

Chapter 1

MEDITATION

A Way To Take Charge Of Your Life

*“All man’s most miseries derive from his not being able to sit quietly for few minutes in a room alone.”
(Blaisal Pacal)*

Our life in the West, particularly in the United States has phenomenally changed since World War II. Our outward appearance and material pursuits have become a driving force of our living, sometimes even at the cost of meeting the needs of our health and obligations to our families. We have grown as the strongest nation, putting together the disciplined armies and navies, weapons and missiles, agricultural and industrial developments, and space and electronic technologies. We have made an enormous progress on the waters, lands and in the outer space. All these achievements have placed us in a position exemplary to other nations. This progress, however, seems to have heavily cost us in other areas.

Our Rising Time-Urgency

In our drive for material pursuits, we have overlooked the needs of other areas in our lives, equally important, to make our lives overall happy and complete. By over extending ourselves in only one direction, making ourselves materially happier, and not taking time out to enough relax ourselves and meeting our obligations to our families fully, we have invited, often unknowingly, other undesirable elements into our lives. These include: the rising of unmanageable stress and its adverse effects such as health and mental disorders, splits in families, decline in family values and boredom in life

The more we have grown modernized, the more we have lost peace in our lives. The more we have advanced in science and technologies, the more we have lost connection with ourselves. The more we have endeavored to touch the distant planets, the more we have lost touch with our own. The more we have marched together as a nation to reach the highest peak of power and affluence, the farther we have left behind our individuality. The more we have searched for success outside us, the more we have lost harmony within us. **George**

Carlin expresses the same in different words, “We have learned how to make a living, but not a life; added years to our life, but not life to our years.” It is high time that we reexamine our priorities and the direction of our progress.

Why Meditation?

You might have experienced, at one time or another, that when deeply preoccupied with a problem, the solution of it seems to be moving farther from our sight. But when we take our mind away from it for a while, the solution emerges mysteriously. This problem could be solving a mathematical equation, finding a right word or thought while editing a piece of writing, troubleshooting an error at work or seeking a solution in a real life predicament. As a good night’s sleep heals fatigue of our body and rejuvenates our brain cells for another long day, shifting our mind to a relaxed state temporarily renders a new perception to the troubling situation and opens up a new possibility.

A biographical study of spiritual masters and great thinkers will reveal that a realization of some profound experience or thought has occurred to them only when they were in their mental solitude, a voluntary seclusion—a home away from their own. When we train our mind to relax daily, withdrawing it from its relentless thought processes and daily pressing demands, we begin experiencing the presence of our higher consciousness within us, an infinite source of our guidance and potentials, which otherwise remain unrecognized all our life.

This training of shifting our mind’s focus to the state of deepest relaxation possible, for a few minutes daily, is called meditation. In meditation, we shift our focus, not on a different activity, but on calming our thoughts and emotions. This altered focus helps us to better perceive our daily priorities and life’s overall progress. It is a technique to regain our inner harmony through rising above the troubling thoughts, often related to the unpleasant experiences of our past such as failures, regrets, traumas, guilt, and fears; and the anxieties of future.

For the lasting success in the area of our self-improvement, changes must take place from within us, not only in our outer behaviors. The external modification does not promise a long term result. Practicing meditation alters us inside out. Though this process is slow and demands enormous amount of patience, it promises a lasting success, making us better human beings and proud of ourselves evermore. It alters us inside subtly and effortlessly, like a

fruit naturally emerging from its flower. With the growing self-awareness in regular practice of meditation, our perception to human life elevates, and with that transforms our attitude to our relationships with the world and its events in our day-to-day life.

Though still juggling with the myriad responsibilities in our daily life, same as before, such as dealing with commute, travels, work, relationships and health, we now respond to them differently, with more poise and awareness. We grow more conscious of the consequences of our acts and the purpose of our lives. We do not react as mechanically and impulsively as before. Meditation is a way to enjoy each of the cardinal aspects of our life to its fullest-health, personal relationship and worldly success.

The deepening level of silence, with our growing practice of meditation, leads our mind higher from its attachment of our day-to-day world. This places our mind in a better position to examine our thoughts, phobias and mental proclivities, and understand the deep-rooted unpleasant memories of our past. It helps us to be non-reactionary and non-judgmental in our attitudes. It helps develop our philosophical awareness to better adapt ourselves to what is unchangeable, to accept the unpredictable, and discover ways to turn impediments into our personal growth.

Regardless of the varied names given to it by different faiths, the only purpose of meditation is to calm our ever-turbulent mind so that we may develop a better perception of the circumstances, relationships and events in our lives at a given moment. Meditation brings more clarity in our thinking, poise in our conduct and prudence in our decisions.

We all generally seek unconditional love in our relationships, eternal happiness in our material possessions, and lasting gratification in fulfillment of our desires. But our day-to-day experiences seem to be proving often otherwise; all those things wherein we see joy, love and happiness seem to be bringing us frustration and miseries instead. We seldom realize that the cause of our suffering lies in our misidentification, and erroneous notion of success. Meditation brings us a sense of compromise with the transitory nature of the world we live in, and what we receive in response to our expectations from it.

We little realize that relationship is often a result of our mutual convenience, and that our transitory natured material possessions cannot promise lasting happiness. Our expectations of happiness in the earthly relationships and worldly

achievements often prove disappointing to us. Practicing meditation helps us develop our discriminatory sense, an insight to distinguish between right and wrong, real and illusory.

Another area that seems to be bringing us disappointment and unhappiness is our tendency to compare ourselves with others. We normally judge our level of success through the sight of others. There is no yardstick as such that determines an ideal level of success in one's life. There is no such scale that determines an exact amount of happiness one must have to be known as happy.

You alone know how successful or happy you are. You are the best judge of the direction and progress of your life, and the level of success and happiness in your life. Meditation helps us know better about ourselves. The more we know about ourselves, the more we feel truly proud of ourselves, making us rise above our competitive comparison. We do not need then to show off others how successful and happy we are. We are in harmony with ourselves and content within with our material possessions. Meditation helps us someday realize this state in our lives. I have discussed about this in length in the last section of this book.

Meditation is a way to rightly balance our priorities at every stage of our lives. **Maharshi Mahesh Yogi**, the founder of the Transcendental Meditation, once declared that if meditation is practiced by even one percent of the population of America, it would generate a positive change in the overall thinking of the entire nation.