

“Those who spend in prosperity and
adversity, and those who control anger
and forgive people, and Allah loves
those who are good in their deeds”
(Qur'an, 3:134)

Anger Management in the Qur'an & Psychology

Five Lectures given at the Islamic Shia
Ithna Asheri Association, Ottawa

Published by
Academy for Learning Islam (A.L.I.)
www.academyofislam.com

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December 8th - 12th, 2014

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Introduction

I am delighted to write the introduction to this booklet on *Anger Management in the Qur'an and Psychology* by Dr. Seyd Nasir Zaidi. Dr. Zaidi is a highly respected Islamic Scholar with tremendous knowledge and experience not only in the area of Islamic Sciences (such as Theology, Philosophy, Spirituality and Mysticism) but also in the areas of Counselling Psychology and Psycho Social Rehabilitation. Dr. Zaidi is the Spiritual Consultant for the Research Institute of Ethics and Spirituality (RISE) and spends most of his time in the academic work of RISE.

RISE is a strategy that explores the role of Islamic spirituality and Islamic ethics from an academic perspective derived from Qur'anic principles, accounts and sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the exalted Ahlulbait (AS). Its purpose is to integrate mystic, spiritual, ethical and jurisprudential approaches to contemporary challenges and issues faced by Muslims and translate them into practical day to day living experiences that allow individuals to live an enlightened state of being. The approach is based on academia and research to ensure that different views and ideologies are analyzed critically thereby creating a healthy forum for discussion and debate. The approach is used to create stronger ties with other Abrahamic Religions by articulating and exposing the commonalities between the major religions and allowing positive and harmonious co-existence. In particular, this strategy allows strengthening the social structure of families and communities.

In keeping with the ethos of RISE and the diverse expertise and knowledge of Dr. Zaidi, he has been able to deliver a series of lectures on Anger Management that has been captured in this booklet. The short booklet takes a practical but holistic approach in dealing with this complicated ethical and moral issue and he has masterfully presented this in an engaging and simple way that can be easily implemented by individuals of all ages. Furthermore, he has integrated the Islamic approach (based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadith) with contemporary theories of Counseling Psychology to produce an approach that is academically grounded and practically implementable. In this booklet, he has beautifully unraveled and demystified different levels of anger management and presented them in a highly effective and concise manner. The emphasis is on how one should integrate an Islamic approach with key psychological principles to assist in dealing with anger management

On behalf of RISE, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of Sr. Farzeen Rizvi for providing editorial and logistical support to this project. We are also thankful to Shaykh Murtaza Bachoo and the Academy for Learning Islam (A.L.I.) for facilitating the publication of this booklet for limited circulation.

Dr. Akber Mithani, President & CEO,
Research Institute of Ethics and Spirituality

Rabi' II 1436/February 2015



LECTURE NO. 1

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالصَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Those who spend in prosperity and adversity, and those who control anger and forgive people, and Allah loves those who are good in their deeds (Qur'an, 3:134)

This verse discusses three important qualities of righteous people:

1. Spending to please Allah (*Infaq*)
2. Controlling anger
3. Forgiving people

Spending in the Way of God (Infaq)

The first quality requires that we spend in the way of God, regardless of our economic conditions. This concept is called *infaq* (a type of charity that is given to please God). The Quran further points out, that *infaq* is a moral duty of even those who are not financially prosperous. . The question then is, how can one spend when one does not have a good economic condition?

The philosophy behind this concept is that the quality of deeds is more important for Allah than the quantity of deeds. According to the Qur'an, our deeds will be judged in the Day of Judgment on the basis of quality and devotion. The Qur'an says, *He, who created death and life that He may test you to see which of you is best in conduct. And He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving* (Qur'an, 67:2). However, the term *infaq* is not limited to spending money; it also includes the application of a professional skill that can be of benefit to people. This can include the transfer of knowledge, teaching of a specific skill, mentoring in a professional career or providing free services to those who are incapable of paying for these services.

Importance of Anger Management

The second quality of righteous people is that they control their anger and forgive people. The issue of controlling anger is a problem in every individual and family. Our relationships are affected when we do not handle our anger properly. It also damages our own psychological well-being, causing serious health issues. This issue is especially more serious in children who express their anger often, who internalize their anger, or express their anger in a way that misleads parents to understand whether their child is angry or not.

Anger Management in Islamic Context

The Prophet Muhammad (SA) says, *the one who controls his anger while he can express it, Allah fills his heart with tranquility and faith.* This *hadith* denotes some worthy points. First, it tells us that sometimes we control our anger because we cannot express it, due to several reasons. For example, one may be forced to suppress his anger due to respect of the person who causes anger,

or he may avoid expressing his anger to protect his personality and save his respect and dignity. So, according to this *hadith*, if someone controls his anger while he is not compelled to hide it, Allah fills his heart with tranquility and *imman*.

Anger Management and the Objectives of Shariah

Second, there are always two aspects of the commandments of God. One is the jurisprudential aspect according to which one has to fulfill all conditions in order to adhere and perform the commandment correctly, but the other part is its moral and spiritual aspect, which relates to the objective of the commandments. In other words, it is important to understand why a certain Islamic or religious law is required to be adhered to and carried out. What is the rationale and interest behind the religious laws? To answer this question, Allah has mentioned the moral and spiritual objectives of His commandments, which are directly related to our spiritual development and character building. For example, Allah says in the Qur'an that prayer is established for people to prevent them from wrong doings and moral corruptions (Qur'an, 29:45) or to reach a level of remembrance of God (Qur'an, 20:14). Allah also says that fasting is prescribed for you so you can become a righteous person (Qur'an, 2:183).

These objectives are important to mention because without knowing the objectives of the commandments of Allah, we cannot perform worship in its true spirit. For example, observing prayer should protect us from wrong doing, or lead us to the level of remembrance of God. In other words, we need to see the effect of our *ibadah* in practice or try to connect our *ibadah* to our moral and spiritual reform. Similarly, this *hadith* tells us that the ultimate objective of controlling anger is to reach the state of tranquility and true faith. Several researches have been conducted in clinical psychology and the psychiatric field which shows a strong link between unmanaged anger and unhealthy stress.

Powers of Human Soul in Islamic Ethics

According to Islamic scholars in the field of ethics, the human soul possesses at least three main distinct powers: The power of intellect, the power of passion (which gives us the desire to acquire something), and the power of anger. Every one of these three ethical virtues is to be practised to a certain degree and within definite limits, transgression of which would transform a virtue into a vice. If every virtue is visualized as the center of a circle, any movement away from the center would be considered a vice, and the farther away it moves from this point, the greater the vice.

Power of Intellect (al-quwwah al-aqliyah) in Islamic Ethics

Intellect and wisdom is the power by which a human is distinguished from animals. Intellect helps us to conceptualize concrete beings in the external world and also see them in abstract form. For example, the concept of human (*insan*) is an abstract concept which has no external existence; rather our intellect extracts this concept from real beings existing in the external world. We also dissect and evaluate single concept with the power of intellect. We are able to examine different things and break down a single concept in different parts in order to reach unknown realities.

However, when the concept of intellect comes to Islamic ethics, it emerges into different meanings. From an ethical perspective, intellect must lead us to distinguish right from wrong. It must lead us to worship Allah and motivate us to try hard to acquire paradise. When it was asked from Imam Sadiq (AS), what is the meaning of intellect (*aql*)? He replied, *aql* is a power by which Allah is worshiped and paradise is acquired. According to another *hadith*, someone came to the Prophet Muhammad (SA) and asked, “There is a person who worships a lot, how do you find him?” The Prophet Muhammad asked, “How is his intellect?” He answered, “I don't know about his intellect”. The Prophet Muhammad then said, “In the Day of Judgment, reward of every *ibadah* will be given according to the level of intellect.” These narrations reinforce that intellect and wisdom must lead us towards *divine world view* where we recognize Allah and the importance of His commandments, otherwise it cannot be termed as ‘intellect’.

The Power of Desire (al-quwwah al-shahwiyyah)

With the help of this power, human soul has passionate desire to take interest in anything which it considers beneficial and pleasurable. This power helps us to gratify our needs and take interest to attain whatever is useful and profitable physically, emotionally and intellectually. This power needs to be used in moderation; otherwise it can turn into greediness and immodesty. The Qur'an used the word *shahwah* in both positive and negative sense. Allah says, it has been made attractive for people to love the desires things like women, children, piles of gold and silver, horses of mark, livestock and farms. That is an enjoyment of the worldly life but with Allah lays the beauty of the final resort (Qur'an, 3:14). In this verse, both positive and negative meanings can be seen but in another verse, only negative side of this term is meant: Then came after them the successors who neglected prayers and followed their desires, so they will soon face the outcomes of their deviation.

The Power of Anger (al-quwwah al-ghadabiyyah)

The power of anger helps us to defend ourselves from foreign threats. So this power is a need of human soul otherwise there was no possibility for men to defend himself against harmful objects and creations. However, this power can also turn into aggression and reckless action if not used in moderation. This moderation level can only be achieved if this power comes under the control of intellect.

In summary, the function and value of every one of these powers or forces of the soul is commonly well understood. If man did not have the power of reason, it would have been impossible for him to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, true and false. If he did not possess the faculty of anger, he could not defend himself against attack and aggression. If the force of sexual attraction and desire did not exist in man, the continued existence of the human species would be endangered.

LECTURE NO. 2

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Good and evil are not equal. Repel evil with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with him will turn as if he were a close friend (Qur'an, 41:34).

According to the Qur'an, Good has a power of its own which wins hearts, and no man however perverted and corrupted, can help esteeming it in his own heart. Then, when good and evil are engaged in a face to face conflict and their nature and merits become apparent and known, after a long drawn out struggle, many people would start hating evil and admiring good.

Secondly, evil should be resisted not by the mere good but by a 'superior' good, as if to say: "If a person treats you unjustly and you forgive him, it is mere good. Superior good is to treat the one who ill-treats you with kindness and love. The result would be that "your worst enemy would become your closest friend", for that is human nature itself. If you remain quiet in response to an abuse, it will be mere goodness but it will not silence the abuser. But if you express good wishes for him in response to his abuses, even the most shameless opponent will feel ashamed, and then would hardly ever be able to employ invectives against you.

Repelling Evil with Goodness

One of the ways to control anger is to repel it with goodness, which is a higher stage of ethics than just to forgive someone. We can forgive someone unwillingly but responding to someone with goodness is more difficult as it requires a more purified heart. One of the reasons of anger comes from other people's behaviour as they cause anger with their evil conduct or abusive tongue. If we develop the quality to repel evil with what is best, then we will be in a better position to control our feelings of stress and intense dislike that may demand action. According to this verse, if we adopt this moral principle, Allah will not only turn away the enmity between the one who shows evil conduct and the one who responds in a good way, but also turn it into a warm friendship.

It seems we take less benefit from the very important moral aspect of this Qur'anic principle to resolve our social and sectarian conflicts. This principle clearly indicates that it is not always possible to convince disagreeable people with logic and rational arguments rather our moral behaviour and treatment is more important to bring harmony and resolve conflicts. This is what we see in the Qur'an that Allah says to the Prophet Muhammad (SA), *Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently And had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you Pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair So when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah Surely Allah loves those who trust (Qur'an 3:159).*

Need of Patience and Higher Level of Perfection

The Qur'anic verse mentioned in the beginning goes further conveying the message that it is not easy to develop this moral quality to repel evil with goodness rather one must have two qualities to follow this Qur'anic principle: *And no one will receive this Achievement except those who have been patient and those who own a great Portion of Faith* (Qur'an, 41:35). This verse indicates that no one is blessed with this attitude without observing patience and reaching to the considerable level of perfection, we cannot get the ability and openness of heart to respond against evil in a good way. The Qur'an goes on to say, *And if some temptation from Satan reaches you then seek shelter in Allah Since He is the Knowing Heare, He Hears the invocation and will rescue the invoker from doing wrong* (Qur'an, 41:36). It means if someone is unable to adopt this attitude he or she should at least be able to acknowledge that Satan has involved and tempting us with a destructive purpose. The Qur'an then says if Satan tempts you then you should seek refuge in Allah.

At another place, the Qur'an reinforces to follow the above way to control anger and get away from any possible confliction. Allah says:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

The servants of Rehman (All Merciful) who walk on the earth humbly and when ignorant people speak to them they reply peaceful (Qur'an, 25:63)

This verse indicates that when the ignorant people address the servants of God, they restrict themselves by saying hello or good-bye to avoid any worthless disputation. It shows that in order to avoid any conflicting situation, this Qur'anic verse can remind us to control our anger and distressful feelings by using very forgiving attitude and soft language. The true servants of the "Merciful" do not believe in harming attitude, even though they may have to deal with the ignorant people who behave rudely and insolently towards them. If they happen to come across such people, they wish them peace and turn away.

The same thing has been expressed in Surah Al-Qassas:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ

And when they hear something vain and absurd they turn away from it, saying, `Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you: peace be to you: we have nothing to do with the ignorant (Qur'an, 28:55).

Controlling Arrogant Behaviour

Above mentioned Qur'an verse also highlights another important way to address our feelings of anger through the avoidance of pride and arrogance. The verse means that the true servants of the Merciful can be easily recognized by the way they walk among people. If a man walks in a humble and dignified way, as opposed to a haughty, vain and proud manner, it shows that he is a noble and gentle person. The same thing has been expressed in another Surah:

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَن تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا

Do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed you will neither pierce the earth, nor reach the mountains in height (Qur'an, 17:37).

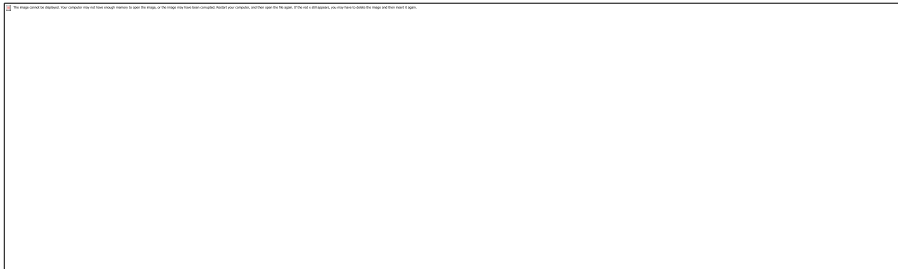
How can we control our anger by avoiding arrogant behaviour, and how can we relate this issue to control our emotional arousal? Basically, one of the root causes of anger is related to an expectation of being valued, appreciated and respected. Proud people always think and believe that they are greater and better than others, and that they have more qualities and resources than others. They have strength and power which must be admired and valued in society. When this kind of person sees that people's attitude is against their expectations and feelings, they become annoyed or angry. In fact, there is no validity in feeling proud over others because no one can claim that he or she is better than other in all aspects.

This is why the Qur'an beautiful describes:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

Indeed Allah does not like anyone who is a swaggering braggart (Qur'an, 4:36).

The word *mukhtal* used in this verse denotes that a proud person does not have the right to show excessive self-esteem and satisfaction over an act, possession, quality, or relationship by which they measure their 'self-worth'. Rather, the meaning of this word is that he just *assumes* that he has such qualities and powers which make him eligible to see others with less worth and merit.



LECTURE NO. 3

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْأَثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ

Those who abstain themselves from major sins and shameful acts, when they get angry, forgive others (Qur'an, 42:37)

Relation between Anger Management and Forgiveness

This verse mentions a deep connection between the 'controlling of anger' and the 'forgiveness of a person'. According to the Qur'an, one of the ways to manage anger is to pardon the other person. Although, the Qur'an emphasises on forgiving others while we are experiencing anger, it is not easy to put this principle into practice. The reason being, our intellect and wisdom loses its control over anger, and a person is then overshadowed by intense emotions and sentiments. When anger takes control, it is nearly impossible to focus on anything except the source of our anger. At this stage, it is difficult for an angry person to show merciful behaviour and forgive the one who provokes him. To take practical steps towards implementing this moral principle, an angry person needs to fulfill certain conditions and analyse his own personality, to become familiar with his own psychological and spiritual position.

Qur'anic Perspective on Forgiveness

Before coming to this point, it is important to know that the Qur'an conveys two clear messages about forgiveness and mercy. First, according to the Qur'an, we should not only learn to forgive people who hurt our feelings and inflict harm on us, we should also eliminate the roots of anger from our heart and soul (Qur'an, 24:22). This means, we need to 'purify' our heart from feelings of displeasure and resentment and stop, negative memories from festering and recurring in our thoughts and imagination.

The second message conveyed in the Qur'an is the 'need to reflect'. Allah's requisite of being all-forgiving towards others actions and deeds, is an extension of the forgiveness He bestows on us, when we seek it. As mentioned in the end of above Qur'anic verse, Allah says, "Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?" This divine tradition needs to be understood properly to see the effectiveness of our prayers and supplications. In essence, we need to adopt Allah's traits into our actions; if we want to seek Allah's help we need to help others, if we request Allah's mercy upon us then we need to be merciful to others. Our desire to gain Allah's help and mercy cannot come without reciprocating the same help and mercy towards Allah's creation.

Psychological Requirements

It is important to understand why it is difficult for us to forgive others. For this, we need to visit several psychological conditions to gain the ability to control our anger and forgive others. We need to be well aware of our strengths, potentials, and weaknesses. When another person causes us to be angry, our strengths help us keep our emotions under control. Similarly we also need to know our level of tolerance for frustration. We need to know our capacity to be realistic in terms of judging ourselves. *We need to understand the psychological mechanism of our anger.* Anger is not a direct result of a particular event or situation; rather it is the result of our predetermined emotions, thoughts, expectations and goals. Our personality traits play a decisive role in making

us angry. For example, we may have *pre-determined* expectations that everyone has to love or value us, or that everything needs to be under our control. When certain interactions do not align with this, we become irate or angry.

We need to set the right level of expectations for ourselves. Sometimes we set high expectations and failure to meet these expectations makes us angry. We should not set goals that exceed our capacities and available opportunities. The concept of *rida* and *taslim* (submission) in the Qur'an teaches us to do our best for successful outcomes but if these outcomes are not according to our desire we should accept our destiny, learn from our mistakes, and work hard to get better results in the future, without expressing complaints or impatience.

Furthermore, it is important for us to accept that our challenges in life do not necessarily support our personal needs, wants and expectations. People do not have the obligation to interact with us in the manner that we expect. Just as others hurt or irritate us, we also hurt and irritate others. Hence learning from others' mistakes allows us to improve ourselves through an indirect interaction or observation.

To forgive others, one needs to accept the 'imperfections' of being human and the fact that others make mistakes just as we do. We are partly a product of our environment. We may have had opportunities come our way, which may not have been available to others. As a result, they have been moulded with a different moral and ethical make-up. They may require further spiritual and moral development to learn how to interact with others and avoid conflicts. However, it is not easy for 'emotionally developed' people to see others in a merciful way; instead, they tend to blame and condescend. This displays an imperfection in our nature, which needs to be acknowledged and changed, to achieve higher levels of perfection.

An optimistic view of life, allows us to control our anger and overcome intense emotions. It is important for our psychological wellbeing to look at the favourable side of any event, to think positively, expect success and hope for good.

One of the psychological problems in the younger generation is their inability to say "No" to others. As a result of this, they become over-burdened with extra responsibilities. They are unable to prioritize their tasks and manage their time. This spiritual and mental condition makes them defenceless and vulnerable to stressful situations which trigger anger.

We need to understand that everyone has their own 'red zone'. Entry into this zone makes us susceptible to being hurt, irritated and threatened. We need to be considerate of others' emotional structure and their threshold for anger. A critical mistake we make is in understanding the limits of this threshold, and if it falls below the norm, in others.

Similarly, the effort to measure our own limits for anger can help us indirectly monitor it. If we're easily provoked, and sensitive it only makes sense for us to "check into" our thoughts and feelings regularly. This way we can detect early warning signs of whether we're getting impatient, irked, or aggravated. The sooner we realize that someone or something is getting on our nerves, the better our chances of calming down before we've lost control of our emotions.

LECTURE NO. 4

فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَ أَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

So whatever thing you are given, that is only a provision of this world's life And what is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord.

Worthlessness of Worldly Life and Anger Management

This verse of the Qur'an shows another spiritual way to manage anger and control our emotions through understanding the 'insignificance' of the materialistic world. According to the Qur'an, whatever gives us enjoyment of life is just 'temporary' while what Allah provides us is much better and much more durable for those who believe and place their trust in Allah. Allah further asks, "Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter?" (Qur'an, 9:8). Hence it is important to remember worldly enjoyment is trivial in comparison to peace in the Hereafter

There is another beautiful Qur'anic verse which maintains the insignificance of this world. Allah says, "Indeed We have made whatever is on the earth an adornment for it that we may test them to see which of them is best in conduct" (Qur'an, 18:7). According to this verse, whatever we see, possess and observe in this world is a beauty of this earth not our beauty; however we seem to think that these possessions heighten our value and make us worthy in the eyes of others. The Qur'an condemns this perception by stating that this is only a trial, and that we have to train ourselves to remember that everything we possess from this world is limited in beauty and value. Instead, Allah says your beauty is your faith in a sense that your faith has been made attractive to you and made appealing in your heart (Qur'an: 49:7). Furthermore, we will be answerable to Allah on the Day of Judgment about our perceptions.

How Emotions and Desires Involve in Angeriness

As discussed previously, our anger is not a direct result of a volatile situation rather our emotions, needs, feelings and expectations play a strong role in making us angry. We put enormous value to our worldly desires. When these desires are unfulfilled we feel our needs are being threatened and that our goals are not being met, we hence get angry. The more focused we are on attaining materialistic things, the more frustrated we get when we do not attain them. However, if we change our perception and see this world as a temporary transition we will realize this is just a short period or a phase in our overall journey, and we become better at controlling our anger.

Effectiveness of Religious Beliefs

This is a very notable aspect of the effectiveness of religious belief that why we need to believe in religion or follow God's commandments? This question is normally raised by the college and university students who live in secular and non-religious environment and encounter anti-religious propaganda around them. The answer of this question is that religion can make our life more meaningful in a sense that spiritual and religious beliefs increase our resources to face physical, emotional and psychological challenges of our life. The one, who does not believe in God and the Day of Judgment, has fewer resources to overcome his or her psychological and emotional impulsive forces. If our approach is limited and confined to this materialistic world, we will have fewer resources to get rid of difficult thoughts which may threaten our life.

For example, feelings of emptiness, fear of death, fear of not achieving our worldly goals, experiencing unappreciated attitude, helplessness against injustice, unfairness and discriminatory actions, feelings of insecure and uncertain future, can only be addressed through religious and spiritual resources. We need meaningful life in order to protect ourselves from psychological disorders, stress, depression and other medical conditions. Similarly, concept of reward of the Day of Judgment is a great reinforcement for coping with difficulties of life.

In comparison to a non-religious person, a religious person has a broader spectrum of life. He or she has the opportunity to see the world at greater depth. Unfortunately, we are not using religious principles and spiritual foundations for our psychological wellbeing. However, serious efforts and researches are being conducted from clinical psychologists and psychiatrics to incorporate religious and spiritual principles in their practices for faster recovery of patients. Research has shown that those hospitalized patients who have religious beliefs recover faster and get have a lower chance of re-hospitalization.

Relation between Durability of Actions and Anger Management

According to the second portion of above mentioned Qur'anic verse, it is very important for us to make our actions, deeds, thoughts and intentions durable, enduring and everlasting by connecting them to the divine world and giving them divine direction. This is just like a drop of water which can sustain only if connected with the ocean. According to the beautiful *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (SA), this world in comparison with the Hereafter is like a drop of water left in your finger when you put it into the ocean and then bring out. Similarly Allah says, *that which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last, and We will surely pay the patient their reward by the best of what they used to do* (Qur'an, 16:96).

Qur'an and Avoiding Hastiness for Managing Anger

Another Qur'anic verse that teaches us how to control our anger is related to observing patience during distressful situation. Allah says, *so remain patient with your Lord's judgment and be not like the Man of the Fish, he cried out when he was in anguish and distressed* (Qur'an, 68:48). In this verse, the Prophet Muhammad (SA) is addressed and commanded to not rush to seek God's punishment and be patient with your Lord's judgment. This verse teaches us that in order to control our anger, we need to observe patience. We need to learn how to refrain ourselves from

hastiness and impulsiveness. This verse tells the story of the Prophet Yunus (Jonah) (AS) who was anxiously seeking God's help in the Fish's belly. Allah says to the Prophet Muhammad (SA), do not behave impatiently as did the Prophet Jonah (peace be on him), who on account of his impatience was driven into the fish's belly. This verse teaches us that at the moment when we get angry, we should refrain from responding to the situation spontaneously and avoid rushing punishment of a person who causes anger in us because it may not be favourable for us to retaliate in an intense emotional situation. Some *hadith* also state that one should avoid taking a decision in anger.

Secondly, this Qu'ranic verse also tells us that sometimes it is better to wait for Allah's decree and wrath. In this way, we can connect ourselves with God's attributes to give more value to our possible reaction. According to Imam Sadiq (AS), when apostles of Jesus Christ asked him, what is the hardest thing in your view, he replied the hardest and worst thing is the wrath of God. They asked, how can we save ourselves from God's wrath? He answered; we have to avoid becoming angry at someone to save ourselves from God's anger. They again asked what is the root cause of God's wrath is? He replied; arrogant behaviour and humiliating someone is the root cause of God's anger. This *hadith* also teaches us that it is very important for us to manifest God's attributes in our personality; to avoid God's anger we need to avoid our anger towards others.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

LECTURE NO. 5

Important Practical Steps to Control Anger

Anger as an emotion, is neither good nor bad. It's perfectly healthy and normal to feel angry when you've been mistreated or wronged. The feeling in itself is not a problem how we react makes a difference. Anger becomes a problem when it harms us or others. We need to understand that uncontrolled anger hurts our physical and psychological wellbeing, our professional and personal relationships with others.

Feelings of anger do not develop all of sudden rather they evolve gradually after passing through different stages. It is possible for an angry person to control their anger at very initial stages and to disallow himself to reach to a full blown stage. We need to explore what is really behind our anger. Anger is a mask for other feelings like hurt, embarrassment, sadness, shame, guilt, insecurity etc. It may be hard for us to express emotions other than anger.

Identifying Triggers

Triggers and warning signs are very important to control anger at initial stages. Triggers are thoughts that automatically enter our head and cause certain emotions. We need to be well aware of triggers which cause us to lose control. We need to avoid stressful situations and places that trigger irritable feelings. Without knowing these triggers we cannot avoid them, so we need to identify these situations and places that can provoke us and stimulate our emotions. We have to take notice of our emotional conditions when we state differences of opinions. When someone refuses to cooperate with us, it stirs negative emotions. Where we feel we are not being valued and life is going out of my control. Once you have identified some of our triggers and have begun to understand themes, we are able to work more constructively to control our response to those triggers.

Checking Tolerance Level

Anger is the emotion of intolerance that can be managed through practicing tolerance. Intolerance is a lack of acceptance of another person's viewpoint or behaviour. Anger drives you to think you're right and the other person is wrong. Sometimes it is hard for us to understand and accept other's view point because we think that we are in the right and others should not disagree.

We have to remind ourselves that if we are secure in our way of thinking then we have nothing to defend if someone holds a different opinion, it should not make us insecure and provoke us to defend ourselves. We can play a more active role in questioning his way of thinking. We also need to avoid personalizing any conversation rather it is better for us to focus on issues. We need to know that intolerance is an attitude that people pick up through life experiences. If we

grow up in a family that tolerates differing points of view, we tend to be like that ourselves. The same is true if we are raised in an intolerant family. It is also important for us to judge the level of tolerance of the person or audience being spoken to, and keep a conversation or interaction to within the threshold of that tolerance.

Accepting the Problem

It is very difficult for us to accept our weaknesses and imperfectness, without admitting this fact we cannot improve our condition. It is easy to trigger others' actions and deeds but difficult to see our own flaws and faults. We need to have a realistic approach about ourselves. It is not appropriate to deceive ourselves in understanding our actual position. Imam Taqi (AS) says that a *believer* must have three qualities: favour (*tofiq*) of Allah, inner admonisher and acceptance of others' advice. What Imam Taqi (AS) mentioned is very important for everyone because if we don't have an inner voice, then we are unprepared to change ourselves and an external admonisher cannot bring any change in us.

Taking Others as a Role Model

Some people are more successful in controlling their anger and anxiety. They can better handle their difficulties, problems and disappointments. However, it is not easy to acquire this trait. We need to use our intellect and wisdom to assess people's way of handling stressful situations and the strategies they adopt in difficult situations. Taking someone as a role model can help us in the management of anger related emotions and feelings.

Our Approach is More Important than the Event

We need to understand that an event or incident is less important than our approach to the event itself. This is why a specific event or incident affects different people in different ways. A particular event can cause anger and stress in one person while not affecting another person. This means the way we look into the event and the approach we adopt plays a decisive role in formulating our psychological condition.

How to Address Children's Anger

A different ability and skill is required to address a child's intense emotional feelings that cause anger. It is important for parents to understand that they need to deal with their own anger and control their own burn out condition. It is observed that parents have a lack of persistence and patience in dealing with their child's anger. They cannot tolerate their child's anger consistently and react in anger. This kind of attitude further increases children's anger and makes them more rebellious. It should be noted that like adults a child needs to feel that his demands are being heard and listened to.

Parent should know that non-verbal conversation with children is more important than verbal conversation. A child learns more from a parents' behaviour than their verbal conversation. It is important for a child to see how his or her parents control their anger. Angry parents avoid addressing their children's anger and may intensify their anger. Parents should patiently back up their words with consistent and confident actions.

Parents also need to catch their children when they perform good behaviour, instead of catching them in their wrong doings. Children need appreciation and admiration on their good deeds, if parents do not respond to their achievements it can cause anger in them. However, parents need to adopt an authoritative style to discipline their children, meaning that they should be strict when required but adjust their behaviour according to the need of their child.

Some children require verbal instructions repeatedly but their parents do not understand that their children need verbal instruction multiple times. Parents need to show more patience to see the result of their instructions, and if they don't see desired outcomes then they need to adopt a different strategy.

It is important to note that children and teens express their anger in different ways or mask their feelings of anger. It is observed that children redirect and convert their anger somewhere else. Sometimes they show their anger in the class not at home. Children and teens that are extremely dependent on their parents may be fearful of experiencing anger towards them. Any experience of anger may quickly rouse in them fears of abandonment, rejection, or punishment. These fears may result in managing anger through repression and suppression. In addition, passive children often feel they do not deserve to express their feelings or thoughts. In fact, a passive child may seem more down or depressed than angry, and yet depression may at times be related to unexpressed anger and hurt. Hence, parents should be very careful about suppressing anger in their child.

Parents also need to know that children are immature in their problem-solving skills, and in their capacity to understand and manage emotions. For this reason, they get angry more quickly and rapidly, they have a low tolerance for frustration. They also lack the capacity to postpone satisfaction of their needs.

Parents need to know that their child or teen may only be receptive to a certain dose of discussion. Sometimes, parents give their child an excessive dose for his or her behaviour, which

could be very harmful for him or her. It is not an easy task to get to know the degree of dosage required for a child but it can be learnt through practice, observation and continuous adjustment.

Normally children don't understand that an event does not directly causes anger in them rather other feelings and emotions engage anger. Without identifying and recognizing these feelings and emotions neither children can control their anger nor can parents treat them. Parents should establish dialogue with their children to facilitate them to understand real causes of their anger. For example, when you ask your child why you became angry? He will say; I am angry because my friend said he will not play with me. If you ask your child, what caused anger in him, he might say because he became sad or hurt or disappointed. If you again ask, why you became sad? He might answer you that I am sad because if he does not play with me it means he does not like me. At this point it would be easier to treat these root causes which result in anger in your child. Parents also need to understand that children lack the vocabulary to express and differentiate between different emotions.

