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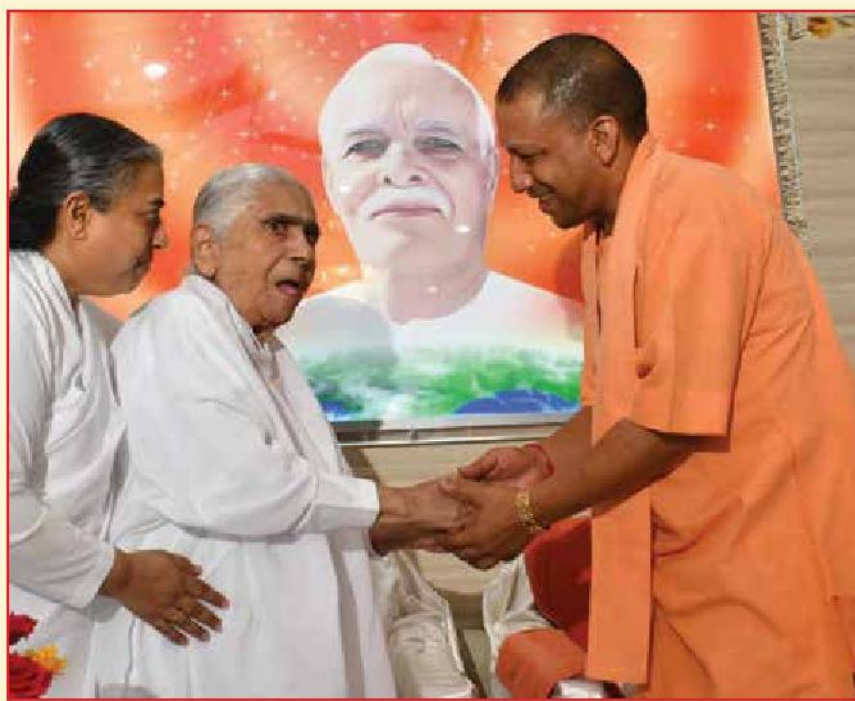
Decoding Greatness and Beyond

The destiny of human beings is linked to their karma (deeds). A great destiny implies that a person has done great deeds to earn it. The world has eulogised and remembered those who achieved greatness in any particular field. We may look at great persons as those who stood above the rest in some way. Greatness is also linked to the way an action is valued by the majority and how much benefit, joy, knowledge or power it brings to others.

Whatever is perceived as great is linked to a lot of factors, such as geographical, cultural, political, social, religious and economic ones. The way something is seen as great has a lot to do with the value systems and self-interests of the people who decide to give it the label of greatness. Hence, greatness is a delicate structure that floats on the surface of time, driven by tides of popularity, compulsive factors and value systems of the period. Deeds and achievements that have a universal impact and hold good for a long time are indeed great.

The basis of good or elevated karma is dharma (religion). What is true dharma? Dharma is connected to the word *dharna*, which means to imbibe spiritual wisdom in one's own behaviour and character. The foundation of elevated karma is true dharma – the awareness of the true self as a spiritual being, a soul, in a human body, not the self as a human being – man or woman.

Our actions result from our self-identity. Whatever consciousness we carry about the self automatically triggers desires, thoughts and actions that reinforce that self-identity. A person who sees himself as someone who is worthy because



Lucknow: Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, welcoming the Chief of Brahma Kumaris, Rajyogini Dadi Janki, at the foundation stone ceremony of 'Gulzar Upvan' Rajyoga Retreat Centre.

of his wealth will perform actions that reinforce his wealthy image. Hence, with the *dharna* of knowing "Who am I?" our intellect very clearly understands what we have to do.

What is truly great will be truly good. The word true means that which lasts forever; that which cannot be influenced by time, space or any other factor. In fact such actions or events would be classified as beyond greatness because such actions originate from a consciousness or awareness that is above the bondage of actions and its results.

That awareness is based on the truth that I am a soul, a spiritual being playing a role in this world drama. I am a child of God – the Supreme Soul – who is an infinite source of peace, happiness, love and bliss, and of all other virtues and powers. God is the Father of all souls. Hence His qualities are inherent in all human souls.

Most of the time we keep hold of karma and let go of the dharma.

When karma and dharma are combined, it becomes karma yoga. To live in the awareness of true dharma means to become aware of our original, pure nature; to live as God's child, who is blessed with all the virtues and powers that we praise God for. We can choose to become an embodiment of peace, love and bliss and then act. Actions performed in this consciousness will be beyond expectations, selfish desires and biased values. They will have a far-reaching, universal impact and produce maximum benefit for the maximum number for a long-lasting period.

Can we humans ever fathom and attain such a level of perfection? Firstly, those who achieve such perfection will never do it with the desire to be great; they will do things for the sake of expressing goodness to the maximum extent. A saying goes: "Just be good and do good and you will be great." Greatness achieved through manipulating others or by competing aggressively will not

bring lasting happiness to anyone.

Who are the greatest personalities remembered by humans in the most exalted way? The deities, whose perfection is eulogised in innumerable temples, idols, myths, legends and songs. The deities are remembered till today as '*Sarvagun sampann, solah kala sampooran, sampooran nirvikari, maryada purshottam, ahimsa parmohdham*' (completely virtuous, sixteen celestial degrees full, completely viceless, following the highest code of conduct and the highest religion of non-violence). They manifested such excellence that their idols are worshipped to this day by countless people.

Such a great and noble creation can only be made by an excellent creator. Who can create humans with such an excellent personality other than God? God is the fount of all virtues and spiritual powers. When humans connect to God through His wisdom and love they realise their highest degree of perfection.

To become truly great, we have to surrender the ego, the consciousness of 'I', and do every task as a trustee. This means to act as an instrument of God. This will enable us to stay beyond expectations, fears, selfish desires, biases, preferences and aversion. The more our actions are based on the purest feelings of joy, love and truth, and the more we act beyond any desire for the fruit of our actions, we will constantly reflect only pure self-respect, love for God and unconditional love for humanity. Such actions are etched forever in the collective memory of human souls as divine and noble actions and those who perform such actions are remembered as the greatest among the great. ■

(Purity Features)

Empowering the mind to change destructive thought patterns

John Milton wrote in *Paradise Lost*, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

More than three centuries later, the truth of that statement is strikingly evident as millions of people across the world struggle with fears, anxieties and depression caused by abnormal thoughts, perceptions and emotions.

Thinking about something in endless circles, going on deliberating when making a decision and then questioning that decision, reading into the smallest of details, always assuming the worst case scenario when in doubt about something, continuously worrying about 'what if' – these habits are destructive and mentally draining.

They can make one feel powerless, helpless, and a hostage to circumstances. Consequently, they impact one's day-to-day life and can put one's health and well-being at risk.

What is innocuous to others can be made into something terrible by an overthinking brain — a rope can become a snake, a grimy surface can be crawling with germs, and a crowded public place can be a minefield of hazards.

Why does this happen? When we repeatedly think about something, we end up magnifying that thing in our mind, and it assumes an importance totally out of proportion to the reality.

Dwelling on problems more than is necessary traps us in their real or imagined details, and then it takes a lot of time, energy

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and effort to overcome them, first in our mind and then in practical terms.

Problems call for clear thinking about solutions. Our focus should be on what needs to be done, not what has happened. Sometimes negative thinking may stem from past bad experiences, which may make one overcautious or apprehensive about suffering the same pain again — once bitten, twice shy, as the proverb says.

In such situations we need to remember that things are not necessarily as bad as we imagine them to be, and instead of reflexively assuming the worst and then suffering the consequent pain and hardship involved in dealing with it, we should think and act rationally.

Fear, worry and dejection deplete our energy and limit our ability to deal with the situation at hand.

Instead of getting weighed down by adversity, if we focus on the way forward, we can quickly leave behind any disappointment caused by our mistakes or setbacks.

Changing destructive thought patterns can be a challenge, but it's not impossible.

With practice, one can train the brain to perceive things differently and reduce the stress of overthinking.

It is up to us to make a mountain out of a molehill or vice versa. But the ability to face misfortune with equanimity, or even happily, comes with inner power. The stronger the mind, the less it is disturbed by failures or reverses. Such a mind will learn its lesson from the event and move on. A strong mind places one on an elevated stage, which offers one a broader perspective. From that high stage, things look small; the same things that loom large over us if our stage is much lower.

The way to elevate one's stage is to empower the mind. Just as an aircraft can remain in the air as long as it has fuel, we can stay elevated if we have an adequate stock of the original qualities of the soul – purity, peace, love and truth.

These virtues help the soul overcome the influence of the vices that lie at the root of negative thinking – fear, anger, jealousy, greed, lust etc.

The way to enhance our stock of virtues is to connect mentally, or remember, the ocean of all virtues, the Supreme Soul, who is also the Father of all souls. When we remember the Supreme, His powers and virtues start flowing into us, empowering and purifying the soul.

Regularly connecting with the Supreme Soul makes the soul powerful enough to resist and ultimately overcome the influence of vices. For such a soul, problems are just interesting challenges – opportunities to learn something new. Once the soul becomes powerful, it naturally remains positive in all circumstances and so is able to find solutions to problems.

Developing such positivity enables one to live a happy life even while negotiating the complexities of today's world. ■

(Purity Bureau)

Wise Sayings

Anger blows out the lamp of the mind.
—Robert Ingersoll

To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. —G.K.Chesterton

The tree of silence bears the fruit of peace. —Arabian proverb

The ideals which have given me new courage to face life cheerfully have been kindness, beauty and truth.
—Albert Einstein

The glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time you fall.
—Chinese Proverb

Most of the shadows of life are caused by standing in our own sunshine.
—R.W.Emerson

Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness.
—James Thurber

The first step towards change is awareness. The second step is acceptance.
—Nathaniel Branden



Amritsar, Punjab: BK Sister Usha from Mount Abu sharing the dais with His Holiness the Dalai Lama at "The Ik-noor Interfaith Conclave" organised by the Punjab Government to mark the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Guru Nanak Dev University. Also seen in pic are Mr. Manpreet Singh Badal, Punjab Finance Minister, and other interfaith leaders.

Spiritual Significance of Christmas

Christmas heralds a festive season of joy and celebration all over the world for Christians and people of other faiths. The day marks the birth of Jesus Christ – who founded the Christian faith more than 2000 years ago. There are several parables and customs associated with the celebration of Christmas. We will explore the spiritual significance and universality of this festival here.

December 25 is one of the coldest and darkest day of the year. Long before the advent of Christianity, the day was celebrated by many cultures such as the Romans, Dravids and Hindus as a sacred day and they worshipped the Sun or light on this day. After the winter solstice the days started becoming longer around this time of the year and people welcomed the light and warmth by joyous celebrations and grand feasts. The Hindus celebrate the day as Bada Din (Big Day) while the Romans and Celts ushered in the rebirth of the Sun signifying the increase in the duration of the daylight. The Christians celebrate the day as the birth of Jesus Christ – the Son of God.

One of the most colourful and striking features of Christmas celebrations is decoration of the Christmas tree. People cut fir or pine trees and decorate them with colourful lights, stars, ornaments, tinsel and garlands. They put a single big star at the top of the tree and also keep gifts at its base.

The Christmas Tree has many similarities with the Kalpa Tree mentioned in Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. This Kalpa Vriksha or world Tree is described as an inverted tree, and its seed, God, lives above and the growth and expansion of the Tree is downwards. The stars and lights in the Christmas Tree



The Christmas tree has many similarities with the Kalpa Tree mentioned in Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

signify human souls. The seed and roots of the Kalpa Tree are incognito. Usually the Christmas Tree is also kept sans the roots and the seed.

The seed of a tree appears in the beginning to generate the tree, then during the middle, as the tree expands into branches, leaves and flowers, the seed becomes invisible and then reappears when the Tree reaches full growth and withers, beginning a new cycle of a new Tree.

The seed of this world Human Tree (Kalpa Vriksha) is God Himself who is called "Vrikshapati", the Creator. He is an invisible, indivisible and infinitesimal sentient point of

light who plays His role in the period between the beginning and the end of the whole drama. This is symbolically connected to the shining star shown at the top of the Christmas Tree. Other stars in the Tree are symbolic of souls who play their respective roles as main actors in the world drama.

Christmas has many parallels with the Indian festival of 'Shivratri', which is celebrated to commemorate the descent of incorporeal God Shiva on earth. Christmas is celebrated towards the beginning of New Year and the end of old year. Similarly, according to scriptures, God descends at the fag end of the Iron Age (Kaliyuga) of the old-world cycle and just before the beginning of the new cycle with Golden Age, (Satyuga). This period is called the Confluence age or Sangamyuga. The old Iron Age is pervaded by unrighteousness, sorrows and sufferings and is similar to the darkest day of the year; 'Shivratri' is also celebrated on the darkest night of the Hindu calendar.

How can Christmas be complete without Santa

Claus? Children wait in sweet anticipation for Christmas so that they get loads of gifts from Santa Claus. Santa Claus is shown as a jolly old plump man with a long silver beard, clad in red and white attire and carrying a bag full of gifts on his shoulder. It is said that he gives gifts to only those children who are well-behaved during the year.

God is the true Santa Claus for all the human beings, His children. God is the golden-red point of light and might who descends in the body of Prajapita Brahma, a white-clad old man and gives us the gift of health, wealth, happiness, love, peace and joy which last for the coming 21 generations (2500 years)

Golden Age is an age of abundance. The gifts placed below the Christmas Tree imply that in the Golden Age or Paradise created by God, nature will be bountiful and everyone will have plenty of everything. In this spiritual perspective Christmas has a universal significance and so let us celebrate it in the true spirit by becoming virtuous and worthy of receiving God's blessings and gifts in the new world. ■
(Purity Features)

Humour

Pizza maker: Sir you want me to cut the pizza into six or twelve pieces?

Bhola: Six only. I can never manage to eat twelve pieces.

□□□

Bhola (to the librarian): Can you recommend a good reading for me?

Librarian: Have you read Shakespeare?

Bhola: No, who wrote it?

□□□

There's one thing all political parties share in common: our money.

□□□

Two robbers were robbing a hotel. The first one said, "I hear sirens. Jump!" The second one said, "But we're on the 13th floor!" The first one screamed back, "This is no time to be superstitious."

Click!

Photo edit your mental images and broadcast them into the universe to draw more happy pictures into your life.

Our past cannot be changed, but unhappy memories can be erased with conscious effort.

□□□

Is it possible that all our expectations are fulfilled all the time?

Unmatched expectations lead to sorrow.



Mohali, Punjab : Lighting candles to launch 'God's Power for Golden Age' are BK Santosh Didi, Maharashtra Zone Head, BK Amir Chand Bhai, Punjab Zone Head, BK Sister Prem Lata, Bibi Paramjit Kaur and others.

News in Photos



V V Puram, Bengaluru, Karnataka : BK Ambika Didi, Sub-Zone Head (Centre Third Row) seen with Mr. Aswin Kumar, Vice Principal and Faculty of Don Bosco College after faculty development programme on 'New Educator for New Era' organised by Brahma Kumaris.



Mysuru, Karnataka : BK Sister Sapna from Delhi at Panel Discussion of International Conference on 'Yoga for Heart Care' organised by Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India. Also seen in pic are Mr. Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Mr. P.K.Pathak, Addl. Secretary and other Senior Officers of AYUSH Ministry and Yoga Gurus.



Kolkata Museum, West Bengal : BK Kanan Didi (2nd L) with Mother Teresa Award at Bijaya Sarbajaya Samman programme 2019. The Award was given to ten women for their contribution in developing Peace and Harmony in West Bengal by Caring Minds and supported by Halo Heritage and Chitragada.



Om Shanti Retreat Centre, Gurugram : Group photo of participants of 3rd Annual Indian National Space Settlement Design Competition held under NASA seen with BK Sisters Divya, Vidhatri and Yeshu.