

MEDITATION

The dynamics of peace



B.K. ASHA

Peace is sought by all, individually as well as collectively. When people talk of peace, they do not just mean the absence of conflict, but a condition in which everyone is free from the fear of violence and there is harmony in society.

But in the world today, conflicts are so common that the mere cessation of hostilities is celebrated as an achievement. In some parts of the world, centuries-old prejudices, grievances, and hatred fuel intermittent conflict and have created such mindsets that people are not even interested in pursuing lasting peace. They are content to ensure that they have the means to deter their enemies and retaliate against their attacks.

On the other hand, there

are countries that have not seen a military conflict for centuries. But do their citizens live in peace?

Stress is very much a part of life for people in these countries, as it is with almost everyone today. Accidents, suicides, homicides and other crimes do take place in these countries and their citizens suffer from diseases just as people elsewhere.

Prosperity, political stability and other external factors do not bring peace. Peace can be experienced only when the mind is not disturbed, distracted or influenced in any way by anything, whether good or bad. In such a state, the mind becomes still, and one is able to observe how it works.

Silence enables one to look clearly into the deep recesses of the mind and watch the subtle mechanisms of thought and feeling work. On doing this, one realises that it is vices that rob us of peace. So long as one is under the influence of any vice, one cannot experience peace for long.

Greed, anger, hatred, lust, jealousy, ego, attachment... all pull the mind in various directions, creating desires, distorting our perspective



We are spiritual beings, or souls, and peace, purity, love and truth are our innate qualities.

Prosperity, political stability and other external factors do not bring peace. Peace can be experienced only when the mind is not disturbed, distracted or influenced in any way by anything, whether good or bad. In such a state, the mind becomes still, and one is able to observe how it works.

and impairing our judgement. One can become a slave to vices without realising it, until one begins to wonder why one cannot experience lasting peace.

All the ills that plague the world can be traced to one or the other vice, or combinations of them. The constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organisation states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Not only wars; crime, corruption, inequality, and even diseases begin in our minds.

These evils are the results of thoughts triggered by

vices. For example, inequality exists, and is growing every year, because those who have far more wealth than they will ever need are unwilling to share it with the less fortunate. It may be because of greed, selfishness, miserliness, lack of compassion, or callous disregard for fellow humans. None of these reasons is counted as a virtue.

We can experience lasting peace only by freeing ourselves of the influence of vices. For that we have to first know, and remember, who we are. When we identify the self with the body, we see ourselves in terms of our nationality, race, gender, or socio-economic status. We get influenced by these aspects of our life and our thinking and behaviour become skewed. Just as an actor has an identity of his own that is separate from the roles he plays, we have a true, eternal identity that is beyond the labels by which we define ourselves.

We are spiritual beings, or souls, and peace, purity, love and truth are our innate qualities. The soul, in its original state, is pure, peaceful, loving, and truthful. When we keep remembering who we are and the

qualities we possess, they begin to emerge from under the influences that had suppressed them. We then begin to experience these virtues and express them in our words and actions. This is how knowledge of the true self changes our life.

But since there are a lot of challenges in the world out there and many things pull the mind in different directions, it is not easy to remain focused on subtle spiritual truths. To acquire the inner strength to resist distractions, we need to connect with a source of power. The biggest such source is the Supreme Soul, the father of all souls. When souls remember Him, they receive His powers, and regular practice of such remembrance, which is called Rajyoga meditation, makes the souls immune to external influences.

Such souls naturally experience and spread peace. When more and more souls do this, peaceful communities are created. This is the basis for establishing a peaceful world order.

B.K. Asha is Director of the Brahma Kumaris' Om Shanti Retreat Centre in Gurugram, Haryana.

EXPLAINED

COMFORT AND HAPPINESS ARE NOT THE SAME



B.K. DR. SAVITA

Are comfort and happiness the same? We may experience comfort when we are physically and mentally at ease. Such an experience makes us happy. And we are certainly comfortable with being happy, except when in the presence of those who are deeply unhappy or disapprove of our happiness.

Many material objects and facilities are a source of comfort—be it a cosy chair, air conditioning or comfort foods.

Comfort experienced through such things, being dependent on external factors, is short-lived. If these facilities or objects are no longer available, we may stop feeling com-

fortable. And if we become used to certain comforts, we suffer when we lose them.

Take the case of someone who is accustomed to having everything done for him by others. If such a person has to fend for himself one day, he will struggle to accomplish the simplest of tasks and may experience considerable grief as a result. Comforts can, in this way, make us complacent, incompetent and weak.

The same is true of mental comforts. We feel comfortable in the company of certain kinds of people or in certain places or situations. When we are not among those we like, or in an unfamiliar place or situation, we may become uneasy.

The feeling of comfort, thus, is dependent on a host of factors. And anything based on external things and conditions that are beyond our control cannot be experienced at will and will not be permanent.

Moreover, if we make the mistake of becoming dependent on such means of comfort, we are setting ourselves up for



Happiness is the best nourishment for the soul.

sorrow.

Happiness, which can be a product of comfort, is not so fickle. It is an experience of inner joy that has little to do with what is outside.

Happiness results from how we perceive people and

situations. Unlike comfort, we can experience happiness by choice.

If we decide to be happy, we will see what is good in other people and in situations. Even if someone or something is not the way we want them to

be, we can look at their positive side and stay content and happy.

Such an attitude comes easily if we recognise the fact that getting upset does not change anything. Instead, it only makes us feel bad and ruins

our day.

Along with this, when we understand that staying happy is what we want anyway, and that it is the best way to deal with all that life throws at us, we will develop the ability to take tests, failures and losses in our stride with a smile.

Happiness is the best nourishment for the soul. A happy person makes light of the heaviest task, while one who is glum will make a mountain of a molehill and labour under its weight, ending up tired, frustrated, angry and disappointed.

Comforts may abandon us at any time, but happiness is our own property—something that we can generate from within, and which no one and nothing can take away from us.

It is up to us to choose whether we want to be content with just temporary feelings of comfort or to enjoy real happiness all the time.

B.K. Dr. Savita is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

There are no bad people, only good people who do bad things when they are weak. Sometimes I do not have the inner power, the moral courage, the discipline or strength to do what I know is right. When this happens, I lose respect for myself. It requires inner power to do what is right, even when it is hard. I gather this inner spiritual power through meditation, reflection and by reconnecting with my core spiritual energy. Today let me restore my self-respect by accumulating inner power.

HUMANKIND UPLIFTMENT

SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND SPIRITUALITY



JUDY JOHNSON

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

—Lilla Watson

As a social activist I used to believe that I needed to name and confront the wrongs in the world. That

if I did not agitate against wrongdoing, I was being complicit with power structures that oppressed and suppressed people. This belief was fueled by a strong dose of anger, outrage, and fear. And it often put me on the opposite side of the fence to many people I perceived as doing wrong. But I was comfortable there as I felt I had the moral high ground.

Current change movements tend to pit one side against another, heightening hyperbole with exaggerated claims to put one's cause forward. The world does not need more of this. The willingness to stop taking sides is heroic. Having found meditation



Bringing God's peaceful loving energy to co-create a community of cooperation, harmony and mutual respect is what the world needs now.

with the Brahma Kumaris, my approach to changing the world has been transformed. I am no longer de-

pendent on rumbling and agitating. Getting angry and outraged, opinionated, and polarized are no longer fuel

for me. My focus has shifted to the human spirit with an understanding that a person's state of consciousness

and the behaviour it produces is at the root of the world's problems.

Now, I consider meditation a form of inner activism. It is the single-minded focus to activate the qualities inside of me that are needed for a better world. True activism begins when I understand that the change we wish to create in our world must first begin inside human consciousness.

The inner activist has a benevolent and powerful desire for an outcome that benefits everyone. This prevents falling into the rhetoric of the polarizing energies of right and wrong. I am aware that we are all tied in the bonds of lower conscious energies such as

greed, fear, and anger. What binds me also binds you.

Bringing God's peaceful loving energy to co-create a community of cooperation, harmony and mutual respect is what the world needs now. The world needs us to sit together and look at the big picture view of our situation so we can see how each one's liberation is intricately intertwined with another's. With meditation, spiritual study and a connection to the Divine, the inner activist makes the valiant effort to be the kind of person who can sit next to anyone on a bench, and genuinely feel from the heart, this is my brother, no matter what they have done.

In a world of increasing

diversity of ideas and opinions, inner activism is a way to create unity at the deepest level, a unity of intention. The energy of this unity will uplift humankind.

Together, side by side, we can envision a beautiful world that works for everyone and do the personal work to activate the inner qualities that befit a better world.

Let us move from protest to providing good wishes. And from the compulsion to comment on every wrong to offering a measure of calm, and caring cooperation.

When I change, the world changes.

Judy Johnson coordinates the activities of the Brahma Kumaris in Atlantic Canada.