

Interview with BK Shivani

Excerpts from a telephonic interview with BK Shivani

by Suma Varughese (Editor in chief of Life positive)

(During inauguration of Life Positive Expo , at the India Habitat Center, New Delhi.)

Q. Your clarity is amazing, and yet you are so young. What has your journey been like?

A. I have been with the Brahma Kumaris for the last 15 years. My mother used to go to the center about four to five years before I joined. Gradually I started going to see what it was about. Then, after my engineering I got married... but during this process I also began understanding these truths clearly. Till then I was not very serious about spirituality.

Q. Oh, you are married? I thought you were celibate...

A: I am celibate but I am married. I have been married for the last 15 years and I live with my husband but we are celibate by choice.

Q: Celibacy is not a problem in the marriage?

A: Not at all. Not that it is compulsory but we do understand the benefits of it. In fact, it makes our relationship very nice. It is an illusion to believe that a physical relationship is vital in a marriage. We are the best of friends.

I go to the center everyday for the daily study and I see how one can use the teachings in the field of work and in the field of relationships. I think that is how clarity has dawned.

Q: Would you say that relationships are one of the most challenging aspects of life?

A: Yes, in our show on Aastha, almost 80 to 85 percent of the questions are on relationships.

Q: Why are relationships so challenging?

A: Relationships do not work if we do not work on ourselves. The equation does not work if we are trying to care for the other without caring for ourselves. A parent is stressed and anxious, but wants to make his children happy. A spouse is unhappy but wants to make his wife happy. If every soul takes care of itself, relationships will evolve. If I cannot create my happiness, I look to my spouse or my family to give it to me and they are looking to me to give it to them. Both are demanding what they

are unable to give to each other.

If a parent were at ease and comfortable with himself, a child would never know how to fear an exam. When they see our reaction to a failure, and how our faces change, they begin to believe that happiness depends on external achievements.

Spirituality, on the other hand, says that I am the creator of my inner state.

Q: Despite being a gold medalist, how come you chose to put your energy here rather than going into the material world?

A: Actually it did not happen in one shot. I was staying at home and working with my husband and studying the teaching. Then I shifted from Pune to Delhi and got the opportunity to serve at the retreat centre in Gurgaon. I was also working side by side in my husband's company, but I could choose my time since it was our own work. My first priority was always the centre. Whenever free, I would work on my husband's office. So that is how it happened. I was tapping into a natural instinct for a human being to share something they like, even if it is a movie you saw or a restaurant you visited. I just like the truths I learnt at the Brahma Kumaris. I saw them working practically. I found a lot of people looking for them and I felt like telling them... it was not a pre planned decision.

Q: Has the teaching clarified the truths for you?

A: I would not call myself a teacher in the first place. I am still learning. We all have a study class seven to eight in the morning. Whatever the teaching, let us say it is "Criticism damages", we try to apply it for the whole day. We play with it. Does it work? Does it not? How much can I use it?

Let us suppose the subject is anger. How long can I survive without losing my temper? When I don't use anger, does work get affected? Do people listen to you if you don't get angry? Sometimes I pass the test, sometimes I fail. If you fail, you start all over. It's like a fun game. You pick up a skill and then you use it.

So it is simply a process of learning, applying and sharing. And because you have tried and tested it, you know how it feels. Suppose I am giving a talk to 500 people saying that everything can be done without anger. When you have the practical experience that this is possible, you know it works and can tell them what to do in certain situations.

Science and spirituality are connected. Both say the same things: Don't believe, experience.

Q: As a science student, how did you reconcile science and spirituality?

A: When I came into spirituality, I initially found it strange. How can God teach? But then I understood that even in science, you start with a hypothesis. Suppose $A=B$. Once you prove that this is so, you write, therefore $A=B$. I asked myself, why not take all they say as a hypothesis and experiment with it? That is how it is done in science. You start with a belief, experiment with it, get the results and then it becomes the truth. Let us suppose I have been taught that you are not a body; you are a soul. You start off with that belief, experiment with it and eventually you experience that you are a soul and not a body.

Spirituality teaches us to challenge our belief systems. In religion we got confused because we left it at the level of belief; because we never experienced the truths. So many people ask you if you believe in God. They never ask if you have experienced God.

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However, very few people apply this wisdom. Sometimes we listen to profound words and go back in awe of the words and of the person who delivered it. And that is it. We never try to apply it. I also think that it is most important to be simple. The sad part today is that everyone tries to make spirituality difficult. People assume that what is hard to get must be profound.

Q: Do you find that people are more receptive to spirituality these days?

A: Everyone is ready, even schoolchildren. I cannot tell you how many children have told me that they watch my show. When I ask them if they understand it, since it was not designed for their age, they say, "However much we understand it is good for us." Children are having relationships in the 4th and 5th standard. They are facing rejection and hurt. If the disease is starting early, the healing must too.

Q: Are children really that precocious these days?

A: the 5th and 6th standard, they have proper girl friends and boy friends. The sad part is that children cannot talk to parents, because immediately they are told, "You are bad." There is just so much confusion and hurt. By the time they have got out of school, they have tried everything. There is so much exposure. It is the vibration of today's times. They need to learn how to handle rejection. They are therefore very ready to learn about spirituality. You have to just give it to them simply and practically. If they understand spirituality will help them with their anger, hurt and so on, they will take it up.

Q: What lies ahead?

A: We are going through a world transformation, not world destruction. It's already happening. People are taking care of their health, their well-being. That is satyug. In satyug, people will be healthy, wealthy and wise. The key factor to bring out this change is taking responsibility for one's own life. Hundred per cent responsibility. No blaming anyone else. As sanskars (conditioning) change, sansar (world) will change. It will be a gradual ongoing process. We won't ever come to know the precise moment of the shift. It is just like morning shading into afternoon, evening and night – it flows.

Q: Can you give us some tips on how to make the spiritual journey easier?

A: It is a misconception to believe that the journey is a hard one. It's a beautiful one. Anyone who works on themselves will enjoy the benefit of the change. It is like exercising. It's not hard, it's just going to make my life better. Spirituality is like a way of life. Take a small thing like waking up the children. Does it have to be rough, by pulling them out of bed? Or can I do it in a different way? That is spirituality. It is nothing separate from living. It simply consists of doing everything I am presently doing, but taking care of how I am inside while doing it. Stay happy, easy, contented and now do everything. That is spirituality.