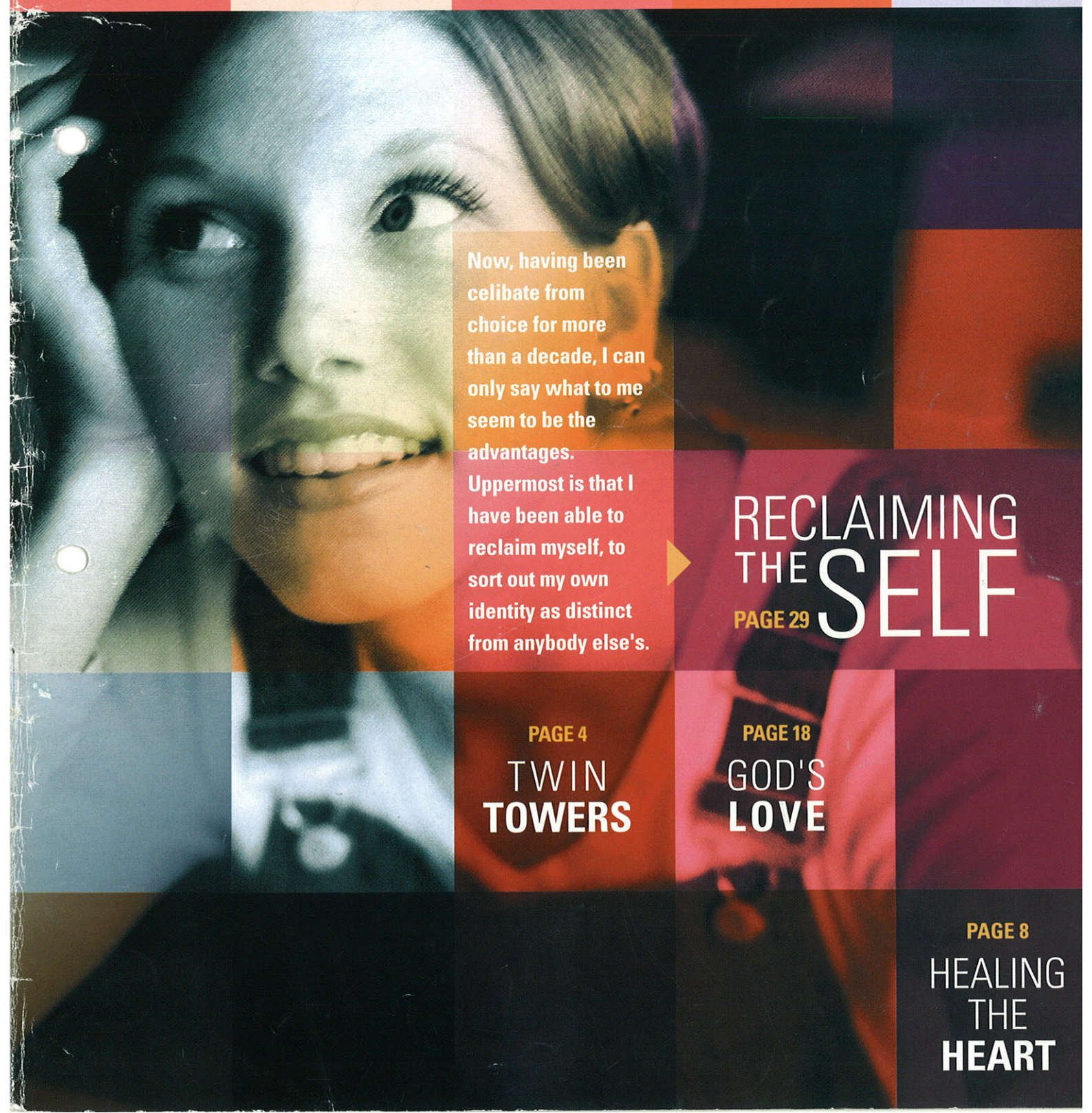


heart & soul

Insights and Inspirations for Living in the Light

ISSUE 17



Now, having been
celibate from
choice for more
than a decade, I can
only say what to me
seem to be the
advantages.

Uppermost is that I
have been able to
reclaim myself, to
sort out my own
identity as distinct
from anybody else's.

RECLAIMING THE SELF

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THE
HEART



Brahma Kumaris
Hardback, Published by HCI
Order Code 2128,
Price US, \$24.95; UK, £15

FOOD & SOUL Easy & Tasty Vegetarian Cookery

There are now as many, possibly far more, vegetarian cookery books on the market than I've had hot dinners. So, you may ask, is there room for yet another?

The answer is yes, provided it's this one. Just about everybody who has ever attended a Brahma Kumaris social function raves about the food, and wonders what makes the dishes quite so special. Is it the ingredients? The way they're prepared? Is there some undiscovered super-chef toiling away in the background?

Well now this new glossy comprehensive cookbook spills the beans, and explains just what makes sampling BK food a unique experience, far beyond merely satisfying hunger.

The BKs regard food preparation as a sacred task and make sure they use only totally fresh, pure ingredients.

Because they don't use onions, garlic or eggs (which they believe increase anxiety and tension) – ingredients most cooks consider absolutely essential for creating appetising veggie dishes – they have had to be extra inventive, and it shows.

They have studied every culinary tradition and come up with dishes to satisfy the most sophisticated and exacting tastebuds, such as Aubergine Casserole and Pasta with Ricotta Cheese. But there are also plenty of fast-food and comfort dishes such as burgers, pizzas and baked

beans. For more advanced cooks, or those who enjoy a kitchen challenge, there are party cakes, sweets, chocolate cookies and cheesecakes.

Having sampled many of them myself, I can honestly say that not only do you not miss the forbidden ingredients, but the dishes actually taste better without them. Even the cakes and sweets are different and better, somehow, than standard varieties.

But it's also important, the BKs maintain, to prepare food in a positive and peaceful frame of mind. If the cook is agitated, this means that negative mood vibrations can pass into and adversely affect the food that is eaten by other people.

The delectable dishes contained in this book are designed to maximise mental as well as physical nourishment and contribute towards a positive, clear and calm frame of mind and outlook.

Lavishly illustrated, totally up to date and with clear, simple instructions, this is the ultimate vegetarian cookbook for both the beginner and the serious cook. Can the TV series be far behind?

Review by Liz Hodgkinson, author of Peace and Purity The Story of the Brahma Kumaris: A Spiritual Revolution.

Food and Soul is available from: bkpublications.com

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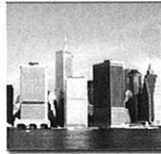
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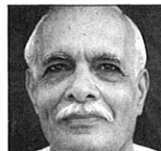
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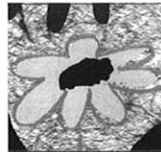
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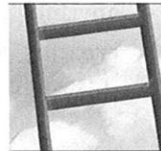
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WELCOME

“Once upon a time” is always a great way to start any story, as it takes us back to our childhood and that golden age of innocence, which most of us can pleasurablely recall. By all accounts, it is now a lost age, as more and more children seem to enter the world of sex, drugs and playstation well before the age of ten.

It seems our permissive society, where freedom is defined more by rights than responsibilities, has overlooked the one vital ingredient in the education of new generations – the inculcation of the values which are the basis of personal integrity, and the principles which bind a community together. Values do not just happen or appear in our lives out of thin air. It is the first responsibility of the adult, the parent, in their relationship with the child, to impart, demonstrate, explain and draw out the values which are the foundation of a harmonious and enriching human relationship. Respect, tolerance, co-operation, love and honesty are but a few.

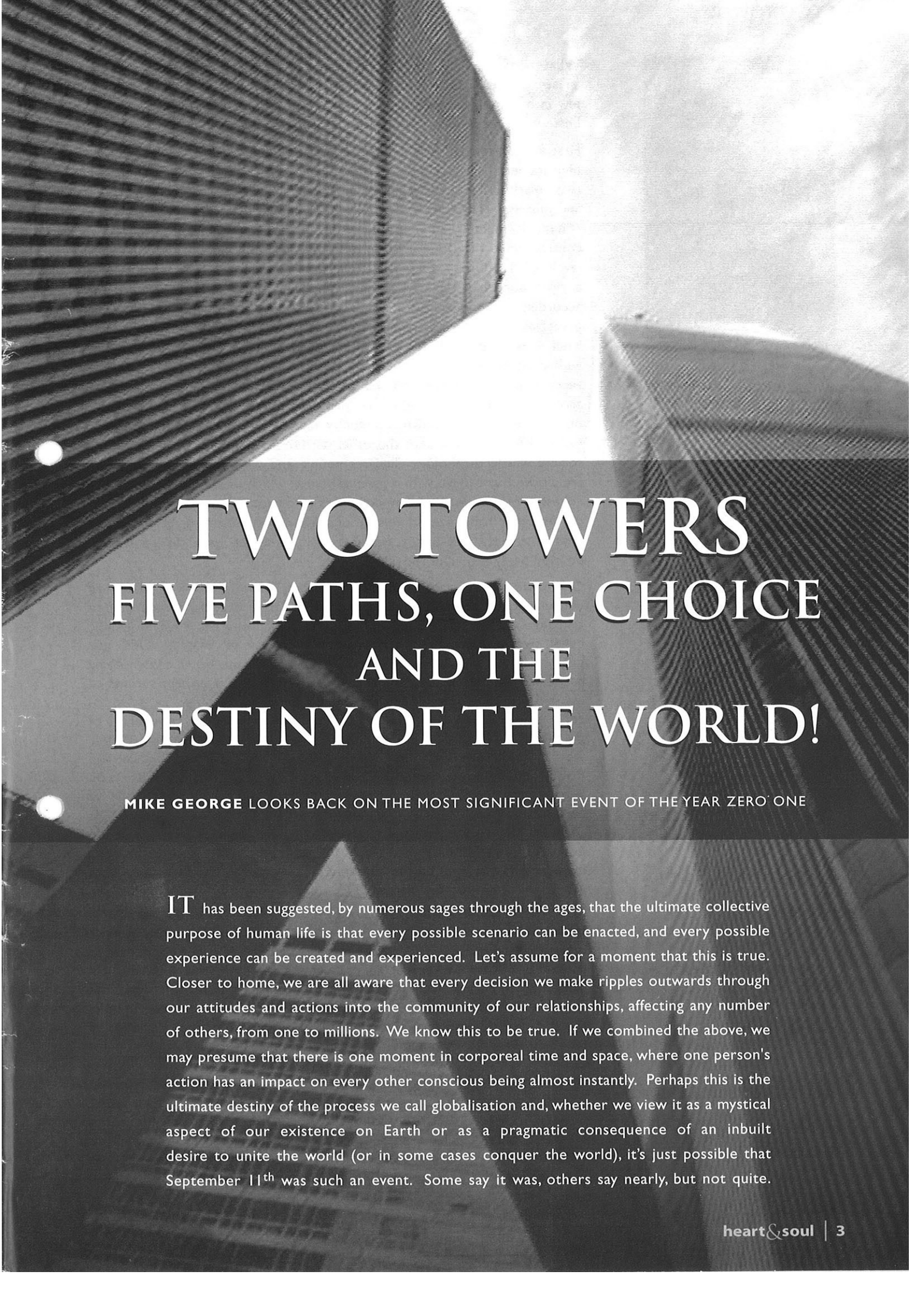
Our culture has been haemorrhaging such values for many decades, as the focus of our relationships has shifted from interpersonal to technopersonal. In a world where technology reigns in almost all areas of our lives, not only are our interpersonal conversations shorter and shallower, but the messages conveyed by the creative minds behind our entertainment industries have increasingly written such values out of the scripts, and replaced them with conversations filled with contempt, violence, selfishness and mistrust. They make more interesting scripts because their shock value holds our attention. Role models are fictional, morality is distorted, the richness and true meaning of our language is lost and, in the process, both innocence and common sense are eroded.

Technological progress has also delivered globalisation and, in so doing, has both shrunk and joined up the world. The upside is a world community in communication, although the content of our communication is seldom high quality wisdom but mostly high quantities of information. The downside is that all that is wrong in the world e.g. envy, violence, exploitation, oppression are expanded to global proportions and played out on a world stage, for all to see and copy, as they happen on the screen in front of us. No one is to blame, not even technology, but we are all responsible!

In this context of the erosion of values and the depersonalisation of relationship, more and more people are realising the need to redefine the meaning of progress! More people are seeing that much needs to be healed, fixed and repaired, or we, and that means all of us, in our shrunken, joined up world, really are going all the way down the hill to hell in a hand-basket. Others have given up hope, and see no way of reversing a process of decay and entropy that has been happening for decades, and probably centuries, when all things in the bigger picture are considered. And there are some who have decided to stop trying to stop the rot altogether. For them it's just too late to 'do anything', and they prefer to concentrate on creating a completely new world, not repairing this old world.

If you had to choose, which camp would you join, old world fixers or new world creators?

Welcome to Heart & Soul – a magazine that tends to lean towards the new world camp, towards building a completely different tomorrow, where the only old things that needs to be fixed today are the hearts and the soul. A new world means a new story. **"Once upon a time....."**



TWO TOWERS FIVE PATHS, ONE CHOICE AND THE DESTINY OF THE WORLD!

MIKE GEORGE LOOKS BACK ON THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT OF THE YEAR ZERO ONE

IT has been suggested, by numerous sages through the ages, that the ultimate collective purpose of human life is that every possible scenario can be enacted, and every possible experience can be created and experienced. Let's assume for a moment that this is true. Closer to home, we are all aware that every decision we make ripples outwards through our attitudes and actions into the community of our relationships, affecting any number of others, from one to millions. We know this to be true. If we combined the above, we may presume that there is one moment in corporeal time and space, where one person's action has an impact on every other conscious being almost instantly. Perhaps this is the ultimate destiny of the process we call globalisation and, whether we view it as a mystical aspect of our existence on Earth or as a pragmatic consequence of an inbuilt desire to unite the world (or in some cases conquer the world), it's just possible that September 11th was such an event. Some say it was, others say nearly, but not quite.



What is made in the minds of men, must become reality in the lives of men. So here we are, starring in our own box office smash of our own real life, real time version of Armageddon, Deep Impact and Hijack all rolled into one!

What it has done is draw many of us into the analysis of the cause of such an act, others into speculative fear of the consequences and surprisingly few into a cool and calm exploration of our choices, as we decide on the best way to respond to such a globally significant moment.

First, a brief summary of the analysis of cause. The historians and the social philosophers have called up all the political and cultural trends behind the two polarised positions of this conflict, in an attempt to discern both cause and meaning. Their analysis goes something like this. One side prefers a community ruled by an imposed and dictatorial hierarchy with high levels of control, while the other lives in a so-called democratic society with high levels of freedom. One side holds fast to religious laws, drawn from ancient doctrines, while the other sets the ground rules of its society according to modern law made to fit the culture and the time. One perceives the other as material, exploitative and acquisitive, while seeing itself as persecuted, exploited and abandoned, thinly disguising its judgments with a righteous indignity. In the meantime the other side sees itself as successful, sophisticated and self certain, often not so thinly disguised as arrogance, while perceiving its protagonist as stuck, backward and oppressive towards its own community and playing the role of the victim of external forces. One sees the other as morally bereft, creating a godless society where technology alienates people and where adults and children are allowed to behave with a permissiveness which undermines the natural cohesion of that society. The defenders of democracy and social freedom, on the other hand, see the misuse of religion and the source of divinity to control society and justify violence towards those of a different faith, political persuasion and lifestyle.

Onlookers see the pace of modernity as simply too fast for a rigid culture determined to hold on to the ways of the past, especially when a free thinking, and therefore free believing, culture threatens their dogmatic belief system. Attack seems to be the only way to defend. One side believes in the sacredness of certain ground while the other sees nothing particularly sacred in any ground. One sees the others' apparent success to be the source of its own distress. Both see each other as potential conquerors of the world, while each sees itself as inevitable conquerors of the world – one through economics and the other through religion. While we may have witnessed the confrontation of such polarities in local and isolated places throughout history, we are now seeing this stark division on a truly global scale. This may well be the long prophesied clash of civilisations, except that the very nature of this confrontation is contradictory to the meaning of civilisation! No longer a sub plot in the drama of human history, this is now the main plot in the drama of all our lives. And it may well be the last plot, building to the climax that touches every single being on the planet.

This idea of 'the final global scene', as a natural climax to some huge global drama, is the conclusion of many who prefer to focus on the consequences more than the causes. They see the ripples of this one event continuing to spread across the waters of daily life, gathering momentum as they do. They say they have seen it coming for a long time, and for them, the eleventh day, of the ninth month, of the year zero one, was the beginning of the end. For others it was simply another level of the gradual escalation of tension between two communities, brilliantly magnified by a hungry media machine. While its magnitude was somewhat surprising, its inevitability was highly predictable. They see much worse, before much better! Their vision is simpler - the 'have nots' continuing to invade and attack the 'haves'. Others, with ironic clarity, see the factual reality of the event as the manifestation of similar scenes which have been created in fiction. Their logic is karmic. They point to those in the industry of entertainment who have bewitched the world with images of cataclysmic disasters and human

suffering in the form of entertainment, and thereby, profiting from people taking pleasure from others pain. The consequences they say, are obvious. What is made in the minds of men, must become reality in the lives of men. So here we are, starring in our own box office smash of our own real life, real time version of Armageddon, Deep Impact and Hijack all rolled into one! What you give you get, what you export you import! It had to come they say, and it's not the final release, there are more episodes currently in production. It is, they insist, the price we must pay of such negative creativity, and the exploitation of the human mind and intellect, on a global scale, for so long.

Meanwhile the psychologists and the psychiatrists are also filling the first drafts of their new books with their analysis of cause and speculations on the consequences. Perhaps the whole thing can be explained away as a symptom of one dysfunctional psyche. One prominent psychologist, from the west coast of the USA, recently offered the therapist's insight on a radio interview. She suggested the whole event could be put down to one man who was denied his father's affections in childhood, using rather a drastic method to get his father's attention in adulthood. The sins of those fathers again! Simplistic, but quite likely to carry some truth.

Without doubt, by far the most fascinating dimension of the whole affair has been the after event conversations and the exploration of the most appropriate response. How do we respond to such events which have an almost instant emotional effect on every human life, and an ongoing impact on our work, the economy, travel and almost every corner of our world community? When it comes to responding to any event there are always choices. However, fear and anger shut down our capacity to create these choices because possibility thinking is almost impossible in the presence of such emotions. So the spectrum of choice is lost, as is the access to the deeper inner wisdom needed to assess and weigh the value of such possibilities.

Regardless of whether the situation is one on one, or millions on millions, there are always choices. However, in such extreme circumstances it takes a cool and calm mind, a wise intellect, and time, to be able to create and choose the right response. In this, and most other such similar scenarios, there are always at least five possible paths of response:

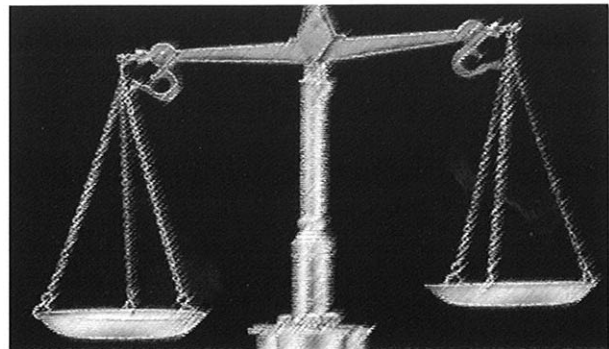
- **The Path of Revenge**
- **The Path of Justice**
- **The Path of Compassion**
- **The Path of Prevention**
- **The Path of Service**

THE PATH OF REVENGE

The path of revenge seems to be the quickest and the easiest, especially in the presence of anger. Revenge finds justification in an assumed right to take an eye for an eye, and the illusion that a score can be settled. The truth, however, is that the scoring has been going on for some time, and is unlikely to end as long as anger finds any place in either side's perception of events. While most human beings would seldom choose revenge when presented with such an event as a hypothetical situation, very few human beings find it easy to stay free of the impulse to strike back when the real event happens. Anger is the primary force behind any attempt to take revenge, punish and inflict pain. The world is now an angry place because no formal education system has ever taught that the world is no place for anger. In fact anger is encouraged and justified in most cultures, most especially our global culture of entertainment. Few wish to recognise and acknowledge that anger kills not only others, but eventually the creator of the anger themselves, because that would mean much inner work is necessary to change a deep habit that is much easier to justify as human nature. Guns and bullets never killed anyone, fear and anger are always the primary cause.

THE PATH OF JUSTICE

In almost every conflict the path of revenge can be easily seen, but most of us would never choose it, unless we ourselves have been directly affected. Sometimes however, revenge is dressed in the cloak of justice. Action in the name of justice is seldom purely motivated by the desire to see justice done. If it were, it would contain some mercy and compassion.



Mercy lies within the discerning wisdom of the judge, as he or she weighs circumstances, character and other influences on the crime. The voice of mercy within the cry for justice will sound like a genuine desire to understand exactly why the crime was committed, what was the true underlying and probably invisible cause. Also found within the true administration of justice will be the signs of forgiveness. Human beings are forgiving by nature, but not when the pain of loss and anger are present, and the emotional wounds are still raw.

If a truly enlightened soul were consulted about the subject of human responsibility at the time of any crime, they might say that for a human being to deliver justice to another human being is an act of arrogance based on ignorance. They would remind us that the deepest understanding of justice informs us that the world at every level - spiritual, mental and physical - is governed by a set of natural laws which ultimately cannot be broken. Any attempt to break any of these laws will always result in eventual failure, and the self correcting and self balancing dynamic within that law is the only source of real justice in the world. We all intuitively acknowledge this when we say things like 'what goes around comes around, what you give you get, what you sow you reap, and of course what you get is the result of what you have given'. This is the law of karma, found in most Eastern wisdom, but more than slightly absent from Western education, despite our acknowledgement of the principle of sowing and reaping. While we may know this law, the wisdom and the patience that is required to allow its manifestation in real life events is quickly overridden by the desire to take the law into our own hands and inflict the return of the pain we have experienced. This only perpetrates an exchange of pain and a self sustaining process of ongoing conflict. In the context of ground zero, the meeting of revenge and justice was neatly expressed in a US military bumper sticker which read, "It is God's responsibility to forgive Mr Bin Laden... but it is our responsibility to arrange the meeting".

THE PATH OF COMPASSION

While any emotion is disturbing our consciousness, it is hard to see the third path - the path of compassion. This requires an open mind and a forgiving heart to see what lies behind the actions of those who would kill others. When our body is sick, we will see a doctor. Regardless of how ill we may be, the doctor never recommends termination or punishment for allowing ourselves to become sick. Quarantine perhaps, but not termination. He or she seeks to understand the disease and then to guide and advise us back to health. We know that anyone who kills another person, or five thousand other people, has performed a morally wrong act. We know this because at the heart of all enlightenment is the idea of complete non-violence and an implicit understanding that killing anyone is wrong. Few would disagree that anyone who kills anyone else is obviously morally wrong. Most of us have learned to condemn such an act and wish to see the punishment fit the crime. What we seem to miss is the idea that killers are not physically sick, but mentally sick. And just as we would not terminate or even torture a sick body, we have no right to terminate or torture a sick mind. The killers themselves are obviously in pain, though they may not be aware that their act comes from their pain.

As a species with the capacity for understanding and compassion, we are here to practise many arts in life,

including the art of forgiveness and healing. In fact, many see the very purpose of their life as an opportunity to practise these arts. The major sticking point on the path of compassion, and the reason why it is a hard path to follow, is that we have not yet learned to understand ourselves. We have not yet been compassionate towards ourselves and forgiven ourselves for our own wrongs, so we find it almost impossible to do the same for others. In fact, if we were to look deeply into our own hearts, we might find our judgment and condemnation of others is simply a projection of our own guilt. Hence the need to first forgive ourselves, before we are able to truly forgive others. And what makes self forgiveness so hard is that most of us are still living under the illusion that others' actions are responsible for our feelings. This of course, is known as the path of the victim!

So how do we achieve a more compassionate response? We do have some role models. Nelson Mandela and Terry Waite both stepped out of many years imprisonment and instantly forgave their captors. Genelle Guzman was the last person pulled alive from the rubble of the World Trade Centre. She said her rescue reaffirmed her faith in God and that she feels no anger towards the terrorists. She explained, "I pray for them, and everyone else behind this act, that they can wake up and realise what is really going on." How do they do it? It is as if they have realised that any resentment is never justified. It is as if they have taken total responsibility for what comes their way and for their own feelings, to such an extent they are able to make a different choice from what most of us might make at the level of their perception, thoughts and, most importantly, their emotions. And as they desist from attempting to take the law into their own hands, it is as if they have heard that old saying, "God did not give us permission to police the universe!" They are of an enlightened few.

THE PATH OF PREVENTION

The fourth path is the Path of Prevention. If we know the behaviour of the patient is dysfunctional and the pattern has shown itself over time, then it is the responsibility of the community to act in protection of others, and of the community itself. Preventative measures are necessary. This is the role of those who have declared their willingness to serve the community, by sustaining the harmony and balance within the community. In more ancient times this would be the role of the elders, whose wisdom and words commanded automatic respect, even by the perpetrators of wrong action. In modern times, it falls to the politicians, whose wisdom and words have been in decline for some time. Compassion plus prevention may seem the most appropriate way forward. However there is a fifth path.

THE PATH OF SERVICE

The fifth path is the path of the truly enlightened, or the Path of Service. Have you ever wondered why the spiritual communities of the world have little to say about such apparently significant and tragic events. Ever wondered why the monks in their temples, the sanyasins in their caves, the meditators in their lotus positions don't pour on to the streets in protest. While everyone else's emotions run high, why are there small pockets of people worldwide who have little to say about such extreme activities of their fellow men and women? There are two reasons why they take the position of the detached observer. Perhaps there is something we can learn from them. To see what they see, and learn from their point of viewing, we need to do what they do with ease – make no personal judgment of others and remain absolutely neutral.

First, they have long ago understood that resistance leads to persistence, that it is not possible for one human being to positively change the behaviour of another, even less possible for one community to forcibly change another. They also know that those who would hurt others are simply expressing their own self created pain, and that to judge and condemn only reinforces their pain and their inability to acknowledge it themselves. To an enlightened soul the only truly authentic and effective form of leadership in such a situation is absolute non-violence in thought and emotion. To many this is perceived as a passive state, and a way of avoiding confronting and solving the problem. But to an enlightened soul it is not. The enlightened soul is aware that the whole human family, regardless of colour, creed or belief system, is connected. They know that all such divisions are ultimately false, an illusion, which is created in human minds – including the divisions of nationality, ideology, race and religion. Enlightened souls know that when emotions run high, and souls burn themselves in their own internal fires of anger and hate, the greatest need is for the calming influence of peace. In much the same way that a wise parent would never take sides or become emotionally involved in their children's squabbles, they know themselves as sources of the two most important energies in human life – peace and love. Seeing the distress of their brothers and sisters, hearing the pain in their hearts and seeing their pain emerge in their actions, they choose the path of service. They generate and give the vibrations of peace and love to every other soul, but most especially to those who are so blinded by their emotions, so unaware of what they do, so consumed by their own pain, that they would kill other members of their own human family in order to avoid acknowledging and healing that pain.

The second reason why the enlightened soul chooses the least visible and least active path is the understanding that whatever is happening in the visible world of action and interaction is exactly what is

meant to happen. They see behind the event and perceive the playing out of patterns of emotion and action between souls, which has been playing out for many hundreds of years. Interference at the level of action is not appropriate unless it is invited or unless the community is endangered. They do not avoid or escape the reality of their brothers in conflict with each other, but neither are they threatened by the possible consequences of such conflict, for death holds no fear for them. To an enlightened soul death is not a gateway to paradise and the promise of a hundred virgins! Death is simply the gateway to another chapter in life, and the next chapter will be much the same as the last unless there has been significant change of character. It is not sought, but neither is it feared. It is certainly never inflicted nor wished upon others.

To an enlightened soul, it is the absence of fear and therefore anger which allows a more objective, dispassionate response, because their's is a peaceful mind. It is only a peaceful mind which can see the complete picture, of which any singular event is only a part. It is only a peaceful mind which can be quiet enough to access and hear the inner wisdom required to discern the meaning of the event. And it is only a quiet and peaceful mind which is able to be creative in the exploration of all possible responses. In most developed cultures today, the immediate reaction to events such as nine eleven in New York is, "My God, don't just sit there, do something." But for hundreds of years the response of a few more enlightened cultures has been, "Don't just do something, sit there!" In this response can be found a recognition of the need to access the deepest inner wisdom, compassion and care before choosing the path of action. It's no use rushing to extinguish a fire if petrol is going to come out of the hose. Water is required, and in the case of extremely violent events, the water of coolness, the water of wisdom and water of love are more likely to douse emotional flames, allowing insightful reflection and possibility thinking, rather than adding fuel to the fire of anger with more anger. Only then can the flames be extinguished and perhaps the house can be saved. Otherwise the fire simply spreads. Slowly but surely, visibly and invisibly, inexorably and insidiously the fire is being fed as it continues to spread across our increasing small and joined up world.

But there is one important hope. With each passing day there seems to come an increased recognition and awareness that we are essentially one world, one family with one destiny. What we do to others we do to ourselves. The time gap between the two is fast disappearing. The connection is becoming more obvious. Perhaps that awareness will have an influence on future similar moments of choice which now appear all but inevitable. Perhaps not!

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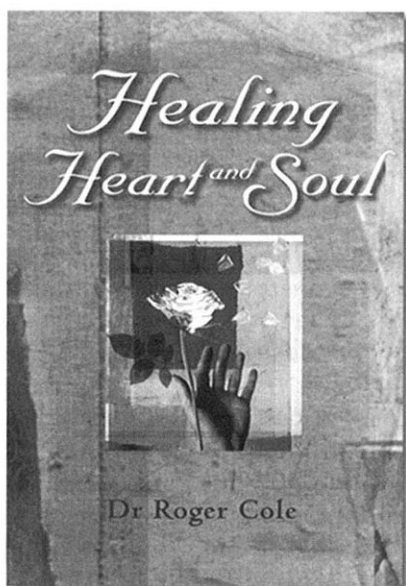


HEALING THE HEART

In his new book *Healing Heart and Soul*, **ROGER COLE** shows us how to heal a broken heart and restore 'inner beauty'.

BECAUSE

hearts are vulnerable to loss and change, we use a lot of energy exercising control over everything that maintains our happiness. This is very complicated when you consider that all the heart desires is love. Empty the heart you've just created of everything and everyone you put there and write just one word. Love. That one word contains all the security you need, yet it seems elusive, nebulous even.



HEALING THE HEART

By setting the heart on many things, we have broken it up into many parts. As every relationship and circumstance ultimately change, we can only have temporary happiness through the heart. Every relationship will end, so sorrow must follow any attachments that lead us to depend on someone else for happiness. When we set our heart on things or people, the attachment within love makes us needy. It is this attachment, not love, that causes grief. Although we love the special people in our lives, attachment makes us vulnerable to loss and separation.

The question is how do we love without becoming attached or dependent? When someone recovers from grief they are re-adjusted to life without that person. Full recovery from losing a partner is marked by readiness to form a new relationship. We fall in love again and the cycle begins over as our happiness depends on someone new. It is not that this is wrong, it is normal in this day and age, but when will we remember the love of our original innocence? This love is dependable and cannot be stolen away. It lives deeply in our heart yet we forget

its existence and beauty, then substitute attachment to compensate for its loss.

We then open our heart to love in the wrong way, placing too many expectations and conditions on that love because we fear loss and rejection. We demand a return for our love and if it isn't received or reciprocated we close our hearts and lock ourselves away. In time we may become disheartened and separated from love altogether, or we may give up, despair or become stressed in our lives.

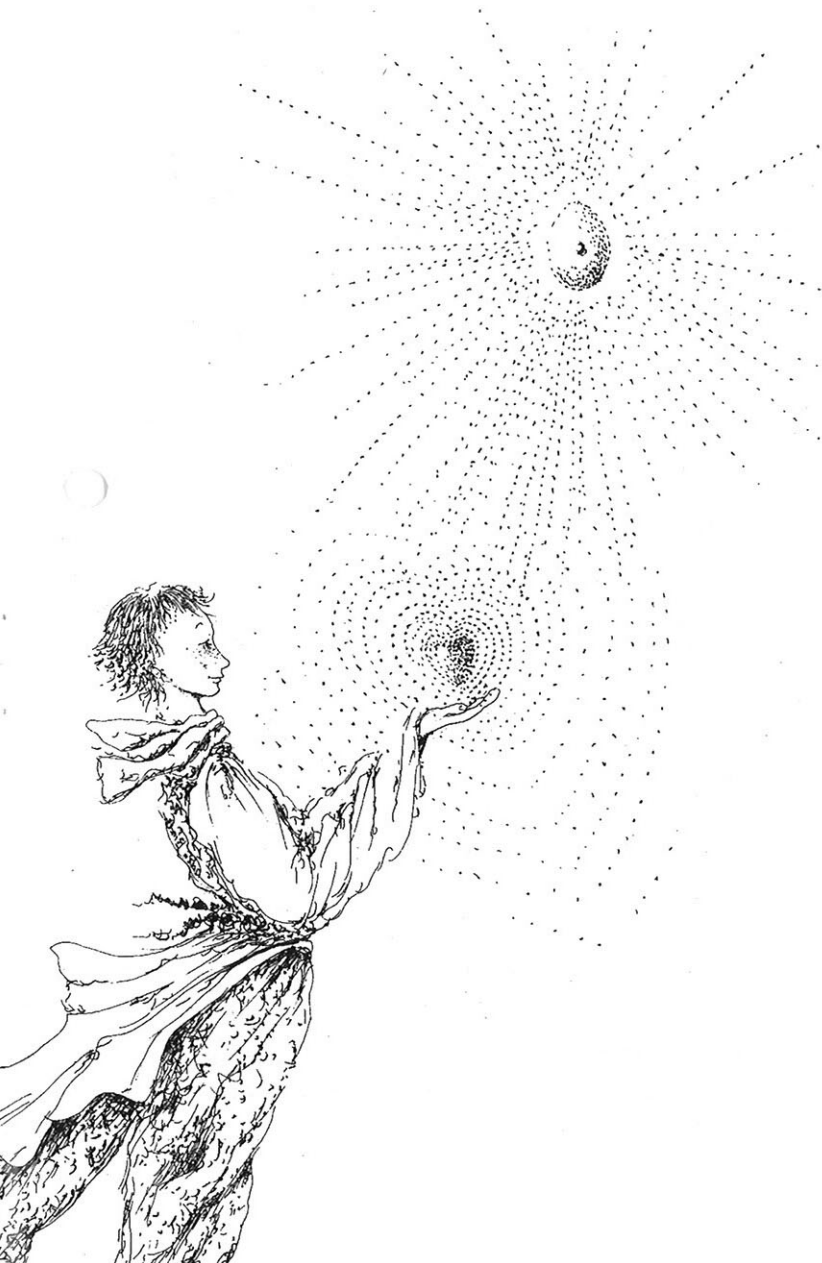
It is attachment that leads to a broken heart, so it is this habit of fear, body-consciousness and conditioning that we need to heal. Then we will find that love was already there and discover that healing was always inevitable.

HEALING THE BROKEN-HEARTED

We are responsible for how we feel. We can't blame anyone else and we 'choose' how we are influenced by situations. If you are angry, broken-hearted or anxious, it is time to choose differently and to insure yourself against it happening again. Healing too is a choice, though you may never have thought of it as such. Firstly you are not your feelings. You may be experiencing anger, depression or fear, but they are not you. They have all been acquired from somewhere and they cloud your peace and inner beauty. Observe them and say, "I am not angry, depressed or frightened. These are just feelings. It's time to let them go and remember who I am." But where did they come from and how do we let them go?

The past has conditioned us. First it deceived us into thinking of ourselves as mortal, vulnerable beings. We think that we are born and that we suffer and die. Then it made us think happiness was something to look for on the outside. We think that we need to pursue our desires and protect our interests. We live in the present with the conditioning of the past and project it into an uncertain future. We doubt ourselves and doubt our fortune. All of these thoughts are mistakes, creating an illusion which separates us from what is real and true - that we are spiritual beings. The illusion is created by fear, which comes from body-consciousness. The solution, quite simply, is the love that comes from soul-consciousness.

To let go of painful feelings, we have to do more than forgive or forget, as feelings will rise again, reawakened by unkind words or attitudes. To be secure in the future, we need to erase these feelings and their impressions from our subconscious. Then we will not be vulnerable any more. To do so we need to change our awareness from one that is trapped by the body to one that is liberated and free. To heal the heart we have to use our mind to go beyond our feelings and emotions. We may need



to go through sorrow or grief before we have the strength to move on but, somewhere, somehow, sometime we must decide it is time to move on. Through thoughts we can travel beyond hurt feelings and discover the feelings and emotions of truth, which enable us look differently at our world.

We cannot react to others' weaknesses unless they are also our own. By the same token we can only appreciate the beauty and qualities of others because they are already our own.

At a talk recently I had been discussing how, in meditation, we can first detach from our roles and the negativity of the outside world, then enter the peace that lies within. I asked the group how differently we might look at the world if we were always peaceful like this. A young man replied, "More positively, we would stop looking at people's weaknesses and would understand that they too are looking for love and happiness." With spiritual awareness our vision sees beyond people's attitudes and behaviour, until we realise that they are exactly like us. We stop judging. We stop looking at their weaknesses. Think for a moment, "How can I recognise arrogance or greed or selfishness?" It must be that I have or have had these weaknesses within myself or how could I know what they are? To look at the weaknesses of others means to think of them, to churn them in our minds, to speak of them and therefore react against them. Every time we do this, we surrender our own peace and so react against our own selves. We allow the negativity of others to influence and hurt us. Ask yourself, "Who's in control of the way I think and therefore feel?" If we're very honest we will see that we have allowed that control to be in the hands of others. We find ourselves blaming someone for hurting us or making us angry. Yet really it is through our own faults, weaknesses or expectations that we choose to be hurt or angry towards the actions or attitudes of others. Healing begins when we take responsibility for how we think and feel and experience life. Instead of looking at others, we should look at ourselves, first using our mind to recognise and cultivate our inner beauty, and then to face and transform our weaknesses.

To cultivate inner beauty, you first have to accept it then seek it. This is challenging, because we have difficulty in knowing our own nature. Many of us are only too ready to be hurt by a disparaging remark but have trouble accepting the good things people see in us. In thinking we have to be humble, we don't accept our greatness, yet until we do so we won't see greatness in others. I don't mean the paradoxical 'greatness' of ego seen in the political, entertainment or sporting arenas, but the greatness of our spirit, our pure being and capacity for love. To accept this greatness is real humility because it enables us to see and value it in others.

To find this inner beauty is also challenging because we have cultivated the habit of looking at our defects. As we look into the 'garden' of our minds, we find a bed of roses choked by weeds. We are then tempted to remove the weeds of our weaknesses, bad habits and negative feelings. But this can become a thankless task. No sooner is one removed than another appears, then we relax our vigilance and it becomes overgrown again. First we need to develop and appreciate the beauty of our garden, which resides in 'the flowers' of our pure qualities and virtues. There is a sanctuary hidden within every soul that is already perfect and complete with every God-given virtue. When you journey inwards you will find a key to this place and discover your original purity, innocence and happiness. This key is peace and the knowledge that you are a peaceful soul; it is also the key to your greatness and freedom.

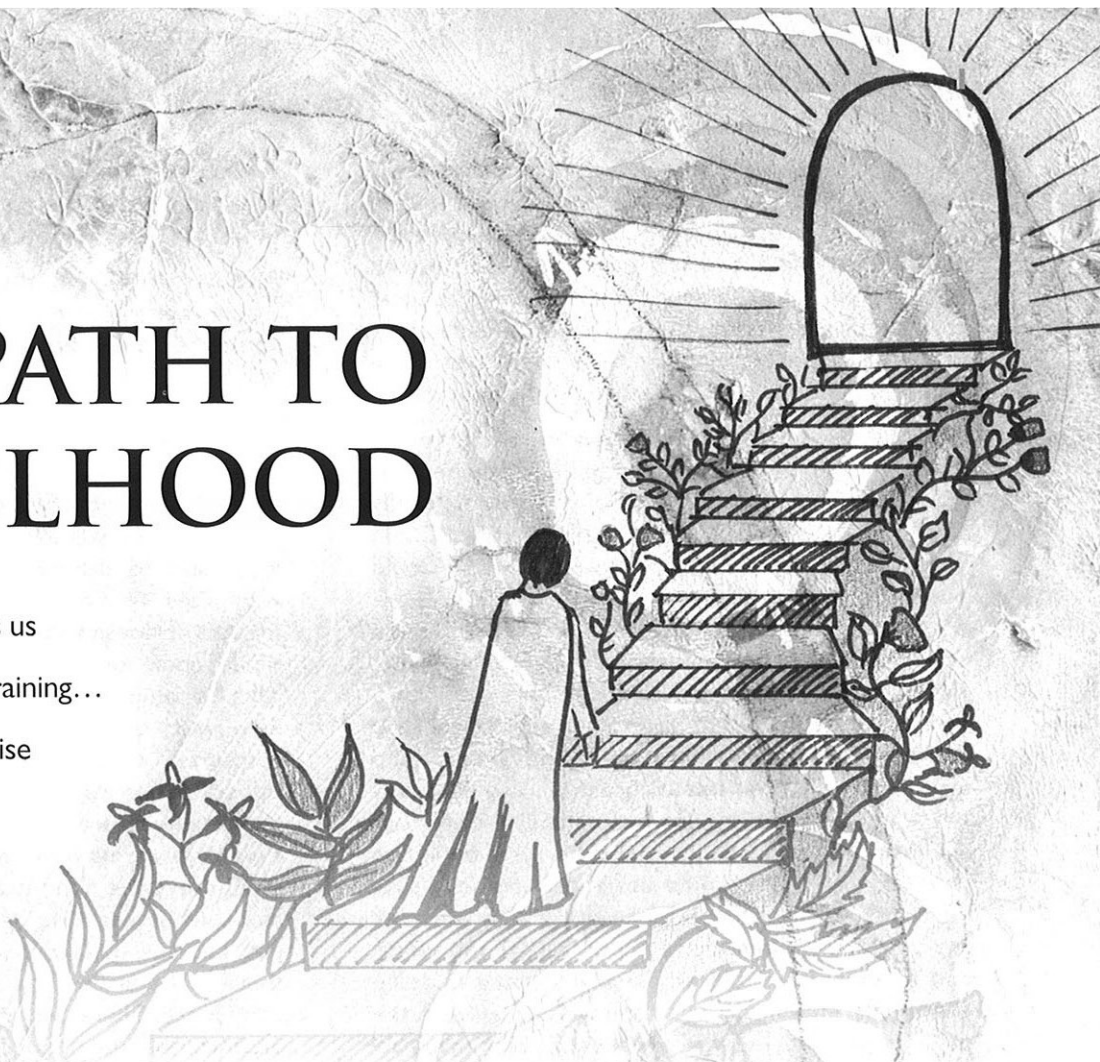
We cannot react to others' weaknesses unless they are also our own. By the same token we can only appreciate the beauty and qualities of others because they are already our own. You cannot like someone's serenity or generosity unless you know what these are. Even if they are not your leading specialities, you like these qualities because they can be reawakened in you. If you really want to heal your heart, begin to appreciate your beauty through others. What can I see that is pure and virtuous in those around me? Think about it. You are really seeing what is pure and virtuous in yourself. Appreciate it. As you look towards the purity and virtue of others, you are actually learning to love and respect yourself unconditionally, at the same time as giving love and respect to everyone. With the peace that is spiritual awareness, look for virtues everywhere - tolerance, gentleness, openness, patience, mercy, generosity - think about them and churn them until their essence is in your heart, for their essence is love.

Discipline your mind so you don't see, churn, or speak of defects and weaknesses, lest their essence penetrate your heart. Simply understand that this soul has forgotten everything. Begin to control your mind. If you have the wrong types of thought, apply a full-stop to them immediately. Determine to finish them immediately. Have no bad vision on anyone. Now you are co-operating with God's love; this is spirituality and your heart is healing. You have recruited your mind into the healing process and you are healing more than past losses, you are returning to love. Soon you will be so full of truth that pain, ego and attachment simply won't exist. They simply disappear and take with them all the weeds from the garden of your mind. As you return to love, you release its power and it removes your weaknesses and negativity. You become the beauty and greatness that had previously been an elusive potential.

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THE PATH TO ANGELHOOD

Wendy Marshall shows us why we are all angels in training... but only when we recognise the opportunities.



There has been much talk and many movies about angels these past few years. I think it is misleading to think of angels as beings with wings, because I think creating this idea that angels are completely different from you and me is what holds us back in our spiritual development.

I believe that the human race is a race of angels and that angelhood is possible for any of us, and indeed all of us. Believing that there is a separate group of beings called angels, removes us from the possibility of what we have within us. Thinking that angels are 'out there', as a force, or a spirit, or a troupe of winged entities, stops us from going inside and discovering something quite extraordinary within ourselves.

Each one of us is a potential angel, however the whole art of becoming an angel is something rather secret. It's about being and doing things that nobody sees and nobody will ever know about. Things that are tremendously important acts of goodness, love and kindness.

There's a story about a young woman who belonged to a special tribe of Indians. It was a warrior tribe and one day a test was set whereby she had to spend five days being guided into the jungle, memorising the

whole route and then making her own way back. The winner of this test would marry the tribe's prince and she herself would then be a princess and one day, the queen. This particular woman had fallen in love with the king's son, so she knew she had to enter. After three days in, she knows she's in the lead because she's trained really well. And then she encounters this old lady by the side of the road, who stops her and says, "I'm half a day from the village, and I'm sick, and I don't think I can go back, and if somebody doesn't take me I think I am going to die here. Can you take me back to my village?" And the woman thinks, "God, I've lived five years in this tribe, and I've got a chance of winning this challenge and I'm in love with the prince. If I take her, I'm not going to marry the prince." She thinks it over but decides there's nothing she can do, "I have to take the old lady back to her village." So she takes the old woman back and thinks, "that's it, there's no way I can win this now" She gets back on her route and she tries to make up time, but when she gets back to her tribe, she sees all the others in the race and she knows she's come in last. Then there is the ceremony and she thinks that whoever won would have deserved it anyway. The ceremony begins and she wants to watch the winner being presented with the prize and marry the prince. The queen of the tribe is

holding the winner's trophy and the queen walks towards her and presents this sacred vessel to her. And when the woman looks into the queen's eyes, she realises that she was the old lady. And she was the only person who stopped and helped her, and that was the only test. There wasn't any other test, and everyone else failed because their eyes were completely set on what they thought the goal was.

All of us have been in these situations. We've had to make a deadline, meet somebody, be somewhere, or start to do something that we think is really important. And then we are interrupted by, "Could you just help me fix the photocopier." Or "Could you just take this call, I can't cope any more." We are on the end of a cry for help, but so many of us are so focused on what we think is the right thing to do, that we miss these little moments. They come to test us to see if we have found our angelhood. They are little moments where we could actually dip inside and use love, use compassion, use care, use peace instead of anger, use understanding instead of animosity, use patience instead of hurrying on in our worried way. We could use those moments, but we are so focused on all those things that we think are important. Sometimes I look out at the world and it seems as if the whole human race is doing everything imaginable but that which really is the most important – being aware and responding to these little tests. So what happens is, when we miss these moments, we push ourselves, and we keep ourselves locked in these ordinary states of consciousness and doing the mundane. To transcend that ordinary state of consciousness, we have to keep reminding ourselves that love is the greatest power on this earth.

THE ANGEL IS THE GIVER

If you decide to be a giver, if you decide that love is going to be your path and your main aim and contribution to life, you might think you'll end up poor. But in fact the way the universe is set up it will give anything for a giver. You start giving and everything in this universe will start to come towards you to help you. It will bring you people, resources, things – everything, but the giving has to be absolutely pure. Some people will do things asked of them, but will then think of telling others, so they could receive love, praise or admiration. But anyone who has gone into that headspace, has gone in the opposite direction of angelhood. Such people will seldom feel real love, true security, stable peace. They will not be able to perform truly benevolent acts of humanity.

When the first test comes, the way to pass it is you just do it, you just give something for the sake of giving, and not only that, you do not expect something back. Love and operating out of a feeling of love is its own reward. You don't need anybody to see you, you don't need anybody to praise or

respect you. The most important thing is to do it for the sake of it. Goodness and love is its own reward. In fact it's better if nobody sees it.

Another test on the road to angelhood, is empowering somebody or disempowering somebody. Somebody makes a mistake and the deadline is short, the whole work is going to be ruined and your reputation is on the line, what do you do? Criticise them? Do you know that if I criticise you, your whole immune system will immediately go down? The feeling of being disempowered will affect every cell in your body. It's very easy to disempower somebody, but it's also very easy to empower somebody. "You made a mistake, it doesn't matter, I've made that mistake ten times, come on, we'll sit together and correct it." This is empowering somebody. It's so easy to empower somebody, but to really empower somebody, it has to be invisible. There are many opportunities to empower somebody. The best opportunities are when the other person doesn't even know you have empowered them and they think they have done it themselves. If you think that someone is encouraging you and empowering you, you become quite dependent on the person being there and you don't really have your own sense of confidence. There are many ways in which we can encourage and empower each other, many opportunities every day, but to do it in a invisible way, this again is working from a very deep, or a very high, ethical system.

And if you do it, your consciousness will step up, there will be power inside you and the universe is beginning to take note, as if to say, "This person is doing something out of a very pure motivation. They have got something to give, how can I help them?" And something will come your way, and then there will be another test, and another test, and it never stops.

The greatest tests come when you start performing acts of love, kindness and compassion. The greatest test is when someone insults you. You are being tested to see if you have the strength to love him or her back, even if you may not want to. All you have to do is to want to and say, "I do not want to hate this person, I don't hate anybody, I want to forgive." Just the fact that you want to forgive will make the universe come to help you. Someone will hand you a book for no apparent reason, or you will overhear someone say something that helps you to shift your consciousness. To be in the same room as somebody who has passed many of their tests, to be close to somebody who has this consciousness of love, is itself transforming. It can help you end all trace of hatred and bitterness, and transform yourself into a state of forgiveness.

Angelhood starts at step one, and there are many chances to take step one, then step two, and then step three. And it's nothing that anybody can see - we have to just take one step at a time. It's loving

for love's sake, it's giving for giving's sake, it's being there with all the things that you believe the world should have. You decide you should be there and available and giving. And if you can't at that moment, you don't give up on yourself. This is the important thing about angelhood, if you can't forgive someone who has ridiculed you, if someone has hurt someone that you love, if someone's is hurting you or bullying you, and you feel that you haven't got that love inside, it doesn't matter, all you have to think is, "I want to, I want to be loving and forgiving, because love is for giving!" The universe will come to your rescue. It will hear that pure thought, that pure feeling, that pure motivation, and you will get what you need at that moment. It might be that you are on your own and not receiving that help at that moment, and maybe you will have to stay in that feeling that, "I want to, but I can't at this moment, but I want to be like this." And that in itself is a test of your integrity and your spiritual ethics, to see the depth and substance of your pure desire. And step-by-step-by-step you are moving from your ordinary state of consciousness towards the territory of angelhood.

You can get there with ease by knowing that you are a spiritual being, by knowing that there is an amazing amount of loving energy and benevolent power inside you, even if you can't feel it at the moment, but having the faith that it's there. In the meantime, say to yourself, "I'm going to work according to these very, high ethics." And when you get to that point, it's as though you have given so much love, you have given so much in those little moments in your life, that all that love, all that benevolence, actually comes back to you, with such a force that it lifts you up. It's called blessings. Blessings aren't little glossy cards with a neat phrase of praise. They are an energy that you create for yourself, moment by moment, step by step, in your life, because there is no other love than pure love. Pure love is a phenomenal protection in any situation, but we get to it inch by inch, day by day, act by act, not immediately.

In reality angelhood is a very ordinary thing, there is nothing extraordinary about it. You don't have to read some secret document, study books or go to the top of the Andes, for angelhood is hidden in these little moments every day. We miss these moments because we've got our heads stuffed with ridiculous false gold. And remember, as much as the universe gives to a giver, it takes from a taker. This is why we feel so insecure in our ordinary state of consciousness, because in our ordinary state of consciousness, we are taking from everything. People talk a lot about how they work for free in a charity, and you hear them talking, and they are actually building up their self respect. It makes them feel good about themselves and that's not giving, because they want people to know about it. And we are all like this when we are in the state of ordinary consciousness,

we are taking all the time. We know how much we are taking from the physical world, constantly exploiting it, but we can't stop it, can we? Even if we know that we shouldn't be ruining the world, we do it because we are in the habitual state of taking. So switching into this mode of giving is like going to the gym and building up your spiritual muscles.

If someone has hurt someone that you love, if someone's is hurting you or bullying you, and you feel that you haven't got that love inside, it doesn't matter, all you have to think is, "I want to, I want to be loving and forgiving, because love is for giving!"

You know what you do to build up a muscle, don't you? You're resisting a weight, and the heavier the weight and the more you resist it, the bigger your muscles grow. It's as simple as that. But you have to start by pushing yourself, beyond what you are presently capable of doing – it's the same with a spiritual way of being - angelhood. It's tempting to take, take, take, and everybody is doing it, everyone is taking from each other. To start giving fully, you are going against the whole direction of the world. It's a bit scary in the beginning. You feel, "Will I end up with nothing?" But actually, the paradox is you'll end up with everything. It's like resisting the forces around you without actually resisting them.

This is why there are images of angels being strong and tall, with six-foot wings, because they have immense spiritual power. They've been to the spiritual gym and they've worked those spiritual muscles up inch by inch, and they know they can rely on them, and they know that they can use those spiritual muscles whenever the need arises, whenever those moments occur. So their sense of confidence, and their sense of being able to fly and go anywhere and do anything in their life, is absolute.

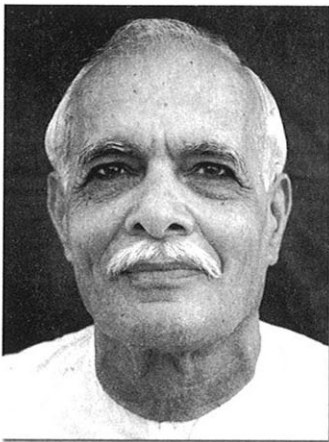
So when we actually start to feel like that and move up into that state of consciousness, we will stay there and humanity will finally regain its spiritual wings, and return all the things we think have been stolen from our hearts. And the earth will be a remarkable place again. We can start as soon as we like, for the tests are all there and the universe is waiting for us just to pass a few of them, to start helping us on our way.

Wendy Marshall is a teacher of meditation and personal development coach. She runs a meditation centre for the Brahma Kumaris in N. Wales.

THE FOOTPRINTS OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SPIRITUAL LEADER

Reflecting on the life and legacy of Brahma Baba,
the founder of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The past decade has seen an explosion in the publication of literature on the subject of leadership. Books packed with leadership tools, techniques, examples and analogies have become the scriptures of the age of management development, and the staple diet for those aspiring to lead others in the new millennium.



Brahma Baba ▲

He never considered himself to be a guru, always discouraged that perception when he felt it in others, and remained incognito and largely became a significant spiritual leader in India only after his death in 1969.

1936 - Early intake of new students ▼



The contrast between manager and leader has never been so sharp - every leader is a manager but not every manager is a leader, managers do things right whereas leaders do the right thing, managers manage things, while leaders inspire others to manage themselves. Managership is fast becoming a secondary qualification to leadership.

What has been missing however, in this plethora of ideas and concepts, is the essence of all leadership - leadership of spirit. What is an organisation but a set of relationships. What is a set of relationships but a gathering of spirits. In any gathering of spirits, leaders are not selected or appointed, they emerge. They emerge naturally because of the authenticity of their being, the power of their presence, the integrity of their actions, the courage of their hearts and their genuine care for others. Perhaps this is why the real leaders in any organisation are not defined by their position or their privileges, but by their ability to command the trust and respect of others as human beings first and as employees or colleagues second. It is that trust and respect which, if sustained over time, eventually crystallises into loyalty and commitment.

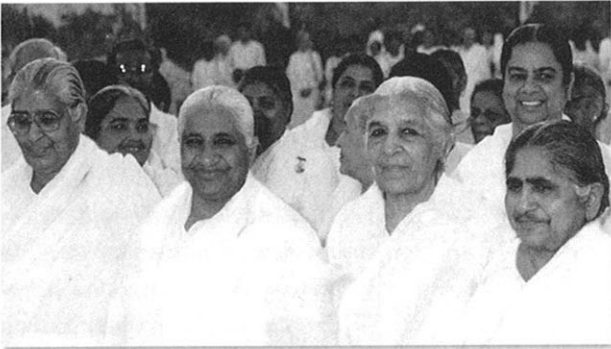
The profile of the complete leader includes many qualities and competencies which have spiritual roots, including the capacity to be sensitive to the feelings, emotions and needs of others, a consistently positive attitude towards every person and situation, and the ability to stay cool in the midst of crisis.

Perhaps, most significantly, nothing disturbs them, their inner stability is deep and real, and they are never moved to anger, never blame others and can never be heard complaining about anything or anybody. Not because their emotions are suppressed, but because they take full responsibility for their feelings, are free of all forms of attachment and have no personal agenda to pursue.

As we celebrate the 33rd year of the passing away of Brahma Baba, the founder of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, it is clear that all who met and worked with this inspiring individual were moved to follow him, not by force, fear or even devotion, but out of pure love and respect for a soul who embodied all the leadership qualities above and more.

Those who were inspired to follow in his footsteps are now no longer followers - they themselves are leaders. They are known as the Dadis, (Senior Sisters) and they themselves have tirelessly dedicated their lives to the spiritual service of others for the past three decades .

In all the memoirs and stories that the Dadis have to tell us about this great soul, there are perhaps three qualities which stand out most frequently. They are the qualities which provide the basis for all effective forms and styles of leadership - humility, respect and love expressed as genuine care.



▲ 1996 - Those young girls, now known worldwide as the Dadis (senior sisters) are seen here celebrating 60 years of spiritual service.

Of the many faces of humility which were a natural part of Brahma Baba's character, it appears that for all the experience and wisdom gained in that final period of his life, he still considered himself a humble student of God. By all accounts it seems the basis of his success in every relationship of his life was the absolute respect and unconditional love which he gave to every person he met, regardless of their background or age. He never considered himself to be a guru, always discouraging that perception whenever he felt it in others. He remained largely incognito and became a significant spiritual leader in India only after his death in 1969.

Perhaps the one quality which is at the heart of his legacy as a leader of spirit was his intention and attitude of continuous service. Long before the sophisticated modern day management gurus discovered the deepest secrets of leadership, Brahma Baba talked the talk and walked the walk of the 'servant leader'.

His leadership style was a living demonstration of the three core attributes of the servant leader:

1. To serve the needs of others before the needs of the self
2. To encourage and facilitate the growth and development of the spiritual dimension in others
3. To be honest and truthful in all dealings with others

Such was the purity and the power of his servant leadership, such was the selfless care and concern towards those who followed him, and such was the unlimited depth and breadth of that care (a pioneer of 24/7) that today, not only do the Dadis stand as living monuments to a true leader of spirit, but there is also a fast expanding international organisation which currently has over 4,000 branches in more than 80 countries where each student and teacher is learning the art of spiritual leadership, beginning with themselves.

To be a teacher we must first be a student. To be a leader we must also be a follower. To follow in the footsteps of any human being is not to imitate them blindly, it is not to try to be exactly like them - for we are all unique and tread our own path back to truth. True followership is taking the best, highest, truest and

purest of all that a real leader of spirit has been, said and done, and then building that into our own lives, thus creating a pathway for our own journey of spirit.

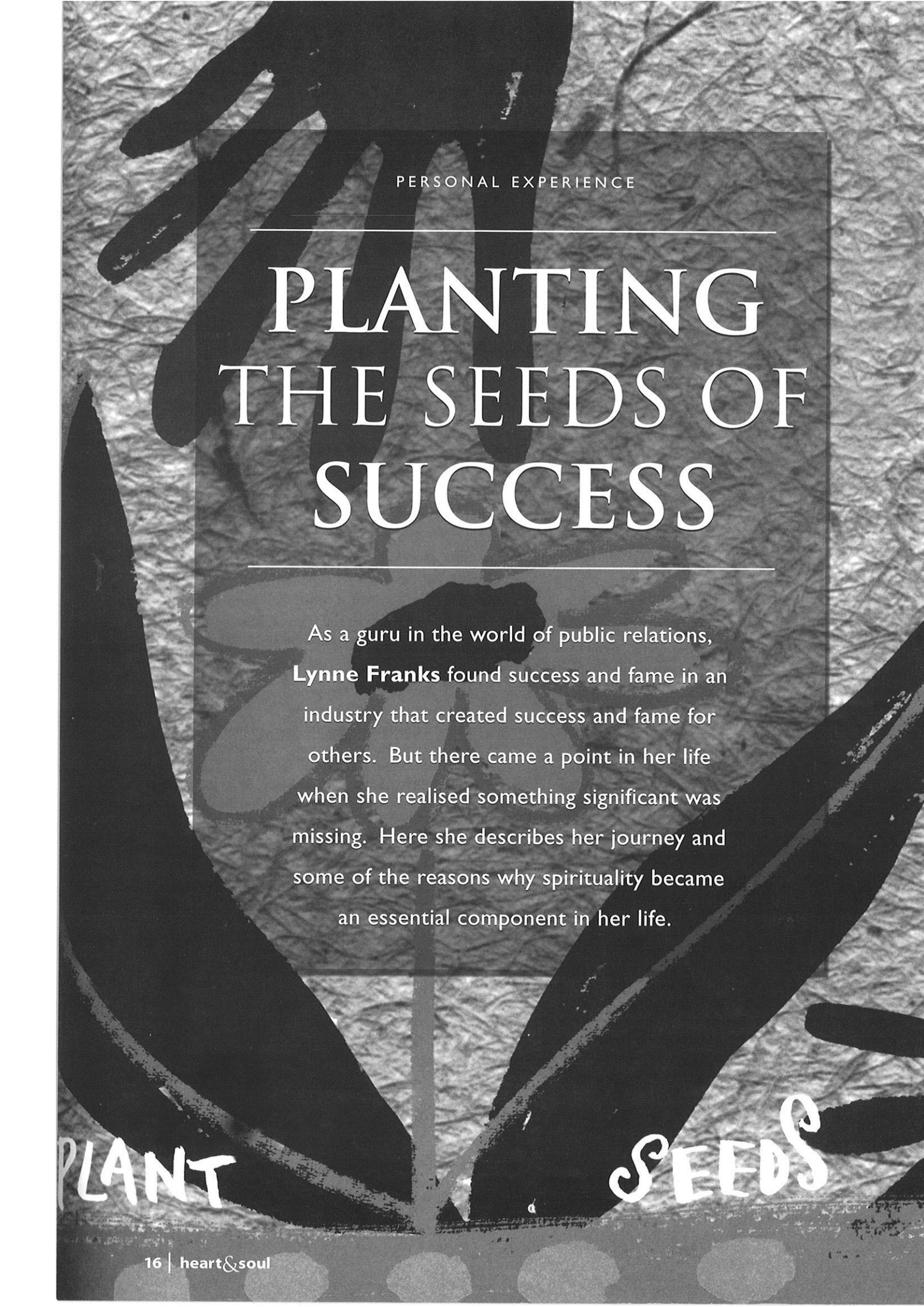
Brahma Baba's footsteps left many clear and radiant footprints for us all to follow. These are perhaps the nine most important and inspiring for our own journey to personal perfection:

- Make God, the Supreme Soul, your constant companion, friend, teacher and guide by cultivating a very real and personal relationship with the parent of all souls.
- Cultivate a love for pure silence so that the Supreme may reach you, touch you and teach you.
- Identify and renounce all that is false, beginning with the illusion that you are your body, and all the various subtle faces of ego, which arise from the illusion of physical identity.
- Accept and respect every soul you meet, regardless of their background.
- Have a clear aim and a focused vision of your final and highest spiritual state of consciousness - your inner destination.
- Understand and practise the consciousness of unconditional love as the highest form of service at this time.
- Completely eliminate anger, criticism and blame from one's personal repertoire of behaviour.
- Study spiritual wisdom relentlessly until the final moments of your life.
- Serve with a heart that is pure, free from desire, and that wants to help the truth emerge in the hearts of others (but never trying to force it to do so).

While Brahma Baba embodied each of these characteristics, there are many other qualities which he taught by example. Each January 18th, the day he left his body, Brahma Baba's spiritual legacy to the world is remembered and celebrated in communities worldwide by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

BRAHMA BABA'S WISDOM

"The easy method to protect yourself from the illusions of the world is to be detached from the world and to have love for God. Those who have love for the Father automatically become detached from the world. The more detached you are, the more loving you will be. Those who are constantly absorbed in God's love cannot be attracted by illusion. Just as waterproof material cannot absorb even a drop of water, in the same way, those who are lost and absorbed in love of God cannot be attracted or distracted by the illusions of others."



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF SUCCESS

As a guru in the world of public relations, **Lynne Franks** found success and fame in an industry that created success and fame for others. But there came a point in her life when she realised something significant was missing. Here she describes her journey and some of the reasons why spirituality became an essential component in her life.

PLANT

SEEDS

When I left school at 16 I was in such a hurry for adventure and the big world of business, I couldn't even entertain the thought of further education. I wanted to be a journalist, I thought, or something to do with communicating with people.

In the mid-sixties it was still difficult for a young woman to be taken seriously, especially without university qualifications, so I took my mother's advice and went to secretarial college. I learnt the basics of shorthand and typing but was too busy exploring the trendy clubs and fashion boutiques to really focus on my lessons. I scraped through and took a job as a shorthand typist in a solicitor's office.

I found out that, despite working since my early teens in my father's butcher shop, I was quite shy and ever had to get used to answering the office switchboard. Even at 17, this wasn't how I wanted to live my life and I rapidly moved to an advertising agency where I learnt about public relations – an area I immediately found I had an aptitude for. It seemed to require the very skill sets that I wanted to develop. Writing, organising events and learning how to charm people on the phone or in person seemed to come naturally to me as I gained more confidence in my abilities.

Little did I realise then that I'd started the career that was going to bring me recognition from my peers, acknowledgement from the UK media as the so-called 'PR Guru', a reasonable amount of material success and even, supposedly, the role as the inspiration for Edina, from BBC's top TV show, Absolutely Fabulous.

At 21 years old, after a few years working in PR and as a journalist, I decided to start my own business. Driven by passion in what I did, plus the confidence and naivety of youth, I started working from my kitchen table, determined to be successful and do the very best job I was capable of.

I was having some fun too and loved the creative process plus the energy of my young team. But I never stopped to analyse why I was driving myself so crazy. I was on a treadmill and I didn't know how to get off.

By the time I was 30, I'd had my own business for nearly ten years and was working with some of the country's top fashion designers and consumer brands. I was married to fashion designer Paul Howie and we worked together with our staff and friends from a large building in the middle of trendy Covent Garden. We had our own lovely house in South London and, most important of all, two beautiful babies, Joshua and his sister Jessica, born two years later.

Life seemed to be perfect. Business was going well for me, although not so well for my husband. He reacted by drinking too much and disappearing for days with his chums. My kids were great – but I was working so hard I rarely saw them. I never got home until late at night and relied on holidays and some weekends to get close with my children.

I didn't feel too healthy either. I was too busy to exercise, always eating rich food in expensive restaurants or grabbing a sandwich on the run. I was extremely stressed and never had time and space to check how I was really doing. I'd just rush from meeting to meeting, press launch to phone call, worrying about the next situation without having time to integrate the last.

I was having some fun too and loved the creative process plus the energy of my young team. But I never stopped to analyse why I was driving myself so crazy. I was on a treadmill and I didn't know how to get off.

At this point in my life, spirituality was the furthest thing from my mind. I had been born a Jew but hadn't practised the faith since a teenager. I'd gone through the motions of study to keep my grandmother happy but didn't relate much to the traditions.

I was way off my centre and looking for some inner strength. I found Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, a Japanese sect based on chanting, through friends and surprised myself by doing the morning and evening rituals for hours daily. It gave me the sense of community and connection with a divine power that I realised I had been looking for. I started understanding about cause and effect, the eternity of the soul and the power of service.

After several years, my husband joined me in my practice and our grand new home in the middle of London became the venue for many meetings of our fellow Buddhists. Our family life became more grounded and, despite all the material trappings of the eighties, our home became a spiritual centre for many. We were involved in putting on a neighbourhood pantomime; helping with a modern version of Alice in Wonderland with our children playing little rabbits and I seemed, with my usual enthusiasm, to have got half of London chanting.

Now at last, perhaps, I was living a successful life. We were making lots of money working together running what had become London's foremost PR agency and we were on the same spiritual path. We lived near the office so I could see more of the children and I had the support to give me the massages and acupuncture I needed regularly.

As I write this I wonder what went wrong, because somehow happiness was still eluding me. I had achieved everything I'd always thought I'd wanted but my inner life somehow still felt empty. My husband and I weren't truly connecting and work was still all consuming. It took the deaths of two of my closest women friends from cancer within a short time period, women who did the same work as me and with children the same age, that made me reassess what living a successful life really meant to me.

FIVE THINGS I HAVE LEARNT IN MY LIFE

1. **Find the time and space for silence and inner communication.**
2. **Always come from my integrity and speak from my heart.**
3. **Respect self and others.**
4. **Take responsibility for all my actions but don't beat myself up for my mistakes.**
5. **Come from a place of love, not fear.**

I found that a successful life was a life based on living my truth. That the wellbeing of my loved ones and friends was far more important than buying a new car or being written about in the newspapers. That service to others could bring more joy than any kind of business achievements and that being in nature, connecting with the divine, would bring me back to my true nature more than any shopping trip to the latest fashion store could even begin to.

Sadly my marriage broke up in this period as I struggled to find out who the real Lynne Franks is. I realised I wasn't a commercial brand struggling for my father's approval and the stress of keeping up with the expectations of myself and others. I saw that I was a woman, a soul, who'd forgotten how to connect with her own higher self.

I had created a life for myself where I was starved of time; time to go inwards and reflect on my inner truth, not through chanting but through quiet time and meditation. I left my job and started on an inner and outer journey that took me on many new adventures and discoveries. I met extraordinary men and women who'd guide and teach me on the way.

I started to wake up to a new kind of consciousness; an awareness of how the world really worked. How business seemed to control so many situations, both

local and global, based just on the bottom line and yet attention to human rights and the environment were never more important for the long term wellbeing of this planet.

I appreciated that the individual can make a difference and take responsibility for humanity, whether through prayers, dialogue or positive action. I learnt the importance of new technology to ask questions and communicate with each other as well as the power of group meditation. I met the Brahma Kumaris, and the powerful yogi and joint administrators Head of Brahma Kumaris, Dadi Janki, who became my mentor and teacher.

The realisation came that controlling my life, whether through chanting my intentions or just too much structure and planning, would not bring me the release I required. I had to learn to trust my flow, leaving space to bring in the new and, most of all, to feel gratitude every day for the abundance of love and connection I am able to give myself and others.

I understood that teaching and writing based on my own experiences, both good and bad, were my way of serving. That all the techniques of public relations; communicating, creating empathy and educating were important tools in a far bigger picture. I realised that my role is to help enable other individuals to be empowered, create their dreams, live by their values and learn how to connect with the universal oneness. And that in turn I would learn so much from those I would meet.

I appreciate that life is a journey and we are constantly growing and developing our awareness with spirit. I have learnt to value the truly successful aspects of my life – relationships with others, connection with nature, taking care of my body and my soul. After several years of living in California, I am returning home to Europe to continue my journey, learning above all to stay in the moment and give myself the time to truly connect with self and others.

It is time now more than ever to work towards a world of peace and understanding, where women and men, whatever their nationality, religion or race learn to communicate together, understand each other, tell their stories and be in touch with their values.

I am dedicated to contributing my skills as a global communicator towards this end, where we can all recognise ourselves as one family, working in partnership to co-create a life based on values and true success.

Planting the seeds of successful living every day of our lives is, I believe, what we are here to do and nurturing and sustaining these fragile plants and flowers will in turn create a garden of beauty where we can all live in harmony and peace.

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Love is never
asked for.
Love comes
to you
automatically.

– Dadi Janki –

For sixty years **Dadi Janki** has been practising meditation and cultivating her relationship with God. For her, God is a very real individual with whom she has a personal relationship. He is not a resident of this world, and is quite the opposite of the idea of an omnipresent being. Dadi sees God as an individual soul, a perfect soul, with a pure personality, residing beyond the three dimensions of this physical, corporeal world. While Dadi is one of the busiest people you could meet, her connection with God is constant, and anyone who meets her is struck by the light, pure love and power that comes through her. In daily classes she encourages those close to her, and those genuinely interested, to cultivate and sustain their own relationship with the source. Her classes are simple but deep, relevant to daily life and yet the atmosphere they create can lift an audience into another dimension. As you listen, you can tell she knows God well and He knows her! Here is a short class on God's Love, very much in her direct but compelling style.

HOW DO WE RECEIVE GODS LOVE?

God reminds us there is no longer any need to ask 'how' or 'why' about anything in life. Otherwise, we will spend our time in thinking and we miss the chance to absorb his love. God is the bestower and He is constantly giving love. It's a question of receiving in one second, so let yourself be free from all other thoughts in order to receive his light and love. All you need to do is say, "God is mine", and God then says, "The child is mine", and then we start to take love.

Secondly, if you give attention to spiritual study, if you are inculcating spiritual truths and allowing those truths to purify your motives, you can draw God's love. Thirdly, if you have the feeling of wanting to give happiness, not to give sorrow or take sorrow, then you can draw God's love. Fourthly, if you are constantly saying 'yes' to the service of others with love, not out of compulsion, with selflessness, not out of wanting recognition, you will also be able to take love. These four aspects will make you worthy and then you have the right to receive God's love.

Love is never asked for. Love comes to you automatically.

Somebody asked me once, "What is God's love?" I said L means Light, O means to have an Open and honest heart which is able to receive, V means Victorious over all the illusions which we use to block our heart, and E means Ever. This is God's love - which means light, forever. God's love makes us constantly victorious over all illusion and all levels of pain. We learn this forever.

There are different aspects of love. One is the love for the self, second is the love for God and third is the love for the spiritual family. My experience tells me you can only love yourself when you have an accurate recognition of God. God's love then gives you strength. It gives you the strength to remain in self-respect. Then you can give yourself love. Otherwise you cannot love yourself. You will be dry. It is just like you are pushing the car without petrol. If anyone asks about your well being you will say, "I am OK, I am fine", but that's all you will feel. However, if you have God's love, that makes the soul content, it allows us to understand everything. Confusion and fear finish. So, we have to understand God. We have to accurately recognise God.

Secondly, the knowledge of this drama should be completely accurate in order to understand each other. It should be so accurately understood that each and everyone has their own part. Everyone's drama or part is fixed. But then, you also need to understand that you also have to play your part, along with everyone else. How should your part be? Only if you are light in this aspect, which means you are not worrying about what is happening in other people's dramas, only then can you become the embodiment of love. Understand and recognise the speciality of everyone, because every soul has their own speciality.

It doesn't take time to understand God, but it takes time to understand one another. Even now, people say to me, "I am OK with everyone except this person." If somebody says to me, "I am fine with everyone but I have difficulty with you", I won't understand it to be the other person's problem, I will feel it is my problem.

We are all in service together. We are all here today because we recognise this is the time of service. So there should be happiness and power within each of us. We should receive power and happiness from one another. Success is where there is power and happiness. If I am living with someone and I don't have power and happiness, then I can't blame them. It is because of my own lack of understanding. It doesn't matter what soul comes in front of me. It doesn't matter if they don't know how to give love. Even then, why should I stop giving love. The sun doesn't stop doing its work. The river doesn't stop flowing. The task of the sun is to give light and the task of the river is to flow. In the same way it is our task to remain embodiments of love. We are the children of God the bestower, we cannot give anything else. At least I should remain an embodiment of love. Even if I just constantly smile, then there is also power in that. You say there are many reasons for your lack of love. But you will dry up if you go on giving the reasons. Get rid of the reasons and find the solution. God is always giving love. God Himself doesn't stop giving love but we create obstacles in taking that love.

God is the ocean of love and I should consider myself as the child of the ocean. Then I can go to the depth of love. Go into the depth of the ocean; then you will become a cloud who can shower on others. Wherever you go you can make that place green. The ocean is unlimited. The more you go into the depth of the truth of who you truly are and who God is, the more you receive the treasure of God's love and power. This takes you beyond; it makes you detached, and detachment is necessary to be loving.

Somebody asked me once,
"What is God's love?"

I said L means Light, O means to
have an Open and honest heart
which is able to receive, V means
Victorious over all the illusions
which we use to block our heart,
and E means for Ever.

Now the question arises, how can I go into the depth of the ocean? You are scared to do this. You stay at the surface and just bring up shells. Some people think about spiritual truths, they churn a little bit, speak a little bit of spiritual knowledge and they are happy. But that is just like playing with shells. You have to go deep and get the jewels. Once you go deep in the ocean, then you won't be distracted by what is happening around you. You won't even hear anything. This is introvertedness. This is going into silence. All this should be happening during whatever task we are engaged in. Be detached, go into the depth of the ocean, be in silence, and play with jewels and the treasures of spiritual knowledge during your daily activities.

Equally important is the vision which we have of ourselves. I see myself as a child of God, I am on Godly service, these are auspicious and beautiful moments of this special time of great personal and world transformation. If any other thoughts come, then they are obstacles in our ability to have the power of concentration. There are many who are clever in writing and in giving lectures, but they are not clever in being in silence, in diving deep inside and bringing up jewels (realisations) and treasure (inner powers). Let your intellect be in silence, in just sitting with God, that's all you need to do.

At this time spiritual service means to be a donor. There are three kinds of donation: there are those who donate, those who are great donors and those who give blessings. Those who donate on the path of truth are those who give (spiritual) knowledge to others; those who are great donors automatically give whatever helps others. And then there are those who also give blessings. From them, whatever anyone needs, they get that automatically, whether it is through subtle vibrations, words, interaction or relationships. The secret in this is to pay attention to your spiritual stage. God says, "You children have to become master knowledgeable and finish being dependent. Let there be no dependency on the elements, nature; no subservience to physical things or other people." By being masters, we can then be donors. Then when people come in front of you, they will automatically receive what they want. You will ask, "How is it possible?" But this is how blessings take place. A great donor of truth or knowledge should not think, "I don't know what this person wants. How can I give them anything?" This means your intellect is not working. To think, "I have to give this, I have to give that", will make you very tired. This is not the sign of a donor. When your stage (state of consciousness) is good, then people will get whatever they need. You just have to stand there and smile!

Have a merciful heart. Do not be hard hearted. If your nature is hard then it will take time for the other person to change, but if you have an honest and merciful heart, then everyone will receive benefit from you. Don't keep their mistakes in your mind. If

you change, the other person will change. If you find that there is a hard hearted feeling towards someone, this indicates a lack of the power of realisation on your part. For this, pay attention to your nature. I am going to tell you a secret. I used to get a little angry because I used to want this person to change and do things properly, but now I make myself very cool.



I know that God has never let go of hope for me. I might have let go of my courage, but God always gave help and made me courageous.

Somebody said to me, "If you become cool then how will the other person reform?" But I said, "Well, when I become angry they still do not reform, so what is the point?" What happens is that first there is this anger, because things are not happening as I like. So then, I begin to lose hope in that soul. Then, there are feelings of dislike for the person. All of this is wrong. In fact, we must never let go of hope for another soul. They themselves might have let go of hope for themselves, others might not have any hope in them either, but I myself must make this lesson firm - I cannot let go of hope for that soul. Why? Because I know that God has never let go of hope for me. I might have let go of my courage, but God always gave help and made me courageous. We have to give the help of giving courage to other souls. This is our duty. I should not expect that someone should change. This is my secret, that that person should not lose hope in himself. Whether they change or not, do not let them let go of hope in the self. Because once you let go of the hope in the self, then your happiness decreases, and you will not be able to draw love from your spiritual family, and change will be extremely difficult. I can't bear to see someone standing just to one side, separated from this love.

Some people say, "Oh! Leave that person alone, they don't make any spiritual effort, why are you so bothered with them?" Many will say to me, "Why do you give that person so much time, this one person is taking a lot of your time. It's better to give your time to someone else." But this is wrong. If you go to hospital, the doctors will give oxygen right to the end, even if they know the person will die. You can't say, "Let go of this person, leave this person." You can't leave the serious patient and go to another patient. What is that? That is called not fulfilling your duty. God never lets go of the child. The child lets go of God, forgets about God, but God simply waits, patiently, lovingly, knowing the child will one day turn to take God's love again.

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SPIRITUALITY AND LOVE IN THE TIME OF OLD AGE

"Love is a fundamental aspect of spirituality."

Dr Sarah Eagger is a consultant psychiatrist at a London teaching hospital. With a long-standing interest in the role of values in the caring professions and more than twenty years of research into spiritual principles and practices, she is frequently asked to share her wisdom with fellow professionals. Here she talks about love and spirituality in the context of caring for the aged and dying.

CHALLENGES OF OLD AGE

As night follows day so old age brings change and loss, and with it dependency, isolation, loneliness and depression. But it can also be a time of great spiritual growth and awareness and, for some, a celebration of wisdom born of experience. People of all ages share basic human needs; love, faith, hope, peace and worship – older people are no different and certainly these needs can take on a particular poignancy in old age. It is normal to view old age with some apprehension. The depletions of ageing multiply with the loss of role, bereavement and domicile. Undoubtedly they have an impact on 'personhood' in ways that we can but barely imagine when we are younger – our self-image and identity slowly drain away and ultimately we face death.

Our society tends to be ageist and marginalises older people, making them feel a burden. In western culture there is such an emphasis on achievement and the work ethic that there simply isn't the appreciation of the wisdom of old age as an essential and significant ingredient of society. It would appear that in eastern societies it is more customary to respect and honour one's elders.

Yet, as the pastoral director of Methodist Homes for the Aged, Albert Jewel reminds us, in his book *Spirituality and Ageing*, "This is a time when they have a real need for the affirmation of their continuing value as unique and socially connected human beings and their wisdom as a resource for others."

Facing death also shapes the spirituality of many older people. The unfinished business of human relationships and the need to become reconciled with significant

others becomes a high priority; their deepest desire is to die at peace. To try and heal painful memories and perhaps even a basic need to be at one with their God (whomever or whatever he, she or it might be), as death approaches, is a legitimate focus. Towards the end of life there is the search for integration (a sense of wholeness in a spiritual sense) to pull life together and make sense of it as a whole.

I recall Erickson's eighth stage of psychosocial development – integrity versus despair. Integrity in old age is the capacity to assimilate (integrate) the value of one's full life experience – to be and to continue to be – through having been – to hold onto the worthwhile aspects of one's life. These include conscious and unconscious memories of having been valued and loved. It implies being free enough of persecutory guilt as a result of having been able to love.

Love is a fundamental aspect of spirituality.

As healthcare professionals, we may feel uncomfortable with the word or the idea of love. Maybe we feel easier describing love 'in action' - in other words, the effect of love in the kind of work we do – care, compassion, consideration, kindness, mercy, empathy and sympathy

Our wellbeing as a society depends
absolutely on whether we, as
individuals, are willing to care about
how life is for other people.

I have in the past been moved and inspired by the writings of Stephanie Dowrick and in particular by some of her reflections for her book, *The Universal Heart*.

"It's clear that at the beginning of a human life and again at the end, love – expressed through delight, gratitude, constancy, interest, good humour, kindness – is what matters most to us. The absence of love is something that countless people experience on a daily basis. They may call it loneliness, isolation, dissatisfaction or emptiness. Often they have become strangers to love and strangers to themselves. Love joins us to others – we need that the longing to care for others and be cared for is fundamental to our shared human nature. We are social beings, using our relationships throughout our lives to find out what we are capable of giving, and to discover who we are, what makes sense to us, what insight we can achieve and what kind of life we are in the process of creating. Love connects us and inspires us. Our wellbeing as a society depends absolutely on whether we, as individuals, are willing to care about how life is for other people. A safe society is one where trust exists and concern for others is readily expressed. If we are cut off from our capacity to give and receive love, we go beyond loneliness, we become dangerous to others as well as ourselves. A life worth living is a life of love. And anything worth discovering about love will deepen not just one but every one of our relationships. Just as crucially though, love joins us to the deepest part of ourselves. It allows us to know that our own life has legitimacy, that from our own inner world we can reach out to give willingly to other people and receive what they can give us." She urges us to love generously.

LOVE AS A VALUE

In 1994 the BMA held a summit on 'Core values for the medical profession'. The summit called for a re-evaluation, redefinition and restatement of core values, which it defined as 'ancient virtues distilled over time'. Those at the meeting recognised these values - derived from the doctor-patient relationship and based on love, caring and sharing - as the profession's greatest asset, greater even than scientific knowledge and sophisticated technology.

The core values of the medical profession identified by that summit were caring, compassion, integrity, competence, confidentiality, responsibility, advocacy and the spirit of enquiry.

Dr Ian McWhinney has written that responding to suffering is a moral obligation, that compassion is not just conditional upon evidence of its effectiveness. The relationship between doctor and patient is a covenant, an undertaking to do what is needed, beyond the terms of the contract. Sticking with a person through thick and thin is hard work, an act of love - active love, tenacity - a whole science (or a whole art). The healing relationship between practitioner and patient is one in which there are strong moral obligations and mutual commitments. He feels we have forgotten the importance in medicine of presence and the continuity

of responsibility. And, as we know from our experience, continuity in relationships builds trust and creates a context for healing.

OLD AGE PSYCHIATRY

In Old Age Psychiatry we deal with much co-morbidity. The elderly with mental health problems often have the triple disadvantage of problems associated with aging, physical illness and mental health --- depression, paranoia and dementia.

What of those who have 'turned their face to the wall' and feel there is nothing for them to live for any more. Is this an illness requiring ECT or a justifiable response to the end of life?

John Swinton in his book, *Spirituality and Mental Health*, describes depression as a profoundly spiritual illness that digs to the heart of a person's spirit and forces people to face experiences of meaninglessness and hopelessness. We know that this can be devastating in its consequences. Swinton believes the spiritual dimension has the potential to reframe experiences and enable people to reinterpret them in ways that are therapeutically helpful.

When we ask the question, "what does it feel like to have dementia?" rather than simply, "What is dementia?" we begin to see this particular condition in a very different light. Swinton highlights the work that has shown clearly the importance of recognising the continuing personhood of people with dementia, even in the midst of neurological degeneration. When viewed from the sufferer's perspective, dementia is found to have hidden psychological and spiritual dimensions that are unnecessarily subsumed by the dominance of the medico-biological discourse. Focusing on the former offers new possibilities of rehumanisation for people with this illness. Swinton encourages interventions, such as a therapeutic presence, that help to reconnect those who are, by definition, becoming disconnected from self, others and God.

Certainly we are challenged to find a spirituality capable of embracing dementia, a condition in which so much is stripped away only the essence may seem to remain. This confronts our usual notions of personhood. I was extremely gratified to find that the late Tom Kitwood, a psychologist and leader in dementia care from Bradford, had put love at the centre of his circle of the main psychological needs of people with dementia in his book *Dementia Reconsidered*.

Kitwood also quotes a carer who described persons with dementia as showing, "an undisguised and almost child-like yearning for love." By love she meant a generous, forgiving and unconditional acceptance, a wholehearted emotional giving, without any expectation of direct reward. The presence of dementia, she suggested, may provoke a psychospiritual crisis in carers, "If we do not deal with our own issues of love, and grief around the failures of love, we cannot live with Alzheimer's disease."

HOW WE LOVE

I know that in our daily practice we reveal aspects of love in a myriad of ways. As you are aware it is often the kind word, a touch or loving look that has the most significance for the patient. As Brian Martindale describes, we have an 'everlasting connection' with those who may have... nothing. At times we are the only human connection our patients have – we become their family, their world, even immodest though it may sound - their reason to live. The rules of standard psychiatry seem to change, to become more flexible and respond in a humane way to the situations we face. We help with the tasks of resolution and integration. I recall a patient who was finding it difficult to come to terms with his loss of skills as a builder and I related the daoist ideas about the increasing value of quiet and reflection in old age. I told him that they regarded one of the tasks of old age was to sit beside running water and contemplate! He then realised how much time he spent sitting by his fishpond and how much he enjoyed it and was delighted.

In the book *Spirituality and Ageing* another author says we so often hear old people say: "Why don't I die – I don't want to be a burden to others." He feels we should never allow this to go unanswered as it signifies hopelessness.

He tells old people: you are never a burden if people love you - those who do have the joy and privilege of looking with tenderness, concern and intelligence at someone they love. But in return you must be able to receive graciously and make it as easy as possible for them to love you. If you receive with a cramped heart you are saying, "I would prefer to receive nothing from you, but I am a victim."

We all depend on one another's love and must learn at all ages how to receive it with gratitude and grace.

All patients are vulnerable, especially the aged. They often can't communicate in the conventional sense, yet really respond to our loving attitude. I don't have to tell you that this is not easy to sustain, day in, day out, with the sheer intensity of the work, but I continuously see how much love is reflected in work we do in dementia care.

We are there to affirm, validate,
acknowledge, listen, witness, to hear
confession, to hear their story, to
love and allow ourselves to be loved.

Stephanie Dowrick's tells a touching story which illustrates this point.

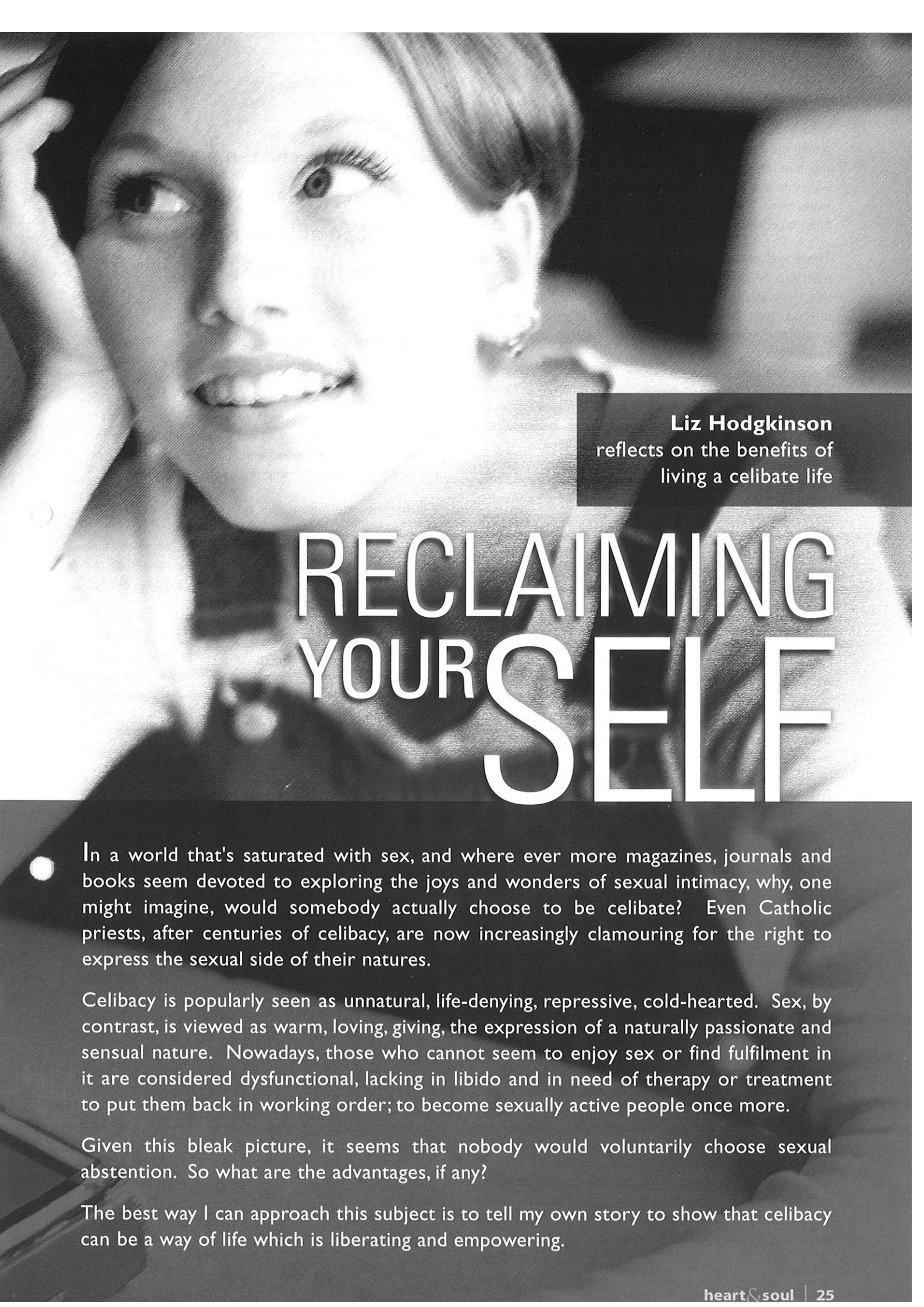
"I was told a quite exceptional story about two people I have observed together on several occasions. The younger man, Geoff, is profoundly intellectually and physically disabled. He has no speech. His movements are limited and out of control. He is also deaf and blind. The older man, Bill, is the volunteer who comes unfailingly each day to see Geoff, to talk to him, hold his hand, share news with him and let him know he is loved. Nothing too remarkable in that you may think. But what about this? When Bill enters the large building where Geoff lives, Geoff starts moving, smiling and making the noises that are for him the nearest approximation to speech. He cannot hear Bill coming. But through his senses he knows that Bill is in the building even when Bill is still several rooms away. Geoff is someone whose powers of comprehension would seem to be minimal. Yet the sense that he has of Bill's presence, and the comfort and delight he draws from that, is unfailingly acute."

This really does demonstrate the mysterious power of love and its central role in caring. I see this on the wards every day.

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Liz Hodgkinson
reflects on the benefits of
living a celibate life

RECLAIMING YOURSELF

In a world that's saturated with sex, and where ever more magazines, journals and books seem devoted to exploring the joys and wonders of sexual intimacy, why, one might imagine, would somebody actually choose to be celibate? Even Catholic priests, after centuries of celibacy, are now increasingly clamouring for the right to express the sexual side of their natures.

Celibacy is popularly seen as unnatural, life-denying, repressive, cold-hearted. Sex, by contrast, is viewed as warm, loving, giving, the expression of a naturally passionate and sensual nature. Nowadays, those who cannot seem to enjoy sex or find fulfilment in it are considered dysfunctional, lacking in libido and in need of therapy or treatment to put them back in working order; to become sexually active people once more.

Given this bleak picture, it seems that nobody would voluntarily choose sexual abstinence. So what are the advantages, if any?

The best way I can approach this subject is to tell my own story to show that celibacy can be a way of life which is liberating and empowering.

I came to sexual maturity in the 1960's, at the time when the permissive society was new, and when there was the idea that all of us - and not just aristocrats or bohemians - could partake fully in a variety of sexual experience. For the first time, sex could be separated from reproduction or the fear of pregnancy.

There was no longer any good reason to confine sex to marriage or to limit ourselves to one partner for life. We, the sixties generation, fondly imagined that, through physical sex, we would become far more loving, passionate and intimate than our parents' generation could have ever hoped for.

At first, this all seemed wonderfully liberating. Women particularly would be able to cast off the repression of centuries. How-to explicit sex manuals appeared on the scene. We could now all have a good time.

The only problem was, we didn't have such a good time. Given to understand that sex was the way to immense joy and lasting union, we at first couldn't understand why it didn't work like that. Why, instead of being gloriously happy and fulfilled, were so many of us miserable and depressed? Don't forget that the first generation to enjoy sexual freedom was also the first generation to take tranquillisers, anti-depressants and sleeping pills to try to wipe out the sense of inadequacy and failure that kept threatening to rise to the surface.

As time went on, some of us dimly began to realise that sex was promising more, much more, than it was ever going to deliver. It clearly wasn't leading to wonderful, ecstatic relationships or to a breaking down of barriers between the sexes. It wasn't making people more loving, more intimate, more gloriously connected. Following the sexual revolution, there were more divorces and relationship break-ups than ever.

Not to say that the failure of relationships was entirely and completely a result of our increased expectations. Its false promise, fools gold, was certainly a major factor. We now had extremely high expectations of all our relationships and top of the list was the idea that intimate encounters had to satisfy us sexually. Otherwise, there was little point.

It came as quite a shock to me to learn - thanks in part to the teachings of the Brahma Kumaris, who first opened my eyes to the underlying dangers of sexual relationships - that sexual desire could actually never be satisfied, that it was, in fact, like any other addiction. The more sexual 'satisfaction' you gained, the more you wanted and the more your tolerance increased, in exactly the same way that a heroin addict or alcoholic keeps wanting more of the mind-altering substance.

After listening to the teachings of the Brahma Kumaris on the subject - which initially sounded extremely strange to me - my then husband and I decided to give sex a rest, to see what happened.

If I had not chosen a period of celibacy, I fear I would never have been able to reclaim myself to the extent I have.

The results were astonishing and entirely positive. We came to see sex as binding, rather than freeing, and it is not an exaggeration to say that our relationship improved beyond all recognition once we decided to take sex out of the agenda. We no longer expected sex to do what it patently could not - bring us together in a lasting loving and joyful union - we set about re-establishing the relationship on a different footing.

We became, eventually, like brother and sister, or like two friends sharing a house. Our respect for each other increased now that we were no longer making impossible demands of each other and now that we were no longer looking to the other for some kind of transcendental satisfaction.

I found that freedom from somebody else's sexual demands, and also the freedom from making sexual demands on another person, gave me the energy to pursue other interests, interests which were ultimately more rewarding. I also became cooler, calmer and, I think, more intelligent, as my mind seemed to clear.



During the years of my celibacy, I found the strength to write 21 published books, to establish myself as a wholly autonomous independent human being and to cultivate a wide range of friendships of varying intensity. I began to see myself as a whole and complete person in my own right, rather than half a human looking to find 'happiness' within a sexually active relationship.

There is also the factor that if you are not relating to one other person in this intimate and exclusive way, you will have more energy to focus upon wider issues. The main reason for celibacy among some religious orders is that, freed from the urgent demands and desires of the body and pulls in that direction, the mind and spirit will be able to turn to God or contemplation of eternal truths.

I can't say that I have had such a high-minded goal during my years of celibacy. My aim was more the feminist one of personal empowerment and a fervent wish not to be colonised by another person.

Now, having been celibate from choice for more than a decade, I can only say what to me seem to be the advantages. Uppermost is that I have been able to reclaim myself, to sort out my own identity as distinct from anybody else's.

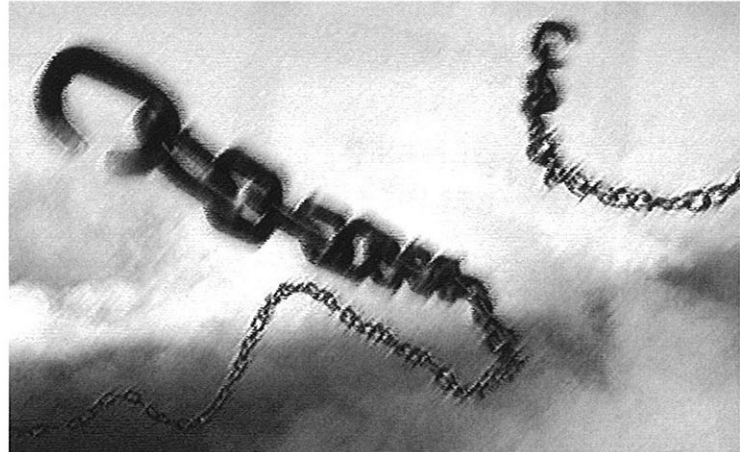
For a woman, I think this particularly important, for in our present society she can lose her identity in a way that does not happen for a man. She loses her name in marriage, usually, and all her children bear the father's name. Women can so easily lose themselves in the roles of wife and mother, whereas a prolonged period of celibacy has helped me to find myself; to bring together the masculine and feminine sides of my nature. Freed from the sexual element, I have been able to explore important issues with both my female and male friends.

I have also been mercifully freed from the worry of pregnancy, dangers of contraception and sexually related diseases, and the fear that somebody might leave me to go off with another. When you are celibate, all your relationships are on a friendship basis and this to me feels much healthier than twining myself around and supergluing myself to another person. I am me, not half of an indivisible couple.

If I had not chosen a period of celibacy, I fear I would never have been able to reclaim myself to the extent I have. In order to create, to realise our potential, we all need solitude, time to ourselves. When entangled in an intense, fervid sexual relationship, that time can be difficult to obtain, even in the largest house. A sexual partner will always feel free to encroach, to take up your time. Why? Because sexual partners always feel they have claims on you, that they own you, at least to some extent.

Sexual activity brings in its wake the emotions of anger, lust, jealousy, possession and attachment. It has been wonderful to be free of those - well, reasonably free - for such a long time. Celibacy allows you to become a more special, more unique individual.

My own feeling now is that celibacy should be presented to people as a choice as valid as sexual activity. It is unrealistic to expect that everybody will henceforth become celibate forever - the sex drive is too powerful, and sex too immediately gratifying for that ever to become a widespread possibility.



But it seems unarguable that the extreme focus on physical sex which has happened in the past 30 years has not brought one jot of extra happiness to society in general. Rather, I would say, it has brought misery. We have the sad spectacle of teenage pregnancies, of children giving birth to children. We daily witness in our newspapers the anguish and sorrow caused by extra-marital affairs. We have an ever-higher abortion rate, and ever-increasing incidence of marriage breakdowns.

We have diseases we cannot even begin to cure or treat, such as AIDS - a salutary reminder of what can happen when the urge for sexual gratification goes mad. We have widespread and increasing prostitution, sexual abuse, sex offenders, sexual harassment, a huge and growing pornography industry. Women's and now men's bodies are being exploited for momentary sexual titillation, in a vast number of magazines and videos. But, can you list similar ills which have resulted from sexual abstention, or celibacy?

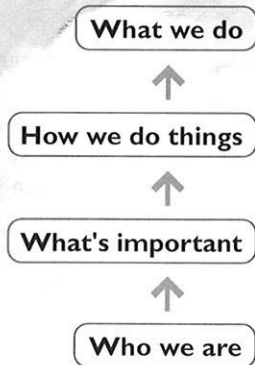
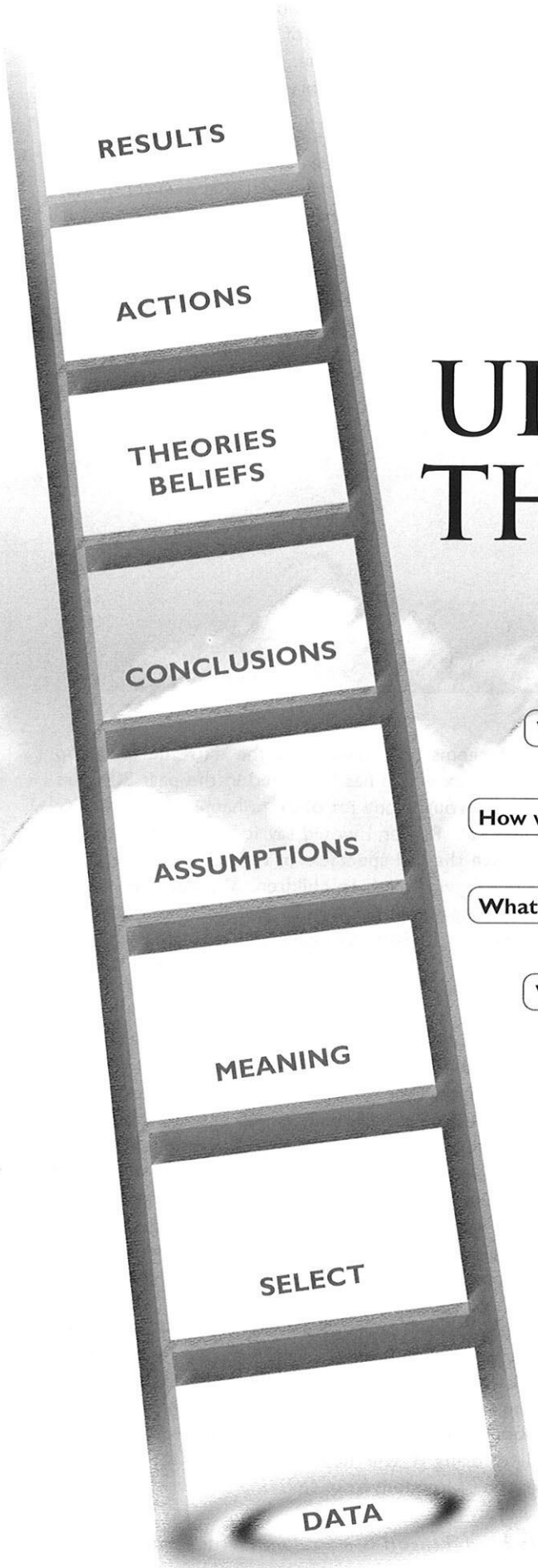
I can't say, any more than anybody else, what will happen in the future. I haven't taken a vow of celibacy and it's possible I may embark on another intimate relationship. I don't know - I only know that nobody can ever say never. But whatever the future might bring, I will never regret my more than a decade of freedom from sex.

Liz Hodgkinson is a freelance writer and author of 40 books.

TWO and a half millennia ago, the father of Western philosophy Socrates advised: "To find your Self, think for yourself." Thinking for the self and knowing the self are deceptively challenging, due to the conditioning and programming we receive from society, family, religion and the media. It is a sad truth that all too few of us genuinely think for ourselves. At an early age our programming begins - to think in certain ways and to eschew others - both the thoughts and those who think them. Unfortunately few of us are able to defend ourselves from the imposed dogma of 'common sense' that Einstein said represents the 'collection of prejudices acquired by age eighteen'.

UP AND DOWN THE LADDER!

Geoff Marlow reminds us of the value of continuous learning and growth



Our **beliefs** about who we are and hence what's important etc. drive our conscious and unconscious decisions about...
 what we **select**,
 what **meanings** we infer,
 what **assumptions** we make,
 what **conclusions** we draw, and so...
 what **beliefs** we create and reinforce
 ... all in a self-reinforcing loop

Truly great thinkers through the ages have been those who recognised and broke free from the constraints of conventional thought. As we have already seen, Albert Einstein was acutely aware of the problem of self-limited awareness. In particular he was aware of the role that education – whether it be formal or in the 'University of Life' – plays in limiting awareness. His recognition that "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education" helped him to remain open to new learning and be a powerful example of what is possible when one truly thinks for oneself and 'never loses a holy curiosity'. So what is a 'holy curiosity'? Simply a 'pure' curiosity to learn. A curiosity which is unbiased and uncoloured by our past beliefs – particularly about who we are. How can we develop such a 'holy curiosity'? A key practice is the 'detached observation' of our own thinking. This practice automatically expands our awareness by highlighting ways in which we unconsciously limit our own awareness.

A very powerful tool for supporting 'detached observation' and developing the power of awareness is the 'Ladder of Inference'. The Ladder is a tool widely used in organisational learning practice and is originally attributed to Chris Argyris, a Professor of Education and Organisational Behaviour at Harvard University in the US. One of the most useful versions of the ladder and how it can be used in organisational change and learning work appears in the Fifth Discipline Fieldbook by Peter Senge et al.

[A word of caution: When using the Ladder of Inference or any other thought tool it is important to remember that a tool is just that - a tool. It is not 'reality' but a convenient way to describe - or model - certain aspects of reality. As W. Edwards Deming, the Quality 'guru' credited with Japan's rise to industrial greatness, said, "All models are wrong, but some models are useful." The same counsel is offered by the Eastern philosopher who said, "When the sage point to the moon, all the idiot sees is the finger".]

In the remainder of this section we will build up, step by step, the Ladder of Inference - for which you will need a blank sheet of paper and a pen. The Ladder of Inference is a 'thought tool' which shows how we abstract, distil and filter our available information, data or observations and reach conclusions about our individual and collective reality - or in the popular idiom 'Life the Universe and Everything'. The model says that we each have a collection or 'pool' of 'observable phenomena' that we can be consciously aware of at any given time. This pool of 'data' includes real time sensory input (what we see, feel, hear, smell, taste) plus a whole lot of other data, such as our memories of past experiences, theories and beliefs, expectations, intentions and our internal reactions to all of these things. So first of all, near the bottom of the paper draw an oval pool labelled 'Data' draw the two legs of the ladder in the pool and seven rungs above the pool.

Being consciously aware of all this data would cause us to 'overload' - so we reduce the data volume by selecting the data we think is most important and filtering out the rest - which remains in our unconscious or subconscious awareness. This step of selection is the 'first rung' on our individual Ladder of Inference, so write 'Select' on the first rung up the ladder above the original pool of data.

Having selected the data we think is most relevant or important, we then impute a certain meaning to the data. For example, say someone turns up late for an appointment and we have been waiting for him or her for twenty minutes. When they arrive they don't seem to be at all apologetic that they kept us waiting for such a long time. So we select the data that a) they turned up twenty minutes late and b) don't seem concerned. We then take the next step of deciding that this means they do not regard

punctuality as an important personal attribute. By imputing this meaning - making this inference - we step up onto the next rung of our ladder, so write 'Meaning' on the rung above the one labelled 'Select'.

The model says that this process goes on continuously, creating 'fragments of meaning' - rather like a jigsaw puzzle, where certain parts of the picture have been completed but there are still many gaps. In order to get a 'complete picture' or understanding of what is going on, we now need to fill these gaps. There are two ways to fill the gaps. Firstly we could go back and gather more data until the gaps are filled, but this might produce some fragments of meaning that challenge some of the fragments we've already got. Secondly, and much less onerously, we can simply make some assumptions based on our own past experience of 'similar situations' to fill the gap. Most of the time most of us use this easier second option, so label the next rung up the ladder 'Assumptions'.

'EVERY MAN MISTAKES THE LIMITS OF HIS OWN VISION FOR THE LIMITS OF THE WORLD'

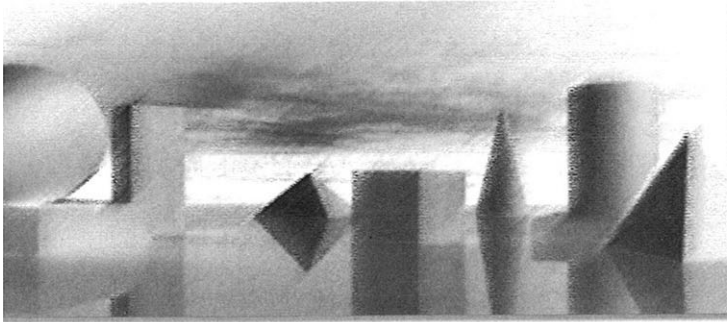
Arthur Schopenhauer

Having now obtained a 'complete picture' we can ascend to the next rung - we have understood what is going on sufficiently to form our conclusions. So label the fourth step on your ladder 'Conclusions'.

In going through the above explanation, we have taken a few minutes or so to journey up the first four rungs of the ladder - to Select data, add Meaning, make Assumptions and reach Conclusions. An important thing to recognise is that in practice, in everyday life, we usually leap up the ladder from the data pool to rung four in a fraction of a second. It is also important to recognise that we are usually unaware that we are performing a process of repeated choices. Choosing or selecting (and discarding) data, choosing from a possibly large spectrum of meanings, choosing 'gap filling' assumptions and choosing conclusions. For the most part the choosing is unconscious - or 'skilled' - we do it automatically without conscious thought (like driving a car once we've learned how). So we see the (selected) data and then - as if by magic - we find ourselves up on rung four staring our conclusions in the face. This 'leap' up the ladder is such a concrete experience that we actually have an expression for it in English - 'jumping to conclusions'.

UP AND DOWN THE LADDER!

We have all experienced the phenomenon that the Ladder of Inference describes. Most people can recall a time when they witnessed some noteworthy event in the company of someone and were subsequently describing the event to a third person. In many cases the person describing the situation is interrupted by their companion at the event with the words "No, that's not what happened at all," followed by a completely different description of what transpired. Although witnessing the same 'reality', both observers selected different data, gave it different meanings, made different assumptions and came to different conclusions. This phenomenon can even occur when the two people at the event know each other (or rather think they know each other) extremely well - for example a husband and wife. A more deliberate example is the way that politicians from different political parties, almost by definition, will draw opposing conclusions from the same data.



The conclusions we reach on rung four now create or reinforce our theories or beliefs about 'Life the Universe and Everything' (or what we tend to think of as 'reality'). Hence rung five is labelled 'Theories/Beliefs'. A belief is a theory that we like so much that we believe it is true and our theories and beliefs drive our actions. So rung six is labelled 'Actions'. Finally it is our actions which decide the results we get in our lives. So rung seven is labelled 'Results'.

The ladder model reveals several important insights. Firstly, what we see as 'reality' and the 'self-evident truth' is actually the product of (mostly unconscious) choices that limit what we can and cannot see. Secondly, others see a different 'reality' because they too make choices that limit their ability to see other possibilities. And as German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said, "Every man mistakes the limits of his own vision for the limits of the world"! Thirdly, the theories or beliefs that I hold - about who I am and what matters - are what dictate the choices I make at each rung of the ladder. I select the data that seems important because I believe that it is the data that is important. I give it the meaning that seems right to me because of what I believe is the right meaning. I make the assumptions that seem to complete the picture best because of what I believe best fits. I come to the conclusions that best seem to

fit what seems to be going on because of the beliefs I have about what seems to be going on. So an individual chooses certain data whilst ignoring other data, gives this data a specific meaning rather than another, makes certain assumptions rather than others and therefore comes to particular conclusions, theories and beliefs rather than others because of their existing theories or beliefs. Hence our conclusions stem directly from choosing to see things in a way that is consistent with our existing theories and beliefs. Yet it is our conclusions that themselves create and reinforce our theories and beliefs. This makes the whole process self-reinforcing. Once I see things a certain way I tend to see them this way in future, even if I was wrong the first time round. Or as Einstein put it, "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education"! Over time the theories and beliefs become so familiar that we accept them as axiomatic - self-evidently 'true'. We are no longer consciously aware of them as being just one of many choices (if indeed we ever were aware of this fact) and they become part of our unconscious understanding of reality.

The importance of understanding the implications of the above insights cannot be overemphasised. One implication is that once we have accepted a theory or belief, it then influences what we see, feel and experience in such a way that reinforces the theory or belief itself. We tend to select data that confirms the belief and reject - unconsciously for the most part - any contrary evidence. Consequently, the more we experience reality through the filter of our existing theories and beliefs, the more we see reality as consistent with our existing theories and beliefs.

Take a moment to reconsider the above example of the hypothetical person who arrived twenty minutes late for our meeting. Actually the person's secretary told them that the meeting was half an hour later, so in their mind they had arrived ten minutes early - hence no need to apologise for being late....

The value of the Ladder of Inference is not in suggesting that we necessarily need to change our beliefs. Rather the model helps to raise awareness of how our theories and beliefs get created and reinforced. By using the above insights we can be better equipped to examine what we select and what we ignore, what meaning we give to the data we select, what assumptions we make and the conclusions, theories and beliefs that we develop and hold. Using the awareness that the Ladder of Inference provides, we can actively increase our awareness of the thinking processes which create and reinforce our own limited perceptions of reality. In so doing become more aware of the unconscious limitations we place on our own ability to learn and grow. Of course, each of us is free to believe what we want to believe, however being attached to any specific way of seeing reality is a major impediment to learning and hence self-mastery.

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PSYCHOTHERAPY FROM A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Ismail Asmail

explores the spiritual roots of psychotherapy

As existential phenomenological psychotherapists we are expected to practise 'epoche' when attending to our clients. The Greek word epoche means 'suspension of beliefs'. We are, therefore, supposed to set aside our assumptions, prejudices, values and expectations during a therapy session, in order to experience the client's real situation.

Although it is acknowledged amongst existential therapy circles that it not possible to completely bracket one's beliefs, there remains the notion that it is partly possible. I contend that it is completely impossible to bracket one's beliefs.

It is, of course, possible to listen to a client in a manner that enables us to gain an inkling into the client's world-view. We can even gain a sense of the client's lived experience, but even this tenuous understanding becomes clouded the minute we intervene because we can only do so from our own value based beliefs. That is why it is said that no two therapists can ever meet the same client.

What this means is that the quality of the therapy a client receives is much more dependent on the personal character of the therapist than on the therapist's academic qualifications. John Heaton makes this point rather succinctly in his paper entitled 'What is Existential Analysis' which appeared in the very first journal of the Society of Existential Analysis. In describing philosophical therapy, Heaton writes,

"Philosophical therapy rises out of the philosopher's life; thus the Greeks and Romans were very interested in how the philosopher lived and how he died. For the mark of a philosopher was that he was not a slave to pleasure and pain and he had overcome irrational fears of death. It would have struck them as absurd to go to someone for therapy who was ambitious, greedy or envious; for these are diseases of the soul and if the therapist is not cured of them how could he hope to cure others? The great advance Freud made was to make psychotherapy a technique, so that anyone could become a therapist provided he knew how to apply the technique; the possession of a valid certificate given by an institution becomes the criterion rather than a judgment of a way of life."

According to Heaton, a therapist would be one who eradicated his or her diseases of the soul, has become emotionally detached, and unaffected by external circumstances. Such a person would indeed be a consciously evolved human being.

Conscious evolution is not the same as the theory of evolution that is commonly understood. Usually evolution is understood to be evolution of physical form, and the organism that is able to control its environment and everything in it better than any other organism is considered to be the most evolved. On this basis we, human beings, are the most evolved since we are able to control our environment and everything in it much more effectively than any other living organism. In fact much of our energy is deployed in controlling our environment, and especially other people, in order for us to feel more comfortable and secure. This is the 'survival of the fittest' mentality, motivated by doubt and fear because we experience the world only through our five bodily senses. The more effective we are in exercising external control, the more powerful we are considered to be. This level of consciousness is firmly rooted in experiencing our world from our five bodily senses. The insecurities that causes wars are exactly the same insecurities that give rise to conflicts in our personal relationships.

"Call me Ishmael, call everybody Ishmael!" exclaimed the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard. He was referring to the biblical story of Abraham's son Ishmael, whose mother was his wife's maid Hagar. The jealous wife Sarah drove the still pregnant Hagar out into the desert. According to the Bible (Genesis 16:12) it

would be the sad fate of this Ishmael for he would become a 'wild man' and "his hand will be against every man and every man's hand will be against his."

Ishmael is the prototype of the modern self-centred competitive individual who acts from the 'survival of the fittest mentality'. Ishmael is engrossed in a destructive dance with others. No wonder Sartre concludes that hell is other people. The world of Ishmael lacks unity. It is a soulless fragmented world where there is no sense of belonging. It is, therefore, not surprising that many people turn to gurus and therapists to alleviate the anxiety of alienation and in search for personal meaning. 'Therapy' according to Rollo May, "is often an expression of the fragmentation of our age rather than an enterprise for overcoming it." Unfortunately, the therapeutic theories are themselves born out of the very same mentality they attempt to cure. Each school believes its own theory to be the right one and, like religious fundamentalists, be prone to defend their version come what may.



Those of us who practise existential psychotherapy based on Heidegger's philosophy believe that one's identity as a human being is always in question. Accordingly one is obliged to take a stand for oneself. This is assumed to be universally true.

Traditional peoples, such as the pre-westernised Australians, are not particularly concerned with their individual identities. In common with Native Americans and traditional Africans, they are more concerned with their relationship with nature and their social group because they see themselves as an integral part of a vast natural system. Their consciousness is collective. Heidegger's is individualistic, a product of the fragmented society in which he lived. As Heidegger suggests, taking a personal stance would simply exacerbate the alienation that modernity has created.

Some argue that Heidegger's philosophy is not individualistic because he acknowledges that no one can exist in isolation from the world, for we are

always enmeshed in a concrete situation. Being in the world means being always in a relationship with the world. It is true that the self and the world cannot be separated. However, it would be misleading to assume that this statement echoes the Aboriginal view of being inseparable from one's world because, for Heidegger, life is a 'thrown projection'. In other words our essence lies in our existence. We enter the world with no identity and, therefore, who we are is what we do. This makes us human doings rather than human beings. This is clearly a self-centred philosophy.

Heidegger also encourages us to be authentic where authenticity is a matter of choosing to choose, i.e. to take full responsibility for one's choices and for one's life. Inauthenticity would be to do what is expected of one in line with social norms. Heidegger says that we should attempt to become authentic as much as possible because if we do not we will be subjected to feelings of futility and depression.

So, in order to become authentic we must become fully aware of the fact that our existence is contingent, i.e. we are going to die. To know that would make us anxious because, according to Heidegger, with one's death comes the end of all possibilities. It is this anxiety that will propel us into living life in accordance with our own beliefs rather than following the crowd. Apart from the fact that becoming fully aware that one will die can also propel one into a deep depression, Heidegger's philosophy assumes that we are finite beings. How can Heidegger be so certain that at death all our possibilities come to an end? Why should we not be open to the possibility of life after physical death? Perhaps it is because our future oriented reasoning brain can only perceive time as linear. The concept of time as linear has made us believe that death means the extinction of individual selves and as a consequence, our egos are terrified of dying.

Yet there are people who do not fear death simply because they perceive time as cyclical rather than linear. Such people notice the obvious, that natural processes, like the seasons, repeat themselves and given that we, human beings, are also an integral part of nature, then we too must participate in nature's self-regenerative cycle. Our bodies will certainly perish, but the aspect that activates the body will not. This aspect is the soul or consciousness. It is the 'I' that is able to observe one's thoughts, emotions, feelings and physical senses. The soul is consciousness and when consciousness leaves the body the body becomes inert.

Those who have been through a near death experience report that they were able to observe the attempts the doctors and nurses were making to

revive them. They also speak of seeing their whole life flash before their eyes, of entering a tunnel and encountering a Being of Light, in whose presence they felt filled with love and peace. Most NDE patients become less materialistic and more concerned for the welfare of others. They become less anxious and "have a zest for living that is hard to describe" according to Melvin Morse, professor of paediatrics at the University of Washington.

The medical profession explains these NDE experiences as universal processes of a dying brain. However, there is one aspect of the NDE, according to David Darling in his book 'After Life', that remains a puzzle to the scientists and materialists. That is the fact that consciousness expands as the brain dies and, furthermore, when consciousness expands self-consciousness disappears.

Darling writes,

"Whatever may lie behind the NDE, whether it is truly evidence of life after death or a mere artifice of the dying brain, makes no difference in one important respect. The NDE is life transforming. The body is seen to be of little consequence and, for some who go through the process, all sense of being an individual is lost. Indeed the NDE reveals something quite astonishing about the human condition. It affords a disturbing peek into the artificial nature of self and the world, neither can seem so substantial again."

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that not only is the soul immortal but also that reincarnation is a reality, such as the case of Viviane Silvino as told by D. Scott Rogo in his book 'Life after Death'. Rogo writes,

"... the strongest type of evidence for reincarnation comes in those instances in which a child seems born with a skill apparently carried over from a previous life. One such skill is language ... One such case was recently reported in Brazil, where it was uncovered by Hernani Andrade, one of South America's leading parapsychologists. Viviane Silvino was born in Sao Paulo in 1963. Though Portuguese by birth, the young girl soon astounded her parents and grandparents when she started bringing snatches of Italian into her conversation. Even before she was two years old, she was calling her sister mia sorella, and would call her doll bambola. Both of these expressions were correctly used and applied. Once when Viviane's mother was explaining to her washerwoman that she didn't know anyone who spoke Italian, the little girl exclaimed, 'lo parlo', which is correct for "I speak it." The girl even began correctly using rather obscure Italian words and expressions in her day to day conversations.

As Guy Lyon Playfair, an English-born journalist who studied the case from Andrade's own archives, writes in his book, *The Unknown Power*,

Once Viviane climbed into a pair of her mother's shoes and started clattering around the house. When her Grandma told her to be quiet, she replied, "Don't disturb me, I'm doing a *pestudura*." This means nothing in Portuguese, but in Italian it is literally 'hard foot' or stomping, which was, indeed, what she was doing. Seeing her youngest sister lying in her pram, Silvia commented on the fact that she was *losca*, or cross-eyed, the Portuguese for which is *vesgo*.'

It was only sometime after she had begun to work Italian words into her vocabulary that Viviane actually stated to recall a past life. Up until this time, the only indication that the girl was being plagued by memories of a prior existence was manifest in her inexplicable fear of aeroplanes. But eventually the child recalled a life in Rome and even offered the specific names of several of her friends of that time, recounted incidents from their lives and dramatically recalled bombing raids over the city. This indicated that she had lived her previous life during World War II, thus explaining her fear of planes.

There are many cases of children born with incredible talents, like Mozart for instance. Henry Ford, was prompted to say, "Genius is experience. Some think that it's a gift or talent, but it is the fruit of many lives. Some are older souls than others and so know more ...I would like to communicate with others the calmness that a more extensive vision of life gives us."

Clearly, to be emotionally detached does not mean to be withdrawn. One remains caring and compassionate and simply does what needs to be done.

And that is exactly what I wish to communicate as well. We are not what we do, as Heidegger believes. What we do is simply a reflection of the level of our consciousness and, as has already been said, it is mostly a reflection of body consciousness. We are immortal souls. That is our ultimate identity beyond our identity as man or woman, black or white, what we do and the roles we play. If we acknowledge that we are immortal souls and have lived many lives other than this particular one, we are then able to interact with our clients from a completely different perspective. It then becomes easy for us to perceive our clients as reincarnated souls as well. This allows us to be non-judgemental in the true sense

because we become aware of our theoretical limitations and can then attend to our clients from a truly 'unknowing' space. The sole purpose of therapy would be to clarify the client's values so that he or she is able to make informed decisions concerning his or her own life. There would be no need to change any one since we know that each one of us is a soul who is 'in the process of self-actualisation' as Abraham Maslow would say. The choices we make either move us towards self-actualisation or away from our reason for being on this planet. To self-actualise is to become free; free from emotional attachments; free from the prisons of our own minds.

The following Zen story captures for me the essence of an emotionally detached person.

The Zen master Hakuin was praised by his neighbours as one living a pure life. A beautiful Japanese girl whose parents owned a food store lived near him. Suddenly, without any warning, her parents discovered she was with child. This made her parents very angry. She would not confess who the man was, but after much harassment at last named Hakuin.

In great anger the parents went to the master. "Is that so?" is all he would say.


After the child was born it was brought to Hakuin. By this time he had lost his reputation, which did not trouble him, but he took very good care of the child. He obtained milk from his neighbours and everything the little one needed.

A year later the girl mother could stand it no longer. She told her parents the truth – that the real father of the child was a young man who worked in the fish market. The mother and father of the girl at once went to Hakuin to ask his forgiveness, to apologise at length, and to get the child back again.

Hakuin was willing. In yielding the child, all he said was, "Is that so?"

Clearly, to be emotionally detached does not mean to be withdrawn. One remains caring and compassionate and simply does what needs to be done. If I were able to be like Hakuin then there would be no need to bracket my beliefs when practising psychotherapy. I have not completely achieved emotional detachment, though this remains my goal. Perhaps emotional detachment ought to be the goal of all therapists as well, for only then can we be free from the diseases of the soul. Perhaps one day I would achieve this goal and enjoy total peace of mind, which, incidentally, is what our clients come to see us for as well.

Ismail Asmall is a practising Psychotherapist and affiliated with the Forward Project.



MAD COWBOY SPEAKS OUT

Howard Lyman explains why the meat industry is at the centre of the modern environment catastrophe.

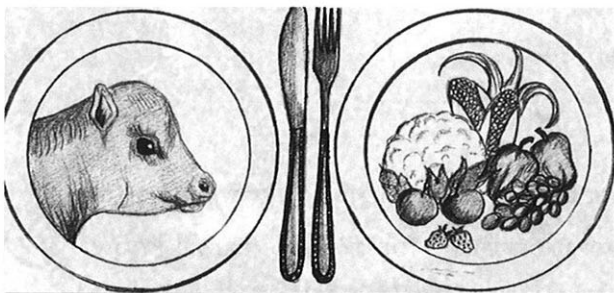
"If you are a meat-eater in America, you have a right to know that you have something in common with most of the cows you have eaten: they have eaten meat too."

I used to be a fourth-generation dairy farmer and cattle rancher. I grew up on a dairy farm in Montana and I ran a feedlot operation there for twenty years. I know first hand how cattle are raised and how meat is produced in this country.

Today I am president of the International Vegetarian Union. Sure, I used to enjoy my steaks as much as the next guy. But if you knew what I know about what goes into the steaks, and what they can do to you, you'd probably be a vegetarian like me. And believe it or not, as a pure vegetarian now, who consumes no animal products at all, I can tell you that these days I enjoy eating more than ever.

After working for those years on my farm, I became very ill due to stress and my diet. My cholesterol level went sky-high and I almost became paralysed. The only solution was to change my diet, even though in Montana it was a sin to be a vegetarian. When I changed to a vegan diet, my health improved immediately. And I have never looked back.

When a cow is slaughtered, about half of it by weight is not eaten by humans. The intestines and their contents, the head, the hooves and horns, as well as the bones and blood are dumped into giant grinders at rendering plants, as are the entire bodies of cows and other farm animals known to be diseased. Rendering is a \$2.4 billion-a-year industry, processing forty billion pounds of dead animals a year. There is simply no such thing in America as an animal too ravaged by disease, or too putrid to be welcomed by the all-embracing arms of the renderer. Another staple of the renderer's diet, in addition to farm animals, is euthanised pets – the six or seven million dogs and cats that are killed in animal shelters every year. The city of Los Angeles alone, for example, sends some two hundred tons of euthanised dogs and cats to a rendering plant every month. Added to the blend are the euthanised catch of animal control agencies and roadkill. Roadkill is not collected daily, and in the summer, the better roadkill collection crews can generally smell it before they can see it. When this gruesome mix is ground and steam-cooked, the lighter, fatty material floating on the top gets refined for use in such products as cosmetics, lubricants, soaps, candles and waxes. The heavier protein material is dried and pulverised into a brown powder – about a quarter of which consists of faecal material. The powder is used as an additive to almost all pet food as well as to livestock feed. Farmers call it 'protein concentrates'. In 1995, five million tons of processed slaughterhouse leftovers were sold for animal feed in the United States. I used to feed tons of the stuff to my own livestock. It never occurred to me that I was feeding cattle to cattle.



We don't know all there is to know about the extent to which the consumption of diseased or unhealthy animals causes disease in humans, but we do know that some diseases – rabies, for example – are transmitted from the host animal to humans. We know that the common food poisonings, brought on by such organisms as the prevalent E.coli bacteria, which results from faecal contamination of food, causes the death of nine thousand Americans a year, and about 80 per cent of food poisonings come from tainted meat. We can also be virtually certain, from the tragedy that has already afflicted Britain and which is now thought to be a major problem in France, that Mad Cow Disease can 'jump species' and give rise to a new variant of the always fatal, brain-wasting Creutzfeldt-Jakob's Disease in humans.

There are only two things wrong with meat: what we know for sure there is in it and all the other stuff that might be in it.

Nearly all meat in America is contaminated with such man-made carcinogens as dioxins, a family of chemicals related to Agent Orange and DDT. This notorious chemical was banned domestically over twenty-five years ago but remains in the ground (and will remain there, unfortunately, for thousands of years to come) and therefore also in the crops fed to animals. Crops grown for cattle feed are permitted to, and almost always do, contain far higher levels of pesticides than crops grown for human consumption. About 80 per cent of pesticides used in America are targeted on four specific crops – corn, soybeans, cotton and wheat – that are the major constituents of livestock feed. Since animals store pesticides and other toxic substances in their fat, they get their most concentrated doses of these carcinogens when they eat other animals. And we in turn get even more concentrated doses of carcinogens when we eat them.

So let us set aside speculation for the moment and begin simply from one indisputable scientific fact about flesh consumption: meat kills. It kills us just as dead as tobacco kills us, but far more frequently. It is by far the number one cause of death and disease in America. One out of every two Americans alive today will die of cardiovascular disease, usually in the form of a heart attack. Heart attacks are never caused by corn, broccoli, or cauliflower; they are not the work of pears, plums or peaches; they are never brought on by rice, barley or lentils. They can virtually always be attributed to saturated fat and cholesterol. Since saturated fat is converted by the liver into cholesterol, these two agents work hand in hand. In excess, they begin clogging our arteries, causing atherosclerosis, the major factor in heart disease. Although it is certainly possible to get too much fat from a few plant-based foods (oils, margarine, nuts, seeds and avocados, for example) most of the saturated fat in the standard American diet and all the cholesterol come from animal products. Study after study has linked the consumption of animal products to heart disease. When I say to you that the consumption of meat, fish, poultry and dairy products is the primary cause of atherosclerosis in non-smokers (for smokers, cigarettes may be equally to blame), I am not just giving my opinion; I am reporting a medical fact that has been established with as much scientific unanimity and consistency as the fact that smoking cigarettes dramatically increases the risk of lung cancer, emphysema and heart disease. But it is a fact that simply hasn't yet been established firmly enough in the public mind – thanks in large part to the obfuscations of the meat and dairy industries, which have taken a lesson from the tobacco industry in how to stay in business while killing people. Their policy is simple: deny, and when you can't deny, confuse.

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LEARNING

*After a while you learn the subtle difference
Between holding a hand and chaining a soul
And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning
And company doesn't mean security
And you begin to learn that kisses aren't
contracts
And presents aren't promises
And you begin to accept your defeats
With your head up and your eyes open
And with the grace of an adult
Not the grief of a child
And you learn to build your roads on today
Because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain
for your plans
After a while you learn that even sunshine
burns if you get too much
So plant your own garden and decorate your
own soul
Instead of waiting for someone to bring you
flowers
And you will learn that you really can endure
That you really are special
And that you really do have worth
So live to learn and know yourself
In doing so, you will learn to live*

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virtue

In its original state, each human soul is filled with beauty and the fragrance of divine qualities. At that original time, these qualities are apparent in personal life and in interaction with others as the soul expresses itself in relationships and activity. However in recent times, we have come to forget our spiritual identity and so have lost touch with our inner qualities. By spending a little time in silence every day, creating a link with the Supreme and feeding our minds with the nourishment of spiritual thoughts, we can revive these natural qualities of our spirit, sometimes called Virtues.

Dadi Janki

SERVICE

Despite the popularity of greed as a motivator, wealth and power rarely make people happy. Whatever acquisition we chase after, once we get it we soon lose interest and find some other Holy Grail to pursue. The treadmill of desires simply leads to more desires. In reality, the secret of finding deep fulfilment lies in serving others. A boss who looks after his staff and customers as he would his own family is a successful boss and a happy human being.

COOLNESS

Maintaining a state of inner calmness protects me from becoming a slave to my emotions. It also helps me to keep a cool head when I see others becoming heated and angry. Coolness is not to be distant or uncaring; rather it requires that I develop the deeply caring nature of a peacemaker and serve others in the best way possible.

HAPPINESS

There is happiness when each moment is used in a worthwhile way. Happiness is such nourishment that it can transform a person from weak into powerful. It makes difficult things easy and heavy things light. To remain happy and share happiness with others is a great act of charity. No matter what happens, my happiness should not be lost.

SILENCE

It is when we silence the chattering of our own mind that we can truly hear what is in our heart and find the still, clear purity that lies within the soul. Spiritual love carries us into the silence of our original state of being. This silence contains the power to create harmony in all relationships and the sweetness to sustain them. And it is when I am silent within that I can let God into my heart and mind, filling me with peace, love and power.