

Ancient Indian Ethos and Mindfulness

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Abstract

Ancient Indian ethos emphasize that all the efforts of human life should be directed towards practical realization of the ultimate truth or reality which could be realized by merging the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. Contemporary understanding of Mindfulness is awareness and open and receptive attention toward whatever is happening at present moment internally and externally. This paper is an attempt to enrich the concept of mindfulness through ancient Indian ethos.

Core Indian Ethos

Ancient Indian ethos consider life as an opportunity to achieve a state of ultimate bliss called *Stitha Prajna* where a person is established in complete peace unaffected by the happenings around. In English this state is commonly referred as enlightenment, liberation, bliss, self-realization, and self-transcendence. This state comes when the individual consciousness of a person gets merged with the universal consciousness. The duality of 'I' and 'We' consciousness perishes and interconnectedness of the individual with all the other creativities of this cosmos is established. He does not feel in his consciousness to be any different from others. On the contrary, he feels others as himself. Every person has a part of Divine or God (Universal Consciousness) in himself as how he could be different from the God when he is created by the God. This part of the God present in a person is called as *Atman* and God or Universal Consciousness is called as *Brahman*. The whole purpose of life, according to Indian ethos, is to merge this *Atman* with *Brahman*. For this, Indian ethos emphasize that all the efforts of human life should be directed towards practical realization of this ultimate truth or reality. This realization is achieved by annihilating three types of pains which are suffered by human beings in their life (Sharma, 1970):

Three Types of Human Pains

The means to annihilate the above pains or sufferings are three-fold:

- *Shravana* (Listening the truth)
- *Manana* (Verifying the truth through critical analysis and getting convinced)
- *Nididhyasana* (Deep meditation for practical realization of ultimate truth)

Indian ethos see life holistically and talks of perfect synthesis of material, moral, cultural,

and spiritual values for achieving the ultimate goal of life. In this endeavour, his life is guided by the four *Purusharthas*: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*.

Purusharthas: Objectives of Human Life

Purushartha has been made of two words: *Purush* and *Artha*. *Purush* means human being and *Artha* means objective. So *Purushartha* means objective of human being. *Purushartha* posits fourfold human objectives reflecting the Indian ethos of proper synthesis of material and spiritual values and realizing the ultimate truth practically. The four objectives of human life are:

- **Dharma** (Supreme duty or 'Categorical Imperative')
- **Artha** (wealth or material)
- **Kama** (Desires)
- **Moksha** (Salvation or liberation)

Dharma

Dharma means living a life in accordance to the law of Divine nature. Indian ethos stresses on the fact that all actions of human beings have invisible potency (*apurva*). No one has control over the time of its fructification, the quantum of effect this potency produces, and its nature. The fructification of *apurva* depends upon the potency of the action (*shakti*). Simply, it could be understood that whenever there is an action by a person there will be a reaction and the time, quantum, and nature of this reaction depends upon the potency of the action (*shakti*) and by the time the action does not produce reaction this *shakti* or potency remains latent in the form of *apurva*.

Divine or righteous actions (*Dharma*) of a person manifests in happiness and devilish or sinful actions (*Adharma*) manifests in pain. Indian ethos defines four kinds of actions for happiness to human beings and they are:

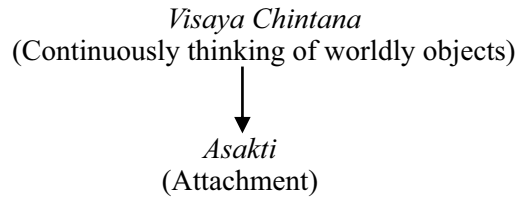
| Four Kinds of Actions for Happiness | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1 | Obligatory (<i>Nitya and Naimittika</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the actions which are mandatory to be performed. • Performing these actions does not lead to any virtue or worthiness but non-performance of these actions is sin. • These actions are of two types namely <i>nitya</i> and <i>naimittika</i>. • <i>Nitya</i> are those actions that must be performed daily and <i>naimittika</i> are those actions that must be performed on specified occasions. |
| 2 | Optional (<i>Kamyā</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the actions whose performance leads to virtue. • Non-performance of these actions does not result in sin. |

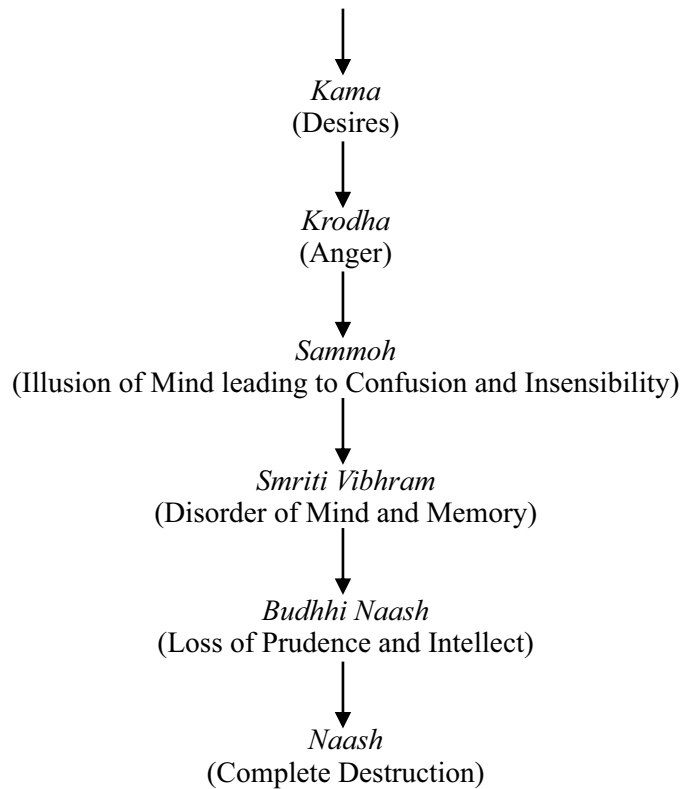
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| 3 | Prohibited (<i>Pratisidha</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the actions whose performance results in sin. • Their non-performance does not lead to virtue. |
| 4 | Expiatory (<i>Prayashchitta</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the actions performed to repent for performing prohibited actions. |

Dharma calls for performing obligatory and optional actions and avoiding prohibited actions. *Karma* which in Indian ethos means the actions performed by a person could lead a person to achieve highest state of happiness which is *stitha prajna* or liberation from all the bondages when only obligatory and optional actions are performed.

The elaboration of Karma which could lead to state of *stitha prajna* could be found in Astanga Yoga propounded by sage Patanjali. In Astanga Yoga there are eightfold paths for achieving liberation and the obligatory, optional, and prohibited actions could easily be understood in these eightfold paths. The eightfold paths are:

1. *Yama*: It gives explanation of prohibited actions. These actions are: Don't lie, Don't steal, Don't hurt anybody, Don't act in lustful manner, and Don't act greedily.
2. *Niyama*: Obligatory actions are mentioned in this stage. *Niyama* means discipline of self and obligatory actions for this are: Cleanliness of body through daily ablutions, Internal purification of mind, Satisfaction (*santosha*), Penance (*tapas*), study of sacred books for self reflection (*svadhyaya*), and devotion to God (*ishvara-pranidhana*)
3. *Asana*: In this part, obligatory action of keeping the body fit is prescribed. Through the practice of *Asanas*, a person achieves stillness in sitting for long periods with a calm mind. *Asanas* make person physically fit for deep meditation.
4. *Pranayama*: For concentration of mind and good health, it is obligatory to have control over the breath. *Pranayama* helps in this direction.
5. *Pratyahara*: It is the obligation of a person to have control over his senses which if not controlled or checked could lead to attachment or fixation towards material things resulting in bad consequences. The chain effect of attachment resulting in bad consequences is given below:





In the above mentioned five paths, first one relates to prohibited actions and other four relates to obligatory actions.

The last three paths are part of meditation or internalization process collectively called as *antaranga sadhana*. These paths are optional for people.

6. *Dharana*: Before starting the process of deep meditation, first the object of meditation has to be decided and then the mind has to be fixed on that object.
7. *Dhyana*: It means meditation and consists in the undisturbed flow of thought round the object of the meditation (*pratyayaikatanata*). It is the steadfast contemplation without any break.
8. *Samadhi*: It means concentration. This is the final step in Yoga. Here the mind is completely absorbed in the object of meditation. In *dhyana* the act of meditation and the object of meditation remain separate. But here they become one. It is the highest means to realize the cessation of mental modifications which is the end. It is the ecstatic state in

which the connection with the outward world is broken and through which one has to pass before obtaining liberation (Sharma, 1970).
The effect or symptoms of Dharma are described in the sutra of Manusmriti.

“*Dhriti, kshama, daamo, asteyam, shaucham, indriya nigras, dhii, vidya, satyam, akrodhah, dashkum dharmam lakshnam*”.

| Effects of Dharma on People | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Dhriti | Patience |
| 2 | Kshama | Forgiveness |
| 3 | Dama | Control over Mind, Self Control |
| 4 | Asteya | Non-stealing |
| 5 | Shaucha | Purity of Body and Mind |
| 6 | Indriya-Nigras | Control over the Senses |
| 7 | Dhii | Intellect |
| 8 | Vidya | Spiritual Knowledge |
| 9 | Satya | Truthfulness |
| 10 | Akrodha | Control over Anger |

Artha

Artha means wealth. One of the objectives of human beings is to earn wealth for financial independence so that they could take care of their basic material needs and fulfill the duties. Basic material needs include food, house, clothes etc. and taking care of the family. The duties of a person are expressed in five sacrifices called *panchamahayajna*. These sacrifices which are to be fulfilled are: to Almighty, ancestors, enlightened souls, non-human living creatures, and humanity. Indian ethos does not have negative view towards wealth and does not glorify poverty rather it lays lot of focus on wealth but with a caution. The cautionary message is that wealth has to be earned through *Dharma* (righteous means and intention).

Every person wants happiness and many feels that wealth is the only way. Indian ethos emphasize that there is no direct connection between happiness (*sukha*) and wealth (*artha*). Wealth gives happiness only when it is guided by Dharma. Association of wealth in any form with mind afflictions such as ego, jealousy, greed, attachment, and desires bring miseries for people.

Artha which is one of the goals of life of all individuals should be clearly understood by remembering the points given below:

Kama

Kama involves the enjoyment of life that includes sensual gratification, sensual pleasure, love and also the aesthetic enjoyments of life. Kama includes various types of desires viz. sensual, psychological, intellectual etc. For fulfillment of Kama, its synthesis with Dharma and Artha is must. Kama should not be pursued unless and until the life of person is guided by Dharma and is earning the wealth fulfilling his basic needs and duties. At anytime the overriding of Kama with ignoring Dharma and Artha would lead individual to misery. In the words of Yogi Seer Shriranga Sadguru “The Kama is a welcome value when it is in rightful third position among four Purusharthas, however the Kama become undesirable value when it is first among six internal enemies which are undesirable desire, anger, greed, attachment, arrogance and jealousy.”

Uncontrolled and unguided Kama takes the form of lust and is a sin. In Law of Manu it is clearly mentioned that Kama never rests by enjoyment of lust, as fire surely increases the more butter is offered to it. This is aptly echoed in the following words of Swami Rama (1980) in his book 'Living with Himalayan Masters':

“Desires for possession increase incessantly and finally become a whirlpool of miseries, such ignorance cannot be dispelled by going to the temple, worshipping in the church, listening to sermons or performing rituals. For centuries human beings have been fulfilling their desires yet they are still miserable. To attain the ultimate reality it is necessary to free oneself from the desire for non-essential encumbrances possessing more than necessary only creates obstacles for oneself. It is a waste of time and energy. Desire is the mother of all misery.”

The celebrated work Kamasutra of Vatsyana recommends the desirability of the pleasure including sensual pleasure, yet regards Dharma or the moral values as the supreme end of the life and says that acquisition of pleasure should be in conformity with Dharma. Vatsyana recommends a harmonious cultivation of Dharma, Artha, and Kama. None of these values or goals of life should be rejected, suppressed or even looked down. As man after all is also a biological animal, satisfaction of the senses is as natural as the satisfaction of hunger and thirst. But, Vatsyana further says that because man is not merely a biological animal but also a psychological and a moral creature, a rational and self conscious person capable of realizing the values, he should, therefore instead of falling down to the level of the beast, transform the animal pleasure into human pleasure by means of self-control, education, culture and spiritual discipline.

Moksha

According to Purusharthas, Moksha is the ultimate objective of a person. It is a state of liberation from all bondages and pain. Nothing more is to be achieved after achieving Moksha. In this state *Atman* (individual consciousness) gets synthesized with the *Brahman* (universal consciousness). It is a state of cessation of all *vrittis* (deformations or modifications) of *chitta* (mind). Mind comes in pure state and absolute and ever luminous soul gets manifested in full. All the barriers between the individual and universal consciousness are removed. It is a state of *param ananda* (ultimate happiness).

Meditation (*upasana*) is the action needed to achieve *Moksha* alongwith the first three *Purusharthas*. To achieve moksha one should spend time in meditation, spiritual studies, and contemplating on self knowledge. By pursuing the first three goals of life as per the Indian ethos a person becomes mature and fit enough to pursue moksha. Thus, *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Kama* are the means to achieve this end of *Moksha*, a harmonious combination of knowledge and action. In the state of *Moksha* one realizes that the senses, the mind, the intellect, feeling and will, the internal organ are all products of *Avidya* (ignorance) and they invariably surround the individual self and constitute the 'individuality'. This individuality arising out of ignorance separates a person from others and interconnectedness is lost. But in the state of *Moksha*, this individuality perishes and realization of true-self takes place. *Aumkara* with its three parts A-U-M represents three states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping which everyone knows. In the state of *Moksha*, the fourth state '*Turiya*' or '*Amatra*' which represents 'Measureless' state is realized directly and intuitively. This state is calm, non-dual, blissful and all consciousness where all plurality is merged and subject-object duality perishes (Sharma, 1970). For a commoner, this state could be equated with a person who has achieved perfection and realized his full potential.

Synthesis of Material and Spiritual Values in Indian Ethos

Indian ethos does not favour negativism; it actually has very positive attitude towards life and the world including both material and spiritual values. But while trying to understand the Indian concept of spirituality, it should be borne in mind that the spiritual value, as projected by seers, is integral and holistic, incorporating within itself the material, moral and cultural values. The holistic meaning of spirituality is prevalent right from the Vedic-Upanishadic time; in the modern age Sri Aurobindo is the champion protagonist of the all-inclusive and all-assimilative character of the spiritual consciousness. The spiritual should not be understood in isolation from the material and socio-cultural life.

However, there is also a misconception of spirituality, according to which the spiritual value is opposed to the material one. The spiritual way is understood as the negation of worldly

life, even as the rejection of the social involvement. Indian ethos only prescribes avoidance of extreme type of hedonistic and consumeristic attitude. Psycho-analytically speaking, a purely unoptimistic and ascetic life is considered as unhealthy and holism (proper synthesis of material, moral, socio-cultural, and spiritual values) is considered as good for mental and social health.

In Indian ethos there is no dichotomy between material and spiritual values. There is nothing in the material world itself that can be deemed as anti-Spirit and impure. The world itself does not bind. What binds and what makes people impure is not the matter or the world but something in their own mind—their ego and selfishness. It is ego and selfishness that make the worldly life impure. If these impurities are gone, anyone can live and enjoy the material life fully and at the same time be spiritual. The point is that really there is no dichotomy or contradiction between material life and spiritual life.

It is quite possible to live the material life in such a way as to make it spiritual. The Indian seers (who can be called spiritual scientists) have pointed out the way to spiritualize the material life itself. They have also prescribed the way of establishing spiritual relationship with Nature and the world of matter. The first prescription is to cultivate respectful and reverential attitude towards Nature and the objects of the world. But the attitude of the modern consumerist mind towards Nature is just the opposite. The consumerist attitude is selfish, egoistic and arrogant. We take the objects of Nature as mere means for our 'Bhoga' (selfish enjoyment). We use and exploit the objects of Nature selfishly and also arrogantly. The result is that we are destroying Nature, and this act of ours is now boomeranging on us.

According to the Indian spiritual tradition, Nature is like our mother and she deserves the same loving and respectful treatment, which the mother does. Nature, like the mother, magnanimously gives us food and other objects necessary for our living. There is our inner unity and affinity with Nature, which we have forgotten. We have taken her to be 'other', fit to be exploited and not to be loved. We are actually killing her, and in so doing we are destroying the source of our own nourishment, and thus we are committing suicide. The remedy is that we should restore the feeling of unity and affinity with Nature and adore her and love her as our mother. This is the spiritual attitude towards Nature. In turn she will continue to nourish us, and she will herself remain ever healthy and happy.

In the Indian ethos, we are required to have the attitude of worship and reverence towards every object of Nature and the world. For example, we worship the earth, the water, the river, the mountain, the trees, the sun, the moon, the planets, and so on. In every profession, the related tools and appliances are worshipped. For example, the farmer worships the earth and the agricultural tools before starting the tilling of the field. The soldier worships his weapons, the musician his instruments. The machines and the engineering tools are ritually

worshipped on the particular day of "Vishwakarma-puja". The money is worshipped as goddess Laksmi (specially on the day of Diwali festival), the books are worshipped as goddess Sarasvati.

The attitude of worship and adoration is to be cultivated not only towards the objects of nature and the material world but also towards every human relationship. For example, the mother, the father, the teacher are to be adored as God. The children too are to be taken as God. The female child is the Goddess and she is ritually worshipped (Kumari-pujana) on different occasions, the male child is taken as Krishna (Bala-Gopala). The wife is Sakti (Goddess) for the husband, and the husband is Siva for the wife.

This spiritual attitude of taking everything of the world as divine, is called (Siva-bhavana) or '!svara-bhavana'. In this, although the word 'God' or 'Divine' is used, it is not necessary to believe in the existence of the metaphysical God. Even an atheist can cultivate this attitude and practise this 'sadhana' because taking something as God simply means having 'Sradha-bhava' (the feeling of reverence) towards it. What is important is not God but the feeling of adoration, which even an atheist can very well have.

The 'Sradha-bhava' (reverential feeling) achieved by following the sadhana of 'Siva-bhavana', is necessary for the annihilation of ego. And annihilation of ego is necessary for success in any field. When I start some work, professional or otherwise, with the egotic feeling that "I" will do it and the credit will be mine, then it is most likely that I will fail. The reason is that the power and guidance for success do not come from the ego but from the deeper Self. Ego is the obstruction on the flow of the natural power of the Self. So, when the ego is tight, the powers of the Self are obstructed, and the result is that we do not succeed. When the ego melts or is thinned, the obstruction is reduced proportionately and the powers of the Self are released, leading to success in life. The practice of 'Siva-bhavana' is a spiritual device of reducing the ego. The possessive and arrogant attitude of the consumerist towards the objects of nature is the mark of ego, and is self-defeating. Cultivation of 'Siva-bhavana' towards the objects of Nature and the world, is the remedy.

Acquisition of material wealth (Artha) and satisfaction of desires (Kama) become unhealthy only when we do the same selfishly and egoistically. The seers have suggested twofold spiritual practice as the remedy for this:

- (i). I should practice to feel that the wealth is not mine but God's, which God has gifted to me out of grace. This removes the feeling of possessiveness (mamatva) towards the wealth and we become unattached (Anasakta) with the wealth. Then we enjoy the wealth in an unattached manner, and in the unattached state of consciousness we enjoy it far better. The psychology of relishing or enjoying is that if we are strongly

attached, the degree of relishment or enjoyment is very low; whereas if we are unattached, the enjoyment is much better. We can safely propose that only an unattached person can really enjoy the world; the attached (Asakta) person accumulates and possesses but does not enjoy.

- (ii). The other prescription is that I should use and appropriate my wealth only to the extent of my need, the rest I should distribute among others who need. This is what is called 'Aparigraha' (non-possession or non-appropriation). 'Need' is different from 'greed'. If I take and use my money for the fulfillment of my 'need', this is quite legitimate and desirable; but if I accumulate for 'greed', then this is a different matter. There is no limit of greed. Comfortable life comes within need, but the greedy person wants money just for the sake of money. The money which is extra of my need and comfort, is really not mine; it belongs to 'Samasti' (society). The purity of money means that it is spent not only for my good but for the good of all (of course, including myself). The society has share in my earning because I am indebted to the society, and I can clear my debt to the society by parting with the extra money and giving the society their share. This is what is called 'Balivaisvadeva' which means feeding all creatures, (Visvadseva – God in the cosmic form of all beings) even symbolically, before feeding oneself. It is enjoined by the tradition that I should donate at least ten percent (Dasamamsa) of my earning to the Samasti (society)

The point is that the entire money that I have or own is not all mine, the extra part of it belongs to the society (Samasti). It is therefore, obligatory on my part to part with the share of the society. This is technically called 'Yajna' (literally meaning 'sacrificing' or 'giving'). 'Yajna' means the act of 'giving' to others or 'feeding' others. The meaning is extended (as in the Gita) to all such acts which are done for the sake of others. So Yajna means the action performed for the 'Loka-hita' (the good of the people or the good of all). Yajna is conceived not as charity or donation (Dana) but as obligation, – as debt which everybody is required to repay to the 'Loka' (society). That is why it is said that one who appropriates all money for oneself without giving others their due share, is virtually a thief (“... yo bhunkte stena eva sah ...”) or “... such a person is a thief and deserves punishment ...” (“... sasteno dandamarhati”) or, “... those who cook only for themselves, eat sin...” (bhunjate te tvaghnan papa ye pacantyatma karmat”).

It would be relevant to mention in this context that the Indian tradition (specially, for example, the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Movement) advises to serve the people not in charity but in love, or to take the service to the people as service to God, which is done for our own good. According to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, 'Nara' (human being) is 'Narayana' (God), and service to man (Nara-seva) is service to God! (Narayana-seva), or, as Sai Baba says, 'Manava-seva' (service to man) is 'Madhavaseva' (service to God). Service to the poor

is not taken as charity but is called 'Narayana-seva' (service to God). Charity (Dana) is moral act, but service with love or doing 'Nara-seva' (service to man) as 'Narayan-seva' (service to God), is spiritual act. The act of charity may generate ego, but the service done out of love or with the feeling of 'Narayana-seva', on the contrary, reduces or melts the ego. In the Indian tradition the concept of 'Dana' (Charity) too is there, but it finds its place in the religious sphere and not in the spiritual field. 'Dana' is considered as 'Pun,ya' (moral merit) and not as spiritual act. 'Dana' in love or with the feeling of service to God, alone is spiritual act, which is more desirable. 'Dana' literally means 'giving'. Giving in love is the real Dana. There is a famous saying of Sai Baba, namely, " Love gives and forgives, selfishness gets and forgets". Love means giving, selfishness means only getting. So, spirituality means giving (not in charity but in love).

Thus by cultivating proper attitude towards Nature and the world, the material life itself can be made spiritual and the so-called dichotomy between the material and the spiritual be abolished. Really there is no dichotomy between the two. We have created the dichotomy by vitiating the world of matter. It is we who have made the material life impure by our ego and selfishness. If the material life is freed from the ego and selfishness, it itself would become spiritual; in fact, originally it 'is' spiritual, the impurity is introduced from our side. By the practice of Siva-bhavana towards every object of Nature and the world, ego is reduced. If the wealth is enjoyed in an unattached manner (which is quite possible, as we have already mentioned) by removing the attitude of 'mine-ness' (Mamatva) and possessiveness towards the wealth and taking it (the wealth) as God, and also by sharing the extra money with the needy, the money becomes pure and the monetary life becomes spiritual. 'Bhoga' (worldly enjoyment) devoid of ego and selfishness, becomes 'Yoga'.

Finally, the question can be asked: Why should one live the life of 'giving' and become spiritual as prescribed in Indian ethos? Would the adopting of the spiritual value not mar his material interests? Why not enjoy the material life as it is, why try to spiritualize it? A more practical question can be asked: If spirituality is introduced into the corporate and business life, would it not destroy the business and defeat the very purpose of the corporate life?

In answer it could be said that Indian ethos emphasize strongly that being spiritual neither means rejecting the personal and individual interests and sacrificing oneself and working only for others, nor it means renouncing and negating the material and economic values. Being spiritual is the correlate of being perfect or complete by removing the factors that obstruct our perfection and completeness. Spiritual life provides high power and wisdom needed for the success in every walk of life—individual, family, social, professional, corporate, business life, and so on. It provides independent ananda or happiness and enhances beyond measures the ananda of the material life. In Bhagavad Gita (2.50), Lord Krishna has explained Yoga as 'Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam'. This means that Yoga is

perfection at work. All the duties including individual, social, or professional when done with excellence or perfection then it becomes yoga. Spirituality helps in achieving this excellence. Spirituality in Indian ethos is a holistic and integral concept and includes material success. It not only includes material success but also becomes the ground and cause for bringing and maintaining material success. Moreover, it provides solutions of the problems that arise in any area of life—individual social, political, professional, managerial, commercial (business), and so on. If we free our minds from the wrong notions and have the proper understanding of the spiritual value, it would become clear that spirituality is 'the way of life-', 'the' way in every walk of life whatsoever.

Mindfulness and Indian Ethos

Contemporary understanding of Mindfulness in West is awareness and open and receptive attention toward whatever is happening at present moment internally and externally (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). According to Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010), 'Mindfulness involves the ability to notice and observe one's own thoughts. Mindful individuals maintain enough distance from their thoughts to view them impartially. This aspect of mindfulness makes it a metacognitive skill, involving cognition about cognition.' Focus on present helps in getting over the thoughts of the past resulting in control of emotions and stress and making a person enjoy the present experiences free from stress and negative emotions (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Arch and Craske, 2006; Brown and Ryan, 2003). In brief, present understanding of Mindfulness in theory and practice revolves around awareness, concentration, and non-judging approach toward the current experience.

According to Indian ethos:

'Mindfulness is seeing yourself by SELF'

In simple terminology,

'Mindfulness is the practice of loosening the ties that bind our Spirit with the body, senses, mind, and intellect; and thereby a person realizing his true nature which is pure, illuminating, and ever-shining free from all mental impurities.'

In Sanskrit the definition of mind is '*sankalp vikalpatmko mannhe*'. Our mind vacillates between past and future hardly comes to present momentwhere life is. It will either agree or disagree with the situation but we are not aware of it. We have to learn how to manage our own mind. The rapport between us and the world is through our mind and spirit. The mind is like mudded water. When the mind is disturbed simply observe what is happening and give it a little time. It will settle down without any effort on our part. Don't

accept when mind is in pieces, accept when mind is at peace because only then the clarity comes and mind becomes as sharp and powerful as a laser beam. The mind has the capacity to heal and elevate itself. It is full of joy, ease and love and true knowledge depends upon calmness of mind (Talwar, 2013).

In Katha Upanishad, an ancient Indian sacred text, it is mentioned:

“Wise people know that body is the chariot, senses are the horses, objects of the senses are the paths, intellect is the charioteer, mind is the rein of the horse lying in the hands of intellect, and Spirit is the Lord of the chariot enjoying the ride”.

The underlying message for Mindfulness in the above text is:

'Be the knower and be the enjoyer. Know the causal process of our sufferings. It starts when senses aimlessly draw toward sense objects. These senses have to be controlled through mind. But mind is in the hand of intellect which is knowledge developed through past experiences. Intellect is required to be under the command of Spirit. Otherwise the chariot will move aimlessly from one path to another reaching nowhere. Those people enjoy who know this truth and follow inside-out approach of Spirit controlling the intellect, intellect controlling the mind, mind controlling the senses, and senses no more move aimlessly. Person sees himself (body, senses, mind, and intellect) with SELF (Spirit or Atman or Individual Consciousness). Serenity prevails. Remove the cause of suffering and effect goes automatically is the mantra. This is Mindfulness.”

Breath is the first act in our present life. When we are born first we take a long deep breath and cry and our last act is we breathe out. In between we always breathe in and out but we are not aware about it. There are many secrets that can be revealed by the breath and we can access a vast mind and intellect through breath. This along with cosmology can make a big difference (Talwar, 2013). Observing the breath for few minutes brings relaxation to the body and mind and energizes our whole system. These days in Mindfulness meditation for stress reduction most of the training programmes across the world make the practitioner concentrate on the breath to live in the present moment.

In Indian ethos meditation is concentration. Concentration on the breath is one way of meditation. In Katha Upanishad, the utility of concentration on breath is explained. It says, by concentrating on breath that flows in and out make a person realize that the source of life is not breath. Instead, the source is somewhere else and is the cause of the breath. Mindfulness takes the person to that cause which is the Spirit and the realization makes the person enlightened as now he knows the source of his life which is no different than the source of any other life. Fire in coal looks different than fire in jungle but fire is same so is the

wind, though one, takes different form. Similarly, Spirit though one, takes different form. Our illusion, called as *avidya* or *maya* (ignorance) is a result of perceptions and inferences drawn through senses, mind, and intellect. Mindfulness makes us realize the oneness of omni-present Spirit in all. He who see many and not the ONE wanders. This truth could be learned even by the mind through practice by surrendering senses to mind and surrendering mind to know Thyself.

Indian ethos calls for overcoming two mental sufferings for Mindfulness and they are:

- Attachment (*Raaga*)
- Aversion (*Dvesha*)

Attachment for something that is transitory like wealth and fame and aversion toward any object makes the mind wander. Aversion arises out of our ignorance of 'I' and 'Others'. It burns the person in hatred. Mindfulness prescribes search for Eternal. Attachment and Aversion makes the mind wandering for transient. Calmness of mind is lost. Calmness makes the mind attentive and receptive to present moment. Attachment and Aversion make the mind dwell in the past. Attachment to transitory things and aversion are evils. Most learned person could be its victim. Evil of mind has to be removed only then there will be rest in senses, concentration in mind, peace in heart and Mindfulness achieved.

Gautama Budhha in his Doctrine of Origination (*Pratityasamutpada*) explains the foundation of Mindfulness. This Doctrine explains the cause of human sufferings (2nd Noble Truth) and the way to cessation of these sufferings (3rd Noble Truth). Uncontrolled mind works in relative way through its interaction with the *Sansara* (world). Controlled mind is an enabler in realizing the reality the Absolute (*nirvana*). *Pratityasamutpada* as told by Budhha so explicitly explains that the world perceived through gross (senses, mind, intellect) results in skewed definition of all creations and destruction arising out of empirical analysis, conditionality, relativity, and dependence. Fixing the mind to transient (impermanent and neither real nor unreal) is the cause. Mind becomes shuttlecock moving from one side to another.

Chandradhar Sharma (1970) explains the Doctrine of Gautama Budhha in following words: “The causal formula is: 'This being, that arises' i.e., 'depending on the cause, the effect arises.' Thus every object of thought is necessarily relative. And because it is relative, it is neither absolutely real (for it is subject to death) nor absolutely unreal (for it appears to arise).”

The remedy for this is prescribed by Gautama Budhha in Eight Noble paths out of which two paths given below are presently linked with Mindfulness:

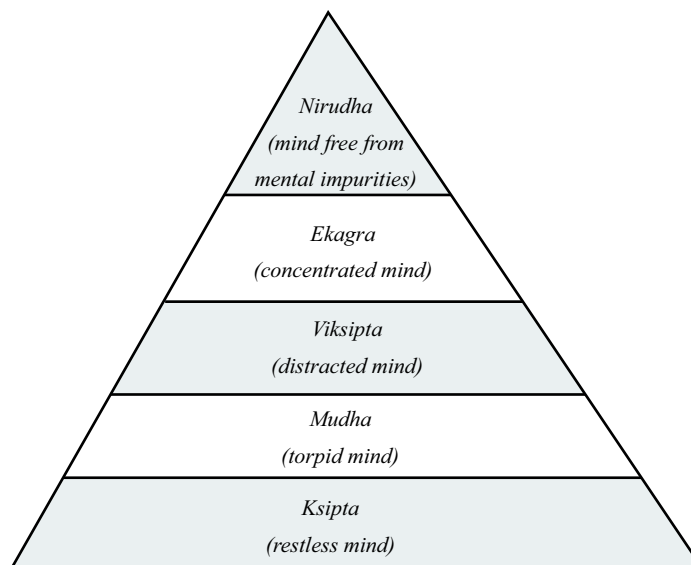
- Right Thoughts (*smriti*)

- Right Concentration (*samadhi*)

But one thing should be remembered that there are pre-requisites for right thoughts and right concentration. As in Astanga Yoga; *yamas* (don'ts of life) , *niyama* (discipline), *asana* (postures for making body fit for deep meditation), *pranayama* (practice of breath control for deep meditation) and *pratyahara* (control of senses) are described as prerequisites for deep meditation; similarly Gautama Budhha has prescribed right living (*ajiva*), right action (*karmanta*), right effort (*vyayama*) and right speech (*vak*) as noble paths making a person fit for right concentration (*samadhi*). Before starting concentration or deep meditation, preparedness of mind is a pre-requisite. Mind is prepared by deciding the object on which mind has to be fixed for meditation. This process is *dharana* in Astanaga Yoga. In eight noble paths of Gautama Budhha, this process could be related to right thoughts so that mind does not waver and fix itself to the *shreya* (good) and not *preya* (pleasure). In current Mindfulness Based Training Programmes worldwide, mind is made to fix on the breath so that mind does not wander in bad thoughts.

Point here is that for Mindfulness there is a complete and holistic process in Indian ethos and teachings of Gautama Budhha. Simply jumping to meditation in Mindfulness based training programmes of few hours, days or week is a gross injustice to the practitioners. Mindfulness is a sacred way of life embracing within itself the material values also resulting in proper synthesis of spiritual values (*shreya* or *Dharma* and *Moksha*) and material values (*preya* or *Artha* and *Kama*).

There are five levels of mental life which are given below.



Five levels of Mental Life

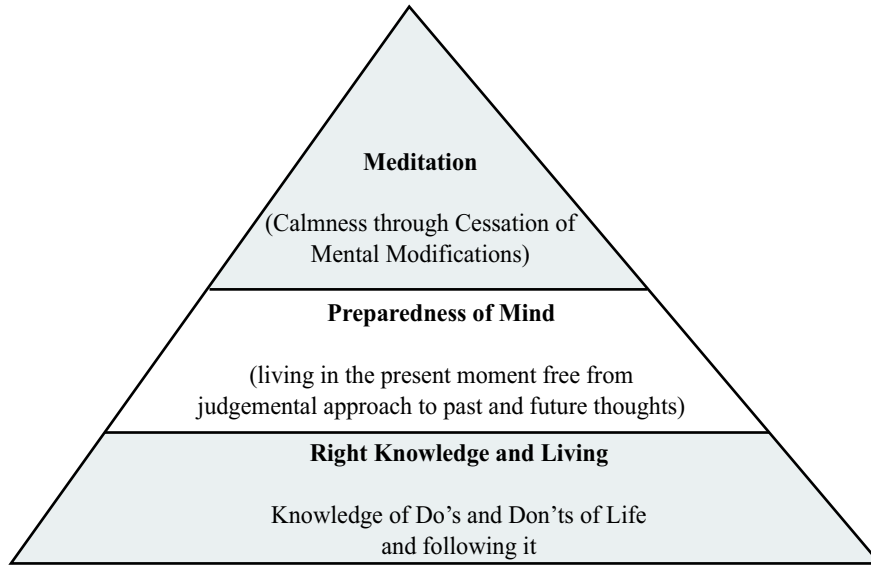
The purpose of Mindfulness is to reach to the highest level of *nirudha* where the mind is in pure and calm state free from all the modifications from the lowest level of *ksipta* where the mind is restless. Initially, any practitioner of Mindfulness need to practice *Ekagra* (concentration) taking care of the pre-requisites mentioned earlier. Normally, *Ekagra* is sufficient for Mindfulness.

According to Sharma (1970) difference in *Ekagra* and *Nirudha* meditation is that *Ekagra* is conscious meditation (*samprajnata*) in which the end state is that mind is fully concentrated on the object of meditation and *Nirudha* is supra-conscious meditation in which the object of meditation is transcended. Further, *Ekagra* meditation could be done in four ways (Sharma, 1970):

| Four ways of Meditation for Concentrated Mind | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Savitarka | Concentrating mind on gross objects like the tip of the nose or the mid-point of the eyebrows or the image of the deity. |
| 2 | Savichara | Concentrating mind on a subtler object of meditation like the sound. |
| 3 | Sananda | Concentrating mind on a still subtler object of meditation like senses which produces joy. |
| 4 | Sasmita | Concentrating on the ego-substance with which the self is generally identified. Here we have conscious ecstasy where individuality persists. |

Conclusion

In nutshell, 'Mindfulness is not two minute noodles' and that is what Indian ethos tells. Mindfulness is a holistic process for higher evolution of human beings from unknown to known, from unreal to real, from 'I' consciousness to 'We' consciousness, from gross to subtle, from transient to Eternal, from turbulence to calmness, from suffering to joy. The three step process for mindfulness is prescribed below on the basis of Indian ethos:



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