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# THE SCOTSMAN

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# Retreat into your own mind

Spiritual leader Dadi Janki believes we can find harmony close to home by changing the way we think, says CLAIRE SMITH

**D**O YOU ever wish that the clock would stop ticking so you could catch up on life? Or that you could turn your back on all that is familiar for a while, so that you could create a little calm in your personal world?

There are few of us who have not dreamed of getting away from it all at one time or another, but with jobs to go to, families who depend on us and a myriad distractions in the modern world, finding time to escape to a desert island or join a spiritual retreat is destined to remain just one more unticked box on our to-do lists.

It is possible, however, to find peace and greater balance close to home, without the need to take time off work or away from the children. Dadi Janki, a globally recognised spiritual leader, believes that we can increase our tranquillity levels and find harmony close to home, by focusing on the way we think.

Dadi Janki, 89, is a founder member of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU), which offers education in human, moral and spiritual values. The university members believe that a retreat is just as much about a state of mind as about a secluded place.

The BKWSU was founded in India 60 years ago and has enjoyed a consultative relationship with the United Nations for over 25 years. In 1992 Dadi Janki was invited to be one of the Ten Keepers of Wisdom, an eminent group of world spiritual leaders convened to advise the Earth Summit in Brazil on the fundamental spiritual dilemmas which underpin worldwide environment issues. She has also advised the UN on women's issues.

Based in London for 30 years, she turned her back on material wealth and comfort in India to dedicate her life to studying the essence of spiritual truths, and advising others how to bring harmony and tranquillity into their lives.

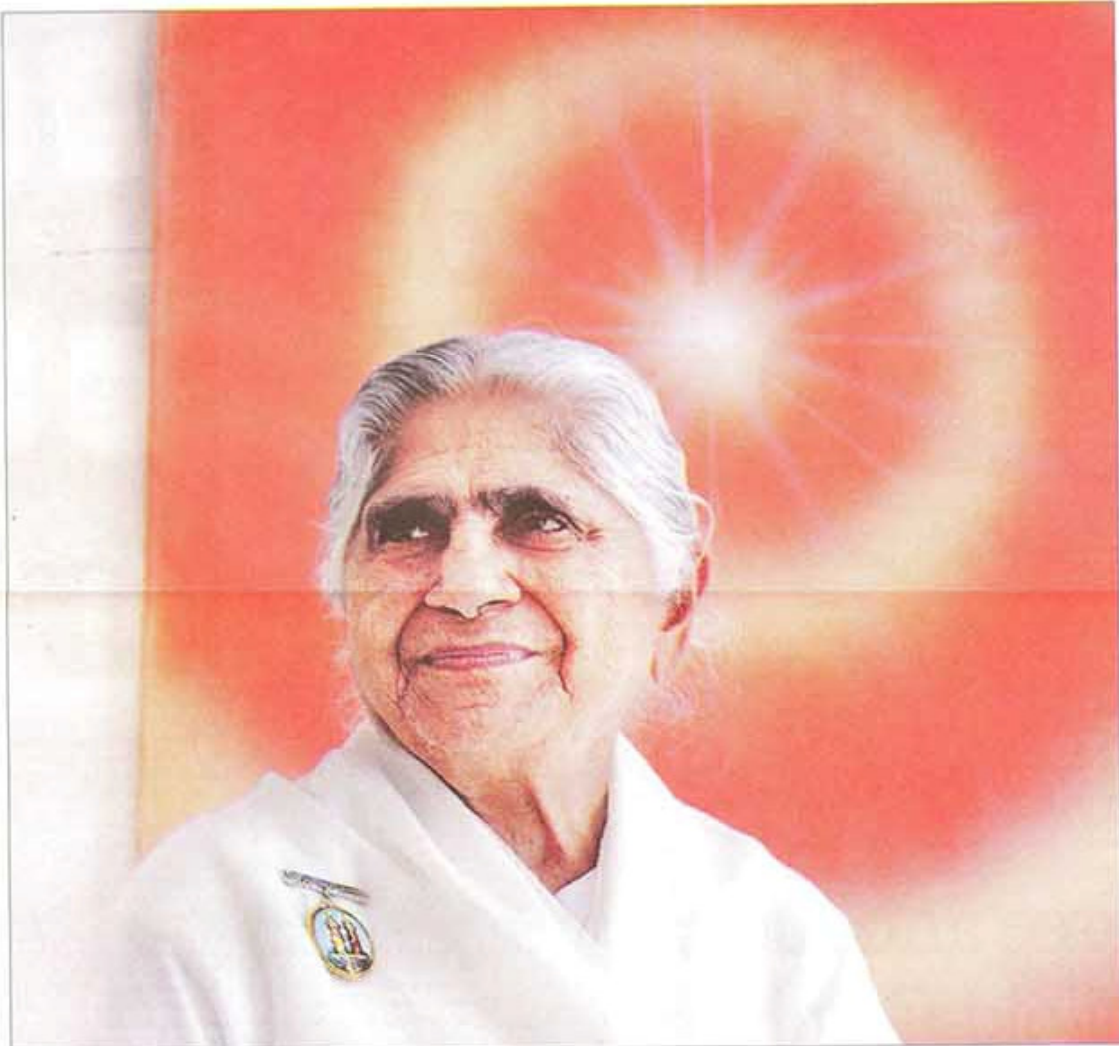
The public relations expert Lynne Franks has cited her as a major influence on her life, and her admirers include the comedienne Ruby Wax, the actress Trudie Styler and singer Neneh Cherry. On a recent visit to Scotland, Dadi Janki addressed thousands at public meetings and civic receptions.

She says she believes it is vital for us all to make space for inner peace, and that a key step to this is valuing our time. "Others can only benefit from our time if we learn the value of it ourselves," she says.

In our quick-fix society it is all too easy to reach for a glass of wine or some other substance to make us feel chilled out, but she believes that changing the way we think is the only true solution to finding peace.

"Sometimes the mind can become unbalanced and you can develop bad habits such as taking drugs," Dadi Janki says. "But if you have understanding you can always bring about change."

Here Dadi Janki shares her



Dadi Janki advocates a quest to find inner peace  
Picture: Sean Bell

thoughts on how to create greater calm in our lives, so that we can create a retreat within our own minds amid the brouhaha of the lives we live.

**Find time for silence**  
OK, so you are not in a position to rent a deserted private island for a week, or tell everyone in your open-plan office to stop talking, but you can probably create some extra quiet in your life by focusing on the here and now.

"In silence and stillness we can master time and find happiness in the present moment," says Dadi Janki.

So, when things get stressful at work or home, stop worrying about the mistake you have just made, or your to-do list for the rest of the week, and simply sit quietly, trying to concentrate your mind on the moment, leaving no room for negative thoughts.

Doing this for a minute or two only at your desk or, preferably, in a quiet room, will help you become more peaceful, and cope better with the rest of the day.

### Listen to your conscience

We all face moral choices in life but it can be easy to ignore the little voice which is telling you to do the right thing. But learning to listen to your conscience and developing a strong sense of your own values will help you develop a feeling of well-being in your life which will help lift your mood daily.

"People come under the influence of other people and they don't even realise what they are doing," Dadi Janki says. "Once I have understood what is right nobody can influence me to do anything which is not right. If you don't listen to your conscience what is the point of life? It may as well be a life that is like being dead."

### Don't be discouraged

Human beings have evolved over millions of years to survive on a planet of varied environments and in ever-changing societies. This has created a flexibility which gives us the power to accept situations and adapt to them. Once we understand

this there is no need to be afraid of challenges in life. "Some people say: It is easy for you, we have difficulties," says Dadi Janki. "Sometimes people try to make problems, as if they are testing you. But nobody expresses their sorrow through me. If you understand that you don't have to be affected by difficulties it doesn't matter what situation may come."

**'Others can only benefit from our time if we learn the value of it ourselves'**

### Let go of bad feelings

You've had a huge argument with a friend and you keep going over it in your mind but the more you think about it the worse you feel. By repeatedly going over feelings of unhappiness or anger in our minds which stem from incidents which have passed, we are hurting nobody but ourselves.

"Something might have happened to someone when

they were six years old and, when they remember, the feeling comes back," says Dadi Janki. "Even if in the present moment those problems are not there, the feeling is the same. It creates peacelessness in the mind, the mind is not able to understand what is happening in the present."

So, if you find yourself becoming angry and negative about past incidents, try to let go by bringing your attention back to the present moment.

Life is short, so why spend any of it focusing on things which have made you unhappy?

### Believe in yourself and in other human beings

With all the stresses and strains of modern life, and the feelings of inadequacy and cynicism these can generate, it is easy to forget the good things of which human beings are capable, such as friendship, charity, and selflessness, and to forget how resilient we can be.

"People's hearts have become so hard they are not able to feel. Human beings have become so sensitive and delicate they are

not able to tolerate the slightest thing. But this is not what human beings should be.

"Human beings are so clever, they can make the impossible possible. If someone does something with insight and faith and trust it is going to work out."

Be inspired by others and remember that all human beings are capable of great things - including you.

### Teach by example

Trying to change or influence other people can be a thankless, exhausting task - after all, few of us like to be told by others what we should do.

With a sense of humility and an open heart, however, we can find the best way to connect with others.

So, if you would like others to adopt a kinder, gentler approach towards you - in the hope that this will take some of the stress out of your life - adopt a kinder, gentler approach to others.

"If you are just talking about things they fall apart," says Dadi Janki. "The best way for people to learn is through example."