

Book Review

UNDERSTANDING OUR MIND

Thich Nhat Hanh, Thomson Press (India) Ltd., 2008 Edition, pp.251, Rs.295/-

Understanding Our Mind is an accessible guide for anyone who is curious about the inner workings of the mind. Author of this book, *Thich Nhat Hanh*, is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. He was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by Martin Luther King, Jr. for his lifelong efforts to generate peace and reconciliation. He is author of *Energy of Prayer*, *Being Peace*, and many other renowned books.

In *Understanding our Mind* author shows us the importance of knowing and understanding our mind to get peace in our world. This book is basically based upon Buddha's teaching on philosophy and psychology. The process of understanding our mind has been explained in fifty verses. These verses are taken from the great fifth-century Buddhist Master Vasubandhu. These fifty verses are divided in six major categories.

In initial fifteen verses related to Store Consciousness, Author says that "Mind is a field in which every kind of seed is sown". These seeds are of different kinds. Human mind have seeds of happiness, sadness, optimism, pessimism, hope, joy, distress, love, kindness, etc. Some of these seeds are gift to us from our ancestors, some we get from our friends, teachers, social group experiences and perceptions. We are the one who water seeds of mind and also get fruits accordingly. So we live distressed for a week time then we will get habit of that. We will practice peace, joy, happiness on continuous basis then we will forward these seeds to our upcoming generation. This is how quality of seeds determines quality of our life.

In this book Author further explains that different kind of seeds have different maturation stages. Every seed needs right amount of time and right conditions in order to grow and bring forth fruits. We practice meditation for a week and we all expect positive result as peace, joy, happiness in that one week. But we all complain that we are not able to get outcome of meditation practice. This is where we all commit mistake. We do not provide proper time, proper nurturing to our mind seeds. Also we don't try to understand correlation between our actions and their results. If we nurture seed of happiness then only we will be happy. We can not be happy by watering seed of sadness.

There are seven verses related to Manas consciousness. Manas consciousness gives support to mind consciousness. Biology describes 'Manas' as Primitive brain which functions solely in the interest of survival, of self preservation. Because of its clinging with notion of self, Manas is protective and defensive. Sometimes it leads human to go in the wrong direction for self preservation. As it is self centered, fruits of this are sad and harmful.

Neelam Saraswat

Author also focuses upon different ways to achieve peace. He explains that there is four pair of ideas we need to go beyond to achieve peace. These ideas are:

- Being and nonbeing
- Coming and going
- Same and different
- Birth and death

These ideas are elaborated wonderfully in this book. He has also suggested path of practice for achieving peace in his verses.

Also author has put some light on world of perceptions. He says that there are three modes of perception; direct, as representation, and as mere image. The way we perceive reality has everything to do with our happiness and sufferings. Suchness (tatatha) can be achieved only by perceiving things without delusion or further distortion, which is direct form of perception. But we generally do not perceive things directly. Generally, we all use two other modes of perception. That is why we all suffer in this world. In this book itself, author has explained path to achieve suchness and to perceive things as reality.

In nutshell, it is a precise book on the process of understanding our mind and to attain peace. Language used by author is very simple and comprehensive. Even a layman with no psychological background can grasp the meaning out of this book. Author has given many beautiful examples from practical aspects which is making this book interesting and worth reading. One must read this book to understand processing of mind and to know about ways to get rid off delusions and false perceptions.

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