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Exploring the relation of Mindfulness and Transformative Suffering

Bhoomika Kabra & Roopa Mathur

Abstract

“Pain is inevitable but suffering is optional”.

Suffering can be regarded as the aversive sensation of any conscious being. Suffering can be of varying degrees of severity, ranging from moderate to unbearably excruciating. People’s reactions to pain can differ dramatically depending on whether they consider it to be light or severe, avoidable or inescapable, useful or worthless, of little or enormous consequence, deserved or undeserved, and acceptable or undesirable. This is where the significance of mindfulness plays a role. Understanding the importance of consciously being in the present moment with a non-judgmental and accepting attitude is what can lead individuals to experience transformation of suffering. The greatest barrier to mindfulness is the self-talk generated by humans in extremely stressful situations which can further deteriorate the condition. The present research explores the role of mindfulness in the process of transforming suffering.

Keywords : Mindfulness, Suffering, Happiness.

Exploring the relation of Mindfulness and Transformative Suffering

Happiness is an electrifying and elusive state. Attaining happiness is a global pursuit. It is considered by many as significantly more important than any other desirable personal outcomes, such as obtaining wealth, acquiring material goods, and getting into heaven. Despite this meaningless suffering is the only experience of a greater preponderance of human population. Pointless suffering is the kind that results when our entire sense of self is imprisoned within mental and emotional anguish at any given time. The focus of any individual is entirely on the current issue presented by life and all the resources are employed to mitigate the problem. There

is no sense of consciousness in the present moment which could enable an individual to view the problem from another perspective. When life throws a challenge at us, the ego-mind takes over so completely that there is an entire shift in the awareness from the present moment making an individual swirl in his self-created definition of any problem.

Transformative suffering can be visualized as to what happens when we establish an intimate association with pain while being mindful. When all of our avoidance, denial, and attempts to flee reveal themselves to be futile and we come to some acceptance of actuality, we suffer in an entirely different way. The attributes of mindfulness, namely awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of one's moment-to-moment experience, are considered as quite effective countermeasures against common forms of psychological suffering—rumination, anxiety, worry, fear, anger, and so on—many of which involve the maladaptive tendencies to avoid, suppress, or over-engage with one's distressing thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness is intrinsically a state of consciousness requiring conscious and purposeful responding to each and every moment experienced by an individual (Brown & Ryan, 2003). It is a way of relating to our whole (positive, negative or neutral) experience that provides us with a way of mitigating our overall intensity of misery and increasing an individual's level of well-being (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005).

When an individual practices mindfulness, suffering can be understood in terms of the constructive role it can have over an individual's life. Individuals can achieve serenity, freedom, and divinity via transformative pain. Awareness of the present moment in life, which comes with the practice of mindfulness can lead an individual to concede their present suffering as productive and resolute because it is a feature of moral learning and spiritual development; thereby leading to transformation of suffering.

Mindfulness is a crucial psychological phenomenon that can alter a person's reaction to life's indispensable or unexpected challenges - not just minor setbacks, but also major psychological issues such as suicidal ideation (Linehan, 1993), chronic depression (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale 2002), and psychotic illnesses (Bach & Hayes, 2002). It's one of the features that sets us apart as people. For generations, society has accepted that traumatic experiences will foster transformation, if they are met with willingness and openness the practice of mindfulness has to offer. Pain and loss in any human being's experience is considered as a part of life. All of us, regardless of our social or economic status, may experience debilitating illness, the death of loved ones, any sort of trauma or violence, great

loss or tragic events at some stage in our lives. To make a healthy living out of these different experiences is what can make an individual's life easier and happier and can be achieved with the practice of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Mindfulness fosters in an individual the capacity to understand that suffering frequently produces substantial moral goods, sufficient to negate any sense of loss or sorrow that arises as a result of it. Because people have different conscious experiences, they may have subjective opinions that are intrinsically unavailable to one another. Suffering is not seen as something that should be pursued or intensified in an excessive or deliberate manner. It should be reduced, alleviated, and improved in a systematic manner rather than chewed over.

Taking the perspective of mindfulness, it can be comprehended that human suffering is a consequence of reactions and presumptions of reality rather than the actual moment; the present. The persistence activity which is shown by individuals in removing the hindrances in their paths and their resistance towards it is what leads them to experience extreme pain. Mindfulness allows the individual to be aware of these resistant behaviours and consciously put in efforts to manage the obstacles rather than working to remove them completely. It helps an individual to understand their suffering deeply and intricately and also guides them in analysing their reactions to such experiences.

Non-judgmental in nature is one of the key features of the practice of mindfulness (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Insight develops, gradually, through the experience of mindful awareness; we realize that every moment is transitory in nature, greed, hate, delusion, or other negative emotions are the source of all misery and every moment is inter-twined with each other. The purpose of practicing mindfulness is not to embrace the concept of retreating from daily life and its associated hassles; the fundamental concern is of appreciating and living in every moment, neither getting attached to pleasurable moments nor outwardly rejecting unpleasurable moments (Didonna, 2009).

Researches have focused on how mindfulness can mitigate the suffering or pain experienced by individuals. It can be seen that mindfulness works on what the mind is processing, how it is processing and what the mind is interpreting about the information being processed (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011). By working on these three parameters, mindfulness works its way through suffering and relieves pain. Human being function on

underlying ignorance of the reality; thereby taking something ephemeral such as suffering to be perpetual. Thus, mindfulness can be considered as an effective medium to help individuals see the transformative consequences of their present suffering and lead a happy life.

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