

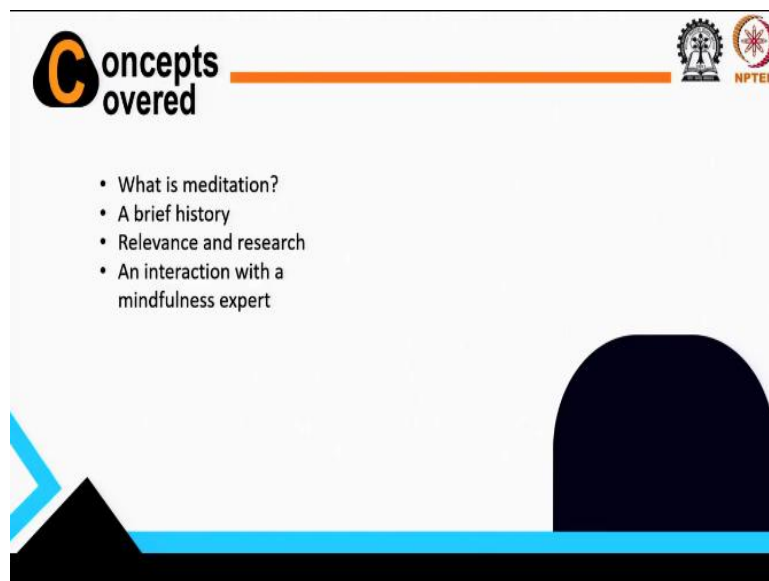
**The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing**  
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**Science of Happiness**  
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**Lecture - 27**  
**Meditation and Mindfulness an Overview**

Good morning friends. In today's session, and the session that follows will be focusing on meditation and mindfulness. Today's session will primarily focus on some of the theoretical areas, history, definition and related aspects of meditation. And the next session, which I call a kind of toolkit, is where the practice aspect will be primarily highlighted. So let us have a quick look at the overview of what we are going to cover today.

The definition of meditation, a quick history, the relevance, and a little bit about the research, I am not going to touch on that to a great degree. And then of course, at the end, there will be an interaction with a mindfulness expert, which will help us transition to the next talk.

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Next lesson session which primarily will focus on the practice, which they call the toolkit of meditation.

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eywords



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- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Breath
- Concentration
- Relaxation
- Happiness





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What is meditation?

- A wide variety of practices
- Thousands of years old
- Various traditions and cultures
- Mind and body integration (yoga – yoke)
- Focus on breath, sound, image, words
- Maintenance of awareness, non-judgement
- Short or long durations
- Guided or self-driven

Various sources: See references

What is meditation? You see that when we start looking at a definition of meditation, there is no general agreement. But if you look at the various traditions across the world, you will find that across the traditions, these components are common. A wide variety of practices And by a wide variety, would like to illustrate that this could even include martial arts, and certain kinds of moving meditations which are followed in China.

Other than primarily focusing on breath and bodily activities, as in Hatha Yoga And, of course, the traditional understanding of meditation, other than I would say, the Christian, or even the philosophical orientation, which focuses on the concept of reflection. Everybody agrees that across the traditions for 1000s of years, some kind of meditation or the other has existed.

And if you are looking back at the last 5000 years, or 4000 years, you will find that fairly sophisticated and in fact, fairly advanced understanding, experimentation, on meditation has taken place in various spiritual traditions across the world. Mind and Body integration, yoga, which is used in Sanskrit, and for many of the practices in India. Etymologically means joining together working together.

And it could be working together various things, but to begin with, body and mind, which is probably done in the most subtle way, with the help of breath because if you are looking at breath, it is one of the subtlest aspects of behaviour. And if you are looking at mind, that the trade of breath which connects to the mind is probably the grossest of things, in the context of framework of intangible things.

So if you are looking at what I mean to say is that breath kind of connects the mind and the body and it is something which is almost in all traditions, given a significant degree of emphasis. It can also be sound, it can be image, it can be words, it can be mantra, it can be chanting, a lot of varieties that are available. But important mental components include a sense of awareness, which is non-judgmental.

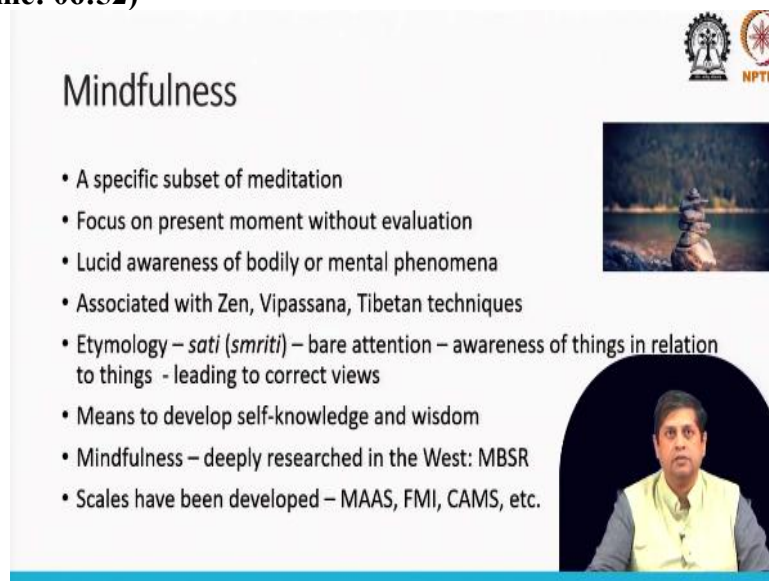
And it could also be a sense of focus a sound, breath, or image, or mantra, as I said a little earlier. So one of the important components is focus the other one is awareness. But what kind of awareness it's a non-judgmental awareness were in our lives. Whenever we think about something immediately our ego, our feelings, our thoughts get attached to it. If I am thinking about my body and I say that, I am feeling hot then maybe 2 kinds of thoughts might come.

I might immediately say that, I am feeling hot let me do something so that I start feeling cool. Or I might ask myself this question, why am I feeling hot and get start getting worried about it, both of these are judgmental or affect driven, then lead to other kinds of effects and trigger other kinds of effects. On the other hand, the ability to develop a non-judgmental approach to the awareness is where you kind of detach yourself from yourself and say that, these are the things which are happening within this mind body composite, that we call the human being.

And at some distance, this observation is taking place without getting involved with the various emotions and thoughts that I mentioned. This can be short durations. These days, and the way I will share with you for the next session, this can be as short as 5 minutes, and they can be of longer durations. And in many traditions, as long as months and years, for which such traditions such I mean practices continue. So we need to keep these things in mind as we go ahead.

And then of course, guided or self-driven, most fundamental seekers are the original thinkers, we are told, identified their own processes, or approaches to meditation. Even when a disciple is taught very often the person she or he practices on her own. But these days, we also have guided meditation tools. And those also play a significant role today in the contemporary practice of meditation.

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## Mindfulness

- A specific subset of meditation
- Focus on present moment without evaluation
- Lucid awareness of bodily or mental phenomena
- Associated with Zen, Vipassana, Tibetan techniques
- Etymology – *sati (smriti)* – bare attention – awareness of things in relation to things - leading to correct views
- Means to develop self-knowledge and wisdom
- Mindfulness – deeply researched in the West: MBSR
- Scales have been developed – MAAS, FMI, CAMS, etc.

The other thing that I will be focusing on because we have a mindfulness expert will be guiding you through this session is what is mindfulness? I would say that it is a subset of meditation. Focusing on the present moment, without evaluation, non-judgmental, lucid awareness of bodily or mental phenomena, I talked about that a little earlier. Generally associated with the Buddhist tradition of Zen Vipassana, or some of the Tibetan techniques.

Etymologically, linked to Sati or smriti, where the focus is on something which is defined in a wide variety of ways by experts, starting from where a bare attention, awareness of things

in relation to things. And finally leading to correct views that is very essential in the Buddhist tradition. Of course, in the contemporary practice, when we talk about mindfulness. We do not go so deep into it. It means to develop self-knowledge and wisdom.

Mindfulness, deeply researched in the West, if you are looking at it, and we will be talking a little more about MBSR, which is Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction techniques, which have come up. And there have been a wide variety of scales, which have been developed in order to do research on mental conditions, or mindfulness. These are a few examples of soft skills MASS, FMI, CMS, all focusing on mindfulness states and especially well researched in the Western countries.

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### A brief history

- Meditation – from *meditatio* (Latin) – think, reflect, devise, ponder
- *Dhyana* – Indian origin (Sanskrit) *dhyai* – to contemplate or meditate
- No universally accepted definition – hence a composite definition
- Earliest references – the *Upanishads*, the *Mahabharata* (the *Gita*)
- Jainism – the *tri-ratnas* – *padasthadyana* – mantra
- Buddhism – *bhavana* – *anapanasati* – *dhyana* / *samadhi*
  - *Samatha* (serenity or tranquillity) – *vipasanna* (insight)
- Hinduism – *yoga* / *dhyana* – pure consciousness

If you go for a brief history of meditation, you will see that the word meditation which is so widely used comes from the Latin word, *meditatio*, and which is to think reflect device ponder. And if you are looking at the other most popular word in the Indian tradition, it is *dhyana*. And then of course, the most popular on being yoga, which comes from the root word *dhyai* that is to contemplate, reflect or meditate.

As I said a little earlier, no universally accepted definitions are available. I tried to give you a composite definition at the beginning. And if you are looking at the history, the earliest references are found in the *Upanishads* and some say that in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, it is well elaborated. And of course, in the *Mahabharata*, we are told of the various practices, by the *pandavas* have some of them going off to meditate and maybe for material gains like meditation for a weapon or meditation to get a boon.

But it is there and if you are going for a more deeper understanding, which transcends the material conditions, then you have to take in fairly elaborated in the Bhagavad Gita. So if you are looking at the Mahabharata, we are looking at something like 4000 years back, Upanishads is a little earlier than that and if you are looking at the Gita somewhere a little later than that. So, by the last 5000 years and some even relate to some of the seals ever found in the Mohenjo daro and harrappa civilization to meditative practices, but these are the earliest traditions that we look at *and* we have it in Jainism. The focus is on bhavana reflection anapanasati then *dhyana*, samadhi, these are the 3 stages in Buddhism. In Jainism we are talking about the three *ratnas*, *padastadhyana*, you are focusing or concentrating on a pada or a mantra. In Buddhism, there are innumerable traditions, Vipassana being one of them, and they are probably the widest range of meditative traditions and practices are available in the Buddhist tradition itself.

But you reflect also deeply on things, which deal with the dead body and the transition of the human body from life to death. And then you enter into a state of dhyana or samadhi. This is the way some of the Buddhist traditions look at it to the key components being Samadhi which is serenity or tranquility, and Vipassana, which is insight. In Hinduism, you have yoga dhyana, which roughly translates something like something into pure consciousness, but as I told you, these are only translations.

And when you look at a wide range of translation, some of them are available in the references which have been said below at the end, you get an idea of what it means the various connotations it has.


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## A brief history...

- Patanjali – *Yogasutra*
  - Eight limbs: *Yama, Niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi*
- *Hatha yoga, Bhakti yoga, Tantra...*
- Sikhism: *Simran*
- Taoism: concentration, insight, visualization
- Judaism: *Torah* – ref to meditation
- Christianity: meditation as a form of prayer, spiritual exegesis
- Islam: *Salah* (prayer), *khushu* (concentration); Sufism







If you are looking at the yoga tradition in the perspective, one of the most popular work is by Patanjali yoga sutra where he talks about the 8 limbs. The 8 practices; which relate to and lead in the direction of Samadhi, the ultimate state of transcendence and these being Yama certain rules, certain restrictions. Do's and don'ts, numerous do's and don'ts, asanas, physical postures, pranayama, breath, pratyahara withdrawal, dharana focused reflection dhyana concentration and samadhi.

As I told you a little earlier, these can be roughly translated in these ways, but it can they can be also translated in slightly different ways. And you would find variations of such translations, we have also traditions like the Hatha yoga, bhakti, yoga, tantra, and the reference to bhakti yoga specifically is because you see that if you are looking at a tradition like the bhakti yoga, the focus is more on a I would say affective state, than a reflective state you start from reflection and you move in the direction of devotion.

And from devotion, you move in the direction of surrender, non-thought and that can also lead to kind of transcendence. On the other hand, the other kinds of definitions that we have are fairly different from these. This particular definition if you are looking at the bhakti yoga tradition, and that's the reason I said that the definitions are very wide and even in bhakti yoga, what I am sharing is just my small perspective that can be a wide range of other interpretations as well.

In Sikhism, we have the concept of Simran, Taoism focuses on concentration, insight visualization, Judaism, in the Torah book of Torah. There is ample reference to meditative practices. In Christianity, a kind of form of prayer, very spiritual exercises where you start reflecting on some of the I would say knowledge or wisdom that has been disseminated and reflect deeply about it. Islam in the prayer tradition, there is reference to concentration Sufism specifically, in fairly deep way also talks about meditation. And some of interestingly is related to movement as well. The gyrating circular movement as well.

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The slide is titled "In modern times" and features a list of bullet points. In the top right corner, there are two logos: one of a gear and a person, and another with the text "NPTEL". To the right of the bullet points, there is a graphic of a heart with an ECG line passing through it. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a yellow vest speaking.

In modern times

- World parliament of religion and Swami Vivekananda
- 1960s – many Asian spiritual teachers visited the West
- Many forms of guided meditations
- Psychotherapy (Jung)
- Clinical applications
- Meditation at work
- Relaxation techniques and bio-feedback

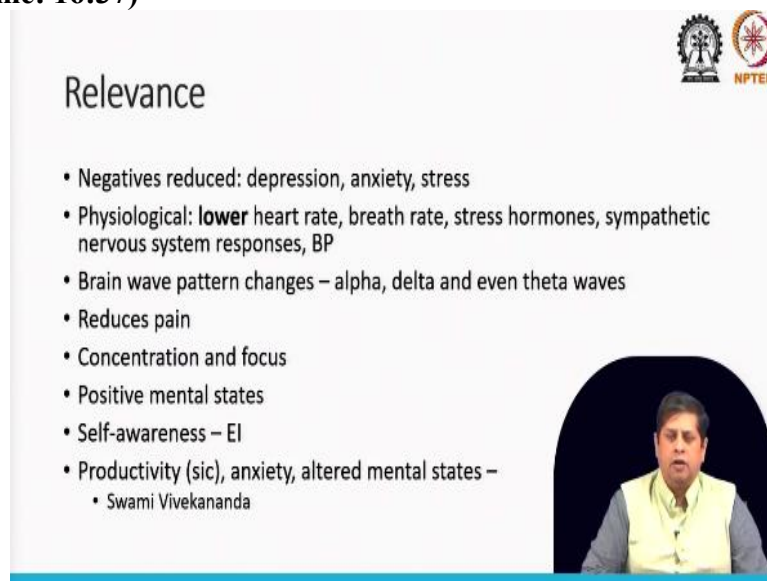
If you are looking at the modern times, you might say that in the West, the curiosity arose with the advent of Swami Vivekananda. You might consider that as one of the watershed moments and the world parliament of religion where various Vedantic reflections, thoughts philosophical, I would say ideas were shared and within that context, of course, there was reference to meditation. And there were a whole series of lectures and documents that were generated by him.

In them by the 1960s, many spiritual teachers of Asia, including India, Thailand, Tibet another places started moving to the west, it was a huge, I would say, surge of interest in meditation. And this is also the time when many forms of formulated, palatable, easy to use guided meditation tools, techniques emerged for looking at the academic world and the world of science. Starting from the time of Carl Jung in psychotherapy, these ideas started emerging there were clinical applications.



Meditation was introduced at work in wide scale, and even today being used in wide scale many places in the use, I relaxation techniques have been scientifically validated, introduced, and biofeedback mechanisms are used also to assist a person to go into deeper states. At a later point of time, towards the end of this series of talks, when I talk about technology and happiness, I would be raising questions about many of the happiness apps, some of which also deal with meditation, and the deeper significance if at all, that the carry.

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The slide is titled "Relevance" and features a list of benefits of meditation. In the top right corner, there are two logos: one of the Indian government and the NPTEL logo. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man in a yellow vest speaking.

### Relevance

- Negatives reduced: depression, anxiety, stress
- Physiological: **lower** heart rate, breath rate, stress hormones, sympathetic nervous system responses, BP
- Brain wave pattern changes – alpha, delta and even theta waves
- Reduces pain
- Concentration and focus
- Positive mental states
- Self-awareness – EI
- Productivity (sic), anxiety, altered mental states –
  - Swami Vivekananda

However, the entire discussion that we are having about the history of meditation, and what is meditation and all that anchors around its relevance, because we are talking within the framework of happiness. So, what are the key points that we find, with a huge amount of scientific and experiential research which has been which have been done in the last 5000 years, negativity is reduced. So depression, anxiety, stress, mental conditions, it has been found consistently reduced.

Physiologically, you find significant changes taking place in the body, lower heart rate, breath rate, stress hormones, lower sympathetic nervous system responses, which are linked to survival, blood pressure is lowered. When you are looking at brainwave pattern changes, you find significant changes in the alpha, delta, and even theta waves which are generally not detected. There also you find changes taking place, indicating by inference by many scientists, states of alertness, even when the oxygen flow to the brain is substantially reduced.

And that is very significant, very high level of alertness and positivity, because other studies which deal with locations of brains indicate that the happiness centres are significantly activated. In fact, many studies have been done with Paul Ricard. And you can go to Google and search for the studies which have been done with him. And you will find that these findings a lot of FMRI studies, or EEG studies indicate the kinds of changes that I am talking about reduced pain.

I talked a little earlier about it, and I will talk about it that for chronic cases where pain management is a significant issue. Today, mindfulness practices have been introduced in the West, in many of the clinics and hospitals, especially where the pain is not curable and one has to live with it. It leads to positive mental states, it leads to self-awareness, and indirectly, it in the process leads to emotional intelligence, productivity, anxiety, altered mental states, these can be some of the negatives as well.

Because you see that if you are extremely happy and relaxed, very often, some of recent studies suggest you may not be as productive as before, and you may not consider producing material objects as the ultimate goal of your life. So, you may have slowed down, that may not be your ultimate goal. Anxiety, sometimes, when you move into altered states, and if you go through the works of Swami Vivekananda and many of the other seekers, philosophers who have been practicing meditation.

You will find that sometimes getting into altered mental states, reaching a state of sublimation can create anxiety within the mind you will find that your self-identity and other things are significantly altered and this can be disruptive and can be frightening. But apart from these minor I would say, issues and obviously meditation does not suit everybody. There are findings which suggest that introverts are better at it than extroverts.

There are personality traits associated with it, mental conduciveness, willingness, and all those things definitely get linked. So, in spite of that, we would say that meditation is significantly relevant.

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**Meditation and Happiness**

- Altered positive mental state (short / long duration)
- Possibility for self awareness, self knowledge
- Reduction of negatives (stress, anxiety, insomnia, etc)
- Reduction of negative health conditions
- Linked to *meaning* (possibility of answering existential questions)
- *Transcendence*

Transcendence

Altered physiology

If you would like to sum up what we find? We find that how is it that happiness and meditation get linked, altered positive mental states whether they are of short duration, or very long duration, somebody might be in a contemplative, happy state, throughout once life doing a series of meditative practices, getting to reflect on once own self, developing a significant amount of emotional intelligence and so on.

So, possibility of self-awareness, self-knowledge exists a reduction of stress, negative stress, anxiety, reduction of negative health conditions and linked to meaning the possibility of answering existential questions, what is the meaning of my life, why do I exist, what is it that holds the secret of happiness? And then, of course, if you go deep enough, we are told, though, not too many of us do experience this, you reach a state of transcendence.

Where the binaries of good and evil, correct or incorrect, positive and negative kind of dissolve and disappear, even happiness and sadness kind of dissolve and disappear. So if you are looking at the blue triangle, on the right hand side, you start with altered physiological changes, just rates and changes. And as you evolve and go deeper into the practice you move into transcendence you will find that for the modern human being somewhere a little above the lower part of the triangle.

We exist, where we take a little bit of interest in meditation, because we feel that we are too stressed, this is going to help us, this is going to bring me a little bit of mental and physical relief, I might become a little more productive. So we kind of set minor goals and the

widespread popularity of meditation today is not because we are talking in terms of the ultimate sense of transcendence, or bliss, or Ananda.

But it will be talking in terms of small tiny goals of maintaining our equilibrium and mental health, at a very basic level within the material things that surround all of us. But even that is good enough to make a start.

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A short interview with Dr. Saamdu Chetri  
Expert on Mindfulness

- What is mindfulness?
- What is its relevance?
- How does it link to happiness?

Dr. Saamdu Chetri  
Visiting Faculty of  
Happiness at NCR, Delhi,  
Chandigarh, IIT Kgp, &  
other universities in India

So at the end of this brief interaction with you, I would say that if you interact with an expert. If you get to know about one particular tradition and learn a little bit about the tradition, something which is fairly popular in the West, probably that's going to help. So we have a short interview with Dr. Sanjay Chetri. And in the next session, you have some practices, which focus on mindfulness, its relevance, and how it's linked to happiness?

I hope you will enjoy this short interview, which I have taken with him. And in the next lecture. and in the next session, which is a kind of a toolkit, you will get exposed to some of the practices which might come in meaningful in our lives.

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Good evening, Dr. Samdu Chetri. It is my privilege to introduce you to my students in this particular course, which deals with science of happiness and well being and within that, we have a special focus on meditation and mindfulness practices. So it is within this particular

context, that I would like to ask you a few questions because you are a practitioner, as well as a deeply embedded person in this particular tradition with your experience.

In gross national happiness center your experience in Bhutan, and your training and orientation in the field of Buddhism. So, with your permission, sir, I would like to ask you a few questions. Thank you, please go ahead. Thank you, sir. So the first question that I would like to ask you is that what is the relevance of meditation for happiness, according to you? Thank you for this very profound question. In fact, these days, happiness and mindfulness is used interchangeably.

If you are meditating, which is dhyana, you have different kinds of meditation. But when you are in dhyana, it means you are in perfect oneness with yourself. In which case, what makes us unhappy? Basically, the thoughts of the past, or the future, you know, a lot of thoughts that arise in your mind that takes away or happens. The moment you are meditating, it means you are focused. And when you are focused, you do not have any excess in your mind, other than what you are doing?

And definitely, you are in a mode of happiness. So, in other words, meditation is a very good start on mindfulness. And as they are interchangeably used, I would rather say that mindfulness is a source of happiness. Thank you, Saamdu ji, that brings me to the question that well, we talk about mental health. And we know that mental health is deeply linked with meditation and mindfulness but what about physical health? Does it also impact our health.

When you talk about physical illness, I mean, there has been a huge research by the Mind and Life Institute in Boston, for over 20 years by over 25 scientists. And they prove that with mindfulness, because mindfulness is a journey, which actually you begin right from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. In other words, you are present in every thought and movement of yourself. So when you are in that, they have done a lot of research to prove that you can cure a lot of your illness, just by being mindful or meditation both, use of the both.

They have a subtle differences. But if you are meditating, you are mindful, if you are mindful, you are naturally meditating. So you know, even to the extent of curing tumour brains. So physically, yes, what makes us good with the mindfulness is that we become so careful about our own movements of life, every breathing almost every breathing, movement of an eye. So

careful that does not allow us to, in fact, even while we want to eat something, you will become very mindful.

Is this good for my health, am I harming somebody by eating this food, am I harming somebody by doing this action, and myself? So these kinds of thoughts arise in us through mindfulness, and therefore, it is a paramount kind of support for the physical health system as well. Thank you very much for this very enlightening response, what about meditation in the context of your culture, can you tell us a little about how it is practiced in your culture atleast?

Meditation have 5 steps, basically of breathing the other one is concentration, focus, through sound through music, through actions, which is mindful movements are also through chanting, prayers, visualization, gazing number of ways, in turn, generate the monks use their breath, as the focus to meditate or to gaze onto something, or to visualize so these are the 3 kinds of practices that are generally done up on the mountains.

And we of course, tend to close our eyes but to be aware, and to be mindful, gazing meditation helps you to be completely aware of what you are looking at, and visualizing that together. When you look at it, you do not close your eyes and visualize your visualizing with your open eyes. Meaning building your open eyes in such a way that you are still gazing on the thing but visualizing completely.

So that is one practice the also through chanting prayers, visualization gazing number of ways, in turn, generate the monks use their breath, as the focus to meditate, or to games onto something, or to visualize. So these are the three kinds of practices that are generally drawn up on the mountains. And we, of course, tend to close our eyes, but to be aware, and to be mindful, gazing meditation.

Helps you to be completely aware of what you are looking at and visualizing that together. When you look at it, you do not close your eyes and visualize you are visualizing with your open eyes. Meaning, feeling your open eyes in such a way that you are still gazing on the thing, but visualizing completely. So that's one practice the other practice totally visualization.

Visualization of Guru visualization of some, you know, something beyond your own self, something multiverse. In the multiverse, or you do chanting, chanting is a very regular prayer

in culture and on the mountains, prayers and chanting are another way of practice. And also the mindful movements through different varieties of dances and songs and things like that. So the major three practices that we generally do is visualization, gazing, breathing, and movements. Thank you, sir. One quick question.

And probably the last question before we close this beautiful session that, could you tell us a little about mindfulness as a system of meditation? And give us a little bit of an idea what exactly it means? Thank you. Actually, when I ask somebody, do you practice mindfulness, they say, no, I have no time. They think mindfulness is to sit and to constantly listen to your breathing or do something else for the process of dhyana. But mindfulness is something beyond that.

Mindfulness is when you are present in what you do, what you think, both what you do, and what you think? When you are present in that you are mindful. So when you are mindful completely, that is why I call it's a source of happiness. And with happiness, of course, you are much more successful in any dream that you have in your life. Because you are grounded, you are totally with yourself, and you appreciate things not just as they are, but not as you think but what as they are rather. So mindfulness is to be present now in here.

And does not mean that we are not present, we are all present now in here, what should be present in your actions and your thoughts. And when you are present, you are not forgetful, or you are not thinking about the future, you are in the present moment. So, this is why we call it live in the present moment, does not mean that we are not living but definitely we are living but our minds are not there.

So, when our minds are focused with our body, one great practice with just listening on, walking through your body, the other one is breathing, which people find it very difficult. So mindfulness is a practice when you are drinking a cup of tea, you see clouds in it, because rain water, you see tea garden, you see tea gardeners work, you see factories in it, when you are mindful about how that tea is prepared and brought to you that's mindfulness.

When you are eating something, you are grateful for the farmers for the multiverse, the sun, the sky, everybody around until that food is onto your table. You are grateful for anybody that's mindful. When you are washing pots and pans, and your mind is completely in there,

you are mindful. I am sure many of us have this great thing opening of our mind when we are taking bath, simply right ideas floating why?

Because we are completely together with the water and our mind is dead. So therefore, a huge part of the brains aperture, actually minds aperture opens up for good things to enter in. And that is why when you are mindful, we bring out bring in lots of great things in our own focus, and motivate that what happens is, you stop the autopilot self of yours, which is the subconscious self that drives you doing all things without thinking, writing your name, riding a bicycle and things like that.

But when you are mindful, your conscious mind really opens up more than the 5% threshold or the neuroscientists and psychologists talk about. You can open more to that, that means you become much more brighter much more intelligent, much more calmer, much more focused, and you become a greater human. Thank you very much Sir submitting for the wonderful insights, and as I promised our class.

We look forward to small guided meditations sessions from you, which we will incorporate into our course and they can practice here. Thank you very much. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for this opportunity. Thank you.

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**CONCLUSION**

- What is meditation?
- A brief history and relevance
- Relation to happiness





So I believe that we have kind of summed up with the definition, relevance. You can see the references at the end. They are very few but they are a good beginning. They have other references which might help you as well. Thank you.

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