

GIVING

LIVING A LIFE FULL OF MEANING



JUDY RODGERS

While disillusionment is a young person's prerogative, as they look around at the chaos a previous generation has made of the world, it is not exclusively so. As we watch our world spinning out of control, many of us wonder what it is all about and how we can have some meaning to our lives. Viktor Frankl outlines three ways of finding meaning in life; creative, experiential, and attitudinal. The third of these concepts is what he determined to apply when he was incarcerated in a concentration camp, in the Second World War. He retained an attitude of giving, however small, even if only a smile, and kept himself sane and even to some extent happy. External cir-

cumstances cannot destroy our internal attitude, that is our own and we can make of it what we will. Whenever we turn to the external world for meaning, there will be a sense of loss, of emptiness, because it is our world within that is the source of meaning and fulfilment. We spend so much time just getting through each day, meeting the needs of ourselves and others, that our inner world is nearly always neglected, and hence the sense of frustration and emptiness. Each of us, each soul, naturally wishes to give and express all that we can be. We need to find that which is within us that we are longing to express. There are three obstacles to this: 1. We try and copy others. We see someone achieving or behaving in such a way that makes us think we should be doing the same. However, the way they are is customised for them, not for us. 2. We just feel like taking when we feel empty. We take time from others, we take from experiences, we distract ourselves, but the emptiness remains. This is because we are really long-



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ing to do the opposite of taking – we are longing to give of ourselves. 3. We live superficially. We need to flourish from deeply within and this requires nourishment, just as flowers need fertiliser and nourishment to grow. For the human being, it is reflection on our inner world that nourishes us the most. We need to find time for reflection. So how do we create meaning? We must find what makes us truly happy. Life has a knack of revealing what it is we are meant to

be giving if we look closely and pay attention. A soul on a quest to find what it is they are here for, will discover that life opens up for them and signals arrive... '... meaning.

It's over here that you need to be...'. All of us have spirituality built into our DNA because we are beings of spirit, souls, beings of conscient light. We need to find that which makes us happy, naturally, so that it becomes my valuable contribution. When I am finally living the life I am meant to live, fully, and expressing all I have to express, then life feels full of

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For this, we need three things. 1. Faith: that all of this will unfold. 2. Meditation: to find what is truly there inside. Without this, I will not be able to see because I will still be caught up in the external world. 3. Reflection: time to set aside for reflecting on what my meditation has shown me, what life has delivered,

how other people have reacted to me. Finally, we must be kind to ourselves, and treat ourselves with respect based on the final work of art we can become. We are all capable of great things through being who we really are meant to be. In this way, kindness and respect will be the way we treat others and that is a massive part of living a life of worth and meaning.

"If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be." - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Judy Rodgers lives in Peace Village, the Brahma Kumaris retreat centre in New York, and serves on a number of global initiatives for the Brahma Kumaris.

VAISHNAV

Pure food for the body, and mind



B.K. USHA

Vaishnavism is one of the major Hindu denominations, and its followers are called Vaishnavas. Vaishnav refers to one who is related to Lord Vishnu, one of the principal deities of Hinduism. Those who are not Hindu are most likely to come across the term Vaishnav at eateries that serve what is called Vaishnav food. Such eateries most often have the word Vaishnav in their name, obviously to let all know the kind of food they serve. Vaishnav food is vegetarian but does not include onion and garlic. The dietary prohibitions are based on the concepts of compassion, non-violence,

and spiritual purity. Because of their conviction in the sacredness of all life, most Vaishnavas avoid meat, eggs, and other animal products. Onion and garlic are shunned because consuming them is said to increase restlessness and disrupt meditation and spiritual practices. Mushrooms are also avoided by some because they grow amid decaying matter, which is considered impure. Some Vaishnavas avoid strong spices and savoury dishes that excessively stimulate the taste buds, which is believed to divert attention from leading a focused and contemplative life. Vaishnavas are also urged to eschew alcohol and other intoxicants which can impair mental clarity and spiritual growth. Those who follow these dietary guidelines consider themselves to be Vaishnavas. Adhering to such rules for ethical or spiritual reasons is commendable, but is it enough? Does having such a diet alone make one a good human being? The final aim of spiritual practices is to elevate the human condition through



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acquisition of divine qualities, and ultimately reflect the fact that we are children of the Divine Father. Having food that is sourced, prepared, and consumed with compassion, non-violence, and spiritual purity does help us in our spiritual endeavours. Food is known to significantly impact the mind in various ways. Adopting a plant-based diet may not inherently make us more compassionate, but it can serve as a catalyst for developing or deepening compassionate attitudes. It is often about the awareness, values, and choices we make as we align our dietary decisions with broader ethical considerations. It is changing the diet of the mind that brings deeper transformation. The kind of thoughts we have, what we

are we likely to have for them? We may smile and say all the right things to them, but our vibrations and behaviour will reveal our true feelings one way or the other. And if we are duplicitous in this manner, what can we expect to get in return? We may be vegetarian, even vegan, but if our thoughts are tainted by dishonesty, anger, jealousy, or hatred, are we as pure or 'Vaishnav' as we would like to believe? Thoughts based on the innate virtues of the soul, including peace, purity, love, and truth, are the pure food for the mind that makes us truly pure. When the soul is free from the contamination of vices, its food, lifestyle, behaviour, and relationships are naturally guided by ethical considerations. It is not a mere dietary or lifestyle statement, but a spiritual choice that brings manifold rewards that make life peaceful, happy, and fulfilling. B.K. Usha is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The more attachments I have (to ideas, people or places), the more obstacles will come into my path. When I am holding onto something, I become inflexible and rigid. When rigid, I bump into life. I am unable to bend and flow with it and begin to experience my life filled with obstacles. Today let me release attachment and flow with life.

MEDITATION

FEELING SAFE AND WORRY-FREE IN CHAOTIC TIMES



MATTHEW EARL

"There is a lot to worry about!" - seems to be a reasonable conclusion to everything happening these days, both on a personal and global level. "My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened." - Michel de Montaigne On the upside, research shows that 85–91 per cent of what we worry about never happens, and suggests the 15 per cent that did happen

was manageable, and also a valuable learning experience. The conclusion? All told, 97 per cent of the time, there is nothing to worry about. What about other obstacles to well-being? UK research in the workplace shows 60 per cent of employees report anxiety, slightly lower for depression. Seventy-four per cent feel so stressed they have been overwhelmed or unable to cope. Concerning statistics revealing you are not alone if you experience these. Nor is it surprising as we face challenges with health, money, relationships, and the pressure from the amount of things we have to do with the time available. Then there is the impact of global situations and general overload from all the sources of information we have to consider and make

choices about. Whatever the statistics, the experience of worry, stress, anxiety, and depression are real and increasing, making us feel unsafe, and out of control. How do we counter all that? FEELING SAFE, NO MATTER WHAT Can meditation provide an answer? Yes but, different methods of meditation vary hugely in their effectiveness in empowering the self for any real change. Any challenge to our mental, emotional or physical health begins with an identity crisis. Rajyoga meditation (yoga for the mind) re-educates us about our true identity, and provides a clear way to return to an ever-increasing state of wholeness and peace. It gets around the challenges most people face



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with meditation, not having a transformational power to focus on and connect to. Without which it is very difficult to concentrate. Rajyoga precisely defines our identity as a soul. The soul resides inside the brain, behind the eyes. As a subtle (non-physical) energy, it cannot be seen, but once fully understood it can be experienced using insight, a faculty of the mind we all have. In contrast, the mind has for a long time focused on an externally derived iden-

tity, constantly searching for solutions outside. The result is a sense of self that is inconsistent and chaotic, literally a reflection of the outside world. Unsurprisingly, this creates an underlying sense of unease, triggering a continual and exhausting search for answers, ultimately giving rise to the issues of worry, stress, anxiety and depression. There is a huge dissonance between what I have grown to believe is my identity – based on, for instance, gender, age, abilities, roles, socio-economic factors, and "what happens" in my life – and the truth of who I really am, something extraordinary, eternal, safe, stable, peaceful, powerful, contented, some of the intrinsic positive qualities of "I, the soul". Committing to a daily practice of Rajyoga medita-

tion, we can rekindle "soul conscious" awareness, a feeling of well-being no matter what challenges we are facing in life. We experience internal chaos reducing, worries lessening, and peace returning. The practice also naturally allows us to tune into the subtle, yet very empowering Divine energy, which transforms our state of mind and moves us towards fully experiencing our innate positivity, benefiting everyone around us too. With that powerful state of mind, I can feel good no matter what, and practical solutions will emerge. One could then ask, "what on earth is there to worry about?" Matthew Earl works as Head of Business Growth & Partnerships, and is a Brahma Kumaris Rajyoga teacher based in London, UK.