

From the Editor's Desk



He is born in vain who, having attained the human birth so difficult to get, does not attempt to realize God, in this very life. – SRI. RAMAKRISHNA

I am the mother of the wicked, as I am the mother of the virtuous. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress just say to yourself . I have a mother'. – SRI. SARADA DEVI

Each soul is potentially Divine. The goal is to manifest this Divine within by controlling Nature, external and Internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these - and be free. – SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

From Mindfulness to Heartfulness – by Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, Mar 08, 2018. The following is an excerpt from Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu's book, "From Mindfulness to Heartfulness: Transforming Self and Society with Compassion". (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018)

Why Heartfulness? Heartfulness describes a way of being in mindfulness, in compassion, and in responsibility. The word mindfulness, by itself, seems insufficient to explain how mindful consciousness extends into compassion and is expressed in active caring. Heartfulness portrays this expansive sense of living with openness and clarity, being true to ourselves, acting in sympathy with all beings, resonating with and being part of the world around us. The word compassion literally means "feeling with," and is enabled by first being willing to feel what you feel, opening up a certain rawness and tenderness. Today's mindfulness movement is full of potential. Mindfulness training programs in diverse settings, including schools, businesses, and governmental agencies, offer good training in reducing stress and increasing the powers and flexibility of ordinary mental processes. Making mindfulness more of a biological, cognitive, brain activity has helped many people overcome resistance to it, as evidence-based research findings convince many that it is legitimate. However, the focus on science also takes mindfulness further from the heart by making it an activity that can be done pragmatically for its benefits. This perpetuates the illusion that we can achieve anything through our intellect and willpower. The science focus disguises the reality that truth, beauty, and kindness are not reached merely by rationally thinking our way to them. Our love of technology and faith in science is countered by the recognition that these will never provide what we need to live with meaning. We realize that no matter how advanced we become, regardless of how sophisticated our gadgets are and how many of them we possess, they will not give us the essential elements of a good life. A meaningful life is focused in the heart and filled with compassion and giving.

Heartfulness seeks to overcome limitations to the kind of mindfulness that is used for the pursuit of profit and pleasure and doesn't challenge materialistic beliefs, values, or practices. - Mindfulness can enable other virtues, but if we remain on the purely cognitive level, or stay narrowly focused on stress reduction, we are missing its true power. While the science focus is extremely convincing as to the reality of the power of mindful practice, we also need to maintain and expand the heart's role in mindfulness. Mindfulness is still becoming equated with the individual pursuit of happiness, with people seeking pleasure and more joy, with less stress and less involvement. Yet the popular culture's adoption of mindfulness alone risks losing its original meaning.

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Heartfulness emphasizes purpose through connecting to something larger than the individual self. A heartfelt life finds meaning in making a difference in the lives of others. A beautiful expression of this evolving form of mindfulness is in the Japanese word kokoro. While minds and hearts are separated in a Western sense, with mind referring to thinking capacity and heart meaning emotions and sentimental feelings, in Eastern thought they are the same reality. In Asia, people often point to their chest when referring to mind as an openness or a universal wakefulness that resonates with the world around them, rather than something created or possessed by their own ego. The word heartfulness brings us closer to the meaning of kokoro and the deep meaning of mindfulness. Kokoro unites feeling emotion, mind, and spirit -- the whole person -- and seems close to the word heartfulness. This word appears in Jon Kabat-Zinn's writings since the 1990s, in which he suggests another way to think of the gentle, appreciative, and nurturing way of mindfulness is to use the word heartfulness. He later warns that many people are not equating mindfulness with heart, thereby missing its true essence. Heartfulness is opening and cultivating the heart to enter stillness and silence, becoming more human, more compassionate, and more responsible, both to oneself and to all other beings. The meaning of heartfulness is expressed in the kanji. It consists of two parts, the top part, meaning "now"; the bottom part, meaning "heart." This symbol clearly expresses the sense of being wholly present in the moment. Living in a state of heartfulness means listening to one's heart, to one's inner voice, affecting our relationship with ourselves as well as our relationships with our family, with our work, and with the larger world.

Heartful Community: I believe that we are at the point now in the United States, where a movement is beginning to emerge.... demanding that instead of just complaining about these things, or just protesting about these things, we begin to look for, and hope for, another way of living.... I see hope beginning to trump despair... in the many small groups emerging all over the place, to try and regain our humanity in ways. Grace Lee Boggs. Like the individual psychotherapy that I practice, mindfulness is a solitary activity. But heartfulness is practiced in groups with the clear goal of creating community, a sense of openness, direct communion with others, and an awareness of oneself as part of something greater. Grounding our encounters in mindfulness enables vulnerability and authenticity. People realize connectedness, engage in deep listening, feel more accepting, and are grateful for what is happening. Mindfulness is a path, not an ending - something to be practiced, put into action. It fosters the awareness of being connected to the self, to something beyond the self, and indeed to everything and everyone.

To be continued: Heartful community

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