

# [ THE EPIC TRUTHS ON ANGER ]

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER, 2005

**Anger is an emotion which either you can control or it will end up controlling you.**

WORK WISE - A fortnightly column by Rahul Kapoor

The Mahabharata has inspired many people to lead a better life, to achieve excellence and to manage difficult situations. The book has a good mix of philosophy, spirituality and practicality. In this article I would like to take the help of two characters from the epic Bhima and Krishna.

Bhima, as we know, was a powerful warrior; he was well built and had strength equal to that of a hundred elephants. On the flipside he was impatient and would get angry very easily. In fact, his answer to most of the problems was use of power. He was the kind of a person who gets angry for every small and big thing. He would confront people aggressively and invariably cause a lot of concern and embarrassment both for himself and his brothers. His approach often disappointed people. He would handle aggression which only doubled his problems and he never found himself at peace.

On the other hand, Krishna was pleasing, friendly and positive. He would manage most situations with patience and understanding. He rarely got angry and even under extreme pressure he would remain calm. He focused on the problem, not people, and more often than not he found solutions to most of those problems. He dealt with different situations and different people in different ways and thus could find innovative solutions most of the time. His approach earned him respect even with his enemies and it was difficult for anyone to hate him. So, Bhima was the kind who could not control his anger and Krishna on the other hand could not only control his emotions but also had the ability to diffuse others' anger and calm them down.

Let's take an example. Imagine that you are traveling in a train and suddenly you are told you cannot travel in the particular compartment as it was reserved for 'Whites only'. You pull out a ticket, which proves that you paid the full fare which gave you the right to travel in it. But the ticket collector does not listen. The next station you are forced out of the train and your luggage thrown out as well. How would you react?

But, if you were to use Bhima's style then, quite naturally, you will get angry, shout and may also use foul language. You may also throw things around, create a scene and try to gather support for yourself.

But, if you were to use Krishna's approach then you will get up, gather your things and start walking out of the station. Not really reacting but surely tell yourself that this was unfair and you will fight this aggression at the right time and in the right place. Yes, exactly like Mahatma Gandhi did when he faced a similar situation in South Africa.

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Well, Krishna was a super being and therefore he was able to succeed in everything that he did. Can mere mortals like you and me achieve success and control our anger? The answer is yes, although there is no one to quick-fix technique to it. Instead you may have to learn a host of techniques and use them as and when the need arises.

## **UNDERSTAND THE ANGER MODEL**

When someone gets angry, his decision making abilities begin to drop to the lowest point. Thus we hear angry people make rude and unreasonable remarks, which they do not mean. Statements like 'You are stupid' 'I cannot tolerate you anymore', 'I want to leave this company' and so on.

However, when the anger levels drop, our decision-making ability begins to rise again. People begin to think rationally and feel sorry about their behavior. Many recognize that they hurt someone in their fury and make amends for it. And most never carry out the threats they had mad in anger.

So, talk less when you're angry because you may say things which you really don't mean but people will invariably remember only those words and feel sad and disappointed. On the other hand, when you encounter an angry model and give the person a benefit of doubt for all the accusations that he is making because you know the statements are coming from a low decision making level. This way you will be able to control your anger and calm the other person down by allowing him to vent.

## **CATCH YOURSELF GETTING ANGRY**

Become aware of symptoms of anger. When you are getting angry find out what happens to your body and mind. You will notice a change in your vocabulary; change in the tone of your voice, tightening in the face or neck muscles, your pace of breathing increases.

Get into action straight away and ensure that your anger level gets under control at this point itself. Relax yourself, concentrate on your breathing and normalize it. Make sure that you relax your neck muscles and fingers. Tell yourself that you will not let the situation go out of hand. Stay in control.

## **THE RIGHT TIMING**

Ask yourself whether you really are in a frame of mind to confront the person who is the cause of your anger. Are you sure that you will be able to focus on the issue and not make unreasonable attacks on the person. Only if you are hundred percent confident

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then talk to the person, else postpone the situation until you get into the right frame of mind for a discussion. This approach will help you to stay focused and solve problems without outburst.

## **LISTEN TO OTHERS**

Slowing down your response and becoming a better listener will help you in becoming a more peaceful person. It takes away the pressure from you. Listening shows caring. So, encourage the people to talk, do not interrupt them, pay attention while they talk, show that you understand and respect the people. Becoming a better listener will make you a more patient person. It will also enhance the quality of your relationships.

## **KEEP QUIET**

The proverb 'Sometimes the best action is no action' can be a boon for an angry mind. When you are angry with someone make an attempt to ask questions to find out why a person has behaved in a certain manner. This approach will help you to understand the other person's point of view. Remember not to interrupt the person while he is speaking. Keep quiet and listen to his side of the story. Ask reflective questions and prompt him to speak more. The more information you gather, the better your response gets.

In conclusion, recognize that anger is an emotion, either you control it or anger will control you. In other words, either you can make anger your slave and use it when ever you need it, else become a slave of your anger and allow it to rule you. It's really your choice.