

ANGER

By Anop R.Vora

The subject of anger has been addressed at length by the great men of the world for years. When we were growing up, our parents told us not to get angry, so did our school teachers, religious leaders, and social leaders. Yet judging from the way most of behave it is not evident that we have paid much attention to their advice. I don't think I am going to add much through this article to the body of knowledge that already exists on the subject; but after reviewing the fundamentals, I would like to share a few ideas to motivate us toward the application.

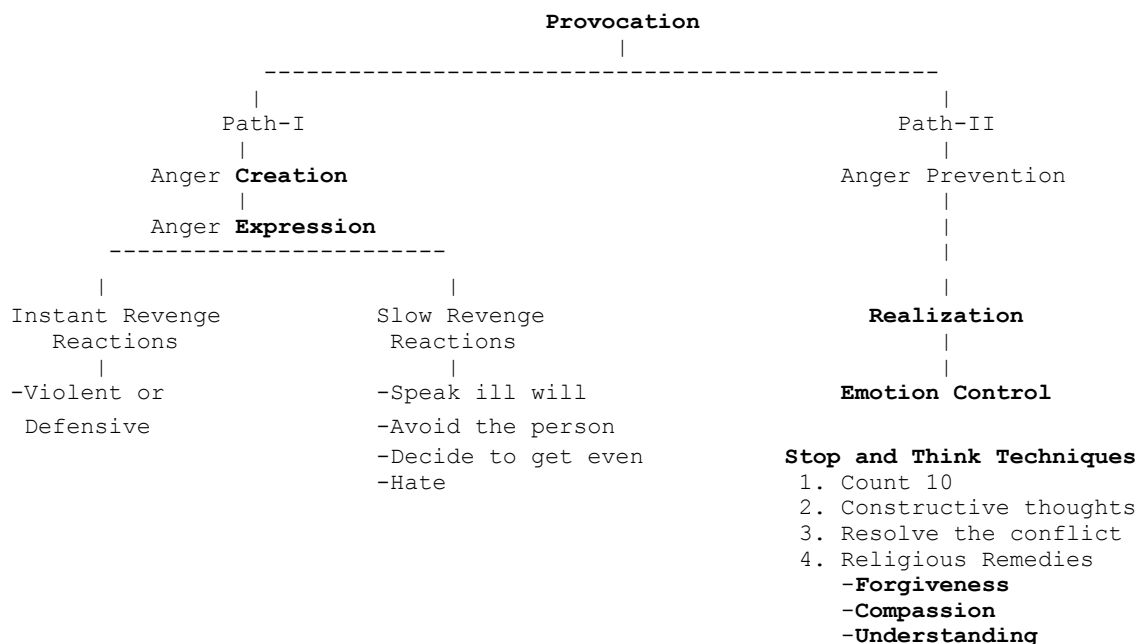
Anger is indeed a powerful emotion-unfortunately used destructively by most people. People get angry, lose their sense of discretion, and at times, ruin relationships with their loved ones in a split second- the relationships that might have taken them years to build.

It is not only the social damage that anger inflicts upon us. It is also the damage to the body and mind. It is scientifically proven that when we get angry, our heart pumps faster, blood pressure goes up, blood flow quickens, muscles tense, and more sugar is added to the blood stream. Headaches, tension, stomach problems are also said to have been connected with anger.

Most people react to certain life situations with anger rather instinctively-without realizing the consequences. Some of those situations are: Frustrations, Disappointments, Annoyance, Harassment, Jealousy, and Greed

These factors act as a catalyst to arouse the anger. Except probably the last two, others are a fact of life beyond our control. We will always have traffic jams, long lines at the bank or a grocery store, causing frustrations and irritations . We are also bound to run into disappointments as we take the journey through the life. The question is: How do we cope with these anger provoking situations?

To answer this question, let us try to understand the fundamental process of anger:



As the left side of the chart depicts, the anger has two components: Creation and expression. Most people follow path-I and upon provocation- get angry and express their anger either instantaneously or slowly over a long period of time-some times for decades!- intensity of expression depending upon the person's psychological make-up. Usually anger expressed in this fashion is destructive because it is accompanied with a number of other harmful emotions such as hate, sense of revenge, violence and many others.

Obviously, we won't have to worry about expressing our anger if we stop it from its creation. What does that mean ? It means the moment we start getting angry, we should quickly realize the emotion and take a detour! (path II). If we realize it and become aware of it, then most probably we will be able to control it.

This means we must allow our mind to stop, think, and reflect. If we think, we can't be angry ! That is one of the reasons modern psychiatrists recommend counting 10 when we are about to explode, and coming up with the ways to avoid the anger provoking situations in the first place.

Now let us look at the religious remedies. First of all, almost all major religions of the world have identified anger as one of the major sins. The common antidote advocated by them is FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION, AND UNDERSTANDING. It appears that the emphasis is on anger PREVENTION rather than EXPRESSION.

Jain Religion has identified 4 major Kashayas(sins)-anger,pride, trickery, and greed. Anger is shown on the top of the list. In addition it is shown intertwined with other emotions: such as hate, violence, jealousy etc. Jainism says that if you can control your anger, you should be able to control other destructive emotions too.

Enough about the fundamentals. Let us talk about the application.

We can attend lectures on swimming but not make any progress until we dive into the swimming pool and apply our knowledge. It is the same way with controlling anger. We must have heard about anger control-may be a thousand times by now. But probably it has not sunk into our thick skulls! Consequently- we are probably reacting to the life situations the same way as we did 10 to 15 years ago.

The make real progress we must APPLY the techniques I mentioned above (Path II). In practical terms, this means -next time when we experience an anger causing situation, we must not let our instinct control our action. We must decide to stop back and think. Let us set a manageable goal. Here is a suggestion:

Let us get up and run to our prayer room RIGHT NOW. Let us close our eyes and take a pledge, in front of God , that we will refrain from getting angry on atleast 5 occasions within the next month. Simple enough?

If we do not do anything after reading this article, most likely we are going to be no different even 5 years now or even 25 years now. We will probably react to the life provocations in the same way. On the other hand, if we try something concrete just 5 times in a month, we will appreciate the benefits and our success will motivate us to keep going higher and higher spiritually. The choice is ours.

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