

A Psychological Examination of Anger Control in Imām Riḍā's Traditions

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Abstract

In line with the advancement of science and technology and the achievement of facilities that bring about welfare, the studies done in psychology have also have furthered the boundaries of knowledge in this domain. Psychologists emphasize that for a better life, people should be taught “the life skills.” This international skill has its roots in Islam, with the only difference being in the new wording used in psychology. One of these skills is emotion (anger) control. Due to the universality of anger and the public inability to control it, the article explains this issue from three viewpoints, namely Imām Riḍā's traditions, ethics, and psychology and finds out that anger control is rooted in the words of our Imāms. After discussing the nature of anger and its physical-behavioral signs as well as its advantages and disadvantages, the article gives in practical solutions for anger control from the foregoing three viewpoints. Finally, it concludes that the eighth Imām of the Shī‘a, who paid attention to knowing and controlling anger centuries before psychologists, is not only superior to them due to his pioneering position in this regard, but also gives in an important solution, that is, connection to spiritual and metaphysical forces. This way, he surpasses others in this regard.

Keywords

Ethical strategies, Strategies in Imām Riḍā's traditions, Scientific strategies, Anger, Anger control.

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Introduction

In line with the scientific advancement that led to the provision and improvement of different facilities and means of life, psychologists and consultants help the humans solve their mental obsessions and move ahead in the peacefulness path. One of the topics covered by psychologists and consultants in this path is life skills.

As Khanīfar (Khanīfar, 2007: 16-17) asserts, “Life skills are a set of abilities that set the grounds for compatibility and positive, effective behaviors. In order to live better, these skills help us address life problems in a positive manner, achieve more success, and suffer less damage.”

These international skills that form the basis of life revolve around the arrangement of personal and social relationship of the humans and promise a peaceful life to them. The International Health Organization provides a list of 10 skills in this regard: Self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, effective communication, coping with stress, coping with emotions (anger), problem solving, decision making, creative thinking, and critical thinking (Ciarrochi, 2007: 215).

Learning these skills provides the human with the possibility to move toward a better and more peaceful life. A little attention to these skills helps us understand that although the titles used for these skills are modern and international, they are actually the teachings that are rooted in Islam, and there is a need on the side of the researchers to prove this fact. The noble Prophet of Islam (s) and his Progeny – who have been created to guide the humans and help them enjoy a healthy and full life – have provided the human with these teachings for a better life so that they can pave the evolution and perfection path and achieve the ultimate Servitude to God and salvation (‘Alawī Gunābādī, 2011: 9). As a poetic verse reads:

If you want to travel to the salvation sphere

You should achieve knowledge, virtues, and art

In order to achieve salvation, we should set the honorable statements of Imāms as our road map and attain many virtues by acting upon them. One of these virtues is good etiquette. Imām Riḍā (a) says: “If a Servant knew what there is in good etiquette for him, he would understand that he needs good temperament” (Mu’min Ḥusaynī, n.d.: 9). Moreover, it is narrated from the Prophet (s): “On the Resurrection Day, nothing has more effect on the human actions record than the good etiquette” (Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1989, vol. 12: 152). One way to achieve the virtue of good etiquette is to acquire patience and get away from anger and rage, because according to Imām Riḍā (a): “Anger is the key to all vices and badness” (Ḥarānī, 1984: 395). If anyone can control this mood in himself, he will stay away from many vices (Mahdawī Kanī, 2011: 305).

Psychologists also emphasize that anger has extensive and important consequences for the life and destiny of the humans and societies. Anger and aggressiveness in various levels and aspects is considered a big and global problem, and the root of many crimes, disorders, distortions, and even wars can be found in it (Adharbāijānī, 2012: 297). This shows the importance of anger control.

When looking for the cause of the aggressive acts of people in different social situations, we find out that suchlike people do not have even the basic social skills, and the teaching of social skills to these people can reduce their aggressiveness (ibid: 317).

Therefore, the present study adopted a descriptive-analytical method to examine the emotion management skills, particularly anger control – which might be a common need for people, especially the youth – based on three approaches, namely Imām Riḍā's (a) traditions, ethics, and psychology. In line with the provision of practical solutions, this study wants to suggest that Imām Riḍā (a) has provided solutions for anger control long before the same solutions are offered by the contemporary psychologists. Moreover, he has given in a solution that is a permanent source of peacefulness, i.e. spiritual connection with the unique God, where the human connects with his most superior refuge through the reception of the metaphysical forces.

Literature review

There are numerous pieces of writing on anger and its control as well as the consequences of anger and issues related to it, and various people have authored works in this regard based on their ability level and position. This topic has been examined via different viewpoints in various magazines, newspapers, and journals. Some research reports similar to our study are “Emotional intelligence and anger control” (Aḥmad Khāliqī, 2012), “Sweeten your life through anger control” (2012, *Happiness and Success Psychology Monthly*), and “Ten pieces of advice for anger control” (Nāṣir Mihrānfard, 2012, *Management Monthly*).

We aim at expressing the Islamic solutions for anger control along with the related cutting-edge scientific findings. Some works in this regard include “Approaches and skills of anger management based on Islamic teachings” (Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Sharī‘atī & Murtiḍā Karamī, 2010, vol. 1, no. 3) and “Anger management based on religious teachings and modern psychology” (Muḥsin Shukūhī Yiktā et al., 2009, vol. 3, no. 5) that have adopted a similar approach to the one taken in this article.

The novelty of this study is its innovative approach in examining anger control as a life skill based on Imām Riḍā's (a) traditions. That is to say, in its provision of anger control methods, the article first presents Imām Riḍā's

(a) suggestions, followed by the statements of the ethics scholars and psychologists. There is made a kind of balance between these three sets of knowledge, which is not seen in other studies.

After the inspection of the meaning of emotion and anger, we address the levels and advantages of anger. Then, we introduce the causes of anger as well as the signs of anger. After that, based on the viewpoint that anger is not inappropriate everywhere, we enumerate the permissible cases of anger. Finally, the solutions for anger control are given.

Emotion

Emotion is one of the great blessings of God that determines to a great degree the human mental and intellectual healthfulness. The emotional state can influence a person's judgments about his and others' behaviors as well as the quality of his social relationships (Mişbāh, 1996: 429-430).

There are numerous evidences that those who control their emotions healthfully, understand others' emotions, and deal with others well enjoy a great deal of advantages in any sphere of life, either in the private and familial domains or the social and political areas (Goleman, 2001: 68). Therefore, the identification of different types of emotion is an important way to arrange social relationships and bring about physical and mental equilibrium. Due to the importance and popularity of anger emotion, we discuss it in more detail here.

The meaning of anger

The literal meaning of anger

"Khashm" (Persian equivalent for anger) is defined as fury, wrath, tantrum, and indignation, and is opposite to happiness (Dihkhudā, 1999: under the entry *khashm*). Likewise, other dictionaries take *khashm* to mean fury (Anwarī, 2003: under the entry *khashm*). Fury happens when a person is mentally distressed and due to his distress and anger, he loses the balance of his volitional faculty and his self-control (Dihkhudā, 1999: under the entry '*Aṣabānī*').

The terminological meaning of anger

It is a mental nervousness and extreme emotion that afflicts the human when he faces difficulties (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1983, vol. 3: 97). This causes the animal soul to move out of the person, which in intense cases makes his face agitated and dark, fills the veins with blood, and takes away the light of intellect (Narāqī, n.d.: 177; Narāqī, 2010, vol. 1: 383; Ghiyāthī Kirmānī, 1999: 39).

Fury is a carnal movement and mood that appears as a result of the boiling of blood in the heart to get revenge (Ibn Miskawayh, 1952: 165;

Khumaynī, 2007: 238). Ṭurayḥī, too, deems vengefulness as the reason of anger (Ṭurayḥī, 1988: under the entry *ghaḍab*).

Psychologists introduce anger a reaction to a distressful condition (Atkinson, 2006, vol. 2: 133). The human adopts fury and aggression to protect himself against dangers and threats (Ādharbājānī, 2012: 308). In other words, the natural and instinctive way of showing fury is aggressive behavior.

The outer effects of anger

Anger is accompanied by some physiological changes such as increased heart rate and blood pressure, the changes in breathing, muscle contractions, adrenaline and cortisol secretion, stiffness of muscles, sweating, closed fists, and loss of control (Tavris, 2001: 95-96). The change of face color, the redness of eyes, and lack of control in doing things, moving body limbs, and speaking are also other outer signs of anger (Kāshānī, 1994: 409-410). At the time of anger, more blood goes to the face and so, the forehead and neck veins get thicker; however, some people get pale (Khānsārī, 1952: 16).

Describing the face of the Prophet of Allāh (s), Imām Riḍā (a) says: “There was a vein on the forehead of the Prophet that swelled when he got angry” (Ṣadūq, 1959, vol. 1: 316; ‘Aṭārudī, 1986, vol. 1: 83).

Anger levels

At the desirable and normal level of anger, the person does not show any feebleness or compromising mood that might move him to tolerate any condition and accept any improper demand; at the same time, he is not so rebelliousness to create problems for others and himself (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1984: 154-155).

It should be noted that this power is reprehensible when it goes beyond the moderate level and moves toward extreme degrees. Some people show undue levels of anger, lose their reasoning ability at the time of anger, and breach the intellectual and legal boundaries. The extreme anger causes the person to always fight with people (Shujā‘ī, 2013: 229).

On the contrary, some other people adopt negligence, and do not show any furious reaction or anger in situations where anger is mandated as necessary by reason and religious law. This mood, which can be the result of the weakness of soul and lowliness, is also reprehensible. Although anger-free people experience less challenges, they do not have jealous pride, and this is a negative point (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2009: 154). The consequences of this are the lack of jealous pride against the unlawful, the forbearance of dishonor and debasement, weakness and meanness, and keeping silent against ritual prohibitions and vices (Shubbar, 2009: 247). Some studies

indicate that people who cannot identify and show their emotions (including anger) might not cope with challenges and are prone to many common psychological ailments (Ciarrochi, 2007: 114).

Therefore, the use of moderate levels of anger is necessary for the human, and is reprehensible only when it is shown in an extreme manner or is totally neglected.

Benefits of anger

The ethics and mysticism scholars have introduced the anger faculty as one of the great divine graces due to which the life of the person as well as the existence of the human being, the family system, and (in general) the high-quality worldly and other-worldly life is guaranteed (Khumaynī, 2002: 134; id., 2004, vol. 4: 126). Anger, which is activated in the external environment of the human, opens his eyes to the existing dangers and empowers him through stimulating his emotions. In exhausting situations, the human usually frees himself from tension by the manifestation of anger. The positive functions and benefits of anger in showing bravery and reacting to injustice are undeniable (Shukūhī Yiktā, 2010: 45). This valuable and important instinct triggers the jealous pride and guides the human to achieve excellent goals such as defending one's beliefs and protecting his life, property, and dignity (Şadr, 2008: 33).

In his studies, Charles Darwin concluded that anger helps the humans and animals to adapt to their surrounding environment. Therefore, one of the main benefits and functions of anger is defending oneself, protecting one's privacy, and getting adapted to the environment (Muchielli, 2006: 139). This instinct is a defensive power used by the human against the harmful factors that threaten his life and healthfulness. Anger is like a firearm in the hands of border guards. To remove the danger and disasters and defend their country, these guards point their guns toward the enemies to subdue them. This act is correct and is approved by reason and religious law. However, if a border guard targets one of his comrades and wounds him, he will be ruled as guilty. Similarly, when the human feels threatened, the anger faculty is automatically triggered to defend the body by empowering the person to defend by any means against wild animals or any other threat. However, the ethical duty and moral virtues do not allow the human to use this weapon – which should be used to defend his healthfulness or life – in unimportant cases and wrong ways (Falsafī, 2004, vol. 2: 56).

Factors that trigger anger

Numerous factors activate anger, including personal, social, economic, natural, and psychological ones. This last category involves anxiety and

psychological complex (Shukūhī Yiktā, 2010: 49). In religious text, factors such as envy, selfishness, quarrel, faultfinding, derision, trickiness, opposition, and greed are suggested as the causes of anger (Shubbar, 2009: 249). Hormones influence the aggressive behavior (Khudāpanāhī, 2009: 302). Physiological (i.e. neurological) causes as well as pain and discomfort can also lead to anger and aggression (Aronson, 2009: 289-292).

The permissible instances of anger

The foregoing sections clearly showed that the human is permitted in important and critical situations to get angry to defend himself or his beliefs provided that he takes into account reason and religion. Imām Riḍā (a) narrates the honorable Prophet of Islam (s) – who was appointed to complete the noble character traits – as saying: “God and I get very angry when someone sheds my blood or bothers my family” (Ṣadūq, 1959, vol. 2: 27; ‘Aṭārūdī, 1986, vol. 1: 278).

Imām Riḍā (a) notes that not only the Prophet (s) got angry, but also his anger was very intense in some cases. The Prophet (s) determined people’s kindness toward Ahl al-Bayt (a) as the wage for his prophetic mission, and this symbol of moral perfection got angry when this very Ahl al-Bayt (a) were bothered.

Of course, it should be noted that anger is bestowed upon the human to defend himself in important cases, and it should not be wasted on worthless issues. Imām Riḍā (a) says: “This world and worldly issues never angered the Prophet” (Ṣadūq, 1959, vol. 1: 317).

In this part, we present some benefits of anger control provided by Shukūhī Yiktā (Shukūhī Yiktā, 2010: 58):

1. The person uses his power based on sound reason and orders, and does not do or say something that would result in regret.
2. It raises others’ friendship and kindness toward this person, because controlling anger and avoidance of aggression – either physical or verbal – and continuous good manners and peaceful treatment of others brings about peacefulness in them and moves the angry person to recover his consciousness and peacefulness.
3. Anger control benefits physical healthfulness in that it protects the human against many diseases.

Anger management

Anger management means having certain skills that reduce the emotions and physiological reactions resulting from anger.

Islam sets out to control aggression through cognitive, emotional, and practical methods.

Cognitive methods

A reference to the Islamic resources makes it clear that there is an extensive effort to provide feedback, form new and correct attitudes to anger, and discuss the positive effects of aggression control and the negative effects of the failure to do so.

Emotional methods

These methods use emotional stimulation of people to abandon aggression. This is done through prohibiting them from anger and aggressive behaviors and recommending them to perform anti-aggression practices such as patience. These statements have a strong and undeniable motivational effects and prohibitive influences for those who believe in Islam and follow the path of Imāms as the role models of perfection and blissfulness.

Practical methods

Finally, providing an objective and behavioral model as well as practical procedures to overcome anger, the Islamic resources teach others how to control anger and decorate themselves with the restraint of anger and patience (Ādharbāijānī, 2012: 318:320).

Similarly, psychologists such as Nuwaku introduce anger control stages as cognitive preparation, skill attainment, and knowledge application (Shukūhī Yiktā, 2010: 51). These three stages are congruent with the stages provided by Islam.

So far, we have talked about the first stage to give in a complete picture of anger and issues related to it. In the coming lines, we offer solutions that focus on learning anger control skills. Knowing the benefits and rewards of anger control, the motivation to do so appears in the human and he then uses what he has learned.

The noble Qur'ān, too, has addressed this influential factor in people's lives. Talking about the anger control, it says: "... [the pious are those] who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men..." (Qur'ān 3:134).

The noble Qur'ān hints at the admirable feature "kazzm ghayẓ" that means swallowing anger. That is to say, when a person gets angry, he should swallow it like a morsel (Muḥaddithī, 2012: 28).

Abūl-Ṣalt narrates from Imām Riḍā (a): "The Sublime God told to one of his prophets: In the morning, eat whatever first came to you ... In the morning, that prophet was walking and suddenly came to a big black mountain. He stood and wondered: My God has ordered me to eat this. Then he hold himself: My God does not order me to do what I cannot. Then he moved ahead to go and eat that mountain. As he got closer to that mountain, it became smaller. When he got to that mountain, he saw it like a morsel. So

he ate that morsel and found it more delicious than any other food ... Someone told him in when he was asleep: You did what you had been ordered. But did you get the point in it? Mountain was the symbol of anger, and when a Servant is overtaken by anger, he does not see himself and forgets his dignity. If a person who is overtaken by anger controls himself, he will know his dignity and will kill the fire of his anger. Finally, anger will become like that delicious morsel for him” (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 74: 18).

The meaning of *kazm ghayz*

Anger control is called “*kazm ghayz*” in ethical discussions. In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, it is defined as drinking anger sip by sip (Ibn Manzūr, 2005, vol. 3: 3443). It is also defined as suffocating, preventing, and blocking (Ādharnūsh, 2012: 591). Finally, it is said: “*kazm*” denotatively means closing the opening of a waterskin full of water, and connotes a person who stops himself of showing anger and fury (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1983, vol. 3: 97).

Some believe that restraint of anger leads to hatred, rage, and psychological complex. Martyr Muṭahharī eloquently writes in this regard:

The anger experienced by the human is exactly like a psychological complex that might appear in a person. The removal of this complex is called *kazm*, just like a cancerous tumor that disappears when treated with electricity. With regard to psychological issues, *kazm ghayz* is when the person acts in a way that not only no sign of his anger is manifested in his behaviors, but even the complex and the hatred in his heart is removed like a melting piece of ice (Muṭahharī, 1993: 41).

Socrates the Wise says: “I deem a ship encircled by terrifying storms and whirlpools and huge mountains more capable of being saved than an agitated angry person, because the captains have time to think and find a way to save that ship, but nothing can help reduce the high anger flames” (Ghiyāthī Kirmānī, 1997: 149). Therefore, the human should learn ways to cope with anger and fury before it happens.

Ways to cope with anger

The treatment of all moral faults is based on knowledge and practice. We should first know this moral vice through qur’ānic verses and Islamic traditions and know the divine reward given to one who restrains his anger. Then we can start practical treatment (Ghazālī, 1983: 115-116).

Here we express the main ways to cope with anger from the viewpoint of Imām Riḍā’s (a) traditions, ethics scholars, and psychologists.

The enhancement of physical strength

Imām Riḍā (a) says: “Olive is a good food ... it strengthens nervous system and diminishes anger and fury” (Ṭabrisī, 1987, vol. 1: 365).

Avicenna says: The human manners and habits follow his temperament. If phlegm, yellow bile, or black bile increase in the person, they will lead into dignity, peacefulness, and patience, fury, and bad-temperedness, respectively.

The neurobiological approach emphasizes that the human brain and nervous system have the pivotal role in understanding the human behavior, intellect, and emotions. Neurobiologists believe that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors have physical bases. The electric shocks move along the brain cells and cause the release of certain chemicals that enable us to think, feel, and behave (Santrock, 2005, vol. 1: 46). Similarly, 14 centuries ago, Imām Riḍā (a) recommended that the nervous system should be strengthened in order to control behaviors.

In a study related to this issue, researchers concluded that alcohol increases aggressive behaviors (Carlson, 2009: 280). This shows the effect of food on behavior.

Therefore, we might not relate all angry and furious behaviors to ethics and cannot remove this negative trait using ethical exercises. Rather, the cause of anger should be first identified; it might be due to a physical problem that needs to be catered. ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), the skillful doctor of humans’ body and soul, has taken this into account and has provided God’s Servants with a harmless solution to strengthen their nervous system and prevent anger.

Change in mood

Describing his noble ancestor, Imām Riḍā (a) says: “When he got angry, he turned away and looked away” (Nūrī, 1988, vol. 12: 195; Ṣadūq, 1959, vol. 1: 317).

He also says: “Try not to get angry; but if you got angry, sit down” (Ḥarānī, 1984: 14).

The ethics scholars also refer to silence and change of physical conditions, and say: As anger is an extreme change in the body and soul, the person should change his physical condition and try to keep calm, even if it is for a short time (Raḥīmī Iṣfahānī, 1996, vol. 4: 128).

Carol Tavris says: When your anger overwhelms you and your body gets stimulated by it, reduce your stimulation by making a pause. If this pause is long enough, your emotional stimulation will be reduced (Santrock, 2005, vol. 2: 111).

Narrating the conduct of the Prophet of Allāh (s), Imām Riḍā (a) teaches

us that at the time of anger, changing the physical conditions and getting away from the place and physical situation which is filled with anger helps us to get calm.

Staying away from constantly-angry people

Narrating his ancestors, Imām ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (a) says: “A person will act according to the belief of his friend and companion. So, each of you should see who his friend is” (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 71: 192).

It is mentioned in *Akhlāq Nāṣirī*: “Nothing is effective on soul more than the effect of companion and associate” (Ṭūsī, 1968: 183).

Sa‘dī (Sa‘dī, 2008: 546) deems the manners of one’s companion greatly effective on him:

If an angel sits with a demon

It will learn how to terrorize, betray, and trick

Some studies have demonstrated that aggression is learnable, just like any other response, through imitation (Atkinson, 2006, vol. 2: 71), though some psychologists such as Freud and Lawrence emphasize the existential nature of aggression (Bidār, 2002: 245; Ādharbāijānī, 2012: 303). Although the existential nature of anger is undeniable, the effects of cultural and social factors on the quality, form, and intensity of its manifestation cannot be ignored (Ādharbāijānī, 2012: 308). This confirms the role of learning in it.

What we said in this section referred to the effect one’s friends and associates have on him, and that getting away from angry people can help him attain peacefulness.

Forgiveness

When it was asked from Imām Riḍā (a) about the best Servants of God, he said: “People who get happy when they make a good deed, ask for forgiveness when they make a bad deed, thank God when they give something for charity, are patient when they are afflicted with a disaster, and forgive when they get angry” (Ḥarānī, 1984: 445; id., 2011:469).

If a person can think at the time of anger that he himself commits tens of mistakes and expects others to forgive him, he can forgive others’ mistakes so that others can forgive him at the time of his mistakes (Jawān Hushyār, 2011: 133).

Forgiveness can be the first step in anger control and management, and it is the strongest method to restore control over life most of the time. Dean Ornish, the famous American physician and researcher, deems forgiveness a suitable replacement for anger and revenge. He says: “The most self-regarding thing for one is to forgive others” (Iran Newspaper, 2008: 12).

Imām Riḍā (a) introduces forgiveness at the time of anger as one of the

characteristic of the best Servants of God. The individual and social consequences of this trait are evident, and Imām encourages people to adopt it to attain the worldly and otherworldly bliss.

Paying attention to punishment

Imām Riḍā (a) has prayed for his friends: “I have promised myself that if anyone ... treats one of my friends with anger, I would ask God to afflict him with the severest punishment in the world” (Mufīd, 2010: 247).

The believers and the friends of Imām Riḍā (a) do not get angry and do not treat the friends of Ahl al-Bayt (a) angrily so as to avoid the divine punishment.

One should think and come to know that whatever happens in the world is based on the divine decree, all creatures are under the control of God’s power, and all issues depend on God (Narāqī, n.d.: 180). If the person sees himself as present in the realm of the Unique, Almighty God, he will not allow himself to make a mistake. With such a robust viewpoint and belief, he will never undertake something that dissatisfies God, as stipulated by the qur’ānic verses and Islamic traditions on the divine punishment.

One way provided by psychologists to reduce and control anger and aggression is the punishment of the aggressor (Ādharbāijānī, 2012: 314; Karīmī, 2010: 219). It should be noted that the effect of this punishment is not automatic and definitive. That is to say, if the punishment is not timely and does not come with sufficient intensity and appropriate intention, it might not be effective enough (Ādharbāijānī, 2012: 314).

It is noteworthy that the Saint Legislator, who is aware of all aspects of human training more than anyone else, will take into account the best method to punish the human so that it leads to positive training outcomes.

Paying attention to the angry person’s facial expression

At the time of anger, people’s facial expression greatly changes. Therefore, Imām Riḍā (a) invites people to good-temperedness: “Treat people with good-temperedness and a happy face” (Shahīd Awwal, 1983: 133; Majlisī, 1983, vol. 71: 167). A happy face is against sourness and these two expressions can never appear simultaneously on the face. Imām asks people to have a happy face and get away from a sullen face that reveals their anger, because the human facial expression greatly changes at the time of anger.

The scholars of ethics say: Look at the face of angry people and see how they have gotten out of the human moods, have adopted the wild beasts’ qualities, and are hated by people (Qumī, 1992: 47-48; Kāshānī, 1994, vol. 4: 421).

A motivational approach emphasizes the fulfillment of the main needs of

the human. This theory considers the human as having certain needs and motivations and deems that his behaviors are to fulfill those needs (Karīmī, 2010: 42). One of the mental needs of the human is to be loved (Biyārī, 2004: 68), and we can tentatively accept that happy faces are accepted quicker and more by the group.

Knowing this, the human tries to have a happy face and stay away from anger and its consequences. It should be noted that happy people always raise friendship and respect from others and everyone is eager to meet them.

Taking into account the divine reward for preventing anger

Someone told Imām Riḍā (a): “Teach me an action by doing which there remains no distance between me and paradise. Imām said: Don’t get angry, don’t ask anything from people, and grant people the right for anything you deem for yourself” (Tūsī, 2010, vol. 2: 276).

Moreover, someone asked Imām Riḍā (a) to teach him an action by doing which he can gain the goodness of this world and the other world. Imām said: Don’t get angry (Mu’assisa Āl al-Bayt Li-’Iḥyā’ al-Turāth, 1986: 390).

It is mentioned in *Mi’rāj al-Sa’āda* that one should read the narrations on praising and rewards of staying away from anger and controlling it, and think about its benefits (Narāqī, n.d.: 180).

In a research project, the kindergarten tutors were asked to ignore children when they showed aggressive behaviors and pay special attention to their actions that were free from anger and aggression, and reward the non-aggressive actions. After several weeks, the aggressive behaviors significantly reduced (Aronson, 2009: 315).

Here we examined the effect of reward from the viewpoint of psychology. Imām Riḍā (a), too, has used this method in order to improve people’s adherence to ethics and faith. In order to achieve bliss, he encourages the Servants of God to think about Paradise and the vicinity of God so that they stay away from vicious deeds. Encouraging people to work for the promised rewards prevents them from getting angry. They can then try to calm themselves, if needed.

The divine reward for the restraint of anger

Imām Riḍā (a) says: “God will show grace and affection to ... anyone who kills his anger and does not get furious” (‘Aṭārudī, 1986, vol. 1: 298; id., 1977: 487).

We should study the narrations that praise the divine reward of restraining anger, and try to quell his anger in order to achieve the other-worldly reward (Narāqī, n.d.: 180).

It is suggested in managerial solutions that if the manager pays attention

to employees' good acts, they will certainly repeat the rewarded act. Rewarding brings about motivation to have the best performance.

Although it is true that prevention is better than treatment, the kind Imām Riḍā (a) does not abandon his followers in case they do wrong deeds. He points out that if something happens and a person gets angry and signs of anger appear in him, he should not think that everything is over; rather, he should know that he can go back and attain the rewards of not getting angry. Imām asks such a person to achieve those divine rewards via resisting the urge to show anger.

Examining the evil consequences of anger and the advantages of patience

Patience not only helps one to have good etiquette, but also brings about otherworldly benefits. For instance, Alexander guaranteed the endurance of his reign through acts of patience. It is told that once a rebel was captivated and was brought to Alexander. He ordered to free him. One of his companions got very angry and said: If I were you, I would kill him. Alexander said: Since I am not you, I don't kill him (Ghiyāthī Kirmānī, 1997: 149).

After knowledge, patience is the second top human perfection, and knowledge without patience is not fruitful (Narāqī, n.d.: 182). Therefore, knowledge and patience accompany each other.

One of the principles of learning is that in order to remove the undesirable behavior, we might reinforce its opposite behavior rather than punishing it (Karīmī, 2010: 220). Therefore, in order to educate people in this regard, we might reinforce the trait opposite to anger, i.e. patience.

It should be noted that patience is superior to restraint of anger, because in the latter, the human forces himself to show patience. That is, he needs restraint of anger when he is already angry (Kāshānī, 1994, vol. 4: 427).

Therefore, patience is introduced as one of the attributes of the Imāms (a), because it has a high status.

Connection to the spiritual realm

In the previous section, we gave in solutions for anger control and discussed it from the viewpoints of three sciences. In the following lines, we present a solution that is found only in the religious sources and psychology is unable to provide such a solution. This method revolves around connection to the spiritual realm and relationship with the unique Creator, which is found only in religious sources. Islamic psychologists address this issue using religious sources and make Western psychologists to confess that this is an appropriate method. Once again, the Islamic and religious sciences surpass other sciences.

Removing the causes and incentives of anger

The treatment of any disease is possible through cutting its roots and removing its causes (ibid: 418). Therefore, the causes that lead to anger – such as pride, arrogance, vanity, presumption, contrariness, derision, enmity, love of power and position, and greed – should be avoided (Narāqī, n.d.: 178). In order to stay away from these negative traits, one should think about their vicious consequences and should try to fight them using their opposite qualities.

Here some related examples are given to clarify how we can remove these traits.

Staying away from greed

Greed and insatiability cause fury. If one is afflicted with these qualities, he can stay away from anger through contentment (Shubbar, 2009: 249). Imām Riḍā (a) says about contentment: “Contentment causes self-restraint, venerability, and freedom from the agonies of insatiability, and prevents one from becoming a servant of the mammonists. The contentment path is not trodden but by two people: worshippers who aspires the otherworldly reward, or a noble person who stays away from the mean people” (Ḥalwānī, 1988: 128). When one expects something from people but his wants are not fulfilled, he gets angry and feels hatred and animosity in his heart (Dastghayb, 1985: 76).

Staying away from arrogance

Arrogance is a mood in which the person sees himself higher than others, and is apposite to modesty (Narāqī, n.d.: 216-221). Imām Riḍā (a) said: “Modesty is treating people in a way that you like others to treat you” (Kulaynī, 2010, vol. 2: 710).

Psychologists say: Anger is caused by unpleasant conditions that another person has brought about, because when we do something wrong ourselves, we feel guilty rather than angry (Atkinson, 2006, vol. 2: 60). Therefore, if everyone follows Imām's statement on the modest behavior, there would be no annoyance and people find themselves less in anger-breeding situations.

Staying away from love of money

Love of money is one of the causes of anger. If one knows that the owner of a property is God, he does not use force and anger to achieve it and does not disturb his own peace.

It is noted in a narration from Imām Riḍā (a): “God is the real owner of people, their property, and other things, and what is in people's hands is borrowed” (Ḥakīmī, 2008, vol. 3: 88). At the end, the human can stay away from vicious traits by knowing their opposite traits and trying to achieve them.

Conclusion

- Anger is a common issue among all humans and has widespread effects and consequences for the life of a person and the society. Therefore, the origin of many crimes and disarrays can be traced back to anger. Anger control is one of the ten skills of life and is considered an international science. Avoiding anger helps one attract kindness and affection, and is beneficial to healthfulness.
- The comparison of Imām Riḍā's (a) solutions with those of psychologists shows that these traditions are still scientific and practical after so many centuries, as the modern science has come to conclusions that Imām Riḍā (a) stated many centuries ago.
- Imām Riḍā (a) provided precise and scientific solutions and applied them in his own life; therefore, he can be introduced as a proper role model to people today. The knowledge he has put forth is still fresh and strategic after many centuries, as psychologists have recently come to the same knowledge and introduce methods he has suggested.
- Imām Riḍā's (a) solutions for anger control are superior to the methods suggested by psychologists because of Imām Riḍā's (a) temporally pioneering position in this regard.
- In addition to Imām Riḍā's (s) pioneering position in giving in solutions that psychologists have just recently attained, he introduces spirituality as a religious means that brings about peace for the humanity. This verified and important scientific solution is only found in the religious sources, and Imām Riḍā (a) has been the first to offer this method.

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The noble Qur'ān

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