

The Concept of Anger and Methods of Anger Management in Buddhist Psychology

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Abstract

This paper investigates the concept of anger and anger-management methods in Buddhist Psychology. Thus, the *Sutta-pitaka* of Three Volumes of Thēravada Buddhism (*Thripitaka*), published by Dharma Chakka Child Foundation, Bandaragama, Sri Lanka in 2006 was referred as the primary source for the study. The scripture suggests several terms for anger such as *dōsa*, *vyāpāda*, *patigha* and *kōda* that bear differences in levels and in nature of anger. The study found several factors as the origin of anger and the way it affects an individual. It could be noticed that anger deteriorates not only mundane life but sansaric circle. The biddhist teachings on deeds (*Kamma*), Sansaric Cycle (*Sansāra*), Loving Kindness Meditation (*Mettā Bhavanā*), Eight Vicissitudes (*Atalō dhahama*), Reflection (*paccavekkhana*), and Examples from the life of Lord Buddha are of importance as methods of anger management found in Buddhist Psychology. All the Buddhist teachings on anger and anger management provide a good understanding of anger and its methods of anger reduction can be applied to decrease the harmful effects of anger. Further these methods have implications in social relationships, counseling and psychotherapy as well.

Key Words: Anger, Anger Management, Hatred, Methods of Anger Management, Buddhist Psychology

Introduction

Anger is a negative kind of emotion. Buddhist Psychology as well as Western Psychology pays attention to this emotion. The branches of Western Psychology such as General Psychology, Health Psychology and Counselling Psychology constitute the information related to anger. In General Psychology, anger is studied as to how it interferes with human behaviour as an emotion. Health Psychology stresses threats on health caused by anger as a negative emotion. Counselling and Clinical Psychology guide to minimize the issues related to personal life caused by anger.

Various definitions have been put forward on anger. Anger is viewed as an immature or uncivilized response to frustration, threat, violence or loss. It is also defined as a strong emotion against someone or something. Anger means perceiving unwholesome emotion which arises against wholesome/peaceful emotions in the mind¹ Buddhist Psychology too, puts forward special facts in relation to emotional anger. And anger according to Buddhist Psychology, is always unwholesome. Consequently, Buddhist Psychology discusses boundless love (*metthā*), compassion (*karunā*) and patience. Anger is a root of unwholesome actions (*akusal*).² It is mentioned that this state, unwholesome actions, causes one to suffer through *Samsāra*. There are few terms used in Buddhist Psychology, based on nature and level, for anger; ‘hatred’ (*dōsa*), ‘Ill-

will (*vyāpāda*), ‘Aversion’ (*Patigha*), Anger (*krōda*) and conflict (*āgātha*). Hatred (*dōsa*) is one of the roots of *akusal* or unwholesome actions. Aversion’ (*Patigha*) is similar to anger, Ill-will (*vyāpāda*) and hatred (*dōsa*).³ It is stated that the term ‘aversion’ (*patigha*) denotes ‘repugnance’, ‘grudge’, ‘revenge’ and ‘anger’.⁴ Aversion (*patigha*) is one of the fourfold latent dispositions (*anusaya*). Ill-will (*vyāpāda*) is used as a synonym to ‘hatred’ (*dōsa*). Ill-will (*vyāpāda*) is one of the ‘*panca nivarana*’. Also ill-will (*vyāpadā*) is one of the tenfold fetter (*dasasanyōjana*).⁵ Ill-will (*vyāpāda*) means extreme hatred (Dhp 233).⁶

Buddhist Psychology discusses the causes of anger, its consequences and remedial measures. Buddhist Psychology on anger is a broad area of teaching. A need for a technique, an exercise to control and minimize anger has emerged highly in our society. So, the objective of this study is to focus on the teachings of the Buddha that assist to control anger.

Objectives

The present study aimed at identifying the Buddhist psychology of anger and anger management. Accordingly, this study tried:

- To understand the nature of the concept of anger in Buddhist Psychology.
- To identify causal factors of anger mentioned in Buddhist Psychology.
- To identify the methods of decreasing anger available in Buddhist Psychology.

Methodology

This study on the methods of controlling anger mentioned in Buddhist Psychology is based on the Tripitaka literature of Thēravada Buddhism. As the methodology, it administered Qualitative research approach and to collect the suitable data, document searching was administered as data collecting tool. Accordingly, the Sutta Pitaka of three volumes of Thēravada Buddhism published by Dharma Chakka Child Foundation, Bandaragama, Sri Lanka in 2006 was used as the primary source. The Buddhist concept of anger as well as methods for controlling anger, constituted in the source was qualitatively analyzed by using themes in the study.

Causes of Anger

According to Buddhist Psychology, there are 10 forms of anger (Dhp, 221).⁷ Here anger was classified based on time; past, present and future. Those ten types of anger, which are mentioned below, show multifaceted causes of anger.

1. Anger begets from the thought that so and so did me misfortune.
2. Anger begets from the thought that so and so is doing misfortunate now itself.
3. Anger begets from the thought that so and so will do me so in future as well.
4. Anger begets from the thought that my friend was ill-treated.
5. Anger begets from the thought that my friend is being ill-treated.
6. Anger begets from the thought that my friend will be ill-treated in future as well.

7. Anger begets from the thought that my foe was well treated.
8. Anger begets from the thought that my foe is being well treated.
9. Anger begets from the thought that my foe will be well treated.
10. Anger begets from tangling legs with obstacles.

The same teaching is found in *Āghata Vattu Sutta* in *Anguttara Nikāya*. Also, *Āghata Vattu* represents the causal factor of anger.⁸

Dhammapada teaches to appease anger in instances where it can even be justifiable. It is mentioned that anger begets and how it should be appeased when being punished, experiencing a loss or damage, ill-treated and being scolded. That is to say that one should be able to control anger just as a talented chauffeur turns, stops and controls over a fast moving vehicle (Dhp, 222).⁹ Anger or getting angry means anxiety. That is threefold; bodily (physical) anger, verbal anger and mental anger. And, it means bodily (physical) anxiety, verbal anxiety and mental anxiety. Bodily, verbal and mental misbehaviour have to be avoided and good qualities have to be cultivated so as to appease anger (Dhp, 231. 232. 233).¹⁰

Anger and Its Influence

According to Buddhist Psychology, anger, wrath, ill-will, and maliciousness make life miserable here and hereafter. Words that cause anger have to be avoided. And, if one uses such words he/she is insulted with same words. So, it begets physical and mental suffering (Dhp, 133).¹¹ Every wholesome thing gained, straining by one, is destroyed by anger. Also friendships and trust earned with time are destroyed by anger. So, anger is more dangerous than any weapon or bomb.

Man loses happiness due to anger and it causes impenitence (stubborn hardness of heart) and suffering. There is a connection between anger and suffering. Man strains for happiness. He accumulates wealth, tries to gain power, and dedicates to achieve higher positions, for happiness yet, experience proves that men in power and with wealth lack happiness. According to the Buddha's teaching, simple life style is important for happiness.

If one harbours anger unto death, according to Buddhism, he suffers throughout existence (*samsāra*). As a result of anger mentioned above, it is mentioned that one suffers a lot here and hereafter.

So, it is crucial that everyone tries to control anger. Emotional anger occurs to everyone. There is no wrong in saying that everyone who has not attained *nibbāna* experience anger as one who attained first stage of sainthood (*sōwān*), second stage of sainthood (*sakurdāgāmi*), and third stage of sainthood (*anāgāmi*). So, it is important to reduce anger while knowing that anger is emerging rather than denying anger.

There is a classification of anger according to how they experience it. Thus, people are of three kinds.

1. Those that get angry frequently and harbour it.

Such people retain anger for a long time as firmly as a letter inscribed on a stone. They are unable to subdue it and allow anger to fester till death. They nurture anger and allow it to generate pus, become inflamed and suppurate; as, a sore or a wound festers unto death.

2. Those that get angry frequently yet, do not harbour anger for a long time.

Anger of such people resembles a print on the ground. Such a print remains for a while, and so does their anger. With conscious mind, they discover the causes of anger and subdue it, and do not become the victims of anger.

3. Those that use harsh words yet, become friendly by subduing anger.

Anger of such people is similar to a mark drawn on the water. Such a mark is temporary, and so, is their anger. With conscious mind, such persons subdue anger within a split of second.¹² We have to understand in which classification mentioned above, we stand. In a way, it gives us self-awareness, and guides us to appease anger. Accordingly, one has to reduce anger by self-evaluation.

It is we that have to make efforts to subdue anger. Many techniques have been taught by Buddha for such an end. We cannot appeal to Buddha or any other god to extract anger from our minds. So, it is imperative to apply techniques mentioned in the Buddhist Psychology to reduce anger.

Methods to reduce anger

Anger may diminish with the lapse of time and is not permanent. Yet, recalling of anger may cause it to last long. Hence, Buddhist Psychology prescribes certain steps that persons must consciously follow to appease anger. Buddha taught humanity not to harbour anger. Dhammapada mentions few causes that give rise to anger, and advocates not to cling to such anger (Dhp, 03).¹³ Anger caused by being scolded (regarding the cast, insulting parents and so on), attacked (with limbs, logs, and weapons), beaten oneself (by lying, retaliating etc.), stolen what one possesses cannot be appeased. Recalling and reaffirming anger that one experienced makes oneself harm. Not clinging to such anger results in appeasing it (Dhp, 04).¹⁴ Lord Buddha taught that forgetting hatred experienced by one causes to appease it properly (Dhp, 04).¹⁵ Hatred is appeased by avoiding retaliating (Dhp, 05).¹⁶ Anger is never appeased by retaliating. Hence, not clinging to anger, avoiding hatred enables us to appease anger and hatred. Avoiding attacking a person who attacked oneself and avoiding scolding (avoiding retaliation) a person who scolded oneself are a noble quality of arahants. A person with an irritated mind becomes happy, making others' mind irritated. If, by any cause, an irritated mind ceases to be so, it results in appeasing the suffering in *samsāra* (Dhp, 390).¹⁷ Avoiding extending malicious thoughts towards a person owing to his/her scolding is a characteristic of a *Brahmin* (Dhp, 400).¹⁸

1. Taking examples from Buddha's life.

The entire life of Buddha can be taken as an example to reduce anger. Buddha extended compassion towards whole beings. Buddha's life exemplifies that he extended compassion similarly towards persons like Ven. Dēvadatta, Chinchimānavikā, and queen of King Udēni Kōsammbi, whose actions, according to modern psychologists, caused anger due to their insults, abuses, harassments, and intimate persons such as Ven. Ananda, Ven. Nanda and Ven. Rahula.

Buddha's life can be used as a role model considering how the Blessed One behaved with a composed mind when facing facts that cause anger. Anger can be evaded by not extending anger. Anger can be beaten by not extending anger. Dhammapada illustrates that one who practices/extends anger can be beaten by not extending anger vice versa, and it is similar to extinguishing fire by water (Dhp, 223).¹⁹ Hatred can be reduced by refraining from hatred. Many try to defeat others by overdoing acts such as cacophony, abusing, attacking and so on. Yet Buddha's life shows us such that conditions can be won by reacting with a calm and collective mind. That is to say, victory always can be achieved not by weakening others but by acts such as being silent in front of those who yell, refraining from abusing those who abuse, refraining from hatred among those who nurse hatred. This is the real victory. This understanding can be used to subdue anger. The *Dhammapada* mentions that victory breeds hatred in the conquered, the defeated live in sorrow. Giving up victory and defeat, the appeased live in peace (Dhp, 201).²⁰ Therefore, victory and defeat in the mundane world, in a way, is a misdeed committed to oneself. Nobler is he who wins himself rather than defeating others (Dhp, 322).²¹ Also, it is nobler to tame oneself than taming others (Dhp, 321).²² Being free from hatred is a characteristic of the wise (Dhp, 258).²³

One cannot be free from anger by abusing or striking back someone. It is impossible to be free from anger by retaliating to someone who abuses, attacks, harasses kills, robs, and destroys wealth. He who has not relinquished anger carries it throughout *samsāra* (Dhp, 291).²⁴

On the other hand, anger can be submerged and one can become calm even by staring at a Buddha statue or painting. Staring at a Buddha statue is a great mental remedy that consoles one's mind. These simple remedial measures can be practiced by everyone.

2. Not shaking by Eight Vicissitudes (*atalōdahama*)

Criticism, insults, mocking and so on are the main causes of generating anger. 'Eight Vicissitude' can be practically used in facing such conditions. One has to practice to stand unshaken in facing these eight worldly norms. Shaking means changing. If one's mind shakes facing these norms, there emerges anger. There are, according to Eight Vicissitudes, eight realities that a person has to face one day. Almost everyone in the world is used to expecting praise, honour, acceptance, gains yet, they are not used to expecting the opposites; blame, insults. The world can neither be good nor bad as one expects. The good too occurs in our lives unexpectedly. Also it should be kept in mind that evil things too may be experienced one day. And, one should learn not to overjoy in comfort and not to wail at sorrow. It is essential, at least to some extent, to try not to be unshaken from the Eight Vissititudes that make us worry, uncomfortable, and to be free from anger. According to Buddhism, there never was, there never is any being that experienced or experience the blame. Blame as well as praise are not of recent origin, but coming from yore (Dhp, 228).²⁵ There never was, there never will be, nor is there, a person who is totally blamed or totally praised (Dhp, 228).²⁶ Hence, it is important to understand that it is impossible for anyone to escape from blame and insults, and those are compulsory in life.

According to Buddhist Psychology, unvirtuous are many in the world. Consequently, they cannot differentiate the right from the wrong. Also they are lack of knowledge, submerged in malpractices, live at will not knowing the merits and demerits. On account of this itself, they lead a harsh life abusing others, and it is a trait of unvirtuousness. So, Buddha preached that the Blessed One had endured abuses hurled at him by worldly men just as a tusker endures the arrows shot at it in the battle field (Dhp, 320).²⁷ A tusker in the battle field endures many arrows shot at it, and

this signifies that the abuses of men should be endured the same way. Buddhist Psychology explains that hatred should be shed down even as a jasmine creeper sheds down a withered jasmine flower at dusk, which bloomed, spreading fragrance all over the place in the morning (Dhp, 377).²⁸

There are instances where the Buddha was scolded being called ‘the bald headed monk’ (*munduka*) and the ‘out cast’ (*wasalaka*) and so on by *Aggika Bāradvāja*.²⁹ *Akkosaka Bharadvaja* also was angered, displeased and insulted with rude and harsh words to Buddha as a Brahman of his clan was ordained. Lord Buddha asked if friends, colleagues, relatives and kinsmen who come to you don't accept staple, non-staple foods & delicacies you serve to them, to whom those foods belong? Then *Akkosaka Bharadvaja* replied that those foods are all mine. Then Buddha asked him that I do not accept from you and it is all yours.³⁰ In such instances, Buddha endured and took steps to make them understand reality. Hence, it should be understood that none can escape blame, and it is more appropriate to react composedly on such occasions. Whoever commits an offence, blames, insults, tortures on a harmless person receives its evil consequences upon himself (Dhp, 125).³¹ Thus it is crucial to endure such experiences to subdue anger.

If one retaliates when he/she receives harm, it makes oneself harm. Speak not harshly to anyone; they will also speak to you harshly. Such exchange of words is painful. Blows for blows will cause you pain (Dhp, 133).³² So, to be free from such acts assists to subdue anger. The *Dhammapada* points out that he who is commit wrong and does not give in to anger will go towards the celestial beings. It is mentioned there that free from anger supports to retain one's calmness, and to rectify his faults.

Frustration can be sited as another fact for anger. That is to say, anger arises when something is not done to the expected level from a second party. In such instances, we should understand that others do not behave as we want. More or less, we cannot achieve what we expect from ourselves. So, it is important to get used not to hope for such things.

3. Recollecting virtues

Special characteristic of anger, whenever we experience it, is ‘the tendency to see or perceive of only the negative side of it.’ Almost everyone in our society is nothing but a mixture of good and evil, and none is completely right or wrong. Yet, when we are in anger, we are used to seeing the wrong, worse aspects and traits of people. The fault lies at the ‘anger itself’ not in the person who expresses it. Had the fault been at the man, he should perpetually have been bad and evil. Yet, when one does not experience anger, he is neither good nor evil. Hence, it is worthy to see good, noble, decent, trait and qualities of that particular thing or person. It is better to see the good qualities of a person. And, it rectifies our perception on people subjected to anger, and enables us to be free from harbouring anger and minimize it. Recollecting one's good qualities or covering the bad qualities with good ones helps reduce anger.

4. Recollecting teachings on deeds (*kamma*)

The concept of *kamma* in Buddhism constitutes the teachings that support to subdue anger. Consequences of anger, according to Buddhism, are severe. Anger is a root of demerits (*akusal*), and it generates evil words, actions and thoughts. And, those evil words, actions and thoughts result in evil results (Dhp, 01).³³ According to *Vattupama Sutta* in *Majjima Nikāya* (Group of

Middle-length Discourses), when the mind is polluted with such evil thoughts, it is similar to a polluted piece of cloth, and hellish life should be expected.³⁴ This implies that anger has to be reduced by knowing its consequences.

One can appease anger by being free from anger as well as by knowing its consequences. When mind is filled with hatred, anger and malicious thoughts, it brings forth suffering and restless mind. Being free from anger alleviates the mind and brings forth consolation. The *Dhammapada* points out that he who hates faces blemish and disgraceful consequences, and goes to a hellish life after death (Dhp, 197).³⁵ Also the *Dhammapada* states that severe anger causes suffering from punishments in this world, and hellish suffering in the next world (Dhp, 248).³⁶ Also hatred (*dōsa*) is one of the factors difficult to be pacified and there is no clinging similar to hatred. It is only one lifetime suffering one experience to be captured by daemons, spirits and lions. Yet, to be captured by anger causes prolonged suffering. So, there is no bondage like hatred (Dhp, 251).³⁷

Having known that evil emotion such as anger causes pollution of the mind and such mind-polluting emotions have to be ejected. Another is an unwholesome emotion generated in the mind. It leads a person towards unwholesome behaviour, difficulties, violence, aggressive behaviour, ferocity and criminal behaviour. Consequences of all these can be severe. Thus, the way anger leads a person to suffering or distress can be understood in relation to Buddhist principle of *kamma*. Since generating anger even because of others results in numerous suffering for oneself in this life and life after this, it is crucial to get rid of anger whenever it appears.

Another method of appeasing anger by applying concept of *kamma* in Buddhist psychology is to understand one's present state of misfortune, loss, dispossession or torture as results of demerits of past lives. So, the creator of the root causes of generating one's anger is oneself. Hence, it is baseless to hate others. This perception on anger assists to reduce anger.

5. Recalling teaching about *samsāra* (cycle of existence)

The target of the anger that we experience is people around us rather than physical objects. Teachings on '*samsāra*' are considered as one of the best lessons to appease anger that is directed towards others. Accordingly, we travel through *samsāra* while being born and dying, being reborn and dying, during which journey, through *samsāra*, we might have been a mother, father, sister, brother, wife, husband, son, daughter or a relative. Accordingly, there is every possibility that our present targets of anger could be our own mother, father, brother, sister, a relative, son or daughter in one of our past lives. There is none who had been a relative in *samsāra*. Buddha has preached that it is difficult to find someone who had not been one's mother, father, brother or sister. Accordingly, anger can be submerged, presuming the unsuitability of hating our close associates.

6. Recalling mutual cooperation

None in the world can survive alone. We are assisted, in multi-faceted ways, to survive by those who are around us. Considering this very assistance, one can relinquish the anger. That is, their contribution is given for what we consume, drink and wear as well as where we live. There are many a people who assist in preparing a plate of meal until the point we receive it. In that sense, everyone has helped each other in society. It is not worthy to get angry towards those who helped us and still have to get used to pay our gratitude to them. Therefore, everyone in society is of assistance to another in numerous ways which is worthwhile trying to reduce anger.

Recalling assistance done by one is important. Once the anger is in the mind, others are seen as foes and only ill-will of him comes to mind. It is a noble quality to recall helps, services extended by others. It is paying gratitude.

7. Practicing giving (*dāna*)

‘Giving’ (charity), which is mentioned in Buddhist Psychology, can be recognized as one of the practical methods to appease anger. The simplest way to make ones foes, ones friends is by ‘giving’. We normally have got used to getting out of the sight of people who generate anger. This never helps in diminishing anger but increasing and maturing it.

A person can be made satisfied by giving or donating. Accordingly, a man with anger and unsatisfied mind can be befriended and intimate instead of extending anger when he receives something. Such a person becomes free of anger seeing that he is being helped rather than being envied. Hence, using ‘giving’ to get close to foes instead of doing atrocities to them helps to appease anger.

8. Stories of Buddhist characters

The stories of Buddhist characters found in abundance in Buddhist literature provide evidence for appeasing anger. Recalling these characters as we experience anger reminds one how to deal with resentful situations.

Buddha’s utterance, when Ven. Punna asked permission to leave to *Sunāparanta*, is notable here. Buddha asked Ven. Punna as *Sunāparanta* people are fierce and rough, they will insult and ridicule you. Ven. Punna replied that if they insult and ridicule me, I think they are civilized that they do not hit me with their hands. If they hit me with their hands, I think they are civilized that they do not hit me with a clod. If they hit me with a clod, I think they are civilized that they do not hit me with a stick and so on. It teaches to extend compassion towards others even when one is harassed and tortured.³⁸ what we normally do after such an instance is trying to find an opportunity to take revenge. That might be a cause for harassing others as well as one’s own destruction. Leading an adversary life promotes anger. If one party does not react, the other party cannot carry on with it. Avoiding reacting is neither a weakness nor a failure of anyone. Ability to control one’s three doors of action is a skill. As everyone does not possess that skill, one should be satisfied with his ability, skill. It is worthy to make use of Buddhist characters to reduce anger.

9. Suppression of defilements

According to Buddhist Psychology, Anger, ill-will, hatred and aversion are defilements. Many discourses constitute facts about suppression of defilements. Few techniques prescribed to abandon defilements generated in the mind, have been noted in *Sabbāsava sutta*, *Majjima Nikāya*. Those techniques can also be used to reduce fermentations such as anger. One can use these techniques to appease anger when he experiences it. Followings are those techniques.

1. *Dassanā* - Abandoned fermentations (anger) by seeing

2. *Sanvarā* - Abandoned fermentations by restraining
3. *Patisevanā* - Abandoned fermentations by using
4. *Adivāsanā* - Abandoned fermentations by tolerating
5. *Parivajjanā* - Abandoned fermentations by avoiding
6. *Vinōdanā* - Abandoned fermentations by dispelling
7. *Bhavana* - Abandoned fermentations by developing³⁹

Above mentioned techniques are important in dealing with anger. We should try to perceive the anger in the mind. As we perceive the anger in mind, we are able to deal with it. Unrestrained sense organs result in generating as well as intensifying anger. Both clinging and contact with the world are causes of anger. Therefore, restraining in senses is crucial. Being subjected or slave to anger either causes or intensifies anger. Buddha advised even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handled saw, even then you should train yourselves: our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate⁴⁰ so, it is suitable to endure anger. A common technique to be practiced when one is in anger is to get away from the situations, incidents or persons that generate anger. It reduces anger and its aggravation hence, the relevance of practical usage of these techniques.

10. Practicing loving kindness (*mettā*)

Counter-actions of wicked thoughts, misbehaviour can be developed in order to control such behaviour. And, it is called counter-conditioning. It is loving kindness (*mettā*) that we should cultivate against anger. The ability to get free from anger can be achieved as much as we practice loving kindness. Suttas like *Mettānisansa* of *Anguttara Nikāya* and *Karaniya Metta sutta* mention the benefits of inculcating loving kindness. *Mettānisansa sutta* of *Anguttara Nikāya* indicates 11 benefits of inculcating loving kindness instead of anger. Recollecting on benefits that can be achieved by inculcating loving kindness assists to appease anger. Those who practise loving kindness gain following benefits.

- They sleep in comfort
- They wake up in comfort
- They see no evil dreams
- They are dear to human beings
- They are dear to non-human beings
- God protects them
- Fire, poison and sword can not touch them.
- Their minds concentrate quickly.
- Countenance is serene
- They die without being confused in mind
- If they fail to attain arahantship here and now, they will be reborn in the brahma world go to brahma world after death.⁴¹

The Dhammapada mentions that he, who practices *mettā meditation (mettā Bhāvanā)*, sleeps well and well awakes (Dhp, 301).⁴² Fighting against fire by using fire is not a successful ploy.

Instead, the opposite has to be done. And, fire has to be extinguished with water. Mind cannot bear two contradictory emotions simultaneously. Anger has to be extinguished with loving kindness.

11. Reflection

Reflection is important to control actions that a person does using three doors of action; mind, body and words. *Ambalattika Rāhulōvāda Sutta* in *Majjima Nikāya* can be regarded as a discourse that constitutes such teachings. It is mentioned in the sutta that bodily, verbal and mental actions have to be examined in three occasions. First occasion is to examine whether a bodily, verbal or mental action brings wholesome results to doer or others or both before it is done. If both parties are benefited, such actions are to be done, such words are to be uttered and such thoughts are to be contemplated. The second occasion is to examine whether a bodily, verbal or mental action are beneficial to doer or others or both while it is being done. If such actions are beneficial, such actions are to be continued. Also after an action is done, words are uttered, thoughts are generated, one has to examine whether such actions, words or thoughts are beneficial to one and others. Actions that are beneficial to both parties have to be done. Anger is an evil emotion. It brings adverse consequences to oneself and others. Hence, anger should be appeased just as the face is examined on the mirror, checking and considering its evil consequences.⁴³

12 Controlling discursive thoughts

Vitakkasanthāna sutta in *Majjima Nikāya* constitutes several techniques that help in reducing anger. It can be considered as a collection of psychological techniques that assist unwholesome emotions. The significance of this sutta is that it points out five consecutive successful techniques, from simple to complex, to control unwholesome emotions. Those are,

- When a childish evil discursive thought is generated based on greed (*lōba*), hatred (*dōsa*) or ignorance (*mōha*), one has to recollect a virtuous counter thought.
- Consequences of discursive thoughts have to be recollected
- Contemplation on not to recollect unwholesome discursive thoughts.
- Roots of the discursive thoughts have to be recollected.
- Unwholesome mind (thought) has to be submerged with wholesome mind (thought) by grinding teeth; placing the upper teeth on lower teeth and pushing the tongue with pain.⁴⁴

When considering above remedial measures, it is observable that those are operable until evil thoughts such as anger are completely eradicated. Anger generated in the mind, which is a discursive thought, can be appeased by following them.

13. Practicing the four divine abodes (*Satara Brahma Viharana*)

Five ploys; four divine abodes (*Satara Brahma Viharana*), *Kammasakatā* (depends on *kamma*) and so on, which can be used as remedial measures to appease anger when it is experienced, have been mentioned in *Patama Āghātapativinaya sutta* of *Majjimanikāya*. They can be utilized to submerge anger easily as followings:

- When anger is generated towards someone, he should extend loving kindness (*mettā*) towards him/her.
- When anger is generated towards someone, he should extend compassion (*karunā*) towards him/her.
- When anger is generated towards someone, he should extend equanimity towards him/her.

- When anger is generated towards someone, one should practice *asati amnasikara* or contemplating on not to recall anger towards him/her.
- When anger is generated towards someone, one should extend *kammassakatā* (That is, to recall, *kamma* is bequeathed, *kamma* generates consequences, *kamma* is relative, *kamma* is dependent, and if one does *kamma*, wholesome or unwholesome, consequences are to be experienced).⁴⁵

If anger one experiences on any reason, to be submerged according to *Patama Āghatapativinaya Sutta*, it is the above mentioned five ploys that are helpful. So, it is worthy to consider the above mentioned clinical techniques to be successful.

14. Recollecting the hygienic body, proper speech, past pleasant actions.

Dutiya Āghātapativinaya sutta is a discourse comprising counselling values that helps reduce anger. The specialty of this discourse is that it constitutes techniques that help reduce anger with examples. And, it contains a classification covering the entire society. So, the characters too in the examples are exemplary. Those techniques can be cited as follows.

1. The way anger should be appeased against a person with impure bodily behaviour and pure verbal behaviour.

Just as a Bhikku, who bears a robe made out of a shroud (*pāṇsakula* robe) and wonders in the street, looks for usable parts on rag clothes stamping it with the left leg and searching with the right leg, so do impure bodily behaviour of a person should not be pondered considering his pure verbal behaviour. Pure verbal behaviour, if there is any, should be pondered.

2. The way anger should be appeased against a person with impure verbal behaviour and pure bodily behaviour.

Just as a tired stricken traveller steps into a pond full of mosses, drinks water removing the mosses with hands, so should impure verbal behaviour of a person is not pondered if he possesses pure bodily behaviour.

3. The way anger should be appeased against a person with impure verbal behaviour and bodily behaviour, and previous pleasant behaviour.

Just as a tired stricken thirsty traveller, having seen a little water in a foot print of a cow drinks it on all fours fearing of polluting if taken with fingers or hands or with an urn, so should impure verbal behaviour of a person not be pondered though he possesses impure verbal and bodily behaviour. And, his impure bodily behaviour should not be pondered though he possesses any. If there is anything pleasurable he has done, it should be pondered.

4. The way anger should be appeased against a person with impure bodily behaviour, impure verbal behaviour, and has not done any pleasant actions in the past.

If an impaired, suffering and sick person steps on to path for a long journey, villages beyond and behind are far away from him. He would not have food, medicine, a helper or a guide. Another person enters into the same path makes pity and extends compassion towards him. That is, the former is better to receive food, medicine, a helper or a guide because that helpless person becomes distressed on the spot. Thus, a person with impure verbal behaviour and bodily behaviour, and

previous pleasant behaviour too should be extended loving kindness. It is only compassion extended and sympathized.

5. The way anger should be appeased against a person with pure bodily behaviour, pure verbal behaviour, and sporadic wholesome actions.

A thirsty weary traveler bathes in a pond full with sweet cold water and surrounded by eye catching flora and white sand, comes out and rests under the shade of the thickets. In the same way, a person with pure bodily behaviour, pure verbal behaviour, and sporadic wholesome actions should be pondered for his pure bodily actions if there is any. It is his pure verbal behaviour, if there is any, should be contemplated. Thus, anger should be reduced against him.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating the concept of anger and methods for reducing anger that are included in Buddhist Psychology and Sutta Pitaka in Theravada Buddhist Thripitaka was referred to gather the relevant information. As findings, several terms representing different intensities of anger are included in Buddhist Psychology and it is of rich in methods to reduce anger. The knowledge of anger and anger management in Buddhist psychology can be added to the available literature in psychology so as to enrich its theories and implications on anger.

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Abbreviations

A.N. = Anguttara Nikāya

K.N. = Khuddaka Nikāya

M.A. = Majjima Nikāya

S.A. = Sanyukta Nikāya

End notes

- *De Silva, Padmasiri*, p. 52
- *Nyanathiloka*, p.108
- *Ibid*, p. 225
- *Ibid*, p.225
- *Ibid*, p. 382
- *Siri Gnanobhasatissa, M.*, Dhp, 233, p.470
- *Ibid, Dhp, 221*, p.451
- *A.N. VI, Āghata Vattu Sutta* p.266
- *Siri Gnanobhasatissa, M.*, Dhp 222, p.453
- *Ibid, Dhp, 321, 232, 233*, p.468, 469, 470
- *Ibid, Dhp, 133*, p.277
- *Vajiramedhi, W.* p.38
- *Siri Gnanobhasatissa, M.*, Dhp, 03, p.07
- *Ibid, Dhp, 04*, p.08
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- *Ibid, Dhp, 05*, p.10
- *Ibid, Dhp, 390*, p. 737
- *Ibid, Dhp, 400*, p.756
- *Ibid, Dhp, 223*, p.455
- *Ibid, Dhp 201*, p.413
- *Ibid, Dhp, 322*, p.621
- *Ibid, Dhp, 321*, p.620
- *Ibid, Dhp, 258*, p.511
- *Ibid, Dhp, 291*, p.567
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- *Ibid, Dhp, 228, p.464*
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- *Siri Gnanobhasatissa, M., Dhp, 197, p. 407*
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- *Ibid, Dhp, 251, p. 498*
- *S.N. IV, Punna Sutta, p.134-138*
- *M.N. I, Sabbāsava sutta, p.20*
- *M.N.I, Kakacupama Sutta, p.323*
- *A.N. VI, Mettānisansa sutta, p.644*
- *Siri Gnanobhasatissa, M., Dhp,301, p.580*
- *M.N. II, Ambalatthika Rāhulōvāda sutta, p.132*
- *M.N. I, Vitakkasanthāna sutta, p. 300-305*
- *A.N. III, Patama Āghātapativinaya sutta, p.302*
- *A. N. III, Dutiya Āghātapativinaya sutta, p. 304-308*