

Meditation Without Bullshit

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Meditation Without Bullshit

A Guide for Rational Men

Aaron S. Elias

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To A. S. Y.

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Preface

The popularity of the New Age movement can be easily explained by the natural aversion of the common herd towards critical thinking. However, for anyone with a rational bone in his body, anything coming out of that corner is of little appeal. In the case of meditation, this is an unfortunate state of affairs. Instead of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, this book attempts to present meditation in a clear and methodological manner that is suitable for everyone with a strong dislike of the spirituality business.

I have written this book primarily for men who are interested in meditation but not receptive to how meditation is commonly taught. This is precisely where I am coming from as well. I do not want to systematically exclude women, however. Quite the opposite is the case. Yet, I have found that women are a lot more tolerant towards fluffy spiritual concepts, no matter how far-fetched they may

be. On the other hand, men seem to be easily put off when confronted with spiritual language, rituals that do not make much sense, or meditation gurus who are overly concerned with fostering a cult of personality.

My first encounter with meditation has been distinctly negative. As a teenager, I had come across video footage of a Japanese Zen monastery. I found it intriguing to learn that monks dedicate a very large part of their waking hours to meditation, with the goal of cultivating a clear mind. However, as I went through a few places that offered meditation in the city I was living in, I was exposed to a culture and worldview that seemed rather foreign, to put it mildly. I encountered cult-like group dynamics, people talking about chakras, the third eye, and the obvious need to donate money to keep their little cult group going. In one group, nobody was able to properly sit in the lotus position. In another, people ended the evening by going to a bar and getting drunk. In a third, it seemed meditation was merely an extended prelude to smoking weed and trying to hook up.

As off-putting as those encounters may have been, my personal experience with meditation has always been very positive. I quickly drew the conclusion that meditation is a viable way of learning how to lead a more focused life. Of course, this does not mean that you have to shed all worldly

desires. My encounters with practitioners, on the other hand, could not have been more negative. I only met one group that was serious, incidentally in a monastery in the South of Germany. In order to stay afloat, they offered Zen retreats that were marketed to middle managers and executives. My encounters with the monks running that place were eye-opening. Seldom have I met people as serene as those. However, as I was unwilling to join the monastery, unable to pay for the expensive weekend courses they offered, and dissatisfied with the various spiritual groups I had easy access to, I had to find my own way.

At the time of writing, I have more than twenty years of practicing my own variant of meditation under my belt. I managed to reach an unusual level of calmness and detachment. People frequently remark how centered, calm and unfazed I appear. Mental clarity is rather beneficial indeed. In this book, I am going to share my personal practice, point out pitfalls I encountered, and provide you with a roadmap.

I am reluctant to put a label on my version of meditation. It is inspired by Zen meditation, zazen, but it is significantly less ritualistic. My initial exposure to meditation was via shikantaza, which is a variant of zazen. Yet, due to my highly analytical background, I stripped it of any resemblance of New Age thinking and superstitions. If you so will,

you are welcome to refer to my school as *Meditation Without Bullshit*. Please excuse the profanity, but considering what people in the spirituality business hawk, bullshit is the most fitting description of it. I hope to rectify that situation to some degree with my book.

Aaron S. Elias