

Meditation – Cure for Stress

By **ABDUL SULTAN**

I was born in Karachi (British India) in 1926. During my young age, I was attached to my grand-father, who was my role model. Being Shia Imami Ismaili Muslim, he practiced Sufism, just as most of the Ismailis have this optional facility. Ismailis are a sect of Shia Islam, who believes in Imamah after the Nabuwa.

I am 88 now.

At the age of 20, I too adopted and practiced that sort of meditation. I started getting up at 4 am. Human beings consist of two things—human body and soul, and that way, one have to maintain a good balance between Din and Dunya, and between materialism and spiritualism. This is an improvement prevalent in the old system when a Jogi or a meditator had to be a Brhamchari and had to live in solitude e.g. in the jungles, caves and mountains. A Sufi can live a normal life, raise a family, earn a living, and at the same time, he can elevate the status of his soul and observe and live his life for the real purpose he has been created.

Sufis believe that Sharia has upper storeys at different levels. Sharia's second upper stage is Tariqat and the third stage is Haqiqat and the top most is the Maarefat.

Some of the Muslims, who are extremist in Sharia, do not like any liberalism in Shariat and as such think that the Sufis are not perfect Muslims, they oppose the concept. For example in

Afghanistan, during Taliban regime, thousands of Ismailis were targeted and tortured and many had their arms and legs amputated.

I may maintain here that the title “Ismaili”, my community got in the year 765AD, about 130 years after the death of the Prophet. Before that we were called Imamis or Shias. It is the historical fact that the foundation of Sufism was laid by the Holy Prophet himself. Just three years before his death, he raised a group of 40 people in Medina and sat with them and taught Sufism daily at night between the sunset prayer (Magreb) and late night prayer (Ishah). And they practiced meditation between 2 am and early morning Fajjar prayer. He had appointed Hazrat Ali as lecturer and instructor. In Hadeath, the Prophet has said “I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its gate.” The Prophet had selected the venue for the group on a varandah surrounded by benches made of stones. That was adjoining his mosque. In Arabic language, bench is called “Suffa”, and the Prophet called them “Ahl-al-suffa”. Ultimately that turned to be “Sufism”. Above all, God blessed this group by revealing a verse that directed the Holy Prophet to support it because they prayed morning and night for “seeking His face”. [Verse 28 of Chapter 18, Al Kahf / The Cave].

My spiritual life was disturbed at the age of 32. It was because my new profession was stressful and required my attention for 16 hours. I could hardly sleep for six hours—thanks to the increasing stress level. In such circumstances, I stopped meditating. I forgot the fact that God is close to those who are close to Him. Conversely, He forgets those who forget Him. As such, living in stressful life for 10 to 15 years, I started to develop Angina, high blood pressure and similar diseases. All these took a toll on business too. Things got so bad that I lost everything and was thrown on the footpath. There was a time when I thought that I would die of heart attack.

I would not be living today if I had succumbed to the situation. Centrifugal force of stress was stretching my heart but I wanted to live and wait for future opportunities. I wanted to find out whether it is possible to wait for the opportunities. I restarted remembering Him wholeheartedly and was back to meditation in the year 1972, at the age of 46.

In two years, I felt a great change in the philosophy of life. I felt that God has blessed me with real knowledge and true path. I felt that I had reached the stage of Haqiqat. I felt reality in everything, Material and spiritual. I could sustain any pain without pain killers. I could face worldly problems with minimum stress. I lost all stage fear and my willpower became stronger.

Life is full of problems. People call it “nature” but I call it “His System”. While my heart problem continued, I had captured the problem of mental “stress”. I felt God was with me all the time and He was protecting me, and looking after all my problems. And that was the reason to overcome “stress”. The happiness that comes from within me, gives me optimistic and positive thinking. That is exactly the opposite of “vicious circle”.

At the age of 69, I had a longest and complicated surgery— bypass of five blockages of arteries and veins of my heart. I did not feel any pain. I overcame all my problem at the age of 72.

Crossing the age of 85, I have lost mobility. Now I am disabled. I live with more than a dozen health problems. I prefer wheel chair whenever I have someone who could drive me but most of the time I have a walking stick in my hand. I live alone in my flat; I cook my food daily, and wash my dishes with my hands. I avoid eating in restaurants and pubs.

I have four loving daughters, but they live in different places. My eldest daughter lives in Los Angeles, USA. Another one lives in

London. Only the youngest one lives in Stockport. She and her husband want me to move into their house but I do not agree to that as I do not want to part with my independence. At the moment I have the freedom to watch TV or sleep or do meditation at any time.

I visit the Asian Centre where I meet senior Asian people of all sects and religions. We are all good friends and discuss our problems and try to help, sympathise and console each other. I also play indoor games.

(The writer is 88 year-old and lives in Stockport).

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