

## Emptying Out Mindfulness:-

One of the key forms of meditational awareness which has been focused upon over the last few years in the West is what has been coined “Mindfulness meditation”, most notably by the well known Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh, who has spread the practice of mindfulness to a larger audience.

In the deeply unfortunate interpretation of Sati (Pali)/ Smṛti (Sanskrit), “Mindfulness” is quite the opposite of what it sounds like. Far from being full of “Mind” it is translated as the observational awareness of one's bodily functions, feelings and content of thought. This is one of the key and most base-level tenets of Buddhist meditation, in fact meditation of all kinds. It is a situation of *almost* not “doing” anything, yet there is a definite *doing* involved. “Mindfulness” is a meditation, it is practised and performed like many other meditations, usually with some unconscious or conscious goal of attaining enlightenment or of being more-calm or of “doing” something to change something. In a way “Mindfulness” could be said to be the root of meditation practice of any kind, but yet it in itself is still caught within dualism.

Muho Noelke, the abbot of Antaiji, explains the pitfalls of consciously seeking mindfulness:-

*“...we have to forget things like "I should be mindful of this or that". If you are mindful, you are already creating a separation ("I - am - mindful - of - ...."). Don't be mindful, please! When you walk, just walk. Let the walk walk. Let the talk talk (Dogen Zenji says: "When we open our mouth, it is filled with Dharma"). Let the eating eat, the sitting sit, the work work. Let sleep sleep.”*

Juddi Krishnamurti:-

*“Meditation means to come upon that space in which there is no centre, and therefore no direction, and therefore no time.”*

*“Meditation is not a search, it's not a seeking, a probing, an exploration. It is an explosion and discovery. It's not the taming of the brain to conform nor is it a self-introspective analysis, it is certainly not the training in concentration which includes, chooses and denies. It's something that comes naturally.....”*

Herein lies the dilemma. The mindfulness approach is often a practice of consciously drawing attention towards the breath, or the body feeling, or other focus in order to “train” the “monkey-mind”. However the “controller” of this process is still involved and as such it is still a form of a perceived “self” seeking. Seeking is still based in a feeling that there is a “self” which is “separated off” from wholeness. It is the dissolution of the actuality of the “self” which in fact forms what we might call “meditation” but we also

might call this “reality as it is” or “liberation”. Hence there is no difference between what we might call “enlightenment” and “meditation” itself, it is just that for many millennia meditation has been seen as a kind of precursor or method to “get to” enlightenment. Unless the fundamental layer of “self” is seen to be only the appearance or mirage of “self” and that life is in fact happening to No-one, meditation is always a situation that stays beyond “reach” so to speak.

Tony Parsons points out the key insight in his book “Nothing Being Everything”:

*“You can’t creep up on Oneness. You can’t move nearer to everything. There is only everything. All the time you are trying to creep up to, or get nearer to being, or more along a path to being, you are being that is trying to move towards being.”*

This is not to suggest meditation should or should not be “done” but the importance is the realization that its process is not about reaching a “higher purpose” or “better” state. It is simply the occurrence of meditation as a belief system which can propel a person, for a while, to believe they are moving closer to the light, when in fact the light never left them. It’s like seeking for your glasses when they are on your head: you can either run around frantically looking for them, believing you will find them like this, or you can sit in meditation and believe that they will “come to you”! Either way, the glasses remain lost until one day they slip down over the eyes through force of gravity when for a moment your eyebrows relax and everything comes into focus.

The “health benefits” of “doing” meditation practice are well-known, however it is well worth considering that stepping out of the “rat-race” of the modern world for any amount of time, engaging in something that is deeply enjoyable, however simple, will have a similar effect on the body. It doesn’t need to be meditation practice, it’s just that in general those people who are busy might enjoy sitting still for a while!

Running down the track of hierarchical idiosyncrasy, meditational control and focusing, or running riot into more obvious madness or depression, all these internalized expressions are ultimately the same seeking and striving, just in different forms. To judge them is to say “a cheetah is better than a snail” - this is meaningless. Inevitably the situation of Natural-state, meditation or liberation occurs when there is a deep relief arising from the understanding that there is nothing one can “do” to achieve a state of peace. Here lies *in itself* the realization that things as they are, are enough, and any further striving is unrequired.

*“The Dude abides.”*  
-The Big Lebowski