



# Hadith

## ANGER IS A BAD CHARACTERISTIC

Abu Hurayrah narrated that:



A man asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to counsel him.



The Prophet said to him: 'Do not give way to anger'.



The man repeated his request several times, and the Prophet [always] said to him: 'Do not give way to anger'.<sup>(1)</sup>

### From the Qur'an

﴿Hasten, all of you, to the achievement of your Lord's forgiveness, and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-fearing, (133) who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and restrain their anger, and forgive their fellow men. God loves the benevolent.﴾ (3: 133-134)

﴿Whatever you are given is but for the enjoyment of life in this world, but that which is with God is much better and more enduring. [It shall be given] to those who believe and place their trust in their Lord; (36) who shun grave sins and gross indecencies; and who, when angered, will forgive.﴾ (42: 36-37)

### The Narrator

Abu Hurayrah whose name according to the best reports was 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr' belonged to the Daws tribe, a branch of the Azd from Yemen. He embraced Islam in Year 7 AH, when the Battle of Khaybar took place. He always remained close to the Prophet and was keen to learn. He memorized numerous hadiths and was the leading narrator of hadiths among the Prophet's companions. He died in Madinah in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

### Summary

A man requested advice from the Prophet and the Prophet advised him not to get angry. The man wanted more of the Prophet's advice, but the Prophet added no more.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6116.



# Message and Meaning



1 A man came to the Prophet, requesting advice from him that brings him all types of goodness and ways to success. He wanted to learn this advice and put it into practice.



2 The Prophet (peace be upon him) counsels the man not to give way to anger. Indeed, anger is the key to all sorts of evil, and keeping it in check is the way to all types of goodness. Some scholars go as far as equating good manners with keeping one's anger in check. Anger may lead a person to kill another, or cause physical harm to someone, or hurl verbal abuse on people, or resort to vulgar and obscene language. It may cause a person to swear most solemnly, or to divorce his wife, or to boycott his relatives. Indeed, it may even take the angry person on to disbelief in God.



3 The man repeated his request, hoping that the Prophet would give him further advice that would benefit him in this life and the next, but the Prophet confined himself to his initial advice, telling the man not to give way to anger.

That the Prophet (peace be upon him) counsels us not to get angry means that we should refrain from its preliminaries and causes, such as getting involved in a futile argument or exchange of blame over trivial matters. It also means acquiring the traits that prevent it, such as forbearance, tolerating people's faults, cheerfulness, etc. With such traits, it becomes easier to suppress anger when there is some cause for it.

It also means not to give way to one's feelings when angry. If something happens to a Muslim making him angry, such a Muslim should endeavour to restrain his anger, stopping short of saying or doing anything that is motivated by angry feelings.

God praises His servants who keep their feelings under control, restraining anger and forgiving other people's faults. He says: 'Hasten, all of you, to the achievement of your Lord's forgiveness, and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-fearing, (133) who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and restrain their anger, and forgive their fellow men. God loves the benevolent'. (3: 133-134) The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us of the very handsome reward God grants to those who suppress their anger. He said: 'Whoever restrains his anger when he is able to act upon it, God shall call him in front of all mankind and allow him to choose his female companion in Heaven'.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by Ahmad, 15637, Abu Dāwūd, 4777; Ibn Mājah, 4186



# Implementation

1

Every Muslim should seek advice, asking scholars, experts and people of experience. Their advice is based on what their life experiences and studies have given them.

2

The Prophet's companions were keen to ask the Prophet about whatever occurred in their lives. They sought his counsel. This testifies to their sincerity and keen desire to learn and understand what God requires of His servants. They are the people to follow.

3

Advocates of Islam and educators should give their advice which is most likely to suit the person requesting it. The person asking the Prophet's counsel in this hadith seems to be one of quick temper. Hence, the Prophet counselled him not to give way to anger and limited his advice to that.

4

Refrain from anger, because it beclouds a person's vision and lands him in what is forbidden. It makes a person lie, accuse others and hurl abuse and slander on them. Hence the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to include in his supplication: 'My Lord, help me to say the truth when I am pleased or angry'.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by Ahmad, 18515.

5

Striving against oneself is harder than against enemies. There is always an inner motive to do what is wrong, such as retaliating for an injury by something much worse, even if the other person is a friend or relative. Hence the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'A powerful person is not the one who beats others; rather, the powerful person is he who controls himself when angry'.<sup>(1)</sup>

6

The Prophet (peace be upon him) remains the role model for all of us. He was never angry over any personal matter, nor did he ever try to avenge a wrong done him. He only got angry for something related to God Himself. 'Ā'ishah said: 'Never did God's Messenger take revenge for himself. Only when something God, Mighty and Exalted, had forbidden was violated [would he exact punishment]'.<sup>(2)</sup> This means that all anger is bad except that for God's sake. This is a duty upon every Muslim.

7

The Prophet (peace be upon him) gives us guidance on resisting and overcoming anger. One effective method is to seek refuge with God against Satan. Two men denounced each other in the presence of the Prophet (peace be upon him). One of them was so angry that his eyes reddened, and his face swelled. The Prophet said: "I know a word that will make what [this man] feels disappear, if he will only say it: I seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed".<sup>(3)</sup> Once a Muslim feels about to be angry, he should seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed.



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6114; Muslim, 2609.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 3560; Muslim, 2327.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 6115; Muslim, 2610.

# Implementation

8

Another way of restraining anger is to sit down if one happens to be standing, or to lie down if one is seated. In the standing position, a person is ready to avenge himself, but a seated person is less likely to, and the one lying down is even further away. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Anger is like a firebrand in a person's heart. Do you not see how an angry person's eyes become red and his cheeks swallowed? Whoever feels anything of the sort should stick to the floor'.<sup>(1)</sup> He also said: 'If any of you gets angry when standing up, let him sit down. If his anger subsides, [well and good], but if not, he should lie down'.<sup>(2)</sup>

9

One way of controlling one's anger is to remain silent and not speak. If one speaks when angry, one's anger is in control. It dictates what to say. Hence, the Prophet, (peace be upon him) said: 'When you get angry, remain silent'.<sup>(3)</sup>

10

Be careful and do not say in anger what you may regret for the rest of your life. How often a fit of anger led a person to a situation of humiliation and regret. 'Aṭā' ibn Abi Rabāḥ said: 'Nothing caused scholars to weep late in their lives worse than a fit of anger. It could destroy their work over fifty, sixty or seventy years. Many a fit of anger has pushed a person into a position in which he remained entangled'.<sup>(4)</sup> Muwarraq al-'Ujalī said that he never said something when angry which he did not regret later when his anger subsided.

11

The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not counsel his interlocutor more than stressing his initial advice not to give way to anger. This because anger is the key to all sorts of evil things. Ibn al-Mubārak was asked to sum up good manners in a short sentence. He said: 'Never be angry'.

12

A well-known Arab maxim says: 'Looking at enemies, I saw no worse enemy for one's good judgement than anger.'

1 Related by Ahmad, 11608; al-Tirmidhī, 2191.

2 Related by Ahmad, 21348; Abu Dāwūd, 4789.

3 Related by Ahmad, 2556; al-Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 1320.

4 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, Vol. 1, p. 374.



