Transforming Anger
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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Transforming Anger

Control your tongue and your actions; then learn to express your anger in a positive way

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There is no escaping anger. everyone gets angry. Sometimes I get angry. Emotions are a fact of life, and you should not try to rationalize or form philosophies justifying them. If I'm angry, I'm angry. But if I try to philosophize about my anger, I'll end up suppressing it. This does not mean one should express anger, either. Control is required. If I'm angry, I should have control over my tongue. You should not hurt others, even though you may feel like doing so in a moment of anger.

Anger begins with harsh words, especially if it involves people who are near and dear to us. Words are the most powerful weapon we have, more than any weapon dependent on our physical strength. The first thing to do is control your tongue. Don't say things that you'll later regret.

Anger is caused because of expectations. I expect something for myself and from others, and when these are not fulfilled, it makes me angry. The closer the people are to me, the more expectations there are. If I have expectations from you, I'll expect you to behave and to talk in a particular way. But if you are a stranger and I have no expectations, I'll be courteous.

Generally, if we call a stranger at odd hours, we are very polite, "I hope I'm not disturbing you." If it's family, we shout even if we're calling at two in the morning, "Why did you take so long to answer the phone?" We take our people for granted and we want them to behave or live in a way that makes us happy.

Thwarted desires also make us angry. They can be little desires, such as wanting to sit at home to watch television. If a call interrupts your plans, it irritates you. Or if someone visits you whom you don't want to meet, it makes you angry. It's because your life is in a flow and someone obstructs the flow. If you cannot do anything about your anger, you get frustrated and depressed. If you are angry with someone who is powerful and whom you cannot hurt, it makes you angrier.

Anger is a power. If it is sustained over a long time without expression or sublimation, it leads to hatred. Hatred is deep and can burn you. It spoils your vision of life and makes you bitter. Even things that would normally make you happy start giving you sorrow.

If I can understand anger and use its force in an intelligent way, I can transform it and use it to my advantage. Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of the train in South Africa. Just imagine being thrown out like that. It would make you feel insulted and angry. What might he have done? He could have been angry with the person, beat him and thrown stones at him. If that didn't work, he could have thrown stones at the train. Or he could have gone home and beat his wife. Once his frustration was expressed, he would feel relief.

But Mahatma Gandhi did something wonderfully different. He got angry, no doubt, but not with the person. He directed his anger at the system which made the man behave the way he did. He directed the anger at apartheid and decided to work for freedom. That was his revenge. He converted anger into a positive strength. To fight for freedom of any country, strength and energy is required. Anger is an energy. If you express it at every little thing, you are wasting it. Therefore, some thinking is needed. If the postman brings you bad news, you don't get angry with him. He is just the messenger. Use your strength to eradicate the source.

Using force to suppress our anger is not good. For example, if your boss says something insulting and you want to give him one on the nose, you can't. You want

to beat him black and blue, but you suppress the feeling. Suppression is bad. Another problem is verbal expression of anger. This is also bad. It's doing what animals do. If a dog is angry, it barks and bites. Sublimation is using your judgment to transform and channel the feeling into a higher cause.

Many people don't get angry for the right reasons. That is bad. If a man is beating a child and you are not getting angry, it does not mean that you are a great person. It means you are equally bad. In this case, you should get angry. When you direct this righteous anger to a higher cause, it is called sublimation. Anger is expressed, but it is expressed for the welfare of yourself and the world. It requires wisdom to know what is good or bad. If you have no wisdom and you get angry, society will set you right. The direction of anger makes it good or bad. If I'm angry against crime, poverty or injustice, it is good, for then I will use my power to improve things.

In our scriptures, the Gods always wield a weapon. Lord Rama is always with his bow, not to cause harm but to fight injustice and adharma. When God holds a weapon, it is for the benefit of the world. But when an asura holds a weapon, it is to harm others. Even the anger of a wise person is beneficial for the world.

Anger under your control can be used to benefit the world. But if anger controls you, you will get destroyed, as did Ravana and Duryodhana. Lakshmana also got angry, but not for his own benefit. Petty anger is bad and can destroy you.

If you become angry and are alone, hold a mirror to yourself and look at your anger objectively. Tell yourself, "I'm getting angry. My voice is raised." This will help you gain control. Anger is like fire, and water helps to calm it down. Drinking cold water or taking a cold shower when you're angry will quell the fire raging inside you. If you are with someone and he is shouting, you should speak calmly. It will cool down the other person. If someone is angry with you, try to sit closer. If you are within an arm's distance, then he cannot point a finger at you. It may sound funny, but it works.

Anger, jealousy, greed, passion and desires by themselves are not good or bad, as all can be utilized for a better purpose. Generally we know about their negative aspects and label them as that. When people say we should not have anger, it is not a proper statement. It creates misunderstanding. Selfish anger is bad, but anger for

the benefit and the welfare of the world is not bad. It will not burn your heart, but it will burn the negative forces. If your anger creates a force and power in you, it is positive. You should cherish the transformed power of anger.