Man needs rest and peace of mind, which means and includes living a fully life. The best means of attaining the peace of mind is meditation. The main objects of Buddhist meditation is the realization of the ultimate goal of life leading to Nibbāna. Experience, however, proves that the process of meditation inevitable involves the importance of the two aspects of present-day life, namely, acquisition of mental equilibrium and of physical fitness.

A man who has practiced Buddhist meditation is able to make quick decisions, correct and sound judgment and concerted effort-mental capabilities which definitely contribute to success in life. And at the same time, by the same process of purification of mind, the physical body becomes cleansed and physical fitness is ensured. To attain these objectives, the correct method or technique of meditation is essential.

The Buddha gave us certain criteria to enable us to distinguish Vipassanā from non-Vipassanā. These criteria are in the form of the qualities of Vipassanā and are six in number: "

Clearly expounded is the teaching of the exalted one; to be seen for oneself, given results here and now, inviting one to come and see, leading straight to the goal, capable of being realized for himself by any average intelligent person."1

Of these qualities, let’s take a closer look at the features of ehipassiko “inviting one to come and see” and see how this quality of Vipassanā is currently affecting the spread of Vipassanā.

Around the world today we are witnessing a great surge of enthusiasm for Vipassanā as more and more people come in contact with it Via Vipassanā meditation. Centers are arising and more and more courses are being conducted, as old students who have grown in Vipassanā and have experienced its benefits wish to share it with others. It is significant to note that this movement continues to spread, much as it must have in the Buddha’s time, by word of mouth from individual to individual and not through any public relations campaign.

What is it that continues to attract people on a personal level to the practice of Vipassanā? What accounts for today’s surge of interest in meditation in ever-increasing number of people around the world?

Of the many answers to these questions, one springs forth from the above mentioned qualities of Vipassanā: that is ehi-passiko, whereby once having tasted pure Vipassanā a meditator feels an irresistible urge to tell friends and family how good it is, how much it has helped him. This usually takes the form of urging them, for their own good, not to come and believe, but to come and see for themselves the beneficial results of Vipassanā.

Another perhaps more powerful aspect of ehi-passiko appears to be at work in the world now, and it is this feature which, I think, accounts for the present snowballing spread of Vipassanā meditation. This feature resides in each student’s behaviour and the quality of his or her interaction with other people in society. As meditators have become more and more established in Sīla, Samādhi and Pañña (moral conduct, control of the mind, concentration, insight) the students themselves become agents of the spread of Vipassanā, promoting it to others...

---

1 Vipassanā Literally, to see in a special way; introspection, insight which purifies the mind; specifically insight into the impermanent, suffering, and egoless nature of mental physical structure. Vipassanā bhāvana, the systematic development of insight through the meditation technique of observing the reality of oneself by observing sensations within the body.

2 Pañña means the sense of understanding in many ways (pa-jīmāna). It surpasses perception (saññā) and consciousness, or awareness (vijjā), in knowing an object in all respects and reaching the path of deliverance. Perception only perceives an object in its colour, shape, and form, but it is unable to understand its intrinsic nature. Awareness, here corresponding to intellect, can understand an object in its colour, shape, and form, and also its intrinsic nature, but it cannot reach the manifestation of the path: Full knowledge knows the object, knows its intrinsic nature or characteristics, and reaches the path. Hence it is
and wisdom), a concomitant change in their attitudes and values has certainly taken place. All reasonable people place much more importance on how a person acts rather than on what one says or espouses. Today as more and more meditators settle down into the business of raising families and assuming responsible roles in society, those behaviour all changes fashioned by their experience and growth in Vipassana will surely be the beacons which attract others to come out of darkness.

Now this is not to say that all meditators are automatically shining examples of Vipassana; but if they are practicing properly then another two qualities of Vipassana will also be operating. One is opaneyyiko, i.e., that the Vipassana is a straight path on which no effort, no step is wasted as each step brings one closer to the goal. Another quality is akāliko, whereby the fruits of Vipassana are experienced here and now at each stage along the path. This being so, the Vipassana is then beneficial in the beginning, beneficial in the middle and beneficial in the end. We all know what a struggle it is to maintain sila, and to keep our samādhi, what it is to maintain the delicate balance of mind in a world blinded by ignorance and addicted to greed and hatred. What can it be that keeps us pressing on, other than the continuous reinforcement inherent in the Vipassana as each effort bears fruit here and now? We have seen these fruits ripen in time and become manifest in ways that, while setting us apart from the many unwholesome aspects of the world, grant us the inner strength and peace of mind to be different.

1 Said: "pajāñjana atithena patta, in the sense of super-understanding or understanding in many ways, that is patta." Majjhima-nikāya, Vol. I, P. 292.

1 Samādhi concentration, control of one's own mind. The second of the three trainings by which the Noble Eightfold Path is practiced. When cultivated as an end in itself, it leads to the attainment of mental absorption (jhāna), but not to total liberation of the mind. Three types of samādhi are: (1) khamika samādhi, momentary concentration, concentration maintained from moment to moment. (2) Upacāra samādhi, 'neighbourhood' concentration, of a level approaching a state of absorption. (3) appanā samādhi, attainment concentration, a state of mental absorption (jhāna). Of these, khamika samādhi is sufficient preparation in order to be able to begin the practice of Vipassana.
These fruits of Vipassanā are nowhere more vividly displayed than in the development of our own perfections. These ennobling qualities of generosity, virtue, patience, self-sacrifice, industriousness, truthfulness, determination, compassion, equanimity and wisdom each become strengthened by continued practice, and each by its very nature becomes an observable phenomenon in our daily lives for all to see. It is in these fruits of Vipassanā that the most powerful aspect of ehi-passiko resides. They say to all: “Here is something good, something for our welfare, something for us to aspire to.” Sometimes as old students we lost sight of just how much we have changed, and we take these fruits for granted. But each of us has only to reflect on our own lives before coming to the Vipassanā and the direction we were headed in at that time, to know what a great change has taken place for the better.

He, who has by the practice of Buddhist meditation passed into the four streams of sanctity and enjoyed the four fruitions, can appreciate the six attributes of the Dhamma, namely: ¹

(1) The Vipassanā ² is not the result of conjecture or speculation, but the result of personal attainments, and it is precise in every respect.

(2) The Vipassanā produces beneficial results here and now for those who practice it in accordance with the techniques evolved by the Buddha.

(3) The effect of Vipassanā on the person practising it is immediate in that it has the quality of simultaneously removing the causes of suffering with the understanding of the truth of suffering.

(4) The Vipassanā can stand the test of those who are anxious to do so. They can know for themselves what the benefits are.

² Dhamma. Phenomenon; object of mind; nature; natural law; law of liberation, i.e., teaching of an enlightened person.
(5) The Vipassanā is part of one's own self, and is therefore susceptible of ready investigation.

(6) The fruits of Vipassanā can be fully experienced by the eight types of noble disciples.¹

The fruits of meditation are innumerable. They are embodied in the discourse on the advantages of a samaṇa's life (sāmaṇāṇaphala sutta). The very object of becoming a samaṇa or monk is to follow strictly and diligently the Noble Eightfold Path and enjoy not only the Fruits (phala) of sotāpatti, saḍgāmi, anāgāmi and arahata, but also to develop many kinds of faculties. Anyone who takes to meditation to gain insight into the ultimate truth also has to work in the same way; and if his potentials are good, he may also enjoy a share of those fruits and faculties.

Only those who take to meditation with good intentions can be assured of success. With the development of the purity and the power of the mind backed by the insight into the ultimate truth of nature, one might be able to do a lot of things in the right direction for the benefit of mankind.

Actually, Vipassanā meditation aims at the total purification of human beings and at the overcoming of sorrow, lamentation, the destruction

¹(1) One who has attained the first path of sanctity, called sotāpatti magga;
(2) One who has attained the first fruition of sanctity, called phala;
(3) One who has attained the second path of sanctity, called saḍgāmi magga;
(4) One who has attained the second fruition of sanctity, called saḍgāmi phala;
(5) One who has attained the third path of sanctity, called anāgāmi magga;
(6) One who has attained the third fruition of sanctity, called anāgāmi phala;
(7) One who has attained the fourth path of sanctity called arahatta magga;
(8) One who has attained the fourth fruition of sanctity and thus becomes an arahat.
of grief and suffering, suffering and the reaching of the right path and the attainment of the Nibbāna state.¹

Even before, he attains the final goal, can achieve peace of mind, happiness, calmness, relaxation, and tranquility and the ability to face life’s daily problems and enjoy a corresponding greater degree of happiness in this very life here and now.

Vipassanā and Modern Society

Modern life is moving at such a rapid pace that there is no time even to breathe. Our fiercely competitive world is like a rat-race where, in spite of all the technological and economic improvements and multifarious pleasures, people are still unhappy. Humankind has made tremendous progress in the fields of science, industry, and political systems, etc., resulting in materialistic development. Man is the promoter and consumer of these advancements, which aim at improving our standard of living and total well-being.

But does this really happen? Look at the so-called “developed countries” of the world, which try to ensure a high standard of living. Despite their advances in such fields as health, education and technology, they are experiencing an increased incidence of mental illness, delinquency, crime, drug addiction, alcoholism, and suicide, etc.

Every society is made up of individuals. The individual in a modern society is a victim of varying degrees of stresses and strains. His or her existence is full of constant conflict between the world within and the world outside. The materialistic world holds humans under a hypnotic spell. Engaged all time in filing their stomachs by earning and spending money,
people are slaves of their own cravings, euphemistically called ambition, aspiration, aims or ideals. These, alas, are seldom fulfilled, which causes deep distress, frustration and dissatisfaction, whether one belongs to the “Haves” or the “Havenots.”

Suffering, then, is a common problem of human life. It is a universal disease, not the bane of any one nation, or persons of any particular colour or creed. So the remedy must also be universal. Vipassanā offers such a remedy.

The basis of any healthy, harmonious society is always the healthy, harmonious individual. Only if each individual has a pure, peaceful mind can we expect peace and harmony in the society. Vipassanā is a unique technique for obtaining peace and harmony within an individual at the experiential level.

The great sage of India, Gotama the Buddha, discovered or rather rediscovered this technique through his deep meditation. He attained enlightenment through this technique and was liberated from all the defilements of the mind. Then with great compassion and love, he distributed it to the suffering mankind. He did not establish any “ism” or “cult’. He taught Vipassanā a way to purify the mind of its negativities of craving and aversion.

The practice of Vipassanā meditation is now spreading throughout the world, and there is a great deal of international cooperation involved. At all of the Vipassanā centers, people come from different states and different countries to give service for the benefit of others. Goenkaji and assistant teachers from India have conducted Vipassanā courses in the west, and now you will find assistant teachers from Western countries conducting courses in Indonesia or Israel. The meditators from Western Europe have organized courses in former socialist countries, and have started a fund for courses in
Africa. Other funds have been set up in the West to help the struggling nations in Southeast Asia, where the demand for courses is enormous, and in South America.

About 25,000 people attend courses in India each year, and about 8,000 in the rest of the World. They come from all walks of life. There are business and community leaders who try to incorporate the principles of Vipassanā in their organizations.¹ Eleven thousand schoolchildren attended course last year.² You will also see uneducated village women and the poorer classes starting to come to Dhamma Giri. They often cannot give much for a donation; it is a struggle for them to pay their train fare to Igatpuri, yet somehow all the centers keep growing. The growth rate is about 20 to 25 per cent each year.

If this growth continues, there is a tremendous potential to break down many long-standing historical barriers, racial, social and economic. However, it must be said again, change must come at the individual level; all must take responsibility. Sometimes there are even more problems when our aim is for the good, we have to face our own weaknesses whilst fighting against prejudice, greed and resistance to change in society. For this, great strength is needed.

By incorporating pure Vipassanā in our lives, we develop in confidence, in determination in our efforts, in awareness, in concentration, and in wisdom and equanimity. If we use these strengths in helping pure Vipassanā to spread, others will also find out how to break down the barriers of their mental impurities. In this way, all the barriers of intolerance and

distrust in society can be broken, to establish greater peace and harmony in the world.

**How does Vipassanā help in daily living?**

The progress on the path of Vipassanā is not measured by how many courses one has taken, or how many years one has been practicing, but by how equanimous one has become in daily living. You reap the benefits of Vipassanā here and now. The first attack is on the ego, which begins to melt progressively as the cleaning process starts.

One student reported that during his stormy adolescent years he had acute differences of opinion with his parents. He left his parental home in great anger, never to see them again. He had not seen them for nearly ten years in spite of their several attempts to contact him. When he came for a Vipassanā course, his ego began to dissolve and he began to perceive his own shortcomings. He felt extremely miserable, but was able to consider his parent’s point of view. He was able to see the situation from different angles, and not only through his coloured glasses. He decided to write to his parents and tell them of his whereabouts, return home and talk it over with them.

Mere advice and counseling do not help. It is only when our perception begins to change that we are able to observe a situation in its totality. As the layers of mental impurities begin to peel off, through the practice of Vipassanā, there is greater clarity of thinking. We begin to develop better judgment of people and situations. This, in turn, helps to improve our relationships with other people. We become less and less demanding of people: family members, children, neighbours, colleagues, subordinates, etc. With greater clarity of thinking our decision-making ability, both in private and work life, become more appropriate and effective.

---

Another student who was a nurse reported how Vipassanā helped reduce her nervousness. She was attached to the Crisis Department of a hospital. The sight of blood and mauled bodies of accident cases would simply paralyze her. She could have asked for a transfer from the department, but she decided to face the problem and not run away from it. With regular practice of Vipassanā, she gradually became more stable and balanced. This greatly impressed the doctors and her colleagues. Her work in the service of her patients was now more effective.

When our minds undergo a cleaning process, our capacity to work increases manifold the energy that was being consumed in our struggle with tensions, emotional blocks, and a narrow-minded ego-centered way of living this now gets channeled more profitable. Our work efficiency increases both qualitatively and quantitatively.

A commonly expressed doubt is Does this technique with its emphasis on equanimity make one inactive? No, it does not. A responsible person in society has to be full of action. What goes away is the habit of bind reaction. We learn to take proper action with positive feeling.

Apart from the purification of the mind, which is the primary goal of the technique, the meditator also experiences gains at the physical and psychological level. Many common ailments such as hypertension, headaches, ulcers, acidity, etc., are very often psychosomatic. These are automatically cured as a by-product of the cleansing process of Vipassanā.

Many drug addicts and alcoholics have found a total cure as a result of regular practice of Vipassanā.

Many students, who practice Vipassanā regularly, keep reporting that their concentration, memory and ability to grasp the material they read have improved tremendously. One student who had given up his college
studies midway and was on tranquillizers is now free of pills. He went back to his students and has now completed them.

All these gains are only by-products of the cleansing process of Vipassanā. They should never be the motive for the practice of Vipassanā, as this is a devaluation of this exalted technique which takes human beings to such great heights in liberating the mind its impurities.

Vipassanā, if practiced correctly and with proper understanding, progressively makes one a better individual. This, in turn, enables one to make a positive and constructive contribution to the society in which one lives. One learns the art of constructive social living which promotes positive social interaction.1

Vipassanā for better Education

We can now understand how Vipassanā can fill that vital gap in modern education viz., the training of mind, leading to a balance, harmonious and purposeful life. Vipassanā meditation imparts a way to observe all the phenomena of this sensory world objectively and impersonally under the penetrating gaze of an equanimous mind. The multifold benefits which accrue from this practice are being discussed at length in this seminar and have formed the basis for research conducted by the Vipassanā Research Institute (Igatpuri, India) in many areas of human activity. Here, only those aspects related to the field of education are being discussed.

The attitude of “bare attention” (bestowed by a mind at once aware and non-reactive) slows down the transition from thought to action, allowing the practitioner more time those crucial few moments needed to come to a

mature decision. The tendency of the base, animal instinct to overpower the faculty of human reason can thus be effectively checked, leading to a gradual reduction in negative traits such as rashness, intolerance, intemperance and aggressive behaviour which characterize modern youth. This emotional education should naturally lead to a marked improvement in the student-teacher relationship, which has been constantly deteriorating over the year due to the corroding influence of a materialistic world view coupled with the negative traits mentioned above.

On the positive side, this training of non-reactive observation of facts, coupled with the insight of Anicca\(^1\) enhances one’s ability to face the vicissitudes of life squarely and equanimously without taking recourse to such escapist alternatives as smoking, alcohol and drugs, which have become the bane of modern society. This attitude of equanimity also reduces the obsessive preoccupation with indulgence in unending materialistic desires, thereby allowing space for the manifestation of the so-called “higher needs” the self-actualization needs of meaningfulness, justice, truthfulness, service, love, compassion, etc., which modern psychology recognizes as essential components of basis human needs. Recent research has shown that people able to manifest these “higher needs” are generally much more creative and innovative, because self-actualization needs provide “a more durable fuel for creativity” than the drive for sensual gratification.

The observation of mental contents is also a powerful tool of self-education because it reveals to the meditator a very clear picture of his weak points and strong points without doing damage to his self-esteem. The habitual attitude of hurriedly glossing over one’s weaknesses, or blowing one’s strengths out of proportion, is thus checked. One gradually gains the inner strength needed to overcome one’s weaknesses without a need to

\(^1\) Anicca means impermanent, ephemeral, changing. One of the three basic characteristics of phenomena, along with anatta and dukkha.
exercise a violent exertion of will or forceful repression, both of which are harmful in the long run. This candid self-examination promotes honesty towards oneself, increases one's tolerance of other's faults, assists in the development of humility and compassion, and reduces vanity.

The attitude of right awareness coupled with equanimity closely corresponds to the disposition of true scientist and scholar, which is characterized by clear definition of the subject, unprejudiced receptivity for the facts, exclusion of the subjective factor in judgment, and deferring judgment until a careful examination of the facts has been made. This practice should therefore be of great help in augmenting the scientific temper. Vipassanā meditation reinforces the scientific outlook in another more direct way. Every meditator, after some length of practice of mindfulness of sensations, reaches a state where he experiences the whole body as a mass of vibrations. This experience is in line with the quantum-relativistic description of matter. This direct experience provides much more clarity about the nature of matter than the scores of mathematical formulae produced by classroom descriptions.

Another important benefit of the systematic practice especially of mindfulness of breath, which is of crucial significance in education, is improvement in one's ability to concentrate on a task. As explained earlier, the essence of the practice is to train the mind to keep the attention continuously on an object, and to minimize the drifting of the mind into futile daydreams, which are the chief obstacle to concentration. The training of observing the mental states also comes in handy. Once such daydreams have arisen (whether during meditation or during normal activity), if one briefly makes these daydreams themselves an object of close observation, their power of distraction is drastically curtailed and they get quickly dispersed. This results in a quick retrieval of concentration.
The attitude of impersonal non-reactive observation is of profound value in the ultimate deliverance of the mind from all bondages, which is the true purpose of spiritual education. To quote Venerable Īnānapoṇika Thera: “the inner distance from things ... as obtained temporarily and partially by bare attention, shows us by our own experience, the possibility of winning perfect detachment and the happiness resulting from it. It bestows upon us the confidence that such temporary setting aside may well become one day a complete stepping out of this world of suffering. It gives a kind of foretaste or at east an idea, of the highest liberty, the ‘holiness during lifetime’ that has been alluded to by the words ‘in the world but not of the world.’

To achieve this objective, the principle requirement is to development an insight into the basic characteristics of life. Impermanence (anicca) is the fundamental characteristic with which a Vipassanā student is continually confronted. As this experience becomes ingrained, realization of the other characteristics viz., of suffering (dukkha) and egolessness (anattā) automatically develops, leading one to a clear understanding of the purpose of life and the way to achieve it the very acme of spiritual education.

Education today has unfortunately been reduced to training of intellect, taught at the school and university level. Reading, writing, memorizing, and thinking – these work only at the conscious superficial levels of the mind. This type of education is not solving the major problems of today’s youth, such as drug and alcohol use, promiscuity, undisciplined

2 Anattā means “Non-ego, not-self, absence of soulessness”: The word anattā is used to convey the following three interpretations: (1) Asāṃkataṭṭha-anattā - On account of being without essence or substance it is called anatta.(2) Asānakataṭṭha-anattā. - On account of not having any owner or over-lord it is called anatta. (3) Avasavatanaṭṭha.- On account of its not yielding to another’s will it is called anatta.
rebellious behaviour, violence and other anti-social activities. Nor is it resolving the problem of academic and occupational dropping out.

Acknowledging that these problems are serious and are not being resolved, we must look for a component of education that is lacking, and see if by adding these difficulties can be eradicated, and youth are enabled to lead happy, active lives.

True education implies the acquisition of "wisdom," i.e., knowledge based on self-experience. Perhaps it is this aspect of education that is missing.

To train the mind to live with the reality of the present moment within the body and mind is the essence of the technique of Vipassanā meditation. A moral code is given to which students must adhere in order to attend a Vipassanā course, and the value of continuing to abide by this code becomes apparent as the student tries to practice meditation in daily life. The second step is Ānāpāna meditation. This means remaining aware of the natural breath at and insight the nostrils for as long as possible, thereby increasing concentration. The third step on a Vipassanā course is Vipassanā meditation proper developing insight, personally acquired wisdom of the nature of our bodies and minds. Those who sincerely undergo a course in Vipassanā meditation report an appreciation of the need for morality; improve concentration and a feeling of release from tensions and negativity; and an increase in happiness and positive activity. Hence Vipassanā is not merely an art of living but also true education.

The ideal period to begin this education in a child is before birth, in the mother's womb. During pregnancy a woman who regularly practices Vipassanā creates an environment conducive to positive mental health development in the child.

Once the child is born, how soon can he or she be given this mental training? Optimum benefits are seen in children above eight years of age.
However, some between five and seven years of age who have participated in children’s courses, accepted this education well.

In India many two or three-day Ānāpāṇa courses have been successfully conducted at three Vipassanā centers, as well as in schools. Thought a residential course of two to three days is optimum, even one-day courses conducted in schools have shown promising results. Different courses are held for different age groups (e.g., eight to ten, eleven to thirteen, and thirteen to fifteen years), the schedules varying according to the cognitive-grasping capacity of the age group. School children are taught only Ānāpāṇa, the important preliminary technique in the teaching of Vipassanā. Younger children work for fifteen to thirty minutes with ease; middle school children can easily meditate for thirty to forty-five minutes at a stretch. Group discussions, games and creative activities punctuate the periods of meditation. In addition, the theory and value of this meditation practice are taught in short discourses and in counseling sessions with older experienced meditators. Some middle and high school students, after learning Ānāpāṇa and practicing for some time, come on their own for a full ten-day Vipassanā course, which they successfully complete. Recently a few schools have incorporated the teaching of Ānāpāṇa into their daily curriculum. Scientific research studies are being carried out on the beneficial effects, based on parents’ and teacher’s reports. Preliminary finding indicated positive changes.

Some colligates and universities in India have been holding ten-day Vipassanā course or have been sending their students for regular courses, as part of their teaching programmed. So far no research work has been done to evaluate the benefits of these ten-day courses, but regular requests for courses, and enthusiastic responses from the youth and teacher participants, suggest a favourable outcome.
The real benefits will come only if this meditation practice becomes an integral part of daily life. The multiple benefits are the consequence of important changes in two major spheres. First, developing concentration with awareness increases the child’s mental strengths of understanding, memory and expression. This benefits in his or academic career as well as various other activities such as games, arts and crafts. Second, the technique helps to purify the mind. Negativities such as abusive or violent behaviour gradually start giving way to more peaceful, harmonious and respectful behaviours at school, home and in society. Hence, with this practice, these problems are bound to show a decline in the long run.

We are confident that more teaching of Ānāpāna and Vipassanā as a part of the regular curriculum in the field of education would lead to lasting beneficial changes in the younger generation, which would bring about a positive revolution in society.¹

Vipassanā and World Organizations

The horrifying problems of racial tension and terrorism, the recent nightmares we are hearing about in Africa, the ongoing poverty in so many parts of the world, are not going to be overcome easily. Powerful organizations with multi-million-dollar resources such as the United Nations and the World Bank have been unable to solve most of these problems. The USA, the remaining superpower, is at present evaluating its relationship with the rest of the post-Cold War world.² There is a growing reluctance in many of its citizens to get involved in foreign problems it has been unable to solve by military or economic means.

¹ Dr. B.G. Savla “Vipassanā and Education” A collection commemorating the teaching of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Vipassanā Research Institute.
There is limited benefit in trying to change "the system" using political or welfare measures, when the underlying human defilements such as anger, craving and fear continue to exist. In any organization, large or small, humanitarian aims will not be properly served if the people in it, especially the leaders, are working with narrow-minded, selfish interests and prejudices. Changes therefore must start in small ways, first in individuals, and then in groups of people who try to co-operate and incorporate the principles of Vipassana in their lives and work. Later on, as the teaching of pure Vipassana spreads, we can expect to see larger organizations applying the wisdom of Vipassana in improving the world.

**Vipassana and Science**

Inquisitiveness is one of the fundamental characteristics of human beings. Right from birth, a child would like to know and understand the surrounding world. As the child grows up, he or she begins to understand the cause-effect relationship between various events: putting a switch down lights a bulb, putting an ice cube in a glass of soft drink cools it, placing a hand in fire heats it and we say, the child is learning, gaining knowledge. Science is essentially a systematization of all the knowledge that humanity has gained about the external world, with the help of our senses.

As the child grows into maturity and experiences the various vicissitudes of life, sooner or later, he or she begins to question: "What is the purpose of all this -being born, studying, earning, having children, rearing a family, getting old and finally dying? Why so much suffering- caused by illness, old age, separation from loved ones, association with 'wicked'?" He begins to contemplate and understand his own true nature, the real cause of his suffering, and the way out of it, and thus becomes wiser; Vipassana is essentially a systematization of all the wisdom gained by humanity. Viewed
in this way, Vipassana and science emerge as two complementary aspects of human endeavour. As the Isa-Upanished puts it, "He who has both spiritual wisdom and secular knowledge together keeps death at bay through the latter and experiences immortality through the former."¹

Science (especially its applied version, technology), gives us the necessary know-how to keep our body in good sharp; Vipassana provides us with an understanding of the very purpose of our existence, the "know-where". Clearly, for the harmonious development of any society- for the harmonious development of any individual a proper integration of science and Vipassana is essential. This is especially crucial in modern times, when the advances in science and technology have empowered us enormously. However, from a lack of "wisdom", of Vipassana, this advancement in science is leading only to an increase in our sorrows: poisoning of land, air, water and of minds.

The essence of the scientific approach was characterized by Thomson: "The aim of science is to describe impersonal facts of experience in verifiable terms as exactly as possible, as simple as possible, and as completely as possible."²

To become a rigorous science, Vipassana must be presented as "the law" which can be experienced by all, not merely a select few. The various propositions have to be presented as hypotheses to be accepted only on verification by experience, albeit personal and subjective, and not on authority. Also, such propositions should be rational and logical.

The teachings of the Buddha, one of the greatest spiritual scientists, meet these requirements. His constant refrain to his disciples could easily be the advice of a modern humane scientist to young students:

Believe nothing merely because you have been told it, or because it is tradition, or because you yourself have imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for him. But whatever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings, believe and cling to that doctrine, and take it as your guide.

The essence of Vipassana, as put crisply by all the Enlightened Ones is “the eschewing of all evil, the perfecting of good deeds, and the purifying of one’s mind.”

The simplicity of this enunciation, devoid of any esoteric pronouncement, many sometimes conceal its profundity. However, its practical utility and universal applicability are quite obvious. Viewed in this light, purifying the mind of its baser instincts is the quintessence of Vipassanā, since this would quite naturally lead to performance of wholesome deeds. It also leads to the development of an insight into the basic characteristics of life. This process of purification is not a mystic knowledge beyond the ken of ordinary people. It is a strictly scientific technique open to anybody who is willing to learn and verify it.

Science is the reflection in physical reality in the world of physical objects and phenomena of a larger non-physical dynamic at work in non-physical domains. When Science and its discoveries are understood with the higher order of logic and understanding of the multisensory human, they reveal the same richness that life itself displays everywhere and endlessly. ...the paradigms... of Science also reveal the way our species has seen itself

---

in relation to the Universe: Newtonian physics reflects a species that is confident in its ability to grasp the dynamics of the physical world through the intellect; relativity reflects a species that understands the limiting relationship between the absolute and the personalized conception of it; and quantum physics reflects a species that is becoming aware of the relationship of its consciousness to the physical world.\(^1\)

It would thus not be an exaggeration to say that for a deeper understanding of modern science, there is a need to develop certain intuitive insights. These can enable us to have experiences more rich than those possible with the basic five senses. Clearly, the process of evolution of such a multisensory personality can be hastened by living life in conformity with the Universal Laws, the Dhamma that is, by practicing Vipassanā.

The complementarity of science and Vipassanā can be succinctly put by paraphrasing the beautiful epigram of Albert Einstein: Science without Vipassanā is blind and Vipassanā without Science is lame for Vipassanā gives us the vision of what ought to be done, and Science gives us the power to do it.\(^2\) The developments in science have unleashed enormous power—but power can do as much harm as good. Today, there is a crying need to channel this power to ensure the very survival of humanity, for otherwise man will destroy himself by misusing the same power. What we must do is reorient our lives in the light of the quintessence of Vipassanā, by practicing morality (śīla), taming the senses by the practice of concentration (samādhi) and progressively purifying the mind by the practice of Vipassanā.

**Vipassanā and Business**

Vipassanā is a great science, the science of understanding mind and matter phenomena. It is a process of mind purification and is free from any

---

sectarian, caste or belief-based approach. Further, it works at the experiential level and leads to a happy life through continuous purification of the mind.

It is said that the major part of the mind is the subconscious or unconscious mind. Generally it is difficult to reach this part of the mind, which keeps on reacting according to its past conditioning. This reactive mind is the storehouse of our impressions (saṅkhārā) of cravings and aversions, and makes our reactions to external events biases and thus lacking in objectivity.

Vipassanā helps in breaking the barrier between the conscious and unconscious mind. Through the process of observing without reacting, the mind is cleansed of its negativities. With the technique of Vipassanā, one reaches deep down to the unconscious level of the mind and experiences sensations within the framework of the body without reacting to them. The law of nature is such that whatever actions we perform are stored in the form of its effect in the unconscious part of the mind. The collection of such impressions (Saṅkhārā)\(^1\) is only from this life but also from earlier lives. This storehouse is the guide to our reactions to the outside environment.

At the experiential level, the major benefits derived are:

1. As more of the mind becomes conscious, one becomes more perceptive and better able to understand a wide variety of situations. In my personal experience, I have found solutions to many difficult problems by meditating.

2. By reducing craving and aversion, one is able to face situations in life more objectively, and thus improve the process of decision-making. It reduces irritation and disappointments under situations which would otherwise create pressure on the mind.

---

\(^1\) Saṅkhāra meaning formation, volitional activity; mental reaction; mental conditioning. One of the five aggregates (khandhā), as well as the second link in the Chain of Conditioned Arising (paṭicca samuppāda). Saṅkhāra is the kamma, the action that gives future results and that is actually responsible for shaping one’s future life. Bhava- Saṅkhāra, a Saṅkhāra which is responsible for rebirth.
3. Business people, depending on the complexities of their work, generally have to face a lot of stress and strain. Such stress has an impact on physical health, and it is said that more than fifty percent of physical problems are psychosomatic in nature. As a side effect of this meditation, physical health can be improved through the process of mind purification.

4. One often seeks power and position in business but is unable to enjoy them because of the negative effect they create through inflation of the ego. The ego stops us from developing the human qualities of love, compassion, peace and equanimity. Vipassanā is beneficial in business, but more importantly, it helps us experience true peace of mind and happiness through a reduction of the ego. This comes with the understanding of the impermanence of both mind and matter.

5. Continuous practice of Vipassanā increases equanimity and thus one is able to live more harmoniously, without being much affected by the tensions of everyday life.

6. Business houses have tremendous strengths at their command in finance, management and technology. Through development of a better value system, Vipassanā induces us to work with the aim of serving humanity. In business, it improves the quality of products and services we produce for society, and encourages a greater service orientation to meet the large needs of society. I was motivated to start the Lupin Rural Support Programme immediately after leaning meditation. This programme has provided increased prosperity and happiness for roughly 200,000 people where we operate, and in turn much happiness to us. We are motivated to develop many more such experiments of human service, some of which we are working toward now.
Vipassanā leads to purification of the mind, and a pure mind will seek happiness through improved service to society.

It is said that Vipassanā is the oldest science of India. Its rediscovery by Gotama Buddha allowed him to realize the ultimate truth, and he taught this technique for the benefit of humanity. Later on, Emperor Ashoka encouraged the spread of this teaching for the benefit of his subjects, as indicated in the rock edicts. We are extremely grateful to Goenkaji for bringing this lost wisdom to our country.

Because Vipassanā goes beyond the barriers of caste, sect, communalism, and narrow nationalism, it brings improves morality so that along with material benefits there can be real happiness. Further, it can be an effective instrument in strengthening national integration and international understanding, factors which are of great relevance in today’s times.¹

Concluding Remarks

The benefit of Vipassanā meditation range from increasing the mediator’s ability to cope with day to day problems to the experience of profound peace that results from the ultimate release of tensions, which takes place, when the nature of existence is fully experienced and known.

It is a truth that each of us is different. And in the practice of Vipassanā as in all else, the time taken to gain benefits varies. But, even if

¹D.G. Gupta, “Vipassanā and Business” An International seminar New Delhi, April 1994
we cannot become an Arahant\(^1\) (enlightened being) immediately, everyone can benefit in some way.

The simple expedient of stepping back from immediate involvement resulting from sense impute, allows the meditator a split second in which to choose to react or not. In practice this means that angry reactions can be better controlled. Problems that used to appear overwhelming and unsolvable come to be seen in a different light, and usually do not seem so important any more. All this serves to make the meditator more capable and unruffled, character traits which have obvious advantages both in the office and at home. The housewife who arranges her day to include half an hour or forty minutes of the tension unraveling provided by Vipassanā meditation is less likely to shout at the children or feel unbearably tired and depressed.

The businessman who forgoes a liquid lunch with friends, locks the door of his office, and takes half an hour out to calm and clear his mind, is more likely to make the right decisions even under intense pressure. He is unlikely to be maneuvered by associates who seek to flatter or deceive in order to further their own ends, because he will be clear-minded enough to be aware of what is happening.

Although a short period of regular daily practice is unlikely to produce stunning flashes of insight every day, it can certainly help the meditator to maintain equilibrium and to deal with problems more efficiently. What the meditator has, in effect, is a method enabling him or her, at any time, to enter into the peace within.

It is the nature of existence that everything changes. Sometimes it may be possible to move smoothly and effortlessly into deep states of awareness and at other times it may take a supreme effort of will to sustain

\(^1\) Arahant means fully liberated being. A person who has reached the fourth and final stage of enlightenment, characterized by the eradication of the last five fetters: craving for existence in the material world, craving for existence in the immaterial world, conceit.
concentration long enough to gain even a superficial feeling of relaxation. Setting aside a regular time for daily practice will help.

Other benefits of Vipassanā help to health. Diseases which are exacerbated by tension show real improvement e.g., high blood pressure, migraine and some forms of paralysis. A famous meditation instructor Goengar, suffered from migraine for many years, traveling to many countries unsuccessfully seeking a cure. He found relief after practicing Vipassanā meditation for a short time.

In this connection the meditator may seem to age less quickly than his peers. The deep peace and energy from within radiate out so that, especially during intensive periods of meditation, the meditator’s appearance changes. As tensions are released at the root, from within, the meditator’s posture relaxes, movements becomes more fluid and youthful. The skin texture changes and faces glow with an inner light.

Some people find that meditation helps with weight reduction. This is for two reasons. When practicing intensively, meditators usually keep the eight precepts, which include not eating solid food after noon. In this case the cause is external. The second cause is more subtle. Many people overeat because they feel empty; they feel a constant lack, an unsatisfactoriness. Eating temporarily fills that gap. However, after experiencing the pervading joy and deep peace accompanying Vipassanā meditation, practitioners feel profoundly satisfied and food loses its attracting for them.

Weight control is only one aspect of this process. Having experienced clear-seeing, untainted by bias or prejudice, we realize that we have been walking around half-blind. It is the same with any sensation. When hearing is no longer filtered and censored by inclinations and aversions, we really hear. The sounds are fresh and full. Suddenly we are not anaesthetized by preconceptions any more. A kind of childlike innocence is regained.
All these benefits however remain relatively superficial. The deepest benefit occurs when through wisdom, we are able to stop grasping and clinging to the sense of self. Feelings of tranquility and rapture come and go but the deepest knowledge is all-pervading and outside time.

Vipassanā aim freedom, enlightenment, from the burden of suffering. It is gained through insight wisdom. As mindfulness and concentration develop in a state of optimum balance and if there is enough energy and Sampajāna\(^1\) or clear comprehension them insight wisdom can arise:

In ‘Vipassanā’ the meditator clearly perceives all that occurs in the present moment, in ‘this fathom long body’. Because he or she is not attached to anything, it is possible to be aware of the deepest tendencies within. It is possible to be clearly aware of the very root of attachment and aversion to whatever occurs and through clear-seeing, eradicated these tendencies at the point where they originate. In Buddhism there is termed the ‘eradication of defilements’. An enlightened being is one who has eradicated all defilements. He is free from their controlling influence. Through unbiased and non-prejudiced, clear awareness it is possible to see the process by which we become entangled in attachments. This ‘seeing’ has the meaning of being aware, or of understanding. It is mental in that there is bare awareness but it is not limited by the narrow confines of thought. It is experiential in that feelings arise and are not ignored, but it is not absorption into sensations, however tariffed they may be. Through this clear comprehension based on mindfulness and concentration, it is possible for attachments and aversions to untangle themselves. The deepest tendencies of the mind are seen for what they really are, and so they lose their power to control.

\(^1\) Sampajāna understanding of the totality of the mind-matter phenomenon, i.e., insight into its impermanent nature at the level of sensation.
Vipassanā meditation is in no way exclusive. It is not necessary to be a Buddhist to make use of this method. It is not even essential to know that this is a Buddhist method of meditation. The Buddha himself said that there were some who, though they had not heard the Vipassanā directly from him, would still be able to walk the right path. ‘There were some who, not having heard it from the Buddha, would nevertheless, through continuous reflection, consideration, and study, through constant observation and practice, be able to walk the right path’. Vipassanā is suitable for all, men, women, children, old and young alike.

The immediate purpose of meditation is to train up the mind to the effect that it may be used suitably in our daily life. The ultimate aim of the meditation, on the other hand, is to seek release from the cycles of birth and rebirth which are the roots of all sorrows and afflictions. It can help anybody to get rid of tensions and thereby offer relaxation to the extent possible.

Meditation develops self-respect and self confidence and as a result one can achieve mental courage and strength to face all problems in life, with considered steps, and at last, many win the race. By the attainment of inner contentment one can easily compromise with the prevailing situations cropped up due to various anomalies and dissensions. Since meditation develops right-understanding in the aspirant, he or she is sure to cope with the fleeting nature of the worldly conditions. It can lead the young people to the Right path whereby they may shape their lives most fruitfully.

Since meditation brings forth Awareness in meditator, he/she therefore, can overcome the human shortcomings and weaknesses. Having learnt the art of mastering the sense-desire, one can overpower the dangerous habits of intoxication, drinking and taking drug etc. By developing sobriety and discipline in one self, one can drive away the nature of narrow-mindedness and get rid of nervous breakdowns the mental distortions. Meditation activates the positive force of the mind and the body, and thereby, one can
regain health and vigour. The mind being the source of many ills, when regulated through moral codes in meditation, many unwanted diseases like high blood pressure, recurrent paroxysmal headache (migraine), some forms of paralysis, reduction of weight and bulkiness, and many other sicknesses of the body and mind may be cured, by the magic-like application of the meditation –medicine. It sometime offers changes in the countenance with an inner glow and make look the meditator a bit younger. Concentration being the aim of meditation it develops retentive memory exquisite and sharpens in inmost zeal.

Meditation lessens the burdensome worries and cares of the worldly life. Meditation is recommended by the psychologists to be the best mental therapy. Through meditation one can overcome most of the psychological or psychosomatic problems of anxiety and disorder. It brings in development of the mind and supreme security from all bondages. Meditation is a part and parcel of daily life. Restlessness, nervous exhaustion and mental impurities can easily be got rid of through constant meditation. Meditation offers firm determination and complete faith in one’s purity and strength of mind.

Meditation, particularly, the Vipassanā or the insight system of meditation Vipsaaanā offers the freedom of the mind and relieving one from worldly defilements, leads the meditator to the attainment of the Blissful Happiness, the Nibbāna. Meditative rest of sleep is the best of medicine for insomnia.

Watchfulness which is said to be deathlessness in Buddhism is the direct outcome of meditation. The meditator through concentration of his mind achieves the human qualities of reservation in speech, diligence in efforts, commanding firmness, steadiness and mental equanimity. Knowing the mind well, one can easily shape his or her life-style leading a normal and natural life, overcoming all sort of tribulations, miseries and afflictions, whatever he or she has to face in day to day activities. The cultivation of
meditation yields in the aspirant, the knowledge producing faculties. Throughness in actions, perception in appropriate perspectives, clarity in conceptions and positive inspiration in rendering dedications and benevolences are also the best qualities of meditation. When bare attention and single-mindedness to one’s mind awakens the lofty moral qualities, one is sure to design himself or herself with ideal manhood or womanhood by getting rid of all defilements.

Self-reliance, self-help and self-respect which are considered to be premier qualitative aspects awarded by the great Buddha to the human race, can also be achieved only through deep meditation. Without meditation nobody at all can understand the Buddha ad Buddhism.¹

¹ Ven. Dr. Rastrapal Mahathera "A guide to the mind purification Vipassanā" P. 65.