



Illustration: Starlyn D'souza

# Bloody, but unbowed

Courage is the ability to face fears, pain, rejection, discrimination, humiliation, loss, disease, debility, separation and failure with equanimity, says **Nandini Sarkar**

**H**eart-wrenching cries of a woman's voice seared the night, daily at midnight, making other residents uneasy. A week ago, her son, 20-year-old Bhaswar, had jumped off the balcony of their eighth-floor apartment, into the arms of waiting death. Shocked friends posted streams of R.I.P messages on his Facebook page, until his grieving father finally closed the account. Later, it was discovered that the sporty, courteous Bhaswar had been dumped by a girlfriend. Bhaswar had not been trained in the life skill of courage. Not knowing how to cope with pain, not having the patience to deal with difficulty, he took his young life.

In contrast, I recall a woman who lived her life with exceptional courage despite the

ordeals she had to face. Roudra was brutally assaulted while on an NGO mission to a village in Odisha. Her devastated husband found her in the general ward of a government hospital, severely bruised, bitten, and unconscious. People said she would never recover from this horror. Six months later, after a series of operations, Roudra was back at her job. She picked up life from where she had left it, travelling, attending conferences, never showing the least self-consciousness, or fear. However, destiny had more trials for her. Some years later, her college-going son, back home on vacation, was found murdered in their home. There were rumours of a drug ring behind the gruesome murder. Her husband could not bear the loss and ignominy, and retired voluntarily from service. A dogged Roudra, however, refused to give up, until her son's name had been cleared of all wrongdoing. Once an atheist, she

turned to Buddhism for succour. She would chant mantras in the early hours of dawn, before the rest of the family was up, seeking calmness and peace in the midst of her terrible ordeal. She was mindful that they had a daughter who needed to be protected and encouraged to move on in life. So, Roudra moved the family out of the city and went to live in Ahmedabad. We heard that her daughter too was working, and was married to an IAS officer.

Roudra was subjected by fate to unbelievable tortures of body-mind, but her spirit, nurtured by the wise Buddhist philosophy of detachment, eventually triumphed. I am convinced her trials made Roudra a saint. She neither committed suicide, nor worried about gossip or public reaction, nor escaped her worldly responsibilities. She turned inward to the self and grew in spiritual stature.

Courage, as a virtue, is needed not only by the armed forces; all of us need it in abundance, as we play out our life-roles. Courage is the ability to face fears, to face pain, rejection, discrimination, humiliation, loss, disease, debility, separation and failure, with equanimity. Courage is the ability to deviate from set patterns, and accepted societal norms. It is the ability to think differently, and to stand up for one's convictions. Mystics say courage is the ability to awaken to our real nature, divine consciousness. Like Roudra, when we accept adversity with calmness, summon the inner strength to face fears boldly, harbour no ill will and let go of past demons, we are indeed being heroic.

### **Why do we have challenges?**

'Why does God allow this to happen? I don't deserve this!' This is a typical reaction when problems surface and people find themselves in a quandary, fearful, troubled, and impatient for quick fixes. Such self-defeating questions don't help. Karma must be faced with courage, dealt with, buried forever with positive action, and the consciousness must be raised vertically, ready for the next challenge. If we remain neutral or escape from difficult situations, future circumstances will bring the same miseries back into our lives, until the universe is sure that we have learnt our lessons.

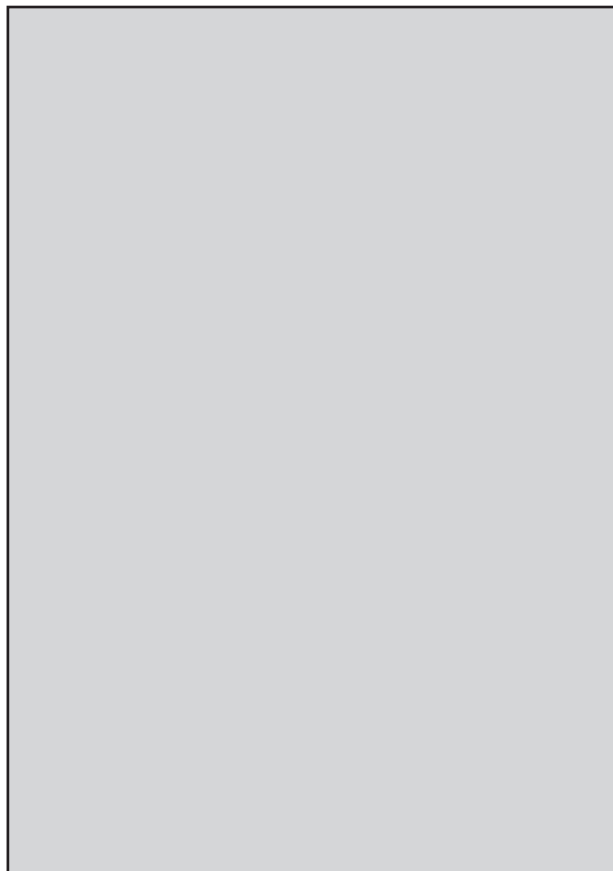
The Masters tell us that we must become battle-ready, because challenges are an inevitable part of life. To meet challenges head on, without developing high blood pressure, diabetes or a series of ailments, we must elevate our consciousness, and keep in touch with the Satchidananda that resides within us, ever true, ever conscious, and ever blissful.

Swami Amar Jyoti of the Truth Consciousness Ashram puts this beautifully. Consider a flowing river. On the surface, the river is in motion, its waters blown by the wind, but underneath, the river flows much slowly. It is the same river, but with a different motion on the surface and a slower motion underneath. Similarly, the surface mind, restless and ignorant, springs up fear and pain,

**If we remain neutral or escape from difficult situations, future circumstances will bring the same miseries back into our lives, until the universe is sure that we have learnt our lessons.**

demoralising and, sapping our spirit. But the same mind, in its subconscious state, is a storehouse of our past karmas and samskaras. The quiet mind or the mind in stillness gradually attains the state of super-consciousness.

In this state of supreme, elevated con-





Budha: The calm and serene face of courage

consciousness, the surface mind and subconscious mind subside and the superconscious mind shines in resplendent glory, providing us all the resources necessary to fight the battle of life. This is the Viratsvarupa, the universal cosmic vision that Krishna showed Arjuna in the Kurukshetra battle says the swami. The spiritual duty enjoined on us is to quiet the mind through meditation and remove its surface turbulence. Meditation or stillness of the mind make us battle-ready. It gives us courage, valour, peace, and equanimity. What a marvellous revelation, that it is two sides of the same mind, the same substance, that can either plunge us to the depths of darkness and despair or elevate us to a sublime self-victory, depending on how we choose to live.

### Keep going

The Mundaka Upanishad proclaims, 'Nayam atma balahinena labhyah' – Self-Realisation is not attained by the weak. Consistency in spiritual practice builds courage. As we develop our spiritual muscles through practice, the soul cries out, unheard by any, 'Charaiveti, Charaiveti' – keep going, keep going. Undoubtedly, consistency in meditation is easier said than done, but in the digital age, there are wonderful resources to lend the lazy or weak seeker a helping hand.

At the end of the day, as I collapse in bed, done with the daily battles of the workplace and two teenaged kids, I look forward to plugging into Anandamurti Gurumaa's Yog Nidra and Mudra meditations, downloaded on my tablet. Her mellifluous voice leads me inward and I am grateful for the waves of joy, the powerful visualisations that flow effortlessly

with her guidance. With this, on tap resource, I am not making excuses any more, about being too tired to meditate at the end of the day.

### Never the same again

A person who cultivates courage, based on a spiritual bedrock, will never be the same again. In the midst of every difficulty, he finds God or Spirit by his side, and his courage quota grows steadily, through experience. To cultivate this wellspring of courage, the Masters call upon us to spare time and energy for raising the consciousness. While Joan of Arc and Mirabai have become classic examples of courage, needing no introduction, another awe-inspiring

saint, who richly demonstrated the 'fire in her belly,' is Aghoremani Devi, fondly known as Gopal's Mother. Married at nine, in 19th century Bengal, widowed at 14, then, initiated by the family guru in the Gopal Mantra, she did Japa ceaselessly. Living alone in a Radha Krishna temple on the banks of the Ganga, unafraid, she chanted her mantra ceaselessly. After meeting Sri Ramakrishna, her sadhana bore fruit and she had uninterrupted visions of God in the form of Gopala for two months. Devotion thus transformed an ordinary widow, Gopal's Mother, to a saint, courageous, strong, radiating bliss and joy. The Master once asked her to narrate her visions to Swami Vivekanada, who was a diehard rationalist at that time. Nevertheless, after listening to her narration, he could not control his tears and assured her, "Yes, Mother, whatever you have seen is all true."

Melt the heart, hardened by worldly cynicism, exhorts Gurumaa Anandmurti, melt it with prarthana, prema, and dhyana and you will gain courage.

Sri Chinmoy wrote:  
*Never the same again,  
 Lost peace restored.  
 Never the same again,  
 Lost joy regained.  
 Never the same again,  
 Lost power reborn*



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. [nandini@cquel.com](mailto:nandini@cquel.com)



To read these articles online and post your comments, go to <http://www.lifepositive.com/Magazine/Jun2012>. We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article. Mail us at [editor@lifepositive.net](mailto:editor@lifepositive.net)