

Therefore Let's Meditate

"He who cannot explain it to a six year old child, has not understood by himself" - Albert Einstein

Chapter I

Introduction

Contrary to the popular belief that the practice of few selected meditation techniques during a weekend would result in instantaneous reduction of stress and tension, this book provides clarification concerning the authenticity of such claim. There is no doubt that meditation is instantaneous; meditation is not time bound or time related in the sense that meditation is not acting as the cause of an effect. Both cause and effect simultaneously occur during the 'act of meditation' making them as a single event. Only in this sense, meditation is spoken of as instantaneous. Further clarification and explanation is needed and; therefore, we will look into the meditation process analytically. While it is true that in deep meditative state one experiences peace and tranquility and all stress and tension are temporarily suspended; it has been generally acknowledged that as soon as one is 'awake' from the meditative state, stress and tension slowly start infiltrating. This phenomenon has been questioned by many and the answer is not too complex to explain; one requires a better understanding of the process of meditation and how mediation works. This is one of the important aspects dealt in this book.

Human beings are complex phenomenon as we have been constituted of subtle entities such as consciousness, mind and ego etc which cannot be separated,

but distinguished in order to understand their functions. Although we appear as a single unit, within us, there are multiple functionalities performed by different segments or layers. However, most of the time we get identified with the physical or the mental layer as the majority of our activities centers around mind and body. At the same time, there are other layers with which we never get identified. So also, we are not aware of the principle that supports all the layers. That which supports all the layers has been considered as having a neutral position, as it moves with any of the layers, and all faculties function due to the presence of that 'entity' within us. This entity, 'the being' is neither a physical nor a conceptual one, but a factual and existential reality and I call it as 'conscious awareness' for some definite purpose.

We will find, in due course, some detailed discussion of various layers with which we have been constituted along with the hierarchical distinction. Also, we will see that conscious awareness never undergoes suffering due to its neutral position. Neutrality and centrality are the unique nature of consciousness and consciousness has different names as some traditions call it as the 'self' or 'soul' or 'being'; it indubitably exists as it requires no proof. It is consciousness or awareness (conscious awareness) that reveals us various psychological states such as we are happy or sad. However, in deep-sleep state, we never feel tensions or worries nor happiness and joy. The experience of the bliss during deep sleep along with the absence of worries and tensions are revealed to us as soon as we get up from the slumber. This means that the blissful state of deep-sleep has been registered in us and we can remember the blissful experience of deep-sleep once we awake from sleep. Here, consciousness functions as a witness in our deep sleep and consciousness witnesses the absence of different states we normally experience during our wakeful state.

In our normal wakeful state, we know that whenever mind gets involved in activities, it engages with the notion of 'I' and an identity is established between 'I' and the ego-mind mechanism. For example, when the mind experiences happiness, we say 'I am happy', rather than saying, 'I experience happiness' or 'I am aware of happiness'. On examination, we can realize that the main task of awareness is to reveal happiness and joy, worries and tension. While so doing, awareness remains transcendent to mind and, therefore, there is no chance for the mind to realize 'awareness'. As a transcendent principle, conscious awareness never experiences stress and tension, but simply discloses joy, happiness, stress, tension and worries of mind.

The main objective of meditation is to realize the nature of 'awareness', i.e., experiencing 'awareness within itself'. Awareness, in its autonomous neutral position, can withdraw from highlighting any objects such as worries, tension and stress and remain focused within its own realm, leaving mind and ego as objective realities that are subject to change. It has been understood that awareness in its neutral position does not have any attachment towards mind and ego that comprise the notion of 'I'. Separating from ego-mind complex, while awareness remains as consciousness, one loses the notion of the 'I'. This results in the 'experiential realization' of awareness in which the notion of 'I' becomes a myth. The deeper one goes inwardly, one will experience that there is no 'I' and this experience is solid and transformative that takes place in an individual while in deep meditative state.

Meditation practice leads to the realization of the nature of awareness without which one cannot feel relief from the shackle of ego-mind complex. By constant practice of meditation, a shift of paradigm takes place and we come to realize the

exact nature of awareness which is neutral and impartial. This paradigmatic shift happens due to the withdrawal of awareness from 'ego-mind' mechanism. Once this happens, awareness remains as pure consciousness with its natural peace and harmony. This process is not automatic and, therefore, we need to practice meditation.

Is it possible to generate peace by practicing meditation? In order to answer this question, let us look into to our feelings, experientially, during the time of meditation and aftermath. It has been widely acknowledged that while in meditative state, worries, stress and tension do not have any direct bearing upon us. During meditation, our awareness dissociates from the mind and mental faculty becomes dysfunctional. Mind, during the time of meditation, is not active and, therefore, it cannot establish any hold upon us. As worries and tension are transcendent to conscious awareness, we never experience any tension and stress while in meditation. What happens during the process of meditation is that our conscious awareness turns to itself and experiences 'itself within itself'. This phenomenon, at this point, can be explained in this way. When we touch our body with our hand, we experience the feeling of touching and, at the same time, the feeling of being touched. We will discuss this in due course.

In our everyday life, we are not aware of the dynamic nature of conscious awareness that engages in disclosing our thoughts and emotions. In the process of meditation, conscious awareness 'turns to itself' and withdraws its support to mental activities and eventually all worries and tensions are temporarily suspended or disconnected. As we withdraw awareness, mind along with its worries and tension become inactive.

I use terms such as 'consciousness', 'awareness' and 'conscious awareness' with specific meaning. Awareness is used in the sense that it does the function of bringing something to our awareness - it does the act of disclosing objects, thoughts and various emotions. Whereas, when I use the term, 'consciousness', it denotes that consciousness remains as it is, without disclosing objects presented to it. For example, in deep sleep, consciousness exists, but there is no awareness of deep sleep while sleeping, but the experience of deep sleep revealed to us through memory when we awake. I use 'conscious awareness' to indicate that the awareness we have while we are conscious of something in our normal waking state. In Western philosophy, conscious awareness can be compared to the concept of 'intentional consciousnesses'.

Awareness, during the time of meditation, remains as consciousness and it is the key factor we need to understand. During meditation, we practically learn how to dissociate or disengage mind by withdrawing our awareness. As a result, those tension and worries that the mind carries cannot be felt as active. While in meditation, we are not aware of worries and tension because awareness is temporally shifted from the realm of mind and mind is at rest or stillness. This situation can be described as the 'freedom of conscious awareness'.

This freedom of awareness to disorient is not automatic, but has to be consciously generated within us by the practice of meditation. When learners consciously engage in meditation, they will find for themselves how to withdraw awareness from the real-life experience by going beyond mind. However, when one gets out of the meditative state, meditation becomes an experience of the past and those worries and tension which were temporarily suspended become active. This

indicates that learners can no longer carry the instantaneous experience of peacefulness they had during the time of meditation. Peace and tranquility that was instantaneous in a particular moment has been reduced to a memory. As a result, learners are prompted to say that, '*it was an enjoyable experience and I thoroughly enjoyed it and I felt timelessness*'. Learners, in general, could not sustain that experience after the practice of meditation.

We can bring about reduction of stress and tension by deviating the attention of mind rather than practicing meditation. Many people resort to such easy way of absconding from mental tension by reading books, playing games, and watching TV, or couple of drinks to have an interval for the mind. Allowing the mind to engage in different activities are nothing but the game of mind, a gimmick, and it is the same mind that finds deviation from one thought to another in order to feel comfort. However, such adjustment is temporary because we are not trained to withdraw our conscious awareness from the mind as a whole. Meditation is a different process in which the individual gains insight into the nature of 'conscious awareness' and its neutral position in life. Most importantly, in meditation, there takes place a shift of the notion of 'I' from 'ego-mind complex' to 'consciousness'. In here, let us understand that the 'I' who is associated with mind withdraws from the activities of mind and associates with 'conscious awareness', eliminating the sense of 'ego'. However, there is no possibility of the notion of 'I' in awareness for 'I' is the summation of all experiences we had in our life.

Experience of intense stress and tensions are the result of our identification of the 'I' with the negative thoughts or emotions. It is to be noted that the identification of 'I' is not confined to those phenomena that take place within the realm of mind, but

the mind has a holistic relationship with the body. As the 'I' gets involved with stress, the whole of the personality undergo suffering, and in the extreme case, it can become fatal. When the mind and the body becomes a single unit with the notion of 'I', it is not mind that suffers, but we say, 'I suffer' and when the body is in pain, we say, 'I am in pain'. Here, the body and mind form an alliance and appear to be inseparable single unit. It is interesting to note that the 'I' not only establish identity with the body, but extend to other minds and bodies with whom it closely associates. We all know how we establish identity with husband, wife, children, brothers and sisters, parents and when they experience pain and suffering, we are much affected. The ripple that the mind generates within the household is capable of transferring worries to others and this transfer of worries and tensions are due to identification.

Identification of oneself with unpleasant experiences along with corresponding judgment and response that takes place in us is the cause of stress and tension. From childhood onwards, we have been used to such identifications while experiencing pain and sorrows. Meditation is a process that unleashes those identities to which we have been fastened. Also, meditation helps to avoid further accumulation of dirt in the mind. Hence, it is advisable to initiate meditation practices while young, at the age of ten onwards. Meditation is one of the rarest gifts that we can offer to the young generation. Our younger generation should be given a chance to develop healthy life free from mental constrains.

If the mind becomes unhealthy and sick, who will take care of it? Apparently mind itself has to take care of, but how can a sick mind take care of itself? People often visit psychoanalysts, who can perform some patch work, but it is temporary and so people frequently visit them. Here, we need to notice one important point that

if the body is in pain, mind will take care and if the mind is suffering, body cannot take care of mind and, therefore, we need something higher than the mind - that is consciousness to which we can depend upon.

Those who are entering into meditation practice should be aware of the nature of activity one is going to be engaged in. Meditation is not, in fact, an activity of mind while the body is at absolute rest in any chosen posture. In this book, the term, 'meditation' is used as both noun and verb; it is a combination of both noun and verb and I use them interchangeably, commencing with verb, an activity, and ending in noun, a non-native state of stillness of mind, so to say. Why meditation is an activity in the beginning is due the fact that we can commence meditation only from where we are. We are in the world of activities, either mental or physical; while physical activity can be brought under control by adopting a posture, mind will not settle so soon at our desire. Mind wanders all over, and it sometimes divides into two or split into many within itself, creating more tension and mutually opposing and conflicting desires.

Practice of meditation, with the right understanding, is the only antidote to check the incessant flow of mind along with the notion of 'I' which engages in all activities. By analyzing and understanding the 'doership and ownership' of actions, one can commence meditation practice. The guru, master or trainer, has a significant role to play in channelizing the practitioner to the right direction. While practicing meditation under the guidance of a master or well-trained trainer, learners may experience a sort of freedom from the fetters of life. This momentary experience by learners would generate a desire to further their practice thinking that it will bring complete cessation of all worries and tensions after few classes. However, to stay in

meditative awareness even after one achieves peaceful experience is problematic for many learners. This book reveals some of the pertinent issues regarding sustainability and how to keep meditation prolonged, sustainable and enduring, throughout the day, week and life.

It is healthy to remember that as soon as we finish the daily practice of meditation, experiencing joy and bliss for half an hour, we are going back to the world of activities and mind can accumulate lots of experience that can cause tension and stress. So it is vital that we need to clean up our mind every day; just as we are cleaning our body. Some people resort to prayer for the purification of mind and believe that god will do the cleaning job. Psychologically, they may feel happy and comfortable after prayer and it is due to their faith in god.

Meditation is more than daily prayers of various kinds. However, a prayer with a meditative mind would be auspicious; a meditative mind cannot be selfish and prayer becomes a universal phenomenon. Prayer is a strong wish for the betterment of the entire world of all living and non-living beings; prayer that happens in a meditative awareness represents a desire for universal peace and tranquility. "Let the entire world experience bliss" has been one of the ancient sacred prayers of the mystic saints of India. It is not that prayer will be granted immediately by a god sitting somewhere in the obscure corner of the universe, but prayer has to be understood as a sincere wish or desire for fulfillment of life. What else one needs in life if life is stress free and is fulfilled every moment within the context of love towards the universe as a whole? At the culmination of meditative awareness, when one realizes the unlimited and boundless nature of the being of the universe, the play of life that takes places within and without, to whom does one pray? In fact, all prayers are to

facilitate a meditative mood but the mind is mind, and it never catches hold of meditation. Hence there is the need for practicing meditation and, therefore, lets meditate.

One should be aware of the fact that the practice of meditation not only helps to the reduction of stress and tension by objectifying the mind, but also it leads to the penetration into existential realm that transcends our discursive understanding. In the beginning, we do not need to bother about such transcendental matters; let us confine into the area of mind which is engrossed in worldly activities generating tension and worries.

In this book, I have endeavored to elucidate some of the crucial points that one should keep in mind while practicing meditation. This book will be beneficial and strongly recommended by many of the learners who are practicing with me. Originally, this book was in the spiral-bind form restricted to private distribution. I ventured to publish this for the benefit of the public as it will offer readers some insight into the practicalities of meditation. I am extremely happy to share my experience with the readers. It does not matter with whom one practices meditation, which school of meditation one goes, which master under whom one gets guidance. Reading and understanding this book would remove the myth associated with meditation and one will be able to recognize the true nature and spirit of meditation.

Meditation requires a playful attitude and that is my understanding. It is advisable not to recline from daily activities; be realistic and while practicing meditation. Try to understand the process of meditation, its philosophy and, at the same time, do not give greater importance to philosophy, although philosophy, for me, leads to understanding and understanding is the essence of life.

I have no claim over the techniques of meditation that I have been practicing and teaching, and my contribution is my experience and understanding, mainly on sustainability. Many practitioners of meditation find it problematic on the issue of sustainability, i.e., how to live in peace and tranquility in everyday life. Again, meditation is, I would say, more of understanding; with the right understanding, meditation will be a successful attempt. It is the understanding that provides sustainability. Right understanding has a greater place in the practice of meditation.

I did not explain any meditation techniques here as it is beyond the scope of the book. I have discussed few fundamental and subtle aspects of the practice of meditation frequently in this book in order to help readers of different temperament. They are not repetition of the same idea, but viewed and analyzed from a different perspective and context so as to provide a better understanding to the readers of different caliber.

Excerpt from other chapters

Chapter II: My Quest for Meditation

I realised that the 'I' in me is nothing but the summation of my experience and understanding accumulated since my childhood onwards. I experientially realised that the 'I' in me is a myth; it is not a real entity, but a false notion generated in me. The moment we realise that the 'I' is a myth; we will be grounded in a different level. We feel, not only the world of objects is constantly changing, but the 'I' also changes continuously. What constitute in us as the 'I' is our psychological continuity. But that is not real either.

Chapter III: Nature of Consciousness and Mind

...let us distinguish consciousness and mind. Consciousness is not something that evolved within after the birth or generated as a result of any external factors, but it is there in us. Sometimes consciousness has been considered as identical with the life principle or life energy or soul or self and, as such, it is not something that is subject to conditioning after the birth of an individual. Whereas mind evolves in us depending upon the circumstance, society and culture and, therefore, mind vary from individual to individual but not consciousness.

Chapter IV : Meditation: Reality and Myth

There is nothing religious in it. Focussing on breath going in and out, or being aware of the different variations of breath cannot be considered as a religious act. Some people think that meditation is religious because most of the well known techniques have been developed in India and the masters have a religious background. However, meditation is not only beyond any religious beliefs such as god, hell and heaven, but it is a practical science which lead us to bring identical result to all individuals who practice meditation regardless of their religious affiliation.

Chapter V: Stress, Tension and Transcendence

Whatever may be reason, meditation practice can lead us to joy and happiness and, therefore, meditation has been widely practiced for the purpose of reducing worries, stress and tension. Many studies and research conducted in the field of meditation reveal the fact that meditation helps not only in reducing stress and tension, but help preventing one from undergoing stress and tension, if practiced regularly. One of the obvious reasons for considering meditation as an effective remedy for stress and tension is the deeper we go

into ourselves, the more we become aware of the intrinsic nature of consciousness that helps to liberate us from stress and tension.

Chapter VI: Mechanism of Ego

For learners of meditation, the experience of the 'death of ego' may be momentary because they are not fully in tune with the meditation practices, but wanting to get away from stress and tension. Although beginners failed to maintain the state of emergence of 'conscious awareness' due to the lack of continues the practice; with the help of a master, slowly but surely, they can achieve the meditative state. However, it requires intensive practice of meditation in order to endure the experience of freedom that one enjoys during the short period of meditation practice. Certain specific and methodical training can prepare the ground for intense practice of meditation.

Chapter VII: Meditation and World Peace

Jean-Paul Sartre says that, "man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does". Yes, he is true; individual freedom has been taken by society, politicians, and religious preachers. We are condemned to inherit the result of the action taken by leaders, preachers and politicians. The beautiful words of the leaders are promising, but their actions are frightening. Politicians constantly exhort their commitment to peace, but they failed to identify issues that cause chaos.

Chapter VIII: Witnessing and Sustainability

Witnessing can be considered as the essence of meditation; in witnessing one goes beyond mind. While in witnessing state, thoughts, worries and stress will appear as objects, as the very process of witnessing separate us from what is witnessed. Worries appear to be a passing cloud for the witnessing consciousness. Just like dark clouds and thunderstorms

never affect the space in which it appears, worries and tensions are just passing clouds to witnessing consciousness; it never affects the container, the person. While in witnessing state, we see that whatsoever to which we have been attached are just passing in front of us; we never feel any attachment towards it.

Chapter IX : Therefore Let's Meditate

Let me try to explain the above phenomenon in the following way. Firstly, at the time of 'self-experiencing', there can be no experience possible as all experiences necessitate an individual subject who experiences them. In 'self-experiencing', the individuality embedded in awareness has been broken along with the notion of 'I' and awareness becomes boundless and infinite. Secondly, in order to experience any objects or thought and emotions, the necessary condition is that we, as an individual subject, must limit ourselves and feel separated from the totality of existence. These two conditions are absent in self-knowledge or self-experience.

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