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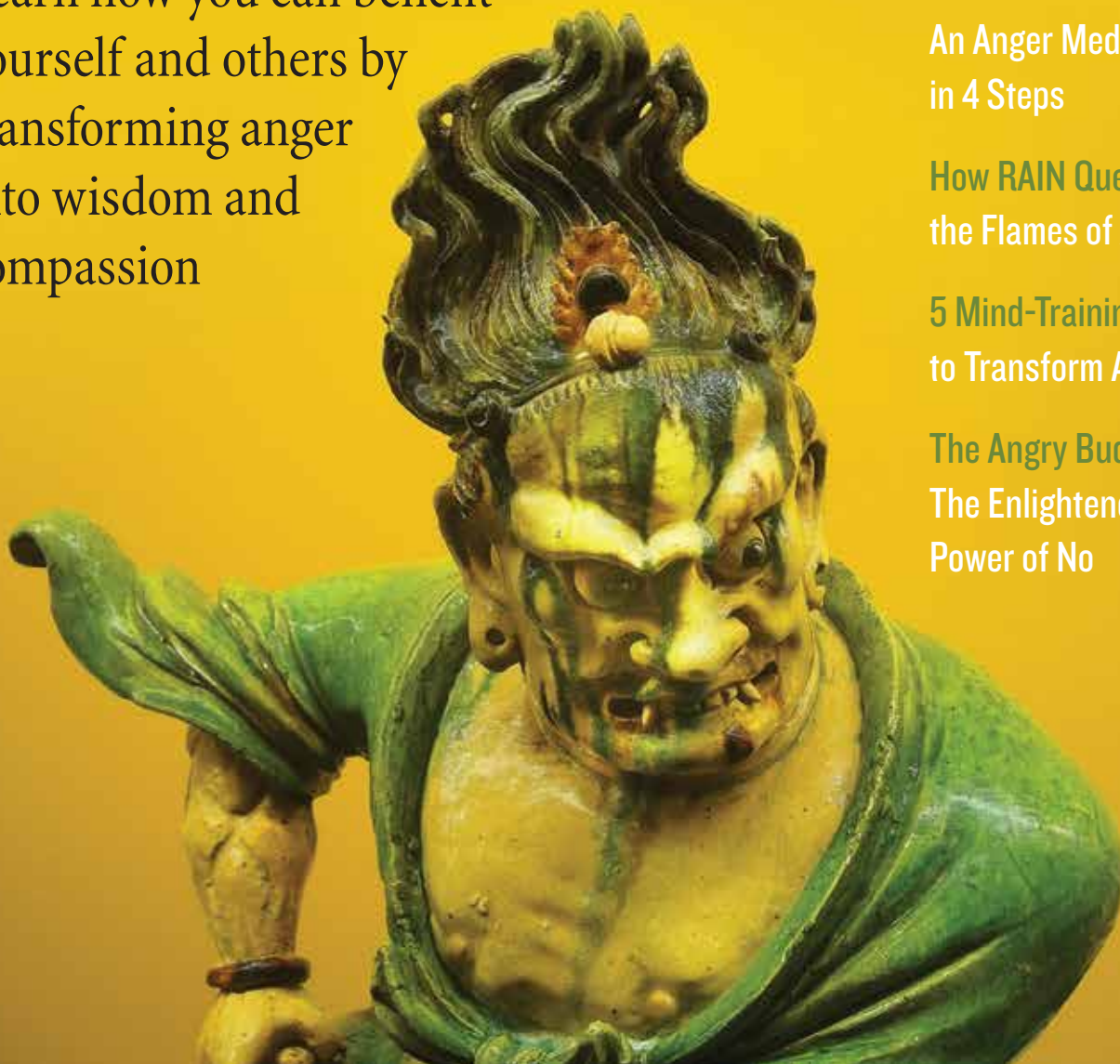
SHAMBHALA SUN

BUDDHISM CULTURE MEDITATION LIFE

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The **Wisdom** of **Anger**

Learn how you can benefit yourself and others by transforming anger into wisdom and compassion



The Poison Tree
An Anger Meditation
in 4 Steps

How RAIN Quells
the Flames of Anger

5 Mind-Training Slogans
to Transform Anger

The Angry Buddha
The Enlightened
Power of No

RAIN

Cools the Flames of Anger



PHOTO BY LIZA MATTHEWS

EMILY HORN teaches us how to recognize, accept, investigate, and not identify with our anger.

The best way to transform anger and other strong emotions is to befriend them. As with any relationship, it takes time to become intimate with the inner workings of our minds. To do it we need courage and strength. And we need the help of an effective technique.

Peeling away the layers of anger moves us closer to life and empowers us to stand up for justice. One of the most effective ways to deepen and transform our relationship with anger is a four-step mindfulness-based practice known by the acronym RAIN: Recognize, Accept, Investigate, Non-Identify. Here's how it works.

1. Recognize Anger

The first step of the practice is to recognize the many forms that anger takes. The energy of anger can move from irritation to resentment to rage. One form can fuel another in a fiery chain reaction that takes just seconds to explode.

We must be willing to face the demons that lie inside us so we are not controlled by them. There are many moments when anger arises without being recognized. Because we fear the intensity of anger, we allow it to build up over time, but pushing anger away or denying it only causes unconscious aggression.

Anger doesn't just disappear when we start to meditate. But with mindfulness practice and the support of others, we can recognize it more quickly when it arises and have the presence to respond appropriately.

2. Accept Anger

Learning to accept anger is the second aspect of RAIN. Non-judgmental acceptance melts the frozen and unconscious aspects of anger and cools the heat of active anger.

It is natural for our protective instincts to arise in certain circumstances. These are an important part of our evolutionary history. Befriending anger requires us to welcome our survival instincts as they arise. You don't need to judge or condemn them.

We must learn to accept not only our personal anger but also the collective anger that permeates our world. Patience and forgiveness, for both ourselves and others, are important practices to help cool the flames of aggression.

3. Investigate Anger

The third step is to investigate the nature of anger. What is this energy that morphs and changes? That can burn like fire and harden like ice?

When you recognize anger is arising, you can use your attention to zoom into all the different layers and forms of anger. This includes bodily sensations, thoughts, and the whole range of feelings on the anger spectrum.

Is the anger light, dark, murky, or hot? Where is it felt in the body? What happens to your breath when you're angry? What are the themes of your thoughts?

By applying your curiosity directly to the feeling of anger, you can change a potential damaging moment into a powerful experience of energy. This will create wise change.

By investigating anger you begin to notice how anger morphs into other emotions. You see the subtle ways you identify with your anger, and how the intensity of anger is like a glue that sticks you to your storylines. This leads to the final step of RAIN practice.

4. Not Identify with Anger

When we practice non-identification, we set aside the stories we tell ourselves about our anger. Focusing on the movement of the breath softens our identification with these stories so we can simply be with what's happening.

When we move beyond our personal story, we open into awareness. Non-identification brings the understanding that anger arises and passes away. In that moment we become even more intimate with anger.

We burn out quickly when we identify with our anger, when we don't recognize how it is driving us, when lack curiosity and investigation. But when we befriend anger, it fuels empowerment, resilience, and change. It deepens into non-separation and living in less harmful ways. Learning to use RAIN—recognizing, accepting, investigating, and non-identifying—turns the suffering of anger into a conscious and workable energy. Through the art of mindfulness, we see the harm that our anger has caused and use it instead to power our lives for the benefit of all. ♦

EMILY HORN is an Insight Meditation teacher and the community director of Buddhist Geeks, which explores what it means to be a Buddhist in this high-tech world. She lives with her husband in Asheville, North Carolina.



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