

SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Having a broad vision shrinks our problems



B.K. GEETA

It is said that we see things not as they are but as we are. While our eyes see everything and everyone the same way, it is the thoughts and feelings that accompany the act of seeing which form an impression in the mind about what we see. If our feelings are light and pure, we feel good about what we see. On the other hand, if we are in a negative frame of mind, we might perceive things differently. We develop bad feelings and a negative attitude towards others when we keep thinking about their faults. To avoid this, we can dwell on what we like about that

person. Focussing on positive qualities automatically frees us from negativity.

There is another way to lift oneself above all things negative, petty, and—when seen in the right perspective—insignificant. That is to develop an unlimited outlook.

Most people are caught up in their own lives and problems which, to them, are big issues. But if we look at the larger picture, we realise that what we expend much of our time and energy on is really a trifle in the journey of life, and even more insignificant in relation to the events unfolding on the vast stage of the world.

Take the case of someone who has lost a loved one recently. If they keep thinking about that person and how they will no longer have their company, love, and support, they will feel that they have suffered a big loss and a void has been created in their life. This can leave them feeling sad, lonely,



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and miserable. But these feelings would be the creation of their thinking. Instead, if they look at the larger picture, they would not be shaken at all. They would remember that everyone has to pass away one

day and no one can be with us forever. They would also remember that death is merely the soul's departure from one body to take birth in another. Those with whom we share our thoughts, feelings and time, and who leave us when they die, are souls who have finished one role to start playing a new role. Thinking in this way broadens our perspective.

One can have a universal attitude towards everything. It is up to us how we take the little inconveniences of life and the problems that crop up in relationships. We can either agonise over them and magnify them into big issues, only to end up feeling burdened, frustrated, or depressed, or see them in the right perspective and deal with them in the best way we can, without harming our state of mind.

Such an attitude helps us remain stable in the face of the challenges that life brings. It also helps others

around us, as it allows us to rise above self-centred or selfish ways of thinking and to think of others as well. One with such an outlook becomes a good team worker who is able to adjust to the nature of other people and work with them. Such a person can also appreciate the good qualities of others and learn from them. They would be free from jealousy and be able to take advice and criticism in the right spirit.

Such individuals are trusted, a source of strength for others, and are unifying figures in any group or organisation.

Such are the benefits of bringing about a simple change in our outlook. Whenever a challenging situation arises, we can check if we are seeing it with a limited perspective or have a broader vision.

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SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

THE SPIRITUAL METHOD FOR PERSONAL GROWTH



B.K. DR SAVITA

When spiritual aspirant sets out on their journey, they aim to rid themselves of flaws and acquire the qualities that make a person elevated and noble. Such transformation of character requires overcoming weaknesses such as anger, greed, ego, and lust. It is a task that demands deep insights into the workings of the mind, constant attention to one's thinking, and a clear understanding of why the mind produces certain kinds of thoughts and how they can

be changed.

Meditation is a fundamental part of this effort. In meditation we observe the mind closely, identifying the desires, fears, and attitudes that give birth to and colour our thoughts. Once we recognise our way of thinking, we can start to change it. Bringing about this change requires knowledge.

Spiritual knowledge tells us that we are souls, and the mind and intellect are the faculties that govern our thought process. It is the soul that controls the body and works through it. The soul carries an imprint of everything it has ever done, and our actions create our tendencies, also called 'sankars'. These character traits condition our way of thinking and behaviour. Once we know the traits that cause us to think or act in a particular way, we can be



The climb up

alert so as not to be influenced by them.

Originally, every soul is pure and free from vices. Vices enter the soul gradually as it interacts with others and matter, and loses awareness of its true identity. Our defects, therefore, are not ours—they are unwanted baggage acquired by the soul during the journey of life. This recognition makes it easy to shed the

baggage.

The way to remove the defects is to remind ourselves, again and again, that we are souls—sentient beings of light, innately pure, calm, loving, and powerful. We are children of the Supreme Soul, the Almighty. All God's powers and virtues are ours to have. We only need to connect with Him, by reminding ourselves of who we are, who

our Father is, and what He is like. Regular practice of this awakens in us the memory of who we really are, and of our eternal relationship with God. Once we accept these spiritual truths, our awareness, and perspective on life, change. The experience of peace, God's love, and the Almighty's support begin to make us naturally calm, loving, and cooperative. As the soul becomes stronger and full, its neediness and selfishness melt away, to be replaced by generosity. We lose our rough edges and grossness.

In addition, the understanding that every soul is going through their journey enables us to accept others as they are. This makes for harmonious relationships. But all this happens only when we apply spiritual knowledge in our daily life. If the knowledge remains

just theory, it will bring little benefit. Merely listening to or memorising spiritual concepts neither helps us nor does it serve others, as people will believe us only when they see in our living proof of what we tell them.

Some people think that such inner transformation is possible only in a life of seclusion where one can devote all one's time and energy to the spiritual effort. It is not so. The feelings, attitudes, and behaviour triggered by social interaction show us where we stand. Our spiritual strength is tested when we face a variety of people and situations. We also get to learn from others. This speeds up the process of self-transformation and helps us reach our goal quickly.

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The conscience is the subtle inner voice that distinguishes right from wrong in every situation. My conscience is more discerning than the 'morality' of the day. This means that something considered 'right' in my social context may not be right for me. When I listen to my conscience, it functions well. If I have silenced my conscience, it will be difficult to hear. Then I become confused and easily influenced by the peer pressure of my social setting. Today let me listen to my conscience and do what is right for me.

SIMPLE PRACTICES

THE METHOD FOR CULTIVATING INNER STRENGTH



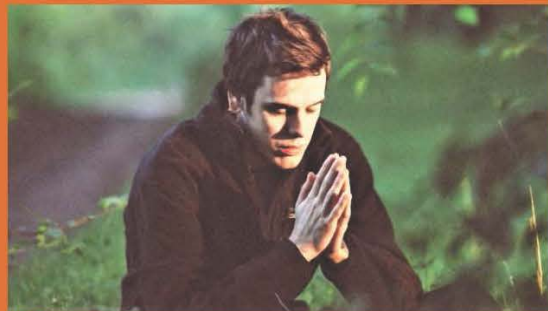
YOGESH SHARDA

Meditation is known to strengthen the mind. There are those who meditate and those who are meditators. Many people do meditation to relax or calm down and that may be enough for them. Those people meditate from time to time when they feel the need, or maybe a little in the mornings and a little in the evenings. A meditator though has a definite lifestyle. One part of them is naturally vigilant, watching the thoughts that are being produced and paying great at-

tention to the quality of those thoughts. They are intensely aware that overthinking and critical, negative thinking, brings mental exhaustion, and that is when the power to tolerate and think clearly is lost.

Their life is a little like that of an athlete going for gold. Those athletes are constantly aware of what they are eating, the nutritional value of the food and the effect that food will have on their weight. They have the natural awareness to maintain optimum weight if they wish to succeed. A meditator is a mental athlete. Even a beginner can start by following a simple routine to take care of the mind.

Spend time on waking to charge the battery of the soul with a few moments of peace. The effects will last all day. During the day take a few moments to return to that feeling of peace, slowing down thoughts. Observe how the thoughts are flowing. Just one



Meditate.

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waste thought can block the flow of happiness and creativity. Do this for two or three minutes, mid-morning and then every couple of hours. Finally, at the end of the day, put the mind to sleep. Think of the whole of life as a play, a drama,

and for today the curtain has come down on this day's performance. Today's drama is over. Give yourself permission to put it into the past, empty the mind of thoughts of today, and let it sleep.

It is 'my' mind that is thinking, so it should be under my control. Waste thoughts and emotions should be under my control. Overthinking is the single most damaging thought pattern that is affecting everyone at this current time. Especially in the face of all the worldwide challenges that each one is facing. For those who make meditation a lifestyle, there is no such thing as a problem, because when we conserve the energy of the mind, we change our perspective on life and its challenges.

It is time now to turn to our inner world of thoughts, emotions and beliefs and pay less attention to the outer world to build inner strength and main-

tain inner happiness as we pass through these challenging times. The way to gauge how much inner strength we already have is by seeing how much ability we have to tolerate people, situations, or even our own weaknesses. How much ability we have to forgive. Gandhi said, 'the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.' We can see how much ability we have to give love. Dadi Prakashmani, former chief of the Brahma Kumaris, said that only a powerful soul can give love. When we are weak, we need to take.

If I want to own my happiness and have willpower and tolerance, I need to respect the mind. It is time now to understand and care for the self, to make it the most important priority. To be a meditator, not just one who meditates.

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