

LIFE MANTRA

# Gentle discipline at the heart of spirituality



B.K. DR NIRMALA

Discipline is integral to the spiritual life, and the more we practise the more it becomes perfectly natural. In time, a virtuous circle develops. As we build our capacity for concentration, we gain controlling power over the mind, which, in turn, augments our ability to concentrate. To train the mind and keep focused on the Divine, I must "rein in" the wild horses of my thoughts, as the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures tell us. The key is to consider myself to be a soul, moving away from body-consciousness and a pre-occupation with the world outside.

However, spiritual maturity does not happen overnight. We should be gentle and patient. It takes time, practice, and sufficient application to check the mind regularly, rather like watchful parents restraining a little child eager to explore the world.

A daily routine is important. "Early to bed, early to rise" is a useful guide. When we meditate first thing in the morning, the world around us is tranquil; mobile phones and social media are quiet, and we can tap into the powerful atmosphere created by other yogis in meditation.

Coming back to the awareness of being a soul and meditating for brief periods throughout the day allows me to check that I am still on course. Free time is an opportunity for meditation. I should learn to love solitude, and to use it wisely.

There are other helpful steps on the spiritual path, such as actively directing the mind to focus on uplifting thoughts or reading and studying inspiring commentaries. Our flaws may ensnare us, particularly anger, attachment, ego, greed and lust. Less obvious are the subtle flaws, which include: - Showing irritation with others by ignoring, or refusing to speak to, them; this is less volatile than anger, yet damaging.



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external disturbances or the attraction of material possessions to divert us, or allow obsessive activity to drain our energy.

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- Being impressed by a person's talents or charisma or depending on others (rather than the Supreme Being) for support.

- An obsession with status, or a tendency to boast, or even to insult others; humility is the sign of a truly spiritual person.

- Acquisitiveness

(which is never satisfied), while being miserly with what we have.

- Carelessness with energy, thoughts, possessions; evading responsibility.

- Jealousy based on a lack of self-respect and a tendency to compare and compete.

We navigate safely through life by learning constantly to return to the awareness of our inner spiritual being. When we realise how much the Supreme Being is able to give us — knowledge, love, peace and happiness — we have so much love for Him. We leave behind our old habit patterns and our fears, and with courage, dedication, discipline and constancy, we can bring about deep changes in our lives, in the lives of others, and ultimately in the world around us.

B.K. Dr. Nirmala is the director of Brahma Kumaris Rajyoga centres in the Asia-Pacific region.

DISCOURSE

## TRUE RELIGION TEACHES PEACE



DADI JANKI

I used to say, 'I am a Hindu, you are a Christian'. I can never say that anymore. My attitude has changed.

Now I would say 'whether you are standing before a statue of Christ or worshipping the image of Krishna, God is still the one Father and we are all the children of the one Father'.

Religion no longer exists in the world in a true form. When merely ritualistic it is superficial and without power. Where there is real understanding, where there is truth in words there is also power.

Power would not be received from God in order for us to fight each other. Power is received for us to become peaceful. True religion says, 'peace', true religion teaches 'peace'.



### A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The most powerful form of honesty is honesty with myself. Being honest with myself requires courage, determination and love. Courage gives me the strength to look in the places I avoid, determination keeps me from looking away, and love softens my vision of myself. Today let me be honest.

SOUL POWER

## POWER TO ACCOMMODATE BRINGS HARMONY, UNITY



GOPI PATEL

"All things have their time, all questions and situations have their answers and all things have their right to be..."

—Dadi Janki

The power to accept someone as they are, or a situation as it is, is a power that can make you truly great. Intellectually understanding that we are all different is one thing, but to remain lovingly indifferent to those

differences, no matter what they are, is another thing altogether.

The ability to accept and accommodate differences in such a way that it is as though they no longer exist is the key to harmony and unity. Just like the analogy of rivers flowing into the ocean, where no distinguishable difference in the waters remains - that is the power to accommodate.

Sometimes in life we feel overwhelmed because too much is happening. We are unable to digest what is going on and how others are behaving, and feel as though we cannot manage. So, the first thing to do is to accept what is happening and name it as it is. That brings relief, rather than denial, and



therefore the tension lessens. Then we can begin to look at the self in an accepting way.

By starting with the self, by nurturing our authentic and real identity, we can see beyond the surface and bring deep generosity and sharing at a deeper level to the situa-

tion. It is very important to take time to meditate and feel and accept that our original state of being is deep peace; then we are able to face any of the storms that come our way and let them pass. It is the deep understanding that I am peace, and not

castigate myself for the mistakes I make, because I am more than my actions; I can change, I can learn, I can become better. The blame game is a waste of energy. If I find myself blaming the self or others it means I have not realised something or accepted the goodness at the heart of each situation and at the heart of each one. Giving regard strengthens relationships. Blame divides and polarises relationships. Openheartedness and generosity are qualities that help us to accept, accommodate and, finally, to transform everything.

As we continue to accept ourselves and nurture our real and authentic self, we can stabilise ourselves with what is eternal, the soul. This starts to finish fear and I develop the power to adjust to anyone and anything. In the same way that water can take its shape from any vessel it is in, but does not lose its core quality, in the same way I adjust but do not lose my identity by doing so. In fact, I can enhance what I am involved in and who I am connected with.

I am a human being, not a human doing, so I do not

castigate myself for the mistakes I make, because I am more than my actions; I can change, I can learn, I can become better. The blame game is a waste of energy. If I find myself blaming the self or others it means I have not realised something or accepted the goodness at the heart of each situation and at the heart of each one. Giving regard strengthens relationships. Blame divides and polarises relationships. Openheartedness and generosity are qualities that help us to accept, accommodate and, finally, to transform everything. Gopi Patel is a spiritual educator and senior Rajyogi meditator with the Brahma Kumaris, specialising in spiritual pragmatism in all areas of life.

SEEKING TRUTH

## THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS, AND THE SOLUTION



SHARONA STILLERMAN

Why is it that some people always complain of having problems while some others never seem to face any troubles?

We all encounter various kinds of situations in life, but each person's response is different, and it is determined by how they perceive the situations. This is why something that is catastrophic for one person is not so for another.

What sets apart the one who sees a problem from the one who does not? Does the latter know something that the former is ignorant of?

Usually, that is not the case. The difference between the two comes down to understanding, and faith in what they know. We all

know that everyone goes through different seasons in life. If it is winter today, spring will follow. No difficulty will persist forever; all troubles will pass one day. But we do not remember this at the right time.

How do we change our perception of things so that nothing feels like a problem? The answer is a novel one but very effective — fill yourself with the light of truth, love, purity, and

power, and the darkness that clouds your perception will vanish.

This darkness - of fear, anger, ego, jealousy, or any kind of negative thought or emotion - is at the root of all problems. This darkness seems to have enveloped the minds of most people.

We often get lost in this darkness within, and increase it further by giving it our attention. Instead of thinking of solutions, we

brood over our difficulties and sink into deeper gloom.

All that is needed to dispel the darkness is to switch on the light of truth. The truth is that we are souls - beings of peace, purity, love, and bliss. These are our natural qualities. That is why we feel at ease, and happy, when we experience these qualities. When we are robbed of peace, devoid of purity and love, we begin to feel unease and sorrow. We move away from our truth, and suffering follows.

The best way to bring the light of truth into our life is to connect with God, the ocean of virtues, by remembering Him. When we do that, we are filled with His light, which we can then spread to others through thoughts, words and deeds that are imbued with our innate virtues. Our life changes, and so do our relationships, and then we find that there are not too many problems in our life after all.

Sharona Stillerman coordinates the activities of the Brahma Kumaris in Israel.



REAL SELF

## FREEDOM IS THE ORIGINAL STATE OF THE SOUL



KEN O'DONNELL

Freedom has two sides. Freedom from and freedom to. I have to be free from any situations and attachments that bring me down or hold me back. I also have to be free to be able to express my true potential.

As a child, I loved going to deserted beaches. I would sit for hours watching the seagulls happily playing and gliding around. I would ask myself why the adults around me were so complicated and weighed down by their own problems.

Even at that young age, I too was bound by many things I did not want to do. Much later, I understood that the sense of freedom of the seagulls was probably



connected to their closeness to being as natural as possible. In other words, they were just being themselves. In the same way, grass grows without any effort. Clouds form, rain comes, the sun shines. Nature unfolds in an inexorable symphony of what it is.

One of the greatest paradoxes is that freedom is part of the original nature of the soul itself. Before we come to this physical dimension, we have no thoughts and even no relationships with anyone or anything. In that sense, we

are originally free. That is why there is such a yearning for a sense of spiritual freedom when we do not have it anymore.

Being true to myself, to my deep inner qualities and to my relationship with the Divine will automatically show me how to remain free while doing things and interacting with others.

All of this brings us back to the basic question of 'who am I?' — the eternal teaser for questing minds.

We develop what we think is intelligence and

get into all sorts of bondage. We obey our appetites and become prisoners of the objects of our senses. Like birds holding onto the branches of trees we pray to God to free us from whatever mess we have succeeded in creating for ourselves. The Divine looks back at us and says the branches are not holding onto us, we are holding onto them.

Ken O'Donnell, an author and international consultant on strategy and leadership, is the director of Brahma Kumaris' services in South America.