

Satsang with Swami Dayananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Dealing anger effectively ¹

Question

Swamiji, can you discuss anger and how to deal with it effectively?

Answer

Anger is nothing but an expression of pain and expectation. Çré Saì karäcärya confirms this in his writings. We expect certain things to happen and there is an obstruction between what to happen and ourselves. In other words, between the desirer and desired, there is an obstruction blocking the fulfillment of what is desirable. Because of this obstruction, this desire is deflected. The deflected form of desire or expectation is called anger.

The problem is that we do not include obstructions in our expectations because we do not want them. But life is full of obstructions. Even breathing has obstructions. Thinking definitely has obstructions, which is what “writer’s block” is all about. The writer cannot get started but, once he or she has begun, it becomes easier and, eventually, the words begin to flow.

Similarly, there are obstructions in everything. But, because we cannot tolerate them, we end up with anger. Sometimes we are our own obstruction, in fact. There is an ideal self, something that we want to be, and there is an actual self, which is quite different. Because we split ourselves in this way, we become angry with ourselves. Here, too, we see that anger is nothing but an expression of expectation.

To live without expectation is meaningless. Therefore, I would say, live with expectations and let the expectations include obstructions too. What can go wrong will go wrong. Include this maxim in your expectations. It is very sane statement and does not mean that you hope or work for things to go wrong. It is, in fact, a totally positive statement.

Things can go wrong—and if they do, take it in your stride. Then there will be no anger. Because there is a possibility of things going wrong, you can certainly take precautions. To be cautious, to avoid all known pitfalls, is to be objective. This is an important part of planning and doing what is to be done. In spite of all your planning and precautions, however, you should know that things can go wrong. You can be objective only when you take such possibilities into account.

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