

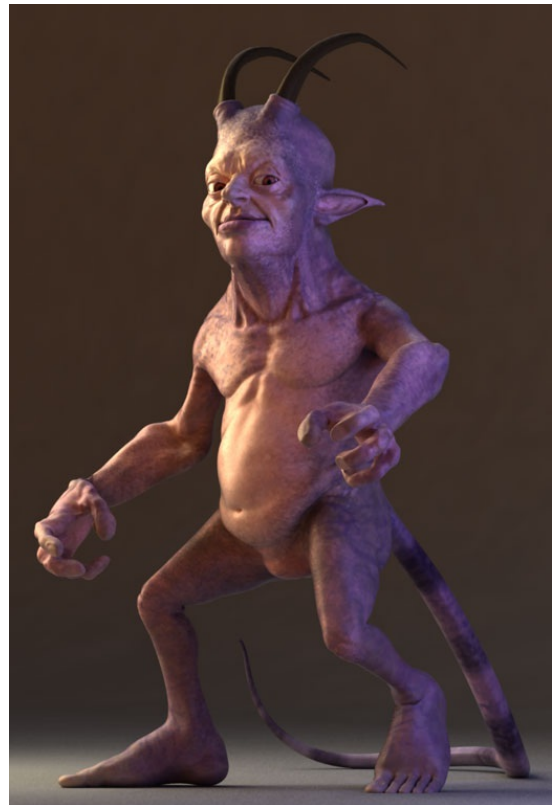
How to Remove Anger

The Anger-eating Demon

Once there lived a demon who had a peculiar diet—he fed on the anger of others. As his feeding ground was the human world, there was no lack of food for him. He found it quite easy to provoke a family quarrel, or national and racial hatred. Even to stir up a war was not very difficult for him. Whenever he succeeded in causing a war, he could properly gorge himself without much further effort, because, once a war starts, hate multiplies by its own momentum and affects even normally friendly people. Thus, the demon's food supply became so rich that he sometimes had to restrain himself from over-eating, being content with nibbling just a small piece of resentment found close-by.

As it often happens with successful people, however, he became rather overbearing, and, one day, when feeling bored, he thought: "Shouldn't I try it with the devas?" On reflection, he chose Tavatimsa, ruled by Sakka. He knew that only a few of these gods had entirely eliminated the fetters of ill-will and aversion, though they were far above petty and selfish quarrels. By magic power he transferred himself to that heavenly realm and was lucky enough to come at a time when Sakka was absent. There was no one in the large audience hall, and, without much ado, the demon seated himself on Sakka's empty throne, waiting quietly for something to happen, which he hoped would bring him a good feed. Soon, some of the devas entered the hall, and they could hardly believe their eyes when they saw that ugly demon, squat and grinning, sitting on the throne. As soon as they had recovered from their shock, they started to shout, "You ugly demon, how can you dare to sit on the throne of our Lord? What utter cheekiness! What a crime! You should be thrown headlong into a boiling cauldron in hell! You should be quartered alive! Begone!"

While the devas were growing angrier and angrier, the demon was delighted and grew every moment in size, strength, and power. The anger he absorbed into his system started to ooze from his body as a smoky red-glowing mist. This evil aura kept the devas at a distance, and their radiance was dimmed.



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Suddenly, a bright glow appeared at the other end of the hall, and it grew into a dazzling light from which Sakka emerged. Having firmly entered the stream that leads to Nibbana, Sakka was unshaken by what he saw. The smoke-screen created by the devas' anger parted as Sakka slowly and politely approached the his throne. "Welcome, Friend! Please remain seated. I can take another chair. May I offer you the drink of hospitality? Our Amrita is not bad this year. Or do you prefer a stronger brew, the vedic Soma?"

While Sakka spoke these friendly words, the demon rapidly shrank to a diminutive size and finally disappeared, trailing behind a whiff of malodorous smoke which, likewise, soon dissolved.

The gist of this story dates back to the discourses of the Buddha. But even now, over 2500 years later, our world looks as if large hordes of Anger-eating Demons were haunting it and were kept well nourished by millions slaving for them all over the earth. Fires of hate and wide-traveling waves of violence threaten to engulf mankind. Also the grass roots of society are poisoned by conflict and discord, manifesting in angry thoughts and words and in violent deeds. Is it not time to end this self-destructive slavery of man to his impulses of hate and aggression which only serve the demoniac forces? Our story tells how these demons of hate can be exorcised by the power of gentleness and love. If this power of love can be tested and proven, at grass-root level, in the widely spread net of personal relationships, society at large, the world at large, will not remain unaffected by it.

(Based on Samyutta Nikaya, Sakka Samyutta, 22, Retold from an ancient Buddhist Story by Nyanaponika Thera)

Subduing anger

When anger arises, there are five ways by which one can subdue it, and by which he should wipe it out completely.

When anger arises, one should develop loving-kindness toward the other person.

When anger arises, one should develop compassion for the other person.

When anger arises, one should develop equanimity toward the other person.

When anger arises, one should ignore the other person and not pay any attention to him.

When anger arises, one should direct one's thoughts to the fact of the other person's being the product of his kamma: "This person is the owner of his kamma, heir of his kamma, born of his kamma, related to his kamma, and abides supported by his kamma. Whatever kamma he does, for good or for evil, to that he will fall heir."

These are five ways by which one can subdue anger whenever it arises and by which one should wipe it out completely.

– Anguttara Nikaya 5, 161, Aghatapativinaya Sutta