

## **A MEETING OF MEDITATIVE MINDS**

During her recent visit to Australia, Sister Jayanti, Additional Administrative Head of The Brahma Kumaris, had the opportunity to discuss the power and potential of meditation with former NSW Premier, Mr Bob Carr.

Mr Carr has been interested in meditation since the late 1960s when he was introduced to Transcendental Meditation by a friend at university. Since then, he has been introduced to The Brahma Kumaris and has met with Sister Jayanti and the National Director for The Brahma Kumaris in Australia, Charlie Hogg, a number of times.

Here, Sister Jayanti and Mr Carr share their thoughts on how a meditative practice can help in today's world, the strengths of female leadership, and the importance of leading from within.

**Q. We are emerging from a global pandemic and people are concerned about cost-of-living pressures. Australians are also leading busy lives. How can Raja Yoga Meditation help?**

**Sister Jayanti:** Raja Yoga Meditation is a method to survive and thrive in today's world. Through meditation, we focus on core values of the self, such as contentment, compassion, peace, love and truth. Then our self-confidence and self-esteem increase and so does our capacity to manage stressful situations. If we feel we can control our inner world, it gives us a sense of stability when everything else seems uncertain.

**Q. How can busy people fit Raja Yoga Meditation into their day?**

**Sister Jayanti:** If you start your day with 10 or 20 minutes of meditation you will know who you are and what you are capable of. Through the day, try to spend two minutes every hour drawing on that power within and using it to recharge your inner battery. As Raja Yoga Meditation is an eyes-open meditation, you can practice it even when you're engaged in other things.

**Q. What do you find beneficial about meditation, Mr Carr?**

**Mr Bob Carr:** I remember the former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, saying he found meditation 'stilled the busy monkey in the mind'. I think it reduces the crowding of thoughts. It offers a way of stilling one's mind and pulling back from the ceaseless busyness so it is easier to make decisions. I read an article that suggested meditation created a 10% gain in happiness and that 10% enhancement could make all the difference. I am not an exemplar of meditation – I find it a very hard discipline, but I will never cease to be interested in meditation and to practice it.

**Q. The Brahma Kumaris demonstrate the strength of female leaders. What do women bring to leadership?**

**Sister Jayanti:** We started in Sindh, India at the time, now Pakistan, when women were second class citizens, but our founder had a vision of a better world for all and that meant equality for everyone. He wanted to give women space to become leaders and teachers and this continues. Women and men can both have feminine traits like compassion and peace but at this moment, when there is so much aggression and violence, women have the capacity to use compassion and love to make a difference that is of benefit to the world.

**Mr Bob Carr:** My mission as party leader in NSW was to get more women into Parliament and during the time that I was Premier, we lifted the number of women on government boards and in government leadership roles. The effect has been a shift in the quality of debate – more issues can be aired and public policy-making is more enlightened.

**Q: Are there female leaders who embody effective and genuine leadership?**

**Sister Jayanti:** The Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrin Jakobsdottir, understands that leadership works well if leaders can spend time with themselves, self-reflect and consider alternative possibilities. The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, is a regular meditator with The Brahma Kumaris and she is a woman of great calm and peace. She comes from a tribal background and had to struggle to move forward and succeed. These are leadership qualities we need more of.

**Mr Bob Carr:** The former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, received world attention for the quality of her leadership. Julia Gillard was very much in the fore as our first woman PM. She had to battle in a way no future woman candidate will have to battle because of the strength she displayed. Angela Merkel also stands out because of the steadiness of her leadership in Germany. She signalled that a woman in national leadership is nothing extraordinary or radical.

**Q: Can you share your thoughts on the benefits of 'leading from within' or 'inside out leadership'?**

**Sister Jayanti:** Whatever internal qualities a leader carries, these are demonstrated by their words and actions. People can sometimes put on a mask but, at some point, reality shines through. If a leader has compassion within, that will be naturally expressed in their actions. If a leader has a desire for power, that will also be expressed. Reflecting on 'how shall we be' rather than 'what can be done' means a leader will reflect on the impact of their decision, rather than making a knee-jerk reaction.

**Mr Bob Carr:** When a leader must make an urgent and difficult decision, we look for something exceptional from them – judgement, the intelligent weighing of all possibilities, considering things the rest of us haven't considered and being bold. When Winston Churchill took over the leadership of Britain in its darkest hour, he said he felt as if all his days had been a preparation for that hour. There was a calm detachment and an acceptance that he had no alternative than to lead.



Mr Bob Carr (former NSW Premier, Australia) with Sister Jayanti and Charlie Hogg (National Coordinator, The Brahma Kumaris Australia)