

Chapter 61: Anger

Anger and angst are a part of the human nature. They are present in the basic instinct of every person. This phenomenon rises from the heart and the mind of an individual. Then it assumes the shape of a flame and pervades the entire body. The eye and the visage become red, the limbs start shaking and froth comes forth from the mouth.

The senses escape out of the control of the person. The intelligence of the angry person disappears momentarily and in that condition there would be hardly any difference between him and a mad person. In this inebriated condition he might commit acts for which he would have to repent his entire life.

‘Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

“Keep away from anger because it starts with rage and ends in remorse.”¹

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq says:

“Anger is the key to all ills.”²

Anger is also harmful to the piety and faith of the person. It can nullify his good acts and make him a sinner.

The Prophet of Islam has said:

“Angst destroys the piety of a person as vinegar does destroy good honey.”³

In a condition of frenzy a person utters unintelligent words and his actions are such that he becomes unpopular in the eyes of others.

‘Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

“Anger is a bad companion which exposes the failings of a person. It brings him closer to evil and takes him away from good.”⁴

Perpetual anger affects the heart and the nerves of a person. And makes them debilitated and weak. Therefore, a person who is concerned about his reputation, health and piety he must fight the bad instinct of anger with full force at his command, lest it destroy his nerves, repute and faith.

It must also be borne in mind that anger is not unnecessary and harmful under all circumstances. At certain times its use is legitimate and advantageous. It must be used judiciously when the situation demands. This instinct only helps one protect his life and property from vandals and undesirable elements.

When the person has to protect his faith, his country or to defend the humanity in general, the instinct of anger will be a part of his chivalry. Without the presence of this instinct a person will be in the ranks of cowards who bow down their heads to any insults or ill treatment from others, If the instinct of anger remains in the control of the instinct of wisdom, it can be an asset for a person.

Fighting in the defense of one's country, the cause of one's faith (Amr bil Maroof nahi an-il Munkar), to protect one's family is legitimate. The instinct of angst makes one capable of taking part in such difficult tasks.

A pious and responsible Muslim will not remain a silent spectator to tyranny, injustice, dictatorship, perpetuation of sins, the forces of imperialism and colonialism etc. Islam permits its people to stand firmly and confront these forces with courage and equanimity, In such situation, however, the angst of the people, should not prevail over wise counsel.

'Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

"If you become a follower of anger, it will take you towards destruction."⁵

This is not right to totally suppress the instinct of anger and make the human being insensitive, unconcerned and shameless. What is required is the need to avoid excessive and unnecessary expression of anger. This is possible with proper upbringing and grooming of the young persons.

Like the other instincts in a person, anger too is in its rudimentary form since the very childhood. The quantum of anger in a person is the reflection of the upbringing he has received, and the environment he has been living in. If the parents maintain the instinct of anger at a moderate level in their affairs, the child too will learn to follow suit. The children of excitable and wrathful parents too will learn to be similar in their future lives.

The child sometimes shouts and rants in anger, his body shivers, the color of his face changes, he hits the ground with his feet, starts rolling on the floor, utters angry word and tries to go to a corner and hides himself. But all these antics of the child may not be all pranks. It can be in anger and the parents have to investigate the cause of the anger and try to remove it.

Anger definitely arises because of some worry or discomfort. Excessive pain, tiredness, sleeplessness,

hunger, excessive thirst, cold and heat make the child restless and give rise to anger. Doing things against the wish of the child, suppressing his freedom of movement, the feeling of undue attention to other children, feeding him forcibly can make the child restless and angry. Some parents teach the children in a subtle way to be angry. They shout at them and become unduly strict. If the child gets angry, they reciprocate with anger instead of trying to calm him down. The child thus gets trained to be a compulsively angry person.

If the child is hungry and thirsty, give him something to eat and drink. If he is tired, help him to sleep. If the child is angry because of your actions, try to amend them. If the anger of the child is because of some rambling thought, calm him down with sweet talk and lullabies. If the child is angry because he needs something, try to find out his need and fulfill it. When the child becomes normal, tell him that he need not cry and become angry to get something. Assure him that he has only to ask for the thing, and if the thing is good for him it will be given to him. Also warn him that if he cries and misbehaves in the future, his wishes may not be granted.

‘Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, says:

“Beware of anger lest it dominates you and becomes a habit.”⁶

Excitable children become angry at the slightest pretext because their nature is not strong. They are notable to tolerate any undesirable thing and get affected with the slightest disturbance and become angry.

1. Mustadrak al-wasail, v 12, p. 326

2. Usul al-Kafi, v 2, p. 303

3. Usul al-Kafi, v 2, p. 302

4. Mustadrak al-wasail, v 2, p. 326

5. Mustadrak al-wasail, v 2, p. 226

6. Gharar al hukm, p. 809

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