

SPIRITUAL KINSHIP

The spiritual key to peace

When we learn to see the light within us, we can also begin to see the light in others. This opening of the ‘eye’ of wisdom helps foster the bonds of spiritual kinship, helping people understand and appreciate each other as members of one global family. This spiritual dimension to peacemaking is the key to its success.



B.K. MRUTHYUNJAYA

At a time when the world is witnessing distressing levels of violence, peace seems to be a distant, even impossible prospect. Economic woes, war or the threat of it, and the ravages of climate change ominously point to an uncertain and bleak future.

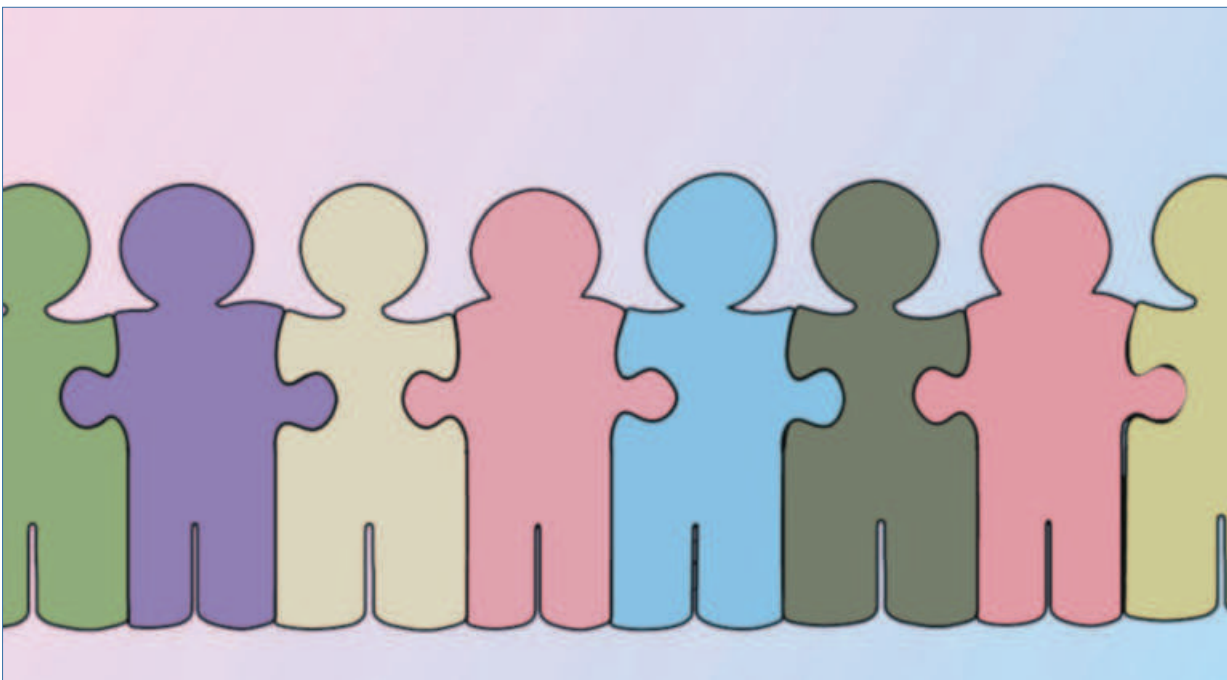
For millions of underprivileged people, even thinking of peace is a luxury, with their lives consumed by the daily struggle for survival in the face of poverty or violence. Most of them subsist on the fringes of society, with some resorting to criminal activity in order to get their

daily bread. This is one example of how the conditions in the world are spawning more problems for societies and nations.

None of these facts inspire optimism for the future of mankind. However, when we look at our past, we find hope. There was a time in history when there was peace and prosperity in the world and man and nature existed in harmony. The memories of that era, referred to in some cultures as the Golden Age, are etched in human souls. This is why we yearn for peace.

Even in recorded history, different parts of the world have experienced periods of peace at various times, which saw the development of art, culture, the sciences, and trade. Almost every civilization and nation has progressed when it was not in conflict or threatened by it.

Studies have found that peaceful societies are more likely to achieve developmental goals, are more resilient when faced with crises,



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and have fewer grievances. They are also more likely to adapt and make concessions to reconcile grievances.

Why then, in spite of the dividends that peace brings, have we failed to achieve it globally?

The reason is the mismatch

between our desire for peace and our actions. All people want peace, but their actions are often guided by other motives. Failure to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of each human being is a key reason for discord between men.

Even where there is a clear understanding of individuals or nations that are different from us, peace becomes a victim of the desire to dominate, to control or gain better access to resources.

International institutions and mechanisms designed

to ensure peace are often rendered ineffective because of the competing agendas of the stakeholders. When individuals and nations disregard the concerns of others and pursue their goals at the expense of others, they damage the fabric of mutual

respect, goodwill, trust and cooperation that helps and protects men and nations far more than any self-serving actions.

Even peace treaties have often failed because while laying down rules and setting out mechanisms to ensure peace, they do not effectively address the mutual suspicion, hatred or grievances underlying conflicts.

Building true and lasting peace requires its defences to be built in the minds of men, as the Unesco charter says.

The root cause of conflict is that humans see those who are different from them — in appearance, beliefs, practices, or in other ways — as undesirable or as a threat. We can rise above such tribal thinking only when we realise that the human family we speak of is indeed one family, tied together by spiritual bonds.

People everywhere, regardless of the language they speak, the passport they hold, and their beliefs about God, want to live peaceful,

happy and comfortable lives. That is because all souls are beings of peace, love and truth, and it is the nature of the soul to be happy. But when we forget our spiritual identity and look at and define each other by race, religion, nationality or gender, we begin to think in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘mine’ and ‘yours’.

We can begin to establish peace globally when we start to look inwards and know who we are. When we learn to see the light within us, we can also begin to see the light in others. This opening of the ‘eye’ of wisdom helps foster the bonds of spiritual kinship, helping people transcend social, political and racial boundaries and understand and appreciate each other as members of one global family. This spiritual dimension to peacemaking is the key to its success.

B.K. Mruthyunjaya is Executive Secretary of the Brahma Kumaris.

SPIRITUAL POWER

VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP IN A COMPLEX WORLD



KEN O'DONNELL

Dealing with situations, other individuals as well as ourselves in a complex and confusing world is a huge challenge. It forces us to look at the four dimensions of what it is to be a competent leader - the kind of knowledge we need, the sort of skills, the attitudes, and most importantly the values.

Because of the constantly changing scenarios we have to periodically review many of the practices we already have or should be employing.

In 1987, as the Cold War was ending, the US military started to use the term VUCA to describe the way the world was heading. VUCA is an acronym for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Am-

biguous. Since then, all these conditions have continued to escalate as things seem to break down more and more.

Volatile because of the nervous nature of change as it happens and the subsequent reactions to it. Everything can explode easily.

Uncertain because anything can happen to anyone, at any time, anywhere. This means a general lack of predictability, in essence, anything can happen ‘suddenly’. Increasing uncertainty is also the main factor behind the rising levels of anxiety we can see in colleagues and loved ones.

Complex because of the interconnectivity and interdependence of multiple components in our systems.

Ambiguous because of the lack of clarity and the excessive misunderstandings related to things that happen.

Just as we are slowly getting out of the pandemic that affected our lives and work so comprehensively, we are suddenly faced with the prospect of a third world war.

In this chaotic world, self-care and the practice of



It is better to be an example of the way we want our world to be.

meditation are not luxuries, but absolute necessities if we intend to keep balance, and help others through the chaos. As we push ourselves harder and harder to reach ever-changing goals, we must learn to pause, reflect

and empower ourselves.

The lives of women who were the original spiritual leaders of the Brahma Kumaris, were embodiments of all that is best in leadership. They transformed spiritual knowledge into practical wis-

dom. Their intense meditation brought them real spiritual power. They built the basic qualities of the soul into the values necessary to run a huge organization in this very complex world. They learnt that interactions are

testing grounds for wisdom, spiritual power, and virtues.

In spite of whatever was going on, they demonstrated many values and virtues that inspired others to deepen their own spiritual endeavours. They showed immense humility, which sprang from the recognition that the knowledge that they gave and the service they were doing were not theirs. They embodied the understanding that they were just instruments of the Divine. They respected everyone because they knew that whatever people believed was real for them. They could immediately discern what others needed spiritually through them. They assumed a responsibility of great wisdom that their task was to forge a connection between a soul and the Divine, the Supreme Soul, and not with themselves.

They instinctively knew that it is better to be an example of the way we want our world to be.

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

INNER SPACE

THE WAY TO DEVELOP PERSONAL RESILIENCE



ARTI LAL

“If you think you’ve made a mistake, it’s not a mistake if you’ve learnt from it: Its part of your learning curve. It only becomes a mistake if you repeat it and haven’t learnt from it.” - Dadi Janki

BOOST YOUR INNER STRENGTH AND WELL-BEING

The foundation of personal

resilience is taking time each day to create a sense of self that is unshakable. Knowing yourself, your potential and what is meaningful to you is the key to building resilience and giving a boost to your inner strength and sense of well-being.

Ask yourself three questions each day:

- What have I done today?
- What have I seen in someone else that was positive or inspiring today?
- What did I do that was positive or inspiring today?

Resilience is about understanding the emotions we have, and being open and courageous as we look within. I need to check in with myself: What am I doing with my inner space? Are

my thoughts driven by fear, or can I look within and discover what is amazing about me?

The more intentional and proactive I become as an individual, the more I am creating a basis of wellness. Taking the time to care and nurture myself gives me the courage to move forward. To live a life that is valuable and connected, we must first be open, curious, compassionate, caring and connected with ourselves. This good relationship with our self becomes an inner compass that allows us to steer through any situation and have the courage that it takes to move forward.

As my resilience grows, my trust in others also grows,

which enables them to also have a greater sense of resilience.

BOUNCE BACK FROM SETBACKS AND FAILURE

“How could I have done that? I could have kicked myself.” When we dwell on failure, we break our self-trust and we set in motion self-sabotage mechanisms which prevent us from feeling joy. At that moment of failure, it is easy to feel that things are rock bottom. Over the years, a number of things have helped me when I experience a setback or failure. When I have this experience, I ask myself one question: Do I want to be right? Or do I want to be happy?



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It is more important to be happy, right? I have learnt that failure is not as drastically bad as we tend to project it. The first thing about failure is that it gives

you time to reflect and learn from the situation. When we do this, the ability to bounce back becomes very natural.

The gift of failure is that it teaches me empathy, humil-

ity, compassion and kindness. I have made some mistakes, but I am also growing. I learn to accept myself and let the past be the past. Another gift of failure is that it brings newness, courage and creativity – it shows me that it’s possible to do things differently.

THRIVE THROUGH UNCERTAINTY AND CHANGE

When I feel that my feet are not on solid ground, when there is uncertainty and change, ask yourself these questions:

- What does being completely peaceful mean to me?
- What does it mean to be a creative force?
- What is the vision that I

hold for myself?

- Am I the most important person in my life?

The vision that you hold for yourself gives the result. Meditation is an ideal way to boost positive energy and anchor ourselves in a vision of inner peace and resilience. Simple thoughts relax the mind and create a little space in our day to experience peace, happiness, gratitude and love.

Meditation experiences of peace, gratitude and love create unlimited reserves of resilience.

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