

GO INWARDS

To cope with change, we must look within

It is lack of inner power that results in wrong ways of thinking and behaviour, which are at the root of the problems we see in the world.



B.K. SHIVANI

When we hear the word 'change', where does our attention go? Towards the world outside, other people, or towards the self? Change is happening everywhere -- in the world, in the people around you, and within you. Change is taking place constantly, and we are told that change is the law of the universe.

But where do we focus? Most importantly, of all the changes that are occurring, which one is in our control, and where we can exercise our choice?

The change occurring outside involves situations, the forces of nature, people, and their behaviour. The change that takes place in our inner world includes change in our way of thinking, speaking, behaving and working, as also change in our food habits and way of life.

We often believe that the change occurring outside affects us. When things out there are not going the way we want, a big change or a crisis suddenly disrupts the life we had become accustomed to, and the crisis persists for months, as is happening now, and we do not know how long it will last, it affects the behaviour of some people. Those who used to be calm earlier have become



unstable -- someone loses his temper very quickly, another one easily breaks down.

When this started happening, what was our reaction? We thought that we had to set things right -- the people and the situations. Our intention was good, we meant to help others, but while we went about doing so, we did not pay attention to our thoughts and feelings, because we believed that we were simply being affected by whatever was happening around us.

We did not realise that this inner change was something we could control, that the direction of change was my choice. Since we did not pay attention to our inner world amidst all the changes taking place outside, we began thinking that it was natural to experience fear, worry and anger. This is how we changed within.

While earlier we rarely used to get angry or worry, and felt

afraid only if it was a really serious situation, now we experience these emotions more frequently. Fear has become a 'natural' emotion for us. When this change occurred in our inner world, it started influencing our external situations.

We need to be aware of some spiritual equations which tell us what affects what: It is humans who influence nature, and our thoughts shape the world. In other words, our inner world influences the world outside, but we thought that it was natural to be affected by a change in situations.

When there is a change outside, we need to change in response, but we must remember that the change within us will influence the situation outside. It is our sanskars, or traits and habits, that create our world, not the other way round.

For example, if a close friend begins to behave in a disagree-

able way, I have the choice of feeling hurt, angry and responding in kind, or understanding that he or she is going through some difficulty and offering them support. The way I choose to respond will determine the future course of my relationship with that person.

Similarly, if we want to change a situation, we have to first bring about change within. We have the power to do that, but when we do not use that power, we change in the wrong direction.

We need to remember that change begins in the mind, and ensure that the change happens consciously and in the right direction.

For that we need to pay attention to our thoughts, feelings, the way we speak, and our behaviour. None of these things are dependent on external situations or other people. They should be of the highest quality we are capable of. When

we think and act according to our highest potential, we begin to exist on a higher plane where our mind becomes more positive. That, in turn, increases our inner power.

It is lack of this inner power that results in wrong ways of thinking and behaviour, which are at the root of the problems we see in the world. The vices in human minds have created the hell the world has become today. But if we have turned the world into hell, we also have the power to create heaven on earth, by using our innate virtues of purity, peace, love and truth. When more and more of us begin to live by these virtues, the world will begin to change, and a time will come when a critical mass of positive energy will transform this world into paradise.

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GUIDING LIGHT

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MIND QUALIFIED TO SERVE OTHERS



DADI JANKI

At this time, when we see the condition of the world, many of us want to serve the world. But when our own minds are affected by the conditions of the world, we cannot really serve. A mind that is filled with anger or sadness cannot serve.

I often have used the analogy of the boat moving through the water. For the boat to reach its destination, the water must remain outside the boat. For our minds to be able to serve, the atmosphere of the world must remain outside of our minds. It is not that the outside atmosphere leaks into the boat of our mind, but rather that the vibrations of a powerful and clean mind affect the atmosphere outside, bringing strength to those who are living in the world.

So, how do we create a mind that is filled with spiritual power? How do we cultivate a mind that is qualified to serve? There are three understandings that we must have in order to cultivate such a powerful mind. First is the recognition that my innate nature is intrinsically good. We may have forgotten that this is our original nature, but we have not lost that innate goodness. This goodness embodies love, peace, happiness, truth, and purity. When I am in touch with this goodness, I become aware that I am a spiritual being, a soul. It is this link back to my original qualities that gives me the further realization that I am a child of God.

Our minds open in a new way to receive spiritual gifts. These spiritual gifts, such as inner peace, spiritual love, and power allow us to use the treasures of this time in a worthwhile way. We can only give

to others when we have reclaimed our spiritual power.

Once we begin to gain spiritual power, what is it that we must do? We must use everything we have in a worthwhile way. We must use time, breath, resources, thoughts, words, and actions for benefit. We must elevate our relationships with others. It is not that we connect with others for efficiencies in the physical world, but that we meet them as our spiritual brothers and sisters, as souls who are as weary as we were and who are thirsty for peace, for spiritual love, for compassion, and for understanding.

No one who comes in front of us should leave empty-handed. Everyone who comes in front of me should receive something -- a virtue, a power, sweet words of en-



couragement. At the end of the day we should take the time to reflect on the day to see if each moment, each breath, each thought, word, and deed were imbued with purity and goodness. We should check to remember whether each one who came in front of us left lighter, easier, and filled with hope.

This is the true meaning of serving through the mind. It is not only that when someone needs special support, we send our good wishes. We, of course, would do that anyway. It is something more. We become so filled with the pure power of spirituality that we continuously emanate that. We become those who are filled with light and with goodness, making each thought and each feeling we have beneficial. When the world accumulates enough souls of this quality, then a new golden age naturally follows, bringing peace and light to the world.

Excerpt from a talk given in Mount Abu.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Two things that hinder our efforts towards progress



B.K. SHEILU

Two major defects hinder our efforts towards self-improvement: Arrogance and ignorance.

Arrogance can be very subtle. It makes us intolerant of even the most innocuous suggestion offered by someone for our progress. Any such suggestion leads to the thought: "Why did this one say this?" This is subtle arrogance.

When someone gives us a suggestion for our own good, it should be seen as a means for our progress not just in the present but also in future. It is in our interest to accept the suggestion and put it into practice. But when arrogance stops us from doing so, there is upheaval in our minds and a chain of thoughts begins: "Why did this happen? How did this happen?"



When someone appreciates or praises us, we have a loving attitude towards that person, but if someone gives us well-meaning but unsolicited advice, do we have the same feeling of love and consider that person to be our well-wisher? We will do so if we have an elevated awareness, otherwise our arrogance will stop us from doing so. This is also the reason why we are not able to

tolerate any insult.

We also become ignorant and are deceived in many ways. Some people pretend to be ignorant in order to save themselves, while some others are really ignorant.

To end arrogance and ignorance we need to have self-respect and humility. When we have a sense of self-respect in our thoughts and humility in our words and behaviour, arrogance

will end.

It is one thing to be a philosopher and quite another to be spiritual. Those who remain aware of being a soul are called spiritual. In the absence of this awareness one is just a philosopher, and such individuals have little spiritual power.

Those who are spiritual attain success in every thought and deed. Success means attainment. Simply acquiring knowledge and repeating those words is known as philosophy, which has a temporary effect on others. In contrast, spirituality makes a lasting impact. Being ignorant means not using in our daily lives the knowledge we have.

A worthy teacher is one who teaches through the example of their life and is an embodiment of what they teach. Their behaviour will be a lesson to others.

Teaching others through instruction is common, but now people want to learn by experience. We can uplift such souls with the power of our elevated thoughts and deeds.

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MEDITATION

CONTEMPLATING ETERNAL TRUTHS MAKES US WELL AGAIN



NEVILLE HODGKINSON

The growth of interest in all types of meditation and other reflective practices is a sign of our need to restore balance between our inner and outer worlds. We are happiest when expressing positive attributes such as kindness and wisdom, and seeing those qualities in the lives of others. But today the currency of kindness is in increasingly short supply. When this is reflected in our actions, much suffering results.

An over-demanding ego makes us chase after illusory goals, of name or fame. If we meet those goals, the ego grows bigger and demands more. Then, to meet those fresh demands, we may find ourselves hardening our hearts to the harm we are causing to others, as well as to ourselves. When we fail to meet these ever-increasing expectations, as we ultimately must, a painful breakdown in our self-respect is likely, perhaps accompanied by a heart attack or other catastrophic illness.

With renewed awareness of the in-



ner being, we become able to instruct the mind to let go, even briefly, of temporary, everyday interests and concerns. Meditation enables us to bypass stress-filled thoughts, feelings and perceptions that the brain puts before us, without recourse to drugs or austere religious practices. As we recover our true sense of identity, as souls or "conscious agents", we loosen the hold of the limited ego. The more we die to the ego's demands for transient "kicks", pleasures and short-lived success, the better our chances of restoring a sense of the peace, love, integrity, compassion and fulfilment that are intrinsic to the inner being. We are at our happiest when experiencing and expressing these profound qualities in our work and relation-

ships, and seeing the same in the lives of others.

Both science and spirituality are showing us that the immortal soul is not just a belief or concept, but a truth to be realised and lived. Every human spirit begins its journey with this inheritance of strength -- the attributes that make us most human. We don't have to try to become something we are not, but rather, to find ways of removing the accumulation of dust that prevents us from seeing clearly who we are.

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