

MANAGING THAT RAGE

BY KURUSH DORDI

How often have we wished that we had behaved differently in times when our rage gets the better of us. How often do we wish that those sharp words uttered like arrows shot blindly and with ignorance could be pulled back into our quivers. In one way or another we have all experienced Anger. It is only in hindsight that we wish that we had acted differently. We hope in those times we had the calm demeanour of the Zen monk who knows how to act with serenity and composure to whatever life throws at him. However by then, the damage caused by the manifestation of that Anger has already been done. While very often we think Anger only affects the recipient, the truth is it does harm both ways. Modern scientists have even linked psychosomatic diseases to Anger; like blood pressure irregularity, digestion problems, and asthma. More often than not chronic anger destroys the very fabric of our social lives causing rifts, misunderstanding and the destruction of the sacred gift human beings have the privilege of, the gift of love.

Anger manifests in many ways and many wise men have prescribed ways to manage anger. And who better could we learn from, than the wise sayings of The Buddha. The Dhammapada, a collection of teachings of the Buddha, offers a glimpse into the importance of developing a way to manage Anger. Here are a few tips from extracts from The Dhammapada (Chapter 17).

I call him a charioteer who holds back the arisen anger as though (holding back) a swerving chariot. Others are only holders of reins. (Ch.17, St.222)

Overcome the angry by non-anger; overcome the wicked with good. Overcome the miserly by giving, the teller of lies with truth. (Ch.17, St. 223)

Speak the truth; do not get angry; give your mite to those who ask (for alms). On these three grounds one goes into the presence of the gods. (Ch.17, St. 224)

Those silent sages who are harmless (ahimsakas) and always (self) controlled go to the Immoveable Abode, whither having gone they do not grieve. (Ch.17, St. 225)

They come to the end of (their) defilements (asavas), those who keep awake, who study day and night, (and) who are intent on Nirvana. (Ch.17, St. 226)

Be on your guard against bodily agitation; be controlled in body. Giving up bodily misconduct, live well behaved as regards the body. (Ch.17, St. 231)

Be on your guard against verbal agitation; be controlled in speech. Giving up verbal misconduct, live well behaved as regards speech. (Ch.17, St. 232)

Be on your guard against mental agitation; be controlled in mind. Giving up mental misconduct, live well behaved as regards the mind. (Ch.17, St. 233)

The wise are controlled in bodily action, controlled in speech and controlled in thought. They are truly well-controlled. (Ch.17, St. 234)

FOR YOUR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. What triggers my anger? Is it a result of something external, or does anger lie within me, looking for opportunities to creep onto the surface?
2. When I get angry, what aspect of myself do I lose control over?
3. What do I wish to remember the next time something triggers anger?
4. Is it possible to get 'angry' with compassion?