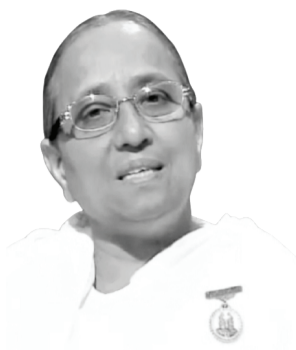


DISCERNMENT

RISING ABOVE JUDGMENT



B.K. GEETA

It is a human tendency to judge others. The question of whether it is right or wrong to do so is complicated and the answer depends on several factors.

Judging others can take various forms, and it is essential to understand the difference between them. In certain situations, making judgments is a necessary part of decision-making and critical thinking. In professional settings, people may be evaluated based on their skills, qualifications, and performance. In such cases, constructive criticism can be a useful tool for personal and professional growth.

Sometimes, judgments help us make decisions and understand the world around us. But making snap judgments for safety or efficiency is quite different from forming deeper, more critical judgments about someone's character or worth. Forming an opinion about someone without knowing the full context or understanding their circumstances can lead to unfair assumptions. This can result in prejudice or ill treatment based on incomplete information or stereotypes.

The consequences of such judgments are often negative: they affect the other person's self-esteem, confidence, and well-being, create barriers in relationships, and lead to misunderstanding and division. Making quick judgments may also prevent us from seeing the potential in other people and limit our ability to learn from them.

If we wish to get a fair idea of the people and situations around us and respond to



Discernment is a thoughtful and empathetic assessment that takes into account the well-being of the other person.

them in a constructive manner, it is much better to be discerning than judgmental. What is the difference

between the two?

We usually judge people or situations in order to decide how to deal with them. Basic-

cally, we categorize them so that we can determine our response. In most cases the main guiding factor is self-

interest or, if a group of people is making the judgment, their overall interest. For this reason, our judgment

may or may not be accurate or fair.

Discernment is a more thoughtful and empathetic assessment that also takes into consideration the interest and well-being of the other person. Individuals are very often complex, and understanding them requires a nuanced approach.

Take the case of parents. When they notice a shortcoming in their child, they do not label or condemn the child. A good parent recognizes what needs to be done to remove the shortcoming, and has the pure wish to see the child free from it. Knowing the child's defect does not diminish the parents' love. With gentle words of encouragement, they urge the child to overcome the weakness.

God, the Supreme Father of all souls, also works in this manner. He knows the karmic story of each and every one of us – better than we know it ourselves. But He does not love us any less for it. As the scriptures tell us, He teaches us the right

way to live and is infinitely patient and loving, always seeing the best in His children and wishing them a better future. The punishment for sin that we fear is not the work of God, who is ever merciful. It is the fruit naturally produced by the seeds we have sown with our thoughts, words, and actions.

Why cannot we be non-judgmental like God? The missing ingredients are love and empathy. The reason is we forget that as children of one God we are all part of the same family. When we recognise our relationship with the Father, then our spiritual kinship with the entire human family also becomes clear to us. And when we appreciate God's unwavering love for us despite all our flaws, we realise that we can be, and ought to be, similarly benevolent towards others. This is the practical essence of religion. B.K. Geeta is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

GOOD HABIT

Early to bed, early to rise...



CHIRYA RISELY

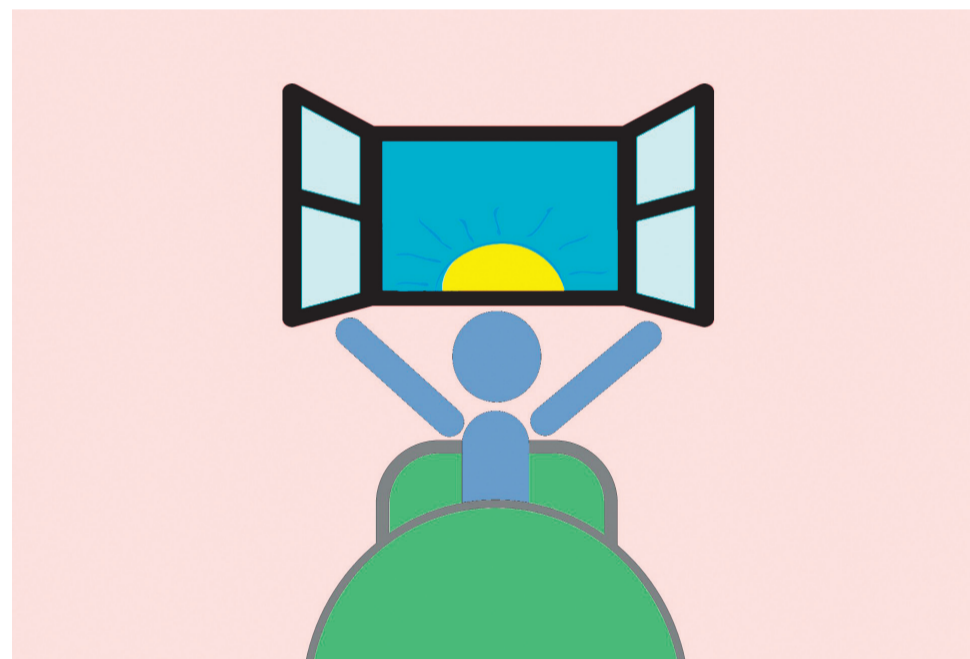
We know the importance of habits. Many people try to cultivate good ones, like eating healthier, reading more, thinking positive thoughts. Here is what to avoid and what to do when it comes to sleeping habits.

In our busy lives we sometimes do not get to complete our to-do list during the daytime, so at night we try to catch up. However, planning for the next day before sleeping increases the number of our thoughts and impacts the quality of sleep. When we spend more time in bed trying to get more sleep, this leads

to tossing and turning, and increased worry and anxiety related to being awake in bed. Over time, this creates an association between the bed, worry, and wakefulness – rather than sleep and relaxation.

Do not use your bedroom as an office space. Use your bedroom as a bedroom. Our beds are a cue for sleep and working in bed weakens this association. Doctors advise patients to 'tech off' one or two hours before bedtime and ditch their night phone habit. Watching news updates two hours before bedtime is another big 'sleep stealer'. The act of "doom scrolling" and "doom watching" refers to constantly scrolling through bad news on social media. Both are harmful to our mental health.

Here are some good ideas for getting maximum benefit from our sleeping hours. Wind down. The human brain can work at its maximum potential when it is not involved in multitasking. Cre-



Waking up early and then creating powerful and happy thoughts charges us up for the rest of the day.

ate a wind-down and bedtime routine to slow down your thought processes. Reading and meditating on uplifting thoughts and simple stretches, yoga and breathing exercises are most helpful as they prepare the mind and body

for relaxation and optimal sleep.

Sleep early. The human body is closely linked to the day and night cycle. Between 10 pm and 2 am we get the most benefit from deep sleep. After that sleep becomes more superficial.

Wake up early. The mind is capable of deep and profound learning when we wake up at 4 am. In fact, the first 20 minutes at the crack of dawn set the tone for the rest of the day. It is our time to rise and shine. We can sit up and re-

member we are a timeless, spiritual being of light and then automatically God's loving light and might enter the soul. This peaceful and quiet time we get before the sun rises creates the environment of increased clarity and energy. This is the time to take care of ourselves and give us power for the day to come. It is the only time in the day that we can do this. This is the 'me time' that provides me with everything I need for the day. The early morning hours are when we can focus and get ahead of things without being distracted. Time becomes our friend as we pause to breathe the fresh morning air and hear the birds singing, the raindrops that may be falling, and the light slowly spreading. It is wonderful that we have control over when and how our days begin and end. It is all up to us.

Chirya Risely is a Rajyoga meditation teacher based at the Brahma Kumaris Peace Village Retreat Center, USA.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Silence is a very good mental teacher. It teaches me how to listen and how to hear. It teaches me to discern how I feel and articulate these feelings in words. Silence allows me to go deeper inside to find the peace that surpasses understanding. It makes peace possible by allowing me to experience myself as a silent being. Today I will learn the art of silence.

TURNING WITHIN

THE CALL OF SILENCE IS GROWING LOUDER



GOPI PATEL

For many in the world, amid the noise and confusion, the desire for silence is growing. If we sit quietly with our conscience, we can feel that silence calling – calling us to come home to the love, peace, truth and power inside. When we experience this as we enter that silence in meditation, then the separation from me and myself is healed. In that separation, the divided self used ego to compensate and prove its worth in the world. As I sit still and go inside and experience each one of my qualities, I give myself the opportunity to heal and become whole. It is the silence of my wholeness, truth, peace and love

that is calling me home again, the home deep inside, so that I can reconnect with that original part of myself again – and release myself from all the artificialities, superficialities, that I have sustained for so long to keep a face in the world. In that, it no longer matters what anyone thinks of me, or if anyone changes or not, what matters is that I have come home.

When we talk about silence, we begin to recognise what a deep nourishment it is for the soul. Living in the human frequency there is no experience that we can sustain for long, because by its very nature the human experience is transient and everchanging. We seek new experiences and stimuli all the time and may even become addicted to that search, and therefore silence may not even be an option, until perhaps a point in our life comes when we face too much difficulty and turn to silence for the solace it can give. Silence can be daunting for many because they do not know what to do with themselves in silence. However, it is not

a place of emptiness, it is a pure reconnection with myself. It is what happens when my mind becomes calm and my intellect becomes clear and all my sense organs become cool – there is then a tremendous clarity with which I can live my life.

There are levels of silence. Because we are habituated to come into sound it is an easy option to talk and keep on talking. We feel the need to fill the gaps in a conversation, to say something, do something. Yet, sometimes, all that noise may not be necessary. When I am content with myself and bring that contented presence into a gathering, silence is a lovely space between us. We do not need to say anything. We are comfortable in the energy of contentment that is created.

To cultivate silence in our lives we have to come back to the language of pure feelings. For most of us our feelings are very mixed, and because of this it does not feel comfortable to remain without sound. I need to tell someone how I feel, what I feel. It seems to work like



If we sit quietly with our conscience, we can feel silence calling us to come home to the love, peace, truth and power inside.

a catharsis, as though it releases something, but it does not clear anything. Cultivating pure feelings is a very subtle effort. I need to take care where my intellect goes all day because wherever my attention goes, energy flows,

and a huge amount of time is spent analysing people, situations, the world, the future – to the extent we distress ourselves or become a dustbin for all the stuff, mainly rubbish, we have been analysing. In doing so, we suppress

our capacity to feel that part of us that is pure. So, check from time to time, where is my intellect right now? Am I thinking about something that is not necessary or giving my attention and time to trying to change something

that is beyond my control? How much time am I giving myself to feel good inside?

Pure feelings have a deep connection with good wishes. In the early morning it is so crucial to create good wishes and pure feelings.

In astrology, they map your moment of birth, and consequently the possibilities the future may hold, based on that map. If we think of every morning like a new birth, we can map out how we are going to wake up and what feelings we are going to generate. We must find a space to experience the silence to generate pure thoughts for the self and the souls I am with and those of the world. It takes effort to wake up and do this every day and concentrate my awareness in something good and pure. It is such an important thing to do – it becomes a protection during the day. The language of silence is the world of pure thoughts and good wishes and the language of the eyes. In that silence, when all the senses are cool, the mind is peaceful and the intellect is clear, the eyes reveal the sparkle of the soul and reflect the transparency and beauty inside. The eyes, of silence, reveal the love inside the soul.

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