

CONNECTION

Issue 30, Jul/Aug 2025



Belonging



THE BRAHMA KUMARIS
AUSTRALIA



Stimulating spiritual and personal reflection through featured articles, poems, artworks and activities;

Enhancing information sharing on BKA activities across the country, including news from the Board, Australian Management Team and Departments, Centres and Class Locations;

Bringing a greater sense of cohesion and community in the BKA family;

Raising awareness of, and engaging BKs in reflection and discussion of key issues

Publisher :

The Brahma Kumaris Australia
181 First Ave, Five Dock NSW 2046

All correspondence to :
bkmagazine@au.brahmakumaris.org

** Submissions are welcome ... Please contact us for a copy of 'Guidelines for Submissions' & 'Submission Checklist' **before** sending in your submission.*

Editorial Team :

Margot Schofield
Morni Chen
Rebecca Attwood

Thanks to :

Catherine Elliott for the cover artwork,
and all contributors/authors of messages,
reports, poems and articles, etc.

Disclaimer

All information, opinions and views of the authors and contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team nor The Brahma Kumaris Australia who is the publisher of Connection Magazine. In accessing this magazine and its supplements, you may save or print the content only for your own personal non-commercial use. Except where expressly stated otherwise, you are not permitted to reproduce, adapt or change in any way this magazine or its supplements for any other purpose without the prior written permission of the editorial team. You are not permitted to reproduce, adapt or change in any way, the content of any article, report, interview, artwork etc, for any other purpose without the prior written permission of the author or contributor of the article, report, interview, artwork, etc. You are not authorised to 'grab' and post any content on any social media or web sites without the prior written permission of the author or contributor of such content. Copyright ownership for all contributions in this magazine and its supplements belong to the relevant contributor. The Brahma Kumaris Australia is not responsible for any copyright infringements for submissions, images, videos or any other media supplied to us by writers or contributors. Connection Magazine reserves the right to refuse any images or submissions that do not suit the style or message of the magazine.

This magazine supports trust, respect and fairness. Thank you for your co-operation.

Welcome ...

Belonging is a basic need. Our hearts empathise with refugees and displaced persons. Imagine not even having a country to which you belong. And yet, Baba has given us such an indelible sense of security with the words, "You are Mine. As you are and what you are, you are Mine."

Holding onto this sense of belonging restores our self-respect and dignity. God, the Highest on High, is there for me unconditionally. From this secure place, we can create a sense of belonging in others.

We deeply embody the awareness that we are all one family and embrace every soul as a child of one God. Baba encourages us to go out of our way to include souls from every background, whether physically or emotionally challenged; people of all ages and from every strata of society.

The articles in this issue will help us to realise how important our attitudes are in creating in others a sense of belonging. We will more easily be able to discern any subtle attitude of judgement or discrimination that we may not have even noticed within ourselves. As Brother Charlie mentions in his message, Belonging and Inclusion were the two main needs expressed by Brahmins. This is true of all our brothers and sisters and we are the ones who can fulfil this need.

*the
Editorial Team*

*"Imagine a circle of compassion
and no one is standing outside of it."*

- Father Gregory Boyle

Message from Br Charlie

Dear Family of Australia,

Once Baba said of the eight jewels that everyone feels they belong to me. To give feelings of belonging is one of the highest states of spirituality. When I break down all the limited barriers and judgments in my own mind, others don't feel judged or labelled and therefore have a sense of safety and naturally close.

Just as peace is my natural state, belonging is innate in the human spirit. The more I feel a true belonging to Baba, automatically I become an instrument to offer these feelings to others. In 2008 we did a survey of the Brahmin family of what they wanted most in their Brahmin Life and the feedback from the whole world was Belonging and Inclusion.

In a world where people feel so disconnected, alienated, marginalised and very alone, to give feelings of belonging is one of the highest forms of service.

Charlie

Cover Art



About our Artist : Catherine Elliott

Catherine is a student of Raja Yoga of 25 years. She has a textile arts and expressive arts practice based from her home in Yangan, Queensland.

The front cover image is a quick sketch done for a flyer to invite residents of Yangan to a community meeting. The **School of Arts** that features in the sketch is where Catherine holds regular textile programs, and has used it as an exhibition space, and a studio. It is also where she goes for Chair Yoga classes and to catch up on the local news.

Catherine lives over 2 hours from her spiritual community, the Brisbane Centre, so the sense of place and belonging she experiences living in this small community is a delight and sustenance to her.

Contents



4 Belonging - A Return Journey

The journey to finally feeling “I’m home, and where I belong”, can take us from the sense of not belonging in childhood, to feeling uncomfortable in social and work groups, and like an imposter and unworthy. Realisation that only Baba can heal our heart is the key to healing.

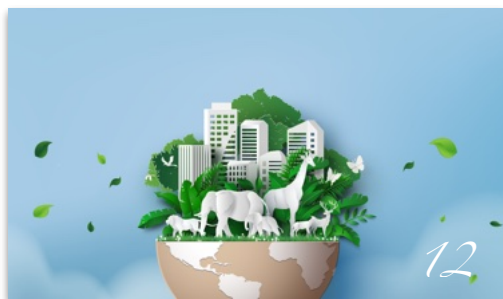
6 Reflections: Stories to Recharge and Rejuvenate

Our quest to belong to only the One, teaches us to let go completely of all longings to belong in limited ways, like seeking the approval of ‘the world’, friends and family, colleagues, society, and even the divine community.

6 Oneness (A Poem)

8 The Spiritual Embrace of Belonging - When Self Meets the World

Beyond external anchors lies a deeper, more profound sense of belonging – a spiritual resonance that blossoms when we truly accept ourselves and feel intrinsically a part of our world.



8 To the One We Belong (A Poem)

10 You Belong - Creating a Safe, Compassionate Space

A compassionate gaze that creates connection with any human being first requires returning to spiritual identity, quieting the noise of exclusion and rejection. It’s a personal practice, but one with immense social impact.

12 The Soul Ecology of Belonging (Green Page)

Every being - tree, ant, whale, star - is stitched into the vast intelligence of the Drama. We are not outside of that. And you are not outside of that. You never were. Even the ache of disconnection is itself a sign that we do belong - but have forgotten.

14 I Belong to Baba, and Baba Belongs to Me (Interview)

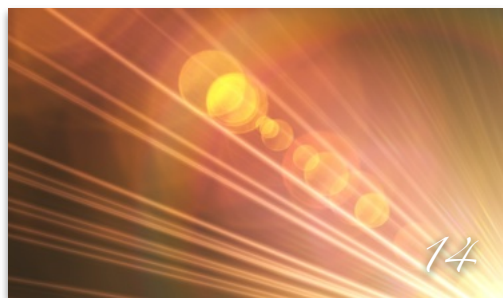
Dr. Vithiya Ilaventhan shares her insights into what belonging means and the different stages we go through on our journeys to a fulfilling sense of belonging.

16 Celebrating 50 Years in Australia (Reports)

Reports on public programs and the family retreat held for 50 years’ service and expansion of The Brahma Kumaris in Australia.

20 Belonging - The Thread that Connects Us

At its core, belonging is about forming connections with people, places, ideas, cultures, or communities. These connections shape our identity, influence our behaviour, and colour our perception of the world.



22 Breathing Life Into a Flame

Love and belonging are not just experiences to receive - they are energies to radiate. The more I keep my flame alight, the more I can become a source of warmth for others.

24 Who Do I Belong To?

Do I really appreciate who I belong to?

25 Drawn Together - The Action and Attracting of Belonging

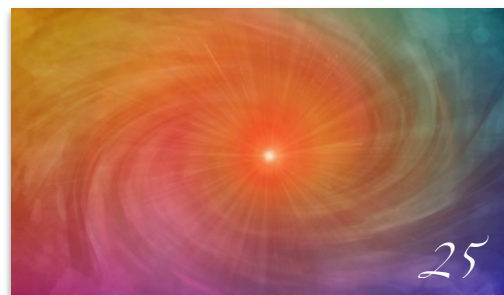
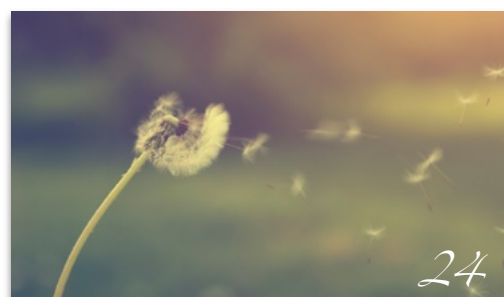
As we belong to the One, so too we belong to one another. Raja Yoga meditation is not a path of isolation. Alongside deep silence and God-realisation, our relationships and connections with others are essential for our spiritual sustenance and growth. There is power for us in the gathering.

26 Book Recommendations from Eternity Ink

Contributors: *Charlie Hogg, Catherine Elliott, Angie O'Toole, Neville Hodgkinson (UK), Sandra Nichols, Jyoti Ravichandran, Lata Bhat, Marianne Lizana (Costa Rica), Tamasin Ramsay, Dr. Vithiya Ilaventhana, Kalvinder Kaur, Gabrielle Martin, Sona Bahri, Swaran Singh, Wesley Ford, Gopi Elton, Katherine McHugh, and Amanda Quinn.*



View and download all previous issues
@ <http://tiny.cc/ConnectionMagazine>



THE ROYAL UNION

This booklet contains a master class on Raja Yoga, and was offered as a contribution to the International Day of Yoga. It comprises a class that was given in Madhuban by Dadi Ratan Mohini, in her hundredth year.

Dadi was asked to explain the essence of yoga to hundreds of students from around the world, most of whom knew little of Indian culture. She made it plain that for the soul to free itself from past conditioning, an act of humility is required. This involves acknowledging that the ideas, beliefs and opinions that each one of us lives with may be defective, and that to step into the mind of the Supreme Being, our Source, we have to go into complete silence. That is, at certain times in meditation it helps to stop thinking altogether. This stepping aside is not blind faith, but a deliberate act, born of trust and understanding. It enables love, peace, happiness and wisdom to emerge from within and creates an experience of true belonging within the soul.

Dadi was perhaps the world's most experienced yogini, having had almost 90 years as a student and teacher with the Brahma Kumaris. Born on 25 March 1925, she was barely 12 when she joined other founding sisters in 14 years of solitude and intense meditation before embarking on a lifetime of spiritual service. A teacher of teachers, she also traveled extensively and played a major role in establishing BK centres in many countries.

<http://tiny.cc/TheRoyalUnion>

NEXT ISSUE Contentment



If you would like to submit a contribution for consideration for the next issue of *Connection*, **before** sending your contribution, please contact us at bkmagazine@au.brahmakumaris.org for a copy of our **Submission Guidelines**

***Final Date** for submissions
is **8 October 2025**



I A childhood memory is of taking First Holy Communion in the Catholic faith. A picture was taken of the group of 7-year-old children – a sea of little girls in white dresses and little boys with bow ties. Right in the middle was one child who was not smiling at the camera like all the rest. She was looking upward with a radiant expression on her face. That child was told by merciless teachers and children that she had ruined the photo, and yes, that child was me. It was a stand-out experience of the sense of not belonging.

Fast-forward to adulthood: I experienced a prevailing sense of being involved but not really belonging to social and work groups. And at the very heart of this feeling was the knowledge that there must be something more significant, more important and meaningful. I was a wife, a mum and one who took on management roles in the workplace, but no matter how full life became there was a gnawing emptiness inside.

Along the road there have been sign-posts, although admittedly some only became noteworthy in retrospect. As a pre-teen I was influenced by priests at my church and nuns at my school. The message they conveyed was punitive. "God will punish you." and "You will burn in Hell for your sins." Only much later in adult life I realised the damage in the form of trauma that these fearsome notions had instilled in me.

There was a day that is etched in my memory. I see an eleven-year-old in the yard of the family home, nothing special happening. A sudden and blinding realisation hit me "God loves me! He would never punish me! He wants only the best for me!". A profound certainty and enormous comfort emerged, and I do recall telling my parents around that time that I wanted to become a nun, to dedicate myself to my loving Father. I never realised the vocation, however I can see now how Baba touched my intellect at that time.

Another sign-post was the strong desire to go to India, when I was about sixteen. It was the only country that interested me and I knew I belonged there somehow. It was only many years later, after coming to Baba that I realised this dream. When I set foot in Bharat I knew I was home.

The pull to belong was strong, although nothing in my life was really satisfying that need. When Larry and I met we were both

on the rebound from broken relationships. Our romantic involvement quickly developed into something much more spiritual. There were times we would be lost in each other's gaze and transported, before we knew anything about drishti. There was a companionship and a sense of belonging and purpose that was different from anything either one had experienced.

Soon we found ourselves attending Transcendental Meditation classes. The year was 1988. I remember the sense of freedom as I transcended the physical into something I could not quite put my finger on. The meditation experience was wonderful, however when I finished each meditation nothing had actually changed in my world. I was still the same. A happy and fulfilling family life and career still left an inexplicable emptiness inside. The sense of not quite belonging prevailed.

Larry and I came to Baba in Newcastle. A work colleague had told me about The Brahma Kumaris, and to be honest I was not really interested at the time. Life was busy and I already had a meditation habit. But there was a pull that would not be denied. We did the course in the month Dadi Prakashmani left her body in 2007. Every lesson was a revelation for me, it all

"There was a day that is etched in my memory. I see an eleven-year-old in the yard of the family home, nothing special happening. A sudden and blinding realisation hit me "God loves me! He would never punish me! He wants only the best for me!"

made perfect sense. I recall being told that Rakhi had been cancelled in many places as souls came to terms with the departure of their beloved Dadi, however the Newcastle Centre decided Rakhi would still be honoured as a program. At this time I knew nothing of Indian culture or faith traditions. I was invited to tie Rakhi (Larry was coaching soccer at the time and could not attend). *It was explained that I would be making a promise to God. With a pounding heart I decided I must do it, this was my destiny. I knew that I was making a life commitment, even while understanding I didn't know the full implications of what I was doing. This was where I belonged.*

We were first-timers in Madhuban the following season. Soon after that I started to teach the course. Baba helped me to realise a lifelong dream to be an adult trainer. A special Regional Trainer role was created for me at work. It meant I could finally leave management behind and do what I knew to be my true vocational calling.

Even though I knew in my mind I'd found the place I belonged there were still fears and insecurities that at times affected my stage. I recall going to Madhuban at the time of Holi. The family was gathered in Harmony Hall in Gyan Sarovar after class. Didis Jayanti and Sudesh took watering cans and ran through the crowded room spraying water all around. They were child-like in their enthusiasm and pure joy, and the audience joined them in a beautiful celebration. I sat at the back of the room and sobbed. I felt I was an imposter who really did not belong here. I was not worthy to share in this joy or belong to this clan. I was overwhelmed by my inferiority.

I came to realise that belonging is more than knowing. It must be anchored deep in the heart. From this point a fierce determination took hold. Even though (according to me) I clearly was not worthy, I would do everything in my power to

become so. It took some time to realise the only One who could heal my poor heart was Baba, and He did, gradually and gently. Eventually I knew deep in the soul that I truly was a child of God, a Confluence-Aged Brahmin whose destiny was being created in real time. The self-respect that had been lost over lifetimes was restored. Baba had performed surgery on my wounded heart and it was now singing. There was so much joy and love.

Over the years it has become apparent to me that belonging is not about entitlement. The joy of belonging is in taking responsibility as Baba's helper for His task. Belonging doesn't come as a burden, rather with a sense of purpose and commitment, and with a certainty that there really is nothing else one would rather be doing. The pleasure and privilege of being an instrument for God is surely the greatest part one can ever play. The ongoing checking for me is in my relationship with Baba. I know I'm on track when we are close, and any distance is a sign of work I need to do. And even this work is a joy because there is progress toward a guaranteed goal. While not yet time to go "Home", finally I'm home, and at last with every part of my being I belong.

"I came to realise that belonging is more than knowing. It must be anchored deep in the heart. From this point a fierce determination took hold. Even though (according to me) I clearly was not worthy, I would do everything in my power to become so."



Angie O'Toole and her husband Larry live next door to Baxter Retreat Centre. Angie has a particular interest in adult teaching and learning. She is part of the Australian Tutor Training Team and the Baxter Planning Team.



"The whole of creation belongs to the Father, and so all are children. Consider yourself to belong to Shiv Baba as you move along and everything is then purified."

- Sakar Murli 18/04/2022



For much of my early life I felt as if I did not really belong in this world. Occasionally, when relaxing on a summer's afternoon in my grandparents' garden, or enjoying a long country walk with friends, I would feel truly at peace. But for the most part, there was a sense of somehow being a stranger.

I learned how to pretend to fit in. I married a beautiful and entertaining woman and loved the family years we had together with our two sons, but even in those relationships, there was a feeling of being something of a fraud. It was a similar story with my work, as a newspaper journalist: I poured enormous effort into it, but in the midst of success, a feeling of inner emptiness was never far away.

Recently I came across something called imposter syndrome, and wondered whether this fits my experience. Psychologists say it is characterised by persistent self-doubt, and an inability to believe in yourself internally, despite your achievements. To overcome it, they advocate recognising and acknowledging the feelings, replacing negative thoughts with kindness and understanding towards the self, and keeping track of your strengths and achievements.

I can see the value of such a process. It is similar, in some ways, to what we do in Raja Yoga, as we learn from the Supreme Soul how to restore our self-respect. But perhaps a key difference is that for the Raj Yogi, the healing begins with an acknowledgement that I really *am* an imposter.

As an old soul, I have had a long journey through time, during which I gradually lost sight of my divinity - that is, the generosity of spirit that shows up naturally when I know myself as a soul, an entity distinct from the body and brain.

This understanding is consistent with a post-materialist paradigm of reality being developed at the frontiers of science, in which it is said that there is a mind-like quality at the root of existence. Like actors on a stage, souls contribute their individual parts within an overall script that runs the show.

A key missing ingredient in this emerging scientific story,

however, is the recognition that the play is made up of two very different acts. The Supreme Being has explained that in the first of these, human beings instinctively understand themselves to be eternal souls, with intrinsically loving and peaceful natures. At the start of the play this "deity" consciousness is in its purest form, and it manifests a world of unbroken happiness.

As those same deities take rebirth, a kind of entropy sets in through which spiritual awareness gradually diminishes, until what is remembered in biblical tradition as "The Fall" takes place, ushering in a divided world. This is Act Two, in which conflict and selfishness increasingly predominate.

Small wonder, then, that there is a "longing to belong" inside many Brahmins, since we have known the oneness of a perfect world. Perhaps all souls feel this longing to some degree, because all have known the sweet silence of the home.

When Brahmins learn about the cycle, and how we came down, and how Satyug lies ahead, the faith and courage to embark on the journey of becoming whole again is restored. But the sanskar of needing to belong can be an obstacle, when we have sought and, at least temporarily, experienced fulfilment in limited ways.

I live at a retreat centre with more than 20 other BKs, whom I love and admire. Each makes a unique contribution to the task of consciousness renewal, as well as performing their physical role or roles within the community. As we grow and mature together, retreat centre life becomes rich in both challenge and achievement.

Yet until recently, I still sometimes felt as though I did not quite fit. I would be moving along happily, when suddenly a sense of "aloneness" would surface in my mind. It was usually triggered

by memories of my former life as a family man and headline-seeking journalist – because those were also ways to gain a feeling of belonging, now no longer so accessible to me.

In Kaliyug, many of us will surely have taken support from positions or relationships, only to suffer their eventual loss. The sadness that comes when we lose something dear to us can be extreme, and long-lasting, and a sanskar of this kind may predispose some of us to a readiness to feel isolated. This can also become a source of the “storms of Maya” over which we need to remain cautious.

So, what have I learned from this? Understanding what is going on can be a big help in coping with such storms, and coming out of them with the soul strengthened rather than weakened by the experience.

What I am still working on is to let go completely of all longings to belong in limited ways – to be seeking the approval of worldly friends and family, or society, or even the divine community. I want to belong only to the One.

It is not that I seek to feel “above” needing approval from elsewhere. It is just that I know that if I really keep the Supreme with me, I will be able to give without needing any return. And the giving does not have to be physical. It can simply take the form of good wishes and pure feelings. The happiness and contentment accompanying that way of living would finish off all other longings – and I would be free.

I did not understand any of this when I began my spiritual pilgrimage 43 years ago. At least now the goal is clear, and perhaps even in reach, if I truly surrender to it. Hope springs eternal!



Neville Hodgkinson is an author and journalist, specialising in health and medical journalism. His books include I Know How to Live, I Know How to Die – the Teachings of Dadi Janki; Will To Be Well - the Real Alternative Medicine; and How HIV/AIDS Set the Stage for the Covid Crisis. Neville has been a student of Raja Yoga for 43 years and now lives at the Brahma Kumaris Global Retreat Centre, Oxford, UK.



ONENESS

by Sandra Nichols

So many things are boundless
Never-ending or beginning
Just discovered or still unknown
Beneath the earth or above.

Our mind and spirit roam free
Creating stories, poems
Intricate crochet patterns
Engineering marvels.

The enduring miracle of life
Returns when a child is born
To recreate unconditional love
And dreams of love returned.

The boundless beauty of nature
Inspires feelings of awe
In the spirals of an uncurling fern frond
A cyclone, galaxy and nautilus.



The veins on a leaf mimic
The lines on our hands
Our breath, the wind and spirit
Entwine to become one.

Filaments of mycelia underground
Send messages between trees
Like nerve cells of our brain
What we don't see, remains.

But nature seen brings us joy
Green, dappled light of forest
Wispy, shape-shifting clouds
Drifting leaves on the breeze.



The human heart yearns for connection, for a sense of place within the vast tapestry of existence. We seek belonging in our families, our communities, and our cultures. But beyond these external anchors lies a deeper, more profound sense of belonging – a spiritual resonance that blossoms when we truly accept ourselves. It is in this acceptance that the boundaries between "self" and "world" begin to dissolve, revealing a profound interconnectedness where the whole world feels like home, and we, in turn, feel intrinsically part of it.

In my pre-teen years, I was able to observe a vast number of people rich in their ethnicity, traditions and languages making such efforts to assimilate into their new adopted home where the local traditions and language were so different, and racism was rampant. I noticed behaviours akin to the fable where a crow, wanting to be a peacock, put on peacock feathers and ended up not being either, crow or peacock, not belonging to either and feeling that it did not belong.

This invoked in me a deep feeling and desire to convey to them that they were rich in who they were. They need not suffer so much in making this new place their home and to be accepted by the local community by measuring up to some external ideal. Their constant striving to assimilate and to fit in was making them focus on their perceived flaws and shortcomings, thereby fostering a deep sense of alienation.

I realised the connection between self-acceptance and a deep sense of belonging. When we begin to embrace all facets of ourselves – the strengths and the vulnerabilities – a quiet revolution begins within. This acceptance is about recognising our inherent worth, our unique and irreplaceable contribution to the grand scheme of things. It's about acknowledging our humanity in its beautiful imperfection.

To my mother's dismay, as a teenager this is the discussion/argument that I would have with the older generation of her old friends and their newly arrived acquaintances.

As we cultivate this inner acceptance, something remarkable starts to happen. The walls we've built around ourselves, fuelled by doubt and judgment, begin to crumble. We realise that the qualities and our shared vulnerabilities become bridges, fostering empathy and understanding. We embrace authenticity, having been released from self-doubt and fear.

This inner shift has a powerful ripple effect on our perception of the world. When we are at peace with ourselves, we are more open to seeing the beauty and interconnectedness in everything around us. The natural world, the bustling city, the faces of strangers – all begin to feel less foreign, less separate. We start to recognize the same spark of life, the same fundamental essence that resides within us reflected in the world outside.

This is the heart of spiritual belonging. It's the understanding that we are not isolated entities adrift in a cold universe, but rather integral threads in the intricate web of life. The air we breathe is shared, the water that sustains us flows through all living things, and the very earth beneath our feet connects us to generations past and future. And especially for us, Baba infuses in us the sweetness of belonging to a world family.

The feeling of the world belonging to us isn't about ownership or dominance. Instead, it's a deep sense of kinship, a recognition that we are part of this magnificent, unfolding story. It's about feeling a sense of responsibility and stewardship

"Their constant striving to assimilate and to fit in was making them focus on their perceived flaws and shortcomings, thereby fostering a deep sense of alienation."

towards the planet and all its inhabitants. Similarly, the feeling of belonging to the world isn't about losing our individuality; it's about recognising our place within the larger ecosystem, understanding that our existence is meaningful and contributes to the whole.

Ultimately, the spiritual significance of belonging lies in the realisation that the separation we often perceive between ourselves, and the world is an illusion. When we truly accept ourselves, we unlock the door to a deeper understanding of our place in the universe. We discover that we are not just living in the world, but that the world lives within us, and we are an inseparable part of its intricate and beautiful design. This profound sense of belonging is not just a feeling; it is a fundamental truth waiting to be embraced.

Just the phrase, "I belong to Baba and Baba belongs to me", opens the profound sense of belonging that becomes a wellspring of joy, peace, and resilience. When we feel deeply connected in this way to Baba, allowing Him to move us, the challenges of life seem less daunting, the moments of beauty more profound. It fosters a sense of gratitude and wonder, reminding us of the miracle of existence and our deep connection to Baba and the world family.

Cocooned under His canopy of protection I become free with a generous heart that can hold everyone in love and compassion with an openness to the interconnectedness of all things, with my spiritual limbs extending God's embrace to everyone. This invisible thread connects us to the world, allowing us to embrace our true selves and, in turn, honour others for who they are.

Jyoti Ravichandran is an IT professional and long-time meditator. She maintains her inner strength of contentment by joyfully integrating the principles of Raja Yoga meditation to challenging situations and relationships. She shares her insights in workshops, drawing upon her own life lessons and the fruit of many years of spiritual study.



To the One We Belong

by Lata Bhat

Golden waves of happiness
Golden rays and lights
Celebrating love and service
At The Great Southern lights!

With Baba in their vision
With enthusiasm they move along
Proud helpers and happy hearts
Like a nightingale singing a song

Birds of a feather flock together
Love and peace go hand in hand
Here is a group of holy swans
Creating a beautiful magical land



Come one, come all
With open arms we welcome you all
A message from time, so very clear
Golden Age is close; very near

Let's become one
and celebrate the Golden Jubilee
Aiming to be our best version
After all, we are One Godly Family!



*"Remember that you are not this body. You are a soul. A child of the Supreme Father.
You belong to Him, and He belongs to you."*

Having the experience of belonging has given me a profound sense of purpose and security in life - like roots grounding me in solid soil, from which the branches of a stronger and truer identity have grown. It has nurtured a connection with Baba that has empowered me, deepened my personal power, strengthened my relationships - both with my physical and spiritual family - and given me a clearer understanding of my role or task in the world.

I was born the first daughter of parents who came from large, close-knit families, so my early years were filled with company, love, gifts, and a sense of safety. However, the country was going through a brutal civil war, which forced my family into exile when I was five years old.

Family bonds were transformed, and it was as if a little plant had been moved to a new pot, with different soil, in a new garden. The roots suffered from being torn out of their original ground, so building new relationships of trust and support, and forming an identity in a place without familiar references, became an adventure with many ups and downs.

As a teenager, I tried to identify with my parents' extended family, but they were so far away, and we had such little contact that it wasn't enough to give me a true sense of belonging. I began to forge deeper friendships with my classmates, and the experiences we shared created small roots that emotionally supported me during a time when I felt a deep emptiness and sadness in my heart.

The search for life's meaning and for understanding my inner truth led me to different spiritual spaces and missionaries who shared their experiences with me, prompting the question: Do I belong to any of these paths?

When I arrived at Brahma Kumaris at the age of 19, I had a powerful realisation. It was like a bell ringing inside, awakening something that had long been asleep: I have always been, and will always be, the same soul, no matter where I am or who I'm

with. That sense of identity, connected to an original and eternal truth, helped calm the anxiety of needing to return to a country or a family to feel part of something, and instead allowed me to explore the answers I carried within to consolidate who I am.

"You do not belong to this limited world. Your true home is with the Supreme Father, in the land of peace."

One of my best friends once came to me deeply worried. Someone had told her that because she wasn't baptised, she would go to hell. Neither of us came from Christian families. She quickly found a place where she could be baptised, and through that ritual, she felt at least she wouldn't be cursed forever. But that moment made me wonder: Do such rites truly make someone belong to a spiritual path? What is it that makes me belong to God?

Just as we all belong to the same human family, regardless of the imaginary borders created by politics or the wars born from greed or misinterpreted religious beliefs, we all belong to the same Seed and the same Home.

When my identity is based on stereotypes and prejudices that separate us, when I live in body consciousness or Maya, I cannot feel that I belong. I tend to reject anything that isn't "normal" according to the distorted systems of the sick society we live in.

One of the most profound experiences that taught me how to reclaim a sense of belonging by cleansing the self of those

learned ideas, and by re-experiencing the self as a soul and seeing all others as brother souls, happened when I worked for six months with women in sex work. I had grown up learning that they were the cause of social problems and were labeled as “bad” women.

One day, I invited them to join me in a meditation. We created a safe space where they could reconnect with their inner light and divinity. To my surprise, several of them began to sob during the exercise. At the end of the practice, they shared with me that it had been a long time since they had felt themselves, that it was deeply moving to once again experience that they were valuable beings, beyond their bodies and the harsh judgment of others.

I learned that a compassionate gaze that creates connection with any human being first requires returning to spiritual identity, quieting the noise of exclusion and rejection. It's a personal practice, but one with immense social impact.

“When the soul belongs to the One, it becomes filled with power, peace, and love. In that remembrance, loneliness disappears.”

Just as the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, in the same way, reaffirming my spiritual rights has helped me feel an inner happiness that does not fluctuate with external changes. Every day, I water the roots of my belonging to Baba, and that has helped me recover my emotional balance because I feel that I have the right to the unlimited peace and constant love that He provides. I have realised that the sadness I carried during my teenage years has dissolved, and now there is a more natural state of contentment within me.

Lately, I've been observing my unconscious resistance to receiving from Baba. I've noticed that guilt, shame, and the extra pressure I place on myself are part of that resistance. Forgiving myself has been a practice that has helped me make peace with who I am, and to feel that I do have the right—that Baba is mine, and I am His.

“Whoever I am, however I am - I am Yours.”



Marianne has been practising Raja Yoga Meditation for 29 years and coordinates the service of Brahma Kumaris in Costa Rica. She is part of the team at the Brahma Kumaris office at the United Nations, working on women's empowerment issues. She is a psychologist by profession, specialising in domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. In addition, she has worked clinically on crisis management and anxiety management.



“Belongingness entails an unwavering commitment to not simply tolerating and respecting difference, but to ensuring that all people are welcome and feel that they belong.”

- John A. Powell

The Soul Ecology of Belonging

by Tamasin Ramsay, PhD



Our first yearning, when we are born into a new life, is to belong. We catch our first breath. We cling to our mother's warm body. We open our eyes to learn about colour, light and shape. We discover our own body and touch everything around us to ground ourselves in the physical world once again. A new day. A new life. A new part to play. The silent being, the soul, who long ago left her/his/its native land of Moolvatan (the land of essence, the soul world, the supreme realm), must now find belonging in this Drama of Life.

Once we know our family of this life, we begin to make friends, extend ourselves into school and social situations, and learn the rules of how to behave - according to the culture, history, politics and language of the land we are born into. We absorb these codes and do our best to abide by them.

What happens along the way, of course - often unintentionally - is that we experience sorrow, isolation, suffering, pain. These become filters through which we see and feel the world. They become fables we believe about ourselves. And these, in turn, can interfere with our sense of belonging. We begin to feel Other. Different. Foreign.

So here we are, little lights who have experienced many lifetimes. Once again we land in a body, bringing with us the latent stories of the remote past. And as we begin writing the story of our new life, old ones often stir within. Sometimes they confuse us. Sometimes they isolate us. Sometimes they leave us with a quiet, uneasy atmosphere we can't quite shake.

All of this takes us further from a sense of belonging.

Especially in societies where individual praise and accomplishment are prized. Ambition, achievement, success, measured in scholarly grades or financial gain, write a new story upon us, one that can quietly separate us from one another. We learn that competition is the way to go. Don't give too much of yourself - you may not get the credit. Look after 'me and mine,' don't concern yourself with 'them'. And this quiet separation from one another becomes the new normal.

The systems and structures of this world - this world of Ravan - have cultivated such isolation in us all. Ravan, the

personification of self-interest through greed, ego, anger, lust and attachment, is the energy that unravels belonging and finds new ways to prove the false as true, to re-write the unnecessary and superfluous as crucial and central.

We have built cities to concentrate workers and finance, to increase production and consumption. We keep buying, keep eating, keep growing, keep using, keep replacing as we search for more, better and different. We spend more and more money to live in less and less space. We confine ourselves inside our homes. One button for light. Another for heat. Another for entertainment. Losing the sovereignty of our own mind and heart, and so our self-respect with it. Forgetting the rhythms of nature to which we are inherently bound, we generate our own ad-hoc rhythms based on the wants of the mind, rather than the symbiosis of nature.

We feel sick and tired and don't know why.

But it is because we have drifted far from who we truly are. And how we truly are.

We are light beings, once residents of the silent realm, where we belonged eternally with the Supreme Soul - the Ocean of Love. We have descended again into the richness of a bodily ecosystem, into the temple of time and space. Our bodies - sacred vessels - are made of the same matter as trees, oceans, clouds. We are kin to all forms. Scientists tell us we share around 60% of our DNA with bananas, and around 85% with cows. These facts are not merely curiosities, they are spiritual metaphors. We are not separate from nature, we are it. But pain, time, and forgetting have drawn us into patterns of disconnection.

And now, after lifetimes of gradual forgetting, the soul aches not for achievement, but for belonging.

And yet, the truth is: we all already belong. Inherently. Intrinsically. Eternally.

In this isolation, Nature teaches us once again. No tree stands alone. Beneath the forest floor, intricate root systems intertwine with fungal networks - mycorrhizal threads of silent reciprocity - sharing nutrients, sending warnings, offering support. A tree falling in one part of the forest is not an end, but a redistribution. A signal. An act that reshapes the whole.

We, too, are like this.

Separation and isolation are illusions - Ravan-like shadows, crafted from the energies of self-interest that feed the patterns of disconnect.

When we return to our true identity, as invisible light beings housed in nature, we remember. Not as tourists or takers, but as children of the Earth and of the Supreme. We begin to feel the resonance of our original belonging. Our original time. Our original home.

Though we may move through life believing we are solitary, the soul is always in relationship. We are woven into subtle karmic threads stretching across time and space. Some of these threads are tender and golden. Others tangled with pain or longing. But all are part of the one weaving. Our lives are not lived in isolation - they ripple. They echo. They speak silently to others in ways we may never consciously perceive.

The world of matter, too, remembers this truth. The ocean calls back the moon. Birds migrate across invisible lines. Seeds sprout not just in response to sunlight and water, but to story and song embedded in the soil.

We are not just born into families. We are born into ecosystems. Into soul families. Into ancestral tides. Into lands that remember us.

Our belonging is not only to one another - it is to all that exists. And to the Divine.

Every being - tree, ant, whale, star - is stitched into the vast intelligence of the Drama. We are not outside of that. And you are not outside of that. You never were. Even the ache of disconnection is itself a sign that you do belong - but have forgotten.

That ache is a soul-memory, buried but burning.

You would not long for belonging if you had never known it.

And you have known it.

Perhaps in the trusting gaze of a dog. In the trusting play of a child. In the deep silence of meditation, when you remember yourself as a soul - beyond nation, name, gender or role. Just light. Just being. Just love.

The forest teaches us that networks are not merely physical. They are felt. They are karmic. They are sacred. When you hold good vibes for another, something shifts. When you forgive, something releases. When you hold another in compassion, you heal something in both of you.

This is the quiet revolution of belonging - not striving, not proving - but remembering. Remembering that to truly belong is to be in alignment with your essence, your purpose, your origins.

And so, we come full circle.

The soul who left the land of silence long ago has travelled far-through lifetimes, through identities, through forgetting. But now, she stands still. Lightly resting in the body. Bare feet of her temple-body meeting the soil. The wind around her. A gum tree overhead. A kookaburra laughing. A breath in her chest. A soul-memory stirring.

There is a word in Welsh that captures this: hiraeth.

A deep homesickness for a place long forgotten, or a time that no longer is. The soul yearning for home, for its ultimate relationship with the Divine, and for its original, pure form.

That yearning is the very proof that you are eternal, divine, important, and that you belong.

You belong in this body.

You belong in your Home.

You belong to the sacred ecology of the Drama.

You belong to the One.

Always have. Always will.



Tamasin Ramsay is a medical anthropologist, conservationist, and spiritual educator based at "Billawin" on Jaadwa and Gunditj Country in Gariwerd, Western Victoria. Her work explores the sacred intersection of soul, ecology, and interspecies kinship. She is the author of Custodians of Purity, a book grounded in her doctoral research, which traces the many-layered journey back to our spiritual origins.



I Belong to Baba

And Baba Belongs to Me

Interview with Dr Vithiya, Shailer Park

What does belonging mean to you?

Belonging means feeling included - knowing that I have a place where I am valued and where I have rights. Belonging to a family brings both responsibilities and rights, but more than that, it means being embraced as one of their own. I am not just present - I am part of them. That, to me, is true belonging.

Can you reflect on your early life experiences of belonging?

I was an only child, so I was always a top priority for those around me. But later I realised that what I thought was belonging was sometimes attachment - being overprotected or pampered. As I grew, I saw the other side of it: I had to give back, take responsibility, and care for others. For example, when my Grandma became very ill, I understood how much she loved me, and that it was my turn to care for her. With friends and teammates, I used to find it difficult to understand certain behaviours. But eventually, I learned the balance - the give and take in relationships.

You grew up during a difficult time in Sri Lanka's history. What was that like?

Yes, I was around 3 or 4 years old during the early riots in the South. Because of that, our community was forced to move to the North. We lost relatives, homes, and all our belongings. I still remember the day my aunties, who had been working in the capital, arrived as refugees - with nothing but a small shopping bag in their hands. That was the moment I first felt that the sense of belonging between communities had been broken.

From the age of 4 to 28, I lived and worked in a war zone. We constantly moved from place to place, surrounded by fear and uncertainty. Yet, despite losing property and even lives, I still remember, even in the middle of a war zone, I felt a deep sense of happiness because of the love, care and support shared among family, friends, and neighbours.

The Sri Lankan government introduced a quota system that limited Tamil students' access to university. Students from Tamil areas had to score much higher than others. This injustice deeply affected Tamil youth, who began to protest. Sadly, the government suppressed them harshly. One major turning point was in 1981 when the Jaffna Library, one of Asia's oldest and largest libraries, was burned. We lost almost 1,000 years of ancient knowledge. In 1983, riots erupted across Colombo and other areas, and the conflict escalated.

"What deeply attracted me was the concept of the Golden Age - a time that is coming when there will be no conflicts, no fear and no untimely death."

What did coming to Australia do to your sense of belonging?

Coming to Australia reshaped my understanding of belonging. At first, it was very challenging: I was in a new place, surrounded by unfamiliar cultures and faces. I often questioned where I fitted in. But over time, Australia has given me space to rediscover who I am. The diversity here helped me feel seen and accepted, not just for what I brought from my past, but for who I was becoming.

Belonging is about being valued, having a voice, and feeling safe to be yourself. Australia gave me that possibility and, in many ways, deepened my sense of belonging - both within myself and with others.

When did your spiritual journey begin?

In my final year of medical school, there was a shortage of doctors, so I was placed in the emergency department alongside a resident doctor. The country was still at war. I remember a young boy brought in with a gunshot wound to his stomach. We did what we could, but there wasn't enough blood for a transfusion, and we couldn't get him to theatre in time. He held my hand and said, "Can you save me, sister?" I had no words - I knew we couldn't. He lost consciousness and passed away.

That moment broke something inside me. I told my mother I couldn't continue my studies. She had already been practising Raja Yoga and took me to the main BK Centre in Colombo. I took the course, and something inside me shifted. I felt hope in life again, and I returned to university and completed my medical degree.

Can you describe what that realisation was?

I understood that I am eternal, that I am not the body. That was deeply reassuring. I also came to accept that the Supreme Soul is a being of light who belongs to everyone.

What deeply attracted me was the concept of the Golden Age - a time that is coming when there will be no conflicts, no fear and no untimely death.

What does belonging in the Brahmin Family mean to you?

Even in my early days of Gyan in Sri Lanka, I wasn't following everything fully, but I always felt loved and included by the Centre Coordinators and the senior sisters. There was so much sustenance - classes, youth groups, and beautiful celebrations. Each time I went to the Centre, I felt I belonged to the family. That feeling laid the foundation for my spiritual life.

When I lived with my in-laws in Colombo, just five minutes from the main Centre, I often volunteered to help with the BK library. I had a strong thirst for knowledge and wanted to read everything. The Sister in charge welcomed me warmly, and I eventually worked my way through nearly every book there.

Even though it gave me so much knowledge, I still felt something was missing and often wondered why. Later, I realised that I wasn't deeply feeling Baba or experiencing that true sense of relationship with Him. In the early days, when I first went to the Centre for meditation, I would always have the experience that everything was filled with bright white light, and everyone appeared as light. Back then, I simply believed that this was how Raja Yoga Meditation would always be.

In Sri Lanka, the Brahmin family was very large, expressive, and interactive. Melbourne was quite different at that time - smaller and very multicultural. However, I still felt a strong sense of belonging because of the warm welcome received, I still felt a strong sense of belonging to the family. The family was inclusive and made us feel truly part of it.

Now that you're coordinating a Course Location in Shailer Park, how do you try to foster belonging and inclusion?

It all starts with soul-conscious love. We welcome people from

many different cultural backgrounds. We hold celebrations and retreats to build a sense of connection. Recently, we had a Mother's Day celebration, and one new Australian sister shared that she had never experienced this much love and regard before. I like giving selfless love, not expecting anything. I always think that everyone has to go close to Baba and to experience him, and whatever they can take from him, it's beautiful.

With so much cultural diversity in Australia, how can we create greater inclusion and belonging?

In Melbourne, we always felt love from our seniors. Even when we were corrected or disciplined, it came from love, and it helped us grow spiritually. Sr Christine always made sure we were connected to Didi Nirmala and other seniors, so we could be sustained by them also. That's a beautiful form of inclusion.

Later, we had the opportunity to move to Brisbane, and Charlie bhai spoke to us about opening a Course Location. At that time, we did not fully understand the depth of responsibility it entailed and like a child, we said yes with a pure heart. During the covid restrictions we purchased a house online with complete faith in Baba. Then we moved here in 2022 and encountered many challenges.

Looking back, I realise that in Melbourne we always felt protected and supported, maybe because we were in the child stage. Here, it's like we've entered a "teenage phase" - we're more exposed, more on the front lines, learning how to manage things on our own. It's a new stage of growth.

We need faith, trust and pure love to bring the family together and a lot of yoga power, to work towards unity. We always work toward that one Family and one Baba.

For someone opening a Course Location for the first time, what support would you recommend?

The most important thing is to feel a sense of belonging. New coordinators need to feel welcomed, not as outsiders, but as valued members of the larger family. When we are embraced with trust and love, we naturally become more open, committed, and ready to serve.

We should not be seen as competitors but as fellow travellers on the path of Seva. Our enthusiasm shouldn't be suppressed, it should be nurtured with care and guidance so we grow in the right direction.

When challenges arise, as they will, they should be addressed with maturity and open communication. Problems are best solved together, through collective effort, so we can move forward as One.

"I like giving selfless love, not expecting anything. I always think that everyone has to go close to Baba and to experience him, and whatever they can take from him, it's beautiful."

Dr. Vithiya Ilaventhan is a General Practitioner with a specialisation in Child Health. She currently serves as the Coordinator of the Shailer Park Course Location in Brisbane, a role she shares with her husband, Illavendan. Dr. Vithiya has been practising Raja Yoga meditation for the past 19 years. She is passionate about teaching, sharing spiritual knowledge, nurturing souls, and helping them develop a deeper connection with the Supreme. Dr. Vithiya also coordinates the BK Double Doctors Group across Australia.



Celebrating 50 Years in Australia

In Melbourne: compiled by Kalvinder Kaur

Awakening Sacred Intelligence: Meditation as the Gateway

Filled with deep wisdom, stillness, presence and power, the evening started with the ethereal sounds of crystal bowls played by Carmen Warrington followed by a heartfelt opening by Lisa Forde.

Dr Ian Gawler OAM facilitated a simply wonderful and long meditation where everyone held pin-drop silence. Martine Harte conducted a rich interview first with Ian and then Sister Jayanti. Ian spoke of the still mind and then Sister Jayanti explored more deeply the different facets of sacred intelligence and how this level of intelligence can be accessed by anyone.

The evening concluded with long meditation facilitated by Sister Jayanti with the subtle sounds of crystal bowls deepening the atmosphere of peace and silence. All the audience then received a take-away affirmation card and gift from Sister Jayanti – a lovely way to end an evening of upliftment, enlightenment and connection! This event can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/qXRUivee6NE?feature=shared>.

Peacebuilding Through Contemplation, Compassion, and Our Common Humanity



On Friday, 11 April 2025, the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) of the Victorian Government, hosted a powerful gathering of over 100 community leaders and participants focused on cultivating peace through inner stillness, compassion, and shared humanity in Queen's Hall at the Parliament of Victoria.

The event was co-organised by the Monash Centre for Consciousness and Contemplative Studies, Monash University, Calm in the City, and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Charles Sturt University, and proudly supported by Meditation Australia.

Following a period of silent meditation to the exquisite music of Galliano Somavilla, opening remarks were given by Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardiner AC, Governor of Victoria, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs. With Bishop Philip Huggins as the MC, speakers Professor Craig Hassed and Sister Jayanti shared insights on the theme, each facilitating guided meditations. This was then followed by a plenary, facilitated by Jon Faine, featuring discussion and community input on ways to promote inner and outer peace. The session ended with participants sharing recommendations and a closing thanks from Commissioner Vivienne Nguyen.

Reflections around the event are available in the following blog post by Bishop Philip Huggins here:

<https://religionsforpeaceaustralia.org.au/?p=20551>,

and a wonderful summary of the event in the following blog post by Martine Harte here:

<https://engagingwomen.com.au/wellbeing/peace-building-through-contemplation-compassion-and-our-common-humanity-forum/>.

Wayfinders: Ordinary People Changing the World



Belonging is often defined as an affinity or connection to a place, people or situation. Globally, increasing numbers of people struggle to belong - to gain and hold onto an experience of authentic place, and feel a sense of belonging. We are hard-wired to connect, yet loneliness, feeling othered, alienated, marginalised and being physically displaced are overwhelmingly prevalent globally. Despite the exponential increase in technologies that enable instant and transnational communication and connectivity, increasingly we feel disconnected and disengaged.

Our world today is complex - marked by economic challenges, social inequality, rising levels of loneliness and anxiety, wars that never seem to end and the melting of our planet many feel overwhelmed and powerless as if life is unfolding beyond their grasp. It is in response to these complexities that *Wayfinders: Ordinary People Changing the World* was created.

During challenging times, *Wayfinders* often emerge... ordinary people doing everyday extraordinary things, shining a light on a way forward, and changing the world for the better. The intent of the Sydney Opera House event, *Wayfinders: Ordinary People Changing the World*, was to create a progressive mood shift from darkness to light, despair to hope, confusion to clarity, chaos to order, resignation to resilience, hatred to harmony, disconnection to belonging, through a transformative conversation on 'Wayfinding', exploring pathways to a more hopeful, resilient, brighter, connected future.

Julia Baird (renowned Australian journalist, broadcaster and best-selling author) facilitated a panel conversation with Sister Jayanti (Additional Administrative Head of The Brahma Kumaris), Linda Burney (former Minister for Indigenous Australians and Member for Barton) and Rev Jon Owen (CEO of Wayside Chapel) about their personal wayfinding journeys.

Storytelling is a powerful narrative. Speaking one's own story can be healing and empowering. Listening to others' stories can be inspiring and uplifting, creating a shared collective experience. Key messages revealed in personal storytelling often provide 'tools' and a 'roadmap' for others who are charting and navigating similar terrain.

The first theme our Wayfinding panelists touched on was **"You are not alone!"** In times of personal challenge and hardship we often feel that we are alone and isolated. The culture of the contemporary world is one where many people feel alienated and disconnected (even within a network of family and friends). Yet the situations we find ourselves in are often shared collective experiences. In tough times, we often see humanity's best – people coming together, supporting one another, and shining through the darkness.

Panelists identified personal challenges they had experienced from their own life and shared how they navigated their way through it; how they managed the feeling of being alone; how they went through the darkness of their journey to find meaning in it; and identified what were the key ingredients that enabled them to move successfully through moments of personal challenge.

The second theme our Wayfinding panelists explored was **"The Anchor Within"**. During tough times, sometimes referred to as 'the dark night of the soul', we discover that when we look within we find the inner power, the inner wisdom, resources and solutions to apply to the external challenge. Sometimes it involves committing to physical activities that promote health and wellbeing (such as a nutritious diet, sufficient sleep, regular exercise etc). It may involve developing or fortifying a prayer/ meditation/ spiritual practice.

The final theme discussed by our Wayfinding panellists focused on the empowering understanding that **"I am the Shift: We are the Shift"**. When seeing a problem and not being able to find a solution a lot of people struggle with is a sense of impotence. It seems massive and overwhelming and what can one individual do? It can be tempting to blame governments, institutions, communities, families, workplaces and so on for the painful injustices in our world. Yet, blaming frequently holds us in a personally disempowered inactive state – expecting someone else or something else to change. When I change, the world changes, or as Mahatma Gandhi's grandson said: *"Be the change you want to see"*.

As the panellists shared about their higher purpose to change the world and how they are personally part of the shift, it became evident that co-creating a brighter future involves personal change. This is not something we do alone, but collectively. *"I am the Shift: We are the Shift"*. With the power of a positive thought and attitude, and the power of collective impact, a brighter world is not only a possibility but a certainty.

International messengers added valuable insights into these key themes. Her Excellency Mrs Droupadi Murmu, the Honourable President of India opened with a message of congratulations on our 50th golden jubilee celebration; Ms Katrín Jakobsdóttir, former Prime Minister of Iceland spoke of the importance of love, compassion and values in leadership today; while Christiana Figueres, Founding Partner Global Optimism and former Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC inspired the audience to step up and discover the leader that lies within each one of us rooted in kindness and compassion for ourselves, others and the environment.

The arts and music are key elements in our spiritual journey and *Wayfinders: Ordinary People Changing the World* was enriched immensely by leading musicians and performing artists. The idea behind the music was to allow the audience to ascend and to move into a space of wonder, to give feelings to the panelists who were lending their wisdom to the notion of us all finding a way forward, together.

Our musicians included legendary jazz musician James Morrison (AO); famous concert pianist Simon Tedeschi, sacred soprano Heather Lee accompanied by Kim Cunio; drummer and composer David Jones with Carmen Warrington; and a Sydney gospel choir, Cafe of the Gate of Salvation, led by singer-composer Tony Backhouse.

Angels in our Town, (Director, Antoinette Sampson), with the bell-ringers, and two conch shell blowers Samarai Cunio and David Kilowsky added a special touch during the opening, performing a composition titled: 'Angels in the House', specially composed and choreographed for the event.

Sr Jayanti led the audience in three guided meditations, on the three takeaway messages:

- You are not alone!
- The Anchor Within
- I am the Shift: We are the Shift

Everyone who contributed, either as a panellist, musician or performer, has been on their own 'wayfinder' journey. The Executive Producer Gabrielle Martin and Music Director Kim Cunio agreed that through using the resources of the spirit, even the impossible becomes possible. Anyone can be a wayfinder, overcoming challenges and helping humanity to move towards harmony, when they turn into their own inner space, connect with their inner light and the Light Above.

The Sydney Opera house was at capacity and thousands of people from around the world watched online. View at: <https://www.youtube.com/live/bZPQmKbwBuU>

Brother Charlie hosted a gathering for around 80 invited guests, immediately after the event, in the Northern Foyer overlooking the Sydney harbour, to re-connect with Sr Jayanti in a more personal way. Violinist Ayako Ichimaru and Sam McNally on keyboards provided the perfect musical welcome as guests mingled with each other and met with Sr Jayanti.



David Jones and Carmen Warrington



The Angels in Our Town gifting flowers to the Panellists.



Ayako Ichimaru and Sam McNally providing entertainment at the after-event program.



"At present, you can make the Father belong to you when you want, in whatever form you want."

- Avyakt Murli 08/05/1973



The Golden Jubilee Celebrations @ The Fairmont Resort was a first ever experience for the BK family worldwide; a 3 day retreat of approximately 700 of Baba's children from Australia, NZ, parts of Asia and a few guests from further afield. The word Australia comes from the Latin word 'australis' which means 'southern'; and given that we are all Baba's lights on this earth and that we are the great souls of the cycle, the design team landed on the name 'Great Southern Lights' for the retreat.

Indeed this gathering was of lights. Lights who came together to rejoice 50 years of the wonder of Baba's task. And whether you had been witness to the magic for 1 year or 50 years or any amount of time in between, the feeling of being one family when we came together was palpable.

From early 2024, when a decision was taken to create a retreat for the whole BK family of Australia, we wondered how many would attend. During the weeks leading up to the retreat, the Fairmont was booked out and it became hard to find a space in either Wilton or Leura! I truly believe that the energy that was generated all around the country was pulling the family. It was a subtle voice calling... you belong, you belong, you belong. And that is how, almost wondrously, the pilgrims arrived on the mount on a beautiful autumn evening on 13th April.

The design team had taken utmost care to make sure that the program focussed around inclusivity - embracing all the cultures and backgrounds of those who attended. Right from the moment we all arrived en masse the reception of the hotel reminded us of reaching Madhuban! The Welcome to Country moment and all the way through the Honouring Ceremony, the dances, music and spoken word segments reflected a sense of belonging and also an appreciation of the diversity that makes us so special. We honoured anyone and everyone. All those who have ever given a finger of co-operation in Baba's task over the half century. Our loudest cheers were for those who

washed pots and dishes and answered phone calls! The beautiful cake of the map of Australia made of many colours brought us all together – different states with unique roles, connected as one. As the retreat went on, the classes and discussions, the once-in-a-kalpa concert featuring artists from 4 decades ago and the amazing creative activities in the afternoons all helped to build a cohesive, loving energy. Watching artists singing songs from deep within their soul, listening to all the live music that energised the atmosphere, observing the rock painters, drummers, creators of the mandala and the light-catchers, the bushwalkers, coffee and chai drinkers...it was a retreat curated to fill each soul with an indelible stamp of joy. In fact the old saying 'those who play together, stay together' applied very aptly here.

The Australian yagya shone with lightness and love at its very best. The generosity of the Board and the vision to create a togetherness like never before, has not only manifested itself in the region but the entire BK worldwide family. Courage built capacity and cooperation manifested our greatest success.

In the vibration created over the 3 days we spent together, one could feel a sense of belonging spread ... we are one ... no matter how we look or dress, what language we speak or food we eat ... we are those lights that have travelled together through eternity ... and will remain synced forever... with each other and with the One.





I have always felt that people belong to me and I belong to them. This may have come from being born on the small island of Fiji. True belonging is more than just living in a place. It is about feeling rooted, accepted, and integral to the community. Generations of Indians have built their lives and legacies on Fijian soil, cultivating a unique Fijian-Indo culture. This cultural heritage has created a powerful sense of place and identity.

This legacy is what I brought to Australia, and it has grown and flourished. I have always felt a sense of acceptance here. I feel valued and connected, and I enjoy sharing this sense of connection with others. Jagjeet and I lived very near to Indraprasth, and I was very close to Didi Nirmala. Jason was just one year old and received a lot of sustenance from Didi.

I helped with the cooking in Indraprasth, together with Asha and Pushpa. They were senior to me, and I felt loved and cared for. Cooking for Baba's family is an opportunity to give blessings and take blessings continuously. We had a lot of fun times. I love life when there is a connection with others.

The service created through the Mind Body Spirit Festival has been an exceptionally wonderful experience for me. Coming from very diverse backgrounds and ages, we serve as one community. As a coordinator, I enjoy getting others involved and building a sense of family that brings us closer together. We each bring to the task our specialities, and there is a gratitude and appreciation of each one's offering. We share our passion towards uplifting individuals from all backgrounds through what we have achieved and what we have learnt.

However, the path to belonging is not always straightforward. For many people, the search for belonging is complicated by barriers such as discrimination, exclusion, or cultural disconnection. Immigrants, for example, often struggle with a dual identity - torn between the culture of their homeland and the expectations of a new

society. They may face prejudice or misunderstanding, which can make it difficult for them to feel accepted. Similarly, members of marginalised groups often experience systemic exclusion, which can erode their sense of belonging and self-worth.

"...someone who feels a strong sense of belonging within a supportive family is more likely to exhibit confidence and resilience in the face of adversity. On the other hand, a lack of belonging can lead to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and even depression."

Belonging is a fundamental human need. It is the deep emotional experience of being accepted, understood, and valued by others. From the earliest stages of life, we are driven to form connections, first with our caregivers, then with peers, communities, and broader cultural groups. Belonging is not just about fitting in; it is about feeling truly seen and supported for who we are. When we belong, we thrive. When we don't, the impact can be isolating, even damaging. In a world that is increasingly connected yet paradoxically fragmented, the concept of belonging has never been more relevant.

At its core, belonging is about forming connections with people, places, ideas, cultures, or communities. These connections shape our identity, influence our behaviour, and colour our perception of the world. For example, someone who feels a strong sense of belonging within a supportive family is more likely to exhibit confidence and resilience in the face of adversity. On the other hand, a lack of belonging can lead to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and even depression.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow placed belongingness near the centre of his hierarchy of needs, just after physical safety

and before esteem and self-actualisation. This highlights the significance of social connection in human development and overall well-being. In schools, students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to succeed academically and emotionally. In workplaces, employees who feel a sense of belonging tend to be more productive, loyal, and motivated.

Moreover, in our digital age, the way we experience belonging is undergoing a shift. Social media platforms provide new opportunities for connection, enabling people to discover communities based on shared interests, values, or identities. Online groups can give a sense of belonging that transcends geographic boundaries. However, this digital belonging can be superficial or fleeting, lacking the depth and authenticity of in-person relationships. It may also lead to echo chambers or social comparison, where individuals feel pressure to conform to be accepted.

True belonging goes beyond surface-level inclusion. It requires authenticity, empathy, and mutual respect. As author and researcher Brené Brown puts it, "Belonging doesn't require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are." This idea underscores a vital point: to foster genuine belonging, individuals must be free to express their true selves without fear of rejection. This means embracing diversity and creating spaces where different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences are not just tolerated but celebrated.

"... Belonging doesn't require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are." This idea underscores a vital point: to foster genuine belonging, individuals must be free to express their true selves without fear of rejection."

Institutions play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging. Schools, workplaces, governments and even our Centres can either reinforce exclusion or promote inclusion. Education systems that highlight diverse voices and histories help students feel seen and valued. Workplaces that prioritise equity and cultural competence create environments where all employees can contribute meaningfully. Public policies that support minority rights and community engagement foster social cohesion and trust.

Belonging starts with empathy and curiosity. When we take the time to listen to others, to understand their experiences, and to offer acceptance, we create small moments of connection that can grow into lasting bonds. We all have the power to make someone feel like they matter, and often it takes only a simple act of kindness or recognition to do so. It is a shared responsibility. Our strength lies in our ability to create inclusive communities where everyone feels they belong. It is about building bridges, not walls.

To belong is to feel safe, supported, and significant. It is to know that you are part of something bigger than yourself. The journey can be challenging, especially for those who have been historically excluded. However, it is a journey worth pursuing because when we foster a sense of belonging, we don't just change individual lives; we strengthen the fabric of society.



Swaran Singh has been a BK for 35 years. She completed a Business Management Diploma in Sydney and has worked at Myers for 26 years in all departments and enjoys working with people from different backgrounds.



"To belong to God means to become fortunate. All are fortunate, but after belonging to the Father, and receiving the inheritance of the different treasures from the Father, you become numberwise in claiming a right to that elevated inheritance."

- Avyakt Murli 19/01/2003



Love, the Defining Moment

Everyone wants to feel love and belonging - it's one of the fundamental needs of the human soul. So often, when we hear stories of how Baba's children took their spiritual births, there is often a stirring experience of love or belonging that drew them towards Baba. Sometimes it comes through the warmth of the Brahmin family when they first visit a BK centre; other times it emerges during a meditation experience with Baba.

When I reflect on my own journey, I don't recall having that kind of defining moment. I do remember experiencing the friendly smiles, welcoming environment, gentle atmosphere, and a sense of community - but I wouldn't have described it, at that time, as a feeling of love or sense of belonging. Was this a reflection of the Brahmin family I had come into contact with or was the reason more to do with myself? The answer as it turned out was to do with something within me and I only came to understand this years later into my Brahmin journey.

The Filter of the Past

Growing up in a dysfunctional family, and never feeling like I could truly fit in at school, love and belonging were unfamiliar concepts to me. I also carried a deep-rooted sense of mistrust towards people. These experiences from my childhood years had created an invisible filter which made it difficult for me to recognise and receive love. Looking back, I can see that most of my friendships and relationships were missing the essence of love. They were functional yes, but dry - missing that sweetness, warmth and joy which brings people close. So when I came to Baba, I simply could not receive love or experience a sense of belonging, even if these things were being showered upon me. Love was lost on me!

Spiritual Surgery

Luckily, there was a saving grace for me. To repair a dysfunctional heart was a task that perfectly suited Baba, the Eternal Surgeon. Surprisingly, there was no dramatic moment of healing - I can't point to a specific moment where love suddenly reignited within me and those unknown traumas in the soul were magically healed. But gradually, over the years, something shifted. I believe it was the steady, consistent practise of yoga and the raw honesty I kept with Baba

throughout, which did the magic. The change has been real suddenly reignited within me and those unknown traumas in the soul were magically healed. But gradually, over the years, something shifted. I believe it was the steady, consistent practise of yoga and the raw honesty I kept with Baba throughout, which did the magic. The change has been real and visible. To me, this quiet inner transformation is nothing short of a miracle!

As this inner flame of love has rekindled, I've noticed it colouring my relationships in a new way. Qualities like care, affection, warmth, and patience have started flowing more naturally into my words, actions and decisions.

"One of the most striking lessons I received came from a story about Dadi Prakashmani. When someone asked her how she balanced love and law, she responded simply: "For Dadi, love is the law."

One of the most striking lessons I received came from a story about Dadi Prakashmani. When someone asked her how she balanced love and law, she responded simply: "For Dadi, love is the law." This concept struck me like lightning. In a world where "law" is often cold and impersonal, I had never thought that the two sides of love and law could be connected. But Dadiji's response opened up a new perspective for me. Even in moments of disagreement, tension or correction, love can, and should, remain present in our feelings for the other. This

understanding has helped me navigate through situations which arise in my relationships, in the service field, and my job. It has become part of a broader passion of mine to explore how to balance contrasting energies, love with law, power with softness, "head" with "heart".

Warmth of the Flame

Love and belonging are not just experiences to receive - they are energies to radiate. I became very interested in this after hearing the stories of Brahma Baba, Mama and many of the Dadis. They had a profound ability to win the hearts of others and make them feel that they belonged to them in a very short space of time. Inspired by their example, I made it a personal quest to learn this art of creating that feeling in others.

If love is a flame, then belonging is the warmth that radiates from it. It's that energy which brings others close and makes them want to remain close. And if I can keep that flame burning strongly within myself, then that warmth will radiate automatically and draw others close!

"If love is a flame, then belonging is the warmth that radiates from it. It's that energy which brings others close and makes them want to remain close."

We know that the true source of this flame comes from our personal connection with Baba. The more I experience that love and belonging with Baba, the brighter my flame will be. However, the other important part of this is how I maintain my attitude and feelings towards others. For me, creating a sense of belonging in others includes not just love, but also being non-judgmental and open. When others feel safe to express themselves and share things with me - their challenges, doubts or issues they are going through - something powerful happens. A subtle bridge is built between myself and that soul.

I have also found that our depth of understanding of the fundamentals of Raja Yoga also plays an important role in shaping my attitude and feelings towards others. Below are some examples of topics in the Raja Yoga course which have a connection with creating a sense of belonging. As you read these, I invite you to reflect on the lines in *italics* and ask yourself honestly if you have experienced this particular aspect of knowledge within your awareness? If your answer is yes, then how often do you maintain this in your attitude and feelings as you meet and greet people throughout the day? If your answer

is no, then it's time to do some work!

The Tree: A Diverse Family

When I began teaching the Raja Yoga course, it occurred to me that the picture of the Tree was not just a map of religions, but a symbol of the interconnectedness of the human population.

From that moment, I started thinking of this picture as the "World Family Tree". The branches represent the various ideologies which are intrinsic to every leaf - every soul - on that branch. Each ideology is embedded within the "spiritual DNA" of those souls. Although the ideologies have their unique differences, they originally came from the one Seed, still part of the same tree and connected by a shared essence. This is similar to a family where the children may have distinct personalities however they share a genetic lineage to their parents. Baba tells us that we are the trunk and roots of the Tree, like elder siblings carrying a silent responsibility to look after the rest. Seeing the human population in this way helps to strengthen the feeling of connection and belonging with all the souls of the world, regardless of their beliefs.

The Cycle: A Clan That's Been Together Forever

The picture of the Cycle shows us that Brahmin souls have been together in this world from the very beginning. We've seen the highs and lows across time, and there is something deeply bonding about that. A metaphor for this is to imagine you have worked in a workplace for 10 years, and the majority of your team members have only been there for a few years, however there is one other team member who has also been there for 10 years. Your bond with that team member is deeper because you've both been around since the start and have "seen it all" together.

Love and belonging are not only gifts we receive from Baba, but treasures to share with the people around us. The more I keep my flame alight, the more I can become a source of warmth for others. As the world continues to become more disconnected, steady radiant love can make all the difference. Who knows - the next time I meet a soul or welcome them into one of Baba's Centres, perhaps they'll feel the warmth and realise: *I belong here.*



Wesley is a Raja Yogi from Brisbane. He enjoys travelling, cooking and going to the gym and works as an engineer, with a love for integrating Baba's knowledge into his everyday working life.





*T*he word 'belonging' conjures up an awareness that I belong somewhere. I am part of a greater whole. I am not adrift. I am not alone, although I can appreciate aloneness as well as belonging. *To whom or what do I belong?*

I belong to Baba, I belong to the Yagya, I belong to a diverse and unique global community, a spiritual family. I belong, and in this belonging I share myself and others share with me. There is a common thread. A commonality that likes us all and it's felt in the eyes and in the heart.

Belonging to God

If this is firm, in my meditation I can experience bliss. I am safe, protected, loved and given exactly what I need at the right time. Through my spiritual, soul conscious lens I can come to know how Baba sees me. Once, whilst walking past Baba in Madhuban and experiencing divine drishti, I realised that Baba adored me. It was an ecstatic feeling that lifted me to a new height of happiness, self love, mutual love for Baba...many beautiful new things.

We can delve deeply into our relationships with Him and this will bring us more a feeling of belonging. I belong and who is it that I belong to? The greatest sense of belonging we can feel is when we are closely connected to our Companion and this is what keeps us spiritually alive. Then we want to further explore the fascinating depths of this relationship of belonging.

Belonging to a Spiritual Family

It is in our DNA, our essence, to want to belong somewhere as this creates community and family. There is safety and security when there is love and commonality. Although one may be part of a family and even a close-knit one at that, if there is an absence of the feeling of belonging, it can cause much sorrow, even grief. Not belonging is a sad state; one of loneliness and an absence that pervades the heart.

Belonging requires:

- Closeness
- Common interests
- Unconditional soul conscious love
- Being part of a larger vision, a grander task
- Spiritual connection
- Empathy and supportiveness

In belonging to God and the yagya, I experience a deep contentment. My faith allows me to know that I am spiritually taken care of.



Gopi Elton has been meditating and teaching with the Brahma Kumaris for forty years. She is a retired health professional, a writer & poet who lives & helps at the Leura



Drawn Together

The Action and Attraction of Belonging

by Katherine McHugh

Drawn together. Our hearts and minds are naturally drawn towards the pure love of One, the Supreme Soul. This practice of Raja Yoga meditation, the action of becoming soul conscious and then raising our consciousness to connect with the Divine, is a deeply profound and life-changing experience that we share.

As we belong to the One, so too we belong to one another. Raja Yoga meditation is not a path of isolation. Alongside deep silence and God-realisation, our relationships and connections with others are essential for our spiritual sustenance and growth.

And so a broad, generous intellect means to maintain the constant awareness that I must not separate myself from the gathering. - Avyakt 31.3.86

There is power in the gathering, especially as we take steps, together, to discover our pure potential, our higher self, and our relationship with the Supreme.

As someone who lives in a Centre, I absolutely love the atmosphere that we create as we meditate, study and celebrate together, face-to-face. Connected through our love of One and pure wish to uplift others, each one of us is an angel, spreading light, peace and good wishes to the souls with whom we interact daily including our families, friends, workplaces and the wider community. With our regular interstate and international guest speakers and visitors, the feelings of being connected nationally and globally is strengthened. Similarly, when I am travelling, it is always wonderful to meet other souls who also share a love for open-eyed meditation. It expands the pure feeling of love and belonging. We share ideas and learn from each other, while also enjoying the familiarity and similarity of our spiritual peers.

These discussions have taught me that each Centre, Retreat Centre and Class Location is unique in how they sustain, engage and inspire souls to come together for spiritual growth and wellbeing. The best way to find out is to reach out, contact your local coordinator, book in for a program or retreat, and get involved.

Within the gathering, the language you use with [all] should be of avyakt feelings; as though angels are speaking to angels, souls to souls. - Avyakt 9.12.75

Alongside all the face-to-face options through local Centres, Retreat Centres and Class Locations, there's also lots of opportunities to belong to online groups.

For example, through the National BK Bhatti (intense meditation), I also feel very much part of a national gathering of regular meditators. Many who join are joining regularly, and that's part of the magic. We meditate together every evening. As we focus on One, the feelings of unity, good wishes and support for one another also naturally emerge. There's a sweet feeling of knowing each other, even though many of us have never met face-to-face.

The thread should be of unity and there should be closeness in sanskars; only then will the rosary seem right. - Avyakt 9.12.75

Whether it's the national murli (English, Hindi and/or Tamil), advanced classes, meditation groups, world meditation hour, book clubs, discussion groups, service groups, or WhatsApp groups, there's a suite of online options available to be explored by anyone from young adults to 'golden oldies' with a desire to connect.

The latest information about what's on offer can be found on the Oz BK Hub <http://tiny.cc/BKFamilyHub>, or through your local coordinator, <http://tiny.cc/BKAustraliaLocations>

You'll also find some hidden gems by talking to others who have a similar interest ... and perhaps it's by sharing your ideas about what interests you that will be the start of something new.

Even if something special has to be done in order to create the power of the gathering, to do that means to have success. So, have a subtle, broad intellect for this. - Avyakt 31.3.86





WELCOME BACK...Due to popular demand

SELDOM IN OUR LIFE ARE WE GIVEN JEWELS let alone the chance to discover real secrets.

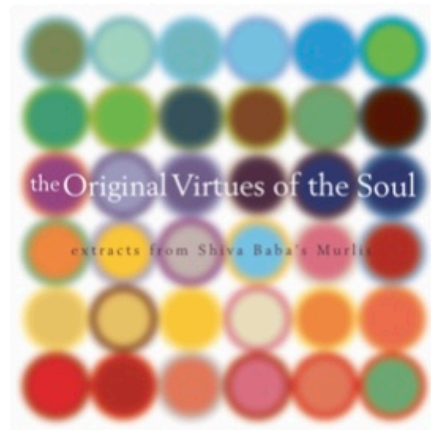
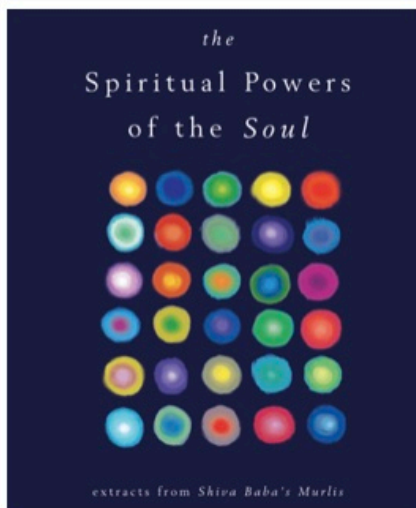
Original Virtues of the Soul contains jewels straight from Shiva Baba, and The Spiritual Powers of the Soul is filled with secret tools for change, pretty big change as we well know.

These books are gold!

Rest your head and heart within them.

Or just fully go for gold, steal them all the jewels inside and live like a king!

With extracts presented in alphabetical order of the full spectrum of virtues and powers, these are an invaluable resource for both long-term BKs and new students.



Available now at Eternity Ink bookstands in most BK Centres.



CONNECTION
magazine



THE BRAHMA KUMARIS
AUSTRALIA