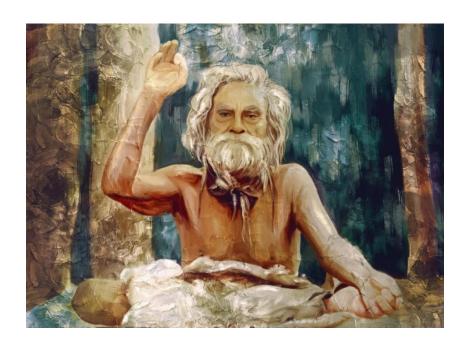
Inspired by Saint Tulsidas-Ramacharitamanas

Grow Your Spiritual Intelligence

Guru Das





Dedication

In humility, I offer this dedication to my Guru Brahmarishi Mahayogi Sri Devraha Baba who initiated me into Bhakti Yoga.

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Introduction

Do you feel the urge to discover a purpose in life? Have you ever felt the need to associate yourself with something more significant than your life? Do you want to reduce 'stress and anxiety' and take ownership of your well-being? Do you follow a spiritual path but feel stuck with your spiritual development? If the answer to any of these questions is 'Yes,' then I believe this book can add value to your life. I live by the principles of a yogic lifestyle and practice meditation. In my professional stint of a decade, I grew up on the career ladder. However, I eventually realized that I had lost my creativity and purpose in life. I suffered from prolonged stress that later turned into depression.

I started my spiritual journey in 2014 to resolve my inner conflicts and restore well-being. I adopted the teachings and practices of the various yogic paths. I purified my limiting thoughts and negative emotions and raised my awareness of joy and peace. Eventually, with my Guru's grace, I found my creative expression and purpose in life. My mission in life is to share and spread the knowledge, methods, and wisdom of *Bhakti Yoga*. This book is an attempt to share my personal life experiences and teachings from the different paths of Yoga: *Jnana Yoga* (the path of knowledge), *Raja Yoga* (the path of mind), and *Bhakti Yoga* (the path of love and devotion). It will give you an in-depth understanding of these yogic paths and the benefits that they can offer in your life.

In the path of *Jnana* Yoga, we use the tool of 'right understanding and thinking.' Irrespective of caste, creed, and spiritual path, this tool helps us to evolve into better human beings. I have emphasized its practical application in our spiritual life as it enables you to realize limiting beliefs and fears, heal the emotional trauma of your past, and use your creative life force energy to discover your unique purpose in life.

I have created case studies by observing everyday life events, people, and human developmental stages; and integrated the understanding from the discipline of western and yogic psychology, modern science, and insights from the holy scripture *Ramacharitamanas*. The *Ramacharitamanas* is a poetic expression of 'deeds of Lord Rama,' written by Saint Tulsidas in the 16th Century in India. My aim is to share insights from the *Ramacharitamanas* that shall inspire you to connect with your divine nature and realize your full potential.

How can you use this book?

This book can serve as your life manual. You need to notice your thoughts, feelings, and actions. This is an ongoing spiritual practice that empowers you to gain insights from the events of your life, enhance your perceptions, and attract opportunities in life. I keep a daily life journal to review my everyday life and be aware of my thoughts, feelings, and actions.

This simple, but powerful daily practice helps me resolve my inner conflicts, become responsive, and make better life decisions. Similarly, you can use this book to gain insight into your life and apply its lessons.

If you come across areas in the chapters that may be significant to your life, pause and pay close attention to your thoughts and feelings. While reading the book, note down these specific areas of the chapters in your daily life journal. In this way, you will have a list of events from your life that need your attention for self-examination. Any past life event is an opportunity to heal our karmic bondage. Write and describe those events in your life journal. This is a powerful tool to defrost blocked emotions. You can refer to this book for any significant life events in your daily life review. Hence, this book will become your life guide. I hope it will be a good starting point to take ownership of your well-being and speed up your spiritual development.

Suppose that you practice a daily life review along with a yogic lifestyle and meditation. In this way, you will gain insights from the deep layers of mind: the subconscious and the unconscious mind, and raise your vibration to the intelligence of love and devotion. I hope this book reveals the love and wisdom of an eternal life.



Chapter 1: Marriage

Do you resist breaking off a relationship that causes pain? Psychologists Baumeister and Leary mention in their research that human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum amount of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships. Since ancient civilization, humans have been seeking belongingness with friends, family, community, and society. The need for belongingness has become the fundamental psychological need for humans.

Marriage is the intimate bond that unites two individuals into a cocoon. It is an uncertain journey to discover our strengths and weaknesses. Life partners share their pain and pleasure and grow together through rich life experiences. This intimate relationship offers opportunities to develop human values and strengthen character. However, married life has its challenges in managing conflicts.

Ask yourself: "Do I self-examine the origins of my conflicts? Do I believe in taking ownership of my well-being? Do I blame the other person or develop guilt and shame for my life circumstances?" If you have answered 'Yes' to the first two questions, you shall live a happy married life. We need to investigate the nature and cause of inner conflicts. Let us understand the significant aspects of our mind that shall help you self-examine the causes of disputes.

Belief

According to research conducted by Harvard University, child development—particularly from birth to five years of age—is the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. At this stage, children learn from their external environment by observing and doing the same activities. The atmosphere, including the behavioral response of parents, plays an essential role in shaping the child's psychological well-being.

Consider a girl who grew up in a family where both the parents worked hard to meet their career goals and the needs of the family members. For prioritizing professional commitments, the parents couldn't give sufficient time to the child's upbringing. Hence, the girl felt lonely. She created the belief that parents who commit most of their time towards work cannot take care of their families. This belief became one of the prime driving forces in her married life.

After marriage, she came to know that her husband was going to expand his business plan. Thus, he wanted to live in another city for a few years. This situation confronted her belief that caused the inner conflict.

Consider a boy who grew up in a middle-class family where the father is the only earning member, and the mother is a homemaker. The father went through several financial crises in his business. As a result, the family members had to bear financial stress.

The boy created the belief that earning a lot of money is the only way to attain happiness in life. When he grew up, he secured his dream career and became rich after years of hard work. However, he discovered that he remained unhappy. He realized that he held a limiting belief which made him restless.

I have included these examples to show that the beliefs created early in life can govern our life choices and behavioral response during married life.

Perception

There is an ancient parable in India where a few blind people described an elephant by the touch of their hand. The first person touched the elephant's ear and said, "The elephant is like a fan." The second person touched the elephant's tail and said, "The elephant is like a rope." The third person reached the elephant's leg and said, "The elephant is like a wall." He remained rigid in his views. Everyone held on to their views but could not understand the others' perceptions!

Most times, we perceive the external world in such a way that it resonates with our experiences. Sometimes in relationships, we stick to our opinion about the way we see a particular situation, problem, or person. Thus, we limit our perception when we cannot understand the totality of life.

Memory

Have you ever woken up in the morning, picked up your smartphone, scrolled through your favorite playlist, and just played your favorite song? If yes, you experienced nostalgia. You wanted to relive those pleasant moments.

Memory stores both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. During the human developmental stages, our brain gets wired to look for pleasurable experiences and avoids unpleasant circumstances. However, one goes through both pleasant and unpleasant experiences in intimate relations. So internally, one may start avoiding unpleasant circumstances and look to experience pleasantness in another form.

As a result of this, an individual may escape from a problematic situation. However, those unpleasant memories will remain in their mind.

Emotion

Two people took a blank sheet and three colors—red, blue, and green. They only used a combination of two of the colors. Do you think both of them would have picked the same combination of colors? Similarly, how you feel about any person or problem is directly related to your emotions during those moments. Our emotional state can affect interpersonal communication and life decisions. For example, an anxious state of mind can influence the decision's outcome. We should observe our emotional and mental state before we respond. It helps us to develop a trustworthy relationship.

Habitual Thinking

When we engage our minds with excessive thinking over any matter, we develop a habit. This compulsive thinking consumes our life force energy. If we develop the habit of compulsive thinking, it is challenging to shift the mind from the object of the thought. Thus, we might create conflicts in the relationship. One common example of regular thinking patterns is a 'worry.'

Judgment

We live in a world of dualities. We create those dualities within us. As we keep processing sensory signals from the external world, our intellectual mind always compares, evaluates, and judges its outcome based on experience. This entire process happens within a split second. As a result, we label the experience as pleasant or unpleasant. To a certain extent, this has its application in the external world, such as survival and decision-making. However, the same mental process can create conflict in an intimate relationship where we need to pay attention to the people, problems, and circumstances.

Imagination

Imagination is an excellent faculty of mind when we can find its creative expression. Unfortunately, it also becomes the source of suffering when it wanders directionless. The mind dwells between the past and the future. For example, if you have a desire to accomplish something, you will project its outcome the way you want it. Imagination plays a role in this mental process. One who compares themselves with others and lives someone else's life remains anxious. Thus, that individual finds it difficult to stay in the present moment. One who remains engaged with imagination driven by a troubled mind creates suffering in life.

Instinctive Behavior

Suppose three employees are working in a team in a multinational company. They need to complete a project within a month. They have different skill sets and responsibilities. Since the project is crucial to the company, the management declares a huge performance bonus. All team members need to collaborate and share their ideas, challenges, and progress in a daily team meeting.

Let us observe the working style and behavioral traits of each employee.

The first employee likes to break down his work into small pieces. He creates a milestone for each of the minor tasks and keeps a tracking sheet. He uses extensive research in his work. He relishes maximizing the bonus. He remains aggressive in meeting his deadlines. He observes his teammates so that he can compare his ideas and work. He takes all measures in his work to gain a competitive edge. During a team meeting, he discusses his work and provides suggestions and ideas for the project. He asks several questions during the team meetings. He also criticizes the shortfalls in others' work.

The second employee likes to go along with her natural pace of working. She remains watchful of the deadline but hardly extends her working hours unless it's absolutely necessary. Incentive seems fair to her. During a team meeting, she briefly mentions her work's progress. She neither asks questions nor provides any suggestions for the entire team. She agrees to the views of the majority. Internally, she feels disturbed and intimidated by the first employee's responses, but she doesn't share that with anyone.

The third employee has no specific strategies for his work. He does his job at his own pace but doesn't see any point in extending his work hours. Collaborating and working with teammates doesn't appeal to him. He doesn't feel responsible for the entire project. He focuses

only on his work. During a team meeting, he speaks in a few words and remains aloof in any further discussions.

These examples illustrate the instinctive behavioral traits of dominant, submissive, and escapist individuals, respectively. These behavioral traits can become compulsive, causing disharmony in a married relationship. Our inner conflicts are barriers to our true potential. If we are willing to self-examine their cause and be conscious in our responses, we can uplift our thoughts and create positive emotions towards spiritual development.

Let us understand the aspects of spiritual development in married life. Lord Rama and Sita are the role model of an ideal couple.

Lord Rama

Lord Rama is the 7th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Rama was the son of King Dasharatha and Queen Kaushalya. King Dasharatha had two other queens, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. Lord Rama grew up with his three siblings—Laxmana, Bharat, and Shatrughna. They held Lord Rama in high reverence. During the birth of Lord Rama, King Dasharatha granted two wishes to Queen Kaikeyi. Unfortunately, this became the source of his misery and death. Manthra, a loyal housemaid, influenced Queen Kaikeyi with her evil intentions. Kaikeyi sought her wishes from King Dasharatha. First, she wanted him to send Rama to exile for fourteen years and second; she wanted him to crown her son, Bharat as the future king. King Dasharatha was devastated but eventually fulfilled her wishes with a heavy heart. He could not bear the pain of separation from Lord Rama and finally left his body. Lord Rama, along with Sita and his younger brother, Laxmana, spent fourteen years in exile.

Lord Rama is divinity personified and the perfect role model for humanity. He is an ideal son, brother, king, husband, and leader. His behavior, responses, and voice are divine. He expressed his virtues by leading an example and inspiring his subordinates, friends, family, and other people. He upheld righteousness in every circumstance in his life.

Sita

King Janaka and his queen found Sita as a child, lying on the barren land in their kingdom. As they were a childless couple, they perceived it as a gift from God and adopted her as their child. King Janaka adored her. He gave her the best of a comfortable environment. Despite this, she remained connected with nature and appreciated its beauty. She was generous and religious. In Ramacharitamanas, Saint Tulsidas said that even poets did not have any words to describe her beauty.

Lord Shiva had offered a powerful bow to the ancestor of King Janaka. Once in her childhood, Sita was playing near a worship room. She saw the bow inside that room and lifted it playfully. Coincidentally, King Janaka witnessed this event. He was astonished and decided that he would marry off Sita to the person who could lift this bow.

During the exile, the Demon King Ravana kidnapped Sita. He kept her imprisoned in his kingdom and surrounded her with evil and cruel demons. However, she did not bow down to Ravana. She remained fearless and maintained her devotion to Lord Rama.

Ideal Couple

King Janaka invited all kings to a ceremony. He wanted to choose a suitable life partner for Sita. So, he kept a condition for the kings and asked them to lift his ancestor's divine bow. Every mighty king tried his best but eventually failed. Only Lord Rama could easily lift the bow. Thus, Lord Rama and Sita got married.

After her marriage, Sita received all comforts. The elders were fond of her and people respected her. When Lord Rama was preparing to leave for exile, he suggested that Sita should stay in the palace. He clearly described the struggles that one needs to face in the forest. However, Sita remained fearless and went along with Lord Rama. She faced the challenges and overcame them with patience and faith. Lord Rama and Sita expressed unconditional love in their relationship and strengthened it while going through the pain of separation.

When Lord Rama came to know about Sita's abduction, he felt intense pain. He urgently went in search of Sita along with his brother, Laxmana. He built up an army to fight against Ravana. Then finally, Lord Rama killed Ravana on the battlefield.

Despite living in a hostile environment in Ravana's kingdom, Sita never gave up hope for a new life. She always thought of Rama, felt his presence, and refused to accept any help and worldly gratifications offered by Ravana.

Witness the Reality

From birth, we learn to use our senses to experience the world. This way of viewing the world is crucial to perceive the world and survive in daily life. However, we can learn to enhance our perceptions in order to accept and overcome life's challenges. Suppose that I ask you to stand in front of a mirror and directly look into your eyes. How do you see them? Most of us can see features such as shape, size, and color of eyes.

Ask yourself the following questions to witness the depth of your being.

- What are the significant moments of joy these eyes have had?
- What are the significant moments of pain these eyes have had?
- How do these eyes appreciate the qualities of others?
- Do I view myself through others' eyes?
- Do I accept myself the way I am?

To look for the answer to each question, visualize relevant life instances with undivided attention, and witness your thoughts and emotions without judgment. This shall help you enhance your perception and accept life's realities. If we embrace the realities of our life, we nurture self-respect and view others the way they are. This attitude is the key to creating harmony in intimate relationships.

When Lord Rama came to know the news of his exile for fourteen years, he remained silent for some time, and then smiled. After that, he felt concerned for his father's well-being and went to see him. King Dasharatha was lying down in great despair.

Rama felt his pain and intending to reduce his grief, he said, "Father, I can go into exile only if you allow me with your full heart." On hearing this, King Dasharatha felt relieved and sent him with a heavy heart.

Queen Kaikeyi reinforced that Rama should spend his life in exile. Lord Rama accepted the reality.

Accepting our life's realities helps us to get unstuck from conflicts and use our life force energy for a better purpose in life.

Gardner of Life

Honeybees create harmony and sweetness in nature. They help in the pollination of different species of flowers whereas Locusts rush in groups and cause damage to the crops. Similarly, we must be like a honeybee willing to resolve internal conflicts and share lessons with an intimate partner. This way, we can develop a culture of heart-to-heart communication.

Nurture the Human Values

Lord Rama clearly described the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the forest. He advised Sita to remain in the palace but he did not force his decision. Sita listened to him patiently and replied that she would not be happy without Lord Rama. She was determined to overcome her life's challenges.

Listening with full attention helps us to empathize and make a conscious decision in life. When we listen to our inner voice, we notice its presence. If we think, feel, and act the same way, conflicts do not arise. If you can maintain this state of being, you can move to the path of happiness. I know this state of being as 'integrity.' Integrity is a human value that helps us to strengthen our character. It helps us to prioritize our actions and purify our thoughts and emotions.

Lord Rama felt the necessity to keep his father's word as his duty, but he also thought of other life opportunities. He consciously moved on with his life and did not have any resentment against others. When Sita was staying in the demons' surveillance, she always kept thinking of Lord Rama. She remained devoted to her love. Hence, she remained fearless. Integrity makes us who we are. It is the foundation of our self-worth.

Lesson

Marriage is a spiritual union where one learns to free themselves from the conditioning of the mind. Intimate relationships and circumstances show us our actual human values and character. If we take ownership of resolving inner conflicts, we can cultivate the culture of love. As a result, marriage can become a space for spiritual development.



Chapter 2: Love

Neha and Rahul studied in the same college. Neha was a hardworking student whereas Rahul was an adventurous young adult who excelled at academics and sports. Neha wanted to become a scientist. She preferred to create trustworthy relationships. On the other hand, Rahul was an extrovert. He wanted to join his dream company.

They fell in love with each other during college days. After establishing themselves in their careers, they got married. They bought a house. They spent joyful moments for a few years. Then life hit them hard as they were about to make a crucial decision.

Neha had received a scholarship to pursue her Ph.D., and thus had to leave for her further studies. Rahul was not in favor of her decision. As the day passed by, they faced a series of hostile arguments, giving each other emotional and mental wounds.

Internally, they were asking themselves one question: "Is this the same person whom I fell in love with?"

Psychologist John Bowlby, in his attachment theory, studied the behavior of infants and their primary caregivers. According to the study, infants seek proximity to attached caregivers in stressful situations. Mary Ainsworth, a developmental psychologist, further carried her work on attachment theory and conducted an experiment named 'Strange Situation.'

She conducted this experiment with infants who were accompanied by their mother and a stranger. She left the infants to explore in a room with a chair full of toys and observed the emotional responses of the infants under various circumstances. She conducted these studies under multiple conditions, such as the presence and absence of caregivers. The infants responded differently to each situation.

The first set of infants displayed a sign of distress when the caregivers left, but felt secured and expressed joy when the caregivers returned after separation. Another collection of infants displayed discomfort even before they were separated from their caregivers. Once the caregivers returned to the room, the infants came near the caregivers and resisted from staying away from them. They were also difficult to comfort. Lastly, a set of infants showed little emotional responses on the arrival and departure of the caregivers. The infants ignored and avoided their presence.

These sets of emotional responses are known as secure, anxious, and avoidance, respectively. Infants develop these primary behavioral traits as a strategy to manage themselves under stressful situations! These behavioral dynamics strengthen during the developmental stages of life. These could also be our emotional responses during adulthood.

If we create a limiting belief in response to any emotional experience, we distort our perception.

Let us examine the cause of conflict between Neha and Rahul. For that, we need to first look at their childhood.

Neha was a shy and reserved girl. She lived with her parents and two elder brothers in a small town. Her father was a government employee and her mother was a homemaker. Unfortunately, she spent her early childhood in a hostile environment. She remained aloof about family matters and focused only on her studies. During her adolescence, she created the belief — "Avoidance of painful life circumstances can create harmony." She used to feel guilt and shame in sharing her thoughts and feelings.

Rahul was a middle child. He was hyperactive. He used to play a lot with his siblings and other kids. His father and mother were working in corporate jobs. In the absence of any close companions, he used to feel disappointment and anger. During adolescence, he made social connections. He went the extra mile to maintain those relationships but also remained aggressive and demanding.

He created the belief—"Having money and material possessions is the way to create and maintain an intimate relationship." Thus, Neha and Rahul unconsciously became the victims of their own limiting beliefs.

Attachment is an emotional bond that exists between an individual and their object of desire. The enclosure provides the foundation to develop trust in a relationship. If we operate within healthy psychological boundaries, we can invest more time producing authentic relations.

However, a great attachment to our self-image and relationship distorts the reality of our life. Let us understand the consequences of this.

Self-deception

Most of us would have played the game 'Hide and Seek' in childhood. In this game, while the seeker counts up to a specific number, the other players hide. After that, the seeker searches for the other players. What if the seeker continues to count and forgets to take part in the game?

This situation is like those people who live in a world of self-deception. Since childhood, we go through various emotional experiences. These experiences can be painful, fearful, joyful, and pleasant. While growing up, we create our self-identity. The more we invest our life force energy towards our self-identity, the more we move away from realizing our true nature.

Our limiting beliefs, likes and dislikes, prestige, and ambition are part of our self-identity. These are like a unique set of self-images around our self-identity. If we are always counting our self-images, we forget to face our fears and beliefs which limits us in realizing our inner potential. For example, a person who seeks validation of love in a relationship may fear rejection. A child who witnesses domestic violence during childhood could either become a people pleaser or a rebel.

Our fears and limiting beliefs influence us to create deception. We need to self-investigate and become aware of our concerns and limiting beliefs. The sooner we break the pattern of self-deception, the better we empower ourselves in our spiritual path. We can realize our strengths and human values. We can make conscious life decisions without the limitation of fears and beliefs and seek our intrinsic motivation. In this way, we can succeed in the spiritual path.

Psychological Violence

Sir Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, a renowned scientist, invented a highly sensitive instrument to record plant growth. He subjected plant and animal tissues to various stimuli and found that they all showed a dynamic response. Jagdish Bose recorded reactions in metals, plants, and animals; and observed the differences in the responses under various conditions. He found that all of them primarily exhibit the same traits of fatigue and depression under hostile and stressful situations.

Similarly, words and thoughts affect our emotional and mental well-being. People with an agitated mind attempt to gain psychological control through their words.

As a result, a person feels hurt, disappointment, stress, and anxiety during hostile arguments. A passive listener can also feel psychological disturbances. For example, an individual who

listens to a heated debate will often feel a low vitality and mental agitation. If we do not observe our thoughts and words, we may unintentionally cause 'Karmic Bondage'. Psychological violence finds its expression with the intent of chosen words and ideas.

Power Struggle

Food and shelter are the basic needs of any human being. Would you consider the 'need for power' as an essential need? In the past, several countries have fought wars and struggled for independence—for example World War I, World War II, and the India Freedom Movement. I believe the culture of seeking power and wealth has left a deep impression on human societies.

The need for power has found its expression in psychological war. We can witness this in intimate relationships where dominance, submission, and avoidance become an integral expression of behavioral responses. Power struggles create conflicts and affect our spiritual development.

Possessiveness

Imagine you are a trainee in a multinational company. The company provides a vast amount of yearly performance bonuses as a reward. You worked hard for three years of your career and secured a decent share of performance bonuses. However, you feel unsatisfied with the lack of innovation and scope of learning in your job. You want to work in an environment where you have the freedom to work on unique ideas.

Consider that you receive an opportunity where you need to start your career from scratch. Would you hold on to the secured designation with a regular bonus, or would you prefer to start your desired career path? Would you be willing to resolve your mental dilemma or would you respond with your instinct?

I have provided this example to share the insight that we may associate self-worth through an external material possession. The longer we associate self-worth with an external motivation, the farther we go away from the purpose of life. Consequently, we limit our spiritual development.

We may develop possessiveness for various reasons, such as to seek security and pleasure. The constant thought of possessiveness creates disharmony within us. It brings disappointment and grief. It affects our vital life decisions and hinders spiritual development.

Love is unconditional intelligence that embraces our past and grounds our mind to the present moment. Let us understand a few of the characteristics of this intelligence.

Innocence

Consider there are two companies—X and Y which compete in business. Because of certain market conditions, company X found it challenging to generate enough business. The chief executive officer of company X decided to merge with company Y and offered it a deal.

The board of directors and shareholders of the company Y asked about the offer. They conducted a group discussion. The meeting's topic was 'Work Culture.' They started a boardroom meeting. They were looking forward to a successful merger and acquisition.

Let us observe a few questions asked in the meeting.

Question 1

How can we train the new employees from company X to learn about our company culture?

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