



# Understanding **ANGER**

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Dear friends,

Most of us struggle with anger. When we are angry, we often cause hurt, tension and conflict. We end up regretting what we said or did, and the people we hurt the most are our near and dear ones. In such cases our anger is unregulated and reactive. This happens because we don't understand the true nature and purpose of anger, and also because we do not have the means to master this volatile emotion, so it becomes destructive. Once we understand our patterns better, it can become a good friend.

## What is anger?

In its pure form, anger is simply a charge of energy in our system. It starts in the energetic sheath of the subtle body and spreads to the physical body. We will explore why this happens and how to use this rush of energy for our betterment. My Master, dear Babuji Maharaj, used to say that anger is one of only two emotions that have been given to us by God for divine purpose. Those two emotions are *kama* (passion) and *krodha* (anger); they can never be destroyed.

It is obvious why *kama* is a divine emotion – without it there would be no procreation and our human species would die out within a couple of generations. But why anger? Its purpose is actually all about continuous improvement, and the Heartfulness practices help us to master that process. But first let's start with what normally happens when we are angry.

## The blame games we play

When something goes wrong, we often blame the other person or situation, and direct the rush of energy toward them: “Something he did made me so angry,” “I was coerced into a situation where I had no choice but to be angry.” A graduate fails during her first job interview and blames the interviewer instead of acknowledging her unpreparedness. Politicians blame the tampering of voting machines when they lose elections. Excuses for skipping meditation are so many, but there is only one reason to do the right thing. When something goes wrong in a marriage, how often do we blame our spouse? It would actually be more honest and productive to confess personal weakness, but the ego does not allow that to happen.

Blame can also be turned inward. We beat ourselves up, but not in a constructive way: “I am so hopeless! Why do I keep making the same stupid mistake again and again!” or “When will I ever learn!” When the blame game turns inward without contemplation and awareness, it is also destructive; we continue to stay stuck in the same patterns.

Einstein once said, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” So let us apply this concept here: We will have to move to a different level of consciousness in order to transcend the awareness in which the anger arose. The immediate need is to reach out to a higher plane of awareness, and that is easier said than done!

What does it mean when we say, “Be aware”? Being aware means not allowing the mind to express itself based on impressions, prejudices or judgments. And how do we train our mind to be without impressions, prejudices and judgments? That is the crux of the matter. We need to find a way to simply be able to evaluate and find solutions. We need to accept the reality of the situation and work from there.

Complaining and blaming others are signs of non-acceptance. In one sense the blame game turns us into helpless victims, while, in another sense, it leads us to solicit someone else’s agreement and sympathy through gossip, justifying why it is not our fault; we are not the ones who need to change. We avoid looking at ourselves by pointing the finger elsewhere.

And then there is another type of reaction – that of suppressing anger, leading to a pressure cooker of emotion building up inside. Does that help? Eventually the energy will implode within us, or go cold and stagnate, leading to an undercurrent of resentment and bitterness. It will have its own consequences and will surely express itself in both mental and physical health issues.

How can we find a healthier response? Let’s visit the idea of acceptance. Take a scenario where someone has done something really bad to hurt your whole family. Does accepting the situation mean doing nothing? In this regard, someone once asked me, “When does acceptance become irresponsible?” Acceptance doesn’t mean being weak and cowardly. It doesn’t mean doing nothing. It only means that we are able to accept the reality of the present circumstances without reacting strongly in the moment, and then moving forward from there. Somehow a newer consciousness will open up, and the right action will follow. Heartfulness supports this in a number of ways, such as:

- Taking refuge in the Guide or God immediately triggers a change in us;
- The Cleaning method always helps us to let go of the strong emotional charge; and
- External help in the form of Transmission can be a miraculous catalyst to manage anger, fear and stress.



## What triggers anger?

So many things can trigger anger, and they can arise from both outside and inside. For example, tragic circumstances and events, insults, criticism, advice, and humiliation are examples of outside triggers, while expectations, desires and wishes trigger us from within. Anger can also surface from deep within us when our *samskaras* are being cleaned – we may not be aware of the source of the anger in this case, as it has come from the past, it has been stored in our subconscious mind long ago, forming a knot of trapped energy, and now it is being released.

## Dealing with criticism

A common cause of anger is criticism, especially when we feel that we are being criticized unjustly or it is unsolicited. What happens? We usually get angry and defensive, or we feel hurt, because that is our normal habit. What if we could respond differently? What if we are able to pause and consider the criticism as an opportunity to learn something about ourselves? After all,



we don't have to agree with the other person's words if the cap doesn't fit. Try to be thankful when somebody tells you, "Look, you made this mistake." When you rewire yourself, you will then thank the person, and say to them, "Now I have an opportunity to correct myself; I did not realize this mistake until you spoke to me."

With such an attitude of openness, you will be able to welcome change and new possibilities, and the result will be continuous improvement. That is why the first Heartfulness Guide, Lalaji, said that criticism is necessary if we want to attain sainthood. Forget about sainthood – criticism is necessary if we want to attain excellence in anything we do. For a person who has such an understanding, criticism will not appear negative; it will be a window of opportunity.

## Expectations

Another common cause of anger is our expectations. When they are not fulfilled, they often turn ugly and give birth to this fire of anger. The insistence on the fulfillment of expectations is even uglier. It acts like oil poured on a fire; it will only intensify the fire. The difference between having an expectation and the insistence on its fulfillment has to be understood. For example, consider the difference between a child saying, "Mommy ought to come to my school to pick me up," and "No one but Mommy must come to my school! She must pick me up!" Doggedness on the fulfillment of expectations fuels anger with greater intensity.

## Where are you?

Let's now explore how meditation helps us to become more alert in managing anger. Ask yourself, "When I meditate, is my awareness present? Am I witnessing my acts, thoughts and feelings, or am I mentally absent?" You can also ask yourself, "When I am angry, am I aware of what is happening inside me, or am I absent?" Often it is this absence that actually triggers anger. When you are unaware and absent, how can you manage what you do, be it meditation or anger?

When you are angry, notice how the anger is flowing. Don't repress it, let it be there, become aware. This very act of witnessing will work like a light in the darkness. When you become aware of what is happening inside you, suddenly peace will descend. The energy that fueled the anger will now fuel peace, the quality of which you will have never experienced before. This contradiction is due to the nature of anger itself. As you become more and more aware, the time gap between your anger and its U-turn will become less and less, and as the gap continues to

lessen with greater awareness, eventually it will tend toward zero, and you will always be at peace.

Impressive peace annihilates the impulses of violence. It is in a peaceful environment that creativity finds true meaning. It is in a peaceful environment that mothers are able to nurture their children. It is in a peaceful environment that we witness and enjoy happiness and so many other wonderful things.

Practicing meditation develops the skill of being aware and present. Thus, it helps us to reduce the time gap between anger and its U-turn. We are able to respond faster with empathy and nobility of character.



## What about attitude?

Now ask yourself another question; "Why do I want to curb my anger?" Is it because you think it is sinful, or because it will raise your level of stress hormones and damage your system? If that is the case, your approach is already a step higher than someone who gets angry all the time, but it is still selfish. It lacks wisdom, since it arises out of a desire to prevent sin rather than because of heartfelt compassion. You are alert to not committing a sin so that you will not be punished. It is the attitude with which you curb anger that will change your future. Is it that you do not want to injure another person for their sake, or is it to protect yourself from a sinful act so as to qualify for heaven? It is better to opt for kindness and compassion.

## Postponing anger

We often postpone good things till later, like meditating regularly, or eating healthy food, or exercising; but rarely is an outburst of anger postponed! Think about this: Can you hold onto that intensity for more than 24 hours? By then it is bound to have dissipated from your system or been internalized. We cannot hold such explosive energy for too long. Moreover, when we do get

angry, it can have such a long lasting effect way into the distant future. The toxicity that follows an eruption can be very stressful, causing damage to so many.

So, try pausing and simply postpone the outburst for a day or two. One or more of the following things may happen:

- You may feel pity for the other person;
- You may think, “Thank goodness I didn’t react!”;
- You may also realize that the other person was right in criticizing you. Then you can thank them for sharing the truth;
- Even if the other person was wrong, why make it worse? By not reacting, you will preserve the relationship and improve the situation.

## Emotional energy

Once anger arises, the energy that is activated remains trapped within us until it finds closure. A sad encounter with another person also remains as an emotional imprint until it finds closure. Love lost creates a vacuum. All these have a ripple effect, both within us as well as on the other people in our lives.

Joy and other positive emotions also create energy fields: they display an inflated curve compared with the negative emotional memories that display an inverted curve.

Remember the time gap of response we explored earlier? Wise people who have mastered their emotions actually avoid having to reduce the gap, because they know how to prevent anger from expressing itself in the first place. Before something happens, they have already anticipated the possible outcomes, and they adjust themselves, until eventually their inner state is of such a high order that there is no longer a need to adjust. Compare this with the other extreme – those people who are so foolish that they rarely adjust even after witnessing the consequences. Most people are somewhere in between. They realize after they have become angry and correct themselves, while those who are slightly better realize during the anger and stop themselves from continuing.

## Uncovering our true nature step by step

Wise people also learn how to master another sort of time gap – the gap between two distracting desires. This time we want the time gap to lengthen as we progress, and as this gap lengthens, so does the gap between two associated thoughts. Eventually it leads to a permanent condition called *nirodha*, where the mind is brought to a perfectly self-contained state with no desires and no thoughts. Now, having no disturbance due to desires or thoughts, we are able to rejoice in the true nature of the Self. There is peace, no pulls and pushes, and pure awareness.



*Nirodha* joins with another tendency known as *ekagra-vritti*, which propels us in the direction of our cherished goal in life. *Nirodha* dispels desires and an impactful ego, and *ekagrata* focuses our attention on where we are headed. Together they work like a two-edged sword, leading us to *Samadhi*, due to the settling of the dust storm of thoughts that has arisen out of our desires and egotism. Thoughts, ideas and intentions slowly disappear into oblivion. As the gap between two thoughts lengthens, there is the possibility of feelings surfacing, so thoughts are replaced by feelings of various types. One feeling goes and another takes hold, until eventually the gap between feelings also extends so that they too disappear. They are replaced by states of becoming. One state of becoming goes and another takes hold, and on it goes ...

During meditation, we can observe that as the gap between two thoughts widens, focused attention is the result, especially when the two thoughts are identical. For example, we have the thought of the source of divine light in the heart. After some time, the same thought repeats. Likewise, when the gap between two feelings widens, their identical recurrence leads to focused feeling, giving us some level of emotional stability and peace.

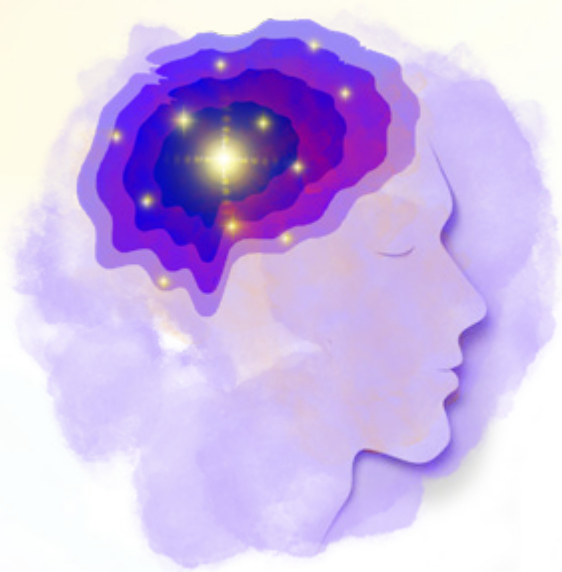
Let’s compare this with a more changeable mental state: Try to remember when you were angry recently – how long did the anger last? What feelings followed immediately after the anger, and then later on? What about a time when you were very happy and joyous? How long did that



last, and what followed? Sadness is followed by happiness, pleasure is followed by guilt, anger is followed by compassion, and absorption is followed by restlessness. There is constant change within, like the ever-changing formations of clouds floating in the sky. Our sky of consciousness keeps changing, based on our thoughts, feelings, and conditions.

We become so many things in such a short period of time. In the morning, you may be restless and anxious due to an exam, but later on, having completed the exam and done well, you become jovial. When our focus keeps changing, as well as our surroundings, our feelings and our condition, we become vulnerable. Imagine a bird that is flying very fast – it is so difficult to photograph it while it is constantly moving. Similarly, it is hard to pinpoint a mind that is constantly moving from one thought to another, one feeling to another. And in the case of our mind, it moves faster than the speed of light! Can a wandering mind attain happiness?

So the solution is to develop a focused mind. And that is only possible by doing some sort of mental gymnastics. The best type of mental gymnastics is provided by the Heartfulness practices, because single-pointed attention of the mind happens simply and effortlessly when we adopt these practices. The natural outcome of having a focused mind is that the heart then remains steady with single-pointed feelings. We remain constantly in tune with our inner feelings. If we also purify and simplify our behavioral tendencies, we can reach a level where single-pointedness of thought, feeling and condition remains.



When we start our spiritual journey, meditating every morning, sometimes it is frustrating because the heart and mind are full of thoughts and feelings. We want to feel peaceful and still, but instead we are acutely aware of the activity within us. In fact, this is very normal. It is rarely the case that we have single-pointed attention from the beginning. Concentration is the outcome of meditation, not the other way around. Thankfully, Transmission gives us glimpses of the focused state from the beginning, and this gives us more of an incentive to continue.

Eventually, we go beyond feeling to becoming. In the time gap between two “becomings” we are able

to remain constant or *sthit*. As the gap between two “becomings” grows, the settled state paves the way for jumping into the abyss of the Absolute Void. Without this steadiness of heart and mind, we remain in limbo.

What do you say to friends who go on changing their minds? Their fickleness is the opposite of constancy and steadiness. Another example is when two people come to me hand in hand, declaring their love for each other, wanting to get married on that very day itself! In order to accommodate their families and friends, they are married after a month or so, and after a few months I learn that they have already separated.

What we call fickleness or dispersion of the mind is known as the loss of *ekagrata* in the words of Patanjali. What we call the constant fickleness of feelings can culminate in multiple personality disorder in the vocabulary of psychiatrists. An ever-changing mind and an ever-changing heart result in an ever-changing consciousness. It feels as though there are so many individuals in one person. In all this, the middle factor of “feeling” plays a major role. Constancy in feelings, or the largest possible time gap between two feelings, is what defines a person.

## Where do these feelings come from?

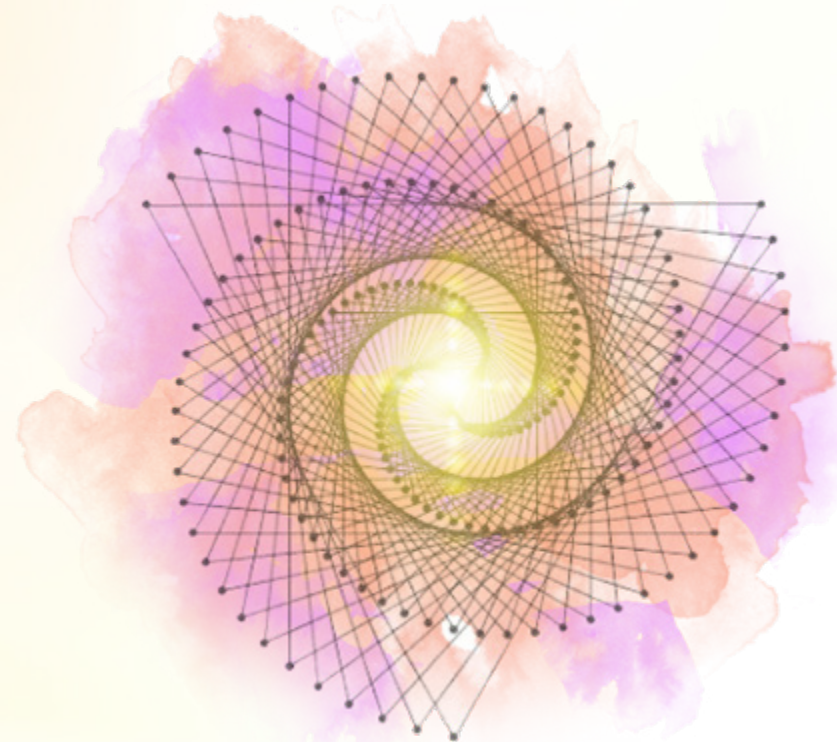
Are they really ours? In a sense, yes, they are our feelings, but they can be triggered from outside. They are often manipulated from outside or from inside, as automatic reactions to situations. In fact, when the mind is not guided by the soul through the heart, the whole of the mind is manipulated from outside. Then it becomes a mechanism, rather than being the essence of us. Awareness is beyond the mind, and it is not controlled by the outside or by any idea. So far, there is no scientific experiment that shows any center in the brain corresponding to awareness. The whole purpose of meditation and spirituality is to bring awareness of all that is the mind, and to let go of our identification with it – to bring awareness, alertness and consciousness.

And understanding all that is in the mind through meditation gives us a much deeper insight about what hurts us the most, and why we react the way we do. It all depends on our identification. The outermost part of our existence is our physical body. If we are completely identified with our body, any attack or criticism at the physical level will hurt, for example, “Your face looks awful.” But most people are more insulted when their mind is attacked – for example, “Why didn’t you think!” – because we identify more deeply with the mind than the body. That is why bipolar disorder has more stigma attached to it than diabetes, even though both are serious diseases – one of is of the mind and the other of the body.



If someone attacks our intelligence, it is even more hurtful: “You are so stupid! How did you arrive at such a decision!” And if someone attacks our ego-subtle body, it hurts the most, as the ego is closer to the soul. From that perspective, the mind can be considered as an outside agency. When someone insults you and you become angry, the person’s insult is only a remote trigger. So why would you behave like a puppet, letting your anger be manipulated in that person’s hands?

If you are angry, remember that your mind is being controlled remotely, behaving like a gramophone record, according to the combination of cognates that you have accumulated as *samskaras* from your past, that are laid down as neural pathways in the brain. And as you go on removing your identification with the mind, you will discover the awareness of your being, your soul. The realization of that distinction between those cognates and the higher awareness of your soul is one of the greatest things that can happen to you, because then you are free!



Right now, your mind, which should be the servant, is playing the role of the master. As a result, you are a slave of your wishes. The mind is functioning like a puppet. This is where establishing a goal in life can help so much. You are able to focus on your goal, and you will naturally avoid all those thoughts and feeling that distract you from it. In Heartfulness we call that constant remembrance. Your whole life takes on a new dimension. You experience life in life. Transmission infuses that life in life into you in every meditation – in fact, it is the source of life in life.

## How to understand and support the anger of others?

But this game of anger is not only about us. What is your response when others get angry? Do you try to fix them by attempting to correct them? Buying time is the best support you can give, as the anger will dissipate. But if that is not possible, it helps if you sit prayerfully, center yourself, and let the person dissipate their explosiveness by listening and by your own calmness.

Silently make the subtlest of suggestions that their anger is being pulled out, and that the person is becoming more loving and understanding.

## The consequences of anger

Can cheerfulness and anger go together? Just as fire cannot emit coolness, anger cannot allow cheerfulness to be conceived. An angry person can neither receive nor share love. So, even if you are physically healthy, financially wealthy, and intellectually sound, what will happen to you if your ability to love and be loved is missing? Who wants to associate with a person with a short fuse? Who wants to go near an inferno? You will see the consequences when love is rejected.

The virtuous garden that is blooming within you is packed with all kinds of gifts, like joy, humility, simplicity, purity and very strong moral muscles. All these may be incinerated by a tiny spark of anger. The fire of anger destroys everything in its trail – physical health, individual peace, mental well-being, harmony within the family, mutual trust, and the bridge connecting yourself with your higher consciousness. You may have a zillion reasons for justifying anger, but the fruits of such a poisonous weed are extremely toxic, so why entertain them?

## Continuous improvement

Let’s go back to Babuji’s idea that anger is a divine emotion; it is an energy that can never be destroyed and demands action from us. Its divine purpose is to bring about our continuous improvement.



So, whenever you are angry, instead of blaming others, exploding, feeling self-pity, or punishing yourself and feeling guilty, ask yourself, “How can I correct myself?” There is nothing wrong with making mistakes as long as you use the opportunity to improve yourself. Treat this as a challenge, an opportunity to evolve out of who you currently are to become the person you hope to be. When you are constantly vigilant, in such awareness there will not be any aggression, only hope for a brighter future.



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