

KEEP YOUR ANGER UNDER CONTROL

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I have heard an elderly friend saying one thing a number of times. “I will kill that fellow. I don’t mind if I have to go to jail for it.” This is not a criminally inclined person saying it. But I consider him a gentleman, a respected elder friend. It is possible that someone has done a grave injustice to him or he believes that someone has committed a grave crime against him.

I understand the anger of the respected friend. He is a public figure and he is in contact with many people. Still I believe that on account of his terrible anger against his opponent he does not want to get out of his own cocoon. His words and the attitude behind those words proclaim that he is not willing to try to understand his opponent and come to a peaceful state of mind. On the contrary, with the thought and talk of murdering his opponent he is feeding his anger and enflaming it!

In the natural world when animals face dangers for their existence they react in two ways. They either attack their enemy or they run away for lives. Their anger gives them the energy to confront the danger in one way or other. I enjoy watching the animal world in “Discovery” and “Animal Planet” television channels. Usually most animals run away for their lives when they see a lion or a tiger. Deer, gazelles and jungle buffalos, even when they are grazing together in big numbers, they run for their lives when they see a lion hunting a prey. But once I saw a herd of jungle buffaloes chasing a mighty lion in defense of their young ones.

The anger of animals in life-threatening situations helps them either to confront their enemy or to run away from the enemy. The behavior of human beings is also similar to that of the animals. But humans being intelligent, they not only see the danger to their existence but also see many other threatening causes. They are afraid of losing respect or breaking relationships. They are afraid also of losing their social standing or perhaps their jobs. They get frightened also about failing in their business or not getting the much desired object. They are afraid that people may hate them or friends may avoid them... There are many such sources of fright.

When any such situation arises the mind become energized by nature. The nervous system becomes stiff and tensed. The blood pressure goes up. And the person gets ready either to confront the situation or run away from the scene. But a person is an intelligent being. He/she need not behave just like an animal. In a frightening or undesirable situation instead of getting angry and acting emotionally person can look for ways and means to defend himself/herself from dangerous situations. But, unfortunately a person does not always behave intellectually!

Let us take an example. In Mumbai on May 7, 2008 Amarnath Grover was attacked with sharp weapons and was done to death. The criminals cut into pieces Grover’s body and burnt them. In the case the Mumbai police have arrested a Kannada actress living in Mumbai Maria Monica Susairaj and a Navy Officer M. L. Jerome Mathew. Here we are confronted with two questions. First, did the criminals faced with unexpected scene in a sudden burst of anger killed the victim Grover? Some wild animals suddenly attack the enemy in such situations. Or, two, the criminals plotted the crime in all its details and killed the victim to get away from an unwanted situation? We do not know what actually happened. Let us hope that the truth will come out sooner or later.

From these types of events and other personal experiences we know that a person's anger could turn out to be deadly. Overcome by anger a person can knowingly or unknowingly commit great crimes. But it is also true that an intelligent person need not be overcome by anger. A person can always control his anger. From being a slave to anger a person can become the master of his/her anger.

Psychologists tell us that a person can take certain concrete steps to overcome his/her anger. When a person gets angry in a sudden unexpected situation, the person can count in his mind slowly one to ten and regain peaceful mind and control his anger. This way the person gets time to respond to the situation intelligently instead of giving automatic instant response. Well-known American writer Mark Twain once wrote, "When you get angry, count one to ten and when you are very angry, say some bad words." Responding instantly at getting angry may lead one to commit atrocious things which person may have to repent later. But instead of acting on the spur of the moment in anger, if a person takes time to understand the whole situation causing anger and his/her anger itself, then the person will have no occasion to repent later.

The golden path to control anger is awareness and understanding. Animals do not have this awareness and understanding. Because animals are not intellectual beings. Faced with unpleasant events or unexpected attacks of one kind or another a person may become angry. A person may become angry with undesirable happenings confronting him/her. But a person can control his/her anger becoming aware of and understanding the forces at work.

Let us take the example of a drunkard father. His wife says that when he is not drunk, he is a very good person. But when he comes home after drinking, then there is no peace at home. Beating wife and children and loud wailing are the order. One day the son studying in a college came back from hostel and found his father making a scene at home after getting drunk. The son becomes very angry with his father. In his anger the son scolded and criticized the father with bad words.

When the father came to his senses, he felt very bad that even his son has dared to criticize and scold him with bad words and he cried like a child. When the son's anger subsided he too realized that he did not behave properly in his anger with his father. And he too cried and repented his anger. The son was studying in college with the money earned by the sweat of his father. If he was a little more understanding, and if he knew that the drunkardness was a sickness and what was needed was treatment like any other sickness instead of quarrelling with his father, he could have helped to improve the situation in his family. This way there would not have been any occasion for the father and son to repent and be sorry for themselves.

Here the story of the collegian son is very different from that of the elderly gentleman to whom I referred to in the beginning. The anger of that elderly friend is deadly. The anger of that person is enkindled not on the spur of the moment. His words reveal that he has thought about his opponent's crime against him and he has continuously enkindled the flame of his anger and cherished it. Now he sees the opponent's crime as a heinous one. So he thinks about murdering his opponent and going to jail. I believe that the gentle man would not do such a thing. Still his anger is real and knowingly or unknowingly he suffers from his anger. A person who cultivates anger suffers bodily, mentally and spiritually.

If a simple person feels anger against a big person, and he/she cherishes that anger through his/her behaviors and through his/her words, then the situation becomes very bad. For instance, a son feels anger against his father and he cultivates his anger through his words and actions, then the situation becomes really very bad. His anger eats into him like a cancer. Instead of a close relationship between the father and the son, hatred and dislike get into the life of the son!

All types of anger have one sure remedy, one solution. That miraculous remedy is forgiveness. Ordinarily a person gets angry when he sees that an injustice has been done to him/her and the anger is removed by giving him/her justice. In many cases the victim of injustice himself/herself will not be able to secure justice. So some people stick to their point of view that they will forgive only if they get justice in the crime committed against them and keep up their anger against their opponent. But understanding and trusting that “it is God who disperses justice” the person who forgives his/her enemy or opponent is happy. Forgiving his/her opponent from the bottom of his/her heart he/she can experience peace within and enjoy good health.

Here the words of the Bible are ideal. The Bible says, “If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day.” (Eph 4, 26). (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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