

# ANGER Management



Seven Ways to  
Tame Your Most  
Destructive Emotion





# Anger Management

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

## Ways to Tame Our Most Destructive Emotion



**F**rustrated by a fast-breaking car in front of him, a man loses control and crashes at an intersection; tempers flare and a fist fight breaks out. In a store nearby, a man stomps off in a huff, cursing the clerk for declining his credit card. In an apartment up the street, a mother screams at her daughter to clean up her room. Down the block, a schoolgirl pouts because her father won't let her date an older boy. Around the corner a man slaps his six-year-old son because he won't sit still in the car. Anger, the most powerful and hurtful emotion we possess, is everywhere. Yet, the average person succumbs to it helplessly, willingly, lapsing into insane episodes now and again without thinking much about it. Many would defend it as their ally, a tool they could not live without. Anger is expressed by humanity in drastically different manners. Low-minded individuals take delight in being angry toward others and expressing that anger in aggressive and violent ways—gang wars, school bullying, vandalism and more. They deliberately use anger and violence to get what they want. Then there is the mass of generally law-abiding people who live a normal, working life but are seriously angry on the inside about one thing or another and express that anger regularly in their words and actions. They are simply angry at the world and have neither the means nor the motivation to eliminate anger from their lives. They are, as a popular book observes, angry all the time. Finally, there are those who are striving to live a life according to spiritual principles but are at times unable to control their anger and as a result end up hurting others and breaching Hinduism's core virtue, nonviolence (ahimsa), while creating new negative karmas to live through in the future. It is to such individuals, who are striving to control anger, even eliminate it from their pattern of behavior, that this Insight is addressed.



# The Perils of ANGER

The Tirukural ❖ Chapter 31  
By Saint Tiruvalluvar, 200 bce

**1** It is restraint that restrains rage when it can injure. If it cannot harm, what does restraint really matter?

**2** Wrath is wrong even when it cannot cause injury, but when it can, there is nothing more evil.

**3** Forget anger toward all who have offended you, for it gives rise to teeming troubles.

**4** Anger kills the face's smile and the heart's joy. Does there exist a greater enemy than one's own anger?

**5** If a man be his own guard, let him guard himself against rage. Left unguarded, his own wrath will annihilate him.

**6** Anger's fire engulfs all who draw near it, burning even friends and family who risk rescue.

**7** As a man trying to strike the ground with his hand can hardly fail, just as surely will one who treasures his temper be destroyed.

**8** Though others inflict wrongs as painful as flaming torches, it is good if a man can refrain from inflammatory tantrums.

**9** If hostile thoughts do not invade his mind, all his other thoughts may swiftly manifest.

**10** As men who have died resemble the dead, so men who have renounced rage resemble renunciates.

## Anger and the Spiritual Path

To improve our understanding and control of anger, it is helpful to look at the concept of the threefold nature of man: 1) superconscious or spiritual, 2) intellectual or mental and 3) instinctive or physical-emotional. It is the instinctive, animal-like nature that contains the tendencies to become angry and harm others. The goal of living a religious life is to learn to control these animal instincts—as well as the ramifications of the intellect and the pride of the ego—and thereby manifest one's spiritual nature. Spiritual striving produces gradual improvement in harnessing and transmuting our instincts, intellect and ego, with the entire process of soul evolution spanning many lifetimes.

Anger is the base behavior of reacting to challenging situations by becoming frustrated and upset, even enraged to the point of lashing out with words or fists. Webster compares the terms for anger as follows: "Anger is broadly applicable to feelings of resentful or revengeful displeasure; indignation implies righteous anger aroused by what seems unjust, mean or insulting; rage suggests a violent outburst of anger in which self-control is lost; fury implies a frenzied rage that

borders on madness; ire, chiefly a literary word, suggests a show of great anger in acts, words, looks, etc.; wrath implies deep indignation expressing itself in a desire to punish or get revenge."

Learning to control anger is so essential to harnessing the instincts that the 2,200-year-old South Indian scripture on ethics, the *Tirukural*, devotes an entire chapter to the subject, shown above. It is, in fact, the chapter that precedes "Avoidance of Injuring Others"—the order of these chapters itself suggesting that to successfully practice nonviolence we need to first control anger.

The *Tirukural* warns that anger gives rise to teeming troubles. It kills the face's smile and the heart's joy. It burns even friends and family who try to intervene, and easily leads to injuring others. Left uncontrolled, it will annihilate you.

A few years ago we had a perfect opportunity to observe this fiery emotion. Two carpenters were building a house next door to the monastery. One, James, clearly more prone to anger than the other, would swear loudly and at length when something didn't work out right, sometimes every few minutes. About once a week, the two men would have a huge argument and James would drop his tools,

stomp off the job and drive away, his tires squealing in defiance. It was a powerful demonstration of how anger can become an accepted part of life for many people.

Swami Budhananda (1917-1983) of the Ramakrishna Mission noted in a series of talks published in *Vedanta Kesari*, [www.sriramakrishnamath.org](http://www.sriramakrishnamath.org): "The evil effects of anger are innumerable. The first thing that happens to an angry person is that he forgets the lessons of wisdom he has learned in life. After that, he loses control over his thoughts and emotions. He becomes overactive, with his highly charged ego as his only guide. He loses his power of discrimination, sense of proportion, and becomes aggressive in manner, hostile to his own welfare. When anger becomes the second nature of a person, physical health and equanimity of mind suffer, and inner peace vanishes in a trice. Anger can destroy friendships, families, business partnerships, professional prospects. Communal and ethnic riots, arson, wars, suicides, murder and many other forms of crime are basically products of anger. In fact, anger makes even a handsome person look ugly. I suggested to a friend, who is remorseful about his flashes of anger, that he keep a large mirror facing his office desk. In case the

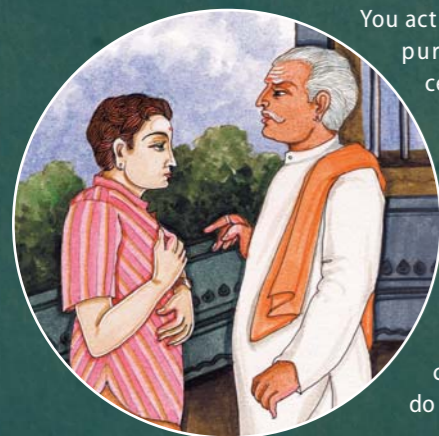
anger-prone person has a lively sense of humor, this mirror-therapy is likely to work."

People are not equally susceptible to anger. Some are usually calm, but occasionally flare up. Others anger easily. Many people are selective about whom they get angry with—perhaps just their spouse or daughter-in-law.

My Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami, observed that anger is the most difficult fault to overcome because it manifests in so many different forms: pouting, long silences, shouting, yelling, swearing and more. In *Living with Siva*, he lists the eight forms of anger from the book *Angry All the Time* (see sidebar below): 1) sneaky anger; 2) the cold shoulder; 3) blaming and shaming; 4) swearing and yelling; 5) demands and threats; 6) chasing and holding; 7) partly controlled violence and; 8) blind rage. These are called the eight rungs on the ladder of violence, an analogy that Gurudeva found helpful in showing how anger can easily snowball. For example, an evening might start with a mild expression of irritability that seems harmless enough but soon escalates into shouting and swearing and culminates in physical cruelty.

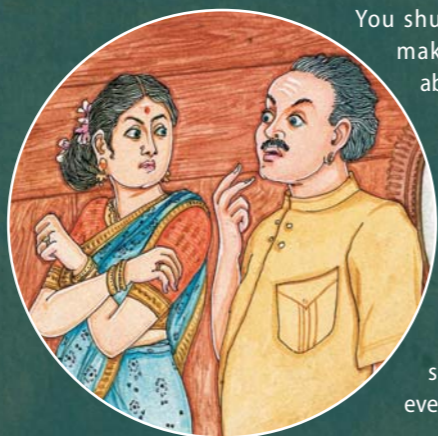
## Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Violence

### 1: Sneaky Anger



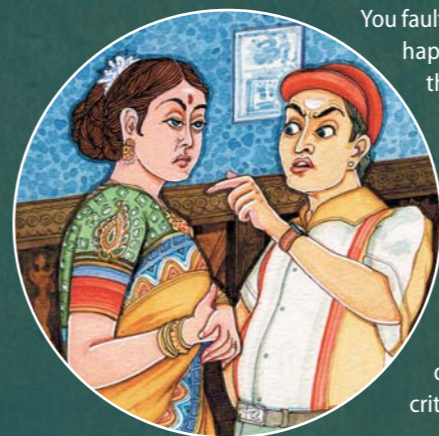
You act and speak normally but purposely neglect to do certain tasks others have asked you to do, pretending that you forgot all about the duties. Example: A teenage boy, upset with his father for firmly disciplining him, retaliates with sneaky anger by chronically "forgetting" to do his household chores.

### 2: The Cold Shoulder



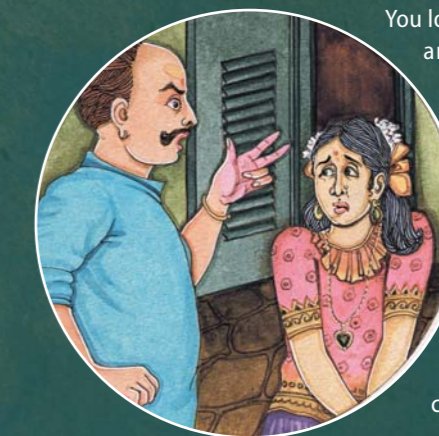
You shun another person and make it clear you are mad about something. However, you refuse to let him or her know what that something is. Example: A wife is upset with her husband for working late and, rather than talk the issue through, gives him the silent, cold shoulder for the entire evening.

### 3: Blaming and Shaming



You fault others for something that happened and then tell them they are "no good" in order to make them feel shame. Example: an employee makes a simple mistake at work, and her boss is upset. Rather than help resolve the problem, he points blame at her, demeaning and intimidating her with personal criticisms.

### 4: Swearing and Yelling



You lose control over your speech and scream and yell at others. Those who have a habit of swearing are most prone to this form of anger. Example: A teenage girl has admitted to a minor wrongdoing at school. Her teacher, known for his foul mouth, yells at her harshly, using cruel, out-of-control words to punish her.

"The chitta-vrittis, the thought-waves, which being gross, we can appreciate and feel. They can be more easily controlled, but what about the finer instincts? How can they be controlled? When I am angry, my whole mind becomes a huge wave of anger. I feel it, see it, handle it, can easily manipulate it, can fight with it; but I cannot succeed perfectly in the fight until I can get down to its causes." SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, RAJA YOGA





### Anger and the Chakras

Useful insights into the nature of anger and how to control it can be gained by relating it to the Hindu system of chakras, the subtle centers of consciousness within each individual (see sidebar to the right). There are seven primary chakras along the spinal column and in the head. When our awareness is flowing through these chakras, consciousness is in the higher nature. The seven chakras, or talas, below the spine, down to the feet, are seats of instinctive consciousness, the origin of fear, anger, jealousy, confusion, selfishness, absence of conscience and malice. Blind rage, the eighth rung on the ladder of violence described in *Angry All the Time*, corresponds to the second lower chakra, called *vitala*. Gurudeva explains, "Anger comes from despair or the threatening of one's self-will. When people are in the consciousness of this chakra, they are even angry at God. With their wrath, they often strike out at those around them, leaving a trail of hurt feelings behind them. From sustained anger arises a persistent, even burning, sense of resentment."

When someone goes into a blind rage, he drops far below the chakras of memory and reason—the muladhara and svadhishtana. Therefore, it is no wonder that afterwards he may not even remember what happened. His consciousness was totally in the vitala chakra, having given up the normal faculties of memory and reason.

Many people think that sneaky anger and the cold shoulder are natural and harmless. Gurudeva warned that, while they are not as vicious as yelling and screaming or throwing things, these expressions stimulate the lower chakras and over time can easily lead to more extreme outbursts, as well as the experience of other lower-chakra emotions, such as fear and jealousy. For these reasons, it is best not to indulge in sneaky anger or the cold shoulder. Sarcasm and cynicism can also be forms of anger. Gurudeva observed, "People who are cynical are expressing their anger and contempt with snide remarks. They may seem to be joking, but their sharp feelings come across anyway, which stimulates that lower chakra until one day their cynicism will turn into really good anger. Then they build up new karmas they never had before, which they will live with until they are faced with those karmas."

Swearing is even more problematic, as it stimulates the lower chakras to a greater degree than sneaky anger, the cold shoulder or

cynicism. Therefore, it is important in managing anger to break the habit of swearing.

### Step One for Conquering Anger

For those on the spiritual path who are striving to control anger, there is an important first step. That is to acknowledge that anger is a serious problem that easily leads to violence and is a quality that should be totally absent from those dedicated to making progress in their spiritual life.

I gave the following advice via e-mail to a devotee who was working to refrain from expressing occasional anger toward a parent: "Thank you for sharing the details regarding your angry encounters. I would suggest you reflect on the seriousness of disharmony in the home. It is taking a few steps backward in spiritual progress. When you do sadhana, you move forward. But if you become angry regularly, you step backward, and as a result you may end up standing still. It is like trying to save money for a special purpose. You save for a while, but then spend what you saved last month, which is like becoming angry and forfeiting the progress you made in your sadhana. By taking anger seriously, you will be motivated to avoid it at all costs."

The devotee recently e-mailed again saying the advice had helped her cope with the force of anger. She had taken the first step—acknowledging that it is a serious problem, an unacceptable mode of behavior for those on the spiritual path.

### Seven Remedies

With this resolve firmly in mind, she was ready to take the second step: to apply remedies to improve her behavior. On pages 46–49, in the illustrated sidebar, we offer seven remedies. The first is to affirm the Hindu perspective that everything in the universe is perfect; the entire physical, mental, emotional and spiritual flow of events is moving in perfect harmony and exquisite coordination according to the divine laws of karma and dharma. Each happening is as perfect as an ocean wave or a butterfly's wing. Anger is an instinctive-emotional protest to what is happening at a particular moment. "Things are just not right!" anger declares. The source of peace and contentment is the opposite sentiment—a wholesome, intelligent acceptance of life's conditions, based on the understanding that God has given us

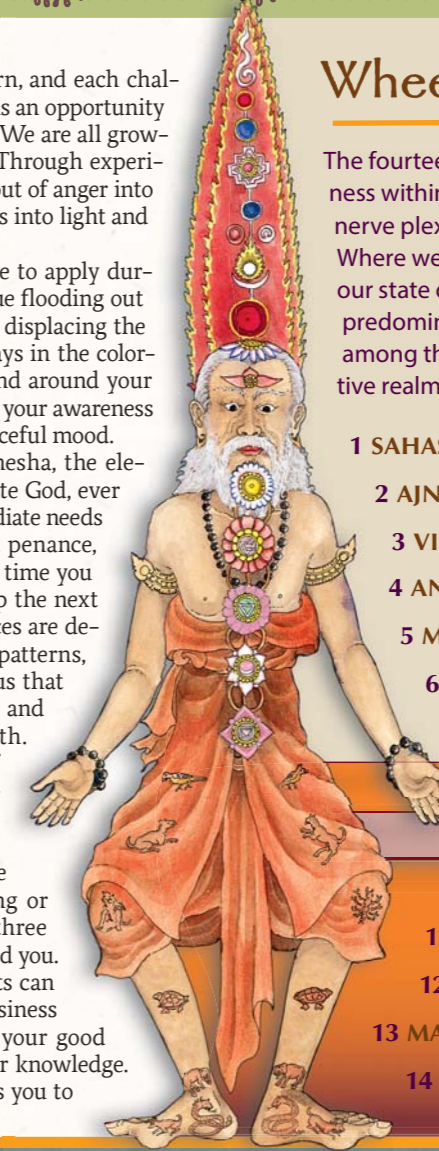
a perfect universe in which to grow and learn, and each challenge or seeming imperfection we encounter is an opportunity for spiritual advancement. Gurudeva wrote: "We are all growing toward God, and experience is the path. Through experience we mature out of fear into fearlessness, out of anger into love, out of conflict into peace, out of darkness into light and union in God."

The second remedy is a first-aid technique to apply during angry outbursts. It is to visualize light blue flooding out from the center of your spine into your aura, displacing the blackish reds that anger automatically displays in the colorful field of subtle energy radiating within and around your body. Mystically, this has the effect of moving your awareness out of the angry state of mind into a more peaceful mood.

The third remedy is to worship Lord Ganesha, the elephant-faced Lord of Dharma, a compassionate God, ever available to assist embodied souls with immediate needs to further their evolution. Remedy four is a penance, setting aside a specified sum of money every time you experience anger. The fifth remedy is to skip the next meal if you become angry. These two sacrifices are designed to remold deep-seated subconscious patterns, called *vasanas*, convincing your subconscious that you are serious about controlling your anger and gradually subduing any occurrence of wrath. Remedy six, the flower penance, is a way of letting go of angry feelings that you hold toward another person. Offering flowers with a loving heart has the effect of dissolving the resentment and awakening forgiveness—be it toward a parent, spouse, employer, sibling or friend. The seventh remedy is to perform three kindly acts toward someone who has disturbed you. For a loved one or close acquaintance, the acts can be performed openly. For others, such as business associates, employers or fellow employees, your good deeds may be done subtly, even without their knowledge. It may be difficult to fulfill this, as it requires you to

## Wheels of Consciousness

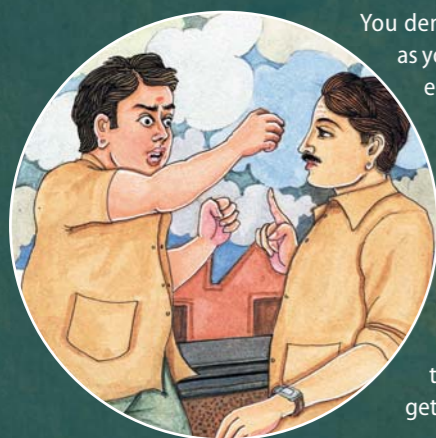
The fourteen chakras are centers of force and consciousness within the inner bodies of man—with corresponding nerve plexuses, ganglia and glands in the physical body. Where we reside in the range of chakras deeply influences our state of mind, our actions and reactions. Anger is the predominant consciousness of the *vitala chakra*, second among the seven lower chakras, all of which are instinctive realms of distress, darkness and confusion.



- 1 SAHASRARA... Illumination—CROWN OF HEAD
- 2 AJNA... Divine sight—THIRD EYE
- 3 VISHUDDHA... Divine love—THROAT
- 4 ANAHATA... Direct cognition—HEART
- 5 MANIPURA... Willpower—SOLAR PLEXUS
- 6 SVADISHTHANA... Reason—BELOW NAVEL
- 7 MULADHARA... Memory—BASE OF SPINE
- 8 ATALA... Fear & lust—HIPS
- 9 VITALA... Raging anger—THIGHS
- 10 SUTALA... Retaliatory jealousy—KNEES
- 11 TALATALA... Prolonged confusion—CALVES
- 12 RASATALA... Selfishness—ANKLES
- 13 MAHATALA... Consciencelessness—FEET
- 14 PATALA... Malice & murder—SOLES OF FEET

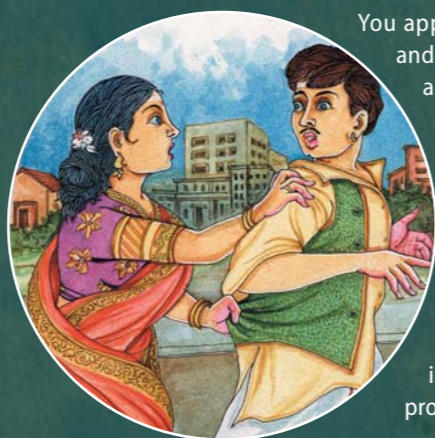
ART BY L. WYAN MARYA

## 5: Demands and Threats



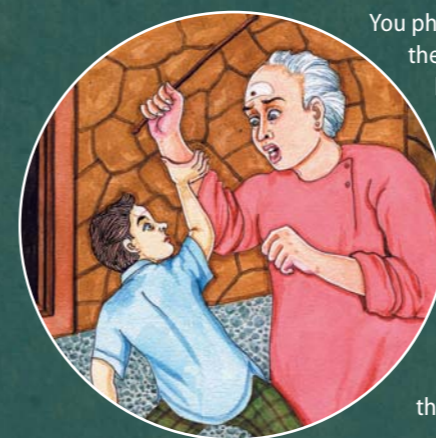
You demand that others behave as you want them to or threaten you will do something drastic if they don't, such as hurt them or yourself. Example: An argument between two business partners gets out of hand and reaches the point where the younger threatens to beat up the associate unless he gets his way.

## 6: Chasing and Holding



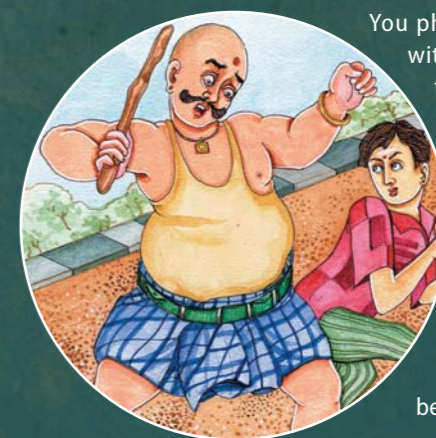
You approach or pursue others and physically restrain them against their will and prevent them from leaving your presence. Example: A woman's fiancée has been accused of seeing another woman. Incensed, she follows him to work, grabs him desperately and insists they talk about the problem right now.

## 7: Partly Controlled Violence



You physically strike someone for the purpose of forcing him or her to do what you want, but without losing control. Example: A young boy is caught stealing at a neighbor's home. The owner, outraged, confronts the boy and swats him several times with a stick, wrongly thinking this will reform the errant youth.

## 8: Blind Rage



You physically attack a person with total loss of control, to the extent that when you return to normal consciousness, you may not even remember the incident. Example: A sassy teenager deliberately insults an overweight stranger. Instead of just scowling, the fiery man flies into a rage and beats the boy mercilessly.





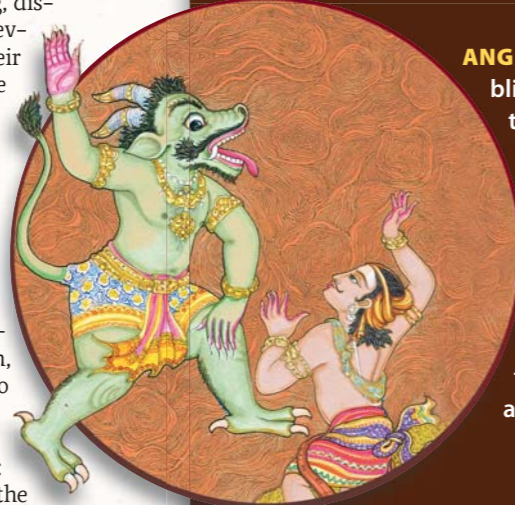
go against the instinctive compulsion to hold on to hard feelings. But acting kindly toward offenders releases you from the grip of seething anger, as surely as the sun dispels a morning fog, dissolving it in the light of higher consciousness. The seven remedies are designed to help seekers objectify their anger, to see it in a clear, detached manner, as a force that they have the power to harness and transmute into higher forms of expression and ultimately be free of it altogether.

#### Diet and Ayurveda

What we eat influences our state of consciousness and where we are in the chakras more than most people realize. The Hindu ideal of following a strict vegetarian diet has many benefits, including lessening the tendency to become angry. Eating meat, fish, fowl and eggs, on the other hand, opens the door to lower consciousness and makes it harder to stay out of the lower states. Temperament is largely a matter of food. The *Chandogya Upanishad* (7:26.2) teaches: "When the food is pure, mind becomes pure. When the mind becomes pure, memory becomes firm. And when a man is in possession of a firm memory, all the bonds which tie him down to the world are loosened." A vegetarian diet helps put us in touch with our higher consciousness and is therefore helpful in increasing our control over anger, as well as the other lower states of mind.

In the healthcare industry, anger is viewed as an insidious malady that, if not harnessed, leads to serious illness, causing high blood pressure, various diseases and even fatal heart attacks. It is addressed with prescription drugs, aromatherapy, massage and homeopathy. The Hindu medical science, ayurveda, views anger as a primary sign of imbalance of the three bodily humors, known as

## Anger's Incendiary Threat ...



**ANGER:** "I will make the people blind and deaf. I will overpower them with wrath and suffocate them with rage. I will catch hold of even wise men. They shall neither harken to what concerns their own happiness, nor reflect what they had read in the scriptures. In a moment I can destroy even the learned, the famous, those who are attentive to duties, the charitable

*doshas*. Dr. Virender Sodhi ([www.ayurvedicscience.com](http://www.ayurvedicscience.com)) of Bellevue, Washington, explained, "Anger is under the control of the *pitta* dosha. *Pitta* is intelligence, anger, digestion, fire, sight and so on. At the mental level, we have four drives: anger, attachment, ego and desire for sex. Although all these are normal animal behaviors,

## ... with Retorts from Patience, Universal Love & Discrimination

and the mighty potentates. I can infuse fury, resentment, wrath, indignation into the minds of all in the twinkling of an eye. I am very powerful. I will disturb the tapas of the aspirant and even yogis and destroy serenity. **ATMAN**, the soul, despaired, "Alas, who will help me now?" **KSHAMA**, the virtue of Patience, spoke up: "I

will! I will pull out the venomous tooth of this demon, Anger." **VISHVAPREMA**, Universal Love, cried out, "I will! I am the water to quench the fire of anger." Finally, **VIVEKA**, Discrimination, roared: "I will! When I rise, anger dies."

Swami Sivananda (1887-1963) founder, Divine Life Society

imbalance in these leads to imbalance of their respective doshas. Just as attachment increases *kapha*, anger increases *pitta*. Imbalance in *pitta* dosha can cause excessive anger, liver maladies, hypertension, etc. Balance is achieved by calming yoga, *shitali pranayama*, walks, mantra, self analysis and diverting the anger into a different form.

"Sandalwood oil: Another simple and effective way to help balance your emotions is to place a drop of sandalwood essential oil on the third eye area between your eyebrows, as well as on the throat, breastbone, navel, temples and wrists.

"Herbal teas: Take ½ teaspoon of chamomile and 1 teaspoon of

# Seven Remedies for the Habit of Anger

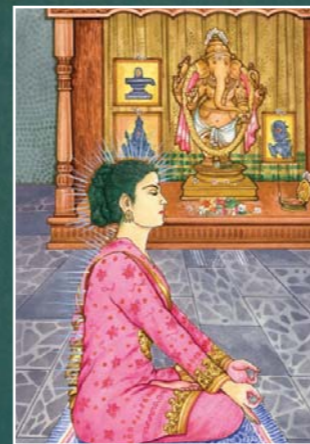
Have you ever suggested to someone who was furious at you that he shouldn't get so angry? Perhaps you offered, "It certainly doesn't make me feel good when you unleash that force on me! And it's not good for you either!" What was the result? He just got madder, right? "How dare you tell me not to get angry, you #%\*\$! !" The point is, no one can change a person except that person himself. We only change when we want to change. Are you ready? Controlling anger could well be viewed as the first exercise in spiritual life, because it stands so squarely between the soul and peace of mind while living in a physical body. Nothing is more fundamental to conquer, and doing so unleashes great energy and provides emotional stability for all other endeavors. Yes, it is work, but work well worth the effort. So, here are some sharp tools—powerful enough to make even a nice person nicer. They are philosophical, penitential, metaphysical, devotional and psychological. Use them to improve your life, and the life of everyone you know.

## 1: Affirm: Everything Is Perfect!

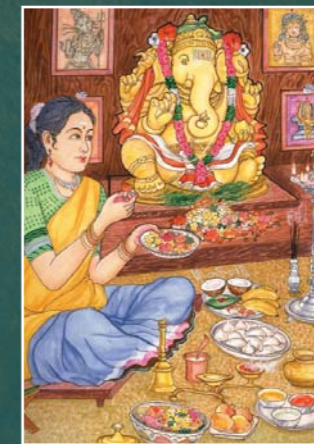


From a mountaintop perspective, God is everywhere, in all things, and everything is in a state of balance and perfection at every point in time. Affirm this Hindu wisdom regularly to cultivate patience and wise acceptance, even of situations that tend to arouse anger. To do so, be seated, close your eyes, breathe deeply and affirm quietly to yourself, "I'm all right, right now, and everything is as it should be from a mountaintop point of view."

## 2: Fill Your Aura with Light Blue 3: Worship Lord Ganesha



If you are overtaken by anger and resentment—emotions which fill your aura with blackish red, streaked with yellow—sit in meditation, breathe and visualize light blue entering your aura and surrounding your body. The blue will neutralize the fiery reds, and before you know it the anger and resentment will be gone. Simply relax and visualize soothing blue radiating out from the center of your spine, flooding your inner and outer aura.



The worship of Lord Ganesha is helpful in overcoming all emotional problems, including anger. As He is seated on the *muladhara* chakra, tuning in to His *shakti* helps raise us up into the *muladhara* chakra and therefore out of anger and fear into a calm, stable state of mind. In fact, you can slowly seal off the lower states of mind and keep awareness permanently lifted above fear and anger through the regular worship of Lord Ganesha.



# Sagely



# Reflections

I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him.

*Booker T. Washington*

If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.

*Chinese proverb*

Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he whom anger chains, can ever pass through maya's gates. So, give these up, sannyasin bold! Say "Om Tat Sat, Om!"

*Swami Vivekananda*

There is nobody who lives happily with anger.

*Shantideva*

When we speak with hatred and anger, it leads to unhappiness, pain and misery. So one should always be soft spoken.

*Yajur Veda 3, 54*

If we could read the secret histories of our enemies, we should find sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Suppose you have a weakness of getting angry easily. Now, what you should do is this: Once you become normal again, go and sit in the family shrine room if you have one, or sit in solitude; then regret and repent your own anger and sincerely pray to your beloved Deity or to Mother Nature, seeking help to get rid of it.

*Shri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi*

To remove anger is not so difficult as to decide to remove it and to maintain that decision.

*Sri Aurobindo*

There should be no yelling in the home unless there is a fire.

*David O. McKay*

A nagging sense of discontent, a feeling of being dissatisfied, or of something being not right, is the fuel that gives rise to anger and hatred. Generally, this discontent arises in us when we feel that either we ourselves, or someone we love, or our close friends are being treated unfairly or threatened: people are being unjust toward us or our close friends.... The idea is to stop it at

an early stage, rather than wait for that anger or hatred to arise fully.

*The Dalai Lama*

Resentment is like taking poison and hoping the other person dies.

*Augustine of Hippo*

Worshippers of Siva who are victim to anger or hatred refrain from meditation, japa and kundalini yoga. They confess sins, do penance and engage in bhakti and karma yoga to raise consciousness. Aum Namah Sivaya. *Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami*

fresh, finely chopped cilantro leaves and steep them in 1 cup hot water for about 10 minutes. Allow this tea to cool before you drink it. You can drink it three times a day, after each meal.

"Ghee nasya: Dip your little finger into a jar of brahmi ghee (or plain ghee) and lubricate the inside of your nostrils with a small amount. (Make sure your nails are trimmed so you don't scratch yourself.) Then gently inhale the ghee upward. This sends a calming message to the brain.

"Shitali pranayama: Make a tube of your tongue; breathe deeply through your mouth down into your belly, hold the breath for a few seconds; exhale through your nose. Do about 12 repetitions.

"Yoga postures: Good yoga asanas for pitta include the camel, cobra, cow, boat, goat and bridge poses. Avoid the headstand or other inverted poses, such as the plow and shoulder stand.

"Meditate: There is an ancient method of meditation that involves watching your every emotion come and go, without either naming it or trying to tame it. As the feelings arise, breathe deeply and exhale the emotions out."

## Anger and Spiritual Striving

Anger is a natural emotion, a protective function of the instinctive mind, not to be vilified or feared. It is a part of our nature, and it is normal to express it—that is, if we are content to live at the instinctive level of our being, which many people are. But each soul inevitably reaches a point where it seeks to harness the natural instincts. Gurudeva explained, "Anger is also, like fear, an instinctive control, and at one time served its purpose. The onrush of anger served to protect man's private interests in critical situations by injecting adrenaline into his blood and thus preparing him for defense. But as man evolves closer to his real, actinic being, he discovers that actinic love, understanding, compassion and wisdom are higher qualities than anger."

Managing anger is vital for anyone who seeks success at sophisticated endeavors and stable, wholesome relationships. For aspirants seeking self-transformation on the spiritual path, it is absolutely essential, for only when the lower nature is subdued can the divine nature be fully expressed. Daily spiritual efforts designed to bring forth

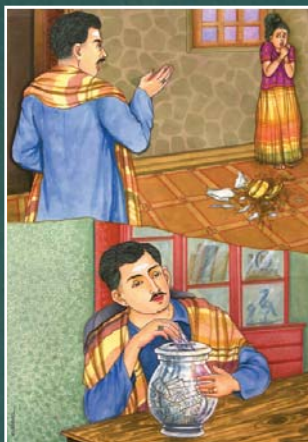
the divine nature are known as sadhana, such as japa, meditation and yoga. As Gurudeva wrote, sadhana, spiritual discipline, is "the mystical, mental, physical and devotional exercise that enables us to dance with Siva by bringing inner advancement, changes in perception and improvements in character. Sadhana allows us to live in the refined and cultured soul nature, rather than in the outer, instinctive or intellectual spheres." But, Gurudeva warned, every time you become angry, you destroy one month's worth of spiritual striving and practice, or sadhana. So, if you don't control anger, performing sadhana is a waste of time. Hence, the number-one sadhana is anger management.

Gurudeva is adamant that seekers refrain from any serious meditative practices until anger and other lower emotions have been harnessed. "Those who remain prone to anger should not do raja yoga or any form of intensive mantra, japa or pranayama amplification of the energies into higher chakras—lest that collective energy plummet into the corresponding lower chakras and be vented through fear, anger and jealousy. Rather, they should perform the always healing vasana daha tantra [writing down and burning recollections of the

past] and confine themselves to karma yoga, such as cleaning in and around the temple and picking flowers for the pujas. These simple acts of *charya* [humble service] are recommended, but should not be extended to intense worship. Then, and only then, their life will be in perspective with the philosophy of Sanatana Dharma and begin to become one with Siva's perfect universe. Brahmadvāra, the door to the seven chakras below the muladhara, will then be sealed off as their experiential patterns settle into the traditional perspective of how life should be and each individual should behave within it."

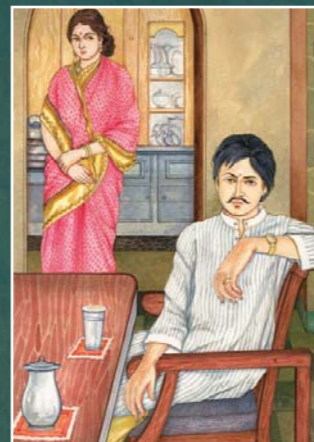
When working to harness the instinctive nature, what is it that tells us how well we are doing? It is the subtle irritation, the seed of wrath, that precedes every form of anger, from the cold shoulder to blind rage. Viewed in this way, the impulse to anger is—at the beginning of the path, the intermediate stages and even subtly at the upper reaches—our astute teacher, signaling to us each split-second the opportunity to be more patient, more understanding, more compassionate and to find a better way to cope with tense situations and keep closed the door to the lower chakras.

## 4: Pay for Each Burst of Ire



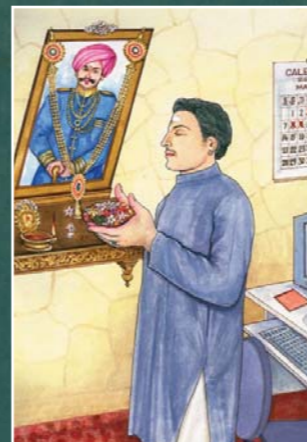
An effective and practical financial remedy is to put a sum of money, such as five dollars, in a jar each time you become angry, and later donate that money to a favorite orphanage or temple. Consistently performed, this penance soon makes it too expensive to get angry! This remedy impresses the subconscious mind that expressions of anger have karmic costs, and that anger can be completely eliminated by sincere efforts to overcome it.

## 5: Don't Eat the Next Meal



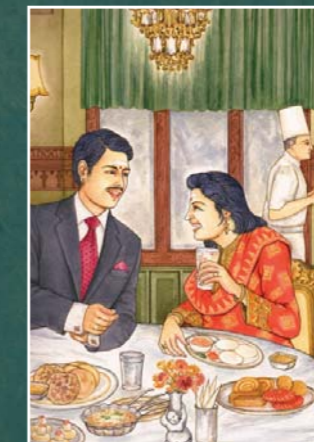
For those who can easily afford to put five dollars in a jar frequently, an alternate penance is fasting. Each time anger arises, simply skip the next meal. Denying yourself a meal has a potent impact, deeply impressing your subconscious mind. If you follow this without fail, the instinctive nature soon catches on that whenever it expresses anger it will soon experience hunger, and in this way is motivated to better control this destructive emotion.

## 6: Offer Flowers



Put up a picture of the person you are angry with and for 31 days place a flower in front of the picture. While doing so, sincerely offer the person your forgiveness in heart and mind. If it becomes difficult to offer the flower of forgiveness, because hurtful memories come up from the subconscious mind, write down the memories and burn the paper in a trash can. Say, "I forgive you, for I know that you gave back to me the karma that I set in motion."

## 7: Perform Three Kindly Acts



If you have gotten upset with another person, do three kindly acts to make up for it. This releases you from your anger and guilt even if he or she is unaware of your good deeds. Example: Returning from a hard day at work, a husband shouts abusively at his wife. After apologizing, he takes her dining to a place of her choosing, buys her an item that she needs for the kitchen and gives her some free time by taking care of the younger children for a half-day.