

Book Review

CELEBRATING SILENCE

**Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Art of Living Foundation, Jaico Book House,
ISBN: 8179923681, Paperback, Rs.125/-**

Celebrating Silence is a collection of the weekly discourses of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, organized by theme rather than by chronological order. Sri Sri discusses topics ranging from doubt and fear to love and dispassion. He describes what it means to be on a spiritual path - a path of service, sadhana, and surrender. He leads us through an understanding of God and back to our inner Self - that which we really seek, often without knowing.

This paperback is a rich resource for anyone on a spiritual path since it contains so much wise advice on things of ultimate concern, such as love of God, service, longing, and seeing the Divine in others.

This book, contains excerpts from five years of talks given around the world. The material is arranged into three thematic sections: the first covers some of the bad habits and selfish ways that we want to change; the second zeroes in on what it means to be on a spiritual path with discussions of service, surrender, and freedom; and the third examines "You, God and Beyond."

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar believes that vows are a helpful tool when it comes to working on bad habits. By making a conscious intention not to do something for a certain period of time, we begin to focus our energies and learn the spiritual art of patience. Another strategy he suggests comes out of the Hindu tradition: If you cannot eliminate vices, magnify them. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi used to be greedy for the poor – wherever he went, he raised money for them.

Shankar says: "What is the point of getting angry about small events? Be angry about the infinite, about Brahma . . . If cravings gnaw at you, crave the truth. If jealousy haunts you, be jealous about seva (service)." He suggests that we learn to be tender with our flaws realizing that in time, they will wither away. And here's some good advice: "Make your smile cheaper and your anger expensive."

Contentment still eludes so many people living in the lap of luxury. This spiritual teacher offers the following counsel: "Though the river is vast, a little sip quenches your thirst. Though the earth has so much food, just a small bite satisfies your hunger. All that you need are tiny bits. Accept a tiny bit of everything in life – that will bring you fulfillment." Contentment comes from the freedom that grows out of being satisfied with tiny blessings.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is especially cogent in his suggestions on how to deal with jealousy and handle rudeness. Handling the incivility of others is good training: "The next time someone is rude to you, make sure you do not get upset. Just return a broad smile. If you can digest rudeness, nothing whatsoever can shake you."

Lavanya Rastogi

About Sri Ravi Shakar & the Art of Living Foundation:

His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation, travels & teaches internationally, reminding us that the great spiritual traditions have common goals and values. His simple message of love, practical wisdom, and compassion continues to inspire people from all walks of life, and He encourages everyone to follow their chosen religious or spiritual path while honouring the path of others.

His talks and programs have helped people around the world in reducing stress, experiencing physical and emotional healing and developing a sense of belongingness.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar completed a traditional education in Vedic literature and modern science when he was only seventeen. At the tender age of four, he could recite the entire Bhagavad Gita. In 1982, he began to teach the Sudarshan Kriya, a powerful breathing technique that cuts down stress and helps individuals focus on the present moment. Today this program is taught around the world as part of the Art of Living course. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar founded the Art of Living Foundation, a UN affiliated non-governmental agency, and is the inspiration behind many charitable organizations devoted to the service of others.

Here's a final quotation on the spiritual practice under discussion in the book: "Service without attitude/ Love without reason/Knowledge without intellect/Life beyond time and events/is what you are."

So simple yet so profound ! A must read for everyone seeking fulfillment in life !

Lavanya Rastogi
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