Chapter Three
Anger and Violence

The Nature of Anger

Yes, anger is a harmful and wasteful force, harmful both to the person himself and to the one on whom it is thrown. You are right in saying that it must be got rid of. Anger immediately opens the door to hostile forces; it is as if you were calling them.

* It [a violent outburst of anger] is obviously a surprise attack that took you off your guard. But you must throw off the tendency to anger with yourself also as well as the other tendency to sudden anger with others — for all anger only disturbs the consciousness and makes it difficult to keep the quiet poise. The whole thing has to be thrown out and the consciousness has to recover and be as if it had not happened.

* These things, hard forms of speech, anger etc., are habits formed by the vital-physical consciousness and, as they are supported by the subconscient, very difficult to change. If one can conquer or change them by force of will or mental or spiritual control, so much the better. But if one cannot do this at once, one must not be upset or think oneself unfit. It is easier for most to realise the Divine or enter into the psychic consciousness than to change this part of the nature; but once the psychic consciousness governs or the higher consciousness descends then it is much easier for these to go. You must not therefore be discouraged by these recurrences or persistences, but try always to stand back in an inner quietude and if they come let them pass away like a cloud across the light. In time these things will be finally dealt with by the Force.

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It [an outburst of anger] is really simply the recurrence of an old habit of the nature. Look at it and see how trifling is the occasion of the rising of this anger and its outburst — it becomes more and more causeless and the absurdity of such movements reveals itself. It would not really be difficult to get rid of it if when it comes you looked at it calmly — for it is perfectly possible to stand back in one part of the being observing in a detached equanimity even while the anger rises on the surface, as if it were someone else in your being who had the anger. The difficulty is that you get alarmed, grieved and upset and that makes it easier for the thing to get hold of your mind which it should not do.

Help we are giving you — stand back so as to be able to feel it and not the obsession of these surface movements.

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When you have such thoughts, it makes a formation of force which falls on the man against whom you are angry. If he is not on his guard or if he is sensitive in any way, it may become effective upon him. That is why such thoughts should be avoided altogether.

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The reason why quietness is not yet fixed and anger returns is that you allow your physical mind to become active. In regard to the sadhana it begins to think there is this defect in you and that defect and therefore the sadhana does not become immediately effective and perfect. This makes the vital nervous or despondent and in the despondency a state of irritation arises. At the same time this mind becomes active as it has now with regard to X or begins to judge and criticise and this too leads to nervousness and irritation. These things belong to the old mind you are trying to leave and therefore stand in the way of concentration and quietude. They should be stopped at their root by rejecting the suggestions of the physical mind as soon as they begin. A new consciousness is coming based upon inner silence and quietude. You must wait quietly for that to develop. True knowledge,
true perceptions of people and things will come in that new silent consciousness. The mind’s view of people and things must necessarily be either limited and defective or erroneous—to go on judging by it is now a waste of time. Wait for the new consciousness to develop and show you all in a new and true light. Then the tendency to anger which arises from this mind and is a violent impatience directed against things the mind and vital do not like, would have no ground to rise at all—or if it rose without cause could be more easily rejected. Rely for the sadhana on the Mother’s grace and her Force, yourself remembering always to keep only two things, quietude and confidence. For things and people, leave them to the Mother also; as you have difficulties in your nature, so they have too; but to deal with them needs insight, sympathy, patience.

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It is indeed a very good sign that the anger when it comes is brief and subdued and no longer expressed in the outward—for that is one very marked stage always of the rejection of something not wanted by the nature. It comes still but it has no longer the old force, duration, intensity, completeness. The externalised condition is often used to show or test the progress made in the outer nature itself, for when one is entirely within these outward movements remain quiescent, so the extent to which they are changed cannot be so easily measured. But of course it is the going inward that most helps to deliver the nature.

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If the anger did not come, it must be because the vital force of the attack is diminishing and it must be more in the physical mind and the external (physical) vital that it acts. You have a great strength for action; as for the inner growth and action of the sadhana you have a strength there too of the psychic and the vital,—it is only the external being that finds these difficulties in its way and is momentarily overcome or affected by them. Things always come in the way when one wants to progress in the sadhana, but in the end if one is sincere in one’s aspiration
these troubles help to prepare the victory of the soul over all that opposes.

The inner will prevails sometimes, sometimes it does not prevail for the time being. That is quite normal. It depends on certain conditions which the physical mind does not see. As one grows in knowledge, one becomes aware of these unseen conditions and understands better what happens.

The fire is always the fire of purification — it is very red when it is acting on the vital; when the vital no longer covers the psychic, then the rose colour of the psychic comes out more and more.

The house you saw is the new building of the nature, especially in the vital, which is being prepared by the sadhana.

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Because anger etc. once used to come, it does not follow that they cannot die down in a short time, so his incredulity is not justifiable. This is just the way that these things do go. They come vehemently and resist the force used to eject them, but if they are still rejected or if there is a change in the consciousness, they lose their force and the consciousness quietly rejects them when they come.

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It is rather perilous to think of anything like that — “Now it [anger] is finished” — it is better to wait some time and see. The hostiles have a habit of trying their strength when they hear anything like that; they want to show you that it is not so.

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But is it true that even anger which is of the lower vital and therefore close to the body, invariably produces these effects? Of course the psychologist can’t know that another man is angry

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1 Physical effects such as flushing of the face, flaring of the nostrils, clenched teeth and “ebullition” in the chest. The correspondent had read a book on psychology in which the author suggested that one cannot “fancy” the state of rage without such visible signs of anger. — Ed.
unless he shows physical signs of it, but also he can’t know what a man is thinking unless the man speaks or writes — does it follow that the state of thought cannot be “fancied” without its sign in speaking or writing? A Japanese who is accustomed to control all his “emotions” and give no sign (if he is angry the first sign you will have of it is a knife in your stomach from a calm or smiling assailant) will have none of these things when he is angry — not even the “ebullition” in the chest, — in its place there will be a settled fire that will burn till his anger achieves itself in action.

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It is your angers that have resulted in these pains. Get rid of the bad temper and the stomach will be more at ease.

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For some sex is more difficult [to conquer than anger], for some greed.

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It [the equivalent of anger in the higher nature] is a rudra power of severity and indignation (in the deepest sense of the word) against what should not be — the warrior force of Mahakali in combating the Asura.

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Yes, certainly. Infinite peace, universal love can remove anger — if they are complete and stable.

Anger Comes from Outside

The fact that the anger comes with such force is itself enough to show that it is not in you that it is, but that it comes from outside. It is a rush of force from the universal Nature that tries to take possession of the individual being and make that being act according to the will of this outside force and not according to the will of the soul within. These things come in the course
of the sadhana because the sadhak is liberating himself from the lower nature and trying to turn towards the Mother and live in her divine consciousness and the higher nature. The forces of the lower nature do not want that and so they make these rushes in order to recover their rule. It is necessary when that comes to remain quiet within remembering the Mother or calling her and reject the anger or whatever else comes, whenever it comes or however often it comes. If that is done, then these forces begin to lose their power to invade. It is easier if one clearly feels them to be outside forces and foreign to oneself; but even if you cannot feel that yet when they enter, still the mind must keep that idea and refuse to accept them as any longer a part of the nature. The idea of the Mother being severe was of course a suggestion that came with the invading force so as to help it to enter. Such suggestions come to many sadhaks (though not so many as before) at Pranam and is the cause to them of much disturbance. Such suggestions must be firmly rejected at once.

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I think you have always had an idea that to give expression to an impulse or a movement is the best way or even the only way to get rid of it. But that is a mistaken idea. If you give expression to anger, you prolong or confirm the habit of the recurrence of anger; you do not diminish or get rid of the habit. The very first step towards weakening the power of anger in the nature and afterwards getting rid of it altogether, is to refuse all expression to it in act or speech. Afterwards one can go on with more likelihood of success to throw it out from the thought and feeling also. And so with all other wrong movements.

All these movements come from outside, from the universal lower nature, or are suggested or thrown upon you by adverse forces — adverse to your spiritual progress. Your method of taking them as your own is again a wrong method; for by doing that you increase their power to recur and take hold of you. If you take them as your own, that gives them a kind of right to be there. If you feel them as not your own, then they have no right, and the will can develop more power to send them away. What
you must always have and feel as yours, is this will, the power to refuse assent, to refuse admission to a wrong movement. Or if it comes in, the power to send it away, without expressing it.

If you find it difficult to reject in the sense of throwing away, what you have to do is to refuse assent. As for instance, as regards voices or suggestions, not to listen to them, not to believe what they want you to believe, not to do what they want or push you to do.

Of course the best way will be if you can keep the contact more with the Mother and her Light and Force and receive and accept and follow only what comes from that higher force. Secondly, to keep the mind quiet, not to allow it to be too active, going from one thing to another. That brings the confusion.

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Anger comes from the vital nature or if it has been driven out from there rises back into it from the subconscient or from the environmental Nature.

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It [rejection] is the way to get rid of these things [anger and sex desire] — when rejected they either sink into the subconscient or pass out into the surrounding (environmental) consciousness through which one is connected with the universal forces. They may try to rise up from the subconscient or come in again from outside; but if one always rejects them, calling in the aid of the Mother and does not allow them to take hold, their force of recurrence dies away and finally they come no more. Sometimes a very decisive rejection gets rid of them at a stroke once for all.

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These things [anger, desire etc.] can only be got rid of if you do not accept them. When they come, you must stand back from them in your mind, look at them and say, “I don’t want this.” If it comes in spite of your not wanting and refusing them, then it shows it is not your own movement, but something thrown upon you by the outside Nature. If you can once see that and
feel them as not yours, then by degrees you can get free of anger, desire and other things that trouble you.

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In fact all these ignorant vital movements originate from outside in the ignorant universal Nature; the human being forms in his superficial parts of being, mental, vital, physical, a habit of certain responses to these waves from outside. It is these responses that he takes as his own character (anger, desire, sex etc.) and thinks he cannot be otherwise. But that is not so; he can change. There is another consciousness deeper within him, his true inner being, which is his real self, but is covered over by the superficial nature. This the ordinary man does not know, but the Yogi becomes aware of it as he progresses in his sadhana. As the consciousness of this inner being increases by sadhana, the surface nature and its responses are pushed out and can be got rid of altogether. But the ignorant universal Nature does not want to let go and throws the old movements on the sadhak and tries to get them inside him again; owing to a habit the superficial nature gives the old responses. If one can get the firm knowledge that these things are from outside and not a real part of oneself, then it is easier for the sadhak to repel such returns, or if they lay hold, he can get rid of them sooner. That is why I say repeatedly that these things rise not in yourself, but from outside.

Anger and the Psychic

If the will is strong enough, it [anger] can be held in check — but usually it is only if the psychic being becomes entirely awake and governs the vital that the tendency to anger can entirely disappear.

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When it is the psychic that rules all the movements of the being, then it [anger] completely disappears and when the equanimity of the higher consciousness takes complete possession of the
lower vital. Till then one can establish a control, diminish and reduce it to a touch that has no outward effect or a wave that passes without self-expression.

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That *inner detachment* is the right thing that must happen always when anger or anything else rises. The psychic reply must become habitual pointing out that anger is neither right nor helpful and then the being must draw back from these outward things and take its stand in its inner self, detach from all these things and people. It is this detachment that is the first thing that must be gained by the sadhak — he must cease to live in these outward things and live in his inner being. The more that is done the more there is a release and peacefulness. Afterwards when one is secure in this inner being, the right thing to do, the right way to deal with men and things will begin to come.

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It is true that anger and strife are in the nature of the human vital and do not go easily; but what is important is to have the will to change and the clear perception that these things must go. If that will and perception are there, then in the end they will go. The most important help to it is, here also, for the psychic being to grow within — for that brings a certain kindliness, patience, charity towards all and one no longer regards everything from the point of view of one's own ego and its pain or pleasure, likings and dislikings. The second help is the growth of the inner peace which outward things cannot trouble. With the peace comes a calm wideness in which one perceives all as one self, all beings as the children of the Mother and the Mother dwelling in oneself and in all. It is that towards which your sadhana will move, for these are the things which come with the growth of the psychic and spiritual consciousness. Then these troubled reactions to outward things will no longer come.

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It is indeed when the quietude comes down from above or comes
out from the psychic that the vital becomes full of peace or of kindliness and goodwill. It is therefore that the inner psychic quietude first and afterwards the peace from above must occupy the whole being. Otherwise such things as anger in the vital can be controlled but it is difficult to get rid of them altogether without this occupation by the inner quietude and higher peace. That you should depend on the Mother for the sadhana is the best attitude, for it is indeed her Force that does the sadhana in you.

It is not at all unnatural that the anger brought back peace and harmony: for this anger was a form of loyalty to the Divine and that put you into touch with your psychic consciousness again. Sri Ramakrishna was quite right about anger. The hostile powers are proof against gentleness and sweetness and non-resistance and soul-force, but a current of righteous anger often sends them flying.

Vindictiveness and Cruelty

Vindictiveness, with or without a real cause for it, is even worse than anger because it is more cold and deliberate in its action and less of an impulse. One should be generous in nature and free from all rancour.

You must get rid of it [cruelty]. Cruelty and falsehood are the two things that separate most from the Divine.

Violence

An inner psychic or spiritual change is not brought about by violence. It is not a change of conduct that has to be done in the

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2 The correspondent wrote that he grew angry when he read some false statements about Sri Aurobindo made by a journalist and that his anger relieved him of a slight depression. He was reminded of a remark made by Sri Ramakrishna: “The ripus (passions) too can help in the spiritual life provided you know the secret of the game: for instance, anger may help you if you turn it against all who are hostile to the Divine.” — Ed.
sad hak, but a change of soul and spirit governing the mind and
vital and body instead of the mind and vital governing. Violence
is the drastic contradiction of that; it makes mental egoism and
vital passion and fury or else cruelty the rulers. Violence in
ordinary Nature does not justify violence in a spiritual work.

* The Essays on the Gita explain the ordinary karmayoga as de-
developed in the Gita, in which the work done is the ordinary
work of human life with only an inward change. There too
the violence to be used is not a personal violence done from
egoistic motives, but part of the ordered system of social life.
Nothing can spiritually justify individual violence done in anger
or passion or from any vital motive. In our Yoga our object is to
rise higher than the ordinary life of man and in it violence has
to be left aside altogether.

* All vital violence in speech or action is rajasic and unyogic. One
must be master of oneself and controlled in speech and act.

* You must not accept everything; you should reject all suggestions
of uncontrolled desire or anger. You must not allow any wrong
force to get hold of your body and use it. It is not safe to accept
these things and you should be very careful to reject them always.

It is necessary that there should be control and organisation,
and these cannot come and get fixed if you accept uncontrolled
desires, violent anger, confusion or extreme restlessness of mind,
for all these are things that disorganise and destroy control.