

BIG QUESTION

Do we fear or love God?



B.K. ASHA

A term often used to describe those who are pious or religious is, God-fearing. This expression implies that the person concerned fears God. That is not what one would expect from someone who is supposed to be close to God, for fear does not bring people together, rather it distances them from each other.

This expression is apparently the product of the view of God as a strict, re-

tributive figure who must be obeyed at pain of the fires of hell.

But God is also known as the Father, Guide, Ocean of Mercy, Ocean of Love, the Benevolent One. And if one thinks about it, one feels that this must be His true form. If God were just a frowning disciplinarian waiting to pounce upon erring humans, why would he be called the Comforter of Hearts and Remover of Sorrow?

The Supreme Soul is the Father of all souls, and loves each one of His children infinitely more than a human can love his or her child. That is because He is completely pure. He sees only the best in His children. Knowing full well their flaws, He does not let that colour His vision. Rather, being merciful, He always wishes them well,



When souls lovingly, and regularly, connect with God, they are cleansed and empowered.

and is ever ready to empower them so that they can overcome their weaknesses and become free of the sorrow they experience because of them.

Recognising this, many souls love God, and many more believe they love Him. But what does loving God mean? Is it just having sweet talk with Him and

accepting His benevolence while doing nothing that He wants of us?

Love is a two-way street in which there is a fair give and take; otherwise,

it becomes a selfish or even cynical relationship devoid of trust and respect.

Loving God means being obedient, faithful and loyal to Him. This may sound like a burden or even bondage, but it is not. God is the most loving parent; the guidance He gives is meant to shield us from harmful influences and the sorrow they bring, and help us become better human beings while living a happy life. With faith in His goodness, when we begin to live by His teachings, we are rewarded with a life of joy. We feel that we are walking holding His hand, and He is there to take care of our worries.

This love is spiritual, and does not involve anything physical. When we look at what we give God and what we get in return, it seems quite a bargain.

A lot of people remem-

ber God when nothing else works, and pray to Him in times of need. He is their helper of last resort. Chasing worldly desires, harried by their cares and worries and buffeted by frequent gusts of sorrow, they have drifted away from God, so they cannot approach Him naturally, the way a child goes to his father. Intimidated by fear, burdened by guilt and troubled by doubt, they relate to God through the contrived means of religious rituals, believing that is the right method. There is no meeting of hearts in such an interaction; instead, it is the relationship between a supplicant and a master.

It need not be so. God merely wants His children, that is us, to be happy and spread happiness all around. He shows us the way to be happy by first reminding us that we are

souls, not bodies, and that we are His children. His powers and virtues are ours to have, if we connect with Him by remembering Him.

When souls regularly connect with God in this manner and draw His power, they are cleansed of harmful tendencies and become strong enough to overcome damaging ways of thinking and behaviour that weaken the soul, harm relationships, and bring sorrow.

Purified and empowered, the souls begin to experience lasting peace and joy. They are then able to share with others how and why to connect with God, and the untold benefits it brings to their lives.

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COGNISANCE

UNDERSTANDING DEATH



B.K. DR. SAVITA

The thought of death triggers diverse feelings in people, including fear, worry, resignation, and even weary anticipation—the last, in those whose life has become a burden to them and death seems a welcome salvation.

Fear of death is usually more about its consequences than about the act of dying. Death, as most people see it, means loss of all that one loves, including those who are near and dear to us, and the joys and comforts of life that we enjoy. All this, we believe, will come to an end with the arrival of the Grim Reaper. Not just one's own death but even the passing away of those we love causes sorrow, as we feel robbed of a

source of happiness, love or support.

Death, in other words, is seen as a dead end beyond which lies nothing and from which one cannot return—it is annihilation of all we know as life.

Such thinking stems from ignorance of spiritual truths. First of all, who is it that experiences what we call life? It is the soul. Consciousness resides in the soul, the immortal being of light that gives life to the body. It is the soul that speaks, hears, smells, tastes, sees and feels through the sense organs of the body. The body is made of matter and is alive only when a soul resides in it. Death is the departure of the soul from the body, and it is the body that dies, not the soul, which is eternal.

We are, in other words, spiritual and eternal beings, not mortal bodies. But most people remain unaware of this fact because the soul, which is infinitesimally small, cannot be seen. Being ignorant of our true identity, we also remain in the dark about our special qualities.

The soul cannot be burnt, drowned, crushed, cut or



Death is the departure of the soul from the body; it is the body that dies, not the soul.

killed.

When the body perishes, the soul leaves to take birth in another body. We souls have always existed and will never cease to be.

Death is not an abyss from which there is no return; it is only the end of the experiences of one life and the start of a new set of experiences. It is renewal.

If we think of all the people and things we love, and our happy memories and pleasant experiences, and fear losing all that when we die, we

only need to remember that we souls have had such relationships and experiences in all our past lives, and when we left those behind, we took another birth and had new experiences.

Like an actor playing different roles, the soul gets a new part in each life, making new connections, and even continuing old ones (without knowing it, of course) with other souls who have taken a new birth.

In this way we acquire a wealth of variegated experi-

ences over successive lives. These are sometimes manifested in our innate tendencies and come to the surface of the mind in the form of dreams.

Death also serves to bury troubling memories, which can otherwise make life difficult. However, death does not provide an escape from the consequences of our actions.

Death, including by suicide, which many resort to in order to avoid pain or fearful circumstances, does not end

the soul's karmic accounts. The soul has to account for all its deeds, whether in the present life or thereafter. We also carry with us credit for our good deeds when we leave a body and take another birth, and get to enjoy the fruit of the good we have done in the past.

Knowledge of our immortality thus reminds us that a good act never goes waste, and we should avoid doing harm to the self and others in order to ensure a happy future for ourselves for all time.

This knowledge also saves us from the short-sighted "live for the moment" attitude to life, which makes man a slave to his mind and senses and often leads him down the path to self-destruction.

Recognising our immortality brings about a change of consciousness, freedom from the fear of death, and farsightedness that enables us to make wise choices that bring happiness to the self and others.

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The ocean floor is silent and still. Pebbles at the bottom of the ocean do not move much. Although there are crashing waves at the surface, the world at the bottom is silent and still. On the surface of my mind, there are thoughts and feelings crashing like the waves on the ocean. If I take a moment to go deeper, I will discover silence and stillness. Today let me dive into my mind and find the depth of peace.

LESSON

LEARN THE ABC OF SILENCE



ANTHONY STRANO

"God tells us: 'Focus on Me and I will whisper good things in your mind'. Ego is such that it makes the mind race; it will not allow you to be still. But, to make the mind peaceful and benevolent, God keeps telling us, 'Focus your mind on Me'."

— Dadi Janki
When we start learning a new language, we go back to basics. It is the same with the language of silence. The ABC of silence comprises three closely-linked steps that help to still a confused and restless mind so it can be so still and silent that it

absorbs healing energy. Step A is reflection, which leads toward step B, concentration, and this moves us effortlessly into step C, connection.

STEP A: REFLECTION

Effective reflection does not mean fixing your mind on an idea and thinking it over and over again. This just wastes time and energy without nourishing either the mind or the soul. Instead, to settle into bliss-

Once you find true concentration, notice how your thoughts become fewer and fewer until, in an eternal moment of reflection and stillness, you reach the point of essence.

ful reflection, first find your natural inner stillness. When it is hard to find stillness, we often try to focus the mind by repeat-



True reflection and concentration come naturally once you are quiet within.

ing a mantra or a series of words over and over. But such forced techniques bring tension into the mind, rather than the freedom of

stillness. True reflection and concentration cannot be compelled; they come naturally once you are quiet within.

STEP B: CONCENTRATION

Once you are still and reflective, try to drift into a gentle and healing state of remem-

bering, reflecting on who you are and contemplating the peaceful soul that you are in essence. The concentration will come to you,

knowing it is welcome. Once you find true concentration, notice how your thoughts become fewer and fewer until, in an eternal moment of reflection and stillness, you reach the point of essence. We might refer to this as peace, the eternal self, or God.

STEP C: CONNECTION

The mind can remain at this point of essence, calm and serene. Because it is so focused on the point of its reflection, there is no outward loss of energy, and so the self starts to feel full. Such a concentrated state creates an automatic connection with the self as a spiritual being and with God, the source of being. As the concentrated thought becomes more pinpointed, it "plugs in" to this source of being, and a current of spiritual energy flows from the eternal source to the self. This connection is very loving and brings a special

form of energy into human consciousness.

We all receive currents of energy all the time, from other human beings, from matter, and from our roles in life, but these can pollute our innate energy or block its release. The human mind and heart need this non-human current of the eternal source, for it creates a different circulation of energy; it creates in us, simultaneously, wonderful feelings of purification and liberation. When this connection is maintained daily, it builds a reservoir of permanent spiritual peace inside that we constantly and quietly share with others, like a flower silently offering its beauty and fragrance to all in its vicinity. Although it does not feel as if it is doing anything, such a concentrated mind becomes an instrument of the Divine. *The late Anthony Strano was an author and Rajyoga teacher with the Brahma Kumaris.*