

Awareness and Vipassanā Meditation

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Introduction

The past is dead and gone and future has not yet come. So, truth is the present moment. The common man either lives in the past or in future. But he is not living in the present.

Intoxicated man is not aware of his action. He is not aware his body is in standing position or sitting position. sleeping or clapping. It is useless to live like that.

“The aim of life is to live, and to live means to be awake, joyously, drunkenly, serenely divinely awake.”¹

Today's life become stressful and mechanical. Man does two things at once. he eats while reading a book. So, he can't fully enjoy the meal. In the office discusses while typing. So, there are mistakes in his work. He is not aware. But he is doing everything mechanically. This is why research on concept of awareness is underway. so that efficiency of man will increase.

What is mindfulness

In western psychology the most widely accepted definition of mindfulness is “paying attention to the present moment deliberately and non-judgementally”²

Awareness is a natural thing. Awareness means aware of our feeling, thoughts, and environment around us. Looking at feeling in neutral way without reacting to the thoughts without saying good or bad.

“Be a detached observer like mirror which reflects but does not react.”³

Idea of mindfulness we find in our spiritual tradition. The word *sati* means awareness in *pali* language. In this language Buddha gave sermons. *Sati* intrinsically is an ever-flowing stream of awareness possessed by man as a natural gift.

¹ Martyn Newman (2016) The Mindfulness book p 4

² Ibid p 5

³ B.K. Narayan (2003) The Immortal Buddha's path to liberation p 79

Vipassanā meditation

It is better to live for a day as a meditator observing proper conduct than life of hundred years of an unrighteous person not practicing meditation.⁴

Buddha gives more importance to the mind. Before Buddha, teaching was spread that mind is a by-product of body. Body is more important than mind. But Buddha stressed the importance of mind; and said; well-directed and controlled mind gives more benefits to man than his father, mother or relative. Undisturbed and uncontrolled mind gives more pain to man than his worst enemy. Buddha says meditation has to become something constant. Buddha brings totally new vision of meditation to the world. Before the time of Buddha practice of meditation was practicing it like it twice a day. One hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Buddha gave totally new interpretation to the process of meditation. Meditation cannot be something that you can do apart from your life. No other teacher has given such a gift to the world.

Vipassanā consists of prefix “*vi*” and *passa*. *Vi* means special. And *passa* means to observe, inspect; thus, *Vipassanā* means observing in a very special way.

We realise the importance of *vipassanā* if we know the nature of our mind. Mind is fickle and difficult to control. As a fletcher makes straight his arrow so the wise man make straight his mind trembling and unsteady mind which is difficult to guard.⁵

The starting point of *vipassanā* meditation is *ānāpānasati*. It means observation of normal natural breath. The word *ānāpānasati* has three component parts. *Āna* , *apāna* and *sati*. *Āna* means inhaled breath or inbreathing. *Apāna* means exhaled breath or out breath. *Sati* means mindfulness or awareness. Mind is like a monkey. It moves in all direction. Now it is on the earth and the next moment it is in the sky. *Anapanasati* is very useful to control the mind.

Why breath

Buddha suggested so many objects of meditation (*kammaṭhāna*) according to temperament of each individual. One of the important objects of meditation is one’s own breath. Breath is easily available all the time. This is universal object of meditation and not sectarian. One

⁴ N. K. Bhagawat (1935). Dhammapada VIII.12

⁵ Ibid III.33

cannot say it is Hindu breath, or Muslim breath or Jewish breath; but breath is a breath. There is no aversion or attachment towards breath. Generally, object of meditation is an idol of a god or picture of a saint so there is chance of attachment towards the object of meditation. Purpose of *vipassanā* is freedom from attachment. So, we take any other object for meditation; then there is a chance of liking and disliking the object and purpose of *vipassanā* is lost. Another thing is that if such an object is imaginary, in *vipassanā* there no imagination involved. Breath is the reality. From truth to ultimate truth is the journey of *vipassana*. Breath is reality of present moment. Those who want to live in the present moment must practice *ānāpānasati*.

Awareness of respiration is useful for both ignorant and the enlightened one. “Monks who have not attained enlightenment should practice mindfulness of breathing for the cessation of outflows. Monks who are enlightened practice mindfulness of breathing for dwelling at ease in present as well as for mindfulness and clear comprehension.”⁶

“The rider of the bike is mindfulness; the bike is mind and road are breath.”⁷

Wakefulness is the way to immortality,

heedlessness is the way to death, and

those who are wakeful die not

*heedless are already dead.*⁸

Before Buddha all spiritual teachers agree that craving for sensual pleasures is the cause of suffering. So according to them one has to avoid sensual objects. Buddha says, depending on sensation craving arises. They miss the link of *vedanā*. This is the great discovery of Buddha.

⁶ A. M. Gavesako (2004) The Seven Practices for a healthy mind, p 8

⁷ Ibid p 13

⁸ N. K. Bhagwat (1935) Dhammapada II.21

“Anupassanā has two components’ parts. Anu and passanā. Anu means seeing consciously, continuously and minutely”⁹

The technical meaning of the term may be becoming continuously aware and observe indifferently without developing attachment.

The human being has physical aspect (*kāyā*), sensation (*vedanā*), psychic aspect of mind (*citta*) and mental contents (*dhamma*). All four can be experienced by observing sensation. Observation of sensation means to examine totality of one’s being physical as well as mental. For this reason, Buddha stressed importance of awareness of *vedanā*.

Vipassanā meditation is based on *satipaṭṭhāna sutta*. To get establish into right awareness. *Sati* means mindfulness *patthāna* means express sense of arousing, making alert and functioning etc. The term *pattāna* means a sound base for making right efforts for gradually removing layers of pollution and realization of state of eternal bliss. The *sati* means possessing the characteristics of reminding, making conscious of one’s being a man, a rare creation potential enough for achieving higher spiritual gain. It makes one aware of his moral and spiritual treasure for which he is generally not conscious of. *Sati* is also treated as door keeper, as a doorkeeper when remain alert at the door the undesirable person does not dare to enter the house similarly on the presence of mindfulness the immoral states do not exert to harbour on the active surface of mind.

During *vipassanā* meditation meditator is aware about environment around him.

Before *vipassanā* we do work mechanically. But after *vipasaana* our full attention to typing work so we will not make any mistake. Our efficiency will increase

⁹ H.S. Sobti (1992) *Vipassana the Buddhist Way*, p 79

Conclusion:

Mechanical absent-minded action constitutes un-mindfulness. Whereas action performed with full concentration denotes mindfulness. Mindfulness has three dimensions, to keep awake forever, to live in the present moment and to act consciously. Mindfulness means union of the mind with the action of the moment. Mind has a special quality it concentrates on small point as well as on full body.

Teaching of Buddha are useful even today.

Real life is present moment; not the memories of the past which are dead and gone nor the dreams of the future which are not yet born. One who lives in the present moment lives real life and he is the happiest.

Breath is universal object of meditation. We cannot say Indian breath or American breath. *vipassanā* is universal meditation technique which one can do without color, creed and cast.

Mindfulness gives us look with new eyes and discover the detail, as well as the potential for wonder and new understanding in each moment.

We can cope up with adversities of life without being depressed. Our efficiency will improve in daily life.

One can do *vipassanā* meditation in any position, standing, sitting even sleeping and therefore person aware every moment. Cross-legged position is not necessary. *vipassanā* meditation is easy to learn.

With help of *vipassanā*, we live in the present. Awareness can be developed with help of *vipassanā* meditation.

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