

FULFILMENT

Discovering real peace



KEN O'DONNELL

"Peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish regardless of race, colour, creed, religion, gender, class, caste or any other social markers of difference."
Nelson Mandela

Social scientists, politicians and religious leaders, each in their own way, have been trying to create such an environment throughout history. A deep look at the sacred texts from the world's religious and spiritual traditions tells us to be the best that we possibly can be towards ourselves and others so that we can

create such an environment. This appeal is perennial. The values that we needed thousands of years ago, are the same today. Although superficial truths and perspectives have changed over time, the basic truth of our existence has always been the same.

It is impossible to think about peace between human beings and their communities and nations without resolving the fundamental question of personal inner peace.

From a spiritual point of view, peace is an original quality of the soul itself. The search for peace in society is exactly the same search for peace within ourselves at an individual level.

Having spent time meeting and observing people in more than 40 countries, the conclusion reached was that humanity's problems were not exclusive to a culture or social class. The greed of



the rich seemed equal to that of the poor. The only difference was in terms of quantity, but not in quality. The attachment of a Russian mother to her child was the same as that of an American mother. The pride that a Muslim had for his religion seemed the same as that of a Christian. The vanity of men and women about their physical appearance is also similar. Ultimately, all problems seemed to be universal in nature. That means we are all

intrinsically, in one way or another, the solutions.

The state of peace is within us all. As my property, no one and nothing can take peace away from me unless I allow that to happen. What happens is we become dislocated from this state of peace and frantically search for it outside of ourselves. We go on spiritual pilgrimages. We hold peace conferences. We even fight wars in order to protect peace. We seek peace in nature to get away from

it all. Peace is often understood as meaning that there is no conflict. However, real peace is not the absence of something. It exists, in its own right, and is a positive force for the reconstruction of the best that we have in this world.

Imagine being in a completely stable and changeless state, neither pulled nor pushed by any circumstances in our world but retaining a constancy of perception and being. That is how God is, and that is why God is considered to be an unlimited Ocean of Peace. Peace, though, is my own original property too. God reminds me of this. The quality of God's peace and my peace is the same. The quantity, however, is different. Because of a superficial understanding of ourselves and the things around us, any peace that we extract from our circumstances can only be ephemeral.

At a surface level, our minds may be jumping around here and there, but deep within the soul, there is silence and peace waiting to be rediscovered and brought out into our lives.

Interacting with things at a superficial level will never bring us peace. Going deep within, connecting with the Source of Peace will bring peace immediately.

Every time I connect with the Source of Peace, my own peace becomes activated and charged so much that it can last for hours on end. In connection with God as the Source of Peace, we can guarantee for ourselves a state of peace and equanimity that can help us through any situation, and ultimately bring the kind of environment where all within it flourish.

Ken O'Donnell is an author and the director of Brahma Kumaris' services in South America.

SELF-GROWTH

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS



DADI JANKI

There is a benefit for you in every situation. If that is, you know how to look for it. The idea behind steady spiritual progress is to see every circumstance and situation (particularly those that challenge you) as a tailor-made lesson in your personal plan for self-development.

For example, in a situation where hurtful or angry words

were exchanged, why not see it as the chance either to perceive things about your own character which need changing or to rehearse some virtue or quality that you need to put into practice more often?

Actually, we should be grateful for the opportunity to evaluate ourselves. In this way, you can transform anything into a constructive lesson. Never think that you have learned enough and now you can stop. You should love it when people try to correct you or give you advice. It keeps you alert and gives you plenty of opportunities to put your truth into practice.

It is a sign of great danger to be unable to accept criticism and instead use your understanding to criticise others. Realise deeply the significance of every moment, and your spiritual progress will be assured.

AWARENESS

SET BOUNDARIES, TAKE BACK CONTROL



NEVILLE HODGKINSON

Some cultures encourage open expression of feelings, whether of love or joy, hatred or sadness. Others put a high value on being respectful and restrained. Whichever way we have been brought up, most of us wish to be kind towards others and find a way to help at times of need.

In today's world, however, the origin and character of our motives are not always clear. Some people are controlling by nature, and try to manipulate others into meeting their needs. Others have a habit of being submissive to other people's wishes, so as to make themselves feel needed.

All too often the healthy

boundary between giving and taking becomes blurred and some-times demolished altogether. That is when resentment and frustration build up, the joy of equality and cooperation in relationships disappears.

When that happens, we have to look closely at our own motives in the parts we are playing. Do we truly wish to help, or are we afraid of the disapproval of the other? Are we looking for love and acceptance, and then feel resentful when we do not receive it?

Trying to redress the balance, and reinstate healthy boundaries, can be deeply challenging. Those with a controlling nature are often devastated and helpless when they face loss of control. And those who allowed themselves to be controlled may find it difficult to break free because of a desire not to cause conflict.

Even facing the fact that our motives are not as clean and clear as we would like may be difficult because this effort can open up old wounds. Quite often, some



When, through meditation and spiritual study, I allow myself to have this sense of connection to a higher power, I am much better able to disengage from my old patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. True self-respect starts to come back, and that improves my ability to respect and understand others so that healthy boundaries between me and the world are restored.

trauma that happened early in life (or it might have been from a previous life) has been buried in our subconscious and may lie at the root of our habitual ways of trying to stay in control, whether through trying to dominate or through being subservient and submissive.

So, letting go of such habits is not a trivial matter. Even against our conscious will,

we find ourselves operating from a position of failing to respect our own or others' boundaries.

I have learned of three methods to help overcome these weaknesses:

1. Strengthen the inner battery of the soul, and its expression through the heart and mind. When the heart is contented and the mind cool, I am much more likely to be

able to stay positive in my exchanges with other people.

2. Take a really good look at what is going on in a relationship. This gives a context in which I can see what is needed for me to become more generous-hearted. Otherwise, if I simply blame the other person, I will continue to react with anger, feeling they are letting me down, or depression, feeling I am a victim.

3. An ability to give constructive feedback to others means I can let them know when they are overstepping the mark, without being unpleasant. It might even happen without my saying anything, just using body language or mental vibrations.

With all three of these methods, power is needed for them to be applied consistently and successfully. My experience is that when this power is missing, it can only be replaced through a relationship with the divine.

The knowledge and understanding that I have gained through the teachings of Rajyoga tell me that under-

neath all that is going on, I am, in fact, a truly powerful, peaceful soul—off-spring of the Supreme.

When, through meditation and spiritual study, I allow myself to have this sense of connection to a higher power, I am much better able to disengage from my old patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. True self-respect starts to come back, and that in turn improves my ability to respect and understand others, so that healthy boundaries between me and the world are restored.

A sense of security replaces the old fears, and this shift in awareness enables me to make God my companion. In other words, I become aligned with God's power of love and wisdom, so that I recover the strength to stop giving or taking inappropriately and learn to act once more according to my own higher nature.

Neville Hodgkinson is a UK-based author and journalist, and a long-time student of Rajyoga.

PIETY

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE COMPLETELY PURE?



B.K. DR SAVITA

Purity and cleanliness are qualities essential for a happy and peaceful life. When one is pure and clean, physically and spiritually, there cannot be any sorrow. Even one impure thought – be it of anger, hatred, or lust – can destroy our peace of mind, and we experience discomfort, agitation, and ultimately, sorrow.

In the spiritual sense, purity is often taken to mean being free from lust, but all kinds of desire are the products of lust.

To be completely pure means to have no desires -- each desire has many facets. First, there is the desire for material possessions. Second, there is the desire to get something from others – love, respect, cooperation. Thirdly, different kinds of desire arise in relationships. Even charitable deeds can be motivated by, or give rise to, desires.

If anything attracts us, it is because of desire. It is self-deception to say, "I don't want it really, it is just that I like it." Be it an object or a person, to have a special attraction towards them – to like just that thing or individual – means there are desires. It is alright to like everything and everyone, but if we like only one particular thing or person, it is a sign of desire.

We may appreciate the fact that someone is helpful, loving, virtuous or good-natured.



It is one thing to note their good qualities and imbibe them but quite another to be attracted to them because of their goodness -- such attraction gives rise to desires.

Not just attraction, even feelings of dislike and enmity bring us down. Being jealous or holding a grudge against

someone also gives rise to desires – to see others fail or suffer. This finishes our peace and happiness, and the mind is always in upheaval.

What are the signs of being impressed by someone or something? There will be attachment and subservience. Similarly, the signs of jealousy

or enmity are, trying to prove oneself right, and being stubborn. We do not realise how much time and energy are wasted in having these kinds of feelings, but they cause much loss. They distress us and others. And if someone points out to us the error of our ways, we offer justifica-

tions: "What is the harm in it? It is just friendship", or "I have to do this. There is no other choice."

Out of a desire for praise and fame, or a wish to show oneself as better than others – due to jealousy – we may have the thought, "I will show them that I am no less than that one."

The very fact of having such a misguided resolve is a sign of a spiritual downfall. It is brought about by arrogance, and the resulting ill-feeling distances us from others and robs us of their goodwill.

An arrogant person has little self-respect. It is self-respect that helps us step away from desires, which in turn leads to happiness and peace.

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

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The ears hear ~ the soul listens. The eyes see ~ the soul observes. The mouth tastes ~ the soul enjoys. The nose smells ~ the soul experiences. The hands touch ~ the soul feels. Today let me be aware that I am the living, human spirit who experiences life from inside a human body through the five senses.