

Rev. Amitha Khema  
*Using Samatha and Vipassana to Overcome Anger*  
June 1, 2026



Namo Buddha, dear wonderful meditators. My name is Amitha Khema. I'm a Buddhist monk in Theravada tradition from Buddha Meditation Center in D.C. I'm also the Buddhist chaplain of George Washington University. We conduct the "Meditate with a Monk" meditation programs in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Over 1,000 meditators have joined us to meditate in an all-day meditation, and there are nearly 500 meditators meditating with the Washington D.C. Buddha Meditation Center. Our center is one branch of Mahamevnawa Meditation Center, which is a worldwide meditation center, and we are primarily located in Sri Lanka. Our teacher is the most Venerable Kiribathgoda Gnānānanda Thero.

Today let's try to learn how *samatha* and vipassana meditation help you overcome anger, and how you can have a peaceful mind by practicing these meditations. After this talk, you all can join with us throughout this month with our meditation classes. You can find all the details in here. When we practice meditations, first we need to know what is what it really means.

Because meditation is a word, it's a huge umbrella that covers so many different ideas. The Buddha teaches us two types of meditations: one meditation we call samantha meditation, and the other meditation we call vipassana meditation. Samatha means calming yourself. To be clear, it's like a focused attention meditation. You focus on a wholesome thing or present moment—anything you can experience in this present moment, maybe your breath, maybe your body, or anything which we talk in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness Sutta*.

Vipassana is a word most of the time we do not understand properly. We still believe that it's just focusing on our breath, but Vipassana means seeing through, or clearly seeing, or insight. So those are the two types of meditations Buddha teaches us in the *Kala Sutta*. *Kala* means that "right time," meaning that if anyone practices in the right time, with focused attention, with calminging samatha meditation and vipassana, or the insight or seeing through clearly meditation, and also listens to teachings of the Buddha and and discusses the dhamma, they can attain the peaceful state of *nibbana* (Skt. nirvana).

So then samatha and vipassana, focused attention and insight meditation, plus listening to dhamma, or teachings of the Buddha, and having discussions on what he says, will lead us to this cessation of all the sufferings of the enlightenment.

Today we are going to learn and understand how we can let go of anger through these meditations.

First of all we need to clarify what anger is and why it's unwholesome. What are the benefits we can gain when we practice loving-kindness meditation? Everyone knows that when you get angry, you feel an uncomfortable feeling within yourself, and your face might not look as nice as usual, and your words also may be not as nice as usual. It's not your personal issue; that's the way of anger. If anyone gets angry, if anyone's mad, they are not offering someone chocolate or roses, but hateful words. They might be insulting and say things behind the others' back. That is what we can expect when anger rises. We do not feel comfortable, and our actions also are not so comfortable to us or to others.

Then we need to understand why we need to let go of anger. First of all, anger is not the best option for navigating through life. Anger is sometimes the worst option that we can take, because sometimes when you say one word out of anger, it can ruin five or 10 years of relationships. Therefore, we need to be mindful to understand how anger rises and how anger falls and how anger take us to a trap of this future danger.

Honestly, anger is like drinking a poison and expecting the other person to die. You are the one suffering. If you are angry this moment with someone, the person you are angry with now, he may be chilling out somewhere while you are suffering thinking of him or her. You are the one suffering and not the other person.

Anger arises in our mind. But how does it arise? That's the thing we need to be clear on. If anyone did something that you were not expecting and don't like, that's where the anger arises. But not in everyone. If it were an enlightened person, that person would never get mad and hold anger. So, let's dive into the "how anger arises" part.

Take a slow but deep breath in, breathe out, and relax yourself. Now take a moment to think that someone slapped you 10 years ago. Now your body does not contain those body cells, even which you had 10 years ago. Now your body does not have the pain that occurred because of that slap, but still it creates pain in your mind if you are still mad about that. If you could not let go, the anger in your mind [repeats] over and over again throughout these 10 years, thousands of times, making you upset. It's not the other person making you suffer, but your mind. That other person who did this bad thing is not doing it now, but your mind bringing it over and over again. So anger arises in mind, and anger is the reason we suffer from someone else's bad behavior.

If someone said something that hurt us a lot, after that you won't hear it in your ears, that's already over. But your mind brings it over and over again and criticizes you. So then we need to let go of that anger in our mind to get back our peace to ourselves.

We do not need to suffer because someone else is wrong or making mistakes.

When it comes to anger, Buddha says there are two reasons to get angry or to feel anger. One called *patibhaga nimitta*, or the biggest reason to get angry, and then second one is *ayoniso manasikara*, or the wrong way of thinking. So any sort of unpleasant experience can make you

angry. It is a reason. But your wrong way of thinking is the second or actual reason to sustain that anger.

Let's dive into this more. So, there are 10 reasons Buddha is bringing up to get angry. One is thinking that someone did something bad to you. That's the reason to get angry. Someone doing bad to you. Someone doing something bad or that you don't like in future—that's another reason to get angry. You have been thinking of the future and you are anxious and you feel pain and anger. The second reason is someone doing something bad to your friend or anyone who you like. Or someone did good to your enemy. That's also a reason to get angry. The last one is just for no reason. Like there are some people, they are born to be angry.

When wrong thinking connects with any of these things, it creates anger in you. Let's dive further into this. In this case, we need to understand the mind pictures that create our world. Buddha describes it like it's a sensual pleasure world. The sensual pleasures world means you know that when you experience something, you actually create it. We are experiencing everything through mind pictures and it's a pleasurable thought pattern. So let's think a little more about this. Mind pictures, OK? Now we are diving to vipassana, and we need your attention, furthermore, in this, because at the end of this discussion or teaching, you will understand.

This is the way to let go of anger forever. Think that you are giving, think that you are telling your child, "Take this book and keep it on the table in the other room." Then your child takes it and he almost forgets what you asked him to do, and he keep it outside, maybe on on the porch. So now in your mind you already have a mind picture. You believe that your book should be in your room on your table, and after some time you are going to your room, and you look into your room, and your mind has a picture—an attached expectation that book should be on the table—but you don't see that book. When your expectation does not match the reality or what you see at that moment, there is a gap between what you see and what you expect in your mind. That gap created pain, since we have not trained other ways to release that pain. That pain catches anger.

Did you understand what I said? Anyone who gets angry, they are attached to expectations. Expectation is not the problem, but attachment to the expectation is the problem.

When you are attached to expectation, you expect only one thing to happen, while there are so many other possible things that can happen. Likewise, when are attached to your expectation, you get angry, because it's not happening as a reality. If it happens, you don't get upset, you are just happy about that.

Now this is something you should think when the next time when you get angry. The first rule, when you, if you want to overcome from anger: Do not find a reason from outside or anyone from outside. Like "he is the one creating anger." Don't point to someone else on the outside to complain. There are eight billion beings in the world, and there are so many reasons they won't

meet your attached expectations. So what you need to do is, whenever you get angry, see what you're attached to and what your expectation is.

For example, the next time that you are driving smoothly as a driver, and someone suddenly overtakes you or tailgates, and it hurts you, and you suddenly break, and you feel your heartbeat you feel your breath and the sound of your breath and suddenly you feel like uncomfortable situation. Things are not what you expect, but that's the reality you're experiencing, and then you feel pain. That pain creates anger, and then what happens? You get angry and you may say all the bad words. But the other driver may not hear that. Your passengers who are riding with you may hear that and it may ruin your whole day.

Instead of that, you can do something simple: Be mindful and see the pain, and see where you are attached, and then let it go.

In the beginning is really difficult, but as one of our regular meditation volunteers said, first >>>>Banti Bhante means in a common name for Buddhist monk. When Bhante said this, I did not believe this is gonna work for me, but after six months, when I am now reflecting, I see that I won't get angry. I know that when I, when I'm driving, I'm not driving here to correct others to see how others driving correctly. I'm driving to my destinations. They are occasionally there are some bad drivers, but it's not my business to correct them, and I want to hold my peace if I want to correct or help someone to correct, so that's that's what mindfulness given that person to improve. Okay, now let's see where Samatha and Vipassana works here to overcome from anger, Vipassana is the clearly seeing the impermanence and rising and falling, these mind pictures and attachments and pain and anger and non-attached look into it, and Samatha allows you to keep your focus in this present moment, and when you develop your samatha, or the calming, or the focused attention with loving kindness meditation, it's like opposite energy, which defeats anger easily, because you are cultivating acceptance, you accept you as you are, you accept others as they are, and you are, you can, you practice a way to put others' shoes and seek the world and love them the way they are and the way they want, so then you have full freedom, and you have full comfort in you, and that's allowing you to let go anger. It's like this: when you feel others, you often won't get mad or angry. It's like this: you don't get angry with your left hand because your right hand doing a lot, even though your left hand doing less, if you are a left hand, you can think the opposite, your left hand doing a lot, but your right hand doing less, but you won't get mad about that, because you feel both hands you belong to you, so like guys, when you cultivate love and kindness, you don't get mad easily, so that doesn't mean that you, you, you do not need to put yourself into troubles when you practice loving kindness. It's like you have so much of love to your dog, and you pet your dog, and you love your dog in the same way you have love to the lion in the zoo, but you keep maintain distance because lion can't understand your love, therefore you are not going to put your hand into lion's cage, even though you love lion, lion may see moving lunge for it, so therefore you are maintaining distance, but not the anger sharing the love. So, for that, this focus attentions help you to calm yourself and not to get angry, Vipassana clearly saying allow you to let go anger forever, so there will be a time that you will feel the pain, but you won't get angry. How nice it will be. Think that from the birth to today, if you have not never ever experienced or never ever got mad, even

though they are unpleasant experiences, never ever you felt anger. How peaceful your mind is, because whenever you think something related to past, there is no nothing to be upset, nothing to regret about what you have done, even though there are bad people in this world, so therefore it's better to let go angry if you practice this, and within 10 years, if you can overcome from. Anger, then, throughout your life, your life journey will be wonderful and amazing. So, therefore, give this a try. When you practice this, you get a benefit to yourself, which is you won't judge others the way they react to you all from their present emotions and feelings. Why? So, if someone angry, they are, as I said earlier, they are not ready to offer you chocolate or roses, but when anger fades away, they are come, they are coming to their normal life. So don't judge when someone angry, because even you or someone else angry, they are not nice, but don't frame them. They are angry people. Just understand that angerized in that person, once anger over, he will be back to normal. Even anger is in you. You don't want to judge yourself. Okay, this is not my personal mistake. That's the way of anger. Once anger over, I'll be good. So the same way, good wholesome quality is also the same. You do not need to frame someone. This is a wholesome person. He seems wholesome because he has wholesome intentions and qualities. So that's the reason we feel he's so wholesome. But if those wholesome thoughts fall fade away, then we can see that wholesome character in that person, so instead of framing people and believing personalities, this practice allows you to see a moment to moment change of the mind, so it's a blessing, so try to practice this, and in that, when you practice this, you will have so much of happiness in you. Why you don't have frames, you don't have glasses, when you see others, and when you see even yourself, send the, it will allow you to have self love a lot, when you have self love, self judgment, that criticizing you, personal regrets, those things will lower, and in the same way, you, you will be a person others would like to come and talk to, because they don't feel any misunderstanding and miscommunication, educations, miscommunications when being with you. Okay, this is the teaching we are gonna practice practically in our meditation classes. We invite you all to join with us to practice meditation. May you all be well and happy Namó Buddha.