

# Breathing in, sorting out

RELIANCE BROADCAST NETWORK CEO TARUN KATIAL EXPLAINS WHY AN ANCIENT MEDITATION TECHNIQUE OFFERS HIM CONVENIENT CATHARSIS

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**T**he broadcast of an evening radio show comes alive inside a studio at one corner of the Reliance Broadcast Network office. Posters of popular Hindi serials papered across the spacious and colourful workplace stand testament to the success achieved by this media house. As the man at the helm of this firm walks out of a meeting, his office informs him of more meetings, appointments and of the several people waiting to see him.

Evidently, Reliance Broadcast Network CEO Tarun Katial is a very busy man. How then, does he handle his never-ending workload? "I practice a meditation technique called vipassana to keep work stress at

bay," says Katial. A foldable cushioned jute mat on the windowsill in his cabin serves as evidence.

"I was initiated into the practice in 2003 by my aunt, Yashodhara Oberoi. My first 10-day residential course at the Vipassana Research Institute in Igatpuri was a life-changing experience that brought a sense of stability in my outlook towards life," says 39-year-old Katial, who practices vipassana daily for at least an hour.

Katial then went on to attend around 12 additional sessions at the Igatpuri centre and at another in Gorai, a west Mumbai Suburb. A regular at most of the weekend sessions at these centres, Katial believes that the practice has helped him stay grounded and deal with what he calls self-created pressure.

Vipassana is taught at these centres via audio-visual instructions and requires the learners to not communicate with each other at all. While this could seem challenging for some, the entertainment sector executive managed just fine. "It's a good practice because everyone is going through their own mental catharsis. The course is like a mental dry-cleaning process. I didn't find the 'not communicating' part much difficult because I don't speak that much even otherwise."

Katial has visited several vipassana centres abroad as well. When asked about his most memorable meditation experience, he reminisces about his visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon in April last year. "That was Guruji's (meditation guru SN Goenka, who

introduced the meditation technique to India) last visit to this Pagoda before he passed away. We travelled to the monastery in Burma where he had attained enlightenment and meditated there. It was an enriching experience."

For Katial, vipassana has played an important role in dealing with stress and anxiety at work at a time when work-life balance remains an elusive concept. "I have managed to inspire several people in my family and my team to start practicing vipassana," he says. "People often have a misconception that to begin this course, you need mental stability or you do this only because you have some issues. This is not a medicine for our problems. It is a way of life," he adds.

When he's not meditating, Katial is busy catching up with his favourite TV series. "Currently, I am hooked on to the political drama series *Saath Nibanda Saath* and I also try to stay updated with *Suits* and *How To Get Away With Murder*."

Though Katial aims to attempt longer and more rigorous courses of vipassana in future, only time will tell if this leads him on the path to enlightenment. **OB**

