

## **MINDFULNESS OR A MIND FULL OF THINGS**

**Ven. Olande Ananda Thera**

*(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 2.1.2020)*

In Buddhism, mindfulness (*sati/smrti*) is one of the seven factors of enlightenment and means a full awareness of what is taking place without any judgement. *Sati-patthana bhavana*, the practice that aims to establish mindfulness, is the development of mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind, and states of mind or characteristics of existence. It leads to insight (*vipassana*) which in turn leads to wisdom, and wisdom ultimately to liberation from suffering and the round of rebirth (*samsara*).

Mindfulness of body consists of being aware of the postures such as sitting, standing, walking, lying down, and other daily activities. Mindfulness of feelings includes physical and mental, pleasant and unpleasant, and even neutral ones. Being aware of one's thoughts and state of mind, whether narrow or expanded, calm or excited, and so on, make up mindfulness of the mind. To notice the characteristics of change of the mind, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self nature of the mind all constitute mindfulness of states of mind.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) therapy is a group programme that was developed by Prof. Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in the 1970s to treat patients struggling with life's difficulties and physical and/or mental illness. Nowadays it has become a billion-dollar industry which is popular especially in the USA. Highly structured programmes have been devised ranging from three-day retreats for professionals to eight-week, evidence-based, secular, intensive mindfulness training to assist people with stress, anxiety, depression and pain. The last is claimed to be a practical approach which trains attention, allowing people to cultivate awareness and therefore enabling them to have more choice and take wise action in their lives. There is even MBSR-T for teens.

Vipassana, to see things as they really are, is one of India's ancient techniques of meditation, reputed to originate from the Buddha. S. N. Goenka started the Vipassana course in India from 1969, which has grown to over 150

centres around the world, all teaching the same thing: mindfulness of the breath (*anapana-sati*) and mindfulness of feelings (*vedananu-sati*). It is a ten-day residential course where participants learn the basics and practise it sufficiently to start to experience its beneficial results. There are no charges for the courses, not even to cover the cost of food and accommodation. All expenses are met by donations from people who, having completed a course and experienced the benefits of Vipassana, wish to give others like them the opportunity to also benefit.

Though mindfulness is more popular as a system of therapy, it is also a spir-

itual practice to overcome suffering and reach nirvana — *ekayano maggo*, often rendered as the one and only way, but not preferred as it sounds overly self-righteous and could foster doubt among people. A more accurate interpretation stresses the fact that the practice leads to nothing but the purification of beings, the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, the disappearance of pain and affliction, the attainment of the right way, the realization of Nibbana (nirvana).

As a lot has been said about mindfulness already, it may be a good idea to sit in silence for a few minutes, and let go of all these ideas, everything, to realize the beyond.



## **NURTURING THE DIVINE SEED — WHO IS NURTURING WHOM?**

**Shikhar Agnihotri**

*(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 2.1.2020)*

What is a seed? Basically it implies energy in a potential form which has the possibility to expand and grow but within the limitations created on its own within the periphery of Law of Harmony.

When we say nurturing the Divine Seed, the question arises immediately, 'Who is nurturing whom?' meaning who are the nurturer and the nurtured in the inner world.

The higher self is the Divine Seed which is sown in the physical, astral and mental fields. But when the human baby is born all its memory goes to the background. And the whole approach/view of life changes from 'I am the Spirit-Seed

and I am sown in the Earth-body' to 'I am the Earth-Body and I have a Spirit-Seed'.

The question of conscious nurturing does not arise until the stage in evolution is reached where the higher Self is able to impress itself upon the lower self in an effective manner. But ultimately it is not about self improvement but the ending of the self (ego).

But the I-ness or doer-ship does not feel comfortable at all with this as it implies the death of I-ness because the I-ness is alive only due to this false belief that I am the doer (personality) and it may seem that if there is nothing to do then how can I exist or how the

work shall be done? The fact is that the work will happen even more efficiently because then the work will not be affected by anxiety, competition, comparison, ambition, desire for recognition, and so on which are all side-effects of the sense of separateness.

So, the only nurturing that is needed is the breaking up of the shell of sense of separateness. The energy and intuition needed to break this shell will also come from the seed itself because there is no fixed process or path for it Every human being is the path unto oneself, every seed is the path unto itself. As the effort can take an individual only up to a limit and not beyond that, the futility of self-centred effort has to be realised for the seed to express itself fully, and that is where the significance of non-judgmental awareness comes into play.

It is just like when a child is born,

milk is available for him/her in the mother and when the need for the milk is over the milk disappears. Do we do something to bring that milk or make it disappear? No. It is just a natural process, just to be witnessed with patience. So, the seed, the child who is about to be born, already makes the arrangements for its nurturing and keeps guiding the lower self, through intuition, about the next step. But to begin with,

i) Performing one's duty with sincerity without complaint, wherever one is placed by one's karma,

ii) Putting in practice every selfless intention as soon as possible; because it is the impulse from the divine seed, and

iii) To be aware of everything outside and inside without any judgment,

are the quickest and surest way of nurturing this divine seed or rather nurturing Oneself through oneself.



## **THE CONTINUOUS DISSATISFACTION AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**

**Esteban Langlois**

*(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 2.1.2020)*

We are always looking for something more. When we achieve a goal, when we get something, almost immediately a new necessity appears, and again we are running after something else. We try to find happiness through the accumulation of vanishing things: beauty, wealth, social recognition, love. All these material, psychological or emotional things are impermanent and never enough. We act guided by the mottos

'always more', 'move forward', 'progress', and so on. We never have enough money, or enough recognition, we must have more. And in this pursuit of happiness we waste our whole life without finding it, because every new conquest only carries more concern and new and more challenging goals. The fear of losing what we got is also ever present. This situation was very well described by Lord Buddha when

he expounded the Four Noble Truths. The search for happiness in the impermanent world only leads us to his fortune, to pain, to unhappiness. We have to search for it in the permanent and spiritual world to avoid the misery of the daily life and have the experience of what we would call happiness. But the only way to reach this spiritual state is the forgoing of one's happiness in favor of the welfare of others. Paradoxical, isn't it?



## VASANT BALIKA VIHAR HOSTEL

Vasant Balika Vihar Hostel is being run under the Indian Section for providing hostel facilities to the Degree College (VKM) students. There is great demand as it is in the heart of the city along with the college. This hostel meets the crucial requirement of such girl students who are keen on pursuing their studies in Varanasi but are staying in far off places.

To meet the higher demand of girl students, a new Rohit Mehta Hostel building has been constructed which was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of BHU on 27 July 2019. The number of students in the hostel has considerably increased during this academic session. A chart reflecting the occupancy this year and last year in the various building of Vasant Balika Vihar is given below:

Name of the Build.	Total No. Seats		No. of occupied	
	2018-19:	2019-20	2018-19:	2018-2019
Anand Bhavan	39	41	39	35
Vinay Bhavan	14	14	14	13
Shanti Bhavan	15	14	15	13
Maitrey Bhavan	30	30	30	26
Blavatsky Bhavan	46	44	46	39
Dhruv Bhavan	6	09	06	07
Bhojanshala Bhavan	16	16	16	13
Rohit Mehta Bhavan	0	144	0	129
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>275</b>

Number of students is likely to increase as 6 more PG courses in Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya are to commence from 2020-2021.

A new executive manager, Mrs Nita Rai, has been appointed from this session. All the hostels are well furnished with cot, mattress, table, chair, cupboard, bed, lights, fans, inverter facilities, television, wifi and computer with internet facility.

Vasant Balika Vihar has two messes — Maitry Mess and Sri Devi Mehta Mess. They serve healthy and hygienic food to the students along with good quality milk and fruits.



## INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II

(Summaries of Talks delivered on 3.1.2020)

### **‘Awareness of the Divine Spark Within’ — Rachana Srivastava**

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: ‘From joy we have come, for joy we live and in that sacred joy, one day, we shall melt again.’ In a world of duality where we see so much of pain and suffering around us, such a statement may sound unrealistic. It seems that as long as we have life, what is guaranteed is anxiety. This anxiety seems to be inbuilt in society, and from it stems fear and other problems. What is required is understanding the root cause of these external problems. Is it not ignorance? Ignorance of the truth that ‘I am divine’. If ‘I am divine’, and if I really know and realize it, then these problems would not have an impact on me. A Chinese proverb says: ‘The entire world surrounds the one who is still within.’ Here, it is not the physical world that is surrounding us. It is the one who is still within us that has to be realized as an antidote for negativity and a supplement to positivity.

Besides *Taittiriya Upanishad*, I would like to quote *Mundaka Upanishad*. *Mundaka* etymologically refers to a person who has shaved his head. In the larger sense, it means that *mundana*, the shaving off, should actually be shaving off of the layers of ignorance which cover us all, to enable us to see ourselves as being one with the universal self.

Our great sages who had attained this enlightenment laid down a fourfold measure as cardinal to the spiritual growth: the first was truth, by which was meant a measure which was universally good. The second was austerity, to focus on something higher than outward distractions. Wisdom to discern right from wrong was the third, and the fourth was chastity. The great sages of both ancient and modern India advised that ‘truth alone triumphs’ and ‘there is no religion higher than truth’ are the cardinal principles to be practised, as a striving towards a state where the finite self would expand and merge into the universal consciousness.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **‘The Divine Spark in Action’ — Sairam Pate**

Birth is not the starting point of a human life, there is a long journey behind and a very long way to go. In general, the word action means ‘the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim’. The third fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* teaches: ‘The fundamental identity of all Souls

with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — a spark of the former — through the Cycle of Incarnation (or “Necessity”) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term.’ Now, it can be assumed that, the Soul is the divine spark journeying to find itself with the Almighty/ Universal Soul.

The theosophical definition of man is: 'That being, in whatsoever part of the universe he finds himself, in whom highest spirit and lowest matter are united by intellect.' The Divine Wisdom teaches that the true self of man lies deeply hidden behind layers of matter, of varying degrees of density. A human body is one of the vehicles to travel in this divine path. Some degree of consciousness exists in all the kingdoms of Nature, only the human being has conscious awareness. Evolution theory

tells us that, man has evolved through long ages from an animal-like creature, virtually mindless and with little consciousness, to the intelligent, thinking, feeling, 'self'-conscious being that he is today. Man is capable of far greater use of mind than lower kingdoms. Everything in existence is part of the Divine Plan and God is eternally present in it. Therefore, as human beings we, too, are part of this great Plan and each individual has at the very depth of his being a spark of the Divine — a portion of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **'The Role of the Divine Spark in Change of Consciousness' — Divyarth Dubey**

Born to parents who have lived and breathed Theosophy all their lives, raised in an environment which is vibrant with the presence of the Masters and educated in an atmosphere dedicated to the service of society, it is no surprise that it is intriguing to me: What is this divine life that we pray to? How is it different from the consciousness? How does it become divine? As a student of Theosophy, the topic is extra interesting to me because it ignites the thought of discussing the nature and meaning of consciousness and whether it can be influenced or changed by anything. It also encourages finding the meaning of divinity and how that divine spark may change the basis of existence.

As seekers of Truth on the path of self-realization, we must often pause and think if we are heading in the right direction. Since there is no way for us to gauge our progress except to peek in

the dark cages of our heart and soul and look for the answers within, we use opportunities like the recent MP and Rajasthan Federation Annual Conference to share our curiosity with fellow-seekers. The journey of unfolding of consciousness from human form to divine manifestation goes through a series of evolutions as discussed by Dr Annie Besant in her book *A Study in Consciousness* and various other theosophists. The word 'consciousness' in its most simplified form means life, and vice versa. It is a state of awareness of a person and his or her surroundings which in other words can be understood as the awareness of boundary of self and others. This is why it is important to have a background of the study of matter for a better understanding of boundaries and the boundless. A thorough understanding of matter enables better comprehension of consciousness and its different dimensions, as we all know about different planes of existence and how they impact consciousness. At every

plane, the different vibrations of matter signal the consciousness, and, depending upon the preparation and power of a plane, the vibrations are processed by the consciousness. So a man can easily be alive because of the response of his physical body to vibrations of the physical plane. But whether he is capable of moving up to the higher divine planes will depend upon his readiness to respond

to the vibrations of those higher planes. This is where the divine spark works as a catalyst not just accelerating the ability to receive and transmit the vibrations but also to prepare the conducive environment for such transmission. J. Krishnamurti is an obvious example for all of us whose consciousness was worked on by the great Masters intensively.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **‘The Divine Spark and Human Evolution’ — Pradip Mahapatra**

Human beings come from the Infinite Source. Human evolution occurs according to the laws and principles that apply to the solar system. A human being is seven-fold as is the solar system. Everywhere one will find changes in the forms or evolution taking place from elemental to human being. Not only the evolution of forms but unfoldment of life is taking place within the forms. The uniqueness of such changes is the unchangeable divine spark within the forms whether it is mineral, plant, animal or human.

Theosophy says that every form, whether mineral, plant, animal or human, contains within it that divine spark which involves potentiality of development into a planetary logos. The Great Master gave the best example in letter no. 67 [ML15]: ‘The human foetus . . . from the moment of its first planting until it completes its seventh month of gestation . . . repeats in miniature

the mineral, vegetable, and animal cycles it passed through in its previous encasements, and only during the last two develops its future human entity. It is completed but towards the child’s seventh year.’

The unfoldment of the divine spark is not confined only to human beings but also to minerals, plants, and animals. The journey of a human being continues to a particular stage when he becomes aware of his stage of evolution and then he consciously strives to speed up to attain knowledge of Atman. The *Atmagita* says: ‘The spark seeks to rejoin the Flame from whence it sprang.’

According to *The Secret Doctrine* every individual sounds his note as part of the keynote of the whole world. His note is in harmony with the Universal Plan, and his whole being evolves in the direction of the goal to be attained. So he continues his journey as a learner till the end, a Temple of Divine Wisdom.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Cultivating the Divine Spark Within — Satrajit Chakravorty**

In *The Voice of the Silence*, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) says: 'The mind is the great slayer of the Real. . . . slay the slayer.' If we analyze it, it means that our mind is not allowing us to see the reality or truth. So, in order to reach the truth we should get control over our mind.

Here, the word 'Real' can be understood as 'consciousness'. The mind and the senses get coloured by worldly matters resulting in the person being a gross materialist. Thus, his evolution process is slow and he is devoid of ethical values. To him a spiritual person is a laughing stock. Later on in life, everyone is paid back in their own coin as per the law of karma. Destiny figures out who will have the last laugh. However, the poor spiritual person, whom the materialistic, wealthy person had ridiculed, comes to his rescue, as there is only love and no vengeance or hatred in real spiritualism.

Now, the spiritualist takes the materialist on a mystical journey to reality. By treading the path of yoga, we know about the seven planes of existence and about our subtle bodies.

In the physical plane we see that, a man's maturity, intellect, knowledge

and all other 'abstract aspects' increase with 'the passage of time or age'. But evolution on the higher planes is much slower and happens over many reincarnations. We can observe that starting from prehistoric times to the modern age there is an increase in the faculty of man. They say that this is because the sun, along with the planets, is also revolving around another centre and slowly it is approaching the ground centre, from which creation has emerged. The closer it gets to this point the higher becomes human intellect.

Another thing we observe is that to have higher thoughts our mind must be purified. Annie Besant in her book *Thought Power — Its Control and Culture* says that when people are occupied with materialistic desires and thought they will not understand higher concepts or evolve in the higher planes. With this profound understanding Annie Besant started the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS). Purification of the mind and inculcation of ethics happens while working in the TOS and then one becomes ready to join the TS, which gives more exalted ethics. Her idea was in parity with Adi Sankaracharya, whom A. P. Sinnett refers in his book, *Esoteric Buddhism*. A careful observation of the self will reveal this to us.



---

Number of delegates registered as on Thursday, 2 January: 1491

---

Printed at Ratna Offsets Private Limited, B-21/42A, Kamachha, Varanasi-221010, India