

SPIRITUAL POWER

# Why many fail at self-improvement



B.K. AMIRCHAND

How do we know a person's character? From his/her behaviour. Our values are expressed in our conduct, and we come to know of someone's character when we interact with him/her.

However, many who set off on the spiritual path do not seem to understand this. Spiritual knowledge appeals to them, and they recognise the benefits of meditation, yet they are unwilling to change their attitude, behaviour and lifestyle. Lacking the courage or conviction to live by spiritual principles, some of them say, "It is not practical to do that in today's world."

Some time ago, I was invited to give a talk on overcoming anger. After the talk, one

person approached me and said that the talk was perfect, but his experience was that his factory — he was a businessman — would not function without his anger.

He explained that because of his feared temper, when he reached the factory every day, the word would go around and all those loitering about would quickly start working. "If I don't get angry with them, no work will get done," he declared.

"But tell me one thing," I asked. "When you reach the factory, what do the workers say, that a saint has arrived, or that the devil is here?"

"They indeed say the devil is here," he admitted.

This is the situation today — we use wrong means to achieve our ends, and are convinced that such methods are indispensable.

Thinking in this way is a mistake, but even those on the spiritual path do so. Their conduct does not match their professed beliefs. They speak of high principles, but in their minds, they tell themselves that a little bit of crookedness is necessary to



survive in the world.

Such dishonesty will never allow us to become a better person — someone who truly adds value to society. It is our actions that inspire others; they make a greater

impact than our words. If we believe in one thing and say something else, our duplicity will be discovered sooner or later. People will sense our lack of integrity from our vibrations, which are created

by our thoughts.

True and lasting self-transformation requires work at the level of our thoughts and feelings. I may be projecting a certain personality, but what is going on in my mind? To bring about change deep within myself and give up damaging habits and beliefs I have clung to for long, I need intense meditation, which will bring me the power to transform.

Mere knowledge of right and wrong does not elevate us. The soul, which is depleted of energy, gets recharged when it connects to the Supreme Source of power, the Almighty. When we regularly link up with this Source, by remembering Him, we become able to remove our weaknesses and resist negative influences. Spiritual power brings determination, which in turn brings success in our efforts.

B.K. Amirchand, a senior Rajyoga teacher, is in charge of the Brahma Kumaris' Punjab Zone, and is Vice Chairperson of the Social Service Wing of Rajyoga Education & Research Foundation.

DISCOURSE

## HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE PEACE WITHIN



DADI JANKI

It is not necessary to search for peace; it is within. Your original state is one of peace. External situations will pull you away from your peace, if, that is,

you let them. Internal feelings can also pull you away. Tiredness, for example, leads to irritability. Learn to be in charge of yourself and maintain your peace. Centre your awareness on your spiritual form, a tiny star-like point of light, seated in the middle of your forehead. Really experience the difference between you the sparkling star, and your body, the physical vehicle. Learn to detach yourself from the vehicle. Even a few moments of this practice, if done regularly, will return you to your natural state of peace. Tiredness will vanish. Irritability too, and your actions will be filled with love, for the self and others.



FAITH IN DIVINE

## TAKING THE RIGHT SUPPORT



B.K. USHA

It is said that knowledge is power. On a spiritual journey, this becomes evident when one faces obstacles as one advances. Those who are ignorant of the likely hurdles on the way lose heart on encountering them, and start doubting their chances of success.

Some others, who have an inkling of what lies ahead, are successful some of the

time and not so at other times. They tire of repeated efforts to remove the impediments and come to a standstill. They think of moving forward, but lack the courage to do so.

Weakened by their labour and short of hope, God's help appears to be a distant prospect for them, so they turn to their fellow travellers for assistance. Forgetting the Almighty, they seek the support of other souls, and thereby move further away from Him.

Since they clutch at straws, they waver and fall when faced by doubt, fear, desires, or tough situations. Disappointed by their failures, they feel that deliverance from their defects and sorrows is

far away.

Because of leaning on vacillating mortals instead of turning to the immortal One, such people achieve success only intermittently. As a result, they are happy and blissful one day, and dejected the next day. This is hardly surprising as their support itself is shaky.

Very few seekers consider their challenges to be opportunities for learning and progress. They see God as their companion and happily move along, crossing the barriers on the way without fretting over them.

The key to success on the spiritual path is complete faith in the Divine. Our sole responsibility is to follow His directions, with the conviction that He will take care of the rest. But if we start thinking that "I am doing this", we will exhaust ourselves battling real and imaginary problems, and lose hope.

B.K. Usha is a senior Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.



RIGHT PRIORITIES

## BECOMING MY OWN MASTER



CAROLIN FRAUDE

A spiritual approach to how we live means understanding that our relationship with the world around us — material and non-material — is of central importance. Our priorities, the choices we make, all have consequences for which we take responsibility.

Everything is connected. We are part of a complex system that embraces individuals, societies, the environment and natural resources. Whatever we do has an impact on the world and its systems — for good or ill.

If I have this deep awareness of my place in the

world, then of course I begin to examine, and ask questions about, the way I live. I understand that what I do, and the choices I make, really matter.

For example, climate change is connected with how each one of us sees the world: Is it like a supermarket for us to take and use whatever we want? Or should we treat the earth as an interdependent system that we disturb, or care for, through our life choices?

Spirituality is fundamentally about learning to perceive in this subtle way. By practising meditation, we bring about a shift in our consciousness, becoming more aware, sensitive, compassionate. It enables us to develop a finer perception of, and sensitivity to, the other person, the environment and natural systems — everything around us.

When I first encountered the Brahma Kumaris as a young person travelling in India, I was impressed by how practical spiritual-



ity can be. I observed the community at Mount Abu quietly combining the inner work of developing a different awareness with day-to-day life, chores and work. This was especially true of Dadi Janki, whose qualities of deep perception and down-to-earth wisdom and practicality have influenced me greatly.

I have come to understand that we can consciously choose a simpler way of

life. There need be no sense of deprivation. Following a plant-based diet, keeping material desires modest, travelling less than we used to, can bring its own reward. We do not need lots of possessions, activity and travel to feel fulfilled.

Inner spiritual work is the way to fill ourselves with whatever we need internally. Yes, we all wish for love, peace and happiness — but consumerism is not the

way to find them: They are external props!

If we choose instead to connect with the Divine, a beautiful, sweet, powerful Being, then we experience a pure and true love that fills us with courage and happiness. A daily practice of connection in meditation brings a lightness and joy that no amount of possessions ever can. It frees us from dependency on material goods or other people's company. We can enjoy being with others without being dependent on them.

This capacity to be "self-led" allows me to hear others' views and yet make my own decisions. I am my own master. Far from doing whatever I like, I consciously take responsibility for myself and for how I impact the world. This is true freedom and empowerment.

Carolin Fraude works for the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam, Germany. She is a Rajyoga teacher and a part of the BK Environment Initiative.

BIG HEART

## How we can create peace in a divided world



BELINDA WESTCOTT

Change has come to the world without any warning. The pandemic has made life suddenly very insecure. This is true of places where food and basic needs were already insecure, and also of places unaccustomed to shortage or restriction. Overnight, people have lost their livelihoods due to a lockdown. Imagine not knowing where your next meal will come from, or if you will be able to

pay next month's rent.

The world is no stranger to divisions of economic status, religion, ethnicity, caste, race, gender, or sexual orientation, yet now there is an even greater polarisation between people. The gap between rich and poor is much greater, and many situations are becoming worse, not better. There is an increase in crime, domestic violence, and corruption as the world becomes more fragile and people feel more insecure. The pandemic has shown us how fast things can change.

The more insecure some people are, the more they tend to be self-centred. They look after their own needs and try to solve their own problems. This increases polarisation and further divides us.



Raised in families and communities with shared beliefs, we are conditioned to regional, cultural, political or religious views of the world. These beliefs have divided us and created the world we live in. The very same beliefs that condition our view of the world and shape us as

individuals, now prevent us from seeing each person with a vision of equality.

It is unlikely that the methods we used in the past to solve our problems will work in the present situation. As Einstein reportedly said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking

we used when we created them." It is time to step back and use a deeper perspective to find new solutions. However frightening and challenging the situations we are now facing across our planet, perhaps this is an opportunity for us to come together as a world society; a time when these incredible divides can heal.

Divisions can be healed when we see the world through a different lens; a spiritual lens. Our true identity is spiritual. When we understand this, that we are not defined by the physical or cultural identities we have acquired, it changes how we see others. We begin to see every human being with a deep sense of equality based on the beauty and divinity of the spirit. We begin to see our

ways of thinking are still influenced by subtle prejudices that separate us from others.

It is time to consider that maybe the beliefs and identities we hold on to are no longer relevant. This can be a time to empty ourselves of outdated beliefs and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. This will open a space within us to create something new, something beautiful and different, sustainable and just.

In a deeply spiritual way, we can use this time to open the path to accepting and embracing our human family, and then we can do amazing things. This is a big-picture view, and a big picture needs a big heart.

Belinda Westcott is based in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, where she coordinates the activities of the Brahma Kumaris.

### A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Feelings freeze, hearts harden and minds muddle when senseless and confusing events happen in the world. Creating a place of warmth and comfort becomes an act of service at such a time. Keeping my inner fire lit, my vision pure and my feelings loving is the spiritual practice required during such times. Today let me be a place of warmth and comfort in a cold world.