

DISCOVER YOUR FREE MIND

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AN ANCIENT INQUIRY TO MODERN-DAY "DIS-
EASES" OF ANXIETY, STRESS, DEPRESSION,
CONFLICTS, & ADDICTIONS

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FOREWORD

If you are in need of a fresh perspective for dealing with life and its challenges, this book is written for you.

Going *beyond standard practices of meditation and mindfulness*, this book takes you on a journey towards personal transformation and inner freedom.

Modern society is now at a severe imbalance with nature. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. – 43.7 million total – experience mental illness in a given year. And almost every adult, even if free from any kind of psychological disorder, finds it a challenge to escape “dis-eases” such as stress, anxiety, conflict, addiction, trauma and depression.

In fact, this is a global pattern that pervades, especially in urban areas of developed and developing countries. We cannot dodge the effect of our external environmental influences. As a result, our mind – the psyche that forms our personality and character and shapes our responses – becomes trapped in a programming of its own.

While external influences affect our mind significantly, there is also hope that we can induce positive changes in our brain. Neuroplasticity, a breakthrough scientific discovery of recent times, confirms that we are not stuck with the

brain that we were born with. The brain actually changes – and keeps changing – throughout our lives! In his book *The Stress Answer*, Dr. Frank Lawlis goes further to add that “if the brain comes to an impasse, it can literally grow alternate routes.” So science is now endorsing what the ancient sages and philosophers proposed: The idea that as individuals, we can improve, learn to cope with our challenges and be free within our own mind.

What does it take to change? And how do we bring about change?

Freedom from external conditioning and the internal controlling impulses and urges of the heart are the emerging challenges of modern civilization. The goal is to regain the inherent freedom of our mind. Such a state of freedom is what I have referred to as the Free Mind, and discovering it amid the turbulence of everyday life thus becomes a path towards transformation. *Just as there are states of mind filled with anger and jealousy, or positive states such as kindness and enthusiasm, there is also the state of Free Mind.*

In this book, I present an inquiry process for addressing some of the common mental challenges we all face, particularly anxiety, stress, depression, conflicts, and addictions. Inquiry taps on the brains inherent ability to “grow alternate routes.” Although much of what I have written comes from my own practice and experiments, such a process is nevertheless scientific and verifiable by anyone who is willing to give it a try. I have found this transformative process of inquiry, which is an ancient approach, to be the best tool among the many contemplative and physio-psychological

approaches I have attempted over the years to permanently free the mind from its warped condition.

It is only when we embark on the journey of discovering our Free Mind that we realize how limited and constrained our mind was in the first place. While compatible with science and individual faith, such a process of direct inquiry draws hope and inspiration from the ancient philosophers of the East and West, and from their path toward inner freedom. It is not, however, the privy of these ancient contemplatives alone. It is, in fact, the perfect antidote to the challenges we face in this day and age.

Discover Your Free Mind entails a fundamental shift in attitude toward dealing with life's daily complexities, whether one lives in solitude or in a large city. It offers to bring meditation into daily life, presenting a perspective that reverses how we view and respond to stress and our daily challenges. It is aimed at anyone who seeks to find balance in the fast-paced, demanding environment of modern life.

About This Book

The first section of this book – A Journey into Free Mind – outlines the nature of Free Mind. Using anecdotes and real-life situations, I point out the factors that stand in the way of discovering this state of Free Mind and clarify the misconceptions we may tend to have.

In Part 2 – Inquiry & Transformation – I elaborate on the nature of Inquiry and its various forms and approaches as a means of freeing us from external conditioning and internal

neurotic impulses. The term Transformative Inquiry refers to that form of inquiry where profound change begins to take place, first within our mind and then in our daily habits and responses to people and situations. I present three inquiry approaches to experiment with and elaborate on the process of discovering the Free Mind.

The third part of the book – Inquiry into “Dis-eases” – has specific chapters on anxiety, stress, depression, conflicts and addictions, and it offers an entirely new perspective to these mental struggles and a model set of questions to work on. Using these models, readers can develop their own inquiry process for any other mental and psychological conditions they might be facing. I have drawn upon my own experiments and life situations while living in both monasteries and major cities to demonstrate its application.

Part 4 – Training for Free Mind – reflects on the essence of training in attention, awareness and cultivating life skills to follow through on the inquiry model presented earlier in the book. The exercises offered here are meant to be templates that guide you toward your own solo path and solo practice. I profile some role models and the philosophical perspective of historical figures of East and West that embodied the spirit of inquiry and the discovery of Free Mind.

Part 5 – Transformation vs. Replication – probes into the external influences on the mind that shape our minds from the perspectives of neuroscience, psychology and economics. I dedicate a chapter to transformation in our commu-

nities and its relevance for those who are on the path to discovering the Free Mind.

The final part of the book outlines my own journey towards the discovery of the Free Mind, a personal transformation that took me beyond the standard practices of meditation and mindfulness. While I emphasize the importance of seeing the mental shifts to inner freedom in daily life, I have also found that freeing the mind from external influences requires ongoing training and an open mind. In this day and age, as in ancient times, the right kind of inquiry offers the greatest potential for freedom.

There are books that give you information, techniques and new beliefs to take home. This is not one of them. What I have sought to present in this book is something that goes beyond meditation or the commonly known practices of mindfulness. *Discover Your Free Mind* integrates self-help, spirituality, neuroscience, psychology and philosophy into a practical framework while transcending any one path, philosophy or method to inner freedom. It provides a compelling model of inner freedom and transformation achieved not through an effortless self-transcendent shift in daily life but through the right inquiry practices. This book is the practical application of ancient wisdom in a modern and secular context.

Discover Your Free Mind penetrates the notion of relying on religion or science, which can be a major deterrent to finding our own direct path to inner freedom. It emphasizes the danger in blindly allowing our minds to be shaped by the man who speaks from the pulpit without realization;

by the woman who crunches numbers and makes inconclusive theories on the nature of our body and the universe; by the psychologist who continues to tell us that our life is a big mess and therapy is our only hope; and by the downstream current of modern society as a whole, which numbs and confines us within a “matrix.”

A JOURNEY INTO FREE MIND

Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you.
~ Jean-Paul Sartre

A JOURNEY BEGINS...



In New York or Bangkok, the skyscrapers proclaim their city's glory – and also hide their shame. In the quiet of the night, these apartments that touch the clouds beckon a failed investor or a deserted lover to hover over their balconies. They lure them towards that one flight... to the possibility of freedom from the pain and suffering in their hearts.

I once looked out over these skyscrapers at a difficult time in my life. Not having yet completely given up hope, I nevertheless found myself engaging in a philosophical contemplation, like the fictional Prince of Denmark, on the value of living life versus ending it. I pondered an end to the acute sense of inadequacy I felt in that moment.

Caught in a swirl of thoughts, I saw that in reality my mind had a will of its own. And I could not directly control it! This “seeing” was momentary, and I had no words or thoughts to translate it then. The closest comparison I could draw was when I had actually jumped from such heights

before. During my adolescent quest for adventure, I had tried bungee jumping (a popular sport in many parts of the world). Tied to a chord that held a high probability of safe return, in the moment before the jump I was gripped with both fear and a sense of excitement.

Just as adventure carries a certain degree of freedom despite the dangers, so too did I glimpse an opening within my mind as I gazed out at the skyscrapers. This “seeing” helped me be aware of the dichotomy of my mind – and yet remain untouched by it. But when I attempted to fix this conflicted state of mind and take charge of it, the swirling current of thoughts revived with an energy of their own. When I relaxed and let go again, I felt free once more. With keen interest, I became aware of this tussle and was now playing and experimenting with my mind, as though teasing a cat to see at which point it would snap back.

It was a new kind of learning: not a cognitive mental processing, though it penetrated my mental faculties. There was no doubt that in that instant, I had discovered freedom despite my inner conflicts. Although not the first, it was the most striking experience of what I have come to refer to as *Free Mind*.

I realized that despite the raging conflict within my mind, I could still be free. This opened up the possibility of complete inner freedom. Thus began my journey of discovering my Free Mind in every instance of life.

Since then, I have been on an outward journey across continents. I have also been on an inner journey, traversing different levels of consciousness and mind states while

training in several kinds of meditation at various monasteries. But none of those outward journeys or the inner journey of blissful mental states has been as liberating as the discovery I chanced upon that day, years ago.

I have since found that returning to the state of freedom I discovered effortlessly that day to be far superior to any enforced practices to control the mind. Accessing the Free Mind has given me a sense of freedom amid all the uncertainties and challenges in my outward life. It has become the only reliable guidepost on my path. I am convinced that such a state of Free Mind is attainable by anyone regardless of his or her background or present life circumstances.

INQUIRY &
TRANSFORMATION

CLOSE TO DEATH OR OPEN TO LIFE?



She was too young to die!

At 40, Naomi still had many ambitions. She had her own TV talk show and was considered a role model for many women. Naomi had undoubtedly accomplished much in life.

Yet a recent medical test had diagnosed an incurable respiratory condition. The doctor ordered further tests. Earlier in the year she had first seen the symptoms, gasping for air during hikes that had once seemed effortless.

As Naomi went through all the medical tests, she was in turmoil. She went from confident and strong-willed woman to powerless and isolated. Nervousness grew and turned into a neurotic fear as she waited for the final diagnosis from the doctor.

As she awaited her fate, she called upon the well-being practices and meditations she had begun years ago and

championed on her show. Meditation and mindfulness practice had become an important topic. Its ability to overcome stress, emotional turmoil and long-term mental afflictions was being scientifically endorsed to a greater degree. In one of her shows she had probed into its ability to cope with fight-or-flight situations.

“Be calm!” she told herself. As she discovered, the ability to be truly calm was not so much an act of will and control. But for now, this kind of assertion and affirmation seemed soothing. Her mind continued to sift through the information she had gathered in the past, with the hope toward some clarity. Her future was now in question. How could she die so young? Her mother had also died when she was relatively young. Maybe it was in her genes.

Naomi had seen videos on the Internet of people struggling with that respiratory condition. She would rather kill herself than go through such suffering. Envisioning the terrifying struggle to breathe caused her to panic. The panic was soon replaced with self-pity. All of her life, she had been devoutly religious. Her faith in God had been so strong that she trusted her life and all its conditions upon God’s will! Had she somehow faltered? In any case, it wasn’t fair. How could God let her down now? The anger now seemed to take over her mind. She felt truly alone. She also began to resent her spiritual teacher. After all, she had trusted his assurance of God’s protection for all those who believed in Him. Tears began to well up in her eyes. She thought of her mother, who had cared for her even though Naomi remained indifferent to her at times. She thought of her father. Had she

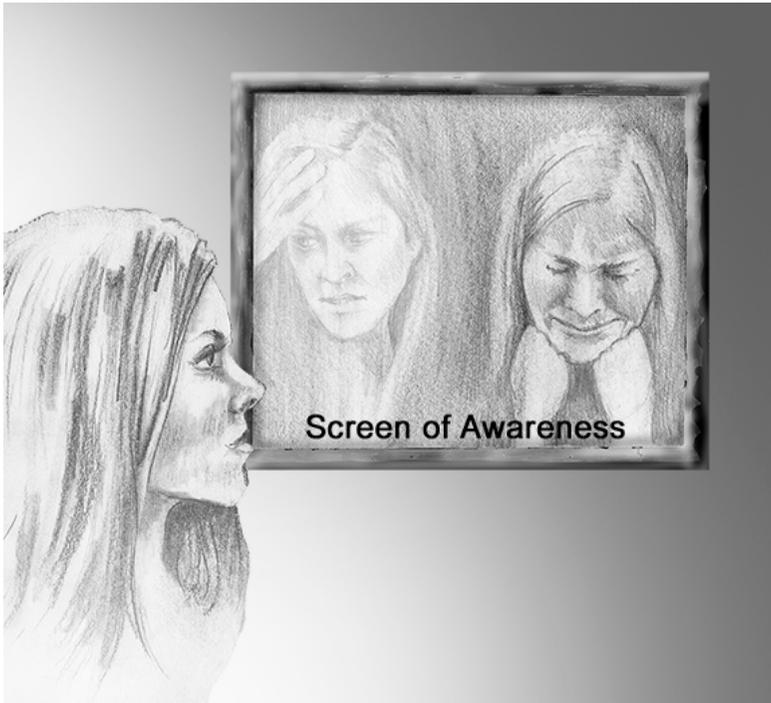
done enough for him in his old age? It was now the brief turn of gratitude to dominate her mind. Thinking of her father's unconditional love and how he would miss her... when she died... filled her with anguish and made her now feel helpless. As the tears rolled down her cheeks, her mind was suddenly jolted from these strong emotions.

She became aware that she was still alive and at the doctor's office!

The high-rise building of this medical office overlooked a vast expanse of sky and ocean. Its spaciousness dimmed the towers and all the surrounding buildings in its enormity. She now became aware of her own frenzied state of mind from a similar state of spaciousness within herself. Amid that conflicting mental condition, a natural force of awareness had risen and brought her back to the present moment where she was alive and apparently still breathing. This awareness brought a certain understanding and dispassion that enabled her to observe what was happening within her mind, without being at the mercy of her mind. She saw how she had been stuck in a progressing series of mental states, rising rapidly and then flitting away. The shocking discovery of her respiratory condition, the panic of fear, the imagination that fueled the fear, the desperation to live and the regrets and amends to make: These were all transitory mental states that gave her a sense of reality and identification. In a flash of insight, she saw that the more she depended on thoughts and these mental states to give her guidance and solace, the more they betrayed her.

She realized that she had been identified with her mind's

soap opera, a story being created and edited on-the-go by her anxiety and imagination. Behind these mental states, she now became aware of the sense of awareness that was in turn aware of the screen through which these mental states moved like images. This *screen of awareness* was unchanged neither by the content of her mind's soap opera at the moment nor by the components that gave rise to these mental states: thoughts, feelings, memories, etc. Each mental state was like a color in a rainbow that gave vivid intensity to the rainbow but in reality was just a mirage. The awareness that she now experienced was free of all mental states, and there was no impulse to alter it or take charge of it.



And now she could choose her freedom from the fleeting mind states by giving up her inner resistance to the outward situation. Wanting no permanent mental state to cling to, she decided right then to make peace with the reality of her own life. *For the first time, she began to feel life in the here and now! The “here and now” was not where she was physically or what she was doing. It was a sense of being alive and free to choose life over death.*

“The doctor is now ready to see you, ma’am,” a voice announced.

As Naomi lifted herself up, she smelled roses. And she noticed that next to where she sat was a flower vase of lovely fresh roses. It seemed to fill her with a reassuring presence, something that she dared not interpret through her intellect. With that reassurance came a sense of faith that no matter what the results of her medical examination were, she would always be fine. As she opened the door to the doctor’s office, she radiated a self-assurance that brought a surge of energy to the physician’s routine day. The doctor noticed it and thought to himself that surely this was not a dying woman. She was not close to death, but open to life!

INQUIRY, THE GPS ON THE PATH



Why is it that so many people go through life and death situations but never experience the transformational moment like Naomi did? Or even if they do, why do they then go back to their normal life and get stuck in its patterns? What is it that causes us to make that shift in our life to that state of Free Mind?

On several occasions, I have sought answers to the eternal verities of life. I have had questions on the nature of my life and beyond, questions which no form of answer could satisfy. *Who am I? Is there a purpose to our life? If I am really going to die one day, what is the purpose of living life? What is the path to freedom from our struggles and foreboding demise?* I have seen this same inner inquiry behind the nervous smiles of my fellow global citizens. These sorts of inquiries run through most of our minds, but we find them too discomforting to let them linger or to engage deeper. In one way or

another, we go about justifying the “carpe diem” attitude of our life.

The more serious ones among us seek relief in science, religion, spirituality, social groups, psychological therapies, philosophy, and so forth. The price we generally pay for such relief is that we give up this spirit of inquiry to directly understand life and the deeper cravings within ourselves. “The unexamined life is not worth living,” said Socrates. And it is this very “unexamined life” that is at the core of all our mental suffering. It is the very thing we keep escaping from.

Investigation, interest, curiosity and discernment are some of the words most commonly referred to, both in Western philosophies and in Eastern contemplative teachings, to describe the inquiring quality of the mind. The *spirit of inquiry* was extolled by Socrates, who ultimately gave up his life for it. But centuries prior to that, this spirit of inquiry had established a tradition among Eastern contemplatives to cocoon themselves in solitude in order to engage in such inquiry without any distractions. Chief among such inquirers was a young prince who later became the Buddha.

But this book is not dedicated to the teachings of Buddha or any of the Eastern contemplatives. Nor is it about the dialogues and logic of Socrates and other Western philosophers. However, it is worth acknowledging that common to all of them was the spirit of inquiry. That is the real “ancient wisdom” we can hope to bring into addressing modern society’s condition.

In today’s age, whenever we have a question of any sort,

the impulse is to turn to Google or YouTube. Before we know it, we are led down the rabbit hole, chasing one hyperlink after another. Finding answers can be consoling to the intellect, but it douses the spirit of inquiry, of a mind that is inherently capable of insights. This spirit of inquiry, which gets kindled and sets us on our own journey, is generally suppressed when we seek security in any teachings or teachers. The inspiration or pointers from any teachings or philosophies, whether ancient or modern, can only be relevant when we engage in such inquiries on our own.

Inquiry happens at many levels, all of them valuable. Most forms of inquiry in the world today are related to academic study or a kind of analysis based on scientific theories. Reasoning that comes from right thinking has one benefit in that it allows us to not be caught up in blind religious faith or to be swayed by our own emotions. So while such reasoning is helpful, it has minimal transformative effect on individuals. Study of any kind helps when we can move to the next stage of inquiry, which is about understanding our deeper nature and the realities of our lives, the kind of inquiry Socrates championed.

Such individual experimentations conducted on one's own mind and body are often termed "practices." When practices are used to discover our own nature and awareness, we have then successfully ventured into other forms of inquiry. Ultimately, inquiry in all its various stages is the essence of every field of study and discipline. But for philosophers, spiritual practitioners and those in pursuit of

inner freedom, harnessing the right quality of inquiry can be a direct path to freedom.

TRANSFORMATION VS. REPLICATION

TRANSFORMATION IN OUR COMMUNITIES



Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.

~ Albert Einstein

“Can you see how you are absorbed in your thinking?”

A pause.

“Can you *now* see that you are attempting to control your thinking and thereby creating another kind of stress?”

These words by a meditation teacher in Thailand jolted me.

“Is she reading my mind, or is she projecting her own impressions and mental state onto me?” I wondered.

My childhood years in the East, particularly in India, had given me enough exposure and caution toward what

skeptics in the West dismissively regard as “woo-woo.” Yet the ability to see and feel the mental and emotional states of others, as I have come to learn over the years, is not a psychic or occult ability. While it does take training to be able to accurately mirror the mental states of others without adding our own judgment, such training is not some kind of “New Age” stuff, either. *It is, in fact, a quality of awareness that is inherent in most people. It is essentially what makes us human.* Neuroscientist V. S. Ramachandran explores this notion further in *The Tell-Tale Brain*. Elaborating on the scientific breakthrough research on “mirror neurons,” Ramachandran points out that these brain cells “lie at the heart of our ability to adopt each other’s point of view and empathize with one another.”

There is, however, another facet to this mirror neuron effect.

Over the years of living in monastic communities, as I shall detail in the next chapter, it was obvious to me that not only was I sensitive to the mental states, moods and emotions of others, but that it affected my own mental state as well. Sometimes this was felt energetically in my own body, and at other times as the reflection of other’s mental states on my own mind, I found that unless I was highly alert to this, I would be helplessly reacting to others. Passing someone in the community kitchen who was angry, I could feel their anger. Meeting a visitor on monastery grounds who was filled with gratitude, I could feel the joy of gratitude within my own heart. It seemed that some areas within my own mental makeup responded to a greater extent to others’

emotions while some other areas, or qualities that were less developed, seemed less responsive.

As I became aware of my growing ability to feel and see through the mental and emotional states of others, from close friends to stone-faced strangers, I realized that this process was making me aware of my own mind states and mental patterns as well. In neurological terms, Ramachandran describes this as a “mirror-neuron system being ‘bent back’ on itself full-circle,” resulting in the co-evolution of “self-awareness and other-awareness.”

MIRROR NEURON & MEME EFFECT IN MODERN SOCIETY

Communities that support one another can thus serve as an effective mirror for their residents. Residents who are receptive and sensitive to this quality of the mind begin to see clearly the areas in their lives that need to be transformed. They become more self-aware as their awareness of others' mental and emotional states develops. Partners and families seeking to learn and grow together can also relate to this healthy mirroring effect. In the domain of faith-inspired social service, such as Mother Teresa's communities, this ability to feel for others is closely linked with one's own inner growth and freedom.

But living in a community, or being in a relationship or part of an organization, also has the danger of influencing us toward unhealthy mind states and habits, or the danger of reinforcing preexisting but erroneous thinking patterns

within us (which we briefly explored in the chapter “Escape from Pain”). Psychologist and author Susan Blackmore attributes this effect to memes, a term originally coined by Richard Dawkins. She writes, “Memes are habits, skills, behaviors, or stories that are copied from person to person by imitation. Like genes, memes compete to be copied, but instead of being chemicals locked inside cells, they are information that jumps from brain to brain, or from brain to computers, books and works of art. The winning memes spread across the world, shaping our minds and cultures as they go.”

This may explain why as a society and civilization, we still seem to fall short of Ramachandran’s theory that our brains are “uniquely hardwired for empathy and compassion.” Despite the mirror neuron effect that Ramachandran concludes creates reciprocity in humans between self-awareness and other-awareness, we can see that this element of empathy and altruism seems limited in our society. At some level, it may even appear that we carry some kind of a “sociopath meme” that makes us self-centric and less aware of others around us, as seen in the highly competitive environment of modern society, especially in urban areas. “Other awareness,” or an expanded state of awareness, seems not just unfathomable but also undesirable. When we step back and look at this from an evolutionary perspective, it makes one wonder whether we have evolved at all from the jungle psyche of “survival of the fittest.” Maybe not at a primal level, but at a psychological level such a perspective still appears to keep us on our toes in a world

where security is equated with wealth, possessions, university degrees, recognition, etc. It is perhaps explained better by the “selfish gene theory,” which attributes our competitive spirit to the genes within us that want to replicate themselves, and this spreads like a virus within the society (of course the genes referred to here are not biological but mental and used as an analogy for memes).

Anxiety and stress have thus indirectly served as leverage in modern civilization in chasing after goals and possessions, hoping that through them we can make a permanent claim on security and our sense of self. But the frenzy of seeking security rarely stops even when we gain all the necessities we need. In some cases we attempt to accumulate enough material success and wealth to also sustain our family members and the generations after us. Embedded in this notion of self is a mental pattern of greedily hoarding in the fear of what tomorrow may or may not bring. Along with accruing a nest egg, we are most vulnerable to accruing “diseased” patterns of stress, anxieties and conflicts.

This became evident to me in my interactions with various entrepreneurs, executives and Hollywood artistes over the years. Most of them acknowledged the deep discontent in their lives and the insecurity in their minds, despite all their wealth and success. (Recent studies have shown that on average, wealthy people tend to be less happy.) Very few understand that conditioned into their psyche by society is the constant craving to gain more, which is the cause of much of their suffering. By contrast, I have lived in monasteries where food is scarce at times and the roof is barely

held together. Yet many of the people had such inner freedom in their life of simplicity (not that they are completely free of their inner craving tendencies). For instance, when one visits or lives with those in smaller towns, developing or underdeveloped nations, it is apparent that these people value their families, friends, and human relations as a means of security rather than material assets. These people somehow seem to be friendlier and happier, despite being financially stretched. They are more willing to give and share their fewer resources with others.

The Meme of Commercialization & Monetization

The modern trends of commercialization and privatization are prevalent not just in capitalist nations like the U.S., but also in communist and socialist model nations such as China and India. For instance, making profits from treating those who suffer physically or mentally, as in medical treatment, has come to be an accepted norm. Even spiritual training and teaching, which over generations has been given away, has not survived the “virus of monetization” in today’s society. Nipun Mehta, the founder of Service Space, describes this problem: “We have three big sectors. The private sector is rooted in extrinsic motivations like money, power and fame. On the other end, we have the voluntary sector that is rooted in very intrinsic sort of motivations – compassion, knowledge, purpose. And then there is the public sector that is supposed to regulate between the two and work on both sides of the aisle. This is how it is sup-

posed to work in theory. In practice, though, the private sector starts to take over. In fact, it starts to dominate.”

In *Sacred Economics*, Charles Eisenstein notes how the use of money has shifted from the “ancient gift economies to modern capitalism” and “contributed to alienation, competition and scarcity, destroyed community and necessitated endless growth.” Because we are caught in this delusion of being a separate self, Eisenstein writes, all our actions are toward serving this distinct entity of self that is disconnected from the rest of the world. And as a society, that is the story we have been telling ourselves.

Very few of us want to consider the matter seriously, as it calls upon us to extend our awareness beyond our self and our families, and into our communities and beyond. We are pressed on a daily basis with concerns like how to burn off all the extra calories we consume or how to equip our children with a competitive edge over their peers. But going by the plight of mental health in developed nations, it’s obvious something is not working and the future we are striving toward seems less secure. We can hope we somehow escape the fate of the many who succumb to mental health problems and modern-day “dis-eases.” Or we just use such examples as becoming smarter, getting better insurance coverage and investing in better retirement funds. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with these things, the point is that we are ignoring the root of the problem – the very sources of comfort that we think will make us happier cause many of our troubles and conflicts, both within ourselves and within society. The more we attempt to secure

our future and hoard for tomorrow, the more “dis-eased” we are as a society, still caught up in our primal fear for survival.

For transformation to come about in society at large, we have to deconstruct our notions of self rather than enhance them. Just as giving an unconditional gift to someone is an act of selflessness and a leap of faith, letting go of our belief in monetary transactions and rewards is a process of discovering true freedom within ourselves. It is the shift from seeking security in a world that measures growth and prosperity by outer standards rather than each individual’s interconnectedness with others.

In such a society, the external influence would then be healthy enough to prod every individual naturally and consciously in a process of co-evolving awareness of self and awareness of environment. While transformation at an individual level is important, we each have the responsibility to create and sustain an ethical environment that can adopt transformational values. Not hoarding more than our needs, not spreading negativity over the Internet and social media, and prioritizing and supporting life skills training (as discussed in the previous chapter) are all individual and group commitments toward building an ecology that truly supports, rather than destroys one another out of insecurity and fear.

Education and training in values and ethics have historically been the responsibility of churches and religious communities. However, the challenge of organized religions is that they create another kind of “meme effect” to counter civilization’s meme effect. At a sociocultural level, such

replacing of one belief or behavioral pattern with another does not lead to the state of Free Mind. Take, for instance, the practice of giving and generosity, as extolled in the proverbial context of religions. Most philanthropists who are motivated to donate based on gaining admiration or of being redeemed only gain another form of identity or a “feel-good” sense of self-worthiness. True acts of freedom in today’s society, where resources are scattered unevenly, arise from inquiry into one’s real needs and understanding the “dis-eased” state of the greedy mind.