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Established in year 1985 to conduct scientific research on the theory and practice of Vipassana Meditation

Researches done by VRI

In the previous volume we have seen the journey of Vipassana Research Institute (V.R.I.) in Academics, Academic Research and Research on practical application of Vipassana Meditation in various fields of lives. This volume addresses the main researches completed and ongoing in the research categories, Health, Education, Social Change and Organisation and Management Development.

The V.R.I. has taken up four major areas of research to study the impact of Vipassana Meditation: Health and Addiction, Education, Social Change and Organization & Management Development.

Health: Studies have established its beneficial role as a positive mental health measure in various psycho-somatic disorders, personality disorders, besides alcohol and drug abuse & addiction. However, it must be emphasized that any such health benefits are considered to be just the by-products of this profound technique of mental purification.

- *The Effect of Vipassana meditation in cases of Hypertension*

Investigator: Ensiyeh Bebaie, Clinical Psychologist from Iran; Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai.

In this research the subjects suffering from Hypertension for 3 years or more and who were sitting their 10-day Vipassana Course at Igatpuri, were voluntarily evaluated with a before-and-after research design, by means of a Self-Report Symptom Inventory – Symptoms Check List (SCL-90), besides, a Proforma for General Information.

The Experimental group subjects showed a significant improvement in their Systolic as well as Diastolic Blood Pressure readings after their Vipassana course at the 3 months, as also, the 6 months follow-up evaluations. Furthermore, they had improved significantly in the Interpersonal Sensitivity and Hostility symptoms of SCL-90 within group analysis and in the Somatisation and depression symptoms of SCL-90.

- *Assessment of the Efficacy of Vipassana Meditation on Ageing: A Polysomnographic & Endocrine Function Evaluation*

Investigator: Dr. Bindu M. Kutty at National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro-sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, India in collaboration with V.R.I.

The Efficacy of Vipassana Meditation on combating the age associated changes in sleep, cardiovascular and endocrine functions is assessed in healthy male subjects.

It was concluded that Vipassana Meditation appears to minimize the age associated changes in sleep, cardiovascular and endocrine functions. It appears that Vipassana meditation helps to foster a perfect psycho-physical balance.

- *A Cognitive & Electro-Physiological Study of Long-Term Vipassana Meditators, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata*

Investigator: Pritha Mukherjee, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata, India in collaboration with V.R.I.

The analysis sheds light on EEG patterns specific to three phases of Vipassana meditation training and practice viz., Ānāpāna, Vipassana and Mettā Bhāvanā. In addition, objective data was produced on both the establishment / increased threshold of equanimity and tranquillity in long-term meditators. The battery of cognitive tests indicated long-term psychological changes on sustained meditative practice.

It was concluded that Vipassana meditators generate very high amplitude oscillations in the Alpha region which persists with very little fluctuation over the entire meditation period.

- Randomized controlled trial of Vipassana meditation among patients with migraine.

Investigator: Madhav Goyal, Johns Hopkins School of medicine, Baltimore, MD, U.S.A. in collaboration with V.R.I.

It explored how the extent and manner one reacted to sensations can modulate the level of pain and suffering one experiences.

It was concluded that Vipassana meditators experienced reduced frequency and severity of headaches and improved awareness of the triggers of their symptoms, improved quality of life and mental health, improved heart-rate variability and sleep, reduced blood pressure, smoking and alcohol use.

- Effects of Vipassana on the Mind and Body of Meditators are being studied, in close collaboration with the Vipassana International Academy (VIA), Dhamma Giri, India, & other Vipassana Centres, and with voluntary participation of meditator-students of various age groups irrespective of caste, creed, colour, gender and nationality. Research studies have been completed into the application of Vipassana in daily life.

Education: Vipassana being a scientific and secular technique, has been found to be an ideal instrument to fulfill the emotional and spiritual dimensions of a child's personality, allowing them to grow into balanced, confident and happy human beings. This in turn will help create a society that is free from fear, insecurity, intolerance, violence, nervousness and depression. Children courses are being conducted in India since 1986 and over the years, they have continued to gather momentum in India and abroad.

Many management institutes like Symbiosis and Sadhana Institute of Pune have made 10-day course as a part of their curriculum.

- **Anita Chitre et al (2005-06), *Impact of Vipassana in Autistic Children, Dhanvantari Special School, Bhuj, Gujarat.***

Present study is an exploratory qualitative study about impact of meditation in autism. It is based on behavioral observation of autistic children following Ānāpāna meditation. Objective of the study is to compare the perception of caregivers about child's behavior before and after one year of meditation.

It was found that Meditation therapy along with regular schooling helped modify sociability and physical/health area for better behaviour in children with autism.

Children undergoing Ānāpāna mediation daily for 10 minutes during school working days showed change in the area of sociability and health behaviour. This is an ongoing research.

- **MITRA** – MITRA stands for Mind In Training for Right Awareness. MITRA Upakram has been formed to spread awareness about Ānāpāna and Vipassana courses in the education sector in the State of Maharashtra. Research is being conducted on around two Crore school children of Maharashtra to evaluate the impact of Ānāpāna Meditation on them. Similar Research will be conducted on school children of other states also in near future.

Statistics from the project is helping to do research on qualitative changes in lives of children. This is an ongoing research.

Social Change: Many scientific studies have been carried out on the impact of Vipassana on one's personal, interpersonal relationships etc. All India Institute of Medical Sciences has established that Vipassana meditation increases persons' control of their emotions resulting in a reduction in feelings of anger, tension, hostility, revenge and helplessness. Drug addiction, neurotic and psychopathological symptoms also get diminished.

- ***Vipassana in Prison***

The practice of Vipassana leads man away from narcissism to mature, social love and this personal transformation becomes the catalyst for social change and development. Beginning with the Central Jail in Jaipur in 1975, where the first ever prison course was organized, world-over wherever Vipassana courses are being conducted in prisons a marked change is being found in the attitude and behavior of the participants. Hardened criminals convicted of crimes have regretted their offences and become calmer and more equanimous; in addition, crimes and petty offences in certain participating jails have significantly reduced.

Thereafter the courses were conducted in many locations like Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad, the Central Jail in Baroda, the Tihar Jail in the capital city of Delhi and many other Jails.

Vipassana was first introduced in Tihar in November 1993, a series of courses in various jails, both in India and Abroad followed. It was found that Vipassana has a high rehabilitative value and can meet various therapeutic needs of the prisoners.

With the Indian Union Home Ministry's recognition and strong recommendation in 1994, Vipassana courses are presently being organized in prisons all over the country. Prison officials from other countries too like the U.S.A., U.K., New Zealand, Mexico, Spain, Taiwan, Nepal etc also have started introducing Vipassana in their prison facilities.

Vipassana, as an added important tool to be used on the Reformation of Prisoners, is gaining acceptance the world over.

Organization and Management Development: The Government of Maharashtra has been a pioneer in introducing Vipassana to its personnel (since 1996), giving leave facility for their participation in Vipassana courses. Many other States, besides several government and non-government bodies, have followed suit, taking Vipassana as a human resource development measure.

Organisations such Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB), Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA) have also followed the suit.

▪ ***Impact of Vipassana in Government Organisation***

Investigator: Parihar D. R.I.F.S., Deputy Director, Directorate of Social Forestry, Maharashtra State, Pune.

The research was on Central and State Government officials. However, executives, managers etc. in Public Sector Undertakings and Professors, Lecturers etc. in Government Institutes of Higher & Technical Education have also been included to make the study more comprehensive. A wide coverage of these subjects was undertaken throughout the country and an attempt was made to investigate the changes that the subjects felt within themselves and the benefits of Vipassana in their personal and professional lives.

The research findings indicated that the well-being of the subjects increased significantly and Occupational Stress of the subjects reduced significantly by practicing Vipassana. An average of 94% of the subjects felt that Vipassana has a direct role to play in improving public administration and should be used as a Human Resource Development tool. They further stated that it would be in the best interest of government organizations that the employees take Vipassana courses at regular intervals.

▪ ***Executive courses***

With an increasing demand from professionals in various fields and government officials and white collared workforce a course was designed to specially cater to the demanding and stressful lifestyles of professionals, high ranking Government officials and business executives. Through 2003-04 alone, more than 800 students have been trained in Vipassana under this programme. Interestingly it was also held in the Mandarin language for Taiwanese and Chinese countrymen. It is an ongoing effort of V.R.I. to analyse its results in the vast field of corporate management.

VRI has received research proposal for the assistance in the matter of physical and mental health, education, organisation and management development and progress and also social change. Some of the projects are in progress and others are scheduled to commence this year.



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