

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek forgiveness from Allah

We stand witness to Allah that there is no God but Him

That Muhammad (saww) is his slave and messenger

### **Disease of the soul: Anger (Ghadhab)**

#### Definition of Anger (Ghadhab)

- The great researcher Ahmad ibn Muhammad, popularly known as Ibn Miskawayh, in his book *Taharat al-'Araq*, which is a fine book of rare excellence, summarises anger as follows:

*“Anger, in fact, is an inner psychic movement due to which a state of agitation is produced in the heart’s blood, arousing a desire for vengeance. And when this agitation becomes more violent, it intensifies the fire of anger. A violent commotion in the blood seizes the heart, filling the arteries and the brain with a flurry of dark smoke, on account of which the mind and the intellect lose control and become powerless.”*

#### Surah Ali Imran 3:134

- In the Holy Quran Surah Ali Imran [3:134], Allah swt says:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Those who expend in prosperity and adversity in almsgiving, and those who restrain their anger and pardon men; And Allah loves the good-doers.

The Arabic word *Kadzimiin* mentioned in the above verse refers to those who restrain their anger and pardon the faults of men. In the above verse, Allah teaches us to restrain our anger and encourages us to be merciful to our fellowmen.

- Imam Hasan (as), the Holy Prophet's eldest grandson, was once being served his meal by his slave servant, who accidentally threw on him a dish boiling hot, and fearing a severe punishment, immediately recited the words "*the repressors of rage*". Imam Hasan (as) said, "*I am not angry.*"  
"*And the forgivers of men*", proceeded the servant. "*I forgive*", replied the Imam.  
"*And Allah loves the doers of good*", concluded the servant. "*Since it is so, I give you liberty and four hundred pieces of silver*" replied the Imam.  
[*The Holy Quran*, Aqa Mirza Mahdi Puya & S.V. Mir Ahmad 'Ali]
- It is clear from the above verse and the story of Imam Hassan (as) that restraining the anger by itself is not enough though it is necessary. Apart from restraining our anger we should also pardon the faults of our fellow beings as only then we can get rid of the enmity in our heart.

## Some Hadith on Anger

- Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as) has said that there is no more powerful army of Iblis than 'women' and 'anger'. [*Safinatul Al Bihar* Bab Al Ghadab Vol 6 page 653]
- Imam Al Sadiq (as) once said: "Anger is the key (that opens the door) to all kinds of vices." [Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), Vol. III (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyid jawad Mustafawi, p. 412.)]
- It is reported on the authority of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as), the Prophet of God said: "Anger spoils faith in the same way as vinegar destroys honey." [Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), Vol. III (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyid jawad Mustafawi, p. 412.)]
- It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) that he heard his father Imam al-Baqir (as), as saying: "A bedouin came to the Prophet (saww) and said: 'I live in the desert. Teach me the essence of wisdom.' Thereupon the Prophet (saww) said to him: 'I command you not to get angry'. After repeating his question thrice (and hearing the same reply from the Prophet every time) the bedouin said to himself: 'After this I will not ask any question, since the Apostle of God (saww) does not command anything but good'." Imam al-Sadiq (as) says: "My father used to say, 'Is there anything more violent than anger? Verily, a man gets angry and kills someone whose blood has been forbidden by God, or slanders a married woman'." [Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 303, hadith # 4]
- Once someone asked the Prophet for advice and the Prophet told him not to be angry. The man then left. Later there was a war between that man's tribe and another tribe. Then he remembered the advice that the Prophet had given him. He then laid down his arm and tried to reconcile. Later there was a reconciliation which was only possible because anger was restrained. [*Safinatul Al Bihar* Bab Al Ghadab Vol 6 page 651]
- Imam Ali (as) said "Anger is a stroke of madness, since the afflicted later feels remorse and regrets. If someone does not feel any remorse after anger, it means that his madness has become fixed." [*Jami 'al-Sa'adat* page 75]
- There is a door in hellfire and no one shall enter it except those who lash out their anger by offending Allah. [*Mizaanul Al Hikmah* hadith # 14747]

## The Three Characteristics of Man

- Allah has created man with three characteristics: *intellect*, *desires* and *ghadhab*. If anger or desires rule then the result can be catastrophic. However, if intellect dominates then even the vice of anger can disappear.
- If our desires or anger dominate, then there will be no difference between us and animals. This is because animals lack the characteristic of *aql* or intellect. But mankind if after being

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bestowed with intellect does not let it dominates, then it can safely be argued that such people will be acting worse than beasts. As stated in the Holy Quran Surah Al A'raf [7:179]:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا  
وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَافِلُونَ

And certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and the men;  
they have hearts with which they do not understand,  
and they have eyes with which they do not see,  
and they have ears with which they do not hear;  
they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse misguidance; these are the heedless ones.

- If God forbids, anger becomes a permanent part of our nature, then that will be akin to our hearts becoming hardened like stones. Regarding the hardness of human hearts, Allah swt in Surah Baqarah [2:74] states:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ  
الأنهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ  
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Then your hearts became hardened thereafter and are like stones, or even yet harder.  
For there are stones from which rivers are gushing. And others split, so that water issues from them. And others crash down in fear of God. And God is not heedless of the things you do.

- Thus it may happen that when someone gets angry, in a bout of extreme anger, he turns away from the religion of God. The hot flames and dark fumes of anger not only destroy his faith but by adversely affecting his righteous beliefs, they can potentially lead him to eternal damnation. And when he becomes aware of it, his remorse is of no avail, as the fire of anger, which was lit by a spark thrown by Satan, continues to roar in his heart.
- Indeed Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) has said, “*Anger is the spark lit by Satan in the heart of the son of Adam.*” [Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), Vol. III (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyid jawad Mustafawi, p. 415.)
- We have already discussed the story of the ego of Iblis in an earlier class. When Allah commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam (as), Iblis refused as he thought that since he was made of fire, he was superior to mankind who was made of clay. As stated in the Holy Quran Surah Al A'raf [7:12]:

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ

Said He (Allah): What prevented thee to bow thyself, when I commanded thee?

Said he (Iblis): I am better than he; Thou createdst me of fire, and him Thou createdst of clay.

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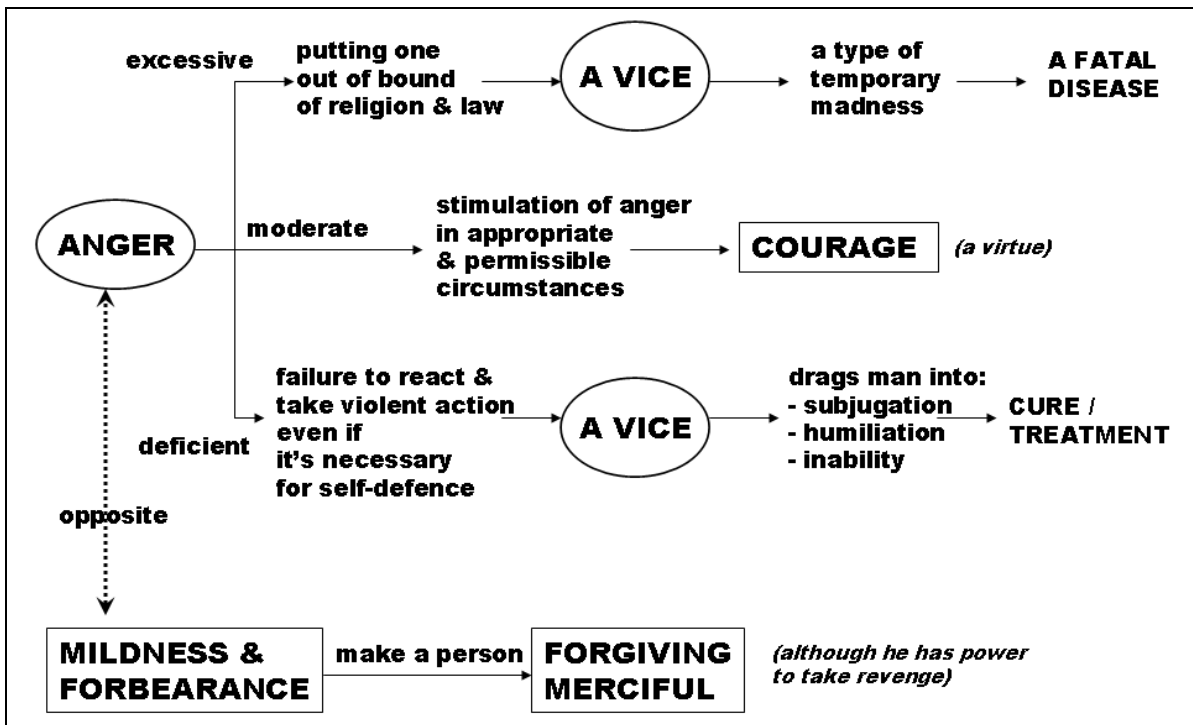
- If we think about the properties of fire vs. clay, we will notice a diametrical difference. The property of fire is that by its very nature *it is disorderly and blazing*. On the other hand, earth by its very nature is *calm and serene*.

That is why Imam Ali (as) has said,  
 “When a person gets angry, if he is standing, he should immediately lie down (sit down) on earth for a while as this removes the filth of Satan from him at that time.”  
 [Al-Rayshahri, *Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith # 15059]

In fact it is very hard to imagine someone being angry when lying down. Usually when people are angry, they get up if they were lying down, or even stand up if they were sitting. Thus as Imam Ali (as) said, to get rid of anger, we should do the opposite i.e. to lie down or sit down on earth.

**The Three Levels of Anger**

- We learnt from the lessons on patience that *sabr* or forbearance makes a person forgiving in nature although he has power to take revenge. The opposite of mildness and forbearance is anger. Anger in turn can have three levels: *excessive* anger, *moderate* anger and *deficient* anger. We briefly discuss each of these in turn.

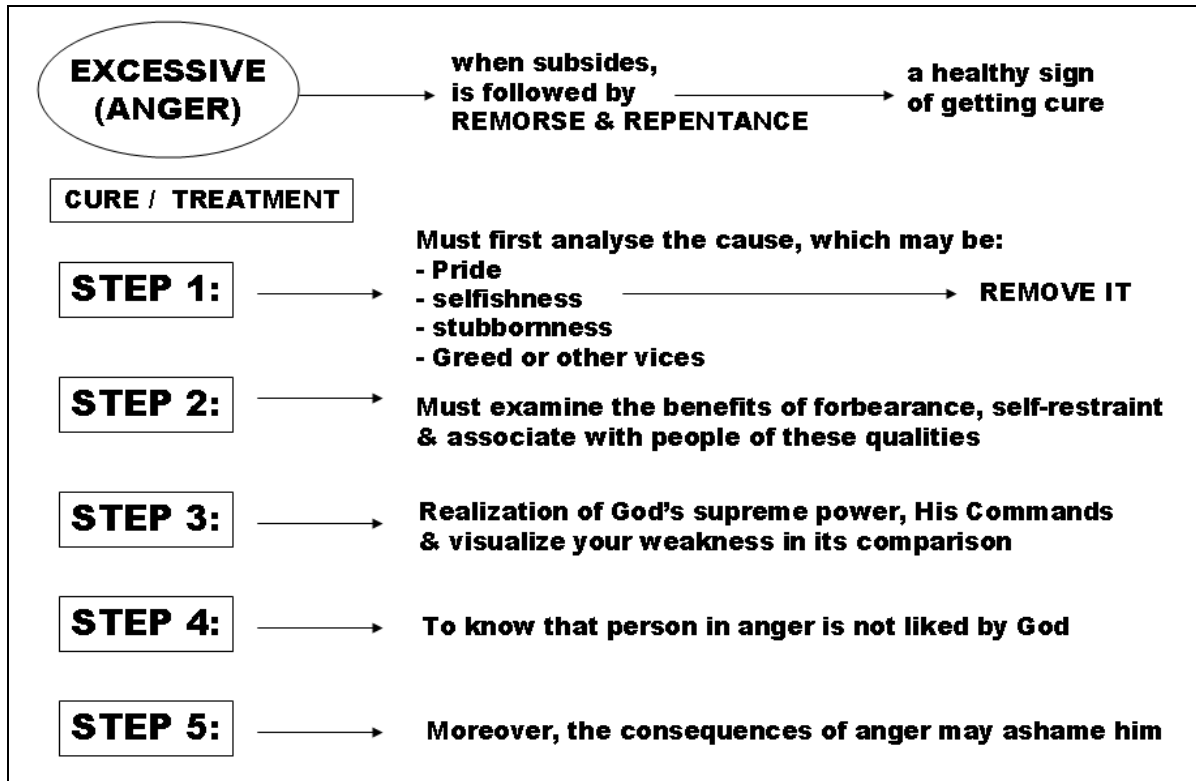


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**Excessive Anger**

- Anger is excessive when it starts dominating our intellect and takes command of our tongue and of our actions.
- The result of excessive anger is that it puts us out of bound of religion and law.
- The vice from excessive anger is temporary madness which itself is a fatal disease.



**Moderate Anger**

- Anger is moderate as long as it does not dominate our intellect.
- Thus if anger does not impair our sense of reasoning then it is not problematic as we do not become a slave of ghadhab.
- Stimulation of anger in appropriate and permissible circumstances can indeed be an ethical virtue due to courage.
- It is said that the anger of a momin does not cause him to do injustice. Furthermore, the contention of a momin does not cause him to indulge in *batil* or injustice. Hence one characteristic of a momin is that irrespective of whether he is angry or content in pleasure, he will remain just. The reason why the anger of a momin does not cause him to be unjust is that the anger of a momin is always moderate and is dominated by his *aql*.

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- It should be known that the power of anger is one of the biggest favours of God conferred upon his creatures, by means of which they are enabled to pursue activities constructive to their world and hereafter, are assured to the continuity of the species as well as the safety and survival of social order and civic life.
- Hence anger is not a vice as long as we are able to dominate it with our reasoning. Of course that is easier said than done but nevertheless that is a Jihad that we should aspire to win as otherwise it can have unfortunate consequences.
- Anger therefore is not a sin as long we can control it with our sense of logic. Indeed even Allah can be angry on his slaves if they disobey him. The Holy Quran says in Surah Al Fatihah [1:6-7]:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ  
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Guide us to the right path; The path of those whom Thou hast blessed;  
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful; Nor of those who are astray.

**Complaint against husband: Example of Imam Ali (as)**

Imam Ali (as) during the days of his Khilafat used to personally listen to the grievances and complaints of the people. Once, the days were hot and people did not venture out of their houses after mid-day. Imam Ali (as) sat everyday outside his house under the shade of a wall so that if someone had any complaints, could lodge the same to him directly. Sometimes he walked in lanes and streets observing the general condition of the people.

One day he returned to his residence tired and sweating, and found a woman waiting. Seeing him, she came near and said: *"I am in trouble. My husband oppresses me. He has turned me out from the house and has threatened to beat me. If I go to him he will beat me. I request you to do justice between us"*.

*"O Servant of Allah, it is too hot now. Wait till it cools down in the afternoon. Then I shall come with you and redress your grievances". "If I stay out too long, I am afraid it may increase his anger"*.

For a moment he bowed his head and then raised it up saying to himself, *"No, By God, justice to the oppressed should not be delayed. The right of the oppressed should certainly be taken from the oppressor; and every fear should be taken out from her heart so that she may stand boldly before the oppressor and demand her right"*.

*"Tell me where your house is?"*

*"It is in such and such place"*.

*"Let us go."*

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He accompanied her to her house, stood at the door and called loudly, *"O Master of the house! Peace be upon thee"*.

A young man came out. He was her husband. He did not recognize Imam Ali (as). He found that an old man of about sixty years had accompanied her and assumed that she had brought him for support and mediation; but he kept silent.

*"This lady has a complaint against you. She says that you have oppressed her and have ousted her from the house. Besides you have threatened to beat her. I have come here to tell you to fear Allah and be kind to your wife"*.

*"In what way does it concern you if I have not treated my wife well. Yes, I had threatened to beat her, but now, since she has brought you to obey plead for her, I shall throw her into fire and burn her alive"*.

Imam Ali (as) was disturbed by the impudence of the man. Drawing out his sword he said, *"I am only advising you to do good and admonishing you from bad deeds; but you are replying me in such manner clearly saying to burn this woman in fire. Do you think there is no authority in this world?"*

His loud voice drew the attention of the passers by, and a huge crowd gathered. Whoever came bowed down with reverence before the old man and saluted him by saying *"Peace be on you O Commander of the Faithful"*.

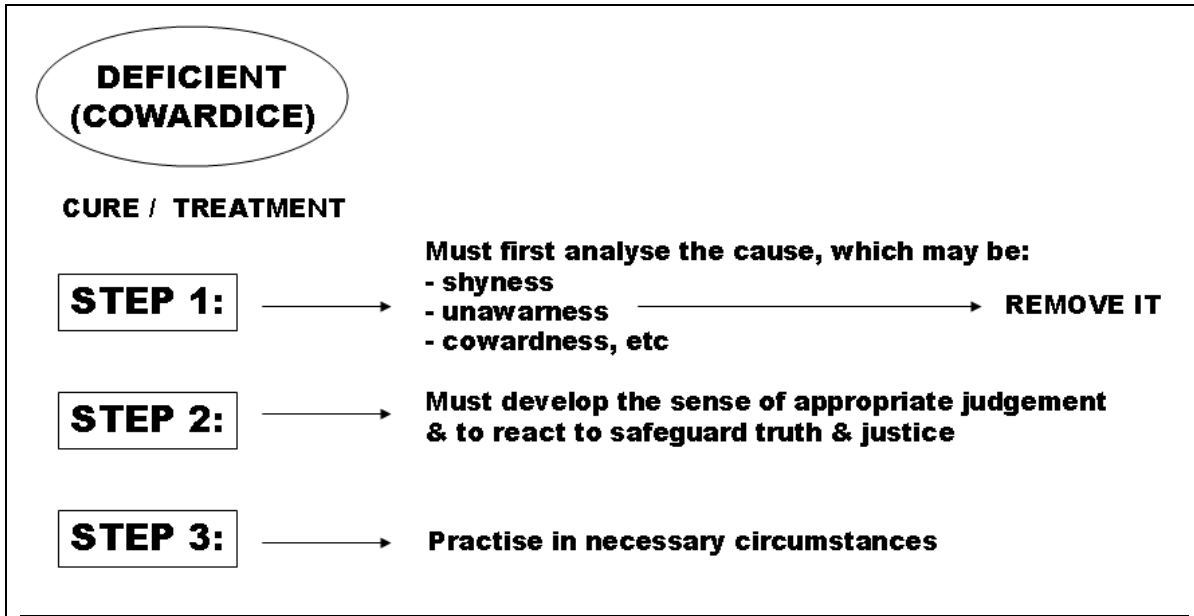
When the rude young man realized as to whom he was talking with, he trembled and supplicated, *"O Ameerul Momineen! Forgive me. I confess my faults and promise that henceforth I shall obey my wife"*.

Imam Ali (as) turned to the woman and told her to go in the house and cautioned her not to behave in such a manner that her husband had to be angry again.

The above story illustrates that [moderate anger can be useful](#). Imam Ali took out his sword and was angry at the rude young man but at the same time the Imam never let his anger dominate him. [The result was courage and justice was done](#).

### Deficient anger

- Anger is deficient when we do not take appropriate action even when we are supposed to, for instance when our rights are being usurped.
- Because of deficient anger, a person may not be able to take violent action even when it is necessary for self-defence.
- Deficient anger can result in a vice because it drags man into subjugation and humiliation.
- Someone once asked Imam Hasan Ibn Ali about the meaning of cowardice. The Imam said that a coward is one who is daring towards companions but fears the enemies. [*Mizaanul Al Hikmah* Hadith # 2278]  
Hence the lack of anger can become a vice as it can lead to cowardice.



- Indeed in the Holy Quran Surah Al Fath [48:29], Allah swt says:

*مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ*

Muhammad is the Messenger of God and those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers and merciful among themselves

- Narration stated “*Shyness is of two types, shyness out of consciousness and shyness out of feeble minded. Shyness of consciousness is wisdom and shyness of feeble minded is ignorance*”. [Mizaanul Al Hikmah Hadith # 4577]
- “*Whom ever his shyness stop him from speaking the truth then he is of the feeble minded person* “. [Mizaanul Al Hikmah Hadith # 4579]

### Advice to Cure Anger

- A person with the habit of often getting angry should know that anger is the faculty that is granted by God Almighty for the sake of the preservation, continuity and survival of human species and for the discipline and order of the family system, protection of human rights and safeguarding Divine laws. If he acts contrary to this divine purpose and makes use of power of anger against the design of God, it will be a breach of trust that deserves severe punishment from Him.
- Among the fundamental remedies of anger is to get rid of the factors responsible for its provocation. These factors include self-love, which in turn causes love of wealth, glory, and honour, and the desire to impose one's will and expand one's domain of power on the creatures of God. These inherently excite the fire of anger, as the individual infatuated with them tends to hold them in high regard. When someone loves these things, he gets excited

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and angry if any one of his aspired goals is not achieved. Another factor that sometimes arouses anger is that it is imagined to be a merit and confused with bravery due to one's ignorance.

Anger is thus the product of spiritual weakness, insufficiency of faith, immoderation of character and soul, love of the world and concern for mundane things and the fear of losing the pleasures of life. It is because of this that the vice of anger is found more often in women than in men, more in sick individuals than in healthy people, more in children than in grown ups, more in the elderly than in young people.

- It is said that we can cure our anger with silence. Indeed it takes two to fight. If one person calms down, then quarrels and arguments can be avoided. Thus for instance if both the husband and wife are always angry simultaneously than that could be problematic and can lead to undesirable circumstances.

Indeed it is true that the tongue of a wise man is behind his consciousness but the tongue of a *ahmaq* comes before his conscious.

- A wise person thinks carefully of the evil consequences of anger and the benefits of restraint, thus making it incumbent upon himself to stamp out this fire from his heart with every possible effort. He clears from his heart the love of wealth, honour and the like that provoke his anger. If he resolves to act against his inner self and its worldly desires, with the help and blessings of God, his attachment becomes less intense and he gives lesser importance to them. His inner calm and contentment, caused by giving up the love of wealth, honour and the like, will not allow his self to act unjustly. Gradually, he will not lose the grip of self-restraint at times when anger is provoked in his heart. Finally, he will achieve complete control over his anger.

[Adapted from Al-Khumayni, *Forty Hadith*, chapter 7, 'Ghadhab']

### **Conclusion**

- Allah swt in the Holy Qur'an Surah Al-A'raf [7:199] says :  
"Keep to forgiveness, and enjoin what is fair, and turn away from the ignorant."
- Rasulullah (saww) said:  
"Forgiveness raises a man's station; Forgive, so that God may honour you."
- Imam Ali (as) said:  
"Anger is a stroke of madness, since the afflicted later feels remorse and regrets.  
If someone does not feel any remorse after anger, It means that his madness has become fixed."
- Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) as mentioned in Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol.2, p.186, hadith #11, said:  
"A Mukmin is the person who when angered,  
his anger doesn't lead him away from that which is true ..."

## Mind Blowing Story

### Bahlul and a Judge

It is said that a certain man decided to do Hajj. Since he had little children, he went to the judge and, in front of the court officials, gave 1,000 dinars to the judge for his children. He said, *"If I die during this journey, then you are my successor. What you yourself want, give to my children, and if I safely return, then I will take back this deposit."*

He departed from the judge's office for Hajj; Allah willed for him to die on the way. When his sons became of age and understanding, they asked for their deposit which was trusted with the judge.

The judge said, *"Your father willed in front of the people that I give to you whatever I wanted. In this respect, I can give you only 100 dinars."*

They started yelling and screaming. The judge called the witnesses and asked, *"Do you people testify that that day these children's father gave me 1,000 dinars and said, 'If I die on the way, then give my sons whatever you want.'"*

All the people testified that yes, he said this.

Therefore the judge said, *"Now I won't give you more than 100 dinars."*

Those poor sons were perturbed and asked everyone for help. The people couldn't change this lawful trick. Gradually, Bahlul heard about it. He took the children with him to the judge and said, *"Why don't you give these orphans their right?"*

The judge said, *"Their father willed that I give them whatever I wish, and I won't give them more than 100 dinars."*

*"O Judge! What you want is 900 dinars, and according to your words, that deceased willed that whatever you yourself want, give to my sons; therefore, give that late person's children the 900 dinars that you yourself want. That is their right."*

The judge became helpless at Bahlul's answer and was compelled to give the orphans the 900 dinars.

#### Disclaimer:

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