

Meditation: A simple honesty beyond methods and routines

By **Acharya Prashant** - December 22, 2024



Meditation is the submergence of the ego in its essential nature. It is at the root of all self-knowledge and wisdom. However, most often, what we call meditation is just escapism—using some ‘method of meditation’ to superficially soothe our restlessness or gain temporary and deceptive relief from stress.

True meditation begins when you face your inner chaos head-on, not run away from it. It’s not about feeling good; it’s about coming face-to-face with uncomfortable facts. Real meditation is the fire that destroys your false identities, your conditioning, and, therefore, your suffering.

Are we really ready to allow the false within them to be burned down? This inner annealing is meditation; anything less is just a feel-good exercise. The Gita emphasizes that true meditation is about self-observation. This impartial, silent self-observation is meditation. The fruit of self-observation is freedom from all that is superfluous.

Meditation is not about sitting with closed eyes for fifteen minutes every morning. It is about being aware every moment. You cannot schedule awareness. You cannot say, 'I will meditate for twenty minutes and then go back to living a chaotic, unconscious life.' True meditation means you are fully observant in everything you do—whether you are studying, working, or just sitting silently. Meditation is not something you do at a particular time of day; it is about the quality of your whole life, your being itself. In this regard, allowing oneself to observe, enquire, and understand is central. The meditative mind gets into the reality of everything—its reactions, beliefs, ambitions, relationships, and life choices. It begins to see the conditioning that governs life and hence moves into clarity and freedom.

Meditation is not a tool to manage stress or ease mental health issues; it is about understanding why stress exists in the first place. Stress is not natural; it is born from the misdirection of life, from chasing false goals, living in fear, and being burdened by societal expectations. We are told to achieve, compete, and conform. Our minds are constantly bombarded with desires, ambitions, and insecurities—be successful, be liked, be somebody. This constant striving and comparison create unbearable inner noise. Meditation is not meant to soothe this noise temporarily; it is meant to silence it forever by addressing its very source.

The author of the Gita puts it beautifully: A truly meditative mind is silent and still, not because it is controlled using some method of meditation but because it has seen the source of its desires, fears, and restlessness.

Meditation is not a wellness program or a remedy for lifestyle diseases. If you are approaching meditation as a way to fix your physical ailments or improve your 'wellness quotient,' you are missing the point. Meditation is not a tool for better health; it is about discovering a better self. What kind of life are we living that diseases become part of our very lifestyle? We overeat, overthink, and live in perpetual stress, competition, and dissatisfaction. Our bodies suffer because our minds are sick with desires, fears, and insecurities. If you want true wellness, start with the mind rather than the body. The body is only reflecting the disease that exists deep within. Meditation helps, not by directly curing lifestyle diseases but by bringing you face-to-face with the root of your disorder. It asks you to pause and observe: Why are you anxious and restless? Why are you chasing goals that are not yours at all? The body suffers when the mind is chaotic and unconscious. Meditation is a deep, continuous awareness that brings clarity to your actions, thoughts, and choices.

When you live meditatively, you naturally make choices that are aligned with truth and well-being—your relationships change. Your work becomes meaningful, not compulsive. Your mind becomes light, not burdened. And when the mind is at ease, the body, too, comes into harmony. So, do not treat meditation as a wellness hack. Treat it as a doorway to freedom from the very life that is making you sick. Then wellness, in the truest sense, will happen—not just to your body, but to your entire being.

In popular culture, meditation is being seen as a tool that can bring young folks back to their roots. But what are these roots? If you ask meditation to take you back to your so-called roots without questioning what those 'roots' represent, then you are using meditation as a tool to reinforce tradition, not to uncover Truth. Such a thing is not meditation; it is just glorified conformity. The roots that meditation brings you to are not external. They are the roots of your own being—the source of clarity, freedom, and wisdom within you.

From this place of deep inner connection, you can then look at your so-called roots—your culture, values, and traditions—and decide with clarity whether they are worth holding on to or letting go of. True meditation gives you the courage to discern and choose what is real and discard what is false, even if it comes dressed as 'roots.' So, meditation does not bring you closer to your roots in the traditional sense. It liberates you from the blind hold of all external roots and connects you to the one essential root—your own true nature. I am often asked if there are any meditation routines tailored for children and teens and if meditation helps manage attention deficit, hyperactivity, and a host of other mental health issues that today's kids are grappling with.

First of all, children are not born restless or troubled; they are distorted by the kind of environment and values we, as adults, provide them. Parents need to ask: What kind of world are we raising our children in? What are we teaching them through our own lives? From a young age, they are overburdened with expectations, distractions, gadgets, competition, and excessive information. Their natural innocence and curiosity are suppressed under pressure to perform, achieve, and conform. Attention deficit in children is mostly a product of an unnatural environment steeped in ignorance. You cannot solve this by imposing mechanical routines on them. That will only add to their burden. Mental health issues like hyperactivity and attention deficit are symptoms, not the root cause. Address the root. Why is the child's mind so distracted? Why is there so much energy and restlessness? It is because we have filled their lives with distractions, noise, and artificial stimulation. Let their minds rest naturally by simplifying their lives. Cut down on unnecessary gadgets, activities, and pressures. Awaken in them love for wisdom literature.

What children truly need is not enforced discipline but an environment of freedom, love, and simplicity. Prevent toxic influences from reaching kids. Let them run, play, explore, and live naturally. Encourage them to observe the world with wonder. Teach them through your own example to live with awareness and attention.

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