

LIFE MANTRA

# I decide the quality of my relationships

Where love is spiritual, we do not focus on the other person’s defects. We may be aware of the defects, but we share love unconditionally so that the other person is able to overcome weaknesses.



B.K. AMIRCHAND

Living a successful life means having good relationships. Success in relationships depends on our character, which determines how I think, speak and act. If I am rude to someone, it is not because of something wrong in the other person, but due to a flaw within me. Do I expect people to behave the way I want and everything to be according to my wishes? “I am the eldest (or most senior), so it should be as I say”, or “I deserve respect” -- what do these thoughts indicate? Expecting obedience or respect

is just another way of begging. These expectations stem from ego. If we have made ourselves worthy of respect, we will get it without asking. Do icons or idols in temples expect respect, or anything at all? They are inanimate, but they are revered for the virtues they represent. The faithful worship them and make extravagant offerings before them. The moment I start expecting anything from others, problems will begin in my relationships. On the other hand, if I am humble and minimise my expectations, I will become a giver. The two qualities are inversely proportional -- the fewer my expectations, the more I will give -- whether it is good wishes, cooperation or material help. My relationships will then be naturally sweet. The more you expect from people, the more people will avoid you; the more you give, the more others will be drawn towards you. It is not about giving money or things -- we can at least smile at others and lift their spirits. How often do



we smile without others smiling first? Some people scowl just to keep others at bay. Happiness is an innate quality of the human soul, but we suppress it under various pressures or from selfish motives. What does a smile cost? It is such an easy thing to do to make others happy. Another quality that sustains relationships is trust, which is based on honesty. If I lie and deceive others, how can there be

any trust? In the absence of honesty and trust, there will be no real love, either. Since relationships begin with the self, I have to be honest, trusting and loving if I want others to be that way. I need to be honest, even if others are not, because that is being true to my own beliefs. The integrity of that behaviour will be noticed and often inspire others to manage their lives in that way too.

After the self come the people I am connected to, and my tasks -- in that order. But what do I value? Getting my way, even at the expense of others? When I cherish my relationships, I will maintain them at any cost. Some people claim that circumstances compel them to disregard their relationships. There is no such thing as compulsion; we always have a choice and our choices indicate what we hold dear. When I stay happy and maintain cheerful relations with everyone, I will be rewarded with a contented life. If a family member who cooks my meals is angry because of me, what feelings will go into their cooking, and how good will that food be for me? Making small sacrifices for the sake of others is worth it, because ultimately it benefits everyone, including me. B.K. Amirchand, a senior Rajyoga teacher, is Zonal In-charge of the Brahma Kumaris’ Punjab Zone. He is also Vice Chairperson of the Social Service Wing of the Rajyoga Education & Research Foundation.

DISCOURSE

## SHOWING THE SPIRITUAL PATH



DADI JANKI

A spiritual path is like a school. Not a regular school where you learn ordinary skills, but a spiritual school where you learn the skills of spirit -- like how to remove flaws in your character, or how to remain unaffected

by the negative influences around you. Some people think that if they follow a spiritual path, they will not be able to cultivate their individual talents. However, what kinds of talent do people really need nowadays? To remove one’s own ego is a great talent; to love others is another. There is no need to study all those other complicated things. If you have the nature of following God, then God’s nature will become your own. Become true; reveal your true self through your spiritual study, and claim a spiritual degree!



BIG QUESTION

# What constitutes elevated action?



MAUREEN GOODMAN

At every moment I have a choice over how I respond. Even if I am restricted in words or actions, I have a choice over how I think and feel, and those thoughts and

feelings are the seeds of my actions, or my karma. As is the quality of the seed, so is the fruit. Some seeds bear fruit quickly, some more slowly. In fact, thoughts and feelings are actions in themselves because they have an effect on me and those around me. They also determine the quality of my actions. For this reason we have to consider the consequences of action in the long term. It is easy for us to understand the seeds of negative actions. We identify five gross vices -- greed, anger, desire, attachment

and ego -- and many subtle vices such as jealousy, impatience, disregard etc. Sometimes the subtle vices can go unnoticed in the short term, or even pass for virtues, but in the longer term they cause suffering. For example, I may help someone, but if I want their love and respect in return, a state of co-dependency may develop, and in the long term that will weaken us both. So, what constitutes elevated action? Action which is a step beyond the usual ‘good deeds’ that I can do; something which brings



about a deeper change.

Elevated karma is karma that will bring about positive change in the self, in the environment around me, and ultimately the world. It is karma that is done with true spiritual awareness,

an awareness that affirms the spiritual identity and original qualities of the self. The Brahma Kumaris affirm the spiritual identity of the soul as an infinitesimal point of light that resides in the centre of the forehead,

and we practise ‘soul consciousness’ as a way of moving beyond the ego or identification of the self with role, position, wealth, status, relationship, and even gender. This is a true state of non-violence; the state where the inherent qualities of the soul are motivating every thought, word and action. This is elevated karma. Another dimension to elevated karma is that once the inherent goodness is awakened in the self, then the next step of connecting or aligning myself to a greater Source, a Supreme

Being, happens in a very natural and powerful way. The source of my power is no longer just human power but also Godly power within the self. In affirming the existence, and then relationship, with a Supreme Being, the quality of karma comes to a completely different level. The return of such karma is manifold. God’s love, peace and power will come to me. Entering into karma in this way can also mitigate the effects of negative karma already created. We do not live in isolation, and our actions have

an influence on others. We cannot teach by words, but through our lives. The philosophy of karma can promote social justice, but the method is not to fight against something that we feel is not right, but to rather focus our energy on creating something new that can be an inspiration for change in our world. (Excerpt from a talk at The World Congress of Faiths.) Maureen Goodman is the Programme Director for the Brahma Kumaris UK, and BK NGO representative to the United Nations in Vienna.

SOUL CONSCIOUS

# HUMILITY: AN EXPRESSION OF SELF-RESPECT



ARUNA LADVA

What do we define as humility? Who do we define as humble? Do we call people humble because of who they are, or what they do? Humility is, in fact, about an attitude; it is all to do with our state of mind. It is about being open to other people’s opinions and ideas. It is about listening, and not just hearing. It is about giving regard to others in subtle ways and not to go through life like a bulldozer. In spiritual language, humility is about being egoless... as we drop the labels of the body, our roles, performances and all those details of body consciousness, we automatically become egoless, which means humble. Becoming soul conscious is the key to humility; in soul consciousness, humility shines like the sun, humility simply comes

naturally. Humility is an innate quality within the soul... one has no ego about anything because someone who has humility is simply in a state of self-respect. When we come from a place of inner self-respect, then there is nothing to lose because we feel secure within our self, it is from this place that humility can grow. By contrast someone who is insecure will not be in their self-respect and will be using the tools of body consciousness, especially the ego, to prop themselves up. Humility is about acceptance. Accepting the other person... for what they are and also the roles that they play. Humility is not about having a hierarchy of egos and playing the game of ‘who is better than who’... the humble person has no need to play these



games any more.

It is not that one has to always demonstrate being humble... in the extreme this can also be known as ‘playing the martyr’. But when one is full of all divine virtues, then one naturally becomes humble, one need not make effort, or have to prove one’s humility. In being-ness there is a natural flow of energy, it is almost as if there is no other way of being, but to be humble because it is part of our nature. We forget that humility is one of the latent virtues and powers of the soul. There is no loss in humility, there can only be gain; actually, it is a state of power within the soul. Humility can only come from a steady and stable place of self-respect, inner soul respect really, which is based on a true knowledge and experience of the self, not as the body, but as a pure consciousness. That is who we all are in our essence, now is the time for us to live from that place of awareness of being pure consciousness. Courtesy of its timetomeditate.org Aruna Ladva, author of several books on self-development, is a Rajyoga meditation teacher who has taught this ancient art of meditation in many countries

AWARENESS

# DISCOVERING THE BEST WAY TO REMAIN SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY

DR PRATAP MIDHA

The Hindi word for healthy is ‘swasth’. ‘Swa’ means the self, and one who is established in the self, or stable in his or her true identity, is healthy. Our true identity is that we are souls, and if we remember that while going about our tasks, and we relate to others with that elevated consciousness, we remain free from negative thinking. This keeps us spiritually healthy. We tend to blame other people and situations for our problems. If we are unhappy, we begin to think that our workplace is not good, the co-workers are irritating, the boss is uncooperative, and so on. But spiritual knowledge tells us that I, the soul, am the creator of my thoughts, feelings and desires. No one can make me angry or sad as long as I am in control of myself. For that I need to nourish the soul. Nowadays, people are very particular about what they eat -- some have just raw food while others use only organic produce. But we are not as careful about the intake of the soul -- what we watch, read, listen to, or think. That is why we have ‘indigestion’; our mind is confused, indecisive

and turbulent.

Sometimes, we think too much but do very little, and that makes us impatient. We agonise over work not getting done and how things should be. We need to be patient with the self if we want to sustain ourselves through the challenges of life. To nourish the soul we also need to share happiness and be kind to others. The satisfaction we get from coming to the aid of others, which scientists call the helper’s high, uplifts us. Having good wishes and pure feelings for others makes a lot of difference. If we see only the good in others, we will be surrounded by goodness, and that is what will influence us. Just as our physical environment, whether it is hot or cold, affects us, the subtle environment we create by our thoughts affects our mind and body. This is why those who stay positive and happy have fewer physical illnesses. Lifelong spiritual effort can be challenging, and one can be disheartened if one does not experience progress. When we keep our goal in mind and have the faith that a true heart and sincere efforts will bring success at the right time, we will not lose hope.



One also needs to be independent -- not dependent on others -- in order to be healthy. One’s spiritual or mental connection should be with the Divine, the Supreme Source, and not any human being. For this we need to take care that we are not impressed by anyone. Others may have many good qualities, but those are gifts from the Divine. Then, we should be aware of

the quality of our thoughts, so that we can keep ourselves free of wasteful and negative thinking. This awareness helps us realise what we need to change in ourselves. The subsequent transformation affects a shift in our consciousness, our way of thinking, and our life. Dr. Pratap Midha is Medical Director of the Global Hospital and Research Centre in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.