

Love and Sacrifice — The Cure for Anger and Desire

[From "Tenth Discourse", pages 61-66, in Bhagavad-Gita: Discourses of Sri Satya Sai Baba.]

Anger is born of desire. Desire arises from thoughts. Therefore, thoughts alone are responsible for both anger and desire. Just as you cannot get cloth without thread and thread without cotton, you cannot get anger without desire, and desire without thoughts. In the Gita, the divine teacher has termed desire and anger as Analam, which literally means fire. There is danger of being harmed by fire even when it is some distance from you. When this is true for a fire that is burning outside, then how much more careful must you be when the fire is raging in your own heart. This fire of desire and anger has an extraordinary capacity to destroy all the human qualities and to suppress the divine spark that is inside you, leaving only the demonic nature remaining within. This fire of desire has no long-term aim; it will not be appeased once some goal is reached; on the contrary, it can never be satisfied. It has a voracious appetite that is endless. Whatever fuel you give to fire, whether it is wood, oil, or anything else, it will never have enough. The word Alam means contentment, and Analam means complete absence of contentment. This fire of desire and anger has no contentment at all.

Most things in the world have prescribed limits, but this fire has no limits whatsoever in its hunger. That being its nature, is there any way to control it? The Lord declared in the Gita, "You can conquer anger through love, and you can conquer desire through renunciation and sacrifice." Where there is love there can be no anger. If you develop your love, then there will be no room left in your heart for hatred and anger to take root. The heart is like a single-seat sofa; only one quality can establish itself there. It will leave no place for another to enter and occupy it at the same time. A devotee has to make every effort to establish love in his heart. If you want to conquer anger through love then you have to develop your love in a most magnificent way. Love is always prepared to shower itself freely, and to overlook the defects and weaknesses in others. Love has this extraordinary quality. It lives by giving and forgiving, whereas the little ego-self lives by getting and forgetting. Where there is love there can be no room for selfishness, and where there is selfishness there will be no love.

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There is absolutely nothing in the world that you cannot achieve when you shine with this principle of love. With love you can conquer all obstacles. Therefore, to achieve total victory over anger you have to fill your heart with love and make love the dominant force in your life. Once you recognize that the indweller of your heart is the indweller of every heart, that the beloved Lord whom you worship is seated on the throne of your heart, is also dwelling in every other heart, then there can be no possibility of hating or being angry with any person in the world. When the same Lord is in every heart how can you look down with contempt at another? Therefore, immerse yourself fully in this principle of love and establish it indelibly in your heart.

As has been mentioned before by Swami, when love is associated with thoughts, it becomes truth; when love is introduced into your activities, your actions become Dharma; when your feelings are saturated with love, your heart is filled with supreme peace; and when you allow love to guide your understanding and reasoning, then your intelligence becomes saturated with non-violence. Therefore, love is truth, love is righteousness, love is peace, love is nonviolence. For all these great qualities love is the undercurrent. If your thoughts are not filled with love, there will be no truth. If there is no love in your actions, Dharma will not be present. If you do not feel love in your heart, there will be no peace. And if you do not base your understanding on love, non-violence will not establish itself in your intellect. So, just as sugar is the basis of all different kinds of sweets, so also love is the basic ingredient for Sathya [truth], Dharma [righteousness], Shanti [peace] and Ahimsa [non-violence]. Love is the divinity itself. Love is God and God is love. Love is the divine power that activates everything. Through love you can easily conquer hatred and anger. Therefore, always live in love.

Anger can be the source of numerous difficulties and expose you to countless problems. It destroys your dignity and undermines the principle of humanity that resides within you. Anger first enters in a very subtle form and gradually becomes all-pervasive. Initially, when it comes in, it will only ask for a small bit of space. "Just give me a little room to sit down," it says. Once it has established itself, it declares, "Now, I'll make myself enough space to lie down and stay." But, you

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must not permit even the least room in your heart for such bad traits. Once you let anger in, it will be impossible to get rid of it. Even if you make friends with it and give it 50,000 Rupees, it will not leave you. It is a most dangerous poison that should not be given even the least space to get a foothold within you.

In a car the red break-lights goes on as a warning before the car comes to a stop. In the same way, before you explode into anger, your eyes become red, your lips begin to quiver and the whole body becomes hot. The moment you start having any of these symptoms, you had best leave the place you are in immediately and go to a solitary spot and sit there until peace returns. As was mentioned yesterday, you can also take a cold-water bath. Once anger expresses itself in words it may lead to endless complications and problems later on. Even if your anger is justifiable and you are protecting the truth, you will still have to learn how to express that truth in a sweet way, in a dear way, in an acceptable way that will be received by the other person, without hurting him in any way. Therefore, every devotee must learn to control his anger by developing and saturating his heart with love.

Next, let us consider how to deal with desire. To conquer desire you have to develop a sacrificing nature; you must be steeped in renunciation. Renunciation does not mean that you give up your family and go to the forest; nor does it require you to give up all your property and take up Sanyasa [a homeless renunciant]. Once you realize the defects in any object, once you recognize the transitory and worthlessness in helping you to reach your goal, you will automatically stop desiring it. Even when living the life of a householder immersed in the world, you can recognize the defects and weaknesses of the things of the world. For example, there may be certain kinds of food that you enjoy very much, and you may have a variety of dishes made of this food on your plate, and you are about to eat your meal with great relish; but then the cook comes and says, "Sir, please don't eat this dish; a poisonous insect has fallen in and is dead inside" The moment you hear this and recognize the harmfulness of the food you were about to eat, you would under no circumstances consider eating it anymore, no matter how much you previously cherished that dish and looked forward to having it.

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In the same way, you have to recognize the nature of the things of the world. They are ever changing and some day they must cease to exist. Once you know this, how can you remain enthusiastic about acquiring them, and trying to get lasting enjoyment from them? Food is only medicine for the disease called hunger. How can it ever be an item of luxurious indulgence? When you are sick and medicines are given, do you refuse them if they are not tasty? Therefore, recognize the fact that the things you use in the world are only medicines for the diseases that you have.

As the disease improves, the need for medicine diminishes. When you are well you do not need to take any medicines at all; but when you are sick you must take the medicine that is right for the sickness, which will cure you of your illness. You cannot refuse to take the medicine just because it is not very tasty and flavorful, and still, at the same time, hope to get cured. Now, you are running after all sorts of attractive and tasty things, which instead of curing your ills worsen them. You rejoice that you have discovered so many delights in the world, and that you are living a very happy life, enjoying many things that seem to give you much comfort and joy. But these are not real enjoyments, for, in the future, you will surely have to face the consequences of all these indulgences you are engaging in now.

Consider a giant tree, which have a number of branches heaped with flowers and fruits. It is a very grand and attractive tree. One particular day, this tree begins to dry up and its flowers fall off. Is it because there is a shortage of water or manure? Has there been some neglect in feeding it? No, there is some kind of pest that has attacked its roots and is destroying this beautiful tree. Through the roots the pest enters and starts to eat up this giant tree. In the same way, once you allow this pest of desire and hatred to enter your heart, then one day you will quite suddenly come to ruin. This is absolutely certain.

In the material world you think that a rich man is a very important individual, but in the world of the spirit, material wealth is of no consequence. Charity is a quality that is much greater than all the possessions associated with wealth. If there is no charity, wealth has no intrinsic value at all. You have four sons, each of whom will enter a claim to your wealth. The first is charity. The second is the government. The third is the thief. And the fourth is fire. Each of them expects to inherit your wealth, but if you were to hand over all your wealth to your first son, charity, then the

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others will get no share of it. When you give freely to charity, you will find that the other claimants will show great respect for your decision, and will not press their own claims.

For example, we know that the government gives you an income-tax exemption when you donate to charity. Even fire will be a little frightened of you, and thieves will leave you alone. So, when you give to charity, which may be considered your oldest son and your natural heir, then the others who would otherwise try to claim your wealth, will respect your action and not interfere. But if you possess wealth and do not give to charity, then the thief will have his eye on you and the government will also try to catch hold of you and claim your riches as its own. If these two for some reason choose to ignore you, then fire will come one day and destroy your possessions. Therefore, the Gita has concluded that it is charity, not wealth, which is really important.

In a similar way, in human beings, it is not the ability to speak well, but the truth that is uttered, which is important. If there is no truth in your speech, then whatever you say will have no value at all. The Gita has also declared that it is not life itself but a good character that is important. A life devoid of good character is useless. You have to develop your character and earn a good name so that the principle of humanity will shine forth in you. Your most important duty is to harbor good thoughts, to have good behavior, to speak good words and to lead a good life. You must be very careful with your words and actions so that you will never earn a bad name. Instead of living for a hundred years the life of a crow, scavenging off others, it is far better to live a few moments as a swan, with an untarnished name and an unblemished character. Gita has called such a sterling soul, whose life is replete with goodness, a Paramahansa, a most sacred being.

Good actions are far more important than physical strength. A body that is not being used to serve others is nothing but a dead body. Use your body in the service of mankind, not just for the purpose of catering to your own selfish needs. Today, whatever man does, thinks or utters is primarily inspired by selfishness. In order to overcome this tendency, you have to constantly seek opportunities to help others and develop the principle of service. In this process, by your good actions, all of humanity will get sanctified. It is very difficult to obtain birth as a human being. You must spend some time thinking over how to properly utilize this rare life that has been given to you

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and develop good habits which will overcome these weaknesses of desire and anger, that waste your golden chance. How do you best overcome the deeply ingrained bad habits and replace them with good habits? Consider a small example.

One day a beautiful dog happens to come to your house; you do not know to whom it belongs. It is such an attractive thing, in order to keep it there for some time and enjoy its presence you give it a little food. Next day it comes about the same time, and again you feed it and enjoy having it visit you. Like this it comes back every day to get fed, and gradually over a period of time, attachment increases and this dog now regularly visits your house, spending more and more time there. One day you find that it will no longer leave; it just continues to live at your house from that time on. But the happiness that you enjoy in looking at physical beauty does not last very long; once the beauty is no longer accompanied by joy, it becomes obnoxious to you. In the case of this dog, you soon get tired of having it around all the time, and so you look for a way to get rid of it.

To begin with you must ask yourself why that dog has attached itself to you and is now living in the house. The reason is that right from the very beginning you have been feeding it regularly every day; you have also been stroking it, admiring it, and paying so much attention to it. It is this repeated daily practice that has created the attachment between yourself and the dog. Now you must develop a new regular practice (Abhyasa), which will break this attachment and help you to get rid of the dog. For this the best method is to reverse the original process that created the attachment and made the object so dear to you.

In the case of the dog, if no food is given for some days and everyone is indifferent to it, paying no attention to it whatsoever, then soon, of its own accord, the dog will go away. Therefore, it is the practice that is important; it is through practice that you have developed certain attachments and undesirable qualities, and it is through practice that you can change them. The Bhagavad Gita has said, that for everything practice is the starting point. In the 12th verse of the Chapter on Bhakti [Devotion] Yoga, it says, "Through practice you will be able to get knowledge, through knowledge you will be able to develop meditation, through meditation you will develop sacrifice, and only when you have sacrifice will you obtain peace of mind." Therefore, it all starts with Abhyasa or steady practice.

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For many births, you have been enamored by beauty and you have engaged in desire and anger until these passions have struck deep roots in your heart. Now, you have become a slave of your desires. Mere words will not be enough to get rid of them. After having practiced attachment for so long, these negative qualities have developed such strong roots, that even if you were to cut them off at the surface, they would sprout up again and again. When desire has become an integral part of you, it is only by reversing the process and practicing detachment and renunciation that you will be able to get rid of these deeply ingrained pests. In the beginning, desires are extremely attractive and sweet. After some time you develop distaste for them; but then it is already quite difficult, in fact, almost impossible to get rid of them. Therefore, it is best if right from the very beginning you develop renunciation and detachment as part of your nature, and give no place or importance to desire. Unless you have such an attitude of sacrifice and a capacity to resist desires, you will not be ready to receive the grace of the Lord.

A bullock or a horse, which cannot be controlled, a car without brakes, or a life which is not based on control of the senses, are all dangerous. Control of the senses is very important. In the Yoga Sutra, Patanjali emphasized the need to tightly control the tendencies of the mind to go off in all directions, running after desires. Mind and senses must be kept in check within limited bounds. Even happiness that exceeds certain limits can be harmful. For everything there is a limit, there is a range of healthy functioning.

The normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees; if it goes up even one degree there will be a disease in progress. Only when it is within the appropriate level does it indicate a healthy body. In the same way, your blood pressure is normal when it is 120 over 80. If the blood pressure goes up to 150 over 90 it indicates an abnormal condition in the body, which may be indicative of a disease. Similarly, the heartbeat should be around 75; if it increases a disease will be in progress. The same is also true for your eyes; there is a range of light that is appropriate to healthy functioning. If the light is too bright the eyes cannot see and will be harmed. This is true, as well, in the case of the ears; there is a proper range of sound. If the level of sound exceeds that range, which may happen close to an airplane, or a train or a loudspeaker, the hearing will become impaired.

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We see that life is something like a limited company. If you want to carry on unlimited business with this limited company then you will be subject to a great deal of distress. Therefore, you have to impose restrictions on your behavior, and spend your life acting always within certain prescribed limits. This can also be called discipline. Discipline is particularly necessary for the spiritual progress of an individual; without discipline a person is likely to become nothing but an animal. But discipline, too, has to be exercised within limits; there is even a need to regulate your discipline if you are to enjoy life. You see that for everything there is a limit and a bound; if you stay within these limits you will not be troubled by life.

You need to take proper notice of these two dreadful enemies of man, Kama and Krodha, desire and anger, and develop complete control over them. These enemies are not external to you; they are your inner enemies. If you are defeated by your own inner enemies, how can you ever hope to conquer your external ones? But, once you keep these inner enemies under firm check, your other enemies can be defeated quite easily. The Bhagavad Gita has taught that desire and anger are the primary obstacles to liberation, so, it is absolutely important that they be curbed. In the coming days we will take up some of the other enemies that get in the way of your path, such as jealousy and miserliness.

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Love Leads to Union with God.....BABA

"Feeling angry is_____."

1. Normal
2. Something experienced by everyone
3. Not something you outgrow
4. A powerful feeling, but one you can learn to manage with practice.
5. Not the same thing as aggression, which is a behavior (such as hitting someone) that may result if you can't bring your anger under control.
6. All of the above.

If your answer was "F" you recognize that anger is a **normal** emotion experienced by everyone. It is not a **behavior**. Anger is a part of life and society has not done a great job in teaching us how to cope with it. Girls are taught to avoid being angry and boys are praised and encouraged to display this emotion in a negative way. So, what is anger?

Anger?

According to Hendrie Weisinger, Ph.D., there are five interrelated dimensions all operating simultaneously in any angry situation. These dimensions include:

- ? **Cognition**- our present thoughts
- ? **Emotion**- the physiological arousal that anger produces
- ? **Communication**- the way we display our anger to others
- ? **Affect**-the way that we experience life when we are angry
- ? **Behavior**- the way we behave when we are angry

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Body responses to anger

If we are aware, our body can inform us of when we are angry. There are stages of physiological signs of anger.

- ? A stimulus triggers emotion
- ? Tension or Stress begins to build
- ? Adrenaline is released contributing to growing tension.
- ? Breathing rate increases
- ? Heartbeat accelerates
- ? Blood pressure rises
- ? There is now a body and mind "Fight or Flight" response

Even though the body is aware of times where we feel angry, according to Leo Madow, M.D., there exists something called **masked expressions** of anger. Following is a list of expressions, which suggests an underlying anger.

? **Modified expression on anger** - These indications of anger are fairly direct but modified in form. For example, "I am annoyed," "I am fed up," "I'm ready to explode," or "I was annoyed by my friend but not really angry."

? **Indirect expression on anger** - In this case anger is even more hidden. Indirect expressions attempt to disguise the anger from the speaker and the listener. "I'm not angry." "I'm just disappointed in you."

? **Variation on depression** - This group includes such phrases as "feeling blue" or "down in the dumps." These expressions are even more removed than the previously mentioned categories and are harder to recognize.

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Effect on our health

If managed inappropriately anger is likely to negatively affect our physical and mental health. Listed below are examples of disorders that may develop if anger is suppressed without an outlet.

- ? Headaches
- ? Gastrointestinal disorders
- ? Respiratory disorders
- ? Skin disorders
- ? Genito-urinary disorders
- ? Arthritis
- ? Disabilities of the nervous system
- ? Circulatory disorders
- ? Aggravation of existing physical symptoms
- ? Emotional disturbances
- ? Suicide

How can we manage anger?

Below are a list of interventions mentioned earlier by Dr. Madow, that help us to manage anger from cognitive, emotional, communication, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

Cognitive

? **Identifying Provocation** - provides you with data to help you confront or avoid a provocation.

? **Alternative Explanations** - By considering an alternative explanation of a provoking event, chances are more likely that you will place it in the appropriate perspective and thereby respond more properly. - By considering an alternative explanation of a provoking event, chances are more likely that you will place it in the appropriate perspective and thereby respond more properly.

? **Combating Anger Distortions** -use anger to warn you that it is time to reexamine your thinking. -use anger to warn you that it is time to reexamine your thinking.

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? **Anger Management Instructions** - When your anger is just, you can cognitively deal with your anger by using your self-statements as self-instructions ("Don't let this get to you," or "Take a deep breath.") - When your anger is just, you can cognitively deal with your anger by using your self-statements as self-instructions ("Don't let this get to you," or "Take a deep breath.")

? **Clarifying Expectations** - anticipating what events you will encounter.

? **Mental Rehearsal** - creating and patterning yourself after the positive images you envision.

Emotional

? **Body Biofeedback** - By discovering the way your body feels when anger is approaching, you can use that feeling as a cue for altering your physiological response or altering your thoughts and behavior so that your anger does not get out of hand.

? **Generating Alternative Arousal** - Using anger as a cue to generate an alternative form of physical arousal that is antagonistic to anger or arousal (i.e., relaxation & humor).

? **Channeling Arousal** - Using the arousal you acquire from being angry as a powerful source of energy that helps you handle a provocative productively.

Communication

? **Assertiveness** - teaches you to stand up for your legitimate rights and express your needs in an appropriate way.

? **Listening** - allows you to open up communication channels.

? **Negotiation** - process by which two people work the conflict out by coming to a mutually satisfying agreement.

? **Criticism** - ability to give and receive constructive criticism .

? **Confrontation** - the ability to take responsibility for perceiving a situation or a person's behavior as unacceptable. Once identified, specifically describe the unacceptable behavior or situation. Stating clearly the tangible effects of the event.

? **Praise** - decreases the chances of the other person becoming defensive.

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Feelings

? **Feeling awareness** - prior to expressing feelings in a productive way, it is necessary to acknowledge that they exist.

? **Expressing feelings** - ability to express feelings in positive way.

? **Making positive affect work for you** - keep yourself in a positive mood, induce positive affect in others, find everyday uppers (*no drugs*), offer help whenever you can, and be kind.

Behavior

? **Learning our anger actions** - identify the behaviors we do when we are angry through: modeling, operant learning, de-escalating anger (*time-out*), and creative time-out.

? **Generating productive angry behavior** - prevent anger from escalating and rid yourself of anger actions.

? **Changing your behavior: making new actions easier** - replacing negative responses to anger with new more positive behaviors.

? **Learn the ABC's of anger** - this method helps your to establish what caused your to be angry (**Anger trigger**), what you did about it (**Behavior**), and what happened because of what you did (**Consequence**).