



MINDFULNESS BASED MEDITATIONS & REFLECTIONS ON

'Conscious Relationship' - the Path & Practice of Waking Up Together

With Buddhist Psychologist & Meditation Teacher – John Barter

Appreciating 'Conscious Relationship'

'A healthy mind is the greatest gain.

Contentment is the greatest wealth. A trustworthy friend is the best of kin.

Unconditional freedom is the highest bliss.'

The Buddha: DHAMMAPADA, V.204

- Life is the experience of Relationship: the relationship that our conscious awareness has to the world of experience through our 6 senses, the 5 physical ones and the mind of cognition's as the sixth sense.
- Much of the meaning, joy, health and value of our life is a result of the quality of our Relationships.
- Relationships here include: Relationship to experience (through the senses); The Intra-personal Relationship with our self; The Inter-personal Relationships to others.
- Much of the quality of all Relationships is a result of the quality of our Conscious Awareness; our minds ability to be Mindfully Aware, Mindfully Attentive - Objective - Receptive – Perceptive.
- Conscious Relationship includes Mindfully relating to experience with Care; being Caring and Careful
- Conscious Relationships are all enhanced through the development of Mindfulness through Mindfulness based Meditations.
- Unconscious Relationship is one that takes the relationship and other for granted; on automatic; just going through the motions; unmindful and non reflective; selfish, uncaring and inconsiderate.
- Conscious Relationship appreciates the importance of 'togetherness' – a partnership mentally, emotionally, physically – aligned in living, learning and loving together in and through life.
- All variety of issues and problems occur when relationship is not engaged and lived consciously.
- Conscious Relationship appreciates the importance of the Relationship itself as a phenomena apart from the individuals in it. In this we can speak of a relationship as being healthy and happy, strong and sustaining, meaningful and enduring, as opposed to the opposites.
- The topic of Relationship and of what constitutes a worthwhile one is vast. This presentation is but a small offering into that topic, and while the perspectives and practices may be applicable to the various forms of relationship here they are mostly addressed to Intimate Relationship.
- KALYANA MITTA: a beautiful word meaning a 'beautiful friend' or 'beautiful relationship'.
- The Buddha said that of the 'Holy Life' / 'Spiritual Practice' a beautiful friend / relationship is the whole of the Holy Life / Spiritual Practice – that is how important it is.
- We may not be living the celibate, renunciant life, but in engaging Spiritual Practice and living and learning from the unfolding of our life, a beautiful relationship / lovely relationships are essential for being well and living well.
- Whether our relationship to experience, towards our self, to others (intimately, familiarly, socially, professionally) when these are compromised the whole of our psycho-physical health and wellbeing is effected.
- Conscious Relationship has great therapeutic potential, here all relationship become therapeutic. Here our act of relating is an act of healing, a therapeutic balm for the mind-body-heart, of all involved.
- Dr Dean Ornish, in his book *'Love & Survival'* for over twenty years directed clinical research demonstrating – for the first time- developing significant supportive relationships may begin to reverse even severe coronary heart disease, without drugs or surgery. In surveying the medical literature on the relationship between isolation and human mortality he found many studies demonstrating that solitary people have a vastly

increased rate of premature death from all causes. That they are three to five times likelier to die earlier than those with ties to a caring spouse, family or community.

- Since relationships are integral to psycho-physical health and wellbeing, to self esteem and performance, why do we not spend more time energy and attentions reading, researching, studying and taking care of them?
- Is it that because they are so much part of the fabric of our self and life that they get taken for granted and ignored?

Engaging Conscious Relationship

'It is with the heart that one sees rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.'

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, The Little Prince

- Whilst Life is Relationship and Relationships are Life, relationships figure into our life. It is important to see how relationships (especially an intimate one) fits into the bigger picture of our life.
- Stress effects all things and certainly relationships and the quality of them is effected by stress.
- Relationships can be come stressed when individuals feel that the relationship is compromising the bigger picture of their life. It can be important to ask oneself the questions:
What do I want to fulfil with my life; what do I want to make of my life; what is important for me?
What has, what does, what could give meaning, joy and value to my life?
What sort of a life do I want to have and live?
What sort of a life style would I like to have within what is appropriate and possible?
What sort of a person do I want to be; what sort of a sense of self would I like to have?
What are my core values, core beliefs, innate qualities, skills and talents?
- In the context of the sort of life that one might like to have in order to feel fulfilled we can then consider relationship – specifically intimate relationship.
What sort of relationship would fit into what I want to do and fulfil with my life?
What specifically do I want relationship to fulfil for me?
What core values, qualities, interests, appreciations and aspirations would my partner need to have to fulfil the above?
- A great stress on relationship is lack of compatibility. Conscious Relationship involves not only knowing what we what relationship to fulfil for us in the context of our life but also choosing a partner that is compatible to who we are as a person.
- Beyond the initial attraction, fascination, excitement and interaction there needs to be enough compatibility between partners to hold them together and form a strong healthy relationship.

THE SPIES CLASSIFICATION OF COMPATIBILITY

S = Spiritual Compatibility: Religion, Spiritual Perspective / Practice, Philosophy of Life, Morality

P = Physical Compatibility: Physical Attractiveness, Age, Health, Energy, Sexual / Sensuality

I = Intellectual Compatibility: Intelligence, Interests, Word Use, Education, and Profession

E = Emotional Compatibility: Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Openness and Expression

S = Social Compatibility: Degree / type of interaction with others, Social life, Introvert / Extravert

By giving the 5 areas a score from 0 – 10 we can assess ourselves with our partner or potential partner.

Our partners can also score how they assess our compatibility with them.

COMPATIBILITY OF THE 3 V'S

1. Values: compatibility of underlying values and what we find of value.
2. Views: compatibility of underlying views of life, relationship, work etc; views on things.
3. Virtues: compatibility of underlying virtue, morality, ethics, what is appropriate or not.

Cultivating Conscious Relationship

Love is the passionate and abiding desire on the part of two or more people to produce together conditions under which each can be, and spontaneously express, their real self; to produce together an intellectual soil and an emotional climate in which each can flourish far superior to what either could achieve alone.

- Relationships are integral to life and human experience. Generally we do expect and hope that they will fulfil much for us, however like all worthwhile engagements for the best potential outcomes we need to put in the work to make them happen.
- *How much time, energy and attention have we, do we, could we put into cultivating our relationship?*
- The 4 Right Efforts from Buddhist Psychology provides a skilful template for looking after relationship. It includes avoiding or abandoning the wrong relationships as well as states of mind etc.

THE 4 RIGHT EFFORTS – FOR CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP:

1. The effort to AVOID
2. The effort to ABANDON
3. The effort to DEVELOP
4. The effort to MAINTAIN

That which is wholesome, healthy, and skilful, as regards: thoughts, speech, actions, associations with people, and situations –not motivated by Greed, Hatred, Ignorance (Generosity, Kindness, Wisdom).

THE 3 C'S FOR MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIP

1. Chemistry: relationships begin with some chemistry, though it fades its good if some remains.
 2. Communication: relationships require conscious relating for understanding, care, and appreciation.
 3. Commitment: relationships are challenged at times but commitment is required for longevity.
- A wise Emperor once appreciated that his happiness and joy in life came from having good relationships with his wife, his children and his subjects.
Appreciating that a good relationship was a result of the quality of relating he devised 3 Questions whereby the answers would provide the template for good relating and Quality / Conscious Relationship, for the happiness of others and himself.

'THE EMPERORS 3 QUESTIONS'

1. *When is the most important time?:* Now; to say thank you! Sorry! I love you!
 2. *Who is the most important person?:* The person we are with at that time
 3. *What is the most important thing to do?:* To Care; Being both Caring and Careful
- In this context we are not only appreciating the importance of the other person or persons but also the importance of the relationship itself.
 - The relationship needs to be appreciated as a phenomena in it self, with its own process, health, strength, life and qualities.
 - In developing and maintaining a Conscious Relationship we need to remain mindful not just of the other person but on how the relationship is going.
 - Making the quality of relating and the resultant relationship the main thing.
 - The main thing, is to keep the main-thing, the main thing'.

CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP CHECK IN'S / CHECK UP'S

- Relationship may be seen as a business supporting the directors of the company. It needs to remain strong, profitable, and in the black not running into the red and potential bankruptcy.
- Relationship may be seen as a vehicle chosen for a particular journey, but needing to be well maintained and in good repair other wise the occupants may be at risk of break down or accident.
- Arrange to have a regular weekly check in, monthly check up, and yearly AGRM:

How do you feel our relationship is going?

Are you being fulfilled in our relationship?

Are your needs being met?

What could / would make our relationship better?

Are we on track for where and what we hope our relationship will fulfil for us?

- From the above example questions you may like to design a set of questions that you regularly use for each of the Relationship Check In's and Check Up's.
- Remember to Prioritise the Relationship by schedule the meeting, allot the time, keeping notes.

The notes become your Relationship Manual for what works, what doesn't, what to be mindful of.

Maintaining Conscious Relationship amid the Stress of Contemporary Life

*For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult task of all...
the work for which all other work is but preparation.*

*It is a high inducement to the individual to ripen.....a great exacting claim upon us,
something that chooses us and calls us to vast things.*

Rainer Maria Rilke

- Life involves stress however our lives are continuing to become ever increasingly stressful.
- A little stress damages a little; a lot of stress damages a lot; complete stress damages completely.
- Relationships are vulnerable to stress; stress in one area of our life will transfer to other areas.
- Stress in contemporary life effects 3 main factors: Time, Energy, Attention. It is these three factors that are integral to a healthy Conscious Relationship therefore we need to prioritise them and keep them in good supply.

TAKE TEA TOGETHER FOR CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP

T = Time; relationship involves relating, being together, where quantity may be compromise strive for quality time, share and caring together.

E = Energy; all things are energy, relationship is time + energy, where our energy may easily become taxed through professional life mindfully conserve and preserve enough energy for our relationships with our partner, children, friends, and with our self. Emotional expression requires ample energy.

A = Attention; one of the greatest gifts we can give another human being is the quality of our attention. Attention is energy and energy is Life. Relationships fail when people don't get enough quality attention. Attention is an expression of Affection. Listening is hearing with Attention.

To have another trust us we need to show them that we care; we express care by listening.

- Mindfulness Meditation directly develops and enhances TEA through greater mindfulness and time management, conserving and preserving energy, developing and strengthening mindful attention.
- As human beings we experience emotion, and thus in engaging relating / relationship we and those we are relating with will naturally bring emotion to that engagement. However through training in mindfulness we can become more conscious of the skilful use of emotion in that encounter.
- Conscious Relationship engages an awareness and appreciation of the use of emotion in the act of relating and the encounter of relationship.
- The underlying / ultimate emotion for Conscious Relationship is Love, especially in its spiritual form.
- A most skilful template for counteracting unhelpful emotion and engaging Love in its spiritual emotion form, so helpful in Conscious Relationship is provided as the 'Four Spiritual Emotions' an important teaching of the Buddha.

THE 4 SPIRITUAL EMOTIONS –ABIDINGS BRAHMA VIHARA

1. METTA: Loving Kindness, Friendliness, Care
2. KARUNA: Compassion
3. MUDITA: Joy with and for Others
4. UPEKKHA: Equanimity, Calm Equipoise, the balance Compassion & Wisdom

- It is suggested that we interface and engage all experience through these Four Spiritual Emotions that we abide in, abide as, connect to and relate to others through these emotions.
- How we perceive our experience will determine how we will receive our experience. Much of the quality of relating and subsequent relationship is determined by how we VIEW it, THINK about it, SPEEK about it, and ACT in and towards it / the other person.
- Maintaining wholesome, skilful: View, Thought, Speech, Action – in Conscious Relationship aids in preserving and protecting:

THE 5 PROTECTIONS OF RIGHT –VIEW, THOUGHT, SPEECH, ACTION IN RELATIONSHIP

1. Supports and protects the quality of the RELATIONSHIP between people.
 2. Protects those OTHERS that we engage with (from unskilful actions that we may otherwise engage) helping them to feel safe and be trusting of us.
 3. Supports OURSELVE'S maintaining our self worth through good behaviour. If we act in a wholesome way to others, they will generally do so towards us.
 4. Protects OUR MIND from regret, remorse, guilt, fear, shame, that may otherwise arise if we act in an inappropriate way, aiding MEDITATION stress management wellbeing and psycho-spiritual development.
 5. Benefits the WORLD at large as we are a benevolent agent, a force for good, engaging positively into the CAUSE – EFFECT process, while also being model to others.
- In supporting the relationship, apart from being Mindful it can be helpful to see the worth of AFL
A = Acknowledge; F = Forgive; L = Let-Go

Waking Up together in Conscious Relationship

'Once the realisation is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distance continues to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them, which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against a wide sky.'

Rainer Maria Rilke

- Intimate relationship generally and Conscious Relationship specifically allows the possibility of using relationship as an opportunity and avenue for both personal and spiritual development and maturing. This becomes both the vehicle and the avenue for 'awakening' – waking up together.
- Consciously using relationship as an environment and path to greater self awareness, depth of intimacy and spiritual development has the power to also mature and strengthen the relationship itself beyond a focus on material or mundane matters.
- In the context of spiritual practice ones intimate partner becomes one's KALYANA MITTA.
- It is most beneficial to have the support of ones partner in spiritual development both in the engagement of wise approaches and mindfulness practices especially of Meditation.
- The couple that meditates together tends to stay together – a shared evolving together.
- Relationships will always have their particular issues and challenges, especially those where one partner has no interest in 'waking up'. For those engaging in spiritual practice, such relationships require us to be extra mindful, being both caring and careful.
- While one's partner may have no interest in waking up, the relationship can still provide an important opportunity for one self to develop 'Psycho-Spiritual Values' as part of spiritual practice.
A template for such qualities are the Buddha's 'Ten Psycho-Spiritual Values'.
- We may need to ask our self, 'what quality do I need to develop within myself and engage so as to be helpful for this situation or stage in the relationship?

'THE 10 PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL VALUES' PARAMITA

1. GENEROSITY / GIVING
2. MORAL CONDUCT
3. RENUNCIATION/ RELINQUISHMENT / LETTING GO (incl. opinions, views, ego etc)
4. WISDOM

5. ENERGY / MOTIVATION
 6. PATIENCE
 7. HONESTY / TRUTHFULNESS
 8. RESOLVE / COMMITMENT
 9. LOVING KINDNESS / FRIENDLINESS
 10. EQUANIMITY (Equipoise, the balance of Compassion with Wisdom)
- If it happens that one's partner is not interested in consciously engaging relationship as a path of spiritual practice and awakening it is best not to try and make them interested in this potential.
 - By consciously using relationship as a path of spiritual practice one self, developing the 10 Psycho-Spiritual Values including developing the benefits of regular meditation practice we can ourselves become a more mindful, wise, caring and considerate person. Through this ones partner may indeed see the benefits and slowly become interested. Ie. Attracting VS Advertising
 - Ideally to have a KALYANA MITTA as one's life-partner, yet if that is not possible then in a friend, Spiritual Teacher or Support Group can suffice.
 - Remember always:
'Our gift to others is the work we have done, and continue to do on and within our selves.'
And that: *What one person has to offer to another is their own being, nothing more, nothing less.'*
 - By living, learning and loving into our relationships consciously – enabling Conscious Relationship we create a resource to sustain, nurture and nourish our being – for being well and living well into our ongoing life of togetherness.

Recommended Reading & References

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*'The organ for understanding is our heart,
to really understand we need to listen not from our ears but from our heart.'
'To have people trust us we need to show them that we care.
We show people that we care by conscious listening.'*

John Barter



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