

Lessons from Jami al-Sa'adat Part II Session Three

Man can control his lust, anger and other emotions and desires, and channel them to enlighten himself and propel himself along the path of perfection and wisdom.

Jami al-Sa'adat



Diseases of the Power of Anger (Excess)

- 1) Recklessness
- 2) Anger
- 3) Ill-temper
- 4) Rancour
- 5) Callousness



1) Recklessness

Thoughtless entrance into dangerous and deadly situations despite the warnings of both reason and religion.

The Holy Qur'an explicitly forbids it when it says:

And do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction (2:195)



Treatment

The way to cure recklessness is to think carefully before embarking on any particular course of action to see whether reason and religion approve of it or not. If it meets their approval, one may act upon it, but he must abstain from it if disapproved by any one of them.

It may even be necessary for him to abstain from actions in which the amount of danger is not great, so as to curtail his propensity for recklessness. He must maintain this course until he is certain that he has been completely cured of the vice, and until the condition of moderation, namely courage, has been reached.

2) Anger

Anger is one of the conditions of the soul, and possesses three states.

- a) The state of excess, which is defined as what would put one outside the bounds of religion and its laws.
- b) The state of deficiency, which is defined as the state in which one fails to take a violent action even though it is necessary for his self defense.
- c) The state of moderation, in which anger is stimulated in appropriate and permissible circumstances. Thus it is clear that the first and the second states are amongst the vices of the soul, while the third is amongst ethical virtues produced by courage.



Excessive anger is a fatal disease, which can be considered as a type of temporary madness. When it subsides, it is immediately followed by remorse and repentance, which represent healthy responses of a rational person.

Imam Ali (a) has 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.

Treatment

In order to cure excessive anger, one must first remove its causes. These may be pride, selfishness, stubbornness, greed and other such vices.

One must also consider how unseemly excessive anger is, and how evil its consequences may be. He must examine the benefits of forbearance and self-restraint, and associate with people who possess these qualities.

He must also realize that God's power is supreme, and everything is under His command, which would make him realize his own weakness compared with the infinite power of God. He should know that a person in a state of anger is not loved by God.

3) Ill-Temper

This vice is also caused by excessive anger, and its opposite is good-temperedness. This vice causes people to shun someone who possesses it, and brings him ruin in this world and the next. It also destroys all of one's good works.

The Prophet (s) has been quoted as saying:
Ill-temper ruins good works, just as vinegar ruins honey.



4) Rancour

Rancour is also caused by excessive anger and is formed when anger is suppressed. It has evil consequences such as jealousy and severance of relations with someone against whom it is directed, and may result in physical assault, passing of illegitimate remarks about him, spreading of lies, backbiting, slander, divulging of his secrets, etc.

Sometimes rancour comes out into the open and manifests itself as outright hostility, resulting in confrontation, fighting, cursing and name-calling-all of which are fatal vices.

And those who came in after them, who say, ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in the faith, and do not put any rancour in our hearts toward the faithful. Our Lord, You are indeed most kind and merciful.’

Sura al-Hashr, verse 10



Treatment

The way to cure this spiritual disease is that the afflicted individual must first understand that the feeling of rancour hurts one who harbours it in his heart more than the 'person against whom it is directed.

Secondly, he must decide to adopt an attitude of friendliness and helpfulness towards the individual towards whom he feels rancorous, do good things for him even though his emotions pull him in the opposite direction, and continue his affectionate attitude towards him until he is rid of this disease.

5) Callousness

When an individual is afflicted by the vice of callousness and cruelty, he is not affected or saddened by the pains and sufferings of his fellow men. Its opposite is the virtue of mercy and compassion.



Treatment

Treatment and cure of this disease is most difficult, because cruelty and callousness sink into one's character, and become chronic and difficult to cure.

The best treatment for this disease is for the afflicted person to avoid cruel actions, which are outward manifestations of this vice. Next, he should make an effort to share in the sufferings and difficulties faced by others, and consider their problems to be his own. Furthermore, he should try to react in an appropriate manner to such situations, until, gradually, he begins to taste the flavour of compassion, slowly making it permanent within himself.