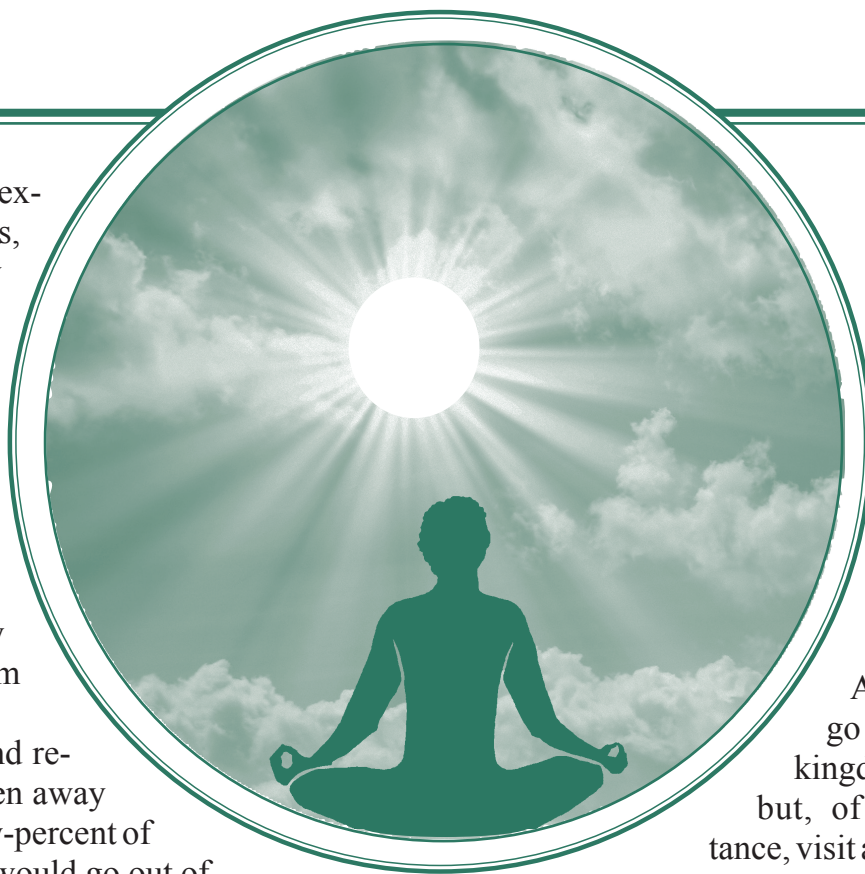


*A*nger or *krodha* exists in many degrees, ranging from ordinary annoyance to intense, violent rage. Contempt, intolerance, vengeance, and hatred are all inseparably related forms of *krodha*. Even those who are highly educated and apparently religious suffer from this malady.

If anger, hatred and revenge were to be taken away from the world, ninety-percent of the movie producers would go out of business. However, for those who want to enjoy the spiritual values of life and to attain true success, peace, and inner fulfillment, these terrible vices need to be eradicated.

Nothing is more degrading for an aspirant than to keep their mind burdened with the manifold forms of *krodha*. They darken the mirror of the mind, dissipate willpower, create illusions, waste mental energy, intensify negative karmas, promote chaos for oneself and others, and lead one to manifold forms of misery. Every effort must be directed by an aspirant towards the prevention as well as cure of this crippling disease of the astral body.



A Slave of My Slaves

An interesting story is told about Alexander the Great, whose guru was a devotee of Indian philosophy. One day the guru told Alexander, "If you go to India, conquer kingdoms if you must; but, of greater importance, visit a sage and, if possible, bring him back with you."

When Alexander reached India he followed the guru's advice and went to a well-known saint and introduced himself quite pompously. The saint didn't say anything or bow his head, as everyone was supposed to do before the emperor.

Alexander said, "Don't you know that I have conquered most of the world, and no one is greater than I? How is it that you don't give me respect?" The sage replied, "Because you are the slave of my slave." "What do you mean?" demanded Alexander angrily. "I can cut you down with a sword." The sage laughed, "Do you think I am this body that you can cut down?" Alexander became quiet and

The Art of Positive Feeling Part One



Overcoming Anger



by Swami Jyotirmayananda

asked for further explanation of the wise man's words. The sage said, "Well, you see, anger, hate, and greed are the greatest enemies and they are my slaves—and you are their slave. So you are the slave of my slaves."

What Causes *Krodha*?

Sometimes there is a certain rationality behind expressions of *krodha*—someone has actually hurt you in some way, inflicting injury on you physically or psychologically—and as a result you feel that the person should receive similar injury. But often people become angry and hateful for no reason at all due to the irrational functioning of intellect. Often this irrationality stems from psychological impressions gathered in childhood. During your childhood you may have encountered many deep frustrations and, because of that, many situations stir up memories that cause you to react inappropriately.

When a person's life lacks a deeper goal, when they have not yet become interested in the project of discovering their inner Self and of being united with God, they become easily bored with life and seek stimulation. Positive situations can stimulate the nervous system, but they are often hard to create. On the other hand, the mind has devised a way of easily creating negative situations through acts of anger and intolerance, which readily create dissension and disharmony.

The deeper roots of anger are impressions of dislike, or *dwesha*, in the unconscious mind. Impressions of like (*raga*) and dislike (*dwesha*) limit one's mental capacity and cause them to become agitated.

Due to contraction of consciousness, every frustrating situation makes you feel as if you are surrounded by walls, and there is no recourse but to get angry. At such moments you forget that such situations have come a thousand times and then have passed away. Becoming angry never was and never will be an effective and necessary solution.

Righteous Indignation?

Many aspirants make the mistake of justifying their bursts of anger as "righteous indignation." This terminology was applied to Jesus's display of anger in a temple. When he saw things were not being done in a righteous way, he threw everything around and showed his displeasure. Similarly, Krishna and Arjuna displayed a righteous and necessary form of anger in the Mahabharata War. Parents, too, have to be angry at times. If they became absolutely cool and calm they would not be able to discipline their children.

This type of anger is of a special nature and it has its proper place in life. Behind such anger there is a spiritual purpose, a project of compassion and love. It is love-backed anger.

However, an aspirant should not confuse this issue and justify every bout of anger as righteous indignation! Most angry situations are not righteous indignation. If your anger is truly purposeful, it will not deeply agitate your mind. It will not disturb the placidity of your reason. You will not lose your power of observation, or your balance. Righteous anger is like a knife used by a skillful chef: you wield it to cut the vegetables, but you do not cut your fingers.

When Anger Gets out of Hand

Expressions of *krodha* begin within your own heart, but eventually affect not only your family, but all your relationships. They spread out into society, affecting many people, like sparks that lead to a conflagration of fire.

A Hindi poet once said, "*Avat gari ek hai, ulatat hote anek.*" This literally means that if one car is coming down the road and due to some impediment it turns over, it will become many. That is, the accident will cause the car to break into numerous pieces. The verse contains a pun on the word "*gari*," which means an abusive word as well

as a car. Thus, the verse implies that if someone says just one abusive word to you and you react the same way, the whole situation will become a wreck of complications and get out of hand.

Just One Drop of Honey

To gain insight into the chaos that anger and its ramifications can cause, reflect on this humorous parable:

Once upon a time there was a honey vendor who went to a shop to sell his product. While he was negotiating the sale, one little drop fell on the floor without the vendor or the shopkeeper knowing it.

Within a few moments, a small ant noticed the honey and rushed to consume it. A little lizard that was in the shop spotted the ant and began to pursue the ant. The shopkeeper's cat quickly spotted the lizard and pounced on it. Then a dog that had entered the shop with a customer became excited, broke away from his master's leash and attacked and injured the cat.

Needless to say, the shopkeeper became very angry. He grabbed a stick, banged the dog with it and broke its leg. This infuriated the dog's owner, who then smashed the shopkeeper over the head.

The shopkeeper had many friends in the shop who all noticed what was going on. The owner of the dog also had many friends present in the shop who were horrified by the events. So, lo and behold, it turned into a free-for-all! A tremendous fight broke out and the shop was ruined, all over a drop of honey.

That spilled drop of honey is like the spirit of *krodha*, which can cause absolute chaos. Anger and its ramifications disturb the harmony that is extremely important in life, creating tension and discord, hurting others as well as oneself.

The Poor Nose

Recall the humorous parable of a man whose monkey servant always fanned him while he was sleeping to drive away the flies. One day a fly

persisted in buzzing around the master's nose and the monkey went on trying to drive the fly away. When that fly continued to return again and again, the monkey's mind was overwhelmed by frustration and clouded by the spirit of vengeance. So, he took a big rock and smashed it on top of the fly.

Unfortunately, the fly was right on the nose of the master! The fly flew off, as if mocking the monkey's vengeance, but the nose of the angry master continued to throb with intense pain! Similarly, whenever you take recourse to vengeance, you may hurt yourself and those you love as well as those you feel deserve to be punished.

Controlling the Three-fold Expressions of Anger

Anger is expressed in three ways: physical, verbal and mental. When an uncultured person becomes angry, he may pick up anything and bang it upon the head of the person who provoked his anger. If one is more civilized, he bangs the telephone or slams the door shut. Both are physical expressions of anger, and both need to be controlled as the first step in uprooting anger. Although anger may linger mentally, and you may utter harsh words, at least let there be no physical expression of anger in your deeds.

The second step in controlling anger is to curtail its verbal expression. You may still be harboring anger in your mind at this stage, but strive to control your speech. This effort saves you from all the painful repercussions that result from having spoken harsh words. Whether your anger is rational or irrational, an uncontrolled tongue always leads to regret, repentance and wastage of energy. Therefore, verbal anger has to be controlled.

In the Mahabharata, Yudhishtira asks Bhishma, "What is one great quality that can enable a person to be successful anywhere in the world, in all projects?" Bhishma replied, "Mastery over the tongue. If you could stop expressing anger through your tongue, your success would be secured in all directions." Finally, your ultimate

goal is to eliminate ill will in your mind, to free yourself of the affliction of mental anger. Ideally, your mind should be so free of this affliction that you don't even recognize the evil done to you. But that requires a profound understanding of spiritual philosophy. To encourage yourself to reach this higher state of mental purity, reflect upon the following insights.

Anger Is Like a Boomerang

Whenever you sustain anger in your mind, you are hurting yourself. The one who is angry and the one towards whom the anger is being directed both become degraded. The effect on the person to whom you are directing your anger varies according to that person's karma. If that person is vulnerable, then he will be affected. Otherwise, your anger will simply return to you like a boomerang and hurt you with all its force.

If you send somebody to hell, you have also sent yourself there to babysit him. How would you know the person is actually suffering in hell unless you are there also? Out of anger, people curse each other, but they have really cursed themselves. The moment you send someone to hell, will need to pack your own suitcase for that trip.

Every time you hold a grudge and intend to hurt another person by your thoughts or actions, you establish a karmic tie that binds you to the person in the future. You have to remain close to them in order to witness your desire for revenge fulfilled.

As You Sow, So You Reap

Develop insight into the Law of Karma. No one can hurt you unless your karma allows it. It is the impressions in your unconscious that draw negative situations to you. You have drawn those situations and circumstances to yourself by your actions and thoughts in the past as well as in the present. Therefore, if you don't want to reincarnate again and again into a world of bitter circumstances, you should not hold any grudge against others.

Rather, consider others as Divine agents reminding you of your error. In doing so, you will develop spiritual qualities within yourself, rather than be a perpetrator of disharmony or even violence.

Day by day be watchful that the negative qualities that might lead you to acts of angry revenge are not encouraged in your personality. If you are irritable and insensitive, if you are not patient and adaptable in your relationships with others, if you are intolerant towards other people and can't wait to listen to what they have to say before you pass your judgments, you are sowing the seeds of negative karmas that will bear bitter fruits in the future.

You will eventually find yourself in situations where no one will be able to tolerate your behavior, your personality traits, your weaknesses, or even your looks. Your very presence will become a source of disharmony. When you crave compassion, you will find that people around you are not compassionate. Then you will wonder how it is that the world has become so cruel and insensitive! At that time you will not realize that you made the world around you as difficult as it is.

Spiritual virtues have a special magic about them: when you develop them within your personality, similar qualities proceed from others and are directed towards you. If you are compassionate towards others, compassion from an external source comes to you in a time of need.

It Could Have Been Worse!

In confronting life's annoying and difficult situations, one has to constantly reflect upon the relativity of things. When things seem bad, remember that they could always have been worse, and so give thanks to God that they were not!

Once a disciple appeared before Buddha and said, "I want to go home to pay back to society some evils I did before." In his early days, the disciple had been a robber and had caused much harm. Now as a *sanyasi* (renunciate), having attained a state of purity, he said that he would like

to face those people from whom he had run away, and thereby exhaust his negative karma.

Buddha said, “Suppose you go there and people don’t appreciate your presence? Suppose they insult you, or they laugh at you?” He said, “I will say to myself, ‘Thanks to the Buddha within me that they are simply using insulting words. They are not beating me; they are not pelting stones at me.’ ”

Buddha responded, “Suppose they do pelt stones at you?” He said, “Then I will thank God they are pelting stones at me, and thereby repaying me for what I have done to them, so the account will be cleared.” Buddha then said, “Suppose they don’t just pelt stones, but kill you?” He said, “Then they would have released me from the bondage of embodiment.”

Why Waste Precious Energy?

Life is short, and must be well utilized for a higher purpose. Do not allow the mind to acquire the habit of being angry over little things. Be introspective. Look within yourself again and again. If you create dissension and tension during the first half of the day, spend the rest of the day worrying about the repercussions, and then the next day struggle to remedy the situation, think of all the time and energy you have wasted.

Conserve your energy for the central project of your life—the attainment of Self-realization. In the short duration of your life, you have this tremendous task to accomplish, and it requires that you be as enduring, patient, forgiving, and broad-hearted as possible.

Patients Require Patience

You must realize that an evil doer is a sick person. If a doctor is caring for a sick patient, how will he deal with that person? If the patient, due to illness, is throwing things around, the doctor will try to save himself from injury but he will not start throwing things back in anger. He will wait

for an opportunity to help the patient. Similarly, you should have that type of attitude in dealing with all those who seek to harm you.

Love Even your Enemies

Terminating anger implies promoting the opposite of anger: forgiveness, love, patience, endurance, understanding. Even in cases where the mind seems to direct hatred on a rational basis, one must place before himself the ideal taught by Buddha and Jesus, and endeavour to develop goodwill and compassion even towards those who are bent upon harming him.

Remember the sayings of Lord Jesus: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.’ But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43—45) Directing love and goodwill even towards those who are crude and inimical is indeed super normal. But unless one upholds this saintly ideal, they cannot rise beyond the normal level of human consciousness.

Do not develop an internal grudge when you are harmed. Revenge leads you nowhere. If someone has inflicted pain upon you and you have suffered, there is nothing you can do to undo that pain. Plotting to have the evildoer experience equal or greater pain does not remedy the pain you have already experienced. A nobler approach is for you to enable the person to understand his error through the higher power of love, endurance and patience.

In the Ramayana, Tulsidas says that a saintly personality is like a sandalwood tree. When an axe strikes the sandalwood tree, what does the tree do? It merely lends its fragrance to the axe. Similarly, if a crude person harms a saintly person, that saint radiates a fragrance that can turn the evildoer into a saint. This ideal of endurance, forbearance and compassion must always be held in view.

Flowers for Thorns

Saint Kabira has given the following profound advice: If a person plants thorns on your pathway, do not go to his home and do the same in return. Instead, stealthily go to his place and plant all the best flowers there. If you do so, a miracle will occur. The thorns that the person has planted to hurt you will become flowers of blessings, and the flowers that you sow for him will prick his heart in such a way that he will begin to repent for the evil he has done. As a result, there will be a transformation within him. Thus, while crude people retaliate in a negative way, retaliation by a saintly personality is of a positive nature and has profound effects for the development of virtue.

Soap and Water for the Mind

It must be well understood that if you did not encounter gross personalities, people who are crooked and difficult, there would be no evolution. No one would become a saint if there were no demoniac personalities.

God, in His infinite wisdom, has provided that all types of people interact with each other for the purpose of learning and growth. By their inspiring example and influence, saintly people continue encouraging those who are not saintly to advance spiritually. On the other hand, by their gross nature, and by continually creating difficulty for others, demoniac personalities go on urging the saints to attain even loftier states of perfection. Therefore, you should not look upon the unsaintly personalities as having no place in the world.

As Kabira says, "If you find someone who insults you constantly, appreciate that person and give them a place in your home, for that person will purify your mind without the help of soap and water."

If you want to increase your physical strength, you may have to go to a gym or a health spa and pay a lot of money. However, if mental strength

is what you are after, the project is a simple one. Simply cherish everyone who constantly criticizes you and never allows you a moment's peace. Do whatever you can to keep them around, for he or she affords you the opportunity of gaining immense mental strength by keeping your mind alert, your will effective, and your introspection keen—and you don't have to pay a cent for their services!

Breaking the Cycles of Violence

No negative sentiment, especially hatred, can ever be appeased by enjoying or indulging in that sentiment. Suppose you have hated a person for some time. Would seeing that person revenged upon in a most miserable manner rid your mind of that hatred? Would you be free of it? No! The more you hate and seek revenge on that person, the more you fear that person's revenge in the future. Therefore, your hatred becomes more and more reinforced.

Buddha once found two factions of his disciples quarrelling among themselves. When he saw that day by day their hatred was being sustained, he told them the following parable:

Long ago in Benares there was a King named Brahmadatta. Because he was ambitious and wanted to expand his kingdom, Brahmadatta conquered the small kingdom of Kaushala that was ruled by another King named Dirgheti. To secure his rulership of that kingdom, Brahmadatta decided to kill the conquered King and Queen so that they could never rise up against him to regain the kingdom.

However, before the plot could be carried out, Dirgheti and his wife escaped. Eventually they went into hiding in Benares, assuming a disguise and living in the home of a potter who was their friend. They lived there with a sense of security and eventually had a son named Dirghayu. Dirghayu was a promising young boy and when he reached the age of sixteen his parents sent him away to receive a better education.

During this time when the son was away, a barber recognized the disguised Dirgheti. Hoping greedily to receive a reward for the information, the barber quickly reported his whereabouts to King Brahmadatta. Eager to destroy his old enemy, the King sent his soldiers to the house of the potter and Dirgheti and his wife were taken away to await their fate.

On the day of the execution, a crowd gathered at the site where the grim event was to take place, and in that crowd was Dirghayu. When the former king, Dirgheti, saw his son coming towards him, he became terribly afraid that the youth would do something to reveal himself before Brahmadatta and be executed as well. To warn the boy, the father shouted to him, “O my son, do not look long, do not look short. Hatred is not appeased by hatred, but by nonhatred alone.”

King Brahmadatta did not understand this strange riddle, and although he knew there was a son somewhere among the crowd, he could not find him. Thus, before the eyes of their child, King Dirgheti and his wife were executed, and Dirghayu was left with terrible pain in his heart.

As he grew up, Dirghayu became an expert in handling elephants, and as a result, he was asked to work in the royal elephant stable. There Dirghayu used to play on a flute so melodiously that one day the King heard him from the window and was enchanted by the song. King Brahmadatta asked to have the young man brought before him, and found him to be endowed with excellent qualities. Dirghayu became a close counsellor and companion of the King, and wherever the King went, he took Dirghayu with him. King Brahmadatta never realized that this young man he liked so much was the son of the former king and queen he had executed, and he never suspected that Dirghayu was always waiting for the perfect opportunity to kill him in revenge.

Then one day that opportunity came. During a hunting excursion the king strayed away from the main army as he rode in his chariot along with Dirghayu. Due to the hot weather, the King became very tired and Dirghayu suggested that they rest in the cool shade of the trees. So they got down from

the chariot, and Dirghayu laid the head of the King on his thigh and asked him to relax there for a while.

When the King fell asleep, Dirghayu saw the opportunity he had been waiting for. Nobody was around and the King was completely in his power! However, as he unsheathed his sword, he remembered the words of his father and quickly put his sword away.

Suddenly the King opened his eyes, and with great fear, trembling all over, said, “I had a terrible dream.” “What did you dream about?” asked Dirghayu. The King replied, “I have been dreaming that the son of the royal couple I executed is going to avenge upon me. In my dream I saw that son near me with a sword in his hand, ready to kill me.”

As the King was telling Dirghayu about his dream, Dirghayu again drew his sword and said, “I am that son and I am going to kill you.” Shocked and frightened, the King replied, “Please don’t kill me.” “Likewise, don’t kill me either,” said Dirghayu. “I am as much in fear of you as you are in fear of me. So let us make a truce not to kill each other.” “Verily so,” responded the King. “I pledge our enduring friendship.”

Then the King, having recovered from the shocking situation, asked Dirghayu, “What was the meaning of the message given by your father at the time of his death?” Dirghayu explained, “‘Do not look long’ means do not sustain hatred for a long time. ‘Do not look short’ means do not act hastily. If I was hasty, I would have run the sword against your throat and then I would have been killed by your people. Then my people would go after you and yours, and the chain would continue. However, if I extend forgiveness to you for what you did, and you extend fearlessness to me, the cycle of violence will be broken.”

After telling this story to his disciples, Buddha concluded by reminding them that it is by nonhatred alone—by acts of love and understanding—that hatred can be overcome. This type of philosophy promotes world peace, as opposed to the philosophy whereby hatred is perpetuated and often sustained from lifetime to lifetime, causing endless grief.