

FATE OR FREE WILL?

# Creating our destiny



B.K. ASHA

The question of whether a man is bound by fate or has free will has exercised the human mind for ages. Many believe that everything in life is predetermined and there is nothing we can do about it. Others dismiss this as fatalism and hold that we have all the freedom to do and be whatever we want.

Which of these beliefs is true, or does the truth lie somewhere in between? Some people say that our destiny is determined by God. Others believe that each person is born under the influence of certain stars or planets, which decide

their destiny. Destiny, they think, is an overwhelming force against which struggle is futile.

The fact is that we create our destiny by our actions. Our present condition is the result of past actions, whether of this life or earlier ones. Our future depends on what we think and do in the present. So we have the power to determine our fate. We can make it great by doing great things, or choose to be ordinary, or bring about our downfall with wrong actions. We have the freedom of choice; once we make that choice, it becomes our destiny.

Of course, there are some things we cannot change, such as the body we are born with, or our family or race. But even these result from past karma. We are born in a certain place and family because we have karmic accounts to settle in that place, and with others in the family.



All situations in our life that are seemingly caused by factors beyond our control are the result of past actions. Nothing is accidental or a product of what people commonly call luck. Each and every soul in this world is reaping the fruit—good or bad—of their actions.

This does not mean we are slaves of our past. We cannot change the past and we do not even know what all we have done in our earlier lives, but we can choose how

we react when faced with the consequences of our actions. When we accept all situations in life as products of our actions, we are saved from much worry and sorrow. A clear understanding of the law of karma brings the realisation that we are getting exactly what we deserve. Then we do not blame God or other people for our problems. Instead of grumbling or grieving, we can take heart from the fact that our accounts are being settled.

Such acceptance does not mean being passive. We can do all in our power to change things for the better. At the very least we can develop patience, tolerance and fortitude by facing adversities—all these qualities make us stronger.

The law of karma operates even at the level of thoughts. When thoughts are acted upon, a bigger karmic account is created. As they say, "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny".

Thus, if we want a good future for ourselves, we need to start with good thoughts. This is a conscious choice subject to our will.

Some people complain that they want to be positive but negative thoughts brought about by their circumstances thwart them. This is where meditation comes in.

Rajyoga meditation teaches us to transform our thinking and, thereby, our life. It begins with re-minding ourselves that we are souls, and dwelling on the soul's innate qualities of peace, purity, love, and joy. We also remember that we are children of the Supreme Soul, our loving, benevolent, and Almighty parent.

Regular practice of Rajyoga helps us experience the peace and love within us, and draw more of the same from our Father, who is an inexhaustible source of virtues. When the soul is repeatedly imbued with goodness, one feels content and fulfilled, and damaging habits of the past lose their hold on us. As the quality of our consciousness changes, so do our actions, and, ultimately, our destiny.

B.K. Asha is director of the Brahma Kumaris' Om Shanti Retreat Centre in Gurugram, Haryana.

VIRTUES

## HONESTY CREATES PURE FEELINGS



DADI JANKI

Love is connected to virtues. Virtues create love within the self and within others. When virtues reduce, the quality of love is also reduced. When all virtues are present, there is complete and pure love. Out of all the virtues, the main one is honesty. If we feel someone is not being honest with us, our love breaks. Whether it is our mother, father, husband, wife or friend, if we feel they are being dishonest, love breaks. In terms of our relationship with God, if we are honest with God, we will draw His love. If we are not, that love will break. Even if we have no virtue other than honesty, we will be able to draw God's love.

The first kind of honesty is honest

with myself. If I am honest with myself, there need be no situation in which I am not honest with others. If someone distrusts my honesty, perhaps it is a sign that I need to become more honest.

Honesty means to be very clear about everything going on inside us. Where there is honesty, feelings become pure and clean. Such



clarity is reflected in our words; they will be filled with the power of truth and spoken with ease and without hesitation. The genuine honesty cultivated within us is what will reach out and touch others.

SUPPORT

## TRUE ENCOURAGEMENT



JUDY JOHNSON

One of the hardest experiences in life is to watch the suffering of someone we love. Our intense desire to help is frustrated by an equally intense feeling of helplessness. When faced with the discomfort of this inner intensity, I have often jumped inside the circle of sorrow to stand next to my loved one. Although I experienced a momentary relief from feeling helpless, I was not very useful to them. The energy of my own sorrow, pity and wor-

ry stole my strength, weakened my words of encouragement, and made my presence a bit wobbly.

In French, the word for heart is 'coeur'. It is the root of the word 'courage' and the verb 'to encourage'. To encourage someone is to give them heart. I have discovered that the only way I can encourage another person is if my heart is strong. When I detach from my inner struggle and their sorrow, I can reclaim the wholeness of my heart and bring its strength to my loved ones. Then my words of encouragement and my presence are more powerful.

Through the journey of meditation, I am learning to stand next to my loved ones without stepping inside their sorrow. I am learning to give respectful space for the other person's heart to beat at its own rate. My focus is on keeping my heart steady, calm and strong



by connecting with my eternal nature of peace and love. This slight separation between my heart and theirs allows God's energy to enter for healing.

As I strengthen spiritually by absorbing God's love and power in silence, my presence brings soothing comfort and strength to others who are suffering. I have learned in Rajyoga that it is possible, over time, to become spiritually strong enough to be able to stand next to someone without absorbing their pain at all. As my pain heals, I have more energy to offer others in the form of encouragement and strength. When they feel this strength, they find the resources inside themselves to do what is needed to move forward.

Judy Johnson coordinates the activities of the Brahma Kumaris meditation centre in Atlantic Canada.

WELLNESS

## EXERCISE AND DIET CONTROL FOR THE MIND



B.K. SHEILU

Almost all over the world, physical ailments related to poor lifestyles are ravaging the health of a large section of the population. These diseases including diabetes, coronary artery disease, and hypertension, are prevalent in the young and old alike.

Recognising the root cause of these ailments, doctors are advising lesser dependence on medicines and stressing on exercise and diet control for maintaining physical health.

A wrong lifestyle can lead to several ailments, and such a lifestyle is rooted in the mind and seeded in the

soul. Medical research has found that 85% of all diseases are psychosomatic: They are caused or aggravated by a mental factor such as internal conflict or stress.

To nip the problem in the bud, it is necessary to address it at the root level. This involves checking and changing the pattern of our thoughts.

This is what meditation is all about. If we sit down quietly for a while and observe the thoughts that arise in our mind, we will get an idea of where our mind is going. We will also recognise what kind of thoughts give us joy and which ones give us pain. Invariably, thoughts associated with positive qualities such as love, compassion, happiness, and knowledge, help us feel better. On the other hand, thoughts linked to vices such as anger, ego, hatred, and jealousy, produce discomfort and agitation. Thoughts also trigger biochemical changes in the

body by influencing hormonal processes. Positive thoughts sustained over a long time have positive health effects, while negative thoughts ultimately lead to disease.

After observing the thoughts, the next step is to give them a positive direction so that we can remain happy and healthy.

Having control over our thoughts means having the ability to focus the mind where we want, keep it there for as long as we want, and withdraw it at will.

Practising this frequently, starting with even a few seconds at first, helps us gradually develop control over the mind. This also reduces waste thoughts, which consume a lot of our time and energy.

While that is a rudimentary exercise to improve our concentration, gaining mastery over the mind requires some spiritual knowledge and exercise. It helps to know that we



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are souls, not bodies. The mind and intellect are faculties of the soul. The brain, which is part of the body, is the hardware that enables the soul to control the body.

Exercising the mind involves taking our attention away from the physical body and the physical world, and directing it to our spiritual self, the soul. This is me—a sentient point of light and energy, separate from the body but dwelling in it. I, the soul, am the one who feels, thinks, speaks, and acts through the medium of the body. Doing this exercise regularly strengthens our awareness of our true identity and control over our mental and physical faculties.

Diet control goes with this exercise. Pure thoughts are the healthy diet of the mind. Creative thoughts are like vitamins, as they maintain our zeal and enthusiasm.

Positive thoughts, like proteins, build willpower, while thoughts of serving

others are like carbohydrates, and provide energy to the mind.

Waste thoughts deplete mental energy and leave us weak. Negative thoughts are toxic and wreck mental health, eroding our ability to make the right judgment, take correct decisions, tolerate negative situations or face adversity. Such thoughts arise from body-consciousness but are seeded in the soul in the form of vices such as lust, anger, greed, and ego.

The most elevated thoughts arise during the practice of Rajyoga meditation when the soul lovingly remembers God, the father of all souls, the ocean of virtues.

Through this link the mind fills with purity, peace, power, and contentment, making us healthy and whole.

B.K. Sheilu is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.