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Human Life on Planet Earth Only

For centuries man has wondered whether life exists anywhere outside our planet. Systematic scientific efforts to detect signs of extraterrestrial life began after the advent of radio in the early 20th century, and concerted international efforts in this regard have been going on for more than three decades.

Over the years, a lot of money has been spent on various programmes designed to look for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence. But all those efforts have drawn a blank so far.

From time to time, there is a flutter when it is reported that scientists have found signs that a planet or other heavenly body might have, or have had, water, indicating the possibility that life might exist, or might have existed, on it.

There was one such report recently, which said that complex, organic molecules had been discovered in geyser plumes that shoot off hundreds of miles above the surface of one of the moons of Saturn. But then it turned out that the molecules were not the products of life processes. Instead they were merely the raw ingredients of life. To conclude from them that life existed on the moon would be akin to saying that since dough, salt and yeast had been found in a house, there was bread in that house.

The fact is that planet earth is the only home of human beings in the universe. Even other life forms have not been found to exist anywhere else as conditions on other planets are not conducive to life.

While science has so far offered no evidence of the existence of life anywhere other than earth, myths and religious texts do speak of other worlds. In Indian mythology, there is mention of three worlds. Some believe that besides the world inhabited by humans, there is a heaven up above in the sky where divine beings live, and a hell somewhere in the netherworld, populated by demons and evil characters. Christian mythology similarly describes a paradise and an inferno.

Heaven and hell are not different places but states through which this world passes during a cycle of time. The world begins as heaven when it is in its pristine state, and gradually turns into hell as human souls lose their power and virtues and become increasingly influenced by vices.

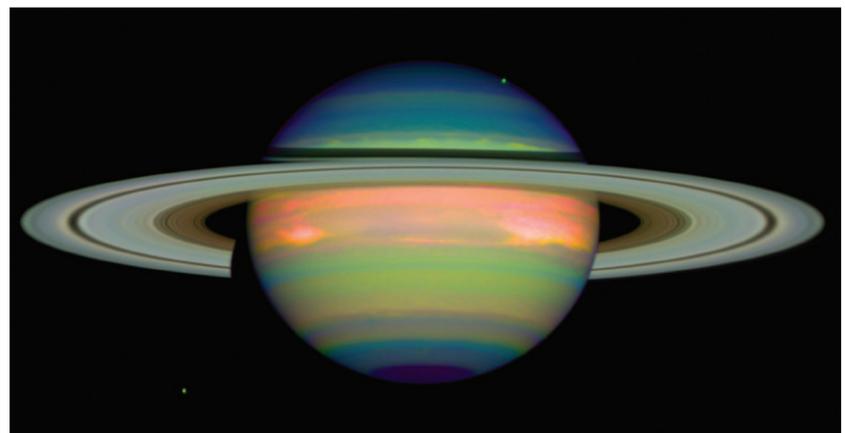
The three worlds, in reality are the world we all know, and the soul world from where all souls come to this world to play their part in the story of life, and the transitory subtle world where souls exist in subtle, angelic form before they return to the soul world at the end of each cycle of time, before returning to this world when the next cycle begins.

These three worlds are the only that ever exist, and it is only on earth that souls take birth and humans, all other creatures, and the elements of nature interact in the drama that we call life.

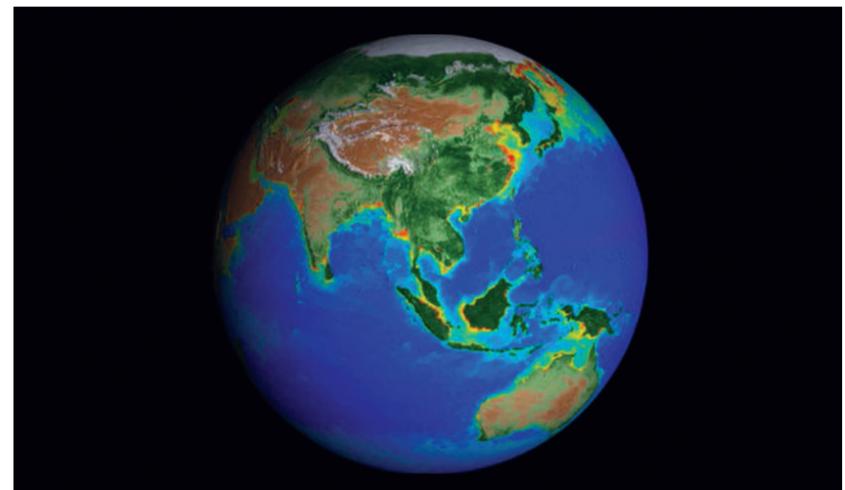
It is also to this very world that God comes, as described in the Bhagavad Gita, when unrighteousness rules, in order to redeem mankind and establish a righteous order once again. There is no mention in the scriptures of communion between God and His children, the human souls, in any other world.

Many sages and seers who could go into trance and travel in subtle form have described the subtle world and spoken of the soul world, but none have ever mentioned life existing in any other part of the universe.

Human fascination with exploring the cosmos and finding out if there are other places where life might exist in some form, is understandable. The universe is vast and much of it remains a mystery to us despite all our scientific advancement. But it is ironical that while



This delightfully detailed false colour image of Saturn is a combination of three images taken in January 1998 by the Hubble Space Telescope. Credit: NASA



Mother Earth - the only planet in the universe which sustains life.



Earth is our only home. Let's make it more liveable for all humans, other creatures, and nature.

we are looking for other inhabitable places in outer space, we have made the only home of mankind that we know of almost uninhabitable.

Reckless human activity is changing climatic conditions on earth in such a manner that scientists are predicting the extinction of life as we know it within the next century. Instead of a starry-eyed search for extraterrestrial life, it would be so much better to use our talents and resources to make this world more liveable for all humans, other creatures, and nature.★

(Purity Features)

NGO OF UNITED NATIONS IN CONSULTATIVE STATUS WITH ECOSOC & UNICEF. OVER 4000 ASSOCIATE CENTRES IN 137 COUNTRIES.

The Value of Time

The beep of the alarm clock beckons a new day, and from that moment onwards it is we and time racing against each other. Time keeps us on our toes constantly; everything we do is bound by it. Thus time must be valued if we want to add value to our lives.

Life is precious. And what is life – moments of time strung together. Most people's lives revolve around becoming prosperous. Almost all of their day is centred on acquiring wealth, social status, health and education for themselves and their families. These achievements are short-lived or last a lifetime. But think about it – can we ensure that the fruits of our effort last longer than that? Especially in an age when untimely death is common, wouldn't it be intelligent to invest in ventures that bring eternal gain? How can we enhance our period of profit?

The first step forward is to recognise that the only space of action granted to us by time is 'now', and we must be wholeheartedly available in it. If our mind and intellect are too busy recreating the past or resolving puzzles of why, how, if and but, then the opportunity of creating something new in the now is lost to us.

As per the law of karma, the only means by which a soul can create its fortune is by performing positive karma in the present moment. Thoughts, words and actions that are pure, positive and powerful bring us cumulative returns that enrich our karmic account. If we perform elevated karma consistently, its fruits accumulate with time and invite health, wealth and happiness into our experiences.

This spiritual fortune is imperishable and travels with us immortal souls through our upcoming births. It provides for our material as well as emotional well-being long after our current bodily costume is gone. Thus the formula to insure our investments is to empower ourselves, live a life of virtue, and earn others' good wishes in the process. If we live by values, we value our time.

Also beware of participating in any form of negative acts, directly or indirectly, because that burdens us with debt. A karmic debt is the

*We consume
our tomorrows
fretting about our
yesterdays.*



**As per the law of karma,
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cumulative return of our actions performed under the influence of weaknesses and vices. To clear it, a soul goes through a period of setbacks and suffering, which drains its powers, following which, it is likely to spend additional time, energy, money and effort in recuperating.

Sometimes, while journeying to success, we are tempted to take shortcuts. Sometimes we are bored and divert to the more interesting looking by-lanes. In many of these cases, we wander from our path and are eventually compelled to take a U-turn. So, both negative and disoriented acts eat into our resources. They leave us feeling hollow, and so it is important that our actions are driven both by a sense of purpose and purity of intent.

It doesn't matter how long we live, but how we live. A life of meaning and depth takes shape as we put to best use even the smallest unit of time. As per spiritual science, the smallest unit of time is a thought, and to make the most of it, we must work with clarity and concentration. It is through them that we add quality to our lives. And yes, do refrain from the habit of thinking too much – it is injurious to health.

Have you ever arranged for a family

dinner? Many a times, after putting up a grand and perfect show, the host is left too exhausted to enjoy his own meal. The long hours of planning and preparation take a toll on him. Interestingly, often the best parties turn out to be those that happen without much prior notice. A basic prep time, a very willing host, and some intelligent thinking come together to make the whole arrangement fall into place, as though effortlessly. The combination of optimum investment of thoughts and full investment of heart can produce knockout results. We feel satisfied by doing our best, not by overdoing it.

Finally, let us picture a day well-spent: we plan good things, remain focused on them in thought and action, and accomplish them all before the buzzer goes off. If we start late or are often found panting to reach our goals, it is a sign that we must train ourselves to befriend time.

A tip for doing that is to set our mental clock a tad bit ahead of the actual one. This helps create a buffer zone that allows us to slide to a smooth finish. Our aim here is to avoid any rush so that time does not interfere in our creativity, and we remain easy. It by no way means that we become time-conscious, wherein the pressure to remain punctual ruins our peace of mind. The idea is to devise ways to economise on our thoughts.★ (Purity Bureau)

The Illusion

An illusion is something that appears to be real, but is not actually real.

If I am able to see through an illusion with understanding, then I will be saved from being deceived. But the fact is that illusion is often created through our own thoughts and feelings.

The emotions and impressions of the past mixed together with our own creative thinking and hearsay manifest themselves in the form of an illusion around us. Then within that illusion we act and interact with life. And when it comes to the intellect's time to decide what to do, what is right and what is wrong, it is influenced by the illusion surrounding it, resulting in further illusion.

Our own thoughts and feelings are the key players in this. They are responsible for the waste thoughts which multiply uncontrollably and the feelings that follow in support. It may appear that they are our protectors and guards against all who are out to get us, but that is the illusion.

Don't be deceived by the illusions of your own mind.



New Delhi: Mrs. Sumitra Mahajan, Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha, with Mrs. Abha Mahto, former Member of Parliament, BK Savita and BK Raghu.



New Delhi: Mr. Rajnath Singh, Hon'ble Home Minister of India, being presented Brahma Kumaris literature by BK Radha Behn from Lucknow.

High-rise or high risk?

Most of the urban skyline in cities around the world is characterised by high-rise buildings. These tall structures have become a symbol of modern civilisation and progress. The high-rise buildings came up to resolve the increasing pressure of housing in high population density urban areas. But in several cases these concrete jungles have sprouted mindlessly, with scant regard to the overall wellness of people who live in them.

The history of high-rises may be traced back to the pyramids of Egypt (about 48 storeys in height). In modern history, tall structures were not built until the late 1600s, apart from a few Roman apartment buildings of six or seven storeys and Europe's gothic cathedrals. Tall buildings with iron skeletons began to be constructed in the 1860s. Thus, high-rises can be termed as a very recent phenomenon. Hence they are not 'natural' habitats for human beings and so they may also be in some way harmful.

People living in high-rise buildings live with many fears. The height of the buildings evokes fear of fall from a high window or terrace. The possibility of fire is also a high-risk accident which can trap people inside their home or office. Earthquakes are another scary possibility that makes the chances of escaping to safety much less for people in high-rises because during such disasters electricity, elevators and communication lines can break down completely and the chances of running down from the top floors to an open ground or street are very low.

High-rise buildings are also a soft target for terrorist attacks. We have witnessed the horror of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. The fact that thousands of people are living or working in high-rises means that people are more strangers than known neighbours sharing that space. It compounds the fear of crime and absence of social bonding and community support.

Many high-rises have guarded gates and high-tech security so that strangers cannot enter. People who live on the upper floors of a high-rise, especially children and the elderly, are less likely to leave home. This separates people from the outdoors, the city and from other people. High-rises separate large numbers of people from the street and they end up in a city that is detached from street life. People living on upper floors have scarce contact with ground-level events.

*Your life is a
printout of your
thoughts.*



Elderly who live on high floors are less likely to leave their house. Parents find it difficult to allow small children to go down to the park outside.

Also, the sheer number of people in one building may increase the fear of catching communicable diseases spread by others. Air and touch borne flu and colds, for example, spread more easily when many people share hallway air, door handles and elevator buttons.

There have been many studies about how living in high-rises affects children. For families with small children, high-rise living is an unsuitable option. Parents find it difficult to allow small children to go down to the park and to supervise their play. Consequently, children who live on higher floors go outside less often to play.

High-rises are isolating and dehumanising. In a large colony of high-rises, a pedestrian can hardly see people on the streets. There is only concrete, steel and glass all around. High-rise structures are not of human scale. People in high-rises are less likely to have chance encounters that occur in streets, public spaces and low-rise neighbourhoods. Such encounters are crucial for the liveliness and social fabric of a city. They are also essential for developing community support and individual social skills.

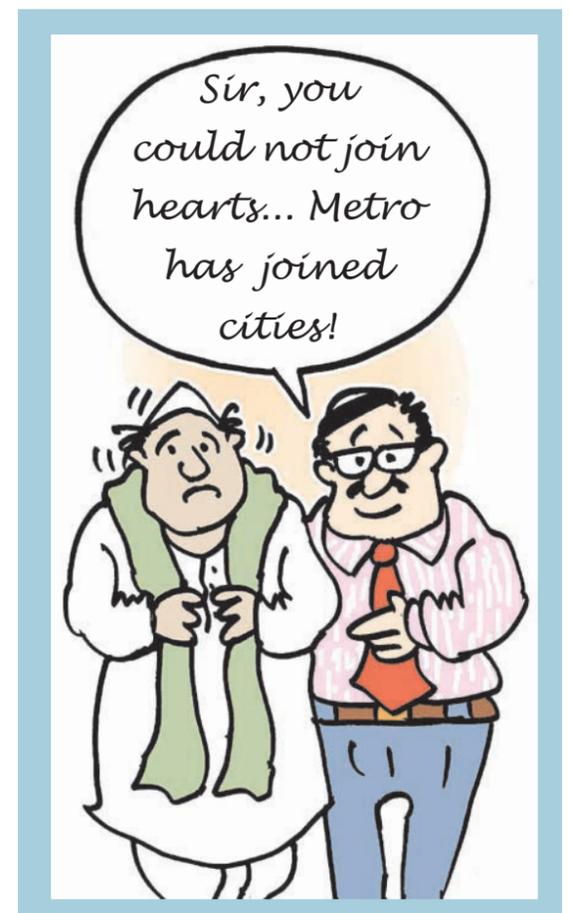
Tall buildings offer increased profits for developers. However, the higher a building rises, the more expensive is the construction. Tall buildings inflate the price of adjacent land, thus making the protection of older buildings and affordable housing less achievable. In this way, they increase inequality.

Furthermore, high-rise buildings are built largely of steel and concrete and

are less sustainable than low-rise and mid-rise buildings. High-rises use almost twice as much energy per square metre as mid-rise structures.

Living in a high-rise creates a very myopic and narrow worldview. People in these buildings have a very finite, protected and non-diverse human experience. It can make people very protective about their space and intolerant towards people who are not of their kind. Psychologist Daniel Cappon writes in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* that high-rises keep children and the elderly from getting exercise due to the extra effort it takes to get outside, and encourages them to stay at home and switch on the TV. And he believes that the level of alienation and isolation, which negatively impacts health and even shortens people's lives, and these disadvantages increase with the height of the building. We must not go on blindly building these vertical coffins for the premature death of our civilization, he says.★

(Purity Features)



Seeing into Being

BK Judy Johnson, Halifax, Canada

Is it possible to see a better world into being? The answer for the Brahma Kumaris is a resounding 'YES'. Our philosophy and spiritual practice is based on the understanding that, as spiritual beings, we have the power to transform the world. Seeing the best in ourselves and others, consistently over time, we will transform our individual consciousness. Then the practical collective expression of our better selves will create a better world to live in.

We come to the idea of seeing with the experience of our physical eyes, which allow us to see what is in front of us. However, the inner eye and a vivid imagination can create worlds which feel so real that they transport us into new experiences.

Seeing into being describes the power of the human mind

to create through use of the imagination.

Inner seeing is, in fact, a prerequisite to bringing something into being. An architectural framework is built with imagination long before physical hands are able to replicate the image in the outer world. The world's greatest inventions began as drawings in the mind of the inventor.

Seeing a picture in the mind's eye can be pleasing and comforting. Or it may serve as a call to action, inspiring me to bring the idea into being. Sometimes a mental picture has such traction that it demands creation, instigating a person to act even when the idea does not seem possible.

Visualization is a powerful tool used by sports psychologists and athletes as a way to break through habits of thought. Having performed at a certain level of speed, distance or height, an athlete begins to believe it as the limit of their potential. Engaging the power of imagination to create a picture of higher performance activates the will to stretch beyond the known threshold. By visualizing personal success in a race, the physiology of an athlete's body is compelled to respond.

In the same way life coaches ask us to imagine our ideal scenario for success to help us strive to create it. Then they help us commit to daily practices that will form new habits, ultimately resulting in the practical expression of our ideal. Visualization, thus, is an intentional use of the mind and imagination to translate seeing into being.

If I can see it I can create it

If I cannot see it, I will not be able to create it
Let's try something. Imagine a green field stretching to the horizon. Speckles of bright pink and purple flowers are splashed across the green. The sky is blue. The sun rises above the horizon, bathing the sky with orange and red. Dew drops sparkle like diamonds on the field, and you touch the cool grass with your bare feet. The air smells like the new growth of spring. You turn towards the sun and enjoy its warmth. Around you there are people walking into the field, joining you to greet the new day. Their faces are radiant with happiness, their eyes smile gently with love. The world is at peace.

Can you picture it? How does this scene make you feel?

*There's a way to
be good again.*



**Lifting your awareness
beyond the threshold
of daily living empowers
you to create the
blueprint of pictures
buried in your memory.**

Perhaps we are seeing the same thing. Or perhaps your field is bigger than mine, or it smells more earthy. You have probably filled in the details from your own memories of nature, as you have known it in its purest form. And you may be feeling the way you do in nature.

I am imagining this scene while sitting in a cafe in Canada. I can see snow outside the window, a contrast to the sunny field. Perhaps you are in a crowded city, or you are reading this in a country too hot and arid to have green fields. Yet, although separated by time and space, we are seeing the same thing with our minds. The idea from my mind has travelled through time and space to take shape in your mind. The idea came as a picture and created a feeling.

The purpose of this experiment is to show that seeing is very powerful. Pictures and ideas are contagious and can stimulate memories, bringing an experience into being. Big ideas for creating a better world must capture the heart as well as the imagination, awakening a longing to change, and to step beyond the known comfort zone. Where do these ideas come from? How do they get traction?

The good things we long for – love, peace and happiness – have no pictures. We cannot see them; rather they are experiences, feelings.

However, we associate our deepest feelings with pictures of the people or scenes where we experienced them. The feelings and associated pictures are stored as memories. They are awakened when we see something that reminds us of them. When we remember something familiar but forgotten, the longing to experience it again creates the traction required for action. We recreate the known.

At this time the human heart is longing for the experience of kindness, acceptance, respect and peace. We all feel drawn to these values, and share a common picture in the mind's eye of what they can look like. When asked to describe their idea of heaven or a better world, most people (including those who do not believe in heaven) describe a similar place. It has a lovely clean environment, everyone is treated with respect, everyone is safe and cared for, and we all live in peace.

From the perspective of rebirth, we have all been there. Everyone has a memory of a beautiful time within them, buried in the subconscious and carried across centuries.

Our longings are expressions of our deepest memories from our past. They draw us to replicate the conditions in which we first experienced them, driving our desire to create a better world. Therefore, in order to see a new world into being, we need to create more experiences of goodness, innocence and kindness in this world. Then, over time, we will begin to see and believe in the possibility of a new world.

Let's go back to the field. Only this time imagine you are stepping up into a field of higher consciousness, where it is possible for minds to connect and beautiful memories to be seen in full expression. As you arrive, imagine that there are thousands who, like you in this moment, are imagining a beautiful world. The power of our combined concentrated thoughts bends around time and space, surrounding the world with a blanket of generative energy.

As you lift your awareness beyond the threshold of daily living, consider the possibility that there is an even higher energy field, drawing you up beyond the limits of what you consider possible and empowering you to create the blueprint of feelings and pictures buried in your memory.

Although the pictures may not be clear, the longing to create a better world is growing. A beautiful world will come from our collective positive dreams.

Join me in the field. ★



Mount Abu, Rajasthan: Students of Blind School learning spiritual knowledge through 3D models displayed by Divyang Seva Cell of the Brahma Kumaris.

The Dying Tree of Life

The Tree of Life, also known as 'Kalpa Tree', is dying. Its leaves have almost dried and are infected by diseases. They have lost colour and changed shape. The Tree is bearing fruits of misfortune and has grown thorns of grief. Is it the same Tree of Life that once had lush green leaves, colourful flowers and was laden with sweet and juicy fruits of joy and fortune for all?

Let's take a closer look. The tree has become completely hollow from inside... the same way as wood is eaten up by termites. Only the form and outer bark remain. Inner content is finished. Inner contentment has gone.

Powerless Powers

The plight of all the four categories of inheritors of fortune from the Tree has become miserable. These are the Rulers, the Religious Heads, the Worshippers and the People. All of them once naturally possessed their respective powers, which have been lost today.

The Rulers: The ruling class no longer has the power to rule. It has given up the sanskars of royalty and consequently, lost the loyalty of the subjects. Loyalty flows from royalty, which means, in essence, the quality of sterling character. The rulers of today are not sovereign. The name is 'ruler' but inside, leg pulling and chair pulling goes on all the time. The fire of jealousy keeps on burning continuously. What to speak of getting any joy or happiness from rulers, they themselves do not have even a single minute of peace and rest. Even the ordinary fortune of good sleep is not there. Sleep is nature's way of providing rest and relief from tiredness and also giving relaxation by merging of thoughts. They are deprived of even this natural fortune. In other words, they are rulers no doubt but without any fortune. There is neither the fortune of power to rule nor of deriving any pleasure out of such rule. They sit on the seat of power haunted constantly by the ghosts of fear.

The Religious Heads: A few tender fresh leaves do keep emerging on the tree, but very soon, ego enters the scene. The sparrows of pride, name and fame, and accepting praise start eating them. In many cases, the name is religion but inside, the insect of unrighteous activity has made



Humans today are running after the mirage of name and fame, burning in the hell-fire of hatred and seeking escape in crazy consumerism.

them hollow. Deeply sunk in all sorts of worldly intoxications, they have become unconscious of the true consciousness that is religion. There is great outward pomp and show, but inside, desires and attachments have taken the place of renunciation and 'tapasya' (penance). Some are busy in the game of showing off their 'siddhis' (attainments) by performing illusory miracles. Many of them have become oblivious of their religious duties and are bargaining for high rewards if certain wishes of their followers are fulfilled.

The Worshippers: The eyes of worshippers are blindfolded owing to blind faith. Yet they are hoping to reach the destination. From whichever direction any sound comes they start moving towards that. Uncomfortably though, because of being blindfolded. Inside, they are experiencing uneasiness and worry. Whenever they hear that someone is granting quick boons or performing miracles, they rush to them. They are so engrossed in playing with dolls, owing to blind faith, that if someone tries to give them the Godly message about their true identity and abode, it falls on deaf ears. The power that they had as worshippers came from a relationship of deep and selfless love for God. Now, they have become selfish. They keep on begging. Asking for peace, happiness, more money, long life for their relatives and so on. Give me this and give me that is the content of their prayers. So, the power they gained by pure, loving worship has disappeared.

The People: The people are sitting on the pyre of worries.

They appear to be eating, moving about, doing all activity normally. Inside, there is a constant thought of fear that the pyre may ignite any time. In their thoughts they see the scenes, like in a dream, that at any moment they may get into some trap or the other - trouble with the authorities, suffering from natural calamities, raped and looted by criminals - such dream-like scenes keep on emerging in their thoughts. The pyre of worries on which they are sitting has made them restless, harassed and tense. They do not see any way to escape and save themselves. If on one side there is the risk of burning in fire, on the other, there is the danger of drowning in water. So, they are living under the shadow of fear, worries and tensions surrounding them on all sides.

What a Fall!

Man is the most superior of all species. There was a time when he was divine. God had created him in His own image. The original creation of God, the Supreme Creator, the seed of the Tree, could be nothing else but divine. A mention of that pristine creation is found in scriptures of almost all major religions.

In the course of time, that original state of divinity was lost as lust, ego and other vices entered his mind. He sought it back through worship and prayer but that did not happen. On the contrary, the hold of vices gradually became more strong. Then came a time when he coined the phrase 'man is an animal' and proceeded to shed his human qualities and values. Presently, he has become worse than an animal, in the moral and spiritual sense of the term. What a Fall!

Worthless Life

By losing human values, man has made himself worthless and perhaps the cheapest thing in the world. Divinity and humanity in

man has become the most precious rarity. It is conspicuous by its absence. Let's be frank. Has man not become a soul-less creature today? Is he not devoid of the fragrance of human virtues, like a plastic flower? Has he not become a living corpse possessed by the ghosts of lust and anger, greed and ego? Pulled by sensual pleasures and pushed from one momentary attraction to another, all the time?

Need any proof? No stability, no security, no higher aim of life. Running after the mirage of name and fame. Shadowed by anxiety and haunted by fear. Burning continuously in the hell-fire of jealousy and hatred. Seeking escape in vulgar consumerism which is self-deception. The hangover of every such indulgence only increases his miserable plight. The heart weeps. The conscience cries: This is not the right course.

Hope for Future

The question that occupies every mind is: Is there any hope for the future? The answer is: Yes. There is a silver lining. The cosmos is eternal. And it is the law of eternity that everything follows a cyclic pattern. It cannot be otherwise.

The tree emerges from its seed and after it has fully grown and before it dies, the seed reappears so that a new tree can come into existence. This happens always.

The same holds good for the Human Tree. The present Tree of Life has decayed. Today's sordid state of affairs cannot continue for long. It has to finish. It's now time for its rejuvenation, for recreating the original man, who will be virtuous and divine. The Supreme Seed has already begun this Divine Task of Recreation. Brahma Kumaris are the Seed's instruments for accomplishing it. Visit your nearest Rajyoga centre and discover for yourself. *

(Transcribed from a talk by BK Brij Mohan)

The start is what stops most people.



Sri Lanka: BK Brij Mohan from India in conversation with the Hon'ble Sarath Ekanayake, Chief Minister of Kandy. Mr. Ekanayake inaugurated the programme on 'Self Empowerment' for Education Directors and Officers, held at Central Provincial Council.

EDITORIAL

Too Taxing for the Poor

Welfare states levy taxes on their citizens to provide them with better amenities, to strive for a more equitable distribution of resources, and improve the lot of the poor. Income tax is charged proportional to a person's income so that the rich contribute the most to the public exchequer, and the low-income groups are not burdened.

If this principle were truly shaping our reality, the gap between the haves and have-nots would not be so wide. The World Inequality Report 2018 states that too much wealth is concentrated in very few hands across the globe, and this gap has widened over the past few decades. In India, the top 10 per cent earners cornered more than half of the national income by 2016.

The vice of greed does not allow wealth to be truly shared among the people. The rich devise several ways to avoid taxes, and pass on their tax burden to the consumers by raising the prices of their products. The poor may not be directly taxed, but they end up paying in many other ways. Governments around the world levy indirect taxes, which form a major portion of the state exchequer. Unlike income tax, indirect taxes are passed on to all consumers, both rich and poor alike, as part of the price of goods they buy or services they use. While the rich remain unaffected by the resultant rise in prices, the poor pay through the nose. Life for them turns into a struggle.

Over and above this, when inflation hits the economy, or if there is a medical emergency or other big financial requirement in the family, the situation becomes unbearable for the poor. They are then compelled to compromise with their ethical means of living.

Many of them work every day for long hours without proper food and rest. To compensate for lack of nutrition, they consume substances such as tobacco, alcohol, opium and other drugs that give them a temporary energy boost. As a result, they are trapped lifelong by such addictions which ruin their lives in several ways. Ironically, most of these substances are heavily taxed to generate revenue for the government.

As taxes and prices rise, the middle class also feels compelled to compromise with its ethical and moral principles. To meet the needs of their families in a scenario of limited income and increasing taxes, many have come to accept corruption as a part and parcel of life. Bribery is widely prevalent. Honest employees have little choice but to keep mum. They also put up with rude behaviour and humiliating experiences at work for the sake of their livelihood.

The extreme is reached when, in order to make ends meet, women at workplace are forced to compromise with their dignity and honour, and parents are made to compel their children to put in long hours of labour. Thus an annual rise in taxes is leading to a downfall in values, decline in public health, lowering of human dignity and increased suffering for the poor.

In the interest of real welfare, the authorities should come up with a far-sighted rescue plan for the poor. One way to do that would perhaps be to bring down indirect taxes, or at least freeze them at their existing level. The state may not only invest more in public welfare schemes, but should also ensure that the benefit of that actually reaches the weaker sections.

A big difference can be made if top priority is given to creating a culture of values. When public servants rise above greed and corruption, empathise with their countrymen, and understand the value of true service, official measures will have better chances of success. The environment will become conducive for collective good. Authorities can collaborate with credible spiritual NGOs to achieve the mission of restoring human values and dignity.★

Gleanings from the press

Saturn's moon could support life, says study

Complex organic molecules have been discovered originating from one of Saturn's moons, Enceladus, adding to its potential to support life, researchers say. Organic compounds on the surface of Mars and seasonal fluctuations of atmospheric methane, mark some of the strongest evidence ever that the earth's neighbour may have harboured life. As against previously detected lightweight organic molecules on Enceladus, the newly found fragments are much larger. Such large molecules can only be created by complex chemical processes including those related to life. (Reuters)
(Read with 'Human Life on Planet Earth Only' feature article published on the front page of this issue.)

Earth may get twice as hot as predicted

The earth may end up being twice as warm as projected by climate models, even if the world meets the target of limiting global warming to under two degrees Celsius, a study shows. The study, published in 'Nature Geoscience', showed sea levels may rise six metres or more even if Paris climate goals are met. "Even with just 2 degree Celsius of warming — and potentially just 1.5 degree Celsius — significant impacts on the ecosystem are possible. We can expect that sea-level rise could become unstoppable for millennia, impacting much of the world's population, infrastructure and economic activity," says the study. (Press Trust of India)



Heart disease deaths up 34% in 15 years

The death rate due to cardiac diseases in the last 15 years continues to rise in India, with cardiovascular diseases (CVD) being the leading cause of death, underlining the need to adopt population-level strategies to reduce risk factors. It rose by around 34 per cent, from 115.7 to 209.1 deaths per one lakh population in the same period, says a new study. To reduce premature death and disability from CVD, India needs to implement population-level policies while strengthening and integrating its local, regional and national health systems," the study says. In 2016, an estimated 62.5 million years of life were lost prematurely due to CVD in India. (Times of India)

Car vibrations make drivers sleepy: Study

Vibrations of cars make people sleepier, affecting their concentration and alertness levels just 15 minutes after they get behind the wheel, a study has found. With about 20 per cent of fatal road crashes involving driver fatigue, researchers hope that their findings can be used by manufacturers to improve car seat designs to help keep drivers awake. "We've found the gentle vibrations made by car seats as you drive can lull your brain and body," says the study. (Press Trust of India)

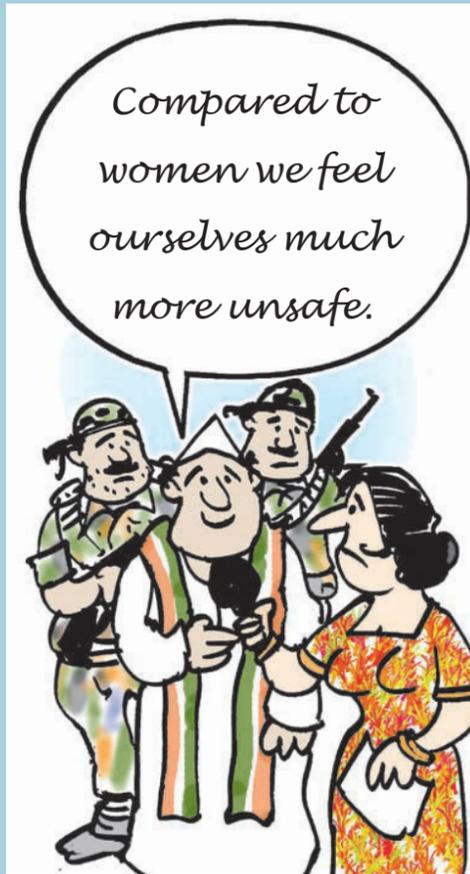
Novel technique can combat brain disease

A new molecular imaging method can monitor the success of gene therapy in all areas of the brain that may allow physicians to tackle brain conditions such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and multiple sclerosis, a new study suggests. (IANS)

Bhoola Bhai

And our friend Bhoola Bhai on the Mandir Lane says that vibrations of peace and goodwill are sent and spread by a Rajyogi by concentrating the power of the mind and intellect through mind control.

Worry never fixes anything.



The Bondage Which Protects

BK Sister Kiran, Eugene, Oregon, USA

On August 26th 2018, Hindu women will tie rakhis (beautiful threads) on the right wrists of their brothers, apply tilaks (sacred marks) to the centers of their foreheads and offer them sweets. As they pray for their brothers' welfare, their brothers will pledge to protect their sisters' honour. Then they will give their sisters gifts and money as tokens of affection. Friends will also tie rakhis on one another to affirm their solidarity.

In modern times, Rakshabandhan, the ancient Hindu festival of brotherhood and pure love, has come to signify bonds of personal affection. Originally, however, it reflected the bond of purity and divine protection (*Raksha* means 'protection'; *bandhan*, 'bond') which memorialized our ancient covenant with God. The sacred rakhi thread symbolized the purity and peace of our original nature. Its knot represented our pledge to refrain from actions which are contrary to that divine nature. This pledge, born of spiritual love, was and is the 'tie that binds' us to God. It entitles us to the Supreme Soul's protection from vices and negativity and

Rakshabandhan memorializes the bond of purity and divine protection, reflecting our ancient covenant with God.

consequent grief and suffering. Everyone—in this age when vices have corrupted our thoughts and deeds—needs such divine protection. Raksha bandhan underscores the importance of seeking it.

The tilak applied on the forehead was meant to make us aware of our true spiritual nature as souls. All human souls, as children of the Supreme, are brothers and sisters. Therefore soul awareness enables our vision of the family of humanity and of our eternal relationship with each other, which is based on selfless love, trust, faith and clean dealings. Raksha bandhan reminds us to rediscover the divinity in our relationships.



In one Hindu myth, Indrani ties a rakhi around her husband Indra's wrist following his defeat by demons. Indra, King of Gods, attains victory over the demons with the power of this protection, recovering the city of immortality, Amaravati. This myth symbolizes how the bond of spiritual love protects and gives victory over demons (anger, greed, ego, etc.) inherent in our body-based identity, enabling the return to an awareness of our eternal nature as an immortal soul.

Historically too, tying a rakhi offered protection. Alexander's wife tied a rakhi on the wrist of Alexander's Hindu adversary, Puru. As Puru raised his hand to kill Alexander, he saw the rakhi and restrained himself. "My hands are tied," people say when they can't do

certain things. Thus, a rakhi on one's wrist reminds us to do noble deeds and refrain from performing actions harmful to the self and others.

On August 26th, wouldn't our communities and our world be blessed if we celebrated the original spirit of Raksha bandhan by refraining from actions contrary to our divine nature? Will you join me in becoming aware of our spiritual interconnectedness and committing to actions which express selfless love, trust, faith and clean dealings? Let's apply the tilak and tie the sacred thread. ★

In Lighter Vein

- I backed the right horse but the wrong horse won.
- Money used to talk, but now it goes without saying.
- He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
- Your banker will lend you money if you can prove you do not need it.
- It is not hard to meet expenses...They are everywhere.
- My dreams are not dead, they are only sleeping.
- The absent are always wrong.
- Avoid reality — illusions are better.



Abu Road, Manmohini Complex: Inaugurating Administrators' Conference are Dadi Janki, Chief of Brahma Kumaris, BK Brij Mohan, Addl. Secretary General, Mr. Pradeep Patel, Chairman, Backward and Minority Finance Development Corporation, Bhopal (Chief Guest), BK Asha Didi, Chairperson, BK Avdesh Didi, National Coordinator, BK Mruthyunjaya, Executive Secretary, Mr. V. Shashank Sekhar, Jt. Secretary, Union Ministry of HRD, and others.

There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't yet met.

Highest Respect

The virtue of purity commands the highest respect. Even kings and VIPs bow in front of *sanyasis*, who lead a pure life. Even the rich and the highly educated bow in front of idols in temples because deities were an embodiment of purity in thought, word and action.

In Indian culture, *kumaris* or unmarried girls are worshipped. Revering them as goddesses, elders touch their feet on religious festivals. After marriage, as the gift of innocence is taken away, girls have to touch elders' feet as a mark of regard towards them.

This proves that celibacy or abstinence commands the highest respect. It is through the power of purity that all other virtues are born. It is what makes a soul *paawan* or holy.



Delhi, Mandawali: Mr. Manish Sisodia, Hon'ble Dy. Chief Minister of Delhi, receiving a picture of God Shiva from BK Sunita Behn and BK Jagrup Bhai during his visit to Rajyoga Centre.



Sunder Nagar, Himachal Pradesh: Mr. Jairam Thakur, Hon'ble Chief Minister, being presented a memento by BK Sisters Naveena and Daya after inauguration of Brahma Kumaris Spiritual Exhibition.



Ludhiana, Punjab: BK Raj Didi giving Godly gift to Mr. Rakesh Pandey, MLA, along with BK Pawan Batra and BK E.V.Girish from Mumbai.



Nepal, Narayangarh: Lighting candles during 'Creative Lifestyle through Positive Thinking' programme are BK Raj Didi, Director of Brahma Kumaris in Nepal, BK Raju from Mount Abu, Mr. Sanukaji Shrestha, Speaker of Legislative Assembly, Mr. Tilak Mahat, MP, Mr. I.P.Dhakkal, Vice Chancellor, AFU, and BK Laxmi, sub-zone incharge.



Jeypore, Odisha: BK Jayanti presenting Godly gift to Janab Md. Mustaf Baig, President, Muslim Anjuman Committee, during Interfaith Meet.



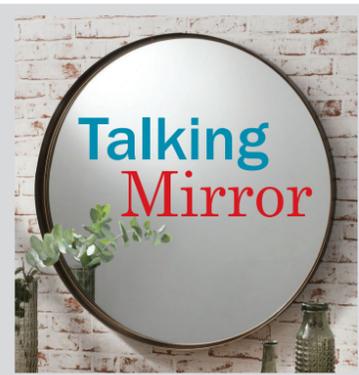
Alkapuri, Vadodara, Gujarat: Lighting lamps to inaugurate 'Yoga Meditation Programme' are BK Dr. Niranjana, Ms. Bhargsetu Sharma, Animal Activist, Dr. L.P.Pandey, HOD, Yoga Dept., Ayurvedic College, Yogacharya Harish Vaidya, BK Narendra, Ms. Devanshi and Ms. Geeta Merch, Principal, Nursing College.



Godly Rajyoga Retreat Centre, Puri, Odisha: Mr.Mridul Pathak, CCF & Field Director, Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, receiving blessing card from BK Nirupama Behn, Director, GRC after a session on Godly knowledge.



Warangal, Andhra Pradesh: Mr. P. Dayakar Garu, Member of Parliament, being presented a picture of Shri Krishna by BK Savita Behn, along with BK Sudhakar Bhai and BK SriIatha.



The Miner and The Diamond

The miner heard that the mountain contained a very large and precious diamond. He set about to find it and spent five years of his life searching with a clean heart and motive. He often felt like giving up and at times he did and left the mountain and got down to the village below. He got drawn back time and again to the mountain in the hope of finding something so precious. One day he had finished searching one part of the mountain and found nothing but a sore and aching back.

Later he sat outside his shack, and at this point it's worth noting that you can spend a lifetime looking for meaning to life and for a purpose for you being on earth and seek pure and true love, yet not until the karmic tumblers line up and fall into place you will be able to find what you want. When your karma is worthy, it will automatically move the spiritual tumblers and in what might appear to be mere chance to most people, you will stumble across that which you've been searching for all your life.

Whilst sitting outside his cabin the man, feeling dejected and deflated, looked down and could see something shining in the dirt. Could this be the diamond I have been searching for, he thought. Could this be the day that finally I receive my reward for all my endless searching?

The tumblers that had been slowly moving over the years had finally come into alignment on this special day. This man's karma was such that now and only now, this incredible diamond appeared to him – and easily and without no further effort on his part.

It was as if the miner had put the work in, sown the seeds and now was due the fruit of his labour, which was simply to fall in his lap.

He moved the dirt away and there it was, the biggest, most valuable diamond in the world. He held it with great amazement in his hands. He could not believe that such beauty and uniqueness was now in his hands and that at long last it was his.

The years of loneliness, toil and suffering had now ended for this miner of truth and love and at last his payday had arrived.

This man's journey was now complete. The only thing left for him was to share his fortune with the world and let them see the beauty of the diamond. ★

B.K. David, U.K.

You often forget mobile but never the charger.



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Dadi Prakashmani

Angel of Love and Light

Dadi Prakashmani was the administrative chief of the Brahma Kumaris spiritual organisation from 1969 till she left her body on August 25, 2007. She had joined the spiritual family of Pitashri Brahma as a young girl in 1936. For more than 70 years she served tirelessly to share the love and truth of God with humanity. With her exemplary leadership she steered the institution both in spirit and number from a small family to a worldwide spiritual movement spanning five continents.

Apart from winning recognition and awards for the institution from the United Nations and several other organisations, Dadiji glorified the Brahma Kumaris as the largest women-led spiritual movement in the world. She was a great spiritual ambassador who brought fame to India and Mt. Abu as a world spiritual centre. Dadiji was admired and welcomed by countless heads of state, celebrities, social, religious, intellectual and other leaders all over the world as a great Indian spiritual icon.

She was a pillar of spiritual integrity and human values for the millions of brothers and sisters who became part of this organization. The incessant stream of pure love and good wishes in her heart flowed through her words and gestures. Her sincere care and warmth of heart connected thousands of people with God's wisdom and divine values. In her figure people found genuine spiritual strength and support.

It was her capacity to touch every heart that made her a true leader. She had a great ability to make all human encounters feel special and personal irrespective of the person's class, status or creed. She could expand her time to satisfy everyone without rushing or denying it. With her there was always an exchange of lightness, love and power, however fleeting the meeting was. She was very selfless and large-hearted. She never thought of her time, space or comfort. It was used for serving others.

Her administrative skills were phenomenal. She expanded the services of Brahma Kumaris in scope and quality, reaching out to all sections of society by offering value-based and practical spiritual courses. She was an exemplary teacher and spiritual guide whose words of wisdom could inspire even the most errant and hard-hearted souls.

She did not command by the authority of her position but with the power of truth

*Divine love
bestows the keys
of knowledge.*

**Dadi's sincere care
and warmth of heart
connected thousands of
people with God's wisdom
and divine values.**

and love. Sometimes a mere glance from her would transform the other person, who would realize his mistake. She would offer her suggestions lovingly and matter-of-factly and it would soon be realized into practical achievement. She stood tall by the total absence of 'I' or ego in her. Such strength of character came from her deep faith in God and great spiritual discipline. She always considered herself to be His humble instrument.

Today she is not amongst us in physical form but she has left behind many milestones that continue to guide us towards spiritual perfection. On the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of her passing on, the most befitting tribute we can pay to her is to emulate the example set by her and carry on the task of self-transformation and world transformation to completion.*

My experiences with Dadi Prakashmani

BK Brij Mohan, New Delhi

- I always felt very close to Dadiji. I think everyone felt that way with her. Dadi Prakashmaniji made each person of this divine family feel as if he or she was the most valuable, worthy soul; she could give everyone the feeling that they were very special.
- Everyone was special in her eyes and that is why she never gave special gifts or toli (prasad) exclusively to anyone.
- She never found fault with anyone but always encouraged and appreciated the specialities of others. Whenever people visited Madhuban (Mt. Abu) she took great care to see that they were satisfied and staying comfortably. She personally saw to it that everyone had good physical and spiritual sustenance. She played a perfect role as the head of the spiritual family.
- Dadiji was completely egoless. As the chief of such a large spiritual organization, she exercised her authority with great humility. She always reminded others that it was Baba's (God's) work and He was getting everything done. She crossed all challenges with complete faith and surrender to Baba.
- She was a charismatic spiritual ambassador. She travelled worldwide and met numerous heads of state and leaders from different walks of life with whom she shared the message of peace. Her spiritual charm gave them all an instant feeling of spiritual bonding and pure love. She was truly a great spiritual leader.

Dadi Prakashmani



**Jewel of Light
To
Angel of Light**



A Tribute

With care and concern deep at heart,
Oozing confidence from the start.

With love for all, big and small,
Extending provision to one and all.

Accurate and efficient to the tiny dot,
Honest in word, deed and the thought.

Rich tributes to the leader transparent,
Who from her elevation did never descend.

O Dadi, Your love & Law guide us in
Tribute,
Being *Baap samaan* will be our befitting
tribute.

Pearls from Dadi Janki

Chief of Brahma Kumaris, Mount Abu

Ragaining our lost integrity

When we over-identified with the physical realm and forgot the soul, we developed ideas and beliefs that were protective of 'I' and 'mine' in physical ways but which were in conflict with our original qualities as souls. The result was that we lost our integrity, within which lies peace.

This poisonous inheritance has been causing us trouble for centuries. Sometimes it was passed on culturally, and sometimes it was carried within the soul itself. Negative (as well as positive) actions performed in one life influence our nature and character in the next.

We have to remove this poison if we are to become strong and happy, because body-conscious habits of thinking and feeling repeatedly break our connection with the divine power that can renew us. When we truly understand and connect with the Supreme, fill with wisdom, and bring the power of truth into our actions, this automatically destroys and displaces some of the dirt.

Some negative habits of thinking and feeling are long-established and can be hard to shift, however. They repeatedly break our connection. So, it also takes honest self-examination to identify them and remove them. The best way to do this is regularly take time out for silent reflection.

We need to look within and see where the mind is going when it loses connection with the Supreme, and comes into disturbance and discontentment. With regular checking, we develop more power to change.

Someone once asked me, what do you do in yoga? I replied: I clean my mirror! What will God see when He looks at me? I want it to be a beautiful image. When we make genuine effort of this kind, it is as though God loves us even more and goes out of His way to help.

God uplifted me and showed me what a good life is.

Create the future you want

One reason for sorrow in the world is that people become entangled with the past. Realize that the past is past. Don't sit there and repeat it - even in your mind. It's a waste of time. Be present in the present. If your stage is good in the present, your future will be very good. When you become an observer of your own mind, you begin to see how to create the future you want.

Make Yourself Free

Now is the time to make yourself free from conflict with anyone. Be free from animosity and free from fear. When you are free from animosity, there is no conflict with anyone. Now all of you make your stage such that your attention is on the One above. I keep a private chart, and during the entire day I check: was

*Your future is in
your hands. You just
have to plant the
right seeds.*

there any type of waste or extra thinking? When my thoughts are loving and pure, then I am in harmony with everyone.

Give Happiness to others

Our time is very valuable. Let every thought and every breath be filled with pure love and happiness. This will bring incredible happiness inside. Never allow your mood to be spoiled. If I have even a trace of sorrow inside, I will give sorrow. The most elevated thoughts are of God. These highest quality of thoughts allow me to stay in happiness. It is not that I should remove someone's sorrow

but that no sorrow should come to them in the first place, and that I should give happiness to others and then happiness is what will come back to me. ★



Shantivan, Abu Road: Dadi Janki, Chief of Brahma Kumaris, performing foundation laying ceremony of 1 MW PV solar power plant near India One Solar Plant. Also in pic. are BK Hansa Behn, BK Lalit Bhai, BK Sudhir Bhai and others.

Unique Godly University

University refers to a place where education is available 'universally' - to all without distinction of religion, gender, colour or caste. It refers to a secular and inclusive institution where people are welcome to learn different subjects and skills of livelihood.

The Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya is a unique university that gives knowledge about the universe. The divine knowledge imparted at its centres or schools includes knowledge of the soul, the three worlds - the corporeal world we live in, the subtle region, and the incorporeal soul world from where we all come - and the three aspects of time. The Supreme Incorporeal Teacher alone can give this highest knowledge, and so it is known as Godly University.

While there is an age limit for applying to other universities, here, at BKIVV, anyone - young or old - can study, and they can learn as long as they live. The interesting part is that people of all age groups study the same knowledge!

When someone graduates from a worldly university, they earn a qualification or a degree which brings them short-term returns. Anyone passing out from this Unique Godly University reaps the fruit for many births to come. ★



Diamond Hall at Shantivan Abu Road Campus and Om Shanti Bhawan (inset) at Brahma Kumaris headquarters, Mount Abu. There are over 4,500 campuses of the Godly University in India and 137 countries abroad.



Indore, Madhya Pradesh: BK Shivani, Motivational Speaker, giving a talk on 'Healing the Healer' at Gyanshikhar Auditorium of Brahma Kumaris Rajyoga Centre. Others on stage are BK Kamla Didi, BK Hemlata Behn and Cine Actor Suresh Oberoi.



Secunderabad, West Merredpally, Telangana: All India Exhibition Bus Campaign – *Mera Bharat Swarnim Bharat* being welcomed by Mr. K.S. Chandrasekhar, CEO of Cantonment Board. Also in pic are BK Chandrika Behn, Vice Chairperson, Youth Wing, BK Manju Behn and others.



Om Shanti Retreat Centre, Gurugram, Haryana: During outstanding BK achievers award ceremony are BK Varnika, who as 1st lady gold medalist in mechanical engineering secured 95.3 per cent in her B-Tech course from NIT-Surat. She is working as Asst. Manager in Indian Oil Corporation, New Delhi; and BK Shubham, who got selected in the prestigious civil services exam in his first attempt, securing All India Rank 670 out of 10 lac candidates and became one of the youngest civil servants in the country at the age of 22 years.



Dehradun, Uttarakhand: During an event to mark the first anniversary of BK Prem Didi, launching a book on her life are (R-L) BK Brij Mohan Bhai, Swami Hathiyogi Baba, BK Rukmani Didi, MM Swami Swatantranand Saraswati, BK Amir Chand Bhai and BK Manju Behn.

Mr. Wise



Mr. Wise?
Yes.
Silence is golden and speech, silver?
Yes, silence is said to be the climax of speech.
And yet most people today opt for silver in place of gold, why?
I cannot say.

◆◆◆◆◆

And Mr. Wise?
I am listening.
Why can't spiritual alchemy convert silver into gold?
Of course, it can and does, for anyone who applies this golden formula: speak less, speak softly and speak sweetly.
Why isn't this golden advice followed by everyone?
I cannot say.

◆◆◆◆◆

Lastly...
Yes, I am listening.
Is there no way to make this golden formula a part of our nature?
Three divine qualities of clarity, purity and divinity are needed to acquire these three respective powers of speech.
And Rajyoga meditation enables inculcation of these qualities?
You are right.

◆◆◆◆◆

Tailpiece



After years of research, an Indian scientist succeeded in developing a potion for youth. On drinking it, a person's body would go back several years in age, allowing older people to relive their green years.

He applied for a patent, for which he needed to fly to the US. Before going, he left the potion with his parents for safe custody.

On return, he arrived at the airport, and wondered that no one had come to receive him. Just then, a young couple with a baby in their arms approached him and greeted him warmly.

He returned the courtesy but wasn't sure. "Who are you," he asked. "We are your parents," they beamed. "When you were away, we couldn't keep our hands off your magic potion and drank some of it. And here we are – all youthful again."

"Really, is that you mum and dad!" exclaimed the scientist, rubbing his eyes.

"But whose baby have you brought with you?" he asked.

"Well," explained the parents, "this is your grandma. She took a double dose!"

◆◆◆◆◆



San Francisco, USA : At 40th Anniversary celebrations of serving the USA held in Anubhuti Retreat Centre are BK Sister Mohini, Regional Coordinator of the Americas and BK Sister Shivani, motivational speaker from India, on 'Gift of Happiness' and 'Love and Forgiveness' with hundreds of listeners from Bay Area.



In the lap of nature, far away from maddening crowds.



Cultural performance during Administrators' Conference, Manmohini Complex, Abu Road.



St. Petersburg, Russia: Dr. Satish Gupta from Brahma Kumaris Global Hospital & Research Centre, India, with eminent personalities after conducting 3-day training on 'The Heart on your Palm'.



New York, USA: An event with a focus on meditation and silence was organized by the IDY Committee at the United Nations. BK Gayatri Naraine, UN Representative of the Brahma Kumaris (3rd R), shared that yoga was a method to access the peace within us. Others in pic include Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda of Yoga in Daily Life and Ms. Jude Curriwan, Cosmologist.



China, Guangzhou: Participants greeting BK Sapna, who was invited to conduct Rajyoga Meditation at IDY 2018 celebrations organized by China-India Cultural Exchange, supported by Consulate General of India, in which 1,500 Chinese yoga enthusiasts participated.



Sri Lanka, Colombo: BK Brij Mohan, Addl. Secretary General of Brahma Kumaris, from India, after meeting Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, former President of Sri Lanka.



Colombo: Group photo of BK Brij Mohan from India with BK Teachers of Sri Lanka after a Silence Retreat.

A person often meets his destiny on the road he took to avoid it.