

INTROSPECTION

# How to stay calm amid calamity

When we practise Rajyoga meditation, the awareness of being a soul and not the body becomes so strong that it greatly diminishes the fear of death. Secondly, we are quickly able to become detached observers and see things as they really are; not what panic, fear and ignorance create. It gives us the ability to remain calm, observe the facts of the situation and have a clear understanding of what to do.



KEN O'DONNELL

In a world where scenes of calamity seem to be occurring more and more, it may be worth spending a little time reflecting on what is needed from the self, in situations of more than unusual difficulty.

It is often said that the best way to deal with extreme situations, where others around us are panicking and afraid, is to keep a cool head. This is not always easy but there are a couple of approaches that can often help. First, to have an understanding or information about what is going on, and also to maintain an awareness of being an observer. Both are useful and extremely helpful

positions for the self and others, at times of crisis. Three situations in which I found myself may illustrate this.

It is probably safe to say that the more one travels around the world, the more 'opportunities' there are to be involved in unusual events. I travel a great deal, and I was in another country, where I had been invited to give a talk, strangely enough, titled "Remaining calm in the chaos"—the irony of which was not lost on me as the events unfolded. As is our custom, before giving a public talk there were a few moments of quiet contemplation, after which I began to speak. I had only just begun when the building began to shake, and the walls of the room began to move. As I watched what was happening, I saw that many people began to scream and run out of the room, in varying degrees of panic, but some remained seated. The quake lasted about two minutes (and later I learned it was over 7 on the Richter scale), during which time I simply observed what



Meditation gives us the ability to remain calm in extreme situations.

was happening. However, I was also intrigued that some had remained calmly seated. When the quake had subsided, I asked them why they had not run out, in panic, like the others. They replied that they knew that the building was wooden and that in earthquakes it is quite un-

likely that wooden buildings collapse, whereas those of cement and concrete very often do. I realised that my sense of calm certainly came from my practice of meditation, and their sense of calm came from the knowledge they had of the situation.

The second event was in an

airplane; a 30-seater propeller plane, used for many regional flights in South America. It was extremely windy, and in fact, the flight had already been delayed because of the weather conditions. Eventually, we took off. I was at the front of the plane and the air hostess

was seated in her staff seat, facing me. She looked terrified and asked me that if there was any kind of difficulty, would I help her. I said I would. When we came into land, the wind caught the wings of the plane on one side only and tipped it to an alarming angle. Every-

one began to quietly panic, pray or cry. The air hostess remained terrified. I told her, 'Look, the pilot is good, nothing has happened—everything will be fine.' I remained calm, and on the second attempt, we landed well. I was simply observing what was really happening, not what might or might not happen, and was able to remain calm.

The final story had more disastrous results. It was an eight-hour evening bus journey, again in South America, and most of the passengers were asleep quite soon into the journey. Sometime later, the bus hit a sugar cane truck, at 110 kilometres per hour. It turned over several times and landed upside down in a ditch. I was seated near a window exit and I could hear people screaming and groaning, as many had hit their faces on the seats in front of them because it was before seatbelts were mandatory. I began observing quite calmly what the situation was. People needed help and there was a smell

of petrol. I pushed open the window with my feet and went to the front of the bus to find that the driver was already dead. I then went up to the highway to flag down other vehicles and went back to help people get out of the bus. There were seven or eight more fatalities that night.

For most people in situations of extremity, the first feeling is fear. When we practise Rajyoga meditation, the awareness of being a soul and not the body becomes so strong that it greatly diminishes the fear of death. Secondly, we are quickly able to become detached observers and see things as they really are; not what panic, fear and ignorance create. It gives us the ability to remain calm, observe the facts of the situation and have a clear understanding of what to do. At times of calamity, what more could I and those around me need?

Ken O'Donnell is an author and the director of Brahma Kumaris' services in South America.

COMPOSURE

## TO BE FREE FROM ANGER, TAP INTO THE PEACE WITHIN



B.K. USHA

Anger is an emotion familiar to everyone. We all have experienced it in some way or the other. Anger need not be just shouting at someone; it occurs in many other ways, such as irritation, sullenness, aloofness, and resentment. Many people don't even recognise these as various forms of anger. When someone expresses anger, they reveal their state of mind

and can be helped. But those who carry passive forms of anger inside them often do not know the harm it is doing to them.

Why do we get angry? It is the result of a weakness in the soul which makes us lose our temper or in other words, loses control over the self, but we often give justifications for it. We point to the behaviour of others or to situations which, we say, made us angry. According to psychologists, an angry person is very likely to be mistaken in this regard because anger causes a loss of self-monitoring capacity and the ability to see things objectively.

Even if another person's behaviour was bad or a situation was really testing, does getting angry make



Rajyoga helps us build an inner reservoir of peace.

things better? Suppose we give someone a task and they fail to do the work the way we wanted; we get an-

ger at them. What will be the result? We may be able to make them do things our way for some time, but our

anger will put that person under pressure and make them fearful. By getting angry we also hurt others' self-

respect, which may make them resentful. In future, the fear or resentment will not allow them to be honest or free in their interactions with us, and they may no longer have genuine respect for us. In effect, anger builds an invisible wall between people that blocks the flow of good feelings, cooperation and understanding.

Anger also harms the one who gets angry. The physical effects of anger include increased heart rate, blood pressure and levels of adrenaline. An angry person quickly burns up his energy and, therefore, feels exhausted. Those with an angry or irritable disposition are likely to frequently feel tired or weak, which in turn may make them more irritable.

Anger, someone said, is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.

So how can we give up this corrosive emotion? It is essential that we look at everyone as our brothers. This is easy to do when we recognise that we are souls, children of the one Supreme Soul. Every individual has their own personality, talents, and role, which is reflected in their behaviour. If we remember this, no one's behaviour will upset us. If someone gets angry with us, it is because they are not in their best state of mind at that moment. This understanding helps us avoid reflexive reactions, and once the other person's anger subsides, we can sort out any

misunderstanding or differences calmly.

Meditation helps immensely in becoming free from anger. Rajyoga meditation involves reminding ourselves that we are souls, and remembering the Supreme Soul, who is an inexhaustible source of purity, peace, love, and power. Regular practice of Rajyoga helps us build an inner reservoir of peace and develop a positive outlook, both of which enable us to avoid anger. Reminding myself again and again that I am an innately peaceful being eventually imbues me with peace so that nothing and nobody can make me angry.

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RULES

## REDISCOVERING THE LAWS OF LOVE



NEVILLE HODGKINSON

There was a time when I thought true love meant to give one's all to another person—to sacrifice oneself in a relationship, living for the other rather than for oneself.

It didn't work! In today's world, most of us have limitations that make us hungry for support. If one person tries to give endlessly to another, they will end up drained. We are physical as well as spiritual beings, and we need to set boundaries in our give and take.

And yet... true love does work according to different laws from those that govern the

physical world. Divide it, and in fact, it multiplies. A mother still loves her first child when a second is born. A singer's love for a song is not diminished when that song is shared with the world. True love is creative, boundless, a resource that enriches us all.

Why, then, does there seem to be such a shortage of it? No supermarket can buy up supplies of it. No government can nationalise it. No multinational has a monopoly on it. Yet in our consumerist society, we do seem troubled by an inability to give and receive as much of it as we want and need. Is there a way to correct that?

I am realising that the consciousness with which I habitually live holds the key. I have to take care of my physical being, but I do not have to identify with it. I have family members with whom I have a relationship of responsibility, but that does not mean they are mine, such that I must boss them around; nor that they



As the soul flourishes, the power of true love re-emerges.

own me. I have learned that dependency, and attachment, kill love.

A lighter approach developed as I became more aware of myself as a spirit. As the great religious traditions have under-

stood—and as modern science is beginning to rediscover—the material world is secondary to and dynamically put in place by an informational matrix that is at root non-physical. When I understand myself as a

soul—an individual, conscious unit within this mind-like quality in the universe—love blossoms freely, and shows me how to live appropriately and sustainably with others. Fear and neediness disappear.

It's true that to make such a shift, I have to "die" internally too much that was previously dear to me. Be it relationships of dependency, ego-boosting roles and activities, and even to my physical being, I would not have been able to begin on such a journey without the guidance and support of the Supreme Father, to whom I was introduced through Rajyoga.

But the wonder is, as the soul flourishes, the power of true love re-emerges, and this truth starts to put right all that went wrong previously. It turns out that what was lost was worth nothing, compared with that which is gained.

The poet Shelley put it beautifully:

"True love in this differs from gold and clay

That to divide is not to take away."

Neville Hodgkinson is a UK-based author and journalist, and a long-time student of Rajyoga.

### A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Anger burns relationships. When awakened, old habits of irritation, impatience, and anger burn me inside. With moments of reflection and meditation, I can learn to calm this old habit. By using acceptance, love, and the coolness of peace, I can regain perspective. Then with firm determination, I can move beyond anger. Today let me be cool.