

# Be the Peace in the Chaos

by **TARA MANIAR**

It is Chaitra NavRatri (April 6 to 14), a time when Hindus all over the world celebrate the Divine Feminine and read the Ramayana or Tulsikrit Raam Charit Manas in preparation of the birth of Shree Raam. This is an auspicious time for reflection.

I'm at Parmarth Niketan Ashram in Rishikesh, India, observing silence for NavRatri. Each day, just before sunset at 6 p.m., I hurry to the holy banks of Ma Ganga to dip my toes into her holy water, offer my prayers, ceremoniously sprinkle her waters on me and then take a sip of her blessing. Then I participate in the evening Havan and Ganga Aarti, feeling the blessings of the universe flow gracefully into me. It is a magical time – a mystical time when we are in union with the universe.

Just prior to NavRatri, I finished facilitating "Embrace Your Spirit with Chakradance," and after NavRatri, I will be facilitating the workshop "BE the Peace in the Chaos." The topics for this program are mostly based on the teaching of the saints and how to live in the world and with self according to yoga philosophy, with the last module being "Ahimsa in Action."

We read the scriptures or are fortunate enough to sit at the feet of the masters and learn the messages of the divine. But do we apply these messages in our daily lives? Are we the peace in the chaos? Or are we the cause of the chaos?

Being the peace in the chaos does not mean that we sit or do nothing. No! When there is injustice, we need to stand up for justice. However, are we being destructive in seeking justice or constructive? That's a question each of us has to ask whenever we are working with others or even with self. For we can be destructive to self.

Think about the last time you were in a difficult situation. Were you the cause of the chaos or the peace in the chaos? Were you being destructive to self and others? Or were you being constructive to self and the community?

Actually this program "BE the Peace in the Chaos" came out of a statement a participant in one of my cultural diversity workshops said to me decades ago. She said, "You carry yourself so peacefully." I had not noticed that I carried myself peacefully. She said that as she walked into the room she felt a sense of calmness. This got me thinking and "BE the Peace in the Chaos" started its jour-



ney with its foundation in a quotation from Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji of Parmarth Niketan Ashram: "Peace is determined, not by external events, but by our internal attitude. The violence we see in the world is a reflection of the confusion and turmoil inside each one of us. When we are at Peace within; we can create peace in our piece of the world."

How do you create that inner peace so that you can exude peace and bring a sense of calmness to the people around you?

It is in putting into practice the messages of the scriptures and saints that we begin to create that inner peace and exude peace to bring a sense of calmness to the people around you. It is not enough to know that we need to get rid of the ego as the saints and scriptures tell us. We have to perform our daily sadhana / spiritual practice to allow the ego to surrender itself when it knows it is no longer in power. The 'ego' and the 'divine spirit' are both within us. The one we feed is the one that controls our thinking and behaviour. We feed the divine spirit with our daily sadhana / spiritual practice and putting into practice the messages of the saints and scriptures. When we continue to feed the divine spirit, the ego on its own will surrender to the divine spirit within. The ego is a constant companion and always waiting to stand up and take charge. But when we continue to feed the spirit, the divine remains in control.

The picture on most Bhagavat Gitas is Lord Krishna holding the reins of the chariot. This is a reminder to give the reins of the chariot – your body – this life – to the divine within and only then will you experience the joy, freedom and peace, even when there is chaos in your world. During this time of NavRatri, as you read or listen to the story of the Raam Charit

Manas, think about which characteristics you feed. Do you feed the Raam or the Ravan within? Think about your behavior the last time you were in a difficult situation. Did you behave as Raam or Ravan? Did you think about what was best for yourself, the other and the workplace or community? Or did you only think about what was best for you?

In the Ramayana, Lord Raam could have stayed and demanded his birthright as the Prince Regent when King Dasharath asked him to go to the forest. But he knew it would not be good for the kingdom, his father, and he and his father would lose the respect of the people if he stayed. Lord Raam saw his exile into the forest as an opportunity to meet the saints and people of the forest. He turned the difficult situation into a blessing for himself and others. He went into the forest to teach us how to behave in difficult situations. He taught us to deal with difficult situations and challenges from our divine spirit with peace and love in our hearts and the blessings will follow. However, when we allow the ego to control us, we lose our peace and the respect of others and the community.

Learn from Lord Raam how to live from the divine spirit instead of the ego. After the war in Lanka, when Lord Raam was explaining to Ma Sitaji the events of the war, he said, "This is where Ravan died." He did not say this is where I killed Ravan. He stated the facts without seeking the credit. This is an example of doing what must be done without seeking the recognition for the work.

As you reflect on the auspiciousness of NavRatri, whether you are a Devi or Raam bhakta, bring into your life the lessons of the scriptures and "BE the Peace in the Chaos." Cultivate that inner peace with your daily sadhana to bring peace to your little piece of the world. When each of us cultivates inner peace, there will be peace in the world. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantih, Hari Om.



*Tara Maniar is a certified Chakradance™ Facilitator, Spiritual Life Coach and international workshop facilitator who empowers individuals to transform their inner turmoil to enlightened possibilities with individual and group sessions in Canada, India and Trinidad. She brings active compassion, integrity, humility, wisdom, intuition, inspiration and enthusiasm to honour those she serves. For more information about tara and her services, please go to [www.taramaniar.com](http://www.taramaniar.com). For a no-cost consultation, you may contact her at [tara@taramaniar.com](mailto:tara@taramaniar.com) or WhatsApp at 1-204-218-9722.*

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