SUMMARY

Nowadays, human beings are living in the modern world in which one is entertained with all the wonderful advancements of science, technology and civilization providing the abundantly material life. However, individual cannot find eternal peace and true happiness. Unsatisfactory statuses as: stress, fear, anxiety, loneliness, meaninglessness, increasingly arises at an alarming level. Fear and worry are born of the imaginings of a mind that is influenced by worldly conditions. Modern life is an age of rush and speed. Tension is everywhere. Most carry with them an atmosphere of stress. Almost of people are mostly pictures of rush and worry. Rarely they find a picture of calm, content and repose in any of these faces. Such is the modern world, Susant De, a historian described this situation such as: “Civilization brings danger as well as achievement – if there is such a thing as progress, there must so also be possibility of regress,” It is also known that in the superpower industrialized countries, the most chronic diseases are not economic but are ‘stress’ - a psychological crisis in the modern time. On the contrary, in the underdeveloped countries, and developing countries, the crisis consists of both: economic crisis and psychological crisis. And Venerable Piyadassi affirms that: People are searching for solutions to their various problems in vain because their approach, their method, is wrong. They think all problems can be solved externally. Most of the problems, however, are internal. They spring from the world within, and so the solution, too, is to be sought within.

Living being who is living in the world expects himself to be healthy and well-being in both body and mind - The body free from the common cold to cancer such as headache, back pain, heart attack, AIDS, stomach ulcers, tuberculosis, cancer, etc. and the mind is calm, quiet, and happy. Thus, health is very important matter that should be noted by everyone. Therefore, Vietnamese proverb has a sentence: “Health is better than wealth.” (Thanh, 1988). And according to World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease. Health may also be defined as a perfect state of equilibrium of body and mind, where all the physiological activities take
place without impairment or disturbance. This definition affirms that health is a positive, multidimensional state that involves three major dimensions: physical health, psychological health, and social as well as spiritual health. However, there are many factorial groups that may influence various domains of health in a positive or negative manner, but meditation in general and vipassana meditation in particular has far reaching consequences on overall well being of an individual.

VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION

Vipassana meditation is one of India's most ancient meditation techniques. It was discovered more than 2500 years ago by Gotama the Buddha and was taught by him as a universal remedy for universal ills. During the Buddha's time, large numbers of people in India were freed from the bonds of suffering by practicing Vipassana, allowing them to attain high levels of achievement in all spheres of life.

After getting enlightenment under Bodhi Tree in Bodh-gaya, the Buddha began to teach the methods of meditation, which were based on his own experiences, to his disciples as mentioned in the Nikāyas. They consist of two types, namely, Tranquility meditation (Samatha) and Insight meditation (Vipassana).

Tranquility meditation (Samatha meditation) is the concentration of mind on a single object, which makes mind calm. By practising Tranquility meditation (Samatha meditation), one's mind can get rid of all defilements. As long as the mind is engaged in meditation, it is free from all defilements and the person will remain happy and peaceful.

Vipassana is a meditation term or a dhamma term and is a combination of two words namely, ‘vi’ is one word, and ‘passanā’ is the other. Here ‘vi’ means the three characteristics of mentality and physicality; i.e., impermanence, suffering and no-self, or non-ego, while ‘passanā’ means right understanding or realization through deep concentration which is attained by means of mindfulness of the mental and physical processes. So, Vipassanā means realization or right understanding of the three characteristics of mentality and physicality.

By practising vipassanā meditation, mind of a person can be purified of defilements i.e., lust, ill will, ignorance and so on. Certain defilements that have been
destroyed by means of Vipassanā do not come back to him, in other words, when he experiences insight knowledge that experience will not disappear or will not be lost.

The purpose of Vipassanā meditation is to attain not only some degree of concentration but also the understanding of bodily and mental processes as they really are. And its result is the attainment of Enlightenment, Nibbāna.

The Buddha explains the importance of tranquility meditation and insight meditation in this way: “Two things, monks, should be developed for the understanding of sensuality, ill will and delusion...what two? Tranquility and Insight meditation, these two things should be developed for the abandonment, extinction and cessation of sensuality, ill will and delusion.

THE METHOD OF PRACTICING

In order to get best result in practising, the practitioner should understand clearly and be aware of the steps of practising in a methodical way.

The first step, one has to take a vow to observe certain rules of moral conduct (sīla). These are:

1. Abstention from killing
2. Abstention from stealing
3. Abstention from sexual misconduct
4. Abstention from lying
5. Abstention from taking any intoxicant

Any violation of these rules is bound to agitate and defile the mind. An agitated mind cannot proceed on the path of truth, the path of self-exploration. The observance of rules of moral conduct (sīla) is, therefore, the foundation for the practice of vipassanā. This first step itself is likely to initiate a positive change in one's life.

The knowledge of his posture is the next step one has to prepare before practising meditation. That is one goes to a root of tree, a quite room, or a meditation hall and then sits down on a thick well-wadded cushion, with his dress and belt loosely adjusted about his body. He sits cross-legged or half cross-legged. He places
the right hand over the left leg with its palm up and over this has the left hand, while the thumbs press against each other over the palm.

The practitioner raises the whole body slowly and quietly and moves it repeatedly to the left and to the right, backward and forward, until the proper seat and straight posture are obtained. He does not lean too much to one side, left or right, forward or backward. His spinal columns stand erect with the head. Do not sit too upright or rigid, for then he will feel uncomfortable for long time. The main thing is the ears and shoulders, noses and navel stand to each other in one vertical place. The tongue rests against the upper palate and the lips and teeth are firmly closed. The eyes can close or open slightly.

When the position is steadied and the breathing becomes regular, he will now assume a somewhat relaxed attitude. He is not concerned with ideas good or bad. When a thought is awakened there is awareness; when there is awareness, the point is missed. When the exercise is kept up steadily and for a sufficient length of time, disturbing thoughts will naturally cease and there will prevail a state of oneness. That is the procedure/technique of practising Vipassanā meditation.

Vipassanā Meditation -The Four Foundation of Mindfulness - is the way leading to peace and happiness. If he practises well and does not worry about it too much, he acquires not only the lightness of the body but also the briskness of spirit, which finally brings about the clarification of the consciousness. The Four Foundation of Mindfulness is the contemplation of the body, the contemplation of feelings, the contemplation of the mind, and the contemplation of mind-object.

As stated earlier, there is a merit in the notion that vipassana meditation may have significant role in many fields of psychology. In order to check its role in health psychology present study has been designed. This study is directed towards a critical analysis of the effects vipassanā meditation on some of the measures of the physical health, psychological health, and social health with one group in a pre and post design with following title: “Effect of Vipassanā Meditation on Health”. The investigator framed following objectives of the study:
1. To study and compare the effect of vipassanā meditation on physical health of the participants.

2. To examine and compare the effect of vipassanā meditation on psychological health of the participants.

3. To investigate and compare the effect of vipassanā meditation on Social and spiritual health of the participants.

Based on a review of contemporary literature in the field of effect of vipassanā meditation on physical health, psychological health, and social and spiritual health, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There would be a significant positive effect of vipassanā meditation on physical health of the participants.

2. There would be a significant positive effect of vipassanā meditation on psychological health of the participants.

3. There would be a significant positive effect of vipassanā meditation on social and spiritual health of the participants.

The present investigation was intended to study effect of vipassanā meditation on health. The following design and methodology were used to fulfill the objectives of the study:

The ‘before and after’ experimental designs were employed to study effect of vipassanā meditation on physical health, psychological health and social as well as spiritual health. The experimental groups were tested on the above variables both before and after they were exposed to the one course on vipassanā meditation of 10 days duration. For this purpose, various standardized tools/ questionnaires were administered to the practitioners at both conditions (before and after vipassanā meditation). The collection of data was carried out in a quite, disciplined and experimentally controlled manner with the help of volunteers that were mostly practitioners themselves.

For the present study, a total sample of 100 participants (male = 50 and female = 50) were selected on the basis of availability from vipassana meditation training camps. The selected sample consisted of persons from India and other
Summary
- 149 -
countries all over the world such as America, Australia, Canada, Bhutan, Germany, Russia, Sri-lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam etc. All the subjects were able to understand the language of tests/scales adequately. Most of the selected participants were undergoing vipassanā training first time. The age range of the sample was 16 to 70 years with a mean age of 36.97 years.

Instrumentations

The following tools were used in the present investigation:

i. Personal Data Blank Sheet

This consists of information regarding the subject’s name, age, sex, educational qualification, employment status, marital status etc.

ii. Tools for the Assessment of the Effect of Vipassanā Meditation on Physical Health include:

1. Blood Pressure (Automatic Inflation Blood Pressure and Heart Rate Monitor)
2. Heart Rate (Automatic Inflation Blood Pressure and Heart Rate Monitor)
3. Body Temperature (Thermometer)
4. Body Mass Index (Weighing Machine and Height Metre Scale)

iii. Tools for the Assessment of the Effect of Vipassanā Meditation on Psychological Health include:

1. Oxford Happiness scale (Argyle, 2001)
2. Subjective well being inventory (Sell and Nagpal, 1998)
3. State-trait anger inventory (Spielberger, 1988)
4. Anger expression inventory (Spielberger, 1988)

iv. Tools for the Assessment of the Effect of Vipassanā Meditation on Social and Spiritual Health:

1. Social health scale (Nevid, Rathus and Rubenstein, 1998)
2. Spiritual health scale (Nevid, Rathus and Rubenstein, 1998)
As reported above the present investigation was basically aimed at finding out the effect of vipassana meditation on health. For this purpose, a sample of 100 subjects (aged 16-70 years) was selected from persons who practice vipassana meditation. For the data collection, a personal data blank sheet; physical health such as blood pressure, heart rate, body mass index, body temperature would be obtained to assess the physical health; psychological health such as oxford happiness scale, subjective well being inventory, state-trait anger inventory, anger expression inventory; social health and spiritual health scale were administered individually in a random order to all the subjects in two testing sessions by adopting standard procedural method. The obtained scores were statistically analyzed by using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), and inferential statistics (t values), using SPSS for Windows.

It is evident from the obtained results that the mean values of BMI on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 22.38 kg/m²; after practicing VM is 21.38 kg/m². The mean values of HR on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 75.86 bpm; after practicing VM is 71.52 bpm. The mean values of body temperature on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 36.49°C; after practicing VM is 36.90°C. The mean values of systolic (BP) on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 106.93 mm Hg; after practicing VM is 119.58 mm Hg. The mean values of diastolic (BP) on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 69.79 mm Hg; after practicing VM is 81.91. The mean values of happiness on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 45.98; after practicing VM is 59.16. The mean values of well being on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 40.71, after practicing VM is 43.88. The mean values of ill being on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 45.03, after practicing VM is 38.33. The mean values of subjective well being on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 85.74; after practicing VM is 82.21. The mean values of state anger on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 14.00; after practicing VM is 11.74. The mean values of trait anger on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 17.97; after practicing VM is 15.81. The mean values of anger expression on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 21.23, after practicing VM is
18.31. The mean values of spiritual health on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 23.89; after practicing VM is 27.38. The mean values of social health on total participants (N=100) before attending VM is 23.01; after practicing VM is 26.77. As the above obtained results, the mean values of BMI, heart rate, body temperature, systolic (BP), diastolic (BP), happiness, well being, ill being, subjective well being, state anger, trait anger, anger expression, spiritual and social health have been influenced significantly as well as positively in the participants. Thus, it can be concluded that VM did have a positive effect on physical, psychological, social and spiritual health in its all the selected one hundred participants.

As pointed out earlier, vipassana is a Buddhist system of meditation seeking increased awareness of the mind. During the meditation a particular person tries to concentrate his mind and he is supposed to be mentally more active. Though bodily he is very much quiet, neuropsychologically he becomes more active and attentive. On the other hand, increased neurohumoral activity in the blood suggests that they were neurophysiologically more attentive and were in a state of increased activity. When the mind is concentrated, one has regular breathing and regular pulse (heartbeat) and made his body temperature as normal. At that time, the body is relaxed, the mind is happy, calm, peaceful and harmonious. While the body is relaxed, the mind is happy, calm, peaceful, and harmonious, it has a regulatory effect on blood pressure in most of the cases. Thus, the above type of meditation appears to reduce the quantum of stress resulting into lowered metabolic changes in the body. And vipassana meditation keeps a balance between wind, bile, and phlegm in his body. Vipassana meditation results in inhaling more oxygen and consuming less energy. It has been found to have beneficial effects on heart and lungs and an increase in longevity. Besides, the restricted vegetarian diet during the course of meditation with decreased physical activity might be responsible for a significantly lowered rate of BMI in participants. Most of the psycho-physical parameters have significantly changed towards the positive direction after attending the vipassana meditation course.
The most distinctive feature of this technique is non-sectarian and open to all without any consideration of race, caste, religion or nationality. In this way applicability of vipassana meditation is across the cultures and countries.

The ultimate goal of vipassana meditation is to attain Enlightenment, Nibbāna. Vipassana meditation is a technique which has a very practical approach. It not only helps him to pass through the vicissitudes of life in a detached way, but it also promotes social well-being. It is, therefore, a science, not only of self-development but also of social development. It is an art of living whereby he learns to live in peace and harmony with himself and with others as well. The findings recommend that courses on vipassana meditation may be consistently organized in learning, working and living places.