

BEYOND DOUBT

Developing confidence in our own judgement



NEVILLE HODGKINSON

WE sometimes find ourselves agonising over decisions, even seemingly unimportant ones. Why is this?

One reason is a lack of confidence, springing from long-held habits of being pulled and pushed by external circumstances, and conflicting offers of advice from others.

Another is that if there is something going on inside me that I do not feel able to look at, keeping my attention focused outside gives me an excuse not to look within.

And a third, simple reason, is that decisions I made in the past seem to have turned out badly.

But it is useful to understand that in a sense, there are no 'right' and 'wrong' decisions - just 'what is'. There really is no point in beating myself up over past actions.

They were the best I could do at the time.

Of course, society creates laws determining right and wrong, and breaking those laws brings consequences. The same is true of any decision I make myself - because that is the game of life. If I make a mistake, I hurt myself. But if I learn from that, and move on, the stumbling block becomes a stepping stone. Successful business people often say that a willingness to make mistakes, and learn from them, is what took them to the top.

If I develop the habit of thinking negatively about myself and others, it is as if I am stepping further and further away from life's flow, such that there is more and more loss of power. I become stagnant. Then it becomes hard for me to know what to do next.

When, instead, I accept that life is simply signalling me to live it in a different spirit, I can instantly find myself back in the game.

The key is to give priority to thoughts and actions that align with the inner being - the soul, or spark of consciousness - which in its original and fundamental nature is



loving and good. This brings happiness, and restores confidence and clarity.

When I am pulled this way and that, it is usually because I have become too caught up in the external world, and have forgotten to be guided by the positive nature of the inner being.

There is a theory in social psychology called 'cognitive dissonance' which posits that how we see things, and how we actually behave, ultimately have to line up with one another. If I persistently see myself as someone who has been hurt, as a victim,

or as someone who needs to 'climb to the top' at any cost, my behaviour will ultimately align with that image. In doing so, I will become liable to betray my deeper self, which is intrinsically kind, and that kind self will gradually disappear from view.

In contrast to that, if I determinedly and persistently practise seeing myself as a kind and loving being, my actions will gradually line up with that image, and become filled with love and care.

This is why the practice of soul-consciousness is so valuable. Understanding and ex-

periencing that the soul is eternal, with intrinsic qualities of peace, love and compassion, brings strength back to the inner being and frees me from the prison of materialistic thinking. This practice nourishes my awareness of the true self.

As this awareness grows, I automatically find myself wanting to bring those positive qualities into my life and relationships, and to renounce my old, limited habits of greed and selfishness. Positivity becomes the basis of my decisions. The more I attend to the inner being - taking care

to connect with feelings of truth, and positivity of spirit - the more I will choose to find time and space to experience those feelings.

This is what meditation does. Meditation teaches me how to see the soul and draw love and wisdom from the Divine - that is, from God. To access the Divine, I simply need to open my heart to the reality that I am a loving and beautiful being, like the Supreme.

The more I let go of the habit of thinking negatively about myself, the more my true self-respect grows. I find myself being genuinely helpful to others - not because I am told to, but because that is my true nature.

It then becomes increasingly clear that this is a good basis for making decisions, because of the positive feedback I receive. The inner conflict between my true nature, and the limited outlook that caused me to forget my spiritual self, gradually ends, and my trust in my own judgement is restored.

Neville Hodgkinson is a UK-based author and journalist, and a long-time student of Rajyoga.

DISCOURSE

FOR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS, CHANGE YOUR NEGATIVE NATURE



DADI JANKI

A major obstacle to spiritual progress is one's own negative nature. The root cause of this kind of nature is limited consciousness. This root has to be eliminated completely because obstacles that arise from a negative nature will prevent you from taking power from God.

Power from God is received through the awareness and faith that God belongs to you. A negative nature could destroy even this faith.

Recognising the root of the problem helps to transform it.

Limited thinking should simply not be tolerated. There should be total cleanliness inside. For this you need to be very honest about the obstacles you are facing, because it is easy to deceive yourself. Limited thinking will be transformed when you spend time in the awareness of your true nature of peace and in being of help to others.

Thoughts are like seeds. As are my thoughts, so will be my attitude and behaviour. Therefore, my focus should not be so much on the wrong behaviour as on the thinking which causes it. I need to be aware of how much damage is caused by negative thoughts. Negative, wasteful thinking over a long period of time will put me right back into the gutter. The task of a student of spirituality is to change situations through thoughts.

SELF-HELP MANTRA

THE METHOD FOR EASY SELF-IMPROVEMENT



B.K. ATAM PRAKASH

Conviction is the mirror of faith. If faith simply exists as an occasional awareness, it does not provide much power, nor is it visible in our life. However, when it takes the form of a firm conviction, it is reflected in our words and deeds, and others can clearly see it.

Faith remains merely an

intellectual quality if it is confined to rumination and discussion; when it is translated into action, it adds value to life. An elevated awareness bears fruit when it becomes the basis of our thoughts, words, actions and relationships.

A strong conviction is revealed by our face and behaviour. The proof of conviction is confidence and happiness. Conviction can be of many kinds. On the spiritual path, when we work on the self to improve the quality of our thoughts, feelings and actions, conviction based on recognition of our true identity - that I am a pure, peaceful soul - helps a great deal.

The conviction that I am naturally virtuous - not 'I wish to be', or 'I will become' virtuous - awakens the soul's intrinsic qualities of purity, peace, love, truth, and power. When we live by these virtues and they inform our thinking and activity, they are strengthened, much the same way as muscles develop with use. This spiritual growth, in turn, raises our confidence in the success of our efforts.

If we have faith but no happiness, the reason is lack of conviction. Conviction easily makes us forget old weaknesses and grow out of them. On the path of self-improvement, old habits often become hurdles.



Bad company can be given up, but it is not so easy to get rid of bad habits.

The method to change one's habits is to develop a strong conviction about the new path one has chosen. When we have such conviction in the practical form, and not just in the mind, old ways of thinking will not crop up repeatedly and distract us.

Why do old thought patterns not change? We tell ourselves, "I understand everything", and we recognise the need to change. However it all remains at the level of awareness and is not put into action. To be real, self-improvement has to be visible in our life and not just remain an idea. Our attitude, vision and bearing reflect our state of mind and

generate the vibrations that people experience from us.

Some people claim that they wish to keep a low profile and not show off their spiritual attainments. But it is said that no one can hide the sun; no matter how thick the clouds, the sun still gives some light. Similarly, those with strong spiritual convictions cannot remain hidden. The sparkle on their face, their vibrations automatically attract others. These vibrations shield them and those around them from all kinds of negativity.

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LOOK WITHIN

THE MAGIC OF MEDITATION



CHRISTINE MAHONEY AND DAVID JONES

Magic is defined as a supernatural sleight of hand and a manipulation of reality through psychological or physical means. True magic, on the other hand, is about the inexplicable, and that is what makes it so special. It is something out of the ordinary, something not of the usual, mundane world. It is something from the spiritual realms.

The reality is that the spiritual is fully active within the material world. To feel that the spiritual aspect is in fact present, and working in the material world, and is the actual foundation of life, brings a very different attitude towards living. If we put spirituality

first, as the essence, then everything that happens can be tinged with magic. Life has a sparkle!

Human beings, though, have faced so many unexpected and threatening situations over some time, that they want to feel safe and that their parameters are in order, so that survival feels possible. The inexplicable, magical wonderment of spiritual matters can seem uncomfortable and something to shy away from. Humanity has lost its childlike wonder. The pursuit of home, food, shelter and the basic needs of life for security in the physical world can be very stressful. Reaching out, beyond those parameters, into spiritual matters can often feel like a scary thing to do.

Through meditation we can explore spiritual truths in safety. We can discover that in the purest part of the self, the soul, the spark of conscient light, there is the desire to understand and follow the purpose of the soul. Not just 'I exist', but by understanding



the soul I uncover the purest part of me and what I can actually give and contribute to the world.

Further, with a connection with the

Supreme form of spiritual energy, the Supreme Being, we can absorb and manifest deeper and deeper spiritual dimensions. This becomes apparent

in any creative endeavour, such as any music we make or any painting we produce or any poetry we write.

Most importantly though, allowing the spiritual dimension into our reality, we can see that others experience that; they notice the change in us, they take comfort from the way we live our lives and the things we say.

Anyone and everyone can touch the spiritual - it is just a thought or two away, in meditation, and there is nothing more beautiful or magical to experience than opening our eyes to what is unseen and living life with the subtlety of spirituality.

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Peace is the result of settling leftovers from the past. To make peace with myself and my story I must face and dissolve old wounds and regrets with the energy of forgiveness, realisation and love. This reconciliation process brings me peace. After peace, silence follows. Today let me create peace through internal reconciliation.