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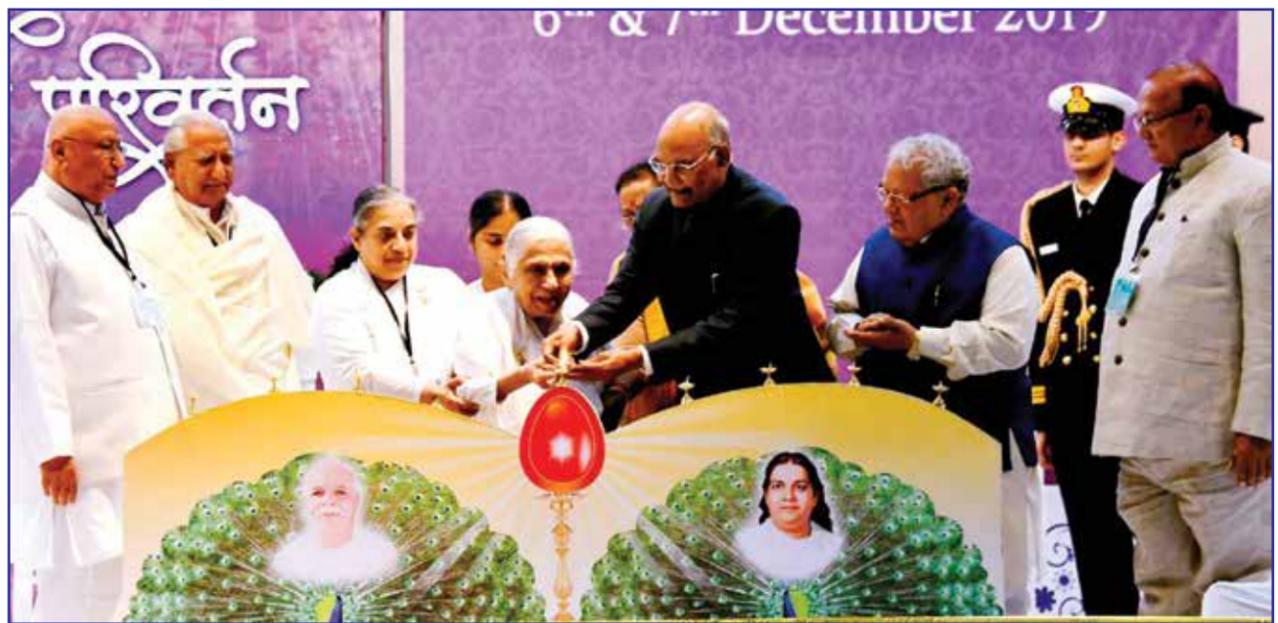
'Spiritual Values Must Reflect in Practical Life'

Mount Abu: When ethical and moral values are visible in one's behaviour, it is proof that one's endeavours on the spiritual path are successful. A lack of ethics in one's practical life hints at incomplete effort-making, said President Ram Nath Kovind while inaugurating a two-day national convention on Empowerment of Women for Social Transformation at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters here on December 6. The session was also attended by Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra and Rajasthan Minister of Energy and Public Health B.D. Kalla.

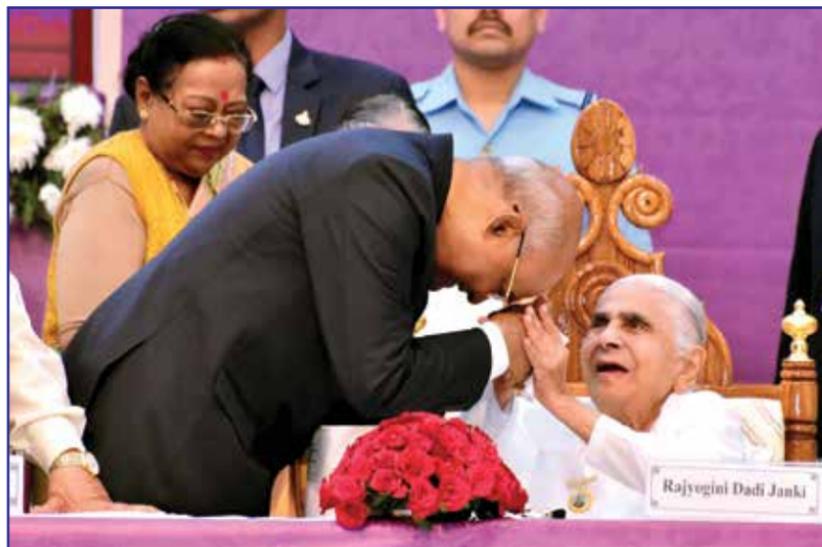
The President said the country's progress lay in empowering women through education. An educated woman is not just an asset to herself but also to her parental home and her in-laws. The children of an educated mother can never remain uneducated, he said.

Underlining the issue of women's safety, the President said it was a matter of grave concern, and a lot still needed to be done in this direction. "The incidents of demonic attacks on daughters shake the soul of the nation. It is the responsibility of parents and every citizen - including you and me - to see that boys have a strong feeling of respect towards women." He said he had made a recommendation before Parliament that convicts under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act should be deprived of the right to mercy petition.

The President said the human journey was synonymous with a search for peace. Despite having material wealth, good relationships, social status, and going to places of worship,



Abu Road, Shantivan: President Ram Nath Kovind and Rajyogini Dadi Janki jointly lighting a lamp to inaugurate a two-day national convention on Empowerment of Women for Social Transformation. Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Rajasthan Minister B.D.Kalla, BK Nirwair and BK Brij Mohan also participated in the ceremony.



Before taking his seat on the dais, President Kovind seeking blessings from Rajyogini Dadi Janki, Chief of Brahma Kumaris.

people are still unable to find peace because they are searching outside when it resides within.

The President said that Dada Lekhraj, the founder of the Brahma Kumaris, was a jeweller in his worldly life, and so he was a true judge of diamonds. After taking the spiritual path he continued the work and shaped ordinary people and many women into invaluable

spiritual diamonds.

Lauding the efforts of the Brahma Kumaris, one of the largest global spiritual organisations, President Kovind said that through its over four thousand five hundred associate centres spread over 130 countries, it had played an important role in the fields of women's empowerment, social transformation, energy

and environment conservation, cleanliness and many others.

Asking people to learn from the life of Dadi Janki, the chief of Brahma Kumaris, he said he agreed with her message that being on the spiritual path means to have a feeling of oneness and belonging to one God. "I have come to take blessings from Dadi and to listen to her... Her entire life has been dedicated to Godly service."

Earlier, giving her blessings, 103-year-old Dadi Janki said she always remembers who she is - a soul - and who she belongs to - the Supreme Soul - and that we are all children of the same Father. She said that throughout her life she had worked with a true heart, had clean dealings, and carried out all tasks with simplicity. "We need to take the first step of courage and the rest of the help comes from above," she said while inspiring everyone to contribute towards world peace and happiness. ■

(Purity Report)

Spiritual Vision for Social Harmony

There has been growing radicalisation on religious and ethnic lines in many parts of the world, and reports of incidents of intolerance have been making headlines frequently. One of the most arduous challenges that faces humanity today is to establish harmony amongst people of different creeds. When we look at the human world and its progress towards a civilised and developed society, we can see our steady march towards better standards of living.

But on another level, fragmentation of human bonds, divisiveness, mistrust and intolerance have also been growing rapidly. There are numerous conflicts and wars going on in different parts of the world because of religious, cultural, linguistic, ideological or political divides. Can the diverse religions and faiths be united? On what grounds are such beliefs based?

Even though there are some common values and tenets in all the faiths, there are far too many misconceptions and conflicting beliefs that have continually fanned mistrust and hostility among the masses. Where there are two opinions can there be a single unifying belief? There can be better understanding, tolerance and acceptance of each faith but there cannot be unity unless there is a single or common belief.

Why are we as humans becoming more and more intolerant? Is it wired in our psyche to hate and hurt each other because someone has a different faith, colour, belief system or lifestyle? In this scenario, legal or political interventions can hardly check or change this much. Unless there is a shift in the mindset of leaders and masses, the situation is going to worsen further.

Spirituality is the common thread that unites all human beings at the core. Only when humans embrace that truth in their hearts will there be a unified world.

Spirituality is the common thread that unites all human beings at the core. It is that unique platform where all labels, differences and divisions dissolve. When we look at the world from a body-conscious perspective, our outlook and attitudes are coloured and prejudiced by limited and narrow feelings. The feelings of 'us' and 'them' arise and there is strong identification with nationality, creed, caste, social status, professional stature, political and cultural groups. These then create strong likes and dislikes, prejudices, biases and intolerance, which create a great imbalance and instability in the human race.

Spiritual wisdom enlightens us, teaching us that we are souls first and we take on earthly identities such as being an Indian or American, male or female, Hindu or Muslim, and so on. These are the various roles that we take on to play our part in this world drama. No two souls or actors can have the same role in this drama. We have to respect the diversity and uniqueness of each human being in this complex matrix of life. Deep

respect and care for each human being can emerge only when there is a soul-conscious vision towards all. When we realise that every human being is a soul acting a role in this world drama, we begin to accept and treat others with kindness no matter how different they seem from us.

We can envisage a unified faith only in terms of the spirituality inherent in all faiths. Universal spiritual and moral values form the essence of religious teachings and the common goal of every seeker. But when will humans realise these values and embody this spirituality? The Golden Age or Satyuga is the period when everyone will be an embodiment of goodness, purity and divinity. Religion or dharma (which actually means original nature) will find its true expression in human beings. Truth, peace and harmony will prevail in that age.

In the eternal cycle of the world drama, everything goes through a change - entropy. Everything degrades from a perfect state to an imperfect, fragmented state. Human souls, nature, religions, civilisations - everything passes through the *sato* (pure), *rajo* (mixed) and *tamo* (impure) stages as the cycle of time spins from the Golden Age to the Iron Age. Today we are witnessing the *tamopradhan* (most degraded) stage of all aspects of human existence. Religions are no exception to this process of change.

As God's children we are all connected to each other as soul brothers. When a person bleeds or gets wounded, the violence affects the whole human race. Every religion or faith has taught us that we should love everyone as our own kin. Actually, we need not tolerate anyone if there is genuine respect and care, just as

in a family we love every member in spite of the weaknesses or imperfections they have. The strong feeling behind that care is that they belong to us. This sense of belonging holds true for the entire human family.

It is the thread of spiritual brotherhood that will create a new world where the idea of *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* - one world family - will be a reality. In that world there will not be a need for tolerance because there will be natural respect for all.

None but God can create such a perfect world based on true dharma. Only God has the authority, wisdom and power to create a world based on a unified faith. God is truth, and truth signifies that which is immutable and eternal. The innate values merged in every human soul are eternal and hence we need to address these values in order to unify the world. Only when humans embrace that truth in their hearts will there be a unified world. God alone gives us the wisdom to nurture these dormant values and to create a peaceful world. ■

(Purity Features)



- Happy New Year -

*Let us ring in the New Year
2020 with the sweet sound
of giving and receiving
blessings of purity... The key
is simple: to reconnect with
the most sacred awareness
of ourselves: that I am a
spiritual being, eternally a
child of God.*



Indore: Dadi Janki unveiling the inscription plate of Shivshakti Sarovar Retreat Centre along with BK Sister Arti and others.



President Kovind being welcomed by BK Nirwair, Secretary General of Brahma Kumaris, on the dais in Diamond Hall, Shantivan, Abu Road.

EDITORIAL

The Roots of Rape

Recently, there has been an explosion of incidents of criminal assault and gang rape in the country. The proliferation of such heinous acts has increased insecurity among women and their families. The government has made punishment for such offences more severe. It has asked the police for greater vigilance and strict enforcement of laws. These steps may help to an extent but they do not hit at the root cause. Thinking that increasing police vigilance will prevent incidents of crime is akin to hoping that training more doctors will eradicate diseases from the country.

The fundamental question is: what leads a person to commit rape in the first place? Surely there is something lacking in the mental and moral make-up of a rapist – something that prevents other honest, upright people from even imagining such an act.

A rapist does not certainly look upon women in the same way as other people do. Their modesty, honour and dignity would hardly concern him. Rather, such a person regards women as mere objects of sexual gratification. The occurrence of rape is increasing in the country because the attitude of more and more men towards women is becoming evil.

The proof of this can be found everywhere – in films, television programmes, reality shows, music videos, advertisements, newspapers, magazines, and in the crude talk and behaviour of men in public places and public transport. The media has taken the lead in promoting objectification of women, and vulgarity is splashed all over it. Suggestive, provocative images are weaved into any content.

These images may look apparently harmless but carry subtle and cleverly crafted subliminal messages, which seep into the public psyche, thereby promoting a culture of promiscuity. We haven't stopped at that. Today, young and impressionable minds are being addicted to lust through free access to pornographic sites on the Internet. Since these images are available everywhere 24x7, many people from all age groups now perceive them as normal. In fact, those who try to oppose them are seen as old-fashioned and prudish.

The growing cases of gender violence, the barbarity of many such acts, and the increased involvement of juveniles in them are nothing but the result of the moral degeneration that has set in our society through circulation of vulgar images by the media. It is ironic that newspapers and TV channels that sell these images make banner news items and 'crusade' for women's cause when these images are used or played out in reality.

The downfall in the standards of public conduct can also be attributed to other practices. Consumption of alcohol, for example, is no longer considered taboo but has become a popular trend among people of all stratas, age groups and genders. When it is common knowledge that many crimes against women are committed under the influence of liquor, and it opens the gateways to other forms of substance abuse, why have we taken it so lightly?

When India won its freedom in 1947, it was hoped that liquor will be banned in the country. Prohibition was introduced in several states. But one after the other, the states gave it up on one pretext or another. The main reason was the revenue it brought in the form of taxes and duties. However, we can see that the price that India is paying in terms of atrocities and sexual assault on women, loss of health and degeneration of values and character is much more than the gain through revenue from liquor sales.

Rather than weeding out such social evils, which destroy a person's restraint and moral stamina, and which the leaders of our country had identified as the greatest cause of our downfall, our society has promoted them and even made them look fashionable.

Sadly, when a tsunami of evil has overwhelmed us, there is little rescue available for willing minds. Teaching moral education in schools and airing value-based programmes on prime time TV – which were normal practices earlier – are no longer in. The culture of respect and religious devotion that many children learnt at home is conspicuously missing.

Unless we revive healthy practices that regularly reconnect people to their inner positivity, and we stop the media from circulating obscene images, understanding the extent of the damage they cause, the situation may go from bad to worse. In that case, we may soon reach a point of no return – where no woman will be safe in our cities, during the day or at night. ■



Gleanings from the press

Eating chillies cuts risk of fatal heart attack

Eating chilli peppers has been linked to a lower risk of suffering a fatal heart attack, scientists say. They found people who consumed the spicy fruit more than four times a week had a 40% less risk of dying of a heart attack. And their mortality risk for all causes was 23% lower, compared with those who did not eat chillies. The study was published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

(Times of India)



Experts use bacteria to make low-calorie sugar

Scientists have used bacteria to derive sugar from fruits and dairy products that has only 38% of the calories of traditional table sugar: The sugar, called tagatose, is approved by the US FDA as a food additive, and there have been no reports to date of the problems that many sugar substitutes have, such as a metallic taste, or links to cancer, according to the researchers at Tufts University in the US. The researchers said tagatose may be safe for diabetics, and will not cause tooth cavities. While derived from fruits and dairy products, tagatose is not abundant and is difficult to extract from those sources, they said. The manufacturing process involves a conversion from more easily obtained galactose to tagatose and is highly inefficient, with yields that may reach only 30%, the researchers explained. (AFP)

Overeating likely main cause of obesity, not lack of exercise

Obesity may be caused by eating too much alone, and not due to poor physical activity, according to a study. The researchers found that the human body can flexibly balance energy budgets in different contexts. Eating too much may be at the core of long-term weight gain. (PTI)

Every 5th fire death in the world is in India

With 27,027 deaths, every fifth fire-related death in the world in 2017 took place in India. Around 9 million fire incidents and 1.2 lakh deaths were recorded across the globe that year. The Indian deaths were 2.5 times the figures in China, where 10,836 people died in fires in 2017. (News Item)

Brushing teeth thrice can cut risk of heart failure

A new study has claimed that brushing your teeth more than twice a day could reduce your risk of suffering heart failure by more than 10%. Researchers from Ewha Woman's University in South Korea conducted an investigation to determine whether improved oral hygiene could be associated with a decreased risk of occurrence of atrial fibrillation – a health condition that causes an abnormally fast heart rate – and heart failure. (The Independent)



One in seven suffers from mental disorders

Depression and anxiety are the most common mental disorders and their prevalence is increasing across India. According to a study published in *Lancet Psychiatry*, 197 million Indians (14.3% of the total population) were suffering from mental disorders in 2017. Of this, 46 million people had depression and 45 million were having anxiety disorders. Stress is a leading cause of both depression and anxiety disorders. (News Report)

Bhoola Bhai

And our friend Bhoola Bhai on Temple Street happened to glance through the following ideas of a writer on foreign affairs: "A formula for world peace will be found by someone, sometime, somewhere." "Some hope this!" he exclaimed.



Om Shanti Retreat Centre (ORC), Gurugram : Lighting lamps at 19th Annual Day celebrations of ORC are Mr. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Union MoS for Health and Family Welfare, Chief Guest, Mr. Jagmohan Addl. Central Provident Fund Commissioner, Invitee BK Sisters Vedanti from Nairobi & BK Sister Kuldeep from Hyderabad, Cine Actor Divya Kumar Khosla, BK Brij Mohan Bhai, BK Gita Didi, BK Chakaradhari Didi, BK Asha Didi, BK Shukla Didi and others.



Shantivan, Abu Road : Group photo of some 200 guests from varied professions who attended the future of power (FOP) Retreat held at Manmohini Complex. Mr. Nizar Juma, the initiator of FOP is seated in front row along with former Maharaja of Sirohi who welcomed the guests after lighting the candles.

Awakening

As long as you need the other to complete you, there will be struggle. Only when you become the one who can complete the other, there will be flow in your life. Simply put, you have to rise from being dependent to being dependable.

Mr. Wise

Mr. Wise?

Yes.

Can anyone remain completely free from all suffering in the world today?

No one, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Shouldn't we call it then the world of sorrow and suffering?

I cannot say.

□□□

And Mr. Wise?

Yes.

Many people believe that suffering has been there 'right from the beginning'.

True. But then, speaking logically, suffering will continue to be there 'right upto the end.'

Which means all effort to remove suffering from the world is bound to fail?

I cannot say.

□□□

Lastly...

Yes.

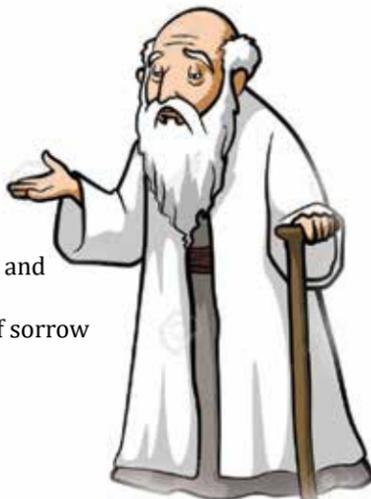
Suffering is a punishment for unrighteous Karma?

True.

How then could suffering exist right in the beginning when Karma had not even begun?

Perhaps you are right.

□□□



Amazing hidden beach - Marieta Islands, Mexico



Tailpiece

Three sisters, aged 92, 94 and 96, live in a house together. One night the 96-year old draws a bath. She puts her foot in and pauses. She yells to the other sisters, 'Was I getting in or out of the bath? The 94-year-old yells back, 'I don't know. I'll come up and see.'

She starts up the stairs and pauses "Was I going up the stairs or down?

The 92-year-old is sitting at the kitchen table having tea listening to her sisters, she shakes her head and says, 'I sure hope I never get that forgetful, touchwood (knocks on wood) ...' She then yells, 'I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door.'

□□□

As a senior citizen was driving down the highway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, 'Raja, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on National Highway 8. Please be careful'

"Heck.' said Raja. It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"