

UNDERSTANDING ANGER

New Year Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda (2008)

Transcribed by Sri VLN Prasad

NOTE: Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks. The transcriptions have been done with Swamiji's blessings by his disciples.



Published by :



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**sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām
asmad āchārya paryantām vande guru paramparām**

Last year, I talked on the topic ‘Is desire an evil’. In Sanskrit, desire is translated as *Kāmaha*. I was wondering what can be the topic of discussion this year. Then, I remembered the scriptures. In the scriptures, *Kāmaha* is always talked about along with its twin brother, namely *Krōdhaha*.

Scriptures always refer to *Kāma* and *Krōdha* together. People who perform *Sandhyāvandanam* might be familiar with the *Kāmōkārshīt Mantraha*. During the *Āvani Āvattam* also, they chant the Mantra - *kāmōkārshīt manyurakārshīt namō namaha*. There also, *Kāma* is combined with *Manyuhu*, which means anger or *Krōdhaha*.

Therefore, I thought we will have a discussion on the topic of Anger. Anger is a powerful emotion and it is also a universal emotion. Almost daily, every person experiences anger in various degrees, whether one belongs to this country or any other country, of any religion, nationality, age, caste or Āshrama.

Even Sanyāsis have the problem or the emotion of anger. When we read the Purānās, even Sages had this powerful emotion. *Vishwāmitra*, *Dūrvāsa* etc, are well known for their anger. Even among Gods, Lord Shiva is known for his anger. In fact, *Sri Rudram* begins with our Namaskāram to Lord Shiva’s anger - *namastē rudra manyavē*.

Therefore, we come to know that anger is a powerful and a universal emotion. Therefore, everybody has got some opinion or other about anger. They have their own philosophy. Psychologists have got their own view and theory about anger. Many Philosophers have talked about the emotional issue of anger. So, we will study what is the view of our scriptures.

All Scriptures, whether they are *Vēdās* or *Purānās* or *Smrutis*, uniformly look upon anger as a serious problem of the mind. It is a serious problem which affects the health of the mind and which cripples the mind. Since the mind is an important instrument for accomplishing our goals, by affecting the mind, anger becomes a very big obstacle in human journey.

Unfortunately, many people do not recognize the seriousness of this problem. Therefore, no body attempts to address this issue. According to the scriptures, this problem can be prevented and can even be cured if a person is willing to seriously work in that direction. But one will work on the anger only if one knows its seriousness.

Therefore, the scriptures have got a twofold task. First, it should create an awareness program. By that, the scriptures have to educate every human being that it is a very serious problem. Once a person has understood its seriousness, then scriptures can try to help the person in handling the problem.

Therefore, in several places, the scriptures talk about the seriousness of anger as a disease of the mind. If you take the Bhagavad Gīta, Krishna talks about this in several places. In the 16th chapter, Krishna divides the entire humanity in two groups - *Dēvās* and *Asurās*, not in the heaven, but upon the earth itself.

Krishna talks about the characteristics of the Dēvās and Asurās. Krishna says that anger makes a person a demon or an *Asura*. You don't require canine teeth to become an Asura. Anger makes a person an Asura and non-anger, *Akrōdhaha* is a *Daivi Sampattihi* which makes a person divine, *Dēvaha*. In another place, Krishna says -

*kāmayēshaha krōdhayēshaha rajōguna samudbhavaha
mahāshanō mahāpāpmā viddhyēnamihā vairinam*

O human being, register this clearly in your mind. Anger is the most powerful and terrible inner enemy, internal *Shatru*. It is a great sinner

which will convert every human being into a sinner. So, anger makes a person a demon. Anger is a powerful internal enemy. Anger is a great sinner. These are all the words used by Krishna.

He gives special advice to spiritual seekers. That advice is *Gnyāna Vignyāna Nāsanam* - anger destroys all the spiritual knowledge that one gains by long effort. It is a destroyer. *daivī sampad vimōkshāya nibandhāya āsurīmata* - anger keeps a person permanently in *Samsāra* and it obstructs the journey towards *Mōksha*. Elsewhere, Krishna uses more powerful expression.

*krōdhāt bhavati sammōhaha sammōhāt smṛti vibhramaha
smṛti bhramshāt buddhi nāshaha buddhi nāshāt pranasyati*

Anger destroys the human being as a human being. Anger dehumanizes a person. First, it makes a person unhuman and later, it makes a person inhuman. Shankarāchārya, in his commentary mentions that once anger has destroyed the very humanness of a person, he is unfit for accomplishing any one of four the *Purushārthās* - *chaturvidha purushārtha ayōgyaha bhavati*.

Previously, he said that anger destroys *Mōksha Purushārtha*, but elsewhere, Krishna says that anger destroys all the four *Purushārthās*. Thus, throughout the Bhagavad Gīta, you find that Krishna says anger is a very serious internal problem or internal enemy. Even though the scriptures have this view, many people do not agree with the scriptural teaching.

Many people hold the view that there are two types of anger. This is the philosophy of majority. One type of anger is good, proper, just and righteous. Another type of anger is bad, unrighteous and improper anger. Only improper anger is bad. Proper anger is ok. If you ask them what proper anger is, they have a very simple answer.

They say - whenever I get angry, it is a genuine, proper anger. They give a brilliant explanation saying that their anger is caused by genuine

reason. They are getting angry for a noble purpose. When they get angry, their motive is very pure. Therefore, the philosophy of the people is that anger is justifiable if the cause is proper or right.

If the purpose and motive are pure, anger is proper. It is good and it is ok. In fact, they go one step further. They say that good anger is required for success in life. Good anger is required for functioning in the world. For us, the worldly people, anger is required to get things done as long as the cause is reasonable and the purpose and motive are pure.

Even though this is the philosophy of many people, unfortunately, scriptures are not in agreement with this philosophy. Scriptures do not classify anger into justifiable, legitimate anger and illegitimate anger. Last year, we divided Kāma into two - ABC Desire and Non-ABC Desire and we said that one type of Kāma is legitimate.

Unfortunately, scriptures do not accept two types of anger. According to scriptures, all forms of anger are serious mental problems. *Why do the Scriptures look upon anger as a serious problem? What is the logic? What is the reasoning?* Whatever scriptures say will have reasons behind it.

We should know that the scriptures do not assess anger based on the cause or based on the purpose or motive. We assess the anger based on the cause, purpose and motive. Scriptures do not assess anger based on these. Scriptures assess anger based on the consequences. It is very important.

According to the scriptures, anger destroys three cardinal, positive, important, healthy, good virtues which are extremely important for the human wellbeing. Anger destroys three important virtues which are indispensable for human wellbeing, at the individual level, family level, corporate level, social level, national level and international level. At all levels, three virtues are important. Anger destroys them and wipes them out. *What are those three important virtues?*

The first important virtue which Krishna highlights throughout the Gīta is *Samatvam* of the mind. Poise or equanimity of mind is an extremely important virtue which is required for the wellbeing of the humanity, both at the micro and macro level. In fact, *Karma Yōga* itself is defined as *Samatvam. samatvam yōga uchyatē; sukha dukkhē samē krutva;*

In every other chapter, Krishna emphasizes mental poise and mental equanimity, mental calmness as an extremely important virtue. It is not only highlighted at the *Karma Yōga* level, but at the *Gnyāna Yōga* level also. One of the important descriptions of a Gnyāni is - *sama dukha sukha swastaha, sama lōshtāshma kānchanaha, tulya priyāpriyō dhīraha, tulya nindātma samstutihi, māna apamānayōstulyaha.*

Thus, *Karma Yōga* is defined as *Samatvam. Gnyāna Yōga* is defined as *Samatvam*. Means is *Samatvam*. End is *Samatvam*. Throughout the life, one virtue which is extremely important is mental balance, mental composition. Anger instantaneously destroys this important virtue. Therefore, *Samatva Nāshakaha Krōdhaha;*

Then, what is the second important virtue that is destroyed by anger? Anger destroys the sensitivity of the mind called *Sūkshmatvam*. The sensitivity of the mind is something by which one can appreciate and be considerate for the feelings of the people around. Sensitivity is that virtue because of which one follows *Ahimsa* as very important value.

The scriptures emphasize *Ahimsa* as a very cardinal virtue. In the ten commandments of Hinduism, which I talked several years before, during a New Year, the first value prescribed is *Ahimsa Paramō Dharmaha*. A Sensitive mind understands the importance of *Ahimsa* and respecting the feelings of others.

This sensitivity of the mind is destroyed by anger. Therefore, during the presence of anger, mind becomes extremely gross. *How do you know?* When the mind is gross, for all the situations, the mind will see violence as the only solution. Even though there are several solutions to any

problem or situation, during anger, when the mind is gross, it will see only one solution for every problem, whether it is minor or major.

What is that? It is violence. When I say violence, I don't mean physical violence, but verbal violence like shouting, using indecent, hurtful words, rude handling, negative body language, terrible facial expressions etc. They alone will be evoked from my personality when my mind is gross.

The mind will justify that by saying that this is the only remedy for the situation at the hand. If we are sincere, we can do an interesting experiment. After a few hours or a few days look back and see whether the rough handling was necessary or not.

Bring back the situation in the family, bring back the situation in your office and study your handling of the situation and ask from your heart if the rough handling or rude behavior necessary. Your own mind will say that in 99% of cases, violence was not required, rude words were not required.

In fact, by simply asking the person to sit in a particular seat is enough, but we shouted for half an hour just because a person sat in your reserved seat. A sensitive mind will understand that violence is an expensive remedy for any situation. Violence may serve as a remedy, no doubt, but violence is always an expensive remedy.

It is like regularly consuming pain killers. Long term consequences are very bad. A sensitive mind understands that violence and rough handling of people and using rude words will have lasting negative consequences. It is an expensive solution and a bad bargain. It is a material success with a serious spiritual loss.

That is why in the Purānās, they symbolically present this. When a Rishi gives a *Shāpa*, for one Shāpa, ten thousand years of *Tapas* is gone. *What is the idea?* The idea is that the spiritual loss is very heavy when I

accomplish something through violent method. But to understand this, a sensitive mind is required. Anger destroys sensitivity.

Therefore, it is *Sūkshmatva Nāshakam*. The first one is *Samatva Nāshakam*. The second one is *Sūkshmatva Nāshakam*. It destroys the sensitivity. The third and worst one is this. Generally, when one is in anger, it causes impulsive responses and actions. 99% anger is followed by impulsive responses. *What are impulsive responses?* They are instantaneous responses.

Instantaneous responses are words and actions coming out of me without quality control. In impulsive responses, intellect, the discriminate power, is either not functioning or it doesn't have enough time to function. Therefore, *Vivēka* is destroyed. Action filtering faculty is destroyed. Quality control faculty is destroyed. In fact, it is this faculty which makes the human being different from animals.

*āhāra nidrā bhaya maithunam cha
samānyamētat pashubhir narānām
buddhir hi tēshām adhikō visēshaha
budhyā vihīnāha pashubhihi samānāha*

Āhāram, Nidrā and Bhayam are common for both animals and human beings. The primary difference is that we have a faculty to think, filter and do the TQM (Total Quality Management). Intelligent industrialists, before letting their products out, have a rigorous quality control method. Otherwise, they know that they cannot survive in society.

Every word and every deed is a product coming out of the human factory. The scriptures say that human beings are supposed to be responsible and they should be aware that words and actions can have very serious consequences. If you read the original *Rāmāyanam*, Kausalya uses negative words towards Bharata, when he comes from his uncle's house, even though Bharata is not involved in sending Rama to the forest.

In fact, Bharata is intensely pained. Kausalya doesn't know this. She mistakes Bharata and uses very wrong words. She says - you wanted the kingdom and you also are a party to all these events. In Rāmāyanam, Bharata goes through intense pain in several verses. It is all because Kausalya did not enquire whether Bharata was involved or not.

Sita also does the same thing when Mārīcha shouts - *hēy sitē hēy lakshmana*. Sita also accuses Lakshmana and Lakshmana also go through intense pain. There we see how much harm innocently looking words can do. Innocent looking words can do so much damage which cannot be compensated.

One person was praising his wife to me. Later, when I met his wife, I told her that her husband adores her. I thought that I will make her happy. I said - all the time he is praising you. I thought that she will be flattered, but that did not happen. She said – Swāmiji, he does not have to praise me. It is enough if he is not rude and rough towards me.

That means any amount of praise cannot serve as a compensation for the damage done by rough and rude handling. Many angry people think that they can roughly handle their subordinates or family members and later, give a few praises or buy an ice-cream. One should understand that the damage is done is done. The scar is for good.

There is no question of compensation. If a person still continues with an angry person, it is not because it has been compensated. It is because of some other reason such as a choice-less situation. Therefore, anger destroys *Vivēka. Sāvadhānatva Nāshakam* - it destroys sensibility. Thus, three important virtues of serenity, sensitivity and sensibility are destroyed.

If you take the Sanskrit expressions - *Samatva Nāshakam, Sūkshmatva Nāshakam, Sāvadhānatva Nāshakam*; they are destroyed by impulsive actions. *Sāvadhānam* means thoughtful, deliberate action. So, anger is a problem because it destroys SSS. Now, the scriptures have educated me.

Suppose, I agree with the scriptures and admit that anger is a problem and I want to avoid anger. *What is the remedy?*

We can talk of four remedies presented in various contexts of scriptures. The first remedy which is easier is a prayer to the Lord for increasing our tolerance or endurance level. Anger is inversely proportional to the tolerance. That is why anger is often defined as intolerance. When an unfavorable situation gives a pain which goes beyond the tolerance, that pain is converted into anger.

The pain will remain as pain, only as long as it is within the tolerance level. When it crosses the tolerance level, pain gets converted into anger. Therefore, the best method is to raise the level of tolerance or *Titiksha*. Pray to Bhagawan - O Lord, give me Titiksha.

*yamhinavyathayantyētē purusham purusharshabha
samaduhkha sukham dhīram sōmrutatvāya kalpatē*

*mātrā sparshāstu kountēya sītōshna sukha dukhadāha
āgamāpāyinō nityāha tām titikshasva bhārata*

The first method is to pray for tolerance. The second one is *Pratignya* - Taking a strong autosuggestion or resolve, self Pratignya. Somebody gave a very nice statement - to be angered by someone is to be conquered by someone. To be angered is to be conquered. *How do you say so?*

When somebody makes me angry, he is proving that the condition of my mind is determined by that person. He has got the switch board of my emotional condition. I am claiming that my mind is my mind. By angering me, the other person is proving that he is in charge of my mind. He is the master of my mind.

Therefore, to get angry is to be conquered, to be defeated. I have lost mastery of the situation. Whoever angers me, has become the master of the situation. At once, I have become mastered. I am a slave. That

means, when I am in anger, I am operating from weakness. We think that when we are angry and when we are shouting, we are trying to prove our mastery.

In fact, through our anger itself, we have proclaimed that I am no more a master. The more I am angry, I think that I am becoming a greater master, but I am proving that I am weak. Remembering that, I have to give an autosuggestion that I want to be in-charge of my mind. I will never permit any human being around to be in-charge of my mind.

I will never allow anyone to dictate my emotional condition. Come what may, however provoking the behavior may be, I want to first establish my mastery over my mind. Thereafter, I will try to establish my mastery over the situation. So, let us be clear about the priority. Mastery over the situation can come only after the mastery over the mind.

Thus, an intelligent person is one who wants to maintain the mastery over the mind and then, try to master the situation. *Therefore, what is the Pratignya?* I will never allow any blessed human being or situation to determine my mental atmosphere. I would like to maintain *Samatvam. nityam cha samachittatvam ishta anishta upapattishu.*

This *Pratignya* has to be taken. It will be a very challenging exercise. Anger management is a wonderful challenging exercise. We will take that challenge, if we are serious. The challenge has to be taken not during New Year, but every day. So, the first method is *Prārthana* and the second method is *Pratignya*. Then, the third method is *Prasāda Bhāvana*.

Prasāda Bhāvana is also important. We go through varieties of experiences in our life. We don't have a control over the experiences that are going to come at any time. Experiences are unpredictable and they are uncontrollable also. Since I don't have any control over the types of experiences, there is no use in having norms for deciding what experiences I should have.

There is no meaning in having norms for deciding what experiences I should have. I can have norms for doing actions in my life because they are based on my free will. Therefore, *karmani ēva adhikāraha*; but with regard to experiences, I cannot have any norm because the experiences are not determined based on my norms.

Bhagawan is not going to consult us regarding what experiences we want. Your neighbor is not going to ask, the auto rickshaw driver who over takes you from the wrong direction is not going to consult you. Remember that it is meaningless to have norms as a *Bhōkta*, to decide the type of experiences.

Once I have a norm, I am going to judge the experiences. When the experiences don't conform to my norms, I am going to violently disapprove those experiences. This violent disapproval alone expresses as anger. The disapproval comes because I judge the experience based on my norm.

As long as I have norms as a like *Bhōkta*, I will have problems. Therefore, scriptures say that as a *Bhōkta*, drop all norms. You have got only one norm. *What is that?* Whatever experience comes, it is *Ēshwara Prasāda*. I am not going to judge. I am not going to keep any norm. I will have norm with regard to what I want to do, but I never keep norms with regard to the reception of experiences.

This *Bhāvana* is called *Prasāda Bhāvana*. Every experience is *Ēshwara Prasāda*. There is no question in judging it to be good or bad, success or failure. *sukha dukkhē samē krutvā, lābhalābhōu samē krutvā*. There is only 'Prasāda' label for everything. If you say it is very difficult, we already had the *Prārthana* for tolerance.

Therefore, *Prasāda Bhāvana* is the third one. All these three are for the prevention of anger. If anger has already come. For diffusing the anger, the fourth method is called *Pratipaksha Bhāvana*. Whenever anger raises and goes beyond our control, sit in one place and

deliberately entertain the counter thought. Chant the Slōka *shāntākāram bhujaga shayanam* and meditate upon Lord Vishnu and bring the mind to quietude. Until then, avoid doing any action.

If the mouth is itching to say something, put something in the mouth. So, practice Pratipaksha Bhāvana. Thus, *Prārthana, Pratignya, Prasāda Bhāvana, Pratipaksha Bhāvana* are four P's or the methods of preventing and diffusing anger. By following the four P's, avoid anger and preserve the three S's.

The three S's are *Samatvam, Sūkshmatvam and Sāvadhānatvam*. According to the scriptures, whatever you want to accomplish through anger, you can accomplish through the three S's. Whatever you proposed to accomplish through anger, it can be accomplished through Samatvam, Sūkshmatvam and Sāvadhānatvam.

Even if rarely disciplinary measures are required, according to scriptures, punishment does not require anger. Punishment only requires a sense of justice. Thus, one can avoid anger and accomplish all the *Purushārthās* by pursuing the four P's. You don't expect anger to disappear today itself.

It has to gradually come down. Remember FIR reduction. Initially, the aim is reduction of frequency, intensity and recovery period and gradually, enjoying *Samatvam*. I wish all of you a happy, prosperous and anger free 2008.

***Pūrnmadah Pūrnamidam Pūrnāth Pūrnāmudachyatē.
Pūrnasya Pūrnāmādāya Pūrnāmēvāvasishyatē..***

Om shānti shānti shāntihi



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