



*When we function as Souls,
we gradually realise
that all forms around
are veils of sound, colour and shape
around the Soul and that
behind every form and its quality
there is the functioning of the Soul.
There is but the Soul
functioning in many forms as the Souls.
In truth there are not many Souls
but one.*

Dr. K. Parvathi Kumar

More and more people sense that they have seen enough in the outer life and feel attracted by the spiritual path. Often however the basics of spiritual life are then ignored. Many study advanced wisdom teachings without first having organised their minds and their personalities, without showing in their lives only one per cent of the wisdom studied. They gather mental fund and are of no use neither for themselves nor for others. Some think that the circumstances of their lives don't permit them to go the path, through sluggishness and imbalance they put up obstacles for themselves. Frequently spirituality is also practised at the expense of common sense, responsibilities and family duties are neglected. All exercises don't bear fruit or only one-sided developments, as long as the foundations have not been laid.

Therefore we have to follow the fundamental steps, i.e. to put them into practise. Thus we slowly can learn to express ourselves as souls. "Basics of Spiritual Life" wants to give some hints for this.

THE POWER OF HABIT

Stronger than Knowing and Wanting

Every man has his personality, and he has developed his character by giving to a matter a certain direction and permanence. What we call individuality has got its shape by habits. Typical personality traits of an individual, a family or a nation develop through the power of habit. There is no creation indeed without the habit-forming principle. The quality of habit makes the earth go round the sun and around itself. Out of habit our heart beats and our lungs breathe. All that we repeatedly do establishes a habit. We form habits and then we cannot abandon them any more.

Since thousands of years we have developed our personality, its habits have solidified and crystallized. Body, senses and behavioural nature have formed programs whose energy patterns mould our habits of eating, speaking, seeing and hearing etc. and cause the imbalances of our behaviour. The programmes of the personality draw us away from the programme of the soul which we are trying to inculcate: We want to speak harmoniously, but then our tongue itches us to speak bad about people behind their back. Our ear itches to listen to things which carry us away into irrelevancies, criticism and superfluous discussions and thus distract us from the presence of the soul. The habits control our mind in a way that they gradu-

ally force us to accept certain forms of being happy and unhappy: Like this for example we get used to drink coffee or to smoke, to alcohol or drugs. The repetition gives us a feeling of satisfaction and we develop an acquired reflex. We acquire a taste for things which at first our sense of taste rejected. Habits are very strong, stronger than our knowing and wanting: Even if somebody knows that smoking is scientifically proven to be bad, he sticks to the habit and doesn't let himself wean away from it.

A Taste for Higher Things

We can use the power of habit for the better or for the worse. In spirituality they don't say: "Get rid of the bad habits"; the "donots" do not exist. The wisdom teachings use a positive, never a negative technique. They say: "Don't fight the darkness, but put on a light." If we try to get rid of bad habits, we will face failure. Instead of it we should introduce good habits and work with them. The good habit consolidates in us just like the bad one. If we apply it for a long time, it gets anchored in us. So by starting a new, positive activity we form a new power-centre in us, and the existing reaction habit slowly comes to an end. It is a soft technique in which the attention is directed to something higher. The taste for higher

things replaces the lower taste. The more the interest is developed in the divine, the more the other things fall off.

Transforming Behavioural Patterns

The power of habit can help us to substantially change our nature. If we begin with one, two good things which appeal to us and repeat them systematically every day, the effect achieved through repetition goes far beyond our understanding. Indeed the effect doesn't come through understanding, but through practising. There is nothing to understand, but to practise regularly, for example to observe the movement of our respiration. When we sing the holy word OM for 5 or 15 minutes every day and listen to it, we will discover an inner growth after some months, which others don't know.

We cannot develop better habits by simply deciding to acquire them. Our energy patterns are neither changed by mentally accumulating wisdom: When it comes to action, the whole wisdom disappears and we still are the same as ten years ago: In spite of meditation and study we have remained faultfinding and negligent. We need not become frustrated, but should accept what we are and try to take small steps forward. The key to the transformation of behavioural patterns is to cultivate thoughts of good will and to regularly do selfless acts of good will without expecting anything. This way we become purer and clearer inside and tend more to have light things around us. Light radiates through our whole being and gives a good smell. There is an inner power growing and we slowly become magnetic.

When the tendencies of our personality control our good intentions, there a crisis arises. Our own will is too little, and the divine will needs to be invoked to strengthen our being. A sincere prayer helps to align our will to the divine will, so that we become strong to take up a realignment. No

master however can help us if we don't make an effort ourselves. The master can only work from a certain point on, and we first have to arrive there. If we don't work out certain preparatory steps, there is nothing he can do, however willing he may be. Good habits help us to attain the awareness of the soul. It is an important task of the parents to teach children good habits and to build up the character step by step from the seventh year on. When the forces in the body are regulated correctly, the children later can lead a good life.

Overcoming the Circumscriptions

But also good habits circumscribe us and we can get ourselves caught in them: We are habituated to light a candle and to meditate at a certain time. If we are disturbed, we get nervous. We have got used to good, pure food, if it is not available we feel irritated. We are caught in our concepts like a bird in a cage. It doesn't matter if it is a golden or an iron cage. When our awareness grows, we have to pull down again the walls of the temple of our value system which we have built. The discipline of yoga practice leads us to a yogic way of life. But just like you leave a boat after having crossed the river, the patterns of yoga are left when the yoga practice is accomplished. Krishna says: "Yoga is to BE", in no frame, in no form, no matter how noble it is. When our soul is integrated into the universal soul, the habit-forming principle comes to an end, since its purpose is accomplished. Then we are no longer forced into patterns, but are really free. Thus it is a principle of the Aquarian age to respect concepts, but not to hold on to them.

Sources used: K.P. Kumar: Saraswathi - The Word / seminar notes. E. Krishnamacharya: Lecture on The Power of Habit.- The World Teacher Trust - Dhanishta, Visakhapatnam, India (booklist: www.good-will.ch/pdf/wtt-publications.pdf)



To be spiritual is to be normal

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Circle of Good Will