# ANGER VERSUS PATIENCE: COMPARISON OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON EXPRESSING AND CONTROLLING ANGER

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#### ABSTRACT:

In the current times when anxiety, depression, and violence, anger as a psychological disorder is known to be the most commonly experienced emotion. It can be considered to be the most poorly handled human emotion both at individual and societal level. The research about anger and health suggests that anger and hostility are strongly linked to increased risk factor for many diseases and are potential triggers for long-term illnesses. Anger often results in hypertension, heart attacks, stroke, and diabetes. On the other hand, patience is a trait which can counter such illnesses and can help cure the anger. Alongside this, religiosity, especially in case of Islam, can be used as effective tool for the treatment of patient's sufferings with diseases caused by anger. The nearest to Allah from His creations are those who are patient and grateful. Patience is the initial step of victory and a prerequisite for effective leadership. Virtues of patience are unlimited. One of the most notable among them is the control on anger. The current research is based on the process of controlling the anger through by developing the praiseworthy trait of patience. The first part of the paper presents an overview of literature related to anger as a problem in the field of psychology. Second part describes anger as an emotion from Islamic perspective. The third part deals with the triggers of anger as suggested

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by the health experts. Fourth part presents the introduction to patience as a desirable trait in Islam. This is followed by a description of patience as a cure for controlling anger with reference to the Quran and Hadith. Last part is about the role and importance of patience in addressing the issue of anger according to the teachings of Quran and Hadith. Being Muslims who wish to control our anger, we should create the trait of patience with an intentions to having a strong belief and trust in Allah and receiving reward from Him only.

KEYWORDS: Anger, Problem, Patience, Trait, Muslims.

#### **Introduction:**

In the current times of anxiety depression and violence, anger as a psychological disorder is known to be the most commonly experienced emotion. It can also be considered to be the most poorly handled human emotion both at individual and social level. Recent psychological research shows many problems and health effect caused by anger. According to De Well (2007)<sup>1</sup>, anger manifestation and self-regulation, deficits have been autonomously identified as risk factors for aggression, anxiety, and stress (1). Anger as an emotional problem may lead to other psychological problems. According to Whitmer and Banich (Psychologists), rumination may lead to an increase in aggression by interfering with or depleting self-regulation capacity.<sup>2</sup> The same researchers have found that those who ruminate on anger experience executive function difficulties, which may also include switching attention from ruminative thoughts to a new mental set, and inhibiting irrelevant long-term memories. The number of studies in the field of medical sociology, criminology, psychology, psychiatry, socio-psychology, and general strain theory (GST) have grown considerably in the last 20 years. According to the GST, people are drawn into crime as an impact or outcome of the negative happenings and strains they go through.3 These emotions may be alleviated through crime depending on individuality of the individual and the environment. Many people may find noncriminal ways to cope with anger. However, if there is a lack of resources to enable that or there is a tendency towards the crime, individuals will be more probably respond to anger, whose resulting emotions lead toward crime. These mixed findings signify a major shortcoming in the General Strain Theory as it is still indistinct why some persons retort to anger and negative emotions through crime while others do not. But the theory of strain can explain the negative relations that create a pressure that results in crime. In another opinion, anger can result in an offensive behavior, dissatisfaction, and unhappy emotions in response to a specific act or situation. This emotion of anger can be externally expressed through the body language, facial expressions, and inattentive behavior or angry conversation. While under the influence of anger, one cannot focus on anything for seconds, minutes, hours, days and even years. This is because of the strain-related negative emotions that affect a smaller portion of the self for those higher in Self-Complexity.<sup>4</sup>

Many negative emotions can be associated with strain. This may include feelings and emotions such as rage, discontent, frustration, and despair. Among these negative emotions, anger creates pressure in the individual which is more likely to translate into crime, as the angry people perceive lower expenses of committing crimes, tend to justify their criminal acts and feel less blameful. Due to their mental condition, they are unable to discuss and resolve problems serenely and reasonably. Moreover, anger creates a sense of authority and a desire for revenge.<sup>5</sup> Recent studies on the connection and relation of strain with anger provide evidence for anger to be linked to the presence of unhealthy levels of strain. Furthermore, the theory that in the relationship strain and crime, anger does not play a mediating role is found to be valid. Crime is one of the ways that people deploy to relive from their negative emotions<sup>6</sup>. For instance, if someone is being pestered, the person may mug the other person to let out their anger or may resort to stimulants and disorienting substances, such as drugs or alcohol, in order to reduce, ignore, or mask, their relevant emotions. Agnew (2006) highlighted that not all the people respond to strain and negative emotions with crime. Most people, however, find conventional ways to manage anger, such as talking with friends. Coping with anger through crime, accordingly, depends on multiple factors related to individuality of the individual and the environment.8 If we reflect on our experience of anger, it will quickly be obvious that, when one is angry, one is aroused emotionally and physically. One is energized by one's anger and ready to do anything to address the issue that is making him or her angry.

#### Anger as an emotion in Islam.

Within the Islamic perspective, the definition of Anger given by the Quran is found through four different words which convey four different states of anger. The first state is defined as "Ghaiz", which is limited to the angry person. In this state the one who is angry is encouraged to control as much as he/she can and given the hope of reward of being forgiven others. The second word used for anger in the Quran is "Sakhat". Where the definition of anger works for the state of wrath from the higher authority to the lower. In this state the anger was attributed to the Allah Almighty only. While in the third state, used in Quran as "Gazab", the wrath of Allah is referred to. 10 The fourth state is again described as the situation of man in which a feeling of anger to react with great infuriation is there. This state can be a situation of revenge a man takes while being angry. Most commonly occurring states are "Ghaiz" and "Ghadhab" as used in the Quran for anger. The state of "Ghaiz" describes the attribute of anger for human beings while the state of "Ghadab" is the attribute of Allah for the state of wrath.

In Islamic teachings, the anger for human beings is considered a negative emotion that should be constrained unless it is for the sake of Allah. It is part of human nature to get angry at times for many reasons, but the true believer controls his anger in order to avoid the many negative consequences anger brings in at both individual and social level. The things that cross our minds in the state of anger and make us feel angry are the things that caused grief, hate, irritation or insult. People react differently to anger, depending on how and what things are concerning them, whether the anger is continuous or not, and on whether they have faith in their hearts or are mutinous and sinful. The feeling of anger segregates the hearts of people in two categories: One, those that can be considered the throne of Allah, illuminate with the divine light, content, serenity, satisfaction, and all the treasures of goodness; two, those that are the throne of satan, which are deprived of light and all forms of goodness.

In relation to anger Allah Almighty has described the qualities of believers

in Quran as those who restrain from anger and pardon people for the sake of Allah as it is said "Who spend (in the cause of Allah) during relieve and adversity and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good". 11 Again in sura Al-Shura, believers are encouraged to control anger as it is described as a trait of true believer – the ones who forgive people in situation of anger. It is said: "And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive". 12

### Triggers for anger.

Experts that have studied the triggers for anger tell us that there are many triggers or factors that can lead to individuals getting angry: Among them the most effective is frustration of a need or a want, e.g., if a person misses a bus or a train, or is unsuccessful in completing some project or task that one is engrossed in. Another trigger is when people or individuals suffer from some prejudice or notice others being unfairly treated, e.g., being conceded over for promotion, having expensive property stolen, and seeing the weak being subjugated by the powerful. Another important trigger is the threat of any type - physical, psychological, social, political, financial or the related to self-esteem, e.g., being snubbed, being considered a failure, having one's good name impugned. It also includes physical aspects such as being injured physically by some one's mistake. As explained earlier, some people may find conventional ways to cope with anger, such as expressing with friends. Therefore, coping with anger through abusing, hitting, using drugs or alcohol or committing crime

depends on a variety of factors related to characteristics of the individual and the environment. Agnew focuses on five factors that may state the effect of anger:

- Use of bodily powers or committing crime including, poor situational intelligence
- Limited conventional social-hold,
- Low social-organization,
- Indulgence in the company of those with ill habits and criminal mindset
- Exposure to situations where disadvantages of criminal coping are insignificant whereas the perceived advantages more.

Psychologists have examined many of the taming factors that increase the probability of engaging in negative activities to express anger. According to some western psychologists, if you turn out to be mad about something, you should let it out and express through any mean. But Islam does not encourage expressing anger unless it is not for the cause of Allah. Rather Islam gives the strategy of patience to control anger. As Prophet Mohammad said "don't get angry." and repeated it several times. The true believer should control his anger and bear the sufferings of what peoples have put on him. This not an easy job to do but it will lead to Paradise.

#### Patience as a trait in Islam.

Patience is one of the valuable traits of a true believer as mentioned in Quran more than "90" times. This is the trait of a believer who has it as firm as horse which never stumbles and as effective as sharp sword which can defend the believer during the times of calamities and obstacles. The trait of patience is regarded as initial step towards victory because those who remain patient are stronger, both internally and externally, than those who let it out. Allah Almighty has granted the privileged of support to the patient people in this world as well as the hereafter. The strong and effective leadership always demonstrates patience. As long as patience is

practiced in handling obstacles in life, no evil force or evil plan can harm the believers. It is the path which leads towards success with consistency and dignity. Patient people are those who attain the love of Allah Almighty. And Allah Almighty has given glad tiding to patient people .<sup>17</sup> Patience in Islam refers to restraining from what is harmful. Or it is to endure what one does not like with the sense of acceptance and submission. If a Muslim experiences sufferings, tortures, or unjust treatment or behavior, he/she endures it with patience and responds to the evil with good. He/she pardons and forgives those who have caused ha0rm, remembering the rewards that Allah has promised. For such people, Allah says in the Quran that "Oh My servants who have believed, fear your lord, for those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is specious. Indeed patient will be given their reward, without account".<sup>18</sup>

Patience as a trait develops various other moral qualities as well. If a person restrains himself from sexual desires that are illegal, it is called self-restraint. But this quality can be acquired through patience. If a person is asked or requested to keep secret and not to disclose it, it is called keeping one's secret. But this quality of keeping one's information secret is attained through patience. If a person is content with what is sufficient for his/her need, it is called asceticism. But this quality of being content can be attained through patience. When anyone controls his/her nerves when angry, it is called forbearance. But the quality of forbearance is one of the forms of being patient. When someone refrains from taking revenge, it is called forgiveness. But this quality of forgiveness requires patience.

Keeping in view all above mentioned points, it can be said that patience is the root cause of all other moral characteristics. All the moral qualities can be applied according to the time and situation. But patience is the only quality which can be applicable along with all the said qualities because all of them are included under patience. If person likes to train him/herself to acquire all good qualities like chastity, forbearance, forgiveness, and humbleness, he/she must have developed the level of patience accordingly.

## Patience as a cure for Anger in Islam.

Patience as trait in human behavior develops other good habits as well. As for anger, it is harmful until or unless it is not for the sake of Allah and for the cause of Allah. It is a part of human nature to become angry at times for many reasons but a true believer gets angry for the sake of Deen of Allah as prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) became angry when he saw curtain with the pictures of animate creatures <sup>19</sup>or when he was requested by Osama for relief of a women from a noble family who had stolen something. In situations when it is not for the sake of Allah, the patience at the time of anger is highly recommended by Allah Almighty and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This is the attribute even shown by Allah Almighty Himself.

### **Allah Almighty as Most forbearing and Patient:**

Prophet Muhammad (علي علي ) said who is more patient than Allah who bears from people as attributed with children and parents but still give them chance of repentance even till the time of death.

"Narrated by Yahya Bin Saeed, as narrated by Al-Amash, as narrated by Saeed Bin Jubair, as narrated by Ubai Abd Lais ,narrated by Abi Musa (RA) The Prophet (عملية ) said: None is more patient than Allah against the harmful saying. He hears from the people they ascribe children to Him, yet He gives them health and (supplies them with) provision."

The one who gets angry must bear in the mind that Allah Almighty is more patient than the man. His patience excels the patience of man in many aspects. Allah Almighty never feel worry, grief, pain, anxiety and all other aspects of imperfection. Yet He is still Most Merciful and most forbearing as mentioned in Quran at more than one places. The difference between forbearance and patience is that patience is the fruit of forbearance. And because of its wide meaning Allah Almighty has

mentioned in the Quran the attribute of forbearance along with the attribute of All-Knowing as forbearance as one who knows still ignores. As mentioned 'And Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing". Patience and forbearance of man is out of ignorance and disability but forbearance of Allah Almighty is out of perfect knowledge and might. Having known the acts of disbelief, polytheism, insult, disobedience of human being, still, Allah Almighty gives time for repentance and keeps encouraging man to return to His path. But when He knows that servant will not change his mind despite of encouragement and bounties from Allah Almighty, then he grasp man with His might. Realizing this fact Prophet Muhammad (مليالية) said that "who is more patient than Allah when hearing something is insulting than Allah Almighty". 22 Allah Almighty is perfect in patience just as he is the most forbearing.

The attribute of Allah as the most patient and forbearing is just like His attribute of mercy and forgiveness. Allah swt owns all the powers and can do anything. He can eliminate all those who disobey him quicker than an eye-blink. But his attribute of being the most patient and forbearing is reflected in Him providing and giving even those who disobey Him, abandon His commands, prefer their own desires over His commands, and remain unfaithful. Only the most and perfect patient is capable of showing patience and mercy to such persons. Allah's patience is mentioned in the Quran where the belief of Christians about Jesus Christ is described that "They say: the Most gracious be-taken a son, indeed they put a monstrous thing! At it the skies are about to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin that they attributed a son to the Most gracious".23 Allah tells that His forbearance and forgiveness prevent Him from showing His wrath. His forbearance represents His patience. So out of His forbearance, He shows His mercy on His enemies. The abovementioned verse shows that heavens and earth are about to collapse on human beings because of their sins but Allah Almighty grasp them out of His forbearance and forgiveness. Although the deeds of disbelievers and sinners deserve instant punishment, but Allah meet them with the requests of His greatness called patience. Allah's mercy takes place before His anger. That is the reason Prophet (ميليالله) used to take refuge of Allah in the time of anger and advised Muslims to take refuge with Allah whenever

they get angry as it will reduce their temptation towards committing negative acts in such situation.24 This tip given by Prophet (عليه ) is highly beneficial for the believer and through this they can seek refuge in Allah, mainly originated out of His will, and it is He who releases or grasps their power of influence.

The believer should also show patience towards others. However, the patience of servant cannot match the patience of Allah which is perfect. But they can create the attribute of patience in them.

The sign of Allah's forbearance is that He rewards his enemies for good deeds they perform in this world, although they are most detestable in His sight. Even greatness of Allah is that He provides His servant with means which enables them to perform virtue and then rewards them to an extent that shows His greatness.

## How Muslims can be Patient in the time of anger.

Since Allah Almighty is forbearing, patient and thankful, He loves those who are patient. He even mentions in the Quran that Allah is with the Patient people.25And Allah loves the most those who are patient in time when the feel anxiety, stress and provocation. Allah Almighty hates the ungrateful, oppressors, the people of merciless, miserly, and cowards and so on. Conversely, he loves the beneficent, generous, patient, grateful, and forgiving. Precisely it can be said that Allah loves everyone's action tracing the sign and attributes of Him. The one who desires to meet Allah and has belief in this follows His instructions in order to attain His favor. If one is running after the favors of Allah, he/she will try to trace the attributes of Allah in living his or her life. Allah is patient and forbearing and His true servant will surely be patient and forgiving even in time of anger too.

The heart of human beings is one of the three types: the healthy or the pure heart, the dead heart and the sick heart. The healthy or the pure heart is cleansed and never wishes to deviate away from the God's commands and injunctions, is fully committed to Him, relies on Him alone, and believes with full trust in His Creator, the Sustainer of all beings. On contrary, the

hearts which are dead remain ignorant of their merciful Creator, who made them into what they are from an insignificant drop of water, who provided them with sustenance even in their mother's womb when they could not decide anything at their own, who softened the hearts of their parents to love and take care of them while they were not able to take care of themselves, and provided them with his countless favors despite them being unthankful. These hearts are ignorant of Ar-Rahman, the merciful Creator, and remain indulged in the deceitful beauties and galore of this temporary world where they have come as nothing but travellers. The third type of heart, the sick heart is between the two types of hearts mentioned above and has the love of God in it, albeit mixed with the love and attachment to the worldly pleasures and material beings<sup>26</sup>.

The heart of a true believer is attached to Allah and he will always try to get closer to Allah by the virtue of His guidance. But the disbeliever disobeys Him out of his own ignorance. The moment anyone realizes his mistake and asks for forgiveness, Allah Almighty forgives him and shows his forbearance and forgiveness. The reward for those that lack patience and remain ungrateful is the torment and disgrace.

# Importance of Patience according to the Ouran and Hadith.

Patience is considered half of the faith. This may be the reason that four times in Quran Allah Almighty has invited the intellect with saying that there are sign for every constantly patient and grateful.<sup>27</sup> According to these instructions of Quran, there is a connection between patience and belief. The belief includes intentions, words, and actions. Patience is linked with the actions and words because belief in action requires acting according to the instruction of Allah and patiently avoiding indulging in sins. So the belief rests on patience whether to avoid sins or to face obstacles in performing virtues. Patience is referred in Quran as support for faith:

"And we made from among them leaders guiding by our command when they were patient and certain of our signs".<sup>28</sup>

Through faith, believer realizes the instruction and reward or punishment.

And by patience, he carries out these teachings. Holding patience is the means which enable him to hold fast his commitment as a believer. Whoever understands the nature of something in hearts and expresses through his word will not be counted as believer unless his heart transform his action into the form of love and hatred. Thus the true believer loves Allah and His Messenger (مُصُوبُ ), submits his heart only to Allah, and commits totally to His Shariah. So the belief comes from patience whether in terms of avoiding sin or performing good deeds. The relation between patience and belief is described in the Quran with such words: "And seek help through patience and prayer, indeed it is difficult except for humbly submissive, who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him".29 Allah Almighty helps the one who tries to practice the trait of patience as mentioned in Quran "And your Patience is not but through Allah".30

In relation to controlling anger and patience, Allah Almighty describes the believer in following manner "Who spend during ease and hardships, and who restrain anger, and who pardon people...and Allah loves the doers of good".<sup>31</sup>

At another place in Quran, belief and patience are described as related to one another with such words "And those avoid major sins...when they are angry, they forgive".<sup>32</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad (عليه وسلم) was a symbol of patience and forgiveness even to the worst of his enemies. Many examples are there in his life when Prophet (عليه وسلم) pardoned the enemies except those who violated the teachings of Islam. At the same time, Prophet (عليه وسلم) encouraged Muslims to be patient especially in the time of anger. Abu Huraira narrates the following Hadith in such words."

Allah's Messenger (علي الله ) said, "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger".33

حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ صُرَدٍ، قَالَ اسْتَبَّ رَجُلاَنِ عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ وَخَنْ عِنْدَهُ جُلُوسٌ، وَأَحَدُهُمَا يَسُبُ " " إِنِيّ لأَعْلَمُ كَلِمَةً لَوْ قَالْهَا لَذَهَبَ عَنْهُ مَا يَجِدُ لَوْ قَالَ صَاحِبَهُ مُغْضَبًا قَدِ احْمَرَ وَجُهُهُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُ ﷺ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ".

"It was narrated by Suleiman bin Sarad: Two men abused each other in front of the Prophet (عليه وسلم) while we were sitting with him. One of the two abused his companion furiously and his face became red. The Prophet (عليه وسلم) said, "I know a word (sentence) the saying of which will cause him to relax if this man says it. Only if he said, "I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the outcast what he feels would go away".34 Once a man asked Prophet (عليه وسلم) for advice, the Prophet (عليه وسلم) said: do not get angry, the man repeated his request several times and each time Prophet told him do not get angry.

Prophet (علوه الله ) said that if a man gets angry and seeks refuge from Allah his anger will go away.35 Keeping silent and changing positions are also methods recommended by the Prophet (علوه الله ). Even remaining silent is very effective because the angry person often loses self-control and may curse or slander other person if he speaks. By keeping silent, he avoids harming himself and others. The believer should remember the reward of controlling anger. The Prophet (علوه الله ) said that the one who controls himself in the time of anger, Allah will fulfill his heart with contentment on the Day of Judgment.36 The true believer will always keep the trait of patience in order to counter his anger which is beneficial in making the situation of anger clear as well as earning the reward for him in this life and hereafter.

## **Findings:**

The research about anger and health suggests that anger and hostility are strongly implicated as risk factor for many diseases and are potential triggers for causing them. Anger is implicated in hypertension, heart attacks, stroke and diabetes.<sup>37</sup> Other than psychological and physical consequences, the anger can also have ill effects on the social relations.

Following the teachings of Quran and the Prophet (عليه والله) can be massively beneficial in the times of anger. In line with the discussion about patience in this paper, it is shown that patience in accordance with the instruction of Quran and Sunnah of Prophet (عليه والله) is the best trait to tackle the anger. The true believer should control anger by increasing his belief and practicing patience. Those who follow the instructions of Allah and His Prophet (عليه والله والله

Moreover, patience is the trait which can help the health experts and psychologists to conduct new research on controlling anger through it. Alongside religiosity, especially in case of Islam, it can be used as an effective tool for the treatment of the patients' sufferings with diseases caused by anger. Being Muslim and those who want to control anger, we should create the trait of patience with the intentions of having a strong belief and trust in Allah and receiving reward from Him only. Since Allah Almighty is forbearing, patient and All-knowing, He loves the most to those who are patient and forgiving. And Allah loves the most who are patient in time when they feel anxiety, stress and provocation. Allah Almighty hates the ungrateful, oppressors, the merciless, the miserly, cowards and so on.

#### **Conclusion**

True believer should keep performing good deeds and never give up hope in Allah's mercy, for His mercy always comes before His anger. Whoever tries to develop an attribute in line with the unparalleled and the greatest attributes of Allah, feels the love and guidance from Him. The one who peruses His pleasure through any of His attributes; He gives him success in this world and hereafter. Those who love Allah are always attracted by His attributes and accordingly become near and dear to Him. The hearts find life in knowledge and the love of Allah. The soul attains satisfaction and peace in showing obedience to Allah. It is Allah who is ever forgiving

and thankful. The nearest to Allah among His creations are those who are patient and grateful. Patience is the initial step of victory and a prerequisite for leadership. Fruits and benefits of patience are unlimited and one of them is control on anger. As explained in this article, anger often leads to crime and violence. Accordingly, by remaining patient, we can protect ourselves and the society from all such negative acts and outburst of violence.

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<sup>33</sup> Bukhari, Book: 73, Ch: Al-Hdar Minal-Ghadab, Hadith: 6114

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Ibid, Hadith: 6116

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Hadith.6113

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Ibid,6110

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Taylor. S, Health Psychology, Ed: 6th, Boston. M.A, McGraw – Hill, P: 348