

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

What is true freedom?



YOGESH SHARDA

In many parts of the world, people have freedom of movement, of speech, the freedom to preach and practise any religion. However, these freedoms can be taken away from you.

The freedom that no one—except yourself—can deprive you of is the freedom to think and feel as you want, when you want.

Generally, we believe that the behaviour of people, events, and circumstances are responsible for the way we feel. But one important principle in a life of spirituality is that my thoughts and emotional state are entirely my choice, and my responsibility.

There are some spiritual principles involved in taking charge of my inner world—owning my peace and happiness, and thinking and feeling what I want, whenever I want. The two foundations for growing internally are inner strength, and our perspective, or the way we see life.

What we choose to see in any situation decides how we feel, which in turn influences how we act. Our actions then shape our circumstances, relationships and our personal world.

We usually try to control events and other people, believing that will make us secure and happy. But if we do that, we will necessarily become stressed. Between me and the world outside is my mind. All I need to do is to shift my desire for control from outside to inside, and have control over my mind.

Like the body, the mind too has its mechanisms. The body needs sleep, food, air and water. Similarly, the mind needs silence. Just as there is a right time for eating and sleeping, there is a time for different mental tasks.

First thing in the morning, we need to engage with ourselves before we engage with others. Creating positive affirmations in the morning, and at least once more during the day, charges the battery of the soul. This mental energy helps to keep us stable.

During the day there are various challenges, and if we don't want to lose our peace and happiness, this morning practice is essential. The empowerment it



provides enables us to choose how we respond to different circumstances. When we lack inner strength, we get stressed and our response is emotional, not entirely in our control.

Stress is directly related to the pressures we face, and inversely proportional to our resilience. The more resilient we are, the lower our stress levels will be, regardless of the situation we are in.

We can develop resilience by strengthening our mind through meditation and having moments of silence during the day, and by upgrading our perspective, which means having a spiritual approach to

people, situations and events.

We can choose to own our peace and happiness even if we do not have control over situations and people. If we respond in a meaningful, constructive way, we will find solutions where none seemed to exist.

This kind of a positive response is possible when we see things the right way, and one factor that decides our perspective is the context in which we see life.

If we see life as a battlefield, we will struggle against people, circumstances, and our own self. If life is a prison for us, where we find only suffering, we will

be constantly trying to escape it. For some people, life is a business, where everything, including relationships, is judged in terms of profit and loss.

It is much better to see life as a school, where circumstances and people, especially difficult people, are our teachers. They teach us a better way to live.

The behaviour of different people may require us to raise the level of our tolerance, patience, courage, or forgiveness. As we imbibe these virtues and make them a part of our character, we grow spiritually, and are able to face challenges much more easily.

Every day offers opportunities to learn. If we have the attitude of a student, we will not complain about problems, and instead use them to become better informed, wiser, stronger.

This spiritual growth makes us realise that we have the freedom to think and act the way we want, without being hostage to situations or individuals. As we use this freedom, it becomes our natural asset—something we can put to good use for the self and others.

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DISCOURSE

TO OVERCOME EGO, DEVELOP HUMILITY



DADI JANKI

We began to descend from our spiritual heights when we started using the body in the wrong way. We are souls, and we begin a cycle of birth and rebirth upon taking a physical body. Eventually we begin to use the body for vice and, from that time onwards, a lot of rubbish starts to accumulate in the soul.

This is how we lost our peace, happiness, love and purity. All the negative things, which have affected us in this lifetime and those gone by, have penetrated deeply within the soul. It is nothing ordinary to eliminate them all.

We start by eliminating the obvious vices: dependencies such as tobacco,

alcohol, lust. But the real effort is in removing the subtle vices, like ego. The subtle vices do not allow us to feel we belong to God.

The difficulty with ego is that it is deeply concealed. Most of us do not even know we have it. If someone says something to us about it, our arrogance increases. Ego destroys love. It destroys the ability to learn, so there is no more give and take.

Ego can be overcome by developing humility. There should be as much humility in the soul as there is honesty, so that the more honest we become, the greater the humility we have. Both go together. If we know how to bow, there will be love. If we do not know how to bow, love finishes. We have to bow down again and again. Bow, bow, bow.

I go through many kinds of situations all day long and I make sure I do not stop exchanging love. The secret behind this is to never stop the give and take of love with God. In this way, we can make our heart so strong that we are no longer hurt by anything. Hurt feelings are the main reason why the give and take of love stops.



GOOD LIFE

DISCOVERING THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS



B.K. SHIVANI

One of the main aspects of our life is relationships—with our family, friends, and colleagues. Whatever we think or say, the way we behave, creates vibrations, which radiate from us to those we interact with. Similarly, others send us their vibes through their thoughts, words and behaviour.

The people in various relationships may be playing different roles, such as a parent and a child, a businessman and a client, a student and a teacher. Whatever their roles, the relations between them involve an exchange of energy, through their vibes.

We tend to think that relationships are mostly about what we see or hear—each other's words and behaviour. We tell others, and even ourselves, "I did so much for them", "I sacrificed my comforts for their sake".

We may have done a lot, but what did we think about them? That is what creates the foundation of the relationship. We overlook this key aspect. As a society, we

focus on what we can see—what others have done for us, our organisation, our community or country.

If our relationships were founded just on what we did, perhaps they would be very strong, since we are busy doing so much throughout the day. But we find that notwithstanding all that we have done for others, the relationship is quite fragile.

Let us shift our focus from what we do to what we think. Take any relationship which lacks the harmony that ought to be there—in spite of our best efforts at fostering cordiality, there is misunderstanding and discontent.

It helps to check what we



are thinking and feeling while doing all that we do for others. Are we peaceful, happy, stable?

We go to great lengths to ensure that everything in our life is perfect, but forget one thing—perfection begins with a perfect state of mind, which creates the right vibes.

It is the soul, the core of our being, that thinks and feels, but we have neglected it, devoting our attention to actions. If we carry stress, irritation or rancour within us, they will contaminate all our relationships. That is because relationships are not just a give and take of goods and services; underlying that is the exchange

of love, respect, acceptance, and trust.

We can offer these energies only when we have an ample stock of them. For that we have to fill ourselves with spiritual power regularly, through meditation and positive thinking. When this power is depleted, we start having expectations, feeling hurt, and complaining.

Once the soul is fully charged, it can transfer its power, by thoughts and words, to other souls, raising their energy level and the quality of the relationship.

B.K. Shivani is a well-known motivational speaker and Rajyoga teacher.

REAL SELF

Truth is based on purity and fearlessness



B.K. GEETA

Truth is a highly valued quality that is equated with God. It is, in fact, the basis of bringing people close to God. Truth achieves this purpose when it is visible in our life and our actions.

The basis of truth is cleanliness, or purity, and fearlessness. When we inculcate these two qualities on the basis of truth, divinity begins to radiate from our person. But this will not happen

if there is any kind of dishonesty, carelessness or lack of cleanliness.

To be true means to have the consciousness of being a pure soul. We lose this awareness when we are influenced by any weakness. Complete purity is the original condition of the soul. Along with this awareness, there needs to be purity and truth in our words and deeds.

We need to check if our words and actions have any trace of falsehood. Are we naturally truthful or do we need to make effort to be so? Just as God is called the Truth, the soul is originally truthful. Truth indicates purity. Is that our natural state?

If we allow any de-



fect or weakness in our thoughts, it will diminish our cleanliness. We avoid stepping on or touching any kind of dirt, but having bad thoughts is the same as stepping on dirt. Listen-

ing to or speaking of anything negative is akin to taking the dirt into the self. Being truthful and clean means not having the slightest impurity in our mind.

Fearlessness is another

aspect of truth. What does it mean to be fearless? We need to be fearless in order to change our harmful habits. To say that one cannot change because one's habits are too strong is

not fearlessness.

Freedom from fear is also needed to harmonise our nature with that of others and to inspire change in others with our example. If we are afraid and wonder

whether or not we will be able to achieve our goals, or if others will accept what we say, that too is not being fearless.

Being influenced by others because of their strong principles or their aura, to the extent that you hesitate to make known your own principles, is also a symptom of fear. We need to be fearless in all circumstances, even when we know that something untoward might happen.

Checking our purity and fearlessness will tell us how true we are, and how close we have come to divinity.

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

There are many small pieces within a clock. The intricate coordination of these multiple pieces makes the clock function accurately. In my life, there are many small pieces, each valuable to me. When coordinated, they ensure the proper functioning of the whole. Today let me appreciate each small piece of my life and the intricate coordination that keeps them functioning smoothly.