

ENLIGHTENMENT

Spiritual growth depends on awareness



GAYATRI NARAINA

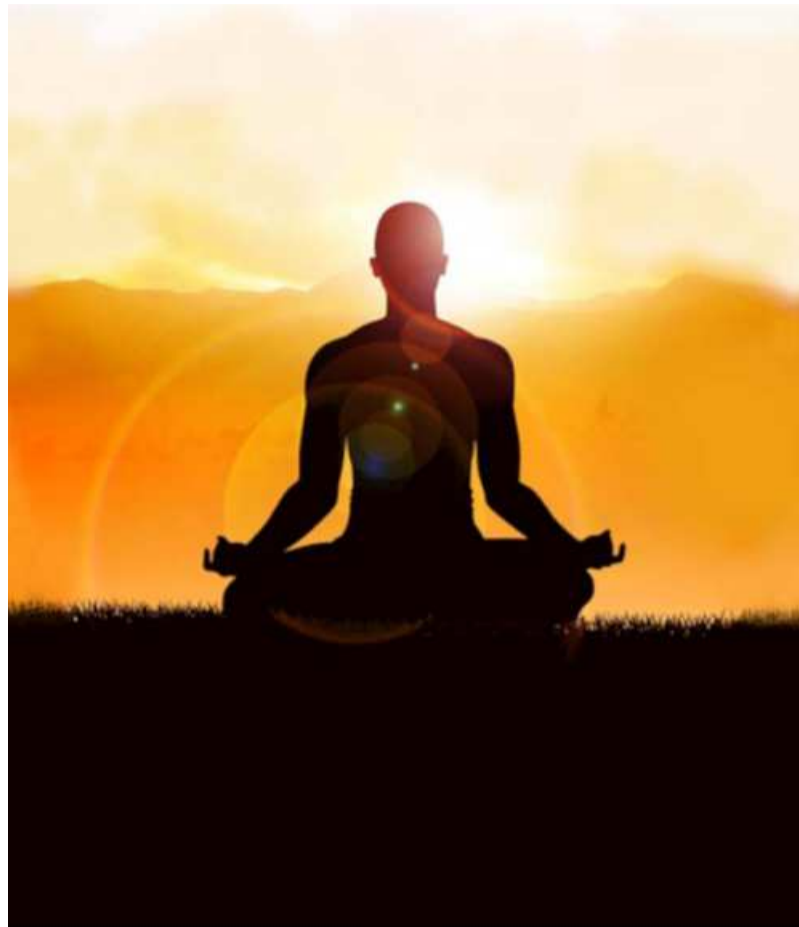
Spiritual growth is a journey, and it is dependent on the experiences, either momentary or prolonged, of spiritual awareness, or it could be called enlightenment. These experiences are essential for growth and yet sometimes we do not even acknowledge them, or they pass us by, unexplored. Sometimes of course, they have an extraordinary impact, and instantly move us forward on our journey. Spiritual enlightenment has a purpose; it is for the introduction to the soul, the real being, the loving and peaceful

self. It is also for the union of the soul with the Supreme Soul. In this connection the soul is free from fear, darkness and pain. Finally, it is for the realisation of the role I play on this world stage, the drama of the circle of life.

So, we need to make ourselves open to and aware of the moments of spiritual enlightenment that come our way, often based on the efforts we make, but often like a powerful gift and message, unasked for.

When we are open and become aware of these moments, or even the sustained experiences in meditation, we need to be curious about what is happening. We need to explore the experience, initially on the level of thought.

For example, there may be the thought that I am experiencing deep peace of a kind different from that which I have been aware of be-



fore. Then I can absorb this thought into a deep feeling of peace and let it emanate from me, as this is what I really am. I become that experience. Once the soul begins to have experiences of this kind and becomes

aware of its own light and power, then there is a growing understanding of the source of all spiritual energy, the Supreme Soul, God.

This awareness deepens the connection, in meditation, with that being, the Parent, the Teacher, the Guide, and the deeper and more frequent the connection, the more the experiences of enlightenment and the more the spiritual growth.

Experiences of enlightenment then, bring the realisation of the soul, of God, the Supreme Soul, and the further, the understanding of the role the soul plays. I realise I am an actor on this world stage. The body is the costume, and the director is the Supreme Soul. Then I become a true star of light and peace.

Gayatri Naraine represents the Brahma Kumaris at the United Nations in New York.

DISCOURSE

WE GET RESPECT ACCORDING TO OUR BEHAVIOUR



DADI JANKI

People like to be shown respect; many believe it to be a right. However, as in the case of most rights, there is responsibility attached to it. This responsibility needs to be understood in order for us to become worthy of respect.

True respect does not come from what we do, as much as how we do

it. This means that we are shown respect according to the virtues and qualities revealed through our behaviour.

Respect is not a matter of supply and demand. On the contrary, if people pick up that we are even slightly in need of respect, they will usually turn away from us completely. This is because the need to be respected indicates a gap somewhere in our sense of self — and most people are so busy trying to fill their own gaps, they get annoyed at the prospect of having to fill someone else's.

Be suspicious of any desire on your part for respect. Indeed, such thoughts are a sure sign that no one is going to give it to you anyway. The very act of trying to get respect from others proves you to be unworthy of it.

SOUL POWER

TRUTH, COURAGE BRING THE POWER TO FACE CHALLENGES



GOPI PATEL

There are so many things we have to face in our lives each day. Situations which feel insurmountable and beyond our control, fear of what might happen, attacks and insults. Then there is the inner weakening - feeling a lack of self-worth, and doubt in the self's ability to deal with things. Yet when we invoke, awaken and develop the power to face, then no situation becomes too fearsome to handle.

The power to face sees the emergence of the feeling that, no matter what, I will be able to overcome this and transform

through this. It can be called faith, and behind it is courage and truth. Courage is a close companion of truth. If there is truth, I can sustain a high level of courage. If there is no truth, there is no courage; if there is no courage, there is no power to face and then I become overwhelmed with worry, stress, anxiety. Eventually, illness develops.

The challenges that we have to face in life are, in fact, tests of our resolve, our limits and the boundaries of our capabilities. For external situations there are skills we can develop to handle them; 'hard skills' or 'sub-skills' and 'soft skills' as they are often referred to.

However, these skills are also rooted in how we feel about ourselves. This is where one of the most difficult terrains to negotiate lies; that of the internal. If I do not recognise that my feelings of unworthiness, self-doubt and self-criticism



are weaknesses, then they will rob me of my dreams.

I need to understand that challenges are like test papers at school — and when I pass the exams, I graduate. So, I need to reframe the context of life; understand that everything is accurate, the cards I am dealt are

the cards that I have.

So, where is the truth? What is the meaning within what is happening right now?

These are tough, important questions to ask the self and it needs the power to face. The power to face also has a companionship with many other

powers; it cannot work alone. For example, if I do not have the power to discern, I cannot see what is true and what is not true. If I cannot see what is true, then I cannot employ the power to face. Cultivating the other spiritual powers enhances the capacity to face.

This is why meditation is so important. Meditation gives us deep understanding of the self and is often referred to as a kind of fire. This fire ignites the faith to be able to bring the answers to those questions out into the open so they can be looked at with compassion and honesty and can be cleaned and transformed.

It is in this fire of courage and truth that dark can become light and alloy become gold. I will also be able to see my weaknesses and strengths. Recognising these strengths will help me resolve the weaknesses.

Meditation helps us to build

reserves of patience, tolerance, compassion and mercy that allow transformation to happen safely and quietly. It gives insights and helps the soul to fully understand the eternal.

I am a soul having a human experience, and the more this becomes a fully realised truth, the more I experience deep stability, and fear finishes. The fear created by the false ego, the identification of the self as a physical body, disappears, because it is not real.

I need to practise this awareness of being an eternal being of light in meditation every day, and at various times during the day. This practice of silence will bring honesty, and a loving and compassionate heart to be able to exercise my power to face.

Gopi Patel is a spiritual educator and senior Rajyogi meditator with the Brahma Kumaris, specialising in spiritual pragmatism in all areas of life.

FESTIVAL OF HOPE

MAHA SHIVRATRI: THE MOST MOMENTOUS DAY IN THE CALENDAR



JANE KAY

Festivals of all kinds are days of celebration. However, religious festivals are also memorials. They are a reminder and a celebration of greatness, be that of an event or a person. To someone from the west, India seems like the very land of festivals! A cornucopia of colour, joy, music and even reverence and sometimes solemnity. However, to the discerning eye, one festival shines like a beacon above all of the others, Maha Shivratri.

It is a festival of hope. It is a festival bringing the promise of light and the end of darkness, the beginning of spring, and renewal.

Most cultures across the world have some way of welcoming spring after the desolation of winter, but in India it is very different. This particular festival is celebrated by Hindu communities, wherever they may be, but the memorial is of Shiva, the Supreme Father of all souls, first making Himself known in Bharat. Perhaps those who grow up celebrating this day never question the wonder of that. To someone from the west it is astonishing, because it means that this incorporeal Father Shiva, the Supreme Benefactor Soul, the Father of all of us souls, must have definitely come at some point, or this memorial



would not exist.

This Supreme Soul must have actually appeared here on Earth, and that too in India, to bring an end to a world of darkness, of suffering, of sorrow, of confusion, and bring forth a world of peace and beauty.

The world we live in now could hardly be darker than it is or hold more suffering than it does. There could be

no time more in need of the reappearance of such a Divine Being.

It could be said that this festival has been celebrated since 'time immemorial', that it began so long ago that no one can remember how it began. Of course, if time is linear, then casting the mind back to recall an event of this magnitude would be almost, if not certainly, impossible. However, if time is cyclical, the end will reach the beginning, and scenes that have only been remembered will actually be witnessed again.

Could it not be, that it is now that the most significant and powerful event in the whole wonderful story of humanity is re-enacted? It seems like a very good time to consider that possibility. Jane Kay is a university teaching fellow in the UK, and a Rajyoga teacher.

VIRTUOUS LIVING

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MERCIFUL?



B.K. GEETA

All religions have their own beliefs and principles, but they have one thing in common — their adherents seek compassion or blessings.

Compassion is regarded as the essence of every religion. If someone is lacking in kindness, or is not compassionate, they are not considered religious. Religion is equated with compassion.

The foremost quality of a spiritual or religious person is kindness — towards the self, the people they come in contact with, and the world at large. We need to ask ourselves if we are always kind and merciful with everyone,



or does our kindness vary from person to person.

Who needs kindness? One who is weak, deprived, or in some kind of bondage. Such persons wish to be treated kindly and mercifully, and even if they have no such desire, a generous person will have good wishes for them.

A kind and charitable attitude can melt even a stone-hearted person. It can turn enemies into friends. But for that one must have compas-

sion, a quality that is very much in need today.

The sign of a compassionate soul is that they will be virtuous and humble. They will also be generous. Being kind and merciful with others when they need it can resolve many interpersonal issues.

Those who are magnanimous do not expect anything from others; they give love and respect unconditionally. They do not count how

many times they have been nice to someone. "They were rude to me, so I responded in kind", "They did this, that is why I reacted that way" — these are not the words of a large-hearted soul.

Being merciful means to be kind to everyone regardless of what they are like or how they speak or behave.

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