

RIGHT PATH

Freedom from bad thoughts leads to true liberation



B.K. GEETA

The path of self-improvement is rarely a straight line. There are ups and downs and our speed varies from time to time. Sometimes we come to a standstill. Some people become dejected and give up. The main reason for this is waste thoughts. Why do they occur? Due to lack of spiritual knowledge, which leads to many questions, doubts, and negative thinking. Even if we know a lot, often we are unable to use that knowledge in the right manner, at the right time. We become happy when we learn new things. However, the joy is short-lived, because what we have learnt soon recedes to the back of the mind.

We do not apply that knowledge in life, so we neither realise its value nor acquire the confidence, the strength, that comes from the experience of using it. Then, when confronted by a challenging situation, we find ourselves unable to cope. That causes disappointment and sorrow, which is multiplied when we see others succeeding where we failed. The keys to becoming wise and powerful are honesty and a clean intellect, both of which enable us to recognise and accept spiritual truths and reduce unnecessary thinking, which drains our energy. Having a clean intellect means following spiritual principles as they are, without adulterating them with our ideas, which is something we tend to do when we are attached to our way of thinking. As long as we are attached to what we consider is 'mine', there will be waste thoughts. We may like what we learn and, on the basis of that,



wish to become a better person, but at the same time we hold on to our old ways. When we think in terms of 'my nature', or 'my view', we are leaving the door ajar for waste thoughts to enter. This is a subtle form of attachment. The mind is attracted or subservient to the object of our attachment. Such subservi-

ence, manifested in our thinking, speech, and interactions, consumes our time and energy against our conscious wish. Unwanted thoughts disturb us when the mind is pulled by what we are attached to. If our objective is self-improvement and we have adopted spiritual principles to achieve it, it is

damaging to persist in old ways that are incompatible with our goal. Another reason for waste thoughts is violation of the disciplines we are supposed to follow for our own benefit. The disciplines are meant to keep the mind clean and safe from harmful influences; ignore them, and waste thoughts will follow.

We can be free from waste thoughts by remaining engaged in high thinking and charitable actions. Using our time and energy in this way brings great joy and contentment, and deliverance from sorrow. This is true liberation. *B.K. Geeta is a senior Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.*

DISCOURSE

SELF-AWARENESS, SPIRITUAL STUDY REMOVE EMOTIONAL PAIN



DADI JANKI

In a situation of emotional distress, you usually have two options; to face the problem, or not. Processing the problem means you are facing it. Suppressing the problem means you are not. There is a big difference between the two. Processing is to the mind what digesting is to the stomach. If your di-

gestive system cannot handle certain foods, you have to stop eating them, otherwise you become sick. Similarly, if you find yourself in a situation where you cannot cope, do not just sit there taking it all in. It is better to say something right there and then. To hold things inside will not allow you to have a healthy mind. What you take in will be indigestible and it will be obvious to others that you are having a problem. Our ability to cope is hampered by thinking too much about other people. This causes problems in the mental digestive system. The best mental 'antacid' is in-depth spiritual study. This, plus a regular practice of self-awareness, penetrates the mind very deeply, dislodging emotional pain at its roots. Only then can emotion be purified, refined and ultimately transformed.



A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Imagine the mind as a library. Stored in the soul is a memory of everything I have ever experienced. Although I cannot remember the details, these experiences shape my perceptions and experience of living. In quiet moments, I can browse the bookshelves of my life and discover the wisdom I have accumulated. Today let me listen in silence and appreciate the wisdom I have stored within me.

BENEVOLENCE

Aligning the head and the heart for inner harmony



MAUREEN GOODMAN

When we find our inner harmony — when the head and the heart work together — we develop a quiet, sustaining energy that keeps us stable no matter what happens. The past few months may well have felt like a roller coaster, with external ups and downs mirrored by inner, emotional turmoil. Many of us have experienced the challenge of trying to

stay serene and stable during a time of great uncertainty. Finding our inner wisdom is key. When wisdom guides our thoughts and feelings, and our reactions to events and people, we develop both strength of heart and benevolence of outlook. A benevolent attitude is one of kindness, generosity and positivity, maintained even in the face of difficulty and challenge. When our words, actions, and even the vibrations of our thoughts, are filled with these qualities, the people around us will sense them and feel reassured, safe and comfortable. We all possess innate wisdom. It is our intu-



itive intelligence — if only we could remember how to access it! When we reach deep inside, through silence and

meditation, we learn to tap into this natural quality. And as we release it, we begin to use one of our most valuable

treasures. This is the way to untangle our thoughts and feelings, and to perceive accurately how we are reacting to situations and people. We understand that if we leave behind the temptation to judge, criticise or control others, then we start to uphold what is of benefit to all — ourselves included. Allied to wisdom is inner strength, based on a profound understanding of who we are. Once we commit to the journey within, reflecting deeply on our true identity as beings of peace, love, wisdom and happiness, we are able to remove any internal fear and replace it with the qualities of resilience

and strength. Removing fear from our hearts allows us to develop a secure foundation for life, an unassailable strength that will hold fast even when we are faced with the ultimate test. Other people's opinions, or the roller coaster of events that we have experienced, or observed, recently — none of these will affect us. Returning home to the true self means stepping away from them and finding that everything we need — which we used to seek in the world outside — is there within. And it is also a path to reconnect with our innate dignity. Once we rediscover our value as

human beings, we feel such a sense of fulfilment that all emptiness and neediness inside dissolves. Interactions with others, founded on self-respect, are informed by a respect for, and appreciation of, their value. So we create an atmosphere of positivity, generosity and empowerment that draws others towards us. There is no criticism, no negativity. Just benevolence founded on the strength of the heart. This is what we need so much in our world just now. *Maureen Goodman is the Programme Director for the Brahma Kumaris UK, and BK NGO representative to the United Nations in Vienna.*

BIG QUESTION

CAN WE BE CHEERFUL ALL THE TIME?



DR PRATAP MIDHA

Being cheerful is not just about smiling, it also means being optimistic, and cooperative. Spirituality teaches us to remain happy in every situation. Some people indulge in self-pity, brooding over what they lack or have lost. The past is past, it cannot be changed, so it is better to look forward to the future. Spirituality restores our self-respect, and we become aware of our true identity, that we are eternal, originally pure souls, and learn to appreciate

what we have, including our qualities and abilities. This brings happiness and stability to our life. But how can we be constantly cheerful? There can be depressing, frustrating, and painful moments in life. How do we remain happy at such times? When we look at the world around us, we see so much insecurity and sorrow; crime is increasing; and people are not trustworthy. All this puts pressure on us. People also suffer from stress at their workplace, which can lead to burnout when they become mentally exhausted or feel hopeless. Spirituality puts us on a different footing by giving us a new understanding of the self — I am a being of peace and power. It fosters values in us, and they in turn beget happiness. According to a Chinese saying, if you want to be

happy for life, be honest. We need to be honest with ourselves. We can deceive others, but not ourselves. When we keep checking the quality of our thoughts and feelings, we come to know where we stand. If we feel uneasy about something, we need to acknowledge it and deal with the cause, or seek help when we cannot handle it ourselves. Repressing our feelings will cause harm. If we cannot share our feelings with others, we can write them down in a diary. Writing down difficult experiences has been found to benefit one's mental and physical health, as it lightens the burden on the mind. One of the most important qualities for being cheerful is being light. Any kind of pressure on the mind makes us thoughtful or gloomy. What does our face look like when we think too



much? Certainly not cheerful. To remain light, it helps to understand that many things are not in our control. We cannot change oth-

ers, but we can change ourselves. We expect others to change, and feel that when that happens, things will become easier for us. But we need to give people time

and space for the change to occur. When we believe that we are responsible for a task, that too makes us heavy. Instead of the task, it is better

to focus on our strengths and abilities and develop those. When we become worthy in this way, our confidence, and people's trust in us, increase. Even then, it is good to keep in mind that doing the task is a role we have been given — it is not our identity. Our responsibility is to be available for the task, alert, accurate and diligent. Then, accepting the result of our efforts keeps us light. Even if we fail, we gain experience. On the other hand, when we do not accept a situation and keep asking why — 'Why me?', 'Why did this happen?', 'Why did they do this?' — it can create anger, resentment and frustration. Acceptance saves us from these harmful emotions. Courage also helps. Courage means being optimistic, seeing the good in the self and others. Courage is needed to accept one's

mistakes, check if there is a flaw in our attitude or beliefs, and make the necessary correction. Service, too, brings happiness. The joy we spread by serving others returns to us multiplied several times over. Sharing our wisdom and enthusiasm boosts our happiness. Service also provides us with a purpose in life, enhancing our sense of self-worth. In the end, it is about working on the self - checking where we can improve, doing the needful, and thereby progressing. When we busy ourselves with self-improvement and service, the mind remains free from unwanted thoughts, and conscious efforts to stay positive keep the graph of our happiness rising. *Dr Pratap Midha is Medical Director of the Global Hospital and Research Centre in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.*