

INNER STRENGTH

Spirituality as the key to self-respect



B.K. JAYANTI

At the heart of every human tradition lie three aspects: respect for the Sacred, the Divine, deep inner values and, thirdly, a guide or signpost for what human life is about and what we human beings should be doing in life. In recent decades, business leaders and the media have held sway and influenced a wide spectrum of decision-makers in communities, right through to the grassroots level. What seems to be missing is the art of listening to the inner voice of conscience. The present state of world affairs suggests that the voice of conscience has become numb, if not silenced. If we don't listen to a good

friend once, twice, five times, the friend will eventually say, "OK, do as you wish. I won't say any more." I feel this is a reflection of what is going on inside each of us. The conscience has stopped speaking to us and, even when it does sometimes, we do not heed its signal because of public opinion, society, culture and history. Instead, we say, "Let's just follow what others are doing and keep going."

We are now at a time when enlightened people, people with an awakened conscience, are coming together. This trend gives great hope because, generally, it has always been a small, dedicated minority that has brought major changes in history. People are now increasingly saying: 'it's time to listen to our conscience.'

What happens when the conscience awakens? As I begin to listen to that quiet voice within, I begin to move away from narrow perspectives and my hori-



zons widen. I clearly see humanity as one human family and respect planet Earth as our home. I look at the past and see what we have done, and I look towards the future and see what I need to do now to create the future of my choice.

The choice is not a difficult one. It is not even just a question of a better world. It is a question of survival. Yes, words and actions are essential, but the seed of change sits within the human heart and mind. Compassion awakens within the alert conscience; we begin to treat each other with dignity and respect. But

respect and dignity do not begin in my interaction with you; they begin deep down within the core of my inner being. In sweet silence, I can hear my voice of conscience and also connect with the truth, love, purity and peace within the self, the spiritual being.

It is when I experience these inner qualities that I learn to respect myself. Spirituality means to understand the self as a spiritual being and acknowledge my values and my self-respect. Secondly, spirituality makes me aware of the presence of the Creator in my life. In meditation,

I focus on the Divine using a direct connection free of intermediaries. This way I draw spiritual strength and power from the Divine, which I then use to transform myself and my behaviour.

Societies worldwide are facing a huge crisis of self-respect and this is the root cause of the environmental crisis. Respect for the self and others can only begin when I go inside and revisit my inner qualities and values and re-energise them through my connection with the Source of all power. That respect then naturally

extends to all forms of life and the planet we share. In this state of sharing, we benefit personally, because through silence and an active conscience, we are able to transform ourselves and live our lives according to our values.

The major part of our work is consciousness-raising—seeking to change the awareness, vision and attitude of those in government, civil society and within our own organisation through dialogue, partnerships, UN and other national and international conferences and local initiatives. In doing so, we aim to bring greater clarity in decisions for the common good and an understanding of how to empower people to adapt and flourish in response to the environmental crisis through a deeper understanding of their core values and inner strengths.

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DISCOURSE

WITH SPIRITUAL POWER, WOMEN CAN SERVE THE WORLD



DADI JANKI

The idea of women playing any role outside the home was strongly opposed in the community where I grew up. That was a long time ago and things have changed. But I did not wait for the change. I had the strong desire to work for the upliftment of humanity and that is what I set out to do.

The courage to do this came from being very clear about my spiritual identity. In point of fact, I am neither male nor female. I am a soul, the child

of God, currently inside a female form. I was also very clear about my aim and concerned about how to be of more service to others.

The world has never looked to women for help in solving its problems. Instead, it has turned to those of great authority, to scholars and to the very wealthy. This has been the crucial mistake.

The mother's role is to awaken the children with great love and prepare them for the rest of the day. She is their support. She nurtures. Generally, it is attachment to the home and children which prevents women from fulfilling their unlimited calling.

To go beyond that attachment is no small accomplishment. To go beyond the fear of what society will say is no less. My relationship with God gave me such internal power that I was not intimidated by social convention. The spirit was strong and so withstood all external pressures and influences.



MEDITATION

GRASPING THE ESSENCE BRINGS SUCCESS



B.K. DR KALA IYENGAR

There is a time for everything and time itself is very valuable. Our time now seems to be taken up with ever more complicated issues. We are constantly bombarded with information, especially via technology, and it is so difficult to grasp the essence of anything. Yet, this is what we need to be able to do.

There is a time for expansion of this kind, in

fact there is a time for expansion in all areas of life, but we seem to have lost the ability to arrive at and deal with the essence. A rose in expansion in a garden is a beautiful thing to behold, but when the essence is extracted, it is powerful enough to completely change an atmosphere. This is what we also need to be able to do.

If we do not learn to go into the essence of matters then we waste our energy, our time and relinquish our power – the power to deal with situations and people in the best way possible. The more time we spend in expansion, the less the outcome is likely to be satisfactory. The investment of that energy does not yield the optimum gain.



If someone is behaving badly, we can either go into the expansion, and analyse, complain, criticise their behaviour, and in so doing get nowhere. Or we can look behind

the behaviour and see the motivation, or the essence of what is going on, and deal directly with that. We can respond with deep understanding and let the other details pass

us by. When we speak and communicate, people no longer have the time, nor are they willing, to listen. We need to be able to convey our message in

essence and powerfully. The more we are able to extract the essence of things, the purer the experience of spirituality can be felt.

It is important not to

lose sight of the times we are passing through. It is a time for calm, concentration and silence within. We have everything we need within us to make the right decisions and to access the essence of all spirituality, the Divine.

The essence of all spiritual endeavour lies in three questions: 'Who am I?' 'What time is it?' 'What do I have to do?' In meditation and a connection with God, the answers become as clear as crystal – and from this essence we can move into expansion and achieve wonders.

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LOOK WITHIN

IN ORDER TO CHANGE, FIRST KNOW YOURSELF



B.K. MRUTHYUNJAYA

Often, when we change our way of thinking and doing things in an attempt at self-improvement, all goes well for some time and we are happy that we have become a better person. But then we find ourselves reverting to our old habits. It happens occasionally at first, and we do not take it seriously. Then the slippages become more frequent and a time comes when we stop bothering about it. "It happens. It does not matter", we tell

ourselves, and the progress we had made is undone.

There can be several reasons for this. We may have a strong desire to change, and determination as well, but we may be ignorant of what the process of change entails, or do not have adequate attention on the self to sustain the transformation.

A farming analogy illustrates this point. We sow the best seed, but the land is barren, the seedling gets little sunshine, and we fail to water it regularly. It may grow into a scrawny tree and bear some fruit, but for how long?

We may decide to have only good, positive thoughts henceforth, but if we become depressed every time there are other kinds of thoughts, we will soon lose hope. Understanding that



such tests are inevitable and learning from them enables

us to take them in our stride and progress towards our

goal. Otherwise, we will make a mountain out of a

molehill. This causes us to lose balance — one day we

are on cloud nine and the next day a mistake leaves us moping.

Instead of finding out what went wrong and taking steps to ensure that it does not recur, we pore over all the details of how we failed, the miserable feeling it brought, whether we will ever stop failing... If we think in this way, what would be our state of mind? Brooding over sickness is not a cure for it; we need to take medicine to become healthy again. Similarly, we can learn from failure and move on.

Another mistake is to tell ourselves that "I am like this anyway" or ascribing our faults to society or the environment in which we grew up. Social conditioning can influence us if we allow it to, but disowning responsibil-

ity for the way we are is a sign of powerlessness and it reinforces our defects.

This is where spirituality comes in. When we know and accept the fact that we are souls, beings of purity and peace expressing ourselves through the physical medium of the body, we recognise that our flaws are acquired traits. We turn our attention inward to experience our peaceful and loving self. This facilitates recognition of our eternal connection with the Supreme Soul, the Father of all souls. Remembering Him, the Almighty, brings the soul the power to break free of its weaknesses and discover a life without sorrow.

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