

In God we trust



Models: Shivi Verma, Nitin Ade

Photo: Kuntesh Panchal

When you truly love God and live by the divine laws she has crafted, your human relationships will blossom and flourish, says **Nandini Sarkar**

*Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet Thee I love and do adore,
O, for grace, to love Thee more.
What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
the world can never fill.*

Sister Gyanmata, foremost woman disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, quoted this stirring hymn in a letter to the Master. A small placard that hung over her bed read, 'God Alone.' This was not the slogan of a rabble-raising missionary, but the personal motto of a person who had endured many trials, and had learnt that God is the nucleus of life, while all human relationships are peripheral to this core.

Gyanmata's pre-monastic name was Edith. Though extremely beautiful, she had married late, refusing all proposals because she was determined to marry only for true love. Her sceptical family had written her off as one who would not marry, when one fine day she met Bissett, her future husband. The marriage may have been late, but it was idyllic, the union of soul mates. After his passing, she joined the SRF ashram on her guru's invitation. She missed her husband, but life took on a new meaning, through devotion to guru, and in tireless seva for the ashram.

When we look to the lives of saints like Gyanmata for help, we learn that people with deep spiritual leanings rarely experience a vacuum in human relationships. Electrified by divine love, they become human magnets, attracting supportive family, teachers, and friends. Secure in the sanctuary of the inner self, believing that 'God walks with me, talks with me and tells me I am His own,' they demonstrate a mystical self-assurance, rare in this world of fragile relationships.

Unlike the ordinary mortal, who is mercilessly tossed on the crests and troughs of human relationships, spiritually orient-

ed people are able to withstand all challenges that surface in a relationship.

Give him your heart

On the surface, human relationships appear as difficult to crack as Rubik's cube. Nevertheless, mystics have discovered the key to the 'seduction of spirit,' which when turned, gives us the confidence to handle relationships. Baba Lokenath, 18th century sage, has captured the imagination of millions of modern, harried Bengalis, with his stirring promise, "Whoever remembers me, whether on the battlefield, in the forest, or in the jungle, I come to his immediate rescue." In 1978, a young professor of economics at a Hyderabad college

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had a life-transforming vision of Baba Lokenath. Later, he became Brahmachari Suddhananda, founder of the Lokenath Divine Life Mission, an NGO that conducts corporate workshops on healing and wellness, provides micro-credit to several villages in West Bengal, and supports people in cultivating the spiritual aspect of their lives. Suddhanandaji says, "When God reveals Himself out of pure compassion, he is no longer 'unseen.' It is as if you cannot breathe without him. I say this out of my deepest experience. And I won't stop at that; my deepest experience also says that God, too, cannot breathe without me." Other mystics too have stumbled upon the enchanting secret that God has everything he wants, except our love, which he craves. So he comes to us in the form of different human relationships, hoping that we will see through the veneer of outward forms and make the 'Divine Romance' a living reality in our lives.

Spiritual spring-cleaning

John Donne the poet said, "No man is an island." People need people. All of us crave satisfying relationships, but many of us suffer from a hidden anxiety. Will the relationship last? Will my dear ones die before me? Why have I been treated inappropriately by those who were dharma-bound to protect me? A close friend of mine went into acute depression after a relationship soured. This was the second time that a relationship had gone awry and she was disturbed, wondering about her own adequacy. Her parents were divorced, and there was a history of childhood trauma. She was popping a dozen pills a day, losing hair and sleep and calling up people in the dead of night, frantic with imagined fears. Around this time, I was introduced to Charu, an Art of Living teacher, who was offering a course, so I asked my friend if she wanted to join. She agreed. Weeks later, she told me that after practising the Sudarshan Kriya,

she had literally howled, overcome by a strange emotion. But she felt much better, stronger.

About nine months later, I heard wonderful news – her ex was back in her life, propelled by his father who was fond of her, and they were going to be married. My friend's tears were the promptings of her soul, with which she had finally connected, after years of spiritual wilderness.

Suddhanandaji calls this smarana-yoga, a deep cry from the heart, which allows the soul to heal and to tread the path of evolved consciousness. Tear therapy has magical results if accompanied by prayer. One day, when you least expect it, you suddenly find that a heavy burden has been lifted from your mind. You could also be shedding tears of repentance for the wrong that you may have done to others.

Either way, through this smarana yoga, you flush out the psychological germs of past relationships and eagerly open the heart chakra to receive vibrant, new relationships.

Finding your soul mate

Spirituality teaches us to look for soul mates or like-minded people when we seek partners, friends, or business associates, and not to rush into relationships. We are told to engage in continuous prayer, and to churn the ether for divine guidance. If this seems like a tall order, the story of KP Singh, India's wealthiest real estate mogul and the iconic builder behind DLF, narrated in his book, *Whatever the Odds*, is really worth a read.

KP attributes his phenomenal success to the right relationships that appeared providentially, because he was patient and untiring in his quest. He transformed the barren Gurgaon into India's premier corporate hub because of his investment in building relationships with farmers, from whom he had bought the land. The tall and handsome KP is also a great romantic, devoted to wife Indira, whom he calls his muse. His love was severely tested, but KP beat the gods at their own game, much like Shiva, the Neelkanth, in Amish's, *The Immortals of Meluha*.

At the height of the DLF success story, Indira was diagnosed with an incurable disease. KP had no second thoughts; he immediately handed over charge of DLF to his young son Rajiv, and scoured the world for the best doctors, flying them out to India in chartered flights for her treatment. He was by her bedside day and night for a year,

reading medical journals, consulting ceaselessly with eminent doctors, strongly willing her to be better. In a twist of fate, soon after she recovered from this near fatal blow, Indira was diagnosed with cancer. Uncomplaining, undaunted, the devoted KP took her to New York where they stayed till the cancer went into remission. This gallant husband also flew in two of her best friends from India to New York to play bridge to divert her mind, after each chemo session!

What a wonderful heart this great businessman demonstrates! Instead of simply using his wealth to engage paid attendants for Indira, he sacrificed the potent lure of money, power, and position to hold her hand in her time of trial. Now we know why men like KP Singh are chosen by the gods for divine favours – they deserve it, because they are genuine and trustworthy in relationships. You can depend on them. They do not indulge in what is called sharp practice, deceiving others, and hurting them with their actions.

Give that you may receive

Everyone wants to be loved, but how many are willing to give love? Subhash and Chhaya Sarkar, my parents-in-law, loved people. They were treated like demi-gods in the suburb of Behala, Kolkata, where they had built schools and colleges for underprivileged children. Subhash had gone from door to door for the first school, often carrying children on his shoulders to school! Chhaya was the daughter of a wealthy man. On her wedding night, she cheerfully handed over her jewellery to Subhash so that the first pucca school building could come up!

A neighbour once threw out a visiting relative, a cancer patient who had come from Kharagpur for treatment and had started spewing blood. She took him into our household along with his wife. The man would throw up rivulets of blood, which she

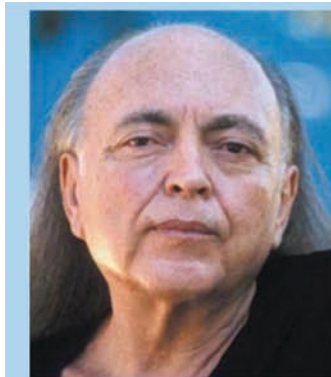
would clean herself. Once, when my husband was working at the Grindlays Bank's New Alipore Branch, a high net worth customer, who heard that he was Chhaya Sarkar's son, hugged him emotionally. What better legacy could a mother leave her children? The customer had been one of the recipients of her love.

When she died, the people of Behala came out in droves, showering flower petals on her cortege. It was a rare, moving sight, a vindication of the philosophy she had lived by, that a woman is called upon not only to mother her own blood-related children, but also to treat all children who come into her sphere, as her own.

Self-reform

The basic law of great relationships is self-reform, the willingness to see ourselves as others see us.

When married couples come to Brahmachari Suddhanada with their tales of woe, he first asks them, "Did you try your best to change your partner's behaviour?" Most reply that they did but they had failed. His second question is, "Did your efforts to change your partner improve the situation or did it aggravate it?" Again, in almost all cases, the reply has been, "No, the more I tried to change my partner, the more things worsened." Suddhanandaji's answer to this conflict is, "If you are truly convinced after your efforts that you cannot change the other person, then the only option is to change yourself. For the next six months, meditate upon your natural breathing, relax your body, and watch the fleeting thoughts of your mind as you watch the clouds floating away. Then as you change, you will see that things outside also are gradually changing their colour. Your reactions are the fruits of your ego; your responses are the manifestations of your soul. However, you cannot be responsive until you have practised meditation and relaxation to calm yourself. A frustrated mind is instinctively reactive, leading you to more depressive situations. Indeed, if we look around us, we see that if we do not invest in building the right relationships in the summer of our lives, they may not come in the winter. Charity begins at home, so we should be careful not to be 'street angels and home devils'."



Aham Da Asmi. Beloved, I Am Da

"Beloved, I Am Da, the Living Person, Who is Manifest as all worlds and forms and beings, and Who is Present as the Transcendental Current of Life in the body of Man... To Realize Me is to Transcend the body-mind in Ecstasy... Only Love Me, Remember Me, have Faith in Me, and Trust Me. Surrender to Me. Breathe Me and Feel Me in all your parts. I Am here... I will dissolve all your bewilderment. Even now you inhere in Me, beyond the body-mind and the world." –Parama Saptana Adi Da Samraj

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Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you

As more women enter the workplace today, there are relationship challenges for both sexes. Both are faced with temptations to stray into relationships outside marriage. Such mistakes may boomerang in future and bring painful karmic consequences. A spiritual bent of mind acts like a kavach or protective amulet, alerting us or forcefully dragging us away from the honey-trap of poisonous relationships.

Do not take things personally

Do not kill yourself or the relationship by taking things personally. Release the hurt into the clear, blue sky of forgiveness. In judging others, we actually cause ourselves the most agony. Therefore, we should have the honesty to mentally review what others say about us, gracefully accept their criticism if they are right and forget about it if they are not. Painful gossip and hurtful rumours are only a nine days' wonder, so why take them too seriously? Next time an ugly challenge surfaces in a relationship, remember that the Universe is the only judge of our actions. The Divine is impartial and un-bribeable.

Assert yourself

I have seen devoted spouses being bullied in public by their counterparts and good-natured, amicable people allowing others to take advantage of their self-effacing nature. Some people by remaining neutral, seek to please everyone. We have a pithy saying in Bengali, 'Merudanda shoja karo'—keep your spine straight! Each one of us is a spark of the Divine so we owe it to the divinity within not to tolerate or accept discourtesy. Do not be a doormat – otherwise you will be abused to the point of no return. Sometimes, the hand of friendship must be withdrawn temporarily, until the other person

learns to show respect. During this period of relative break in the relationship, the masters teach us to pray for the other person to undergo a change of heart, and to hold them in the light. This, they say, is a powerful form of service to others.

Not afraid to be single

A pretty, young, London bohemian in her 20s, suddenly converted to Buddhism, and took off for the Himalayas. She stayed in a Himalayan cave for 12 years, consumed by the desire to achieve emancipation as a woman. This is the story of the iconic Tenzin Palmo, revered Buddhist teacher, so beautifully captured in Vicki Mackenzie's *Cave in the Mountain*.

Let us face it; the desired soul mate may not come in this lifetime for karmic reasons. The worst thing a person can do is to think that he or she is being unfairly treated. The right attitude is to treat circumstances as a needed spiritual discipline, learning to trust in God alone. Therefore, if we introspect, we discover that we have to be yogis, and a yogi is one for whom the ideal of life is – hands to work and heart to God. We learn not to be self-seeking or selfish any more; we learn to respect and care for those that karma places in our lives. We become loyal and committed in relationships, without being a doormat. We choose relationships with wisdom. We are able to handle betrayals or losses with calmness, and hold people who hurt us, in the light, sincerely praying for them to change their ways. To gain this nirvana in relationships, the mantra of the savants is simple:

Change and decay all around I see,
O Thou, who changes not, Abide in me!



Nandini Sarkar is Co-founder, C-Quel, a management services company. A lover of the spiritual Masters she is a follower in the Kriya Yoga tradition.

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