
PERSONAL ETHICS LEADS TO PERSONAL EXCELLENCE : A HEARTFULNESS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Ethics can be defined as a theory or a system consisting of rules of behaviour based on ideas about what is good and bad. (Source: Merriam-Webster's Dictionary). Personal ethics of individuals is an outcome of disciplined behaviour of anyone who practices certain set of values which are considered moral. For anyone who wants to excel in personal life, personal ethics and personal value system forms the backbone and framework, which drives one in every aspect of life situation, when one is forced into a dilemma of choice.

However, considering the demands of material world in the current times, to mould oneself into an individual who maintains highest ethical standards needs extraordinary efforts and commitment from the individual. The desires of material aspirations often drives one out of the ethical path, and sometimes, individuals surrender to the demands of the situation. Internal awareness, a strong willpower and commitment to uphold and follow ethical principles irrespective of the results, needs inner balance and maturity and this may not be possible normally.

There are many a people who follow religious or spiritual path, but still struggle to achieve this consistently over a period of time. What drives people out of ethical practices is the desire for more material gains, fear of future, lack of faith, lack of inner balance, greed, self-centeredness, etc.

This Paper will deal with how Spirituality in general and the spiritual practices such as Heartfulness meditation helps the practitioners to get an inner balance and transformation that would help one to lead an ethical life, which ultimately helps one in achieving personal excellence.

Key Words: Heartfulness meditation (HFNM), Personal Ethics, Personal Excellence, Sahaj Marg (SM), Sri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), Group meditation (Sat sang)

INTRODUCTION

There is a Zen story about a man and a horse. The horse is galloping quickly and the man on it seem to be going somewhere on an important work. A man alongside the road shouts "where are you going?" and the man on the horse replied "I don't know, you have to ask the horse."

This story depicts the mental state of present day people where many a times, they are just driven by the mind. The horse is the force of the ethical habits that pulls one along the daily busy schedule. Many are in a state of turmoil and are ready to start a war with themselves.(1)

Looking at the news across the media, there is overwhelming news almost every day on violations in every possible filed. Individuals, organisations, Institutions, corporate bodies and even governmental agencies, none of them are exception to this. The violations are deviations from the prescribed set of rules or generally not acceptable behaviour, which sometimes may be legal or mostly does not comply with the legal framework.

In simple words we can say that these are ethical violations.



Financial misappropriations, Greedy to be in power, Craving for Fame, &luxurious life, Need for False and Glorified pride are some of the reasons which forms the basis, which prompts the individuals to violate an ethical behaviour.

Even though there are checks and balances in the system through various legislations to identify and penalise such violations, their occurrence is still uncontrollable. Individuals are still under the influence of the falsified needs that drive them into such situations.

Meditation is an ancient art which is contemporary and has been instrumental in supporting and improving the wellbeing of humans in physical and mental level. Regular practices of meditation are found to have positive effect in regulating the mind, stay focused, relieve stress, help to lead a better quality of life, greater concentration and helps the stimulation of immune system (6)

“A balanced state develops in which we are less affected by the ups and downs of everyday life. Our natural capacity for wisdom and right action begins to manifest, allowing us to better prioritize the conflicting demands of life.” (5)

There has been studies in the past on how meditation can help one to cultivate moral imagination (1), teaching business ethics through meditation (8), how intensive meditation training improves perpetual discrimination and sustained attention (13), etc.

The purpose of this article is to review the results of past studies and propose how the contemporary system of meditation practice – the Heartfulness meditation, can be an alternate approach to bring about inner transformation and a balance the tendencies of individuals, which would help one to focus, and achieve ethical behaviour and personal excellence through realisation of one’s full potential.

DEFINITIONS

PERSONAL EXCELLENCE

“According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1992), excellence is defined as “the state, quality, or condition of excelling; superiority”. Furthermore, the word excel is defined as “to do or be better than; surpass; to show superiority, surpass others”.

Richard Hammett (2007) states, “Personal excellence is a process of becoming the best person one can be and is reflected in how one is, as well as what one does. Personal excellence is indicated in people who develop their gifts and talents to the fullest, achieving a harmony in how they think, feel, behave, and believe that leads to productive relationships and outcomes.”

Also, in Bagavad Gita (2.50), it is stated that Excellence in action is yoga

योगःकर्मसुकौशलम् “YogahKarmasuKausalam”

That is, one has to perform the deeds of life with an equanimity and evenness of mind and that actions performed thus loose the binding nature of the doer with the results. Excellence would be a natural outcome of actions if one is able to reach such a state.

Shri Kamlesh Patel (Daaji), the Global leader of Heartfulness Institute, stated that, “The purpose of human life is to achieve personal excellence”.

Overall it can be summarised that, “Personal excellence is the ability to do things or handle situations, be it professional, social or familial life demands, in the best possible way, using all the faculties of an individual with ease, conforming to the ethics and highest moral and social values.” Achieving such a state of personal ability would lead a person to naturally excel in all endeavours.

MEDITATION

When Buddha was asked; “What have you gained from Meditation?” He replied: “Nothing, However, I lost Anger, Anxiety, Depression, Insecurity, and Fear of old age and Death”



Meditation means "To think continuously on one thing." Irrespective of what ever be our intent, which could be, to build a house, to get a well-paying job, etc, when we think about our objective, the more the thought expands and fills our lives. It is important therefore that we choose an object to meditate, that we wish to become.

An undisciplined mind is prone to over activity and reaction to emotional triggers, often causing imbalanced behaviour patterns and habits. Through the meditation practice, one learns to regulate the mind and expand its capacity by gently shifting our focus to a continuous thought.

HEARTFULNESS MEDITATION

HFNM, as the name suggests, is the practice of meditation on the heart. HFNM comprises of the simplified system of Raja yoga also called as Sahaj Marg System of Raja yoga. In HFN system of practice, relaxation is a first step that leads one to the process of meditation. Fundamental to this practice is referring to one's Heart for guidance. Everyone knows that Heart is the centre of physical system where the blood is purified and pumped into different parts of body. HFN method of practice teaches that heart is also the centre of spiritual system. By means of the meditational practice that focuses the mind on the heart, both the mind and the heart work in concert to raise one to the highest possible spiritual condition. (9)

Heartfulness meditation is fully geared towards the evolution of consciousness to the highest level, within the demands of daily life. And this is achieved with a short heart-based meditation in the morning, aided by transmission; a shorter unwinding in the evening to remove daily stress, known as cleaning; and prior to bedtime, a prayerful entreaty that allows you to heed the heart's wise and unceasing guidance. (10)

ELEMENTS OF HFNM PRACTICE

- **Meditation:** The method is to sit comfortably in one position with the thought that our heart is filled with the Source of Light. We do not visualize the light but only suppose that it is present. As other thoughts arise, we gently divert the mind back to the heart and wait patiently for this divine presence to manifest. Heart is chosen, as it is the pumping station of the purified blood to the entire body. When one focuses the attention on the heart, the disruptive thoughts gets regulated and one's mind learns to listen to the heart. Non-attention is the best response to unwanted thoughts, as thoughts without our attention have no power. With practice, as we learn to regulate the mind, mental chatter gradually disappears and we become more receptive to the guiding influence of the heart. Mind and heart thus begin to work together in a balanced way. As our practice deepens, we learn to maintain this balanced state in the midst of life's activities.
- **Cleaning:** One of the main elements of the HFNM is cleaning in the evening, a companion to the practice of meditation, which is done in the morning. All of our experiences—actions and reactions, thoughts and emotions—leave impressions. These impressions accumulate over time, influencing one's view of reality and consequently the behaviour. As habit patterns emerge and solidify, one continue to react in the present as have in the past, setting the blueprint for future action. In this way one becomes, in a real sense, slaves to our past experience. Cleaning is a mental process again, when one should sit comfortably in the same posture for half an hour with a suggestion that all complexities and impurities, including grossness, darkness, etc., are going out of the whole system through the back in the form of smoke or vapour, and that in their place the energy from the source is entering and filling the vacuum created, through the front side of the body. One should finish with the conviction that the cleaning was completed effectively. A feeling of lightness is a sure sign that the weight of the day's impressions has been lifted.



While the evening cleaning effectively removes the day's impressions, deeper cleaning is essential to reach deep-seated impressions, which is removed by meditating with the trainers and attending group meditation sessions.

- **Yogic Transmission or Pranahuti:** One of the most important and unique features of HFNM is the transmission of yogic energy or the life force in to the heart of the willing aspirant. Just like sound and light, the spiritual essence can be transmitted; the yogic energy can be transmitted too. This can be experienced by the practitioners of HFNM.

This yogic transmission of Pranahuti helps the spiritual practitioner to go deeper into meditation, helping in creating that unity with his own consciousness, with his own inner self. Delving deeper into these subconscious states as often as one can, help in maintaining the same state of serenity all through the day. Meditation with Yogic transmission helps in feeling that inner joy.

DISCUSSIONS ON ETHICS AND REVIEW OF PAST STUDIES:

Ethics according to Oxford dictionary is set of Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or conduct of an activity. It is the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.

The word is derived from Greek ethos which can mean "Custom, habit, character or disposition". According to BBC's guide, Ethics covers the following dilemmas:

- how to live a good life
- our rights and responsibilities
- the language of right and wrong
- Moral decisions - what is good and bad?

Our approach to Ethics have been derived from our cultures, religions and philosophies. They infuse debates whenever there is a new set of practices that were introduced in society during a period in time, which looks relevant for that time period, like abortion, human rights, professional conduct etc. (7)

RECENT CLASSIFICATION OF ETHICAL VIOLATIONS

A quick review of the ethical violations over last few years primarily fall under few categories; (4)

- Companies gain profits by means of falsifying reports and accounting malpractices, undue price rise etc.
- Individuals and companies gaining undue advantage by corruption.
- In work places, blaming an individual person wrongly for failure of a project
- IT Employees taking advantage of market, switching jobs frequently for want of salary rise, switching loyalties.
- Political parties taking advantage of an issue and driving political mileage without any consideration for general public.

Many times compliance laws and regulations were formulated after such scandals take place. For example, The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX) is an act passed by U.S. Congress in 2002 to protect investors from the possibility of fraudulent accounting activities by corporations. The SOX Act mandated strict reforms to improve financial disclosures from corporations and prevent accounting fraud.

GOVERNING ETHICS

There had been continuous efforts in governing ethics. There were many questions in the past about ethical issues and it will continue in future too.

Statistics taken since 1997 show that the public perception of ethics in business show as low as 19% people being ethical and this has not changed as further, as subsequent study in 1998, showed 21% business executives as honest. (3)



The study also found that some sections of business people rank lower; such as stock brokers, contractors, real estate agents, insurance & car salesmen, and advertising practitioners. It was also speculated that the impact of computers and World Wide Web, e-commerce, and genetic engineering could pose further challenges. The topics were also expected to be global in nature. (3). This article concludes that unintentional amorality, a phenomenon in which the managers do not possess ethical perceptions, awareness or discernment will need to be managed as this population may grow and such capabilities have to be developed in individuals. (3)

CULTIVATING ETHICAL AND MORAL AWARENESS

There has been few studies in the past wherein meditation has been tried as a prescription to induce ethical values.

La Forge, P. (2004) articulated on how to cultivate ethical values through moral imagination. Moral imagination was conceived as a three-stage process of ethical development. The first stage is reproductive imagination that involves attaining awareness of the contextual factors that affect perception of a moral problem. The second stage, productive imagination, consists of reframing the problem from different perspectives. The third stage, creative imagination, entails developing morally.

According to La Forge, moral imagination can be cultivated through three kinds of meditation: non discursive, semi-discursive, and discursive meditation. The author concludes that Creative moral imagination, nourished by discursive meditation, can be helpful in rediscovering values that exist in myths in the traditional meditative teachings of Asia, of Native Americans, in the philosophy and theology that have guided civilizations in the past.

La Forge, P. (1997) also attempted to show how meditation can be used to help a student to become an ethical person. Discursive and non-discursive meditation gave the student an awareness of ethical issues and lead to the discovery and application of models of ethical conduct in three stages. During first stage, the student was led through non-discursive meditation to discover him/her self as an ethical person. The student was also given the tools to explore ethical issues. During second stage, the student was led to use non-discursive meditation to construct an ethical value system and apply it to his/her own life. An art medium was especially helpful at this stage. Discursive meditation gave the chance for the student to compare who he/she is with what he/she should be. During third stage the students were given the vision of ethical person using four elements with discursive meditation: First, a picture of reality; second, models of ethical rules; third, models of ethical conduct; fourth, current personal and social values. The conclusion contained a description of the ethical person.

One of the key elements which forms basis for ethical violations is the individual's inability to discriminate. All the above methods indicate that meditation as a practice can help one to discipline oneself mentally, provides an awareness of one's current actions and helps one to discriminate between different forms of behaviour and the effect of good, moral and ethical behaviour versus the opposite.

DISCUSSION ON HFN MEDITATION

In this section we will discuss how HFN meditation brings about inner awareness and transformation thereby making one ethical and achieve his highest potential.

All of our experiences—actions and reactions, thoughts and emotions—leave impressions on the heart. These impressions, called samskaras, accumulate over time, influencing our view of reality and consequently our actions. As habit patterns emerge and solidify, we continue to react in the present as we have in the past, setting the blueprint for future action. In this way we become, in a real sense, slaves to our past experience.

The daily practice of cleaning in Sahaj Marg helps to remove the impressions formed during the day (if any) and thereby helps one to get rid of unwanted burden that is



carried to the next day. While the evening cleaning effectively removes the day's impressions, deeper cleaning is essential to reach deep-seated samskaras. The teachers of Sahaj Marg have kindly prepared the trainers who are available for conducting individual sessions for this work. This may be held in person or remotely. The living Master who has the power and love for seeking aspirant, removes all the remaining impressions when one is attending group meditations.

The yogic transmission is a unique feature, which is the subtlest form of energy helps one to go to deeper levels of meditation thereby merging one with one's own higher self. It also it dissolves impurities and past impressions and accelerates our spiritual progress.(9)

Regular practice of daily meditation combines with the daily practice of cleaning, enriched with the yogic transmission which is poured in to the heart of the aspirant, the HFN system of practice helps one to get cleansed of the past impressions and tendencies. The purity of the yogic transmissions helps one from forming further impressions if one retains the inner condition by wilfully applying oneself and holding on it.

The natural outcome is that the distractions of mind are cleansed. As one gets more and more connected with one's inner-self, the myth of dependency on external manifestations such as fame, power, greed, insecurity, fear of future etc vanish. Meditation further helps to keep one focussed as a result of regulated mind. The desires of material aspirations that often drive one out of the ethical path does not arise thereby guiding one in right direction. All the attention of the person is focussed and hence one is able to excel in all the endeavours.

CONCLUSION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper articulated the on personal ethics and behaviour and what drives one to violate. It also reviewed some of the past studies on how meditation as a tool was used to inculcate moral imagination thereby a person is able to behave ethically. The main theme of this paper is to describe HFN meditation, its various elements and the effect of the various elements on a practitioner and how it transforms one by cleaning the impressions and with the help of yogic transmission, helps one to get into deeper levels of meditation and thereby awakening the inner self by merging with it. Thus a person gets devoid of unnecessary desires which drive them out of an ethical behaviour. Due to regulated mind, which gives a person focus and attention, the practitioner is able to perform to ones best possible abilities raising to his highest potential, thereby excelling in all the endeavours.

Further quantitative studies could be conducted using the practitioners of HFN meditation to evaluate and conclude the effect of the practice, how soon a person could be transformed and the various other factors which may influence such a transformation.

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