

KINDNESS

Benevolence makes life joyful



B.K. MOHINI

Benevolence, which is another way to speak of kindness, is the act of bestowing goodwill on another soul. For example, I may be aware of a habit that someone needs to change because it would be very beneficial for the soul, for the person as they navigate their life.

When I am responding to someone who is exhibiting a negative or difficult pattern, I should think, "Okay, was what I said benevolent? Did it bring benefit, or was I just thinking for the sake of thinking, speaking for the sake of speaking?" If I am to be benevolent, then when I speak, I must say something of spiritual benefit, so that the soul I am speaking to is able to attain something. Although it is often difficult to grasp, everything that happens has some benefit. Some say, "Most things are fine, but this situation could be removed." That cannot happen. Indi-



vidual situations cannot be removed, because they are part of a subtle continuity of thought and action based on the karmic accounts we are settling. The more we understand, the more we will say, "Yes, there is some benefit." Everything is very interconnected. It is not possible to take away someone's part in a scene in the drama of life. I just have to remember that what they are saying and doing is beneficial. With pure feelings, love, and beautiful soft words, I can explain to someone, even if the other person is defensive or argumentative.

I can just give support, give love, and give help. Let me do it all with very good feelings. When I see things in this way, I will be able to see the subtle benefit that lies in every situation. If that difficulty was not there, maybe the person would not have learned, gained or realised something important from that situation. So, we need to have feelings of benevolence; first towards the self, then for others, and then looking at what life is bringing to us. If we remain in the awareness of being a soul acting through a body, then when we relate to others, we will

naturally say things that are beneficial for the soul. That is what is needed now. In that way, the first benefit is to the self, and that, in turn, brings benefit to all other souls of the world. Everything becomes entertaining, joyful and light. Play the whole day with the thought that I just need to practise being benevolent. When we do this, we feel very happy. So, our feelings are good, and there is a lot of joy and of course that brings benefit to all.

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TIPS

MAKING LIFE MORE PEACEFUL



B.K. SURYA

If we wish to have peace of mind and be happy, it helps to remember that happiness comes from sharing it with others. We have all noticed how people who are kind and helpful naturally remain happy. On the other hand, those who do a lot of wrongs have little peace or lasting joy. It is a tragedy of our times that a lot of people's minds are so clouded by their desires, prejudices, and fears that they cannot see the difference

between right and wrong. The world is governed by the law of cause and effect. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. We tend to forget that this law applies to our life too - we reap the fruit of our actions, and receive from others what we give through our feelings, thoughts, words and behaviour. All our experiences in life are the result of what we have done at some point in time. The soul is eternal and carries a record of its actions through successive lives, and something done long ago, in a past life, can bear fruit in the present. Recognising this fact helps us chart a better course for the future. The past cannot be changed, but we can mitigate the effect of our past mistakes by doing the right things now. Just as we balance a pair of scales by adding



weight to the lighter side, doing good adds to our merits, and when the good gradually becomes preponderant, it rewards us with greater peace, happiness, and stability. For lasting peace of mind, the mind needs to be powerful so that it is not disturbed by the vicissitudes of life.

Our mental energy is drained mostly by overthinking, agitation, and emotional upheaval caused by ego, anger, or some other weakness. We argue and fight over trifles, which we blow out of all proportion because our perception is distorted by one or more of the above weaknesses. To stop this from happening again and again, we need to improve the quality of our consciousness. If we decide to be more mature, responsible, and sensible, we are able to respond calmly to situations and other people's behaviour. All it takes is a little tolerance and understanding. In time others come to appreciate our calmness and respect us for it, even if they do not say so. When we change the way we see and respond to people and events, we can avoid conflict. Gradually, our confi-

dence and maturity increase, and so does our stability. This does not mean that life will become a bed of roses. Circumstances and people will test us, but instead of complaining or clashing with them, if we take them as tests, we can learn from them and grow. Leading a happy life is in our hands. We can reduce our expectations, and we will not be easily upset. In addition, if we are unselfish and maintain a high level of self-respect, not only will our behaviour foster good relationships, our vibrations will provide comfort and strength to others, making our life more meaningful and fulfilling. B.K. Surya is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Each experience in my life is like a thread woven into the fabric of my heart. The quality of my heart is determined by the quality of these threads. Hard or challenging situations serve to strengthen my heart. Love and generosity open my heart. Each thread of experience adds to my heart. Today let me be aware of the quality of my heart.

PAUSE AND CONNECT

RECHARGING WITH MOTHER NATURE



SYLVIA ISMAIL

The roses of St. Francis, in the garden of the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi, Italy, have no thorns. Such is the power of spiritual love. These days, as I follow and report on the UN climate talks (COP26) as they proceed in Scotland, I have been working on my own garden. Hours spent in front of a computer screen at my home in Egypt have been interspersed with moments of release outdoors, where I have planted and transplanted, fed and watered, a new garden of love. With time, it should grow into a beautiful, productive space, inviting to insects and birds: Perhaps this is a fitting tribute to the Conference. And it should add to the variety and goodness of our table, no bad thing in these days of plastic-wrapped veg and fruit, in-season or out of season, with shocking carbon footprints and unproven claims to freshness. Covering COP sessions has been demanding, with press conferences, protests, and so many presentations. Predictably, technical glitches have tried the nerves even as I give thanks to the internet for the extraordinary privilege of being able to take part without being physically present. Whenever I slip out into the garden, I recharge, pausing in contemplation of the eternal cycle of nature before I



work the soil, hoe and sow. Autumn/winter has been the main sowing season in Egypt since the time of the Pharaohs and—at least in the countryside—so little has changed that you may have a sense of déjà vu as you come across scenes familiar from four-thousand-year-old tomb reliefs and paintings. Working intently and with love, I have planted herbs, salad leaves, carrots, chard and spinach; calendula for splashes of colour and for the pollinators, and tagetes (French marigold) as companion plants to deter pests. It is an organic garden, full of life and interest, where 'volunteer' plants rub shoulders with the ones I sow, and insects—including our honeybees—thrive. These new plantings are my "COP flowers and veg." In this garden, they will grow, flower and go to seed, reminders of nature's ever-repeating cy-

cle of growth, maturation and decline. They are also spiritual balm: The closer you come to Mother Nature, the more you tune into her rhythm because—in truth—human beings and nature have been entwined for almost all the time we have walked the earth. All we need to do is to remember our true identity, our innate dignity, and our connection with the Supreme. So, my COP26 has had its own rhythm and texture. On the one hand, observing meetings and demonstrations, passionate argument and protest. On the other, creating a new garden of love. For me, this will be a very personal and deeply spiritual memorial of the time. Sylvia Ismail is a writer and editor with a background in public affairs, radio broadcasting and journalism, who has been practising Rajyoga for over 10 years.

MINDFULNESS

POWER TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT THOUGHTS



B.K. SHIVANI

Situations exist outside us but they become a part of our consciousness and start to influence our behaviour when we think about them again and again. We meet many people during the course of a day. If we want, we can find something to criticise in each one of them. After all, no one is perfect. But if we make critical comments about others in our mind, such as, 'He is like this', 'She will never improve', 'She was born this way', we are filling negativity inside ourselves. We believe we are right to think that way—"They are like that, so what am I supposed to think?" This is where spirituality comes in. Spirituality teaches us that whatever we think eventually becomes a part of us. Every thought creates a vibration, which affects our state of mind. If we dwell on the defects of other people, the defects no longer remain 'theirs'—they become a part of us. If I repeatedly think about someone, 'She



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is so irritating', I am really creating a habit of getting irritated. We can decide to make a conscious effort to note good qualities in everyone we meet—they may be humble, sincere, hard-working, or punctual. If we think about such qualities, they create positive, healthy vibrations, and our state of mind improves. The better the quality of our thoughts, the stronger

the mind becomes. But we hold on to hurtful, unpleasant memories, fill our mind with them, and then start to believe that the world is not nice... people are not good to me.... We then relate to people on the basis of this belief. This is the result of what we have chosen to store in the mind. Suppose someone is rude to me. I can either keep thinking about how nasty they were, how

they insulted me... or I can tell myself that they were probably not in their best state of mind, or were upset about something, which is why they behaved that way. Then I can dismiss the whole thing from the mind and get on with my life. But if I keep agonising over it, magnifying the incident by replaying it in my mind over and over again, I will become hostage to the negative feelings of hurt, anger, and sorrow I am creating. Regular practice of meditation gives us the power to choose the right thought in every situation. When we use that power, we can be stable and happy, always.

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