

The Practice of Mindful Eating

Introduction

For some reasons, we appear at this moment called 'birthday', in a certain concrete place of the Universe lying on the surface of a huge sphere (called the Earth by us), floating in Space. This surface is wrapped in a thin layer of gas mixture called 'atmosphere' by us....

And similarly to a construction of a building that has got an inconspicuous, ordinary and at the same time important aspect- the foundations, without which our house would crumble and fall-our existence and functioning in this destined place of the Universe, has got its most basic aspect, its foundations without which our life (our body) could never be continued...

These foundations are:

- Gravitation or gravity which protects us from the vacuum and a horrifying frost of the Space
- Atmosphere, the gas mixture with components optimal for biochemical processes of our bodies, in which we are immersed and which we continually use for breathing
- The special kind of matter being the fuel for our body's engine, widely accessible although it's not for free; the absorption which conditions activity and the life of our body. It is food, our main source of energy.

These are the first gifts given to us by somebody/something from the outside without which, the existence of our body would not be possible.

From this very special and at the same time, an ordinary place, using those three pillars, we set off into the adventure of our life. We discover further kinds of energies from the Universe and we learn how to use them. We do it not in a fully conscious way, as a not fully developed unit, using the experience of the group which we belong to-the experience of human civilization.

We are led by both our closer and further family, educational structures of our country, bans and commandments of our religion. It happens till the moment we get internally independent and we begin our independent march our own Way...

And, along with time, new spaces appear, the spaces in which our life may develop-we discover the richness of the floor of mechanical energies (the movement, transferring, mechanical work), we see the variety of the second floor of energies that are more subtle and which are called ethereal energies (i.e. touch, smell, breath, internal biochemical processes), the third floor of even more subtle energies the part of which, we, humans, know as emotions. Finally, the fourth floor -the one of mental energies. Although these spaces gradually come into being, the three aforementioned aspects will still remain, because if we want to continue our presence safely in space-time-continuum, we must use and respect them.

Unfortunately, getting carried away by new life attractions, we leave the service of these three basic aspects of life to instincts, programmes which, being a kind of prosthesis, substitute the part of consciousness or, what is worse- leave it to a coincidence.

In the meantime, a human being, as the only species that is a higher form of life on the Earth, decided to keep a vertical position. Its 'service' is much more demanding from a position with a horizontal maintaining of the spine. Quadruped creatures and Amphibia do not have trouble with a spine although they operate on this position from the level of instincts. Additionally, the lifestyle of a human being, living in the conditions of a city civilization causes that maintaining and the using of the spine from the above mentioned level of instincts is enough only for 30 up to 40 years. Later, there start to accumulate perhaps insignificant but numerous errors of the appropriate keeping of the spine which prevents its correct functioning, and there starts a process which you may call directly - the process of dying.

It can last very long, however, it's worse for a person to whom it applies to. The only solution in that case is the substitution of the mechanism of keeping the body in gravity steered from the level of instincts, with the steering with the aid of consciousness and mindfulness.

Here, in an abbreviated way, there has been outlined the need for the replacing of unaware keeping of the body position through the manual steering and through the introduction of consciousness (one thinks about all configurations of body elements in space). The same dangers and needs appear also in the sphere of breathing and adapting of energy. Also here, introducing mindfulness (which is one of the tools of awareness) will increase the quality of energy of those basic aspects of our life.

Awareness, or work with the 'Centre of Commanding', communicates with the plan of Life, with the place in which Life takes place through mindfulness. Usually, it is divided into the streams of mindfulness, connecting the Centre with the Life aspects which get fulfilled in a more limited way.

Awareness, the special energetic state of the mysterious form of Life, namely, a human being, has got various mysterious features. One of them is illustrated by a well-known proverb present in some nations' tradition: 'Master's eye makes the horse fat'.

'Master's Eye' or the Consciousness, connects to a problem (a task) given to us through Life and with the aid of the stream of mindfulness (with the power and width suited to the 'challenge'). In the place of the 'meeting' there happens the miracle of 'fattening the horse', that is, providing it with the energy- there are generated means for solving the problem. This is how mindfulness works... We do not see this widely in our life and other people's lives around us. Why??!! There are at least two reasons for that.

Firstly, we cannot give the proper stability to the 'Master's Eye'. It shows i.e. in setting two contrasting goals for ourselves (i.e. may it rain and may the sun shine, may some interesting thing be cheap and may it be of top quality, etc.) These contrary directions of activities, when confronted by mindfulness, block the power of 'fattening the horse'.

Techniques that could give more stability are concentration techniques (in early Buddhist tradition called 'samatha').

Secondly, usually, the quality of connecting the Centre with the field of the task or a problem is not sufficient and the stream of mindfulness does not reach the place where it could be used. For instance, we have a simple task of threading a needle. If we put on gloves for this activity, it will be much harder to do. For some strange reasons, not only do we put gloves on our hands, but also we do it for subsequent attempts, which follow. Though it is really difficult to thread a needle in gloves, we keep putting on thicker and thicker gloves! It's a truly wide phenomenon and it creates the total loss of the possibility of using the power of the 'Master's Eye.'

Techniques working on this, create the main current of Meditation (but the above mentioned 'samatha' is necessary!) - and in the theravada tradition it is a Vipassana meditation.

But let us return to the interrupted thread, namely, the realizing of the need of mindfulness introduction on the field of the three basic aspects of human life.

Only after the real achieving of the skill of mindfulness implementation in those three Life areas, there is a sense of expanding of the process to other forms of our participation in space and time. In order to be able to use the opportunity of the 'Master's Eye' safely and steadily, one needs to start appropriate activities in the correct order.

Similarly as it happens with the building of a house, first you must build foundations, walls and a roof, only then you can choose tiles for your bathroom. Those three elementary Life spheres should be present on the Scene of our Theatre, as a background of main action of the Play that is being performed.

Ken Wilber, the American philosopher and scientist claims that the internal development takes place not in a linear way, but according to so called jump or digital dependence. He named a single sequence of such jumps with a word 'fulcrum'. It means that in a specific certain situation of our Participation/Being in space-time continuum, we dismantle it to basic components, we choose an aspect which is interesting for us, in the form of group of ingredients comprising it, we select a few contrasting elements, we separate it from the rest, we include our activities connected to those chosen elements and.....we wait. If we have done everything properly, then there appears a reaction, an answer in the form of a jump in a totally different space-there will appear a new quality of mindfulness.

It may be illustrated by a simple example. If we take a fresh stone from a cherry and we will press it with a thumb and our index finger of one hand, and we will do it properly- the stone will jump. And this movement will be directed in the opposite way to the fingers pressing it.

A Buddhist example of a jump of a trout through a water obstacle on his way to spawning lets us consider another aspect of 'fulcrum' connected to the height of this obstacle, which is somewhat chosen by ourselves. Fulcrum is a place of our conscious effort on the Way and we should undertake our intentions with reference to our strengths and means.

'Bread is made of grain, Grain is made of Light, and the light from the Divine Countenance is taken, The Glory from God its fruit bears in the soil, May it become light in my heart.' In this text of Rudolph Steiner, one of the fingers is the Sun and the other is the Earth. The situation presented here shows one of the largest possible jumps of fulcrum in our space-time. All of respectable schools of internal development set such ambitious tasks for their adepts. But not everyone has got enough energy to perform such a jump. Gradation of our planned jump is possible. And working with the body is just ideal for this. One can find here many couples of fulcrum actions, for instance, working between the left and the right leg (in standing positions) may result in better condition of a lumbar part of the spine. Similarly, it will be in tens and hundreds of isolated work couples of antagonistic muscles in other positions in the composition: leg-to leg, hand-to hand, shoulders-to hips, front of the foot-heel, front of the hand-wrist, etc. And all of this in various body positions in space- bent forwards, backwards, in a twisted or reversed positions.

This is work with mechanical energies but 'watered' with ethereal energy. Breathing functions totally differently with ethereal energies. Thus, it is not a classic hatha yoga and pranajama as they are directed towards a concrete awakening of a snake energy of the spine base-kundalini.

Instead, the proposed approach here is directed towards the gaining of the mindful attitude.

This should be the main effect of those little fulcrum phenomena and may have a form of improving of agility in joints, but not necessarily. This work is based on finding a couple of antagonistic muscles, reaching one of the two possible extreme locations of bones, creating the joint operated by the given muscles, and experiencing with humility a total inability of moving forwards. Then, you can observe carefully the character of the limitations described in the example with the thread and needle.

The above model is closer to Vipassana, and so in this case, it will be selecting and observing of the mechanical processes and ethereal processes close to us (asanas) or ethereal (breathing). In both cases, the work is tedious and the proper effects come after years of regular work. That's why, learning of getting to know of the gradient (the change direction) of these effects is important. Those changes are to start from tough effort at the beginning – but there exists the limit to those efforts which cannot be transgressed), through light work, till effortless doing of difficult asanas.

Sthira sukham asanam – asana should be still (effortless) and comfortable- II.46 sutra from Jogasutr Patangali, gloves are still on, but the subsequent ones are very thin.

The absorption of energy from food is a crucial issue here. Those third from the basic aspects of our being in the time-space in the wide opinion seems to be clear and simple. But it is actually here, when the gloves are particularly thick. We may even say that we start to eat wearing boxing gloves on our hands.

Mindful eating appears to be evident and is used by numerous schools of internal development, from the Buddhist ones to Christian monasteries. However, there is not

much progress here. There are at least several causes of such condition but it is not a place for analysing this. Still, it is noteworthy that some schools 'ideologically' block the subject of working with the sense of taste (ashvad) thus calling a mindful or meditative eating seems to be a large misunderstanding in both cases.

The Practice of Mindful Eating in the form presented below, was created at the turn of the years 1995/96. Its base was a many-year-experience of the author (since 1982) in an intensive practice of asanas and pranajamas according to the method of B.K.S.Iyengar, also the experience of doing long starvation periods (up to 30 days), and meditative practise in various Buddhist schools, mainly from Vipassana according to Mahasi Sajado.

The sessions of Mindful Eating Practice (MEP) last 8-10 days and are conducted in 5-15 groups in secluded centres. During the whole session, there is the practice of asanas, breathing and samatha meditation.

During the first half of the planned time, there is a total lent (participants drink only water) while the second half is devoted to 'eating meditation'-the special sessions of meditative eating conducted according to the method worked out by the author, based on Osho studies, Omraama (Mikhaela Aivanhoy) in particular, which was included in the book 'Le Yoga de la Nutrition'.

The total lent is conducted according to a classic method of running a 'starvation' diet and is based on abstaining from all food products for the period of 4 -5 days. You can drink only water and use enema-filling your large intestine with water.

Therefore, the major field of work for mindful eating are the three basic aspects of our presence in the space-time. 'Vipassanova' way of working with positions and breathing does not enable any radical acceleration. Also meditative work, combined with ingesting, are conducted directly through the instructions given by the above mentioned Teachers and it does not accelerate a radical progress either.

It is only the implementation of the total lent conducted directly before the sessions of Eating Meditations that radically changes the situation. It enables the obtaining of such stability, the intensity of mindfulness in a natural way that Eating Meditation occurs spontaneously within the large majority of Mindful Eating participants from the very first session. It is during subsequent sessions when mindfulness gains newer qualities, working on new fields of sensations, along with the changing levels of eating, starting from fruit juice, through fruit, raw vegetables, till vegetables subjected to thermal processing. It is a Diet Hierarchy Ladder through which the participants of Mindful Eating descend from the high level achieved directly after the lent- to the condition closer, and widely available around us-directly in the end of the Practice.

It is not a place for detailed analysis of this process, however, the obtained quality level of mindfulness enables the achieving of a high level of sensitivity for all our senses. In our mouth, there are vents of energetic channels (normally closed for ordinary people) which enables acquisition of the food ingredients from higher energetic levels, which, up to now, were uselessly let through our digestive system and egested. The quotient of eating skill is increased so significantly through a 'jump', that a glass of fruit juice drunk during the Eating Meditation ensures the satiation of average body energetic needs for many hours.

The achieved quality condition of mindfulness is compared to that one which occurs at a participant of a 7-10 day long workshop of Buddhist meditation. Here it happens by means of 'jumps' and is maintained for a few weeks after the end of the session (but it is kept by various meditation practices, and may be distinctly prolonged).

It is noteworthy, that the asanas and pranajamas practice, the samatha meditation and other internal development techniques, conducted during the Mindful Eating sessions (e.g. Eye exercises or some techniques from Osho repertoire) take up a completely different quality then. It is possible to practice for 5-6 hours per day without any physical fatigue.

The work with ingesting during the Mindful Eating sessions allows to immerse oneself within the areas accessible so little by our mindfulness. The field for this work is our mouth, it is here where a subtle stomach of a human being takes place. It is also the major field of internal work Conscious Eating.

Mindfulness Eating is set in conditions of spontaneous silence, with the sounds of quiet music. Each session starts with the invocation of Rudolph Steiner (quoted above). The food is chewed for a long time and is kept in the mouth (even if it has got a liquid form), to enable the subtle organs present here to absorb subtle energies from the food.

A practitioner tries to find the elements of the ethereal plan (through the deep taste sensations): these are astral (emotional attitude, getting to enjoy the chewing of the food portion), mental (the processing of the way of the food to our plate) and other higher energies (causal, Buddhist and atmanic) through the feeling of gratitude from the fact of presence of so particular form of matter which the food is on our table. Mindfulness and gratitude are powerful tools allowing us to transform lower energies in higher ones. Changes occurring during Mindful Eating sessions are connected also to a somatic level, the division of cells from which our body is constructed.

Meditative Eating sessions enable beautiful and deep insights to our internal world. The achieved condition is stable but finally, it fades away. It has to be noted that these sensations are basically impossible to explain. Some participants related to the author the failure of attempting to describe their family members and friends their sensations from the workshop..

Last but not least, it is necessary to mention that there exist contraindications as far as a total lent is concerned and Eating Meditation itself as a method of going out of the lent (it applies to very rare cases). It is not going to be discussed here but it is worth knowing that total lent sessions have their technical intricacies that are important for some people. Some disorders of digestive systems but also a general state of our psyche may constitute contraindications for doing Eating Meditation in a way which has been proposed by the workshops of Mindful Eating.

In addition, it could be noteworthy to signal a topic of the 'diet hierarchy', namely, ascribing of certain diets to a particular level on an Internal Development Level. With our firmness it has to be stated though, that a diet is not means to achieving of that place on the Ladder. It can be an indication of our development level but one has to approach this topic very delicately.

During the Eating Meditation sessions, participants descend the Diet Hierarchy Ladder.

From the level of energy absorption directly from the Sun (starvation diet), through fruit juice, fruit, raw vegetables, and food subjected to thermal processing and with milk. It can also be a valuable information about ourselves.

The practice of Mindful Eating is about discovering a huge joy and beauty the simplest things under the Sun.

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Appendix

'Become the taste'- the fragment from Osho book "The book of Secrets"

One of the tantric sutras says: During eating and drinking, become the taste of this food and drink, and be full.

We constantly eat something. It is impossible to live without food. But we eat in an unconscious, automatic and mechanical way. If you cannot feel the taste, then you stuff yourself with food. Don't hurry, slow down and become aware of the taste. Only when you slow down, you can be aware of the taste. When you feel the sweetness, become this sweetness. And then, it will melt in all your body, not only in your mouth, on your tongue, but you will feel it in all your body, like a wave flowing through your flesh. Whatever you eat, feel the taste and become this taste.

This is how tantra seems to be in opposition to other traditions. Jinists say: no taste – ashwad. Mahatma Ghandi made it a rule in his ashram: ashwad- do not taste anything. Eat, but do not taste, forget about the taste. Eating is a necessity but do this activity mechanically. The taste is a desire so do not taste. However, Tantra says: taste so much as it is possible, become more sensitive, alive...not only sensitive – become the taste.

Without any taste, your senses begin to die. They start to be less and less sensitive..and without this sensitivity, you will not be able to feel your body, perceive your own feelings. Then you will become focused in your head.

You can eat without tasting, it is not difficult. You can touch somebody without touching, it is not hard either. Actually, we all do it. We squeeze somebody's hand without touching it, because if you would really like to touch it, you must first enter this hand, you must become the fingers in such a way so that you, your soul could enter this hand. Only then you can touch. But also you may withdraw – then, there is only a dead hand...it seems to touch but in reality, it does not touch at all.

We do not touch each other! We are so much scared of touching someone, as symbolically, a touch become sexual. You may be standing in a tram, in a crowd, touching many people but in truth you do not touch them and they do not touch you. Only bodies osculate-but you remain in the distance. But if you really touch somebody in the crowd, you will feel the difference as this person will feel resentful. So you must remain on the side, as if not in the body, but as if a dead body was touching someone. This insensitivity is bad. This is so because you defend yourself against life. You are afraid of death so much..and you do not have to be scared of it as you will not die. It will not happen for the simple reason -you have already died – you are scared, because you have not lived, you will miss the life and you are surrounded by death...

If you eat or drink, become the taste. Drinking water, feel its coolness. Close your eyes, drink slowly, taste it. Feel its coolness and become it, as this cool sensation is transmitted from the water onto your body and becomes its part. You touch it with your lips, your tongue and the coolness is passed on. Let it overwhelm all your body. Let these waves spread in all your body. In this way, you may develop your own sensitivity, you can become more alive, more full.

We are frustrated, we feel empty and we constantly talk about how this life is empty. But it is ourselves that are the reason for this emptiness. We do not fill it and we do not let anything fill it. We are surrounded by a shield which has to protect us. We are afraid of susceptibility for being hurt so we defend ourselves against everything. And we become like tombs, we become dead.

Tantra says: live, live more fully, as life is God. There is no other God but life. Live more fully and thus you will be full with divinity. Live totally and death will not have access to you.

Osho (the fragment of "The Book of Secrets")

The set of books which influenced the creation of Mindful Eating Practice.

-Gospel Of Peace of Jesus Christ.- the original text in Arameic can be found in Vatican Library -"Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana", and the text in old Slavic -Orthodox -in a Royal Habsburg Library, no 156 P;

- Danił Andrejew - "Roza Mira", Izdatelstwo "Prometej", Moskwa 1991;
- Awiessałom Podwodnyj – "Subtle bodies", Studio of Astropsychology 1996;
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- "Classic Indian Yoga - Yogasutras i Jogabhaszja" – translation from sanskrit, footnotes, introduction and afterword – Leon Cyboran, PWN 1986;
- B.K.S.Iyengar - "Yoga" ("Light on Yoga"), PWN, Warsaw 1990;
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- Swami Rama – "The Art of Breathing- A Simple Guide", publ. Limbus 2000;
- Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov - "Joga pitańja" (Le yoga de la nutrition), Izdatelstwo "Prosveta" Collected Works No 204 (Russian version), Paris 1993;