

Will Grossman

The Tape-loop of Anger

Prema: A Way Out Of...

'... angry because angry because angry because,' etc. is a tape-loop. It is a tape-loop that we ourselves put on to stop ourselves from hearing the real message. The real message is inner loneliness, hurt, pain, longing, frustration, disappointment, and the fear of real understanding, love, and contact.

In my previous article, *Myths of the Growth Movement*, I distinguished between two kinds of anger. The first is the kind that *just happens*: sudden, explosive, electrifying, un-premeditated. This anger involves a temporary loss of ego-control which, because it is authentic, makes possible a deeply unitive experience with another person. The second type of anger, which I call playing the devil's game, is the ego-head aggressively maintaining control but masquerading its control as 'feelings'. It is a headtrip designed to confuse the other person (and oneself) about what is actually going on and, if possible, to bludgeon him or her into submission. It is manipulative whereas the first type of anger is simply reactive.

Since this writing is partly a reply to the viewpoint expressed by Ronald Ullmann and others (*Self and Society*, February '75) let me first of all say: of course you feel better when someone shouts at you because it alleviates the tension, but that's quite beside the point. The point is: what is the nature of this 'feeling better'? What exactly goes on inside? What happens inside you, what happens inside me, and what happens between us?

Anger is a cover-up mask of the deeper feelings. Anger protects us from the tensions and anxieties engendered by deeper feelings. Anger is more negotiable than either feeling deep inner longing or deep inner helplessness or even the ecstasy of shared delight. And what is important about anger is not expressing it but *feeling* it, being aware of it, being aware of what really triggered it off and of what physiological-chemical-muscular changes it causes in the body *how* it interferes with mental functioning and energy flow. Express your anger if you must, but be aware of what it does to *me* and to the millions of me's in this world. And above all, be aware of what it does to *you*.

The growth movement has served and continues to serve a tremendously important function in getting people who previously were cut off from their own feelings and denied their own feelings to become cognisant of their feelings and to own their feelings (including anger) rather than to repress them or repudiate them by projecting them on to others. But owning one's anger isn't the same as inflicting it on another being. Seeing in myself an urge to kill and acting on that urge are two quite different things - luckily for all of us.

One reader of my article asked me: 'If someone steps on my foot, I get angry; how is that a cover-up of deeper feelings?' Well, when someone steps on your foot, the first thing you feel is not anger but *pain* - physical pain, first of all, but also the inner soul-pain that someone has again cared so little about you as to step so inconsiderately on your foot. But because you have trained yourself not to express hurt (which threatens to open us to more hurt and still deeper feelings) we express anger and push the other person away. Putting on the tape-loop of anger has again succeeded: it has kept the real message from getting through.

'When a baby screams with anger is he masking feelings?', asks Ronald Ullmann. Of course he is: underneath the anger is need, and the rage is a way of keeping the agony of total helplessness from being fully experienced. Ullmann clearly indicates that he understands what I'm talking about when he writes, 'Our love is tainted with the need for love in return. This need leads to frustration, and frustration leads to anger.' Frustration is the true feeling, the feeling that the anger is masking - frustration that I haven't been nourished in one way or another, frustration and pain that I haven't been sufficiently cared for and cared about.

As long as I am unwilling to acknowledge to you - openly, honestly - that I feel frustrated because you are depriving me of your love-energy, so long will I become angry. This is because, rather than *expressing* my frustration, I react and attack you as the frustrating agent. When I begin expressing the deeper feelings, the hurt and frustration of not being cared about, the anger will dissolve and a door will then open between us.

And all this I can do once I become sufficiently aware of my addictions, of the expectations and demands that make me bully, bribe, blackmail and manipulate everyone and all situations into supplying *my* needs - because of my quite erroneous beliefs that without the satisfaction of those needs I cannot be happy. If our love is tainted, it is tainted by self-centered craving - the same kind of craving that makes us judge everyone on the basis of whether what they are doing is good for *us*. When we begin to see our addictions in operation, when we become aware of how our *addictions* are making us unhappy and not the outside world at all, then we can give up the tyrannical demand that we be fed in one way or another, and the anger which is a reaction to being deprived of our emotional fix will simply disappear. And it is at that moment when we recognise the addictive nature of our emotion-backed demands, that the taint of wanting something in return begins to diminish and we become capable of loving without imposing demands and conditions.

I regret the antagonistic, sarcastic tone of Ullmann's letter. He seems to be more interested in polemicising than in communicating. And why, Ronald Ullmann, do you sneer when you use the word 'guru'? A guru is simply a highly developed being, a teacher with whom there is a deep bond of love. I have at least three Indian gurus; I also have Western gurus, but I call them by other names: friend, colleague, psycho-therapist, lover. Why, really, are you sneering? What does sneering give you?

The teachings I have received and integrated on the basis of my own experience I call Prema, which is a Sanskrit word meaning pure love-energy, or undemanding love that

loves the other for what he *is* and not for what I can get from him. Prema is a system of communication exercises that involve the body, the breathing and voice, the focusing of awareness, the giving of feedback, and the activation of an energy and a consciousness that facilitates sharing and emotional release. But Prema is also a teaching: an indication of how our addictions enslave us, how my conception of what I need (which is further based on my conception of what I *am*) set up addictions which can only destroy my happiness and peace of mind.

The whole Prema system is based on the joy of sharing: the joy of contact which is a sharing of consciousness. This of course includes feelings. But in Prema we don't say, 'I'm angry at you,' and leave it at that, nor do we say 'I'm angry at you because you did such and such,' but we try to get at what's underneath all that by saying, 'I'm angry at you because you don't really listen to me and that upsets me,' or, 'I'm angry at you because I want to give you something and you don't seem to want anything from me.' In other words, Prema emphasizes true I/Thou contact and invites participants to let go of antagonism, hostility, and destructivity. The way this is done is not by arm-twisting or moralising but by setting up structured communication exercises which allow a person the time and space, without fear of interruption, to express his thoughts and feelings.

I invite persons interested in Prema to contact me c/o Centre d'Evolution, 14 rue des Saints-Peres, 75007 Paris, France.

'ROOTS'

Seagulls swoop and turn
White against the woods,
Black against the sky.
The worms lie coiled
Pink in the unturned earth,
Bruised and purple in the hollows
Created by the spade
Plunging into the brown
Sticky, squelching soil.

The airy castles of the mind
Are rooted through the body
In this muddy earth.
Man's experience piles up,
Becomes a compost heap,
Full of the rags and tags
Of other people's lives;
Full of the actions and
Reactions of his own.

If only we stay rooted
We can change;
Working through despair
Blending past and present,
Wasting nothing, growing,
Until the power comes
At last into our hands
And we ourselves can mould
The contours of our being.

Anne Coghill