ Moses ... exercise lenience towards my and your enemy ...” (Ibid, 72: 438). So, it can be stated that exercising lenience with the people is one of the prominent features of the God’s messengers and in line with their duty of guiding and instructing and amongst the instruments of perfect accomplishment of such a duty.

One of the proofs and aspects of exercising lenience, especially for the divine prophets or any other person in the position of instructing or navigating others, can be sought in influencing the others; in a hadith from Imam Sadeq (PBUH), it has been narrated that Amir Al-Mo’menin Ali (PBUH) used to order that “... and the weapon of knowledge is softness of speech and its sword is consent and its bow is lenience ...” (Kolaini, 1987, 1:48). According to the last sentence, it can be perceived that in the same way that bow is the tool of throwing an arrow and its hitting and impacting of a target, lenience, as well, transmits the effect of knowledge to the others. It means that the knowledgeable person transfers his or her knowledge to the others via exercising lenience by which s/he can help them enjoy his or her knowledge hence s/he influences them consequently.

The importance of the existence of this property in the divine prophets is to the extent that the intensity of the prophets’ lenience towards the foes of the God’s religion has been expressed in a Hadith from Imam Hasan Mojtaba (PBUH) amongst the causes by which they have proved their superiority to the people (Majlesi, 1983, 72: 401). Accordingly, it can be stated that exercising lenience, as well, is one of the ethical properties making the human beings excel the others before the God.

Anyhow, it is made clear based on these descriptions that such an action has a particular position in Islam and it also becomes evident that exercising lenience is accompanied by a lot of positive effects and evolutions for the doer thereof, i.e. the person who exercises lenience, as well as for those who are treated leniently.

4. Outcomes and Advantages of Lenience:

In this section, the most important effects and advantages of lenience will be dealt with as explicitly presented in hadiths.

4.1. Keeping Oneself Safe:

One of the effects of exercising lenience is keeping oneself safe and, in other words, repelling the evildoing of the others from oneself as it was mentioned in the discussions on lenience.

It has been narrated from Imam Ali (PBUH) that “the person who exercises lenience towards his opponents can keep him or her own self immune in the wars” (Amedi, 1987, 334); or, “the person who exercises lenience towards the people can keep his or her own self safe from the wrongdoings and harms of them as well as their cunningness” (Ibid, 445); or, “he who exercises lenience towards the people can stay immune of their deceits and conspiracies” (Ibid). And, on the other hand, it has been stated in a hadith from Imam Javad (PBUH) that “he who fails to exercise lenience will be approached by what s/he dislikes” (Halvani, 1988, 135). Similar purports have been expressed in many of the other hadiths (see also Astar Abadi Khatib, 1989, 354-366). Also, in another hadith, exercising lenience towards the God’s enemies has been enumerated amongst the most superior alms: “exercising lenience towards the God’s enemies is amongst the best alms given by a person for his or her own self and his or her brothers” (Ibid, 354). The intention of the foresaid hadith is repelling and avoiding the evildoing and harms of the enemies from one’s own self and his or her religious brothers by exercising lenience towards them (see also Ibid). It means that in the same way that giving alms is effective in repelling the disasters and dangers, exercising lenience towards the enemies serves such a function and it can be stated according to this hadith that protection of one’s own self and others against the enemies’ evildoing and damage is one of the important and considerable goals of exercising lenience towards them.

Therefore, one of the outcomes of lenience is keeping oneself safe in the war and bloodshed as well as against the others’ damage, evildoing and plots and the other unpleasant things for a person and, in one word, acquiring the soundness of the world and the human life.

4.2. Soundness of Religion:

In addition to the attaining of soundness of the world and human life and also keeping oneself safe which were mentioned under the aforesaid title, soundness of a person’s religion is another of the lenience’s outcomes. Soundness in absolute terms or soundness of the life has been mentioned in some of the hadiths amongst the outcomes of lenience (Amedi, 1987, 445).

However, in some others, keeping oneself safe of the people's conspiracies (Ibid), in particular, or keeping one's religion and world safe following the exercising of lenience has been explicitly mentioned. It is in the words of Amir Al-Mo'menin Ali (PBUH) that "the soundness of the religion and the world is in exercising lenience towards the people" (Ibid). So, the other advantage of exercising lenience is keeping one's religion sound alongside keeping one's world and life safe.

4.3. Attracting to Religion and Faith:

It was mentioned before that the common meaning of lenience is soft and mild and patient treating of the others with the purpose of repelling their evildoing from one's own self or with the intention of not coercing them to break away from oneself or both. Here, the effect of lenience on attracting the others has been dealt with and it is indeed the very keeping of the others by one's side which was pointed out in the common meaning of lenience.

It has been narrated in the interpretation of ĀYA "And, speak with the people properly" (BAQARAH, 83) by Imam Sadeq (PBUH) that "speak properly with all of the people, whether believers or the opponents; speak with the believers with open arms and happy faces and treat opponents leniently so that they are attracted to faith and, if you are hopeless in [attracting them to the faith], you can (at least) prevent their evildoings from yourselves and the other believer brothers" (Astar Abadi Khatib, 1989, 353-354). So, the attraction of the ideological, intellectual and subjective opponents to the faith is firstly posited in the exercising of lenience towards them with repelling of their evildoings falling in the second place.

This truth has also been pinpointed in ĀYA 159 of SŪRAH Āl-e-Imran where the God addresses the great prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) in the following command: "so, you have become mild in your treating of them by the cause of a mercy from the God and, if you were arrogant and stone-hearted, they would surely scatter from your periphery". It means that if it was not for the softness and mildness of the great prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards), only a few of the people and addressees of his highness could have possibly been attracted to Islam and faith. Therefore, it can be stated that lenience and mildness with the ideological and religious opponents can cause their attraction and lack of lenience towards them is usually followed by their escaping of religion and faith.

4.4. Emergence of Friendship and Brotherhood:

One of the other effects of exercising lenience towards the people is the creation of kindness and friendship or the persistence and heightening of them. It has been stated in a narration from Amir Al-Mo'menin Imam Ali (PBUH) that "one should exercise lenience towards the people so that s/he may enjoy their brotherhood and one should meet them with open arms so as to extinguish their hatred" (Amedi, 1987, 445).

This purport has also been mentioned in ĀYA 34 of SŪRAH FOSSELAT and, of course, in a higher level: “and, goodness is not identical to badness. Drive back [badness] by what is better; [you will see] all of a sudden that the person between him and you there is enmity has become like a cordial and sincere friend”.

As it is clear from the overall signification of the ĀYA, the sentence “goodness is not identical to badness” therein means that goodness and badness are not equal in their effects (see also Tabataba’ei, 1997, 17:391). This ĀYA is in direct relationship with exercising lenience⁴ and even beyond it; because God has ordered in this ĀYA that use should be made of a better way for treating the person who has wrongly behaved towards another person meaning that the wronged person should not only exercise patience and keep silent before him or her and refrain from mutually badly treating him or her but s/he should also respond to his or her badness by goodness. However, the person who is not lenient and tolerant can neither exercise patience and keep quiet against the others’ badness and improper behavior nor can s/he respond to his or her badness by goodness. Thus, considering the fact that lenience is usually applied when a person’s addressee speaks improperly or does an annoying action, it can be stated that exercising lenience along with exhibiting goodness against badness can cause the creation of affection and amicable and sincere friendship.

In line with the above-presented discussion, it can be stated that exercising lenience towards the people can be followed by an increase in the number of a person’s assistors as well as his or her vigor on the other hand; Imam Sadeq (PBUH) has completed his highness’s own words about the importance of exercising lenience towards the people in a hadith as offered in the following command: “the person who keeps his or her hands away from the people has only kept away one hand [but] they will keep away many hands from him or her” (Kolaini, 1987, 2: 117-118). It means that exercising lenience towards the people would be followed by their accompaniment and protection for a fellow of lenience.

So, the other benefit of lenience is the emergence of friendship and brotherhood and increase in one’s friends and assistors and, if lenience is accompanied by exercising goodness as opposed to badness and teasing of the others, it can be followed by affection and cordial friendship.

5. **Completion:**

The point that should be made in the end is that there are other hadiths about lenience that have expressed the boundary or boundaries of lenience and cases of the necessity to quit exercising lenience and their thorough presentation and investigation necessitates another opportunity and article. However, it can be

⁴ In some of the interpretations, as well, the term goodness in the abovementioned ĀYA has been interpreted as meaning lenience (see also, Tusi, no date, 9: 126).

succinctly stated that lenience should not be demonstrated when it causes quitting the fulfillment of the divine limits [Hodūd] or treading of the others' rights. In this regard, it has been narrated from the great prophet of Islam (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) that “after having faith in God, the perfection of intellect is in exercising lenience towards the people in cases other than leaving the right thing undone” (Harrani, 1984, 42). Or, with a similar concept, it has been narrated from Imam Hasan Askari (PBUH) that his highness conditions lenience to a person's non-entering of the wrongdoings as well as non-exiting the doing of the right” (Astar Abadi Khatib, 1989, 48). It means that lenience is favorable and valuable and it is recommended and encouraged when it neither drags a person to wrongdoing nor driving him or her out of the right's circle.

6. Conclusion:

- 1) The term Modārā [lenience] has been actually “Modāra’at” or “Modāra’āt”; it is an infinitive rhyming with “Mofā’alah” and it has been derived from the root “Dar’e” or “Dary”; in its common meaning, Modārā has been most likely derived from the root “Dar’e” which means “repelling” not from the root “Dary” which actually means “fetching and obtaining by a sort of deception”.
- 2) If Modārā [lenience] with people is considered as having been derived from “Dāra’a”, it essentially means repelling their evildoings and harms from oneself [by speaking and behaving properly]. But, if it is considered as having been derived from “Dārā”, it actually means showing mild behavior accompanied by mild tricks towards the people for not coercing them to break away from oneself. It can be generally stated that the general and common meaning of Modārā [lenience] is mildly and patiently treating a person whether for repelling his or her evildoings or for not making him or her go away or both.
- 3) The importance and position of lenience in Islam are clarified from the descriptions presented about it in the hadiths from the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) such as in the following descriptions: one of the preconditions for a person's action to become perfect, being of the same rank as the other obligations, half of faith, the most admired attribute, one of the best deeds, fruit of reason, sign of intellect, a trooper in the intellect's army, prelude to the wisdom and one of the perfection-endowing traits of politeness and magnanimity.
- 4) Exercising lenience towards the people is one of the prominent features of the God's messengers and amongst the means of perfection completion of their duty of guiding and instructing the people. Based on a hadith, the intensity of the prophets' exercising of lenience towards the enemies of the God's religion has been one of the causes by which the God has given them superiority to the people.

- 5) One of the advantages of lenience is keeping oneself safe from the war and bloodshed, damage, evildoing and cunnings of the others as well as the other unpleasant things and, in one word, keeping one's own world and life sound.
- 6) Another benefit of exercising lenience in addition to keeping the human world and life immune against damage and malevolence is keeping one's religion safe and sound.
- 7) Exercising mildness and lenience towards the religious, ideological, intellectual, subjective and other opponents can cause their attraction and lack of lenience towards them is usually followed by their running away from religion and faith. In exercising lenience towards them, both their attraction to the religion, in the first place, and repelling of their evildoings, in the second place, are intended.
- 8) Another advantage of lenience is the emergence of friendship and brotherhood and increase in the number of one's friends and assistors and, considering the fact that lenience is applied when a person's addressee has spoken or behaved offensively, affection and cordial friendship can come about if lenience and goodness are exercised and exhibited against badness and wrongdoing of the others.
- 9) Amongst the cases wherein lenience is not permitted is when lenience causes the non-fulfillment of the divine limits or treading of the others' rights; lenience is favorable and valuable and it is recommended and encouraged when it is applied for cases other than leaving the right thing undone meaning that a person exercising lenience should be dragged neither to the performing of wrongdoing nor exiting the realm of right.

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