

ANGER AND ITS MANAGEMENT



A HINDU APPROACH

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ANGER — ANALYZED THROUGH HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Hindu mythology is a mine of resources concerning every aspect of human psychology. The rather dry principles and teachings of Vedanta are spiced up and illustrated through exciting and imaginative settings and scenarios. The subjects of Dharma — ethics and Āchāra — practice, are teased out through stories, discussions and illustrations.

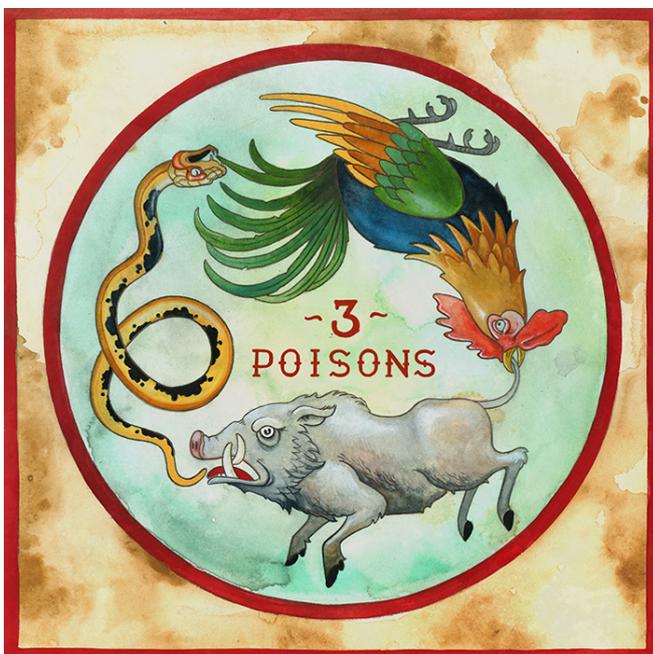
Hinduism is a philosophical system grounded in practice which is based on verifiable psychological principles. The starting point of Hindu philosophy is the existential problem of DUḤKHA which is translated as suffering, discontent, unhappiness, grief, anxiety, chronic stress etc. The purpose of studying philosophy is the mitigation of current *duḥkha* and the prevention of future *duḥkha*. In this series of booklets I am not going to be giving a philosophical analysis of *duḥkha* but rather focusing on personal spiritual practice and self-transformation as illustrated in the stories of Hindu mythology.

The Three Poisons.

In the Gītā Kṛṣṇa teaches about the three greatest obstacles to happiness and contentment here and now: —

*trividham narakasyedam dvāram nāśanam ātmanaḥ |
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet ||*

Self-referent desire, anger and greed/delusion — this is the threefold gateway to Naraka, ruinous to the Self. Therefore one should abandon these three. (Gita 16:21)



In this verse Krishna has given us the three primary spiritual obstacles that we all face and which we need to tackle in our journey of personal development.

nāśanam ātmanaḥ — "they destroy the Self" — these three poisons are the causes of our own self-destruction, they obscure and obliterate the true nature of the *jīvātman* (sat-chit-ānanda) and cause much grief and sorrow.

narakasya-dvāram — "they are the gateways to hell." Not as in Christianity and Islam — leading to a physical roasting in the fires of hell for all eternity, but rather as causing "hellish" conditions here on earth, for oneself and for one's family and associates.

And these three poisons are: —

1. *kāma* (symbolized by the rooster)— literally 'desire' but refers generally to all self-centered desires and craving which are grounded in spiritual ignorance (*avidya*) of our true natures. We assume a myriad of identities for ourselves based on our desire to be someone (*ahaṅkāra*). In accordance with these assumed identities we then develop attractions and cravings (*rāga*) and repulsions and hatred (*dveṣa*)

2. *krodha* (symbolized by the snake) — anger which results from failed hopes and desires or frustrated expectations. When our desires, hopes and expectations are not met we react with anger - either at ourselves or at others. Of all the poisons this is the *most* destructive. In a fit of anger we are capable of even killing our dearest ones and destroying in an instant the positive accumulation of years of effort.

3. *Lobha* (symbolized by the pig) — greed or stinginess is a quality which is grounded in delusion (*moha*) and is the absence of generosity, empathy and compassion. This state of mind leads to further rebirth and stagnation in *samsāra*.

tasmāt etat trayam tyajet — therefore, by all means, one should abandon these three poisons.

These three poisons are the basis for much of modern, progressive political and sociological ideology. The primacy of the individual and satisfaction of his/her desires (*kāma*). Anger and outrage (*krodha*) is seen as positive and self-affirming means of accomplishing one's goals. The pursuit of self-serving profit (*lobha*) to the detriment of the environment, society and workers is seen as a positive business model.

In the daily prayers of the Hindus, **anger** (*manyu/krodha*) and **self-referent desire** (*kāma*) are mentioned as the causes of all transgressions and the two drives to be struggled against. Anger is negated through forgiveness and compassion, and the antidote to self-referent desire is empathetic joy - rejoicing in the happiness of others and generosity. Generosity takes the two forms of active generosity through giving of one's time and resources to help others, and passive generosity — not obstructing the happiness of others.

In iconography these three drives are associate with the Trimurti.

Brahma the creator — *moha*. Delusion is the misidentification of oneself with the body and material stuff. The identification as male/female, insider/outsider, intelligent/stupid, capable/incapable etc.; through one's profession, possessions, relationships, interests, achievements, goals and aspirations etc. These are the personality masks that we assume to create self-identity (*ahaṅkāra* = "I-maker") and then we become attached to all those things that support our assumed identities (*mamata* - "mineness"). Brahmā is the creating energy which projects all things into existence, and through this act of self-projection Brahma becomes the source of all delusion.

Viṣṇu the preserver — *kāma*. Desire is both good and bad. Good desire is directed towards the welfare of all beings. Viṣṇu is the embodiment of the desire for the welfare of the entire world and all his acts and pastimes are directed to this end. By default humans are born selfish for the biological purpose of self-preservation. Our spiritual unfolding entails reversing this natural inclination and emulating Viṣṇu, living a life of meaningful service of others, being a benevolent presence in the world, maintaining harmony and balance.

Śiva the transformer — *krodha*. Everything that comes into existence ends in destruction, whatever appears must disappear. At the end of the cycle of creation Śiva becomes active in destroying the entire universe and recreating it. In the Vedas his predominant characteristic is wrath and He presides over destruction. The destructive aspect of nature — storms, bush-fires, earth-quakes etc. — all appear as displays of wrath (Rudra) but they are nothing but natural processes.

Anger also has two aspects. Positive anger is skillfully directed towards injustice, evil, wickedness and chaos. Śiva is the wrathful deity Rudra whose anger is directed towards all those demonic forces which are disturbing the world, creating havoc and mayhem. He is constantly meditating on the welfare of the world and is quick to anger in combating cosmic miscreants.

Some Teachings on Anger from the Scriptures.

From the Gita

arjuna uvāca

*atha kena prayukto 'yam pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ |
anicchann-api vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ ||*

Arjuna said: But, impelled by what, O Krishna, does one transgress even against one's own will, constrained as it were, by force? (Gita 3:36)

śrī bhagavan uvāca

*kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ |
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhyenam-iha vairiṇam ||*

The Blessed Lord said; It is desire, it is anger, born of the Guna of Rajas; all-devouring, an impeller to sin. Know this (desire) to be the foe here. (Gita 3:37)

Here Krishna clarifies the dynamic of anger. Anger is the reaction to frustrated desires which in turn arise from our aspirational drives (*rajas*) we have. Our aspirational happiness projects can become over-powering and over-whelming – and it is because of this we are often inclined to act in unethical and sometimes illegal ways — causing offence and pain to others.

*dambho darpo 'bhimānaśca krodhaḥ pāruṣyam eva ca |
ajñānaṁ cābhijātasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm ||*

Religious hypocrisy, hubris, self-conceit, anger, rudeness and ignorance these, O Arjuna, belong to one who is born to a non-Divine estate. (Gita 16:4)

*kāma krodha viyuktānām yatīnām yata-cetasām |
abhito brahma-nirvāṇam vartate viditātmanām ||*

To those who are free from desire and anger, who aspire [for realisation] whose minds are controlled, and who have attained self-mastery — the Great Nirvana is close at hand. (Gita 5:26)

From Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa

Rama's discourse to Lakṣmaṇa in Adhyatam Ramayana 1:4:36)

*krodhaḥ mūlo manas-tāpaḥ krodhaḥ saṁsāra bandhanam |
dharma kṣaya-karaḥ krodhaḥ tasmāt krodham parityaja ||
krodha eṣa mahān śatru tṛṣṇā vaitaraṇī nadī |*

*Anger is the root of mental distress, anger keeps one bound to transmigration.
Anger diminishes Dharma — therefore abandon anger by all means.
Anger is a great enemy here and craving is the river Vaitarani¹.*

¹ *Vaitarani* is the fetid river which separates the material world from the spiritual world — the same as the river Styx in Greek mythology. The name literally means - "difficult to cross" – insinuating that craving is as formidable an obstacle to happiness as the river.

Rama to Lakṣmaṇa in Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa 4:15,16)

*tasmād yatnaḥ sadā kāryo vidyābhyāse mumukṣubhiḥ |
kāma krodhādayas tatra śatravaḥ śatru-sūdanaḥ || 15 ||*

Therefore everyone who aspires for liberation should strive to cultivate wisdom. In the cultivation of wisdom, O destroyer of enemies, the principle obstructing factors are selfish desire, anger, [and delusion, hubris, greed and envy.]

*tatrāpi krodha evālaṃ mokṣa-vighnāya sarvadā |
yenāviṣṭhaḥ pumān hanti pitṛ bhrātr suhṛt sakhīn || 16 ||*

Of all these anger is the greatest obstacle to Liberation; for overcome by anger, a man even murders his father, brother, well-wishers and friends.



Śiva as Rudra

Yudhiṣṭhira's discourse on Anger to Draupadi

Vana Parva Section 29

Yudhishtira said,

*krodho hantā manuṣyāṇām krodho bhāvayitā punaḥ |
iti vidधि mahā-prājñe krodha-mūlau bhavābhavau || 1 ||*

Anger is the slayer of people and also their prosperity. Know this, O intelligent Draupadi, that anger is the root of all prosperity (through its control) and all adversity (through its expression).

*yo hi samharate krodham bhavas tasya suśobhane |
yaḥ punaḥ puruṣaḥ krodham nityam na saḥate śubhe |
tasyābhāvāya bhavati krodhaḥ parama dāruṇaḥ || 2 ||*

O beautiful one, one that suppresses anger gains prosperity. That person, again, who always gives way to anger, reaps adversity from therefrom.

*krodha-mūlo vināśo hi prajānām iha dṛśyate |
tat katham mādrśaḥ krodham utsṛjel-loka nāśanam || 3 ||*

It is seen in this world that anger is the cause of destruction of every creature. How then can one like me (who is a noble prince) give way to anger which is so destructive of the world?

*kruddhaḥ pāpaṁ naraḥ kuryāt kruddho hanyād gurūnapi |
kruddhaḥ paruṣayā vācā śreyaso'pyavamanyate || 4 ||*

Through anger one commits sin. The angry person is capable of killing even preceptors. In anger one insults even superiors with harsh words.

*vācyāvācye hi kupito na prajānāti karhicit |
nākāryam asti kruddhasya nāvācyaṁ vidyate tathā || 5 ||*

The angry person fails to distinguish between what should be said and what should not. There is no act that an angry person may not do, no word that an angry person may not utter.

*himṣyāt krodhād avadhyāṁstu vadhyān sampūjayīta ca |
ātmānam api ca kruddhaḥ preṣayed yama-sādanam || 6 ||*

From anger one may slay an innocent person, and may venerate one that deserves to be slain. The angry person may even send himself to the regions of Yama (the god of death).

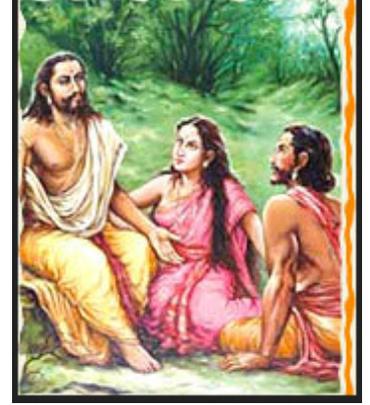
*etān doṣān prapaśyadbhir jitaḥ krodho manīṣibhiḥ |
icchadbhiḥ paramaṁ śreya iha cāmutra cottamam || 7 ||*

Realizing all these faults, the wise control their anger, desirous of obtaining the greatest good both in this and the other world.

*ātmānam ca parāṁścaiva trāyate mahato bhayāt |
krudhyantam aprati krudhyan dvayoreṣa cikitsakaḥ || 9 ||*

One that does not retaliate against an enraged person, rescues himself as also others from great fear. In fact, he may be regarded as the physician of the two (viz., himself and angry man).

*mūḍho yadi kliṣyamānaḥ krudhyate'śaktimān naraḥ |
balīyasām manuṣyāṇām tyajaty ātmānam ātmanā || 10 ||*



If a weak person, persecuted by others, foolishly becomes angry towards them that are mightier, then he simply commits self-destruction.

*tasyātmānaṁ saṁtyajato lokā naśyantyanātmanaḥ |
tasmād draupady-aśaktas manyor niyamaṁ smṛtam || 11 ||*

And one who thus deliberately self-destructs gains nothing in this world or the after-life. Therefore, O Draupadi, it has been said that the weak should always suppress their anger.

*vidvāṁs tathaiva yaḥ śaktaḥ kliśyamānaḥ prakupyati |
anāśayitvā kleśṭāraṁ paraloke na nandati || 12 ||*

And the wise man too who although being persecuted, controls his anger, experiences joy in the hereafter having passed his persecutor over in indifference.

*tasmād balavatā caiva durbalena ca nityadā |
kṣantavyaṁ puruṣeṇāhur-āpatsvapi vijānatā || 13 ||*

It is for this reason has it been taught that the wise, whether strong or weak, should always forgive a persecutor even when the latter is in a predicament.

*manyorhi vijayaṁ kṛṣṇe praśaṁsantīha sādhaḥ |
kṣamāvato jayo nityaṁ sādhor-iha satāṁ matam || 14 ||*

It is for this, O Krishnā, that the virtuous applaud them that have conquered their anger. Indeed, it is the opinion of the virtuous that the honest and forgiving person is always victorious.

*satyaṁ cānṛtataḥ śreyo nṛśaṁsyāccānṛśaṁsatā |
tam evaṁ bahu doṣaṁ tu krodhaṁ sādhu vivarjitam || 15 ||*

Truth is more beneficial than untruth; and gentleness than cruelty. Anger gives rise to so many faults and is totally reject by the virtuous.

*yastu krodhaṁ samutpannaṁ prajñayā patibādhate |
tejasvināṁ taṁ vidvāṁso manyante tattva-darśinaḥ || 17 ||*

One who through mental determination suppresses rising anger, is considered to be possessed of heroic splendour by the discerning pandits.

*kruddho hi kāryaṁ suśroṇi na yathāvat prapaśyati |
nākāryaṁ na ca maryādāṁ naraḥ kruddho 'nupaśyati || 18 ||*

O you of shapely hips! the angry person doesn't see things in their true light. The angry one is unaware of the proper way to act, nor does he respect others.

*hantyaavadhyān api kruddho gurūn kruddhastudatyapi |
tasmāt tejasi kartavye krodho dūre pratiṣṭhitaḥ || 19 ||*

The angry man is capable of murdering even those that deserve not to be killed. The angry man kills even his elders. Therefore, one who has force of character should always banish anger to a distance.

*dākṣyaṁ hyamarṣaḥ śauryaṁ ca śīghratvam iti tejaṣaḥ |
guṇāḥ krodhābhibhūtena na śakyāḥ prāptum añjasā || 20 ||*

One that is overwhelmed with anger cannot easily develop generosity, dignity, courage, skill, and other attributes belonging to real force of character.

*krodhaṁ tyaktvā tu puruṣaḥ samyak tejo 'bhipadyate |
kāla-yuktaṁ mahā-prājñaiḥ krudhdais tejaḥ sudurlabham || 21 ||*

By abandoning anger one can exhibit proper energy, whereas, O wise one, it is highly difficult for an angry person to exhibit his energy at the proper time!

*krodhas tvapaṇḍitaiḥ śaśvat teja ityabhiniścitam |
rajas tu loka-nāśāya vihitaṁ mānuṣām prati || 22 ||*

The ignorant always regard anger as a mark of authenticity. Anger in humans, which arises from the *rajo-guna* is the means for destroying the world.

*tasmācchaśvat tyajet krodhaṁ puruṣaḥ samyag ācaran |
śreyān svadharmān apago na kruddha iti niścitam || 23 ||*

Those, therefore, who wish to behave properly, must ever forsake anger. Even one who has abandoned all the excellent virtues of his own order should still never give way to anger.

*yadi na syur mānuṣeṣu kṣamiṇaḥ pṛthivī samāḥ |
na syāt sandhir manuṣyāṇām krodha-mūlo hi vighrahaḥ || 25 ||*

If amongst people there were not those equal to the earth in forgiveness, there would be no peace among people but perpetual strife caused by anger.

*abhiṣakto hyabhiṣajedāhanyād guruṇā hataḥ |
evam vināśo bhūtānām amadharmāḥ prathito bhavet || 26 ||*

If the injured return their injuries, if one chastised by his superior were to chastise his superior in return, the consequence would be the destruction of every creature, and sin also would prevail in the world.

*ākruṣṭa puruṣaḥ sarvaṁ pratyākrośed anantaram |
pratihanyād dhataścaiva tathā hiṁsyācca hiṁsitaḥ || 27 ||*

If the one abused by another, retaliates with abuse; if an injured person retaliates in kind: if the chastised person chastises in return;

*hanyurhi pitarāḥ putrān putrāścāpi tathā pitṛn |
hanyuśca patayo bhāryāḥ patīn bhāryās tathaiva ca || 28 ||*

If fathers slay sons, and sons fathers and if husbands slay their wives, and wives their husbands;

*evam saṅkupite loke śamaḥ kṛṣṇo na vidyate |
prajānām sandhi-mūlam hi śamaṁ viddhi śubhānane || 29 ||*

A world thus perturbed by anger will be devoid of peace everywhere. O beautiful Krishnā, how can creativity which is based on cooperation arise in a world where anger prevails!

*tāḥ kṣiperan prajāḥ sarvāḥ kṣipraṁ draupadi tādrśāḥ |
tasmān manyur vināśāya prajānām abhavāya ca || 30 ||*

O Draupadi, If the kings also, give way to anger as you suggest, the subjects very quickly meet with destruction, therefore rage is definitely the cause of comprehensive social destruction.

*yasmāt tu loke drśyante kṣamiṇaḥ pṛthivī-samāḥ |
tasmāj janma ca bhūtānām bhavaśca pratipadyate || 31 ||*

There are in the world people who are indeed forgiving like the Earth, therefore it is that creatures are able to be born and to prosperity.

*ākruṣṭas tāḍitaḥ kruddhaḥ kṣamate yo balīyasā |
yaśca nityaṁ jita-krodho vidvān uttama pūruṣaḥ || 33 ||*

He, indeed, is a wise and excellent person who has conquered his anger and who shows forgiveness even when insulted, oppressed, and angered by a strong person.

*atrāpyudāharantīmā gāthā nityam kṣamāvatām |
gītāḥ kṣamāvatām kṛṣṇe kāśyapena mahātmanā || 35 ||*

O Krishnā, the illustrious and forgiving Kaśyapa has, in this respect, sung the following verses in honour of those that are ever forgiving,

*kṣamā dharmāḥ kṣamā yajñāḥ kṣamā vedāḥ kṣamā śrutam |
ya etad evam vijānāti sa sarvaṁ kṣantu mahati || 36 ||*

‘Forgiveness is virtue; forgiveness is sacrifice, forgiveness is the Vedas, forgiveness is the perennial teaching. He that knows this is capable of forgiving everything.

*kṣamā brahma kṣamā satyam kṣamā bhūtaṁ ca bhāvi ca |
kṣamā tapaḥ kṣamā śaucaṁ kṣamayedaṁ dhṛtaṁ jagat || 37 ||*

Forgiveness is boundless; forgiveness is truth; forgiveness is current, forgiveness is the future, forgiveness is ascetic merit; forgiveness purity, forgiveness holds the universe together.

*ati yajña-vidāṁ lokān kṣamiṇaḥ prāpnuvanti ca |
ati brahma-vidāṁ lokān ati cāpi tapasvinām || 38 ||*

Persons that are forgiving attain to the regions obtainable by those that have preformed Vedic sacrifices, or those that are well-conversant with the Vedas, or those that are great meditators.

*anye vai yajuṣāṁ lokāḥ karminām apare tathā |
kṣamāvatām brahma-loke lokāḥ parama pūjitāḥ || 39 ||*

Those that perform Vedic sacrifices as also those that act according to Dharma obtain other regions. The forgiving, however, obtain those much-adored regions that are in the world of Brahma.

*kṣamā tejasvinām tejaḥ kṣamā brahma tapasvinām |
kṣamā satyam satyavatām kṣamā yajñāḥ kṣamā śamaḥ || 40 ||*

Forgiveness is the might of the mighty; forgiveness is the sacrifice of meditators; forgiveness is the truth of the truthful, forgiveness is yajña and self-control.

*tām kṣamāṁ tādrśīm kṛṣṇe katham asmad vidhas tyajet |
yasyām brahma ca satyam ca yajñā lokāśca dhiṣṭhitāḥ || 41 ||*

How, O Krishnā, can one like me abandon forgiveness, which is such, and in which are established Brahma, truth, yajna, wisdom and the worlds?

*kṣantavyam eva satatam puruṣeṇa vijānatā |
yadā hi kṣamate sarvaṁ brahma saṁpadyate tadā || 42 ||*

The wise should always forgive, for when one is capable of forgiving everything, one attains to state of Brahma.

*kṣamāvatām ayaṁ lokaḥ paraścaiva kṣamāvatām |
iha sanmānam ṛcchanti paratra ca parā gatim || 43 ||*

The world belongs to those that are forgiving; the other world is also theirs. The forgiving acquire honours here, and a state of blessedness hereafter.

*yeṣāṁ manyur manuṣyāṇām kṣamayā bhihataḥ sadā |
teṣāṁ paratare lokās tasmāt kṣāntiḥ parā matā || 44 ||*

Those that always conquer their anger by forgiveness, obtain the higher regions. Therefore forgiveness is considered the highest virtue.’

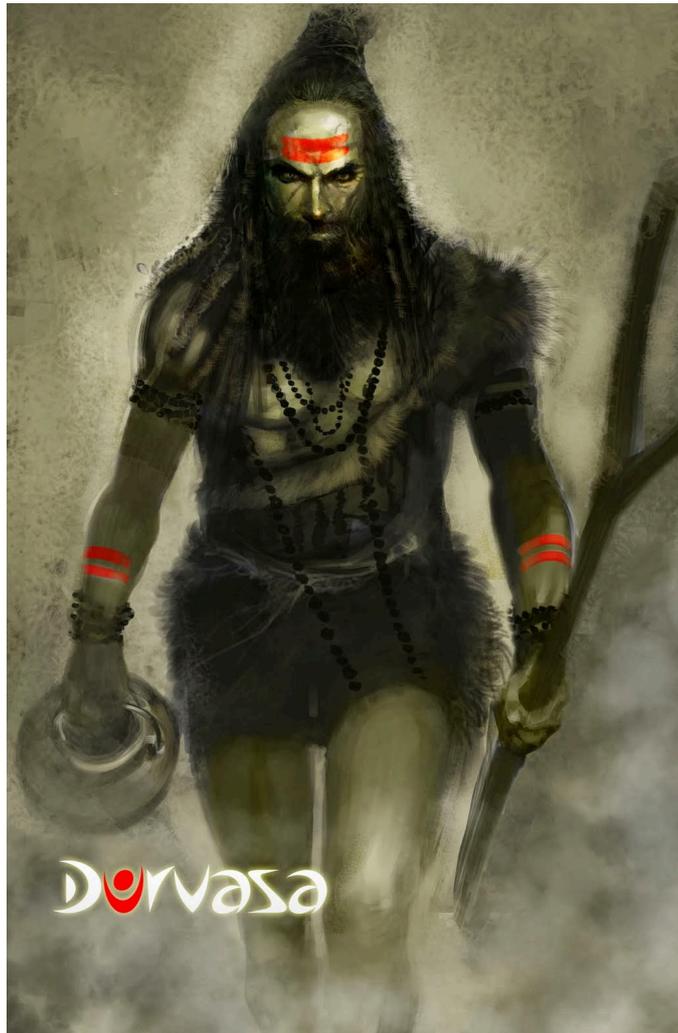
*iti gāthāḥ kāśyapena gāthā nityaṁ kṣamāvatām |
śrutvā gāthāḥ kṣamāyās tvam tuṣya draupadi mā krudhaḥ || 45 ||*

Those are the verses composed by Kashyapa in respect of those that are always forgiving. Having listened, O Draupadi, to these verses about forgiveness, be calm! Don't be angry!

ANGER IN HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Let us now explore Anger through the prism of Hindu mythology.

Sage Durvasa occupies a predominant position in the hagiographies of India. Durvasa was an accomplished yogi and through his extreme austerity, penance and meditation had attained many psychic powers. He was considered to be a partial incarnation of Lord Shiva (the personification of his wrath) and was renowned for his short temper which earned him the epithet — *Krodha Bhaṭṭāraka*, the "irascible one". Although he was a great and learned sage, his lack of ability to control his anger was his greatest weakness. He used to get highly enraged at trivial issues and often cursed the person whom he perceived as offending, without thinking much about the consequences. No one was spared his anger including gods, anti-gods, humans etc. But his anger was always short-lived and he himself would often reveal the method of modifying the effect of his curses. Although he was highly respected for his knowledge and wisdom, everyone was more terrified of his anger, and because of his short temper, he was always welcomed with great trepidation and reverence by all for the fear of being cursed. Durvasa was renowned for testing his devotees and those who passed his stringent conditions received valuable boons.



STORIES OF DURVĀSA'S BIRTH

Durvāsa is regarded as a partial Avatara of Shiva, but there are several different stories and narrative variations regarding his actual advent.

Story 1.

According to the Bhagavata Purana — Being inspired by Lord Brahmā to procreate, Atri the chief of the learned sages, together with his wife Anusuya went to the great mountain named Riksha to perform austerities. Controlling the mind by regulating his breath, the sage remained there for a hundred years subsisting on air while standing on the one leg of non-duality.

The Trimurti simultaneously appeared before him, and recognizing their personal paraphernalia [drum, kuśa grass and discus] and their vehicles; the bull, the swan and Garuda, he fell down prostrating before them and offered his salutations. He prayed to them to have a child. All three agreed to be born as his sons through partial manifestations and promised him that all three will be very famous and would enhance his good name. Lord Brahmā was born as Soma, Dattātreya as a very powerful yogi was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and Durvāsa was born as a partial expansion of Śiva.

Story 2.

In the Brahmanda Purana, it is narrated that Brahma and Shiva one day got into a heated argument which triggered Shiva's wrath. The devas fled in fear and even Parvati could not restrain his anger. Shiva realized that the situation had gotten out of hand, and understood the disharmony it was causing. He directed that concentrated fury of his into an embryo in the womb of Anasuya, the wife of Sage Atri who he knew was the only one who could handle it. The child born was named Durvāsa, which literally means “one who is difficult to live with” (the name also means ill-clothed, the reference is to Siva wearing the animal hide after killing Gajasura). Durvāsa soon proved himself to be the personification of Shiva's anger and was quick to curse those he believed did not follow the path of Dharma, but he was able to control and discipline his ten thousand disciples and guide them wisely, none of whom ever deviated from the path of Dharma.

Story 3.

Anasuya was considered to be the paragon of chastity and fidelity. The wives of the Trimurti; Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Parvati objected to this title being bestowed upon a mere mortal woman, as they considered themselves to be the supreme exemplars. In order to test her, they engaged their husbands in the task. The Trimurti assumed the guise of 3 sages and went to seek alms at the hermitage of sage Atri while he was away. They told Anasuya that she would have to serve them in the nude. She was in a bind — she could neither turn the sages away nor could she appear naked in front of them. But with her power of penance she was able to turn the 3 Rishis into babies and fed them in the nude according to their desire.

Sage Atri on his return to the hermitage saw his wife Anusuya suckling three babies. Anusuya said “These children are the gift of God to us who have been childless so far”. Sage Atri was overjoyed and named them **Datta**, which means ‘given’. At this, the three Gods reverted to their real forms and disclosed the truth. They extolled the power of chastity and purity of Anusuya which vanquished the combined and colossal powers of all three of them. Sage Atri and Anusuya prayed that they should remain as their sons. They consented and the three Gods merged into one body. This is how Dattātreya appeared.

Story 4.

In another story, Rahu had blocked the sun for a long time and the earth was dark. Atri through his miraculous power managed to rescue the Sun from Rahu. Thus Shiva and Vishnu as a reward were born as his sons Durvāsa and Dattāreya respectively.

Notable incidents in the biography of Durvāsa

DURVĀSA & AMBARĪŚA

Ambarīśa was a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, and being pleased with him the Lord appointed the Sudarshana Chakra to protect him whenever he needed it.

He was once fasting the monthly Ekādasi and Dvādasi Vratam for one year. On the final fasting days he was not even eating a morsel of food or a sip of water. It was around the time of breaking his fast that Durvāsa paid him a visit with all his disciples.

Ambarīśa welcomed him with due respect and offered him his hospitality. Accepting his invitation Durvāsa asked him to put off break his until he returned from a bath in the river. The auspicious moment to break the fast arrived and Durvāsa had not returned. Ambarīśa was in a dilemma. After consulting with his spiritual advisors and ministers he decided to take a sip of tulsi water to formally break the fast.

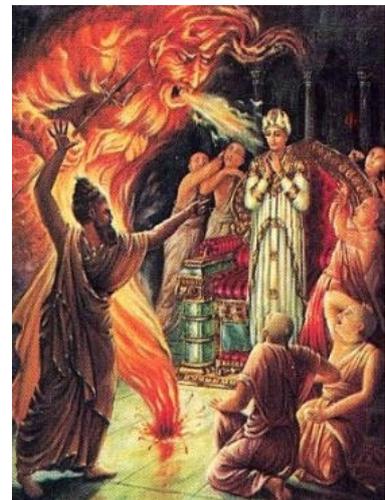
On hearing about this upon his return, Durvāsa was enraged. Pulling a strand of his hair he threw it on the ground and manifested a demon named Krtya and ordered him to kill Ambarīśa. The moment the demon came to kill him, the Sudarshana chakra came to Ambarīśa's rescue and killed the demon Krtya and in turn started chasing Durvāsa.

Durvāsa, was shocked at the unexpected turn of events and fled to seek help from Shiva at Kailasa and from Brahma. Shiva and Brahma both told him that they were helpless against the Sudarshana chakra and advised him to seek refuge in Viṣṇu who owned the chakra. Durvāsa was terrified by now and rushed to Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu told him that he was a “Bhakta Dāsa” and he was made helpless by the devotion (*bhakti*) of his devotee and he asked the sage to go to Ambarīśa himself and seek his pardon.

When finally he reached Ambarīśa, Durvāsa saw that he was still waiting for the sage to break his fast. Durvāsa was very humbled by the devotion of Ambarīśa and begged him to recall the Chakra.

Ambarīśa immediately understood. He closed his eyes and prayed to the Lord, 'Lord! I still respect this great sage as much as I did when I saw him first! Please forgive him for his mistake — He does not deserve this punishment. Please ask the Chakra not to hurt him.'

No sooner had Ambarīśa thought the words, the Chakra stopped. It wavered for a minute and then disappeared.



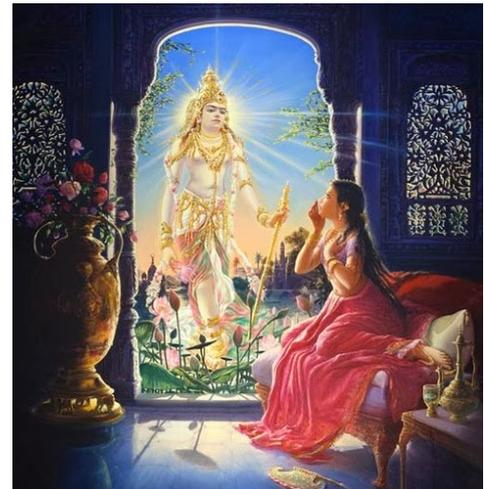
DURVĀSA CURSES SHAKUNTHALA

In Abhijñāna Shakuntala, a poetic treatise by Kalidasa, Durvāsa cursed Shakuntala. Shakuntala was one day day-dreaming of Dushyant whom she had secretly married. She was missing him and was lost in his thoughts when Durvasa paid visit to the Kanava Ashram. Not getting his due respect and seeing Shakuntala completely lost in thoughts and ignoring him, he cursed her that the person in her thoughts, whoever that may be, would forget her. Hearing the curse being uttered, her companions and other people in the ashrama tried to explain and pacify the sage, who softened down. Though the curse couldn't be nullified it was softened, Durvāsa told them that her husband/lover would remember her when he saw the gift he presented her with. The sage's curse proved true, and in time things were patched up and Dushyant was reunited with wife Sakunthala and Bharata his son.



DURVĀSA & KUNTI

Durvāsa was also known to be generous with his boons. One such a person to get receive his benevolence was Kunti, mother of the Pandavas. Kunti was the adopted daughter of Kuntibhoja. When she was a young girl, Durvāsa paid a visit to her father and he instructed her to serve the sage. Kunti served him well and Durvāsa was very pleased with her sincerity and devotion and taught her a Mantra by which she could invoke the gods of her choice and beget children by them. Being very inquisitive she decided to test the mantra and invoked Surya who appeared and from their union Karna was born. Later she had children through Dharmadeva (Yudhishtira), Vayu Deva (Bhīma), and Indra (Arjuna).



She shared this mantra with Madri, second wife of Pandu, and she had twins by Aswini Kumaras namely, Nakula and Sahadev.

DURVĀSA & LORD KRISHNA



Krishna too was not spared the tests of Durvāsa. In order to test the level of Krishna's patience on one occasion he demanded that Krishna smear the left over Kheer/payasam all over his body. In spite of the ridiculous nature of this demand, Krishna obliged with reverence. He smeared it all over his body except under his feet, for which Durvāsa cursed him that he would die because of that. Krishna eventually died by an arrow wound in the heel. In spite of that the sage was impressed by Krishna's devotion and blessed him with all the love in the world.

PROTECTING DRAUPADI'S MODESTY



The version of the story from the Shiva Purana is slightly different from the one that we are told in the Mahabharata. Once while Durvāsa was bathing in river Ganga, his loin cloth was carried away by the underwater current. Draupadi who was there at the scene saw what had happened and immediately tore off a piece of her sari and threw it to him so that he could cover himself up. Because of this timely help he granted Draupadi a boon that when she needed it, she would be guaranteed covering. The boon helped her with an unending stream of clothes to cover her modesty, when Dushasana was trying to strip her naked in assembly hall, at the time when Yudhishtira lost the game of dice to Shakuni.

DURVĀSA VISITS PANDAVAS IN THE FOREST

Duryodhana who was obsessed with the destruction of Pandavas once requested Durvāsa rishi to visit the Pandavas the forest along with his vast retinue of disciples. He knew that they would not have any food to serve them as during the days of exile the Pandavas relied on *Akshaya patra* for their daily food, and once Draupadi had served the brothers and had eaten herself, the food would disappear. Duryodhana hoped that the sage would curse them.

When Durvāsa turned up at their forest hermitage, the Pandavas were taken by surprise and became discomposed, for they feared his temper. Draupadi requested them all to go to the river and take their midday bath while she prepared their repast. She then prayed frantically to Lord Krishna, who appeared immediately in front of her. She hurriedly explained the situation to Krishna who asked her to get the Akshaya patra. Krishna calmly took the vessel and found a lone grain of rice and morsel of vegetable, which he consumed. In the meantime Durvāsa and his disciples had finished their bath but found that they were hungry no more; but in fact they felt completely full. So they went away without returning to the Pandavas as they wouldn't be able to refuse the food they offered and they were in no condition to eat any more!

CAUSES DEATH OF LAKṢMANA

In Valmiki Ramayana Uttara Kanda, Durvāsa turns out to be the cause of Lakshmana's death and eventually also that of Rama. Yama, the god of death, finally came in guise of an ascetic to seek an audience with Rama. Before the commencement of the meeting the ascetic laid down the condition that once the meeting has commenced their dialogue was to remain confidential, and anyone who entered the room and saw or heard them was to be executed. Lakshmana is appointed as the door-keeper.

Yama then tells Rama that he was sent by Brahma to reveal to him his true identity and the purpose of his incarnation. Yama suggests that Rama prepare to return to Vaikuntha.

While Rama was in dialogue with Yama, Durvāsa turns up! He insists on an immediate audience with Rama or the people of Ayodhya would face the dire consequence of his curse. Lakshmana tries to pacify Durvāsa and attempts to explain the situation without any success.

Finally Lakshmana decides that his life is worth nothing compared to the lives of the innocent citizens who would face the curse of Durvāsa.

So knowing well the consequence of disturbing the meeting he walks in and passes the message to Rama. Rama concluded the meeting with Yama and rushed to attend to the sage and fulfil his dharma of hospitality. Durvāsa told Rama that he had fasted for a thousand years and now wanted to break his fast. Rama saw to it that the sage was fed and after he'd left he was plunged into depression. Now according to dharma he had to execute his brother Lakshmana but there was no way he could kill his brother but what else could he do? He consulted the elders and as per Sage Vasishtha's advice it was decided that banishment is equal to execution. Lakshmana immediately retired to the banks of river Sarayu and attained samādhi.

SAMUDRA-MATHANA

THE CHURNING OF THE OCEAN

This is one of the quintessential Hindu myths. It is depicted in a tableau in Bangkok international airport and on the walls of Angkor Wat temple. It is retold with various modifications in most of the Puranas and Epics and there is much to be learnt from this myth.



One day, Durvāsa left his ashrama and was wandering about when all of a sudden, he happened to meet an extremely beautiful *vidhyādhārī*². She was wearing a gorgeous garland of flowers. The sage requested her to give him that garland. She presented the garland respectfully to the sage. The sage wore the garland and set off on his wanderings. All of a sudden he encountered Indra riding on his elephant Airāvāt and going somewhere in a procession with the gods. Instinctively, sage Durvāsa offered that garland to Indra, but Indra placed it on Airāvāt's head. Airāvāt grabbed the garland with his trunk and smashed it on the ground. This whole sequence of events infuriated Durvāsa who cursed Indra. "O Indra! You are so inebriated with your prosperity and puffed up with pride that you dared to insult my humble gift. Hence, all your splendor shall be destroyed. You will lose all your vitality and prosperity."

Indra at once descended from the elephant and begged the sage Durvāsa to forgive him and reverse the curse. Durvāsa said:— "Indra! Forgiveness has no place in my personality. So, all your

² An ethereal angelic being associated with knowledge

repenting and begging is meaningless." Saying this, sage Durvāsa departed from the scene and Indra too left for Amarāvati.

Very soon, the curse began to take effect, Indra began to lose his vitality and splendor. With the loss of Indra's prosperity, all the vegetation on earth began to wither. Hermits stopped performing Yajñas. Chaos ensued in the universe, and people gave up ethical practice and gave themselves up to greed, rampant desires and squabbles.

Very soon, the demons taking advantage of the loss of vitality on the part of the Devas, launched an attack on them, beating them and driving them out of heaven. In despair, Indra along with other vanquished gods approached Brahmā and sought his assistance. Brahmā suggested they all take refuge at Lord Vishnu.

Brahmā even accompanied the gods to the shore of the ocean of milk upon which Lord Vishnu lay in yogic trance upon Ananta Śeṣa. There, they prayed to Lord Vishnu and appraised Him of their ordeal.

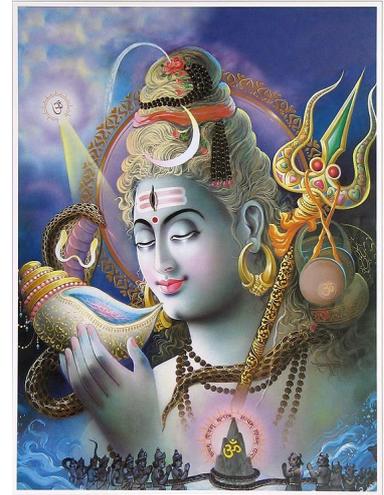
Pleased by their prayers, Lord Vishnu appeared before them and said:— "I will definitely help you regain your splendor and restore order to the universe. Please do what I say. You will need first to reconcile with the Asuras, make peace with them and convince them to join you and participate in the great task of the churning of the sea. Then bring all kinds of herbs and throw them into the sea. Use Mandara mountain as churning-rod and Vāsuki, the great Nāga as the churning-rope. Thus, you will recover *Amrita* (ambrosia of immortality) drinking which, all of you will become immortal and regain your strength."



Following the advice of Lord Vishnu, the gods reconciled with the demons and convinced them to carry out the churning of the sea. They together procured all kinds of herbs and put them in the sea. Then they began the churning using Mandara Mountain. As soon as the churning began, Mandara began to sink due to its immense weight. Lord Vishnu took incarnation of *Kachhap* (the great tortoise) and bore the weight of the mighty mountain on His back. Lord Vishnu Himself guided the churning by stationing himself on top of the mounting.

The first by product of the churning of the ocean that emerged was the hot and deadly poison named *Halāhala*, which immediately began to threaten all the worlds. The terrified creatures of the world were thrown into confusion. They all implored the help of Lord Shiva and brought to his notice the fact that the world was being threatened with dissolution, and since he was the 'Lord of dissolution' he must do something to stop this untimely annihilation of the world.

Seeing their distress Lord Shiva was overwhelmed with compassion. He then took the poison in his palm and swallowed it. The same deadly venom that was threatening to end the worlds now became a beautiful ornament of Lord Shiva, turning his throat a light blue colour, a monument to his supremely compassionate and sacrificing nature. The emergence of poison as the first product of the churning indicates that obstacles inevitably come up whenever any good work is undertaken, whether they be in form of suffering or physical impediments blocking the goal. The bigger the project you set out to accomplish, the stronger is the poison that will turn up. Those on the spiritual path must know that on their way, the negative tendencies *kāma* (self-referent desires), *krodha* (anger) *lobha* (greed) etc. start tormenting them with surprisingly strong vigor.



Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

“That pleasure which at first is like poison, ends up like nectar (*amrita*); and that which at first seems like nectar ends up as poison.” (18.37-38)

After Lord Shiva had partaken the poison, the gods and demons began to churn the ocean again with renewed effort. Next to emerge was the cow Kāmadhenu, who provides us with the necessary materials for Vedic sacrifices (milk, ghee etc.).

The Brahmins laid a claim to her saying that they had a right to the first thing that emerged. To the query that the first item to emerge was the deadly poison, the Brahmins became at a loss for words. However, since both the gods and the demons equally revered the Brahmins, they were respectfully allowed to have their way.

Next emerged a beautiful horse named Uccaihsravas, radiant like the white moon. Indra had already been instructed by Vishnu not to ask for it, so he kept quiet. The king of the demons expressed his desire for it and was allowed to take possession of the horse.

The horse *Uccchai* (high) *Shrava* (praise) signifies the lofty praise and adulation that is initially heaped on those on the spiritual path. Like a swift steed it carries away the practitioner from the spiritual path. The true seeker must always resist its appeal.

Here it must be realized that gods and antigods are both born of the same father, the sage Kashyapa (lit. "Clear-vision") who had two wives. The gods are born of Aditi, meaning non-duality (*A-diti*). Aditi symbolizes the non-dual perspective of seeing things, wherein each and everything is recognized as a part of the universal divine whole. The mother of the antigods is Diti, meaning "duality" indicating the perception of things as being separate, not recognizing the inherent and essential unity underlying all manifested existence.

Next came Airāvāt, the majestic white elephant. Since the antigods had taken the horse, it was now the turn of the gods, hence Indra took the unique elephant as his vehicle. The elephant, with its eyes much smaller in proportion to its large body, is a symbol of minute (*sukshma*) perspective, meaning the capacity to see the essential, 'hidden' nature of things.

Then emerged the jewel called Kaustubha (pure consciousness), which Lord Vishnu took as an adornment for his chest. Thereafter arose the wish-fulfilling tree Parijāta and celestial nymphs known as apsaras, both of which became the delight of the heavens. Next emerged Goddess Lakshmi herself, the embodiment of affluence and prosperity. Seeing her exceptional beauty every one present (except Lord Vishnu) became agitated, kindling in all a desire to possess her.

Indra fetched a seat for her with his own hands, Vishvakarma gave her many splendid ornaments and Lord Brahma a lotus. Thereafter Goddess Lakshmi, radiating with glory, holding a garland in her arms, pondered upon the choice of a suitable spouse — one who was without blemish and would prove to be an eternal companion. She gazed upon all critically, and scrutinizing them thought to herself:—

- 1). Some are high quality ascetics, but have no control over their anger (like sage Durvāsa).
- 2). Though some are extremely knowledgeable, but are still hampered by attachment (like Shukracharya).
- 3). Some are truly great but have not been able to conquer *kāma* (desire), like Lord Brahmā.
- 4). Some are extremely prosperous (like Indra), but unable to defend themselves.
- 5). Some, though scrupulous in performing their dharma, lack compassion (like Parashurama).
- 6). Some are dedicated to sacrifice (like King Shibi), however sacrifice is not sufficient for *mukti* (final liberation).
- 7). There are those free from attachment (like the four eternal celibate brothers – Sanaka etc.), but will never have anything to do with family life.
- 8). Some (like sage Markandeya) have managed to gain a very long life (*chirayu*), but they are not attractive to women. Those who are attractive possess a limited life span.
- 9). The one who possesses both (longevity and attractiveness like Lord Shiva), lives inauspiciously.
- 10). Finally, the one who is totally auspicious, eternal and infinitely attractive, is indifferent to me (Lord Vishnu).

Coming to this conclusion, Devi Lakshmi finally chose as her spouse the Supreme Lord Vishnu, the eternal abode of all auspicious qualities, untouched by the three *gunas*, absolutely independent, and not expecting anything from anybody (*nirpeksha*).

In the meantime Dhanvantari arose from the sea holding the pot of Amrita. When the antigods saw that everyone had been distracted by Lakshmi, they at once snatched the urn of ambrosia from Dhanvantari and ran away. They began quarrelling among themselves as to who would be the first to drink of the ambrosia. Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu appeared in the guise of an extremely beautiful woman Mohini. The antigods were all captivated by her beauty and requested her to distribute the amrita. She told them to line up and close their eyes, she then disappeared with the urn and returned to the gods and distributed the amrita among them.



When the antigods realized that they had been cheated they immediately attacked the gods. But since the gods had regained their strength, they were victorious and balance and harmony was restored to the universe.

SUMMARY

Now all this was gargantuan cataclysmic cosmic drama was the result of a single spate of anger by Durvāsa. Whenever we lose our tempers, we need to realise that a chain of effects could be set in motion with possibly devastating and far reaching results. Anger-management is of utmost importance on the spiritual path and is arguably the biggest obstacle to self-development and unfoldment.

1. Anger is the emotional reaction to a challenge to one's ego, a frustrated desire, hope or expectation — anger can be positive when it is directed at social injustice. Anger is usually about something which has already happened, a more positive approach would be to focus on the present and to search for ways in which to rectify the contentious issue and avoid future recurrences.
2. An angry disposition i.e. being an angry person as opposed to the occasional outburst, is a *samskāra* (subliminal activator), which has been laid down in one's personality from previous births. The *samskāras* of anger are gradually attenuated through the cultivation of its opposite i.e. compassion and generosity. Whenever one is mindful of anger arising, one overrides the anger by an act or word of compassion and generosity.
3. Through study and reflection one can understand the connection between desires/expectations and the anger response. Through introspection one can discover the triggers that cause anger. Once the connection has been established one can then start reflecting upon ways in which the triggers can be neutralized.
4. Through self-control, mindfulness and repeated practice of "letting go" it is possible to control anger.
5. Anger, when it is vented, has three targets — oneself, another or the environment. As a destructive force, anger always involves others — very often those that are closest to us. Anger-management cannot be effective if our significant others are not involved in the healing process.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

- The aim of anger management isn't to suppress feelings of anger but rather to understand the message behind the emotion and express it in a healthy way without losing control. The display of Anger can be a useful tool to bring about change in others — as long as it is not displayed in violence.
- When you do, you'll not only feel better, you'll also be more likely to get your needs met, be better able to manage conflict in your life, and strengthen your relationships.
- Mastering the art of anger management takes work, but the more you practice, the easier it will become.

There are 3 stages in the resolution of anger:—

1. Recognise that there is a problem. Until anger is admitted as a problem it cannot be solved. Most often angry people will blame others and their actions for the triggering of anger. It is the fault of the other — "if only he/she hadn't done or said" "

So the first stage involves (*śravana*) listening to what others have to say, recognising that they are suffering, opening oneself up to the possibility that the problem is more in one's own mind than in the actual event. Acknowledging that there *is* a problem and opening oneself to all possible solutions.

2. Reflection upon the relativity of the issue (*manana*). Some causes of anger are in fact justifiable, others are reasonably so, and others are totally trivial. Reflection involves objectively looking at the issues with the others involved and assessing their relative merits. Getting angry over a burnt dinner as opposed to anger over a house burnt down through negligence — both are due to negligence but have totally different degrees of seriousness and consequences. If the dinner is burnt one can order take-away, if the house is burnt down then the matter is far more serious!

3. Rehabilitation — working with ways in which the issues can be addressed and resolved (*nididhyāsan*). Obviously each and every situation is unique and will require specific solutions. These need to be worked out with all the parties involved.

The Manifestations of Anger	Response
The mind and body are intimately connected, so the emotion of anger will have an immediate effect upon the body such as stomach churning, skin flushing, sweating or claminess, rapid pulse and altered breathing, fists clenching, teeth-grinding etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow down the breath, take slow deep breaths. 2. Sit down, relax the hands and body. 3. Remain silent and say nothing until the symptoms have passed. 4. recite a mantra to help you calm down.

Anger management: why is it important?

Out-of-control anger can damage your relationships, impair your judgment, obstruct your success, and have a negative impact on the way people see you — and a momentary outburst of anger can destroy heaps of accumulated merit! Out-of-control anger hurts you in a number of ways:—

- **physical health.** Constantly operating at high levels of stress and anger makes you more susceptible to heart disease, diabetes, a weakened immune system, insomnia, and high blood pressure.
- **mental health.** Chronic anger consumes huge amounts of mental energy and clouds your thinking, making it harder to concentrate or enjoy life. It can also lead to stress, depression, and other mental health problems.
- **career.** Constructive criticism, creative differences, and heated debate can be healthy. But lashing out only alienates your colleagues, supervisors, or clients and erodes their respect.
- **relationships.** It causes lasting scars in the people you love most and damages friendships and relationships with colleagues. Explosive anger makes it hard for others to trust you, speak honestly, or feel comfortable with you — and it is especially damaging to children.

Tip 1: Explore what's really behind your anger

Anger problems often stem from what you've learned as a child. If you saw others in your family scream and abuse each other, or throw things in rage, you might think this is how anger is supposed to be expressed.

Anger is often a cover-up for other feelings

In order to express your anger in appropriate ways, you need to be in touch with what you are really feeling. Is your anger masking other feelings such as embarrassment, insecurity, hurt, shame, or vulnerability?

- If your knee-jerk response in many situations is anger, it's likely that your temper is covering up your true feelings.
- This is especially likely if you grew up in a family where expressing feelings was strongly discouraged. As an adult, you may have a hard time acknowledging feelings other than anger.
- Anger can also be a symptom of underlying health problems, such as depression, trauma, or chronic stress.

Clues that there's more to your anger

- **You have a hard time compromising.** Is it hard for you to understand other people's points of view, and even harder to concede a point? If you grew up in a family where anger was out of control, you may remember how the angry person got his or her way by being the loudest and most demanding. Compromising might bring up scary feelings of failure and vulnerability.
- **You have trouble expressing emotions other than anger.** Do you pride yourself on being tough and in control? Do you feel that emotions like fear, guilt, or shame don't apply to you? Everyone has those emotions so you may be using anger as a cover for them.
- **You view different opinions as a personal challenge.** Do you believe that your way is always right and get angry when others disagree? If you have a strong need to be in control or have a fragile ego, you may interpret other perspectives as a challenge to your authority, rather than simply a different way of looking at things.

Reconnect with your emotions to manage anger

If you are uncomfortable with different emotions, disconnected, or stuck on an angry one-note response to situations, it's important to get back in touch with your feelings.

Tip 2: Recognize anger warning signs and triggers

Anger fuels the body's "fight or flight" response so while you might feel that you just explode without warning, there are physical warning signs that your body is preparing to react. Recognizing these signs allows you to take steps to manage your anger before it boils over.

- **Note how anger feels in your body.** Is your stomach knotted, your hands or jaw clenched, your muscles tense? Do you feel clammy or flushed? Is your heart pounding or are you breathing faster?
- **Identify negative thought patterns that trigger anger.** You may think that external things — annoying people or situations — are causing your anger. But anger problems have more to do with negative thinking patterns, such as having a rigid view of the way things should be and getting angry when reality doesn't match up. Or maybe you overlook the positive things while letting small irritations mount? Or do you blame others for bad things that happen rather than taking responsibility for your own life?
- **Recognize situations that trigger anger.** Stressful events don't excuse anger, but understanding how these events affect you can help you avoid unnecessary aggravation. Do you get into a fight every time you go out for drinks with certain friends? Or does the traffic on your daily commute drive you crazy? Think about ways to avoid these triggers or view the situation differently so it doesn't provoke anger.

Tip 3: Learn ways to diffuse anger

Once you recognize the warning signs, you can take steps to manage your anger before it spins out of control.

Exercise

Even just a brisk walk around the block can release pent-up energy and enable you to approach the situation with a cooler head.

- Exercise relieves stress, lowers blood pressure, and releases powerful endorphins that improve your mood.

- It can also put some welcome time and space between you and the stressful or frustrating situation.
- Rather than focusing on your anger as you exercise, focus instead on how your body feels as you move — such as the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, or the feeling of the wind on your skin, or the rhythm of your breathing.
- If you know that you're going to be entering a situation that will likely make you angry, exercising beforehand can help keep your mood stable.

Manage stress

The more stressed you are, the more likely you are to lose your temper. But no matter how stressful your life seems, there are steps you can take to relieve the pressure and regain control.

- **Connect regularly with friends and family.** There is nothing more calming to your nervous system than communicating face to face with people who care about you. Your friends don't have to be able to fix your stress; they just need to be good listeners.
- **Practice relaxation techniques.** A daily relaxation practice can help reduce stress and boost feelings of well-being. Try yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation.
- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle.** Getting enough sleep, eating well, reducing your caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and sugar intake, and making time for fun in your life can increase your resistance to stress and make it easier to manage anger.

Tip 4: Manage anger in the moment

In certain situations — an argument with your boss, for example — taking time out to go for a walk or hit the gym may not be practical. These tips can help you cool down in the moment:

- **Focus on the physical sensations of anger.** While it may seem counterintuitive, tuning into the way your body feels when you're angry often lessens the emotional intensity of your anger.
- **Take some deep breaths.** Deep, slow breathing helps counteract rising tension. Breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much air as possible into your lungs.
- **Use your senses.** Take advantage of the relaxing power of your senses — sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste.
- **Slowly count to ten.** Focus on the counting to let your rational mind catch up with your feelings. If you still feel out of control by the time you reach ten, start counting again.
- **Take a moment to think about the situation.** Ask yourself: How important is it in the grand scheme of things? Is it really worth getting angry about it? Is my response appropriate to the situation?

Tip 5: Know when to seek professional help

If you've tried these anger management techniques and your anger is still spiraling out of control, you may need more help. There are many therapists, classes, and programs for people with anger management problems. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

Consider professional help for anger management if:

- You feel constantly frustrated and angry no matter what you try.
- Your temper causes problems at work or in your relationships.
- You avoid new events and people because you feel like you can't control your temper.

- You have gotten in trouble with the law due to your anger.
- Your anger has ever led to physical violence.

Dealing with a loved one with an Anger management issue.

You may feel like you're constantly walking on eggshells, but remember you're not to blame for your loved one's anger management problem. And there's no excuse for physically or verbally abusive behavior.

While you can't control another person's anger, you can control how you respond to it:

- Set clear boundaries about what you will and will not tolerate.
- Wait for a time when you are both calm to talk to your loved one about the anger problem. Don't bring it up when either one of you is already angry.
- Remove yourself from the situation if your loved one does not calm down.
- Consider getting counselling or therapy if you are having a hard time standing up for yourself.
- Put your safety first. If you feel unsafe or threatened in any way, remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible.

Anger isn't the real problem in abusive relationships

Despite what many believe domestic violence and abuse is not due to the abuser's loss of control over his temper, but a deliberate choice to control you. If you are in an abusive relationship, know that your partner needs specialized treatment, not traditional anger management.

adapted from www.helpguide.org