

NEWNESS WITHIN

NEW YEAR IN AN OLD WORLD



B.K. BRIJ MOHAN

With another new year about to begin, as usual there is hope of something new happening – new opportunities, developments, and new ways of doing things. It is with this expectation of newness that we wish each other a happy new year and look forward to the next twelve months. However, other than a change of date, what is really new in a new year? The people and circumstances are mostly the same; in some ways the challenges only in-

crease.

We tend to see human history as a steady progression towards greater knowledge and a better life. In material terms, human development is said to have brought us from the Stone Age to the Space Age. Advancements in science and technology over the past hundred years alone have transformed our lives, bringing greater comfort, amenities, and ease of doing various tasks.

But at the same time, we have suffered a spiritual decline, as denoted by the characterisation of history as a transition from the Golden Age, or Satyug, to the Iron Age, or Kaliyug. The Golden Age was a period of unalloyed purity, peace, and happiness. The defining qualities of the Iron Age, in contrast, are falsehood, conflict, and sorrow. The present condition of the world is definitely akin to Kaliyug and far from that of Satyug. We remember that earlier



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period of joy, and worship those who lived at that time

as deities. These deities, who lived thousands of years ago,

are venerated to this day because of their sterling quali-

ties. The period when they lived, sometimes referred to

as 'Ram Rajya', is regarded as an ideal rule or kingdom defined by righteous governance, equality and justice, peace and harmony, prosperity and welfare.

It is a telling comment on the present state of mankind that 'Ram Rajya', which was once a reality, is now an aspirational goal, periodically invoked in speeches but tacitly accepted as impossible to achieve.

The root cause of this decline is our spiritual downfall, gradually brought about by repeated compromises with our original qualities of purity, peace, and truth, and succumbing to vices such as greed, selfishness, ego, and anger. The current state of the world is a creation and reflection of the souls living in it.

For the new year to be truly new, the newness will have to begin in the soul. When our thoughts and actions begin to be guided by the soul's innate virtues,

and not by vices, our experiences, relationships, and our entire life will change.

The first step towards this newness is to recognise the fact that we are souls, not bodies. We are children of the Supreme Soul, endowed with His qualities. When we accept this reality and live with this awareness, it will transform the way we see ourselves and others. The resulting spiritual upliftment and bonding with other souls will lay the foundation of an enlightened society.

Without this spiritual rejuvenation, we will persist with our old ways in the new year, and continue to suffer the consequences. The new year will be truly a happy one when we develop a new awareness of the self, our relationship with God, and our spiritual kinship with the entire human family.

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MEDITATION

How can we change our world?



JIM RYAN

Everything is in a constant state of change; time, our bodies, and the natural world. Do we have any power over that? Can we change its momentum and progress? To the casual observer, it seems fixed and part of the laws of the universe. Yet there are areas that we can influence, even though we have come to believe that we are who we are, and things are what they are.

Spirituality teaches us that one of the areas over which we have great influence, is the self. There are many areas in this that we can alter or change, and the influence of that alteration can make a huge impact on the lives we lead. One aspect of the self is authenticity. Most people dislike falsehood and deception and anything that is not real. However, most

of us have learnt to behave in certain ways to be accepted, liked, loved, or to get on in life.

However, what the world really wants from us is to be ourselves. Not an artificial self but our real self. We love to meet real people; those who open themselves up and share the authenticity they have within. They face things in an open and real way, and are refreshing to meet. The world wants to know what is in our hearts, not to have to deal with a false persona. Yet, we create an illusion and spend a lot of time trying to maintain that sleight of hand. In so doing, we also trap others, who follow our example. We all end up in a cul-de-sac of confusion. We have lost the naturalness that would help us resolve situations in a simple and beautiful way, and we become lost.

To let go of our false personas, we need power. We may know that we are being false, but we do not have the power to drop the façade. It is with meditation that we acquire the power to let go of these false personalities. Meditation gives us power and access to our inner strength. Then we can begin to express our true feelings and thoughts. However, this needs courage. When we



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face these artifices, there are often repercussions. People are used to us the way we are and may alienate us. In the end, though, we will have self-respect and others will begin to respect us too. Happiness, and well-being will flood back into our lives. Affirmations

combined with meditation are a simple and powerful way to begin. A simple affirmation like 'I am a unique spiritual being' moves us into a place of truth and spiritual power. Affirmations are a way of talking to our subconscious self and reminding the self of the great

inner power we all have.

Another method to influence the self is the act of forgiveness. When we find that we are harbouring heavy, negative feelings and an attitude of hopelessness, feeling that life is going nowhere, our relationships are poor, that our

health is not at the optimum level, then the reason is that we are carrying stuff that we should have let go of, long ago. Many of us are trapped in the prison of the past, holding on to resentments, anger, fears, all of which are disabling us in the present and stopping us from moving forward. We hold on to a belief that we were treated badly, abandoned, or betrayed, let down, cheated. We have a deep sense of disappointment and walk around with a seething anger threatening to bubble over at any moment. Or we become timid and afraid of ever trying anything again, remaining locked in a prison of our own making. What is the way out of this incarceration? It is the power of silence.

We are all part of God's family and in meditation and silence we can make the connection with God. In this we can understand, forgive and let go. It is only with the power of God that we can effect real change, and as we change so does our world.

Jim Ryan has a background in education. He is an author and a Brahma Kumaris Rajyoga teacher, based at the Global Retreat Centre, Oxford, UK.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

I come into this world alone and I will leave alone. On my journey through life, many others stand with me, our stories overlapping. Like trees growing in the forest, my life is shaped by other parts of the ecosystem. If I am to grow tall and strong, I must recognize the value of the diversity around me. In a diverse forest the growth of one element supports the growth of all. The journey of life flourishes most beautifully when I have good company. Today let me stand and maintain my integrity while also enjoying the companionship of others.

VIRTUES

INCREASE YOUR INNER BEAUTY



CHIRYA RISELY

'We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.'

We often believe that happiness depends on how our body looks, especially when we are young. As we grow older, the loss of youth and the natural beauty of the young, causes concern and anxiety, and many try to use artificial means to try to recapture beauty, youth, and vigour. We can hear people making casual statements

like 'I am not happy about how I look', 'I am too fat... I am dark... I am weak' in a lament of the loss of beauty. All this sends a powerful negative message to the mind and the body of rejection of the self. Self-criticism and rejection do great harm to the soul. The truth is that how we look does not make us happy or increase our self-worth, but inner happiness glows from within and that happiness is not only attractive, but also contagious.

Inner beauty is far more valuable than physical appearance. No amount of make-up will increase the inner beauty of the soul. The inner beauty of what is within, lights up the face and streams through the eyes, the windows of the soul. It is the development of character, the acquiring of spiritual values, and the absorbing of real virtues that make a soul beautiful. It



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all depends on the thoughts we have. If we spend time elevating our thoughts, our minds will become ever more beautiful, and this will be reflected on our faces, and our actions will reveal our true character. We can take care of our attitude,

our feelings, behaviour, and habits to increase our inner beauty.

Meditation each morning and evening and the study of spiritual knowledge each day go towards creating a powerful and pure consciousness. We need to also

take care of the health of our bodies, and make sure to maintain a healthy weight. In the same way that increased body weight makes us heavy and unable to move with agility and grace, heavy thought processes also inhibit our ability to

Meditation each morning and evening and the study of spiritual knowledge each day go towards creating a powerful and pure consciousness. We need to also take care of the health of our bodies, and make sure to maintain a healthy weight. In the same way that increased body weight makes us heavy and unable to move with agility and grace, heavy thought processes also inhibit our ability to feel light and easy.

feel light and easy. We can check throughout the day if our thoughts are becoming heavy, in the same way that we check how much we are snacking and putting on weight. If we see that we are becoming too heavy, we can exercise our minds with elevated thoughts and take some moments for meditation, and begin to feel light again.

A person's inner beauty is far more valuable than their physical appearance. Inner natural beauty is the light that radiates from your heart, mind, and soul, and is reflected outward through your eyes, touch, smile, and loving personality. It is about kindness, compassion, gentleness, humility, loving and being non-judgemental about others'

appearance. Our facial expressions, eyes, smile, gestures, and body language, are indicators of who we are inside – beautiful, pure, and powerful. When feeding ourselves with positive energy and embracing our true selves, we radiate a natural beauty. Let our hearts shine brightly, and be like a burst of sunshine in someone's day. We can make a firm endeavour to inspire everyone we meet, to look for the positive in anything that appears negative, and to make sure that anyone who comes to us always leaves us feeling that much more uplifted. All of this not only makes the world a better place, but it will also return to us in unexpected ways because life is an echo; whatever we give out, always comes back to us. Chirya Risely is a Rajyoga meditation teacher, based at the Brahma Kumaris Peace Village Retreat Center, USA.