Context to the nugget

Venerable Tenzin Priyadarshi speaks about how a lot of people have tried to make the practice of spirituality into a hack. He specifically speaks about how several people have tried to create apps for meditation and how that often goes against the grain of how one is supposed to pursue meditation without any addiction of sorts.

Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I think a related point you make Venerable is you talk about the fact that a lot of times still spiritual practice is turned into a life hack by a lot of people, you know, you say what's my RoI on this if I meditate for 20 and did not… I found that quite provoking and you go on to say that what's needed more urgently is the attention to the motivation the discipline and the sense of purpose that creates a nest for practice that will ultimately determine the outcome. Could you talk a little bit more about the mindset with which we need to pursue this journey, the spiritual journey?

Tenzin Priyadarshi (TP): That's a useful thing and a good thing that you have picked up on. There are varying set of opinions of why one should pursue a spiritual life, why an individual should pursue a spiritual life. But fundamentally, if you look in the tradition the goal of spiritual life was often times soteriological meaning it was for the purpose of freedom, it was for the purpose of liberation. And freedom from what? Freedom from suffering, freedom for misery, which for the most part most traditions would say was self-created, right, that there would be other causes of misery, but most of our miserable experiences are self-created misery. When we utilize spirituality or spiritual discipline as a life hack, we become good at managing suffering meaning that just like they have become comfortable with everything else that has encouraged the sense of complacency, we have become good at managing suffering to the point that we are actually content just managing it. There is no desire to free ourselves from it because our identity is too tied in this sense of management of misery and management of being in this world. And that I find is the biggest challenge is where people have sort of specially in the contemporary landscape of things where people have tried to focus on particular skill sets of spiritual life, emotional regulation or sleep regulation or regulation of mindsets to be able to break through and have a very productive day and things of that nature. In those kinds of settings, we forget to ask the fundamental questions. We are not really shifting our worldview on a grand scale of things. And then, other times we sort of give in to the oxymorons of why do something. For example, I cannot tell you how many times I have been approached to help design apps for meditation. And especially when I was taking a year at Stanford almost, I would say two to three proposals a week of various forms to the point that after first three months I had to tell my assistant any enquiry on apps find out what they really want and then we can have this conversation. But you take an example, simple thing, what is your intention? Well, my intention is

for people to meditate more. Well, why do you want to create an app for them to meditate more? Well, I want to create this app so that it can facilitate people to meditate more why because tradition is obscure, tradition is not accessible, you know, people come up with all these kinds of reasons and rationales. Very different from the other mindset, which is you need to make effort to find the right teacher, to find the right fit of the tradition and so on. But here's the challenge is that then you ask them well, what are you measures for success for this app? Because you see in order for the sack… in order for the app to be successful the user must give up using the app after a while, right, meaning that if I am designing a mindfulness or meditation app that is simply increasing the behavioural tendencies of dependency and co-dependency then it kills again one of the fundamentals of meditation practices that you don't become dependent on the method. But if my model for creating a successful technology is that user keeps coming back to the same thing and I find many novel ways to keep bringing users back to the same thing, I am promoting addiction. Now, I can again come up with all the brilliant narrative I want to come around meditation and freedom and happiness, but fundamentally what I am creating and promoting is addiction just of different sorts. So, these are the things that I think people need to deeply think about when we talk about life hacks and coaching and designing apps and things like that, the spiritual world is very rich, of course, we can find things and tools from these rich traditions that are highly relevant in the lives that we live. The fundamental issue is what's the purpose? And that is something that we need to deeply reflect on. Because again, one of the things we have to recognize is that unless and until we learn to give up metrics by which we are measuring our conventional life, those metrics fundamentally do not work in the spiritual landscape and if we bring it in there again, we do violence to the spiritual landscape.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. For more, please visit www.playtopotential.com

End of nugget transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work here.

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