

MEDITATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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The Buddha asserts that all behaviour is the result of the individual's mind. Mind is the forerunner of behaviour. A well-developed mind contributes to happiness, good will and peace and the final attainment of **Nibbana**. What no friend, no relative, no parent can do to an individual is done by a well directed mind. To attain Nibbana, the individual has to maintain a well balanced, wholesome, mind devoid of avarice, ignorance and misconduct.

As a result the Buddha has preached forty different kinds of meditation conducive to the well being of the individual. Thus meditation or mind culture has become the very core of the Buddha's doctrine. Of these forty different types he proclaims two kinds of meditation as of supreme importance.

The Buddha has proclaimed that meditation was necessary to gain the inner state of peace and attain Nibbana. He stressed its importance to a society which was not as complex as today. Today the world is full of stress. An individual is exposed to stressful situations every second of his life. These are stresses induced by the intense environmental situations. He reacts by emotional responses such as sadness, anger, hatred, irritation, frustration, rage, elation, joy, etc. Behaviour responses are evident by poor concentration, forgetting, lessened productivity and unhealthy personal relationships. Physiologically there are changes such as headache, high blood pressure, ulcer, etc. At the cognitive level, the individual displays lower self esteem, helplessness and hopelessness. Emotional arousal is one of the most frequent causes of stress. As a result, man experiences suffering (*dukkha*) which the Buddha considers as the one single problem to all life's problems. In order to experience quieter level of consciousness the mind should be willfully developed. With practice the tendency is for the mind not to wonder aimlessly, but to move naturally in the direction of good behaviour, that generates greater happiness or tranquility.

The Buddha reiterates that meditation is the remedy to calm down one's mind. The objective of meditation is not to gain any communion with a supreme god, or for gaining mystical experience, or for auto hypnosis. It is mainly to gain tranquility of mind (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassana*). It is for deliverance of the mind (*akuppame ceto vimutti*). Through meditation one can overcome most of the psychological stresses experienced by the individual. Psychosomatic

disorders like anxiety, emotions, impulses, high blood-pressure, ulcers, migraine, back pain, dermatitis can also be cured by meditation.

The Buddha's own experience of self mortification as an ascetic for 6 years, and over indulgence in worldly pleasures for nearly 29 years made him realise the futility of resorting to these two extremes and he found the middle path namely the eightfold path. The eightfold path declares the development of morality (sila), tranquility (*Samadhi*), wisdom (panna). Thus Samadhi which is achieved by meditation is of prime importance to the individual. Of the eight factors, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration contribute to samatha. The Buddha once said "When, disciples have gathered together, there are two things to be done, either talk about the Dhamma, or observe noble silence."¹ Meditation cultures the body, to maintain the state of pure consciousness-*samadhi*. It provides a method of arousing the field of consciousness, of transforming the quiet nature of mind into a dynamic state. This way it contributes to the development of extraordinary psycho-physical functioning, and mind-body coordination. It stabilises the mind, thus accelerating it to higher states of supreme knowledge.

Samadhi is an important factor in the eightfold path. Thus it has to be recognised as the base for the attainment of **Nibbana**. It purifies the mind (*cittavisuddhi*) by the elimination of hindrance (*nivarana*). That does not mean that by developing samatha only one can attain **Nibbana**. *Samadhi* is integrated with the other factors in the eightfold path. Thus it has to be recognised as the base for attainment of **Nibbana**.

Samadhi is integrated with the other factors which are morality and wisdom. They go hand in hand with tranquility. It is by developing intense effort, concentration mindfulness one can achieve *Samatha*. But morality and wisdom are equally important. The individual who observes the five precepts strictly and with profound understanding is able to achieve *Samadhi*. In life, thinking, speech and action generate kamma. The person who observes the five precepts- abstinence from killing, stealing, illicit sexual indulgence, speech such as falsehood obscene expressions, abuse and gossip, from partaking alcohol, narcotics, etc are mastering the three factors which are right livelihood, right speech and right actions. It is the stepping stone to **Nibbana**. It is the foundation of mental development. He should steadfastly develop calm and serenity. He should think. Thus "others may harm, but I will become harmless, others may slay living beings, but I will become a non slayer, others may wrongly steal things, but I will not, others may live unchaste, but I will live pure, others may slander, talk harshly, gossip, but I will talk only word that promote concord, harmless words, agreeable to the ear, full of love, heart pleasing, courteous, worthy of

being borne in mind, timely, fit and to the point, others may be covetous, I will not covet, others may mentally lay hold of things but I will lay mental of things fully alright. Energetic steeped in lowliness of heart, unswerving as regards truth and rectitude, peaceful, honest, contended, generous and truth in all things will I be. I will cherish mindfulness and wise penetration that is fully aware of the truth at all times, and will not be moved by the evanescent or grasp at it.¹ Thus sila or morality contributes to the development of concentration (*samatha*).

By deep concentration the individual acquires wisdom. It constitutes right understanding and right thought. Thus wisdom is as important as the other two factors. The eightfold path consisting of morality, concentration and wisdom, the Buddha names as threefold training (*tivida-sikkha*). The three are integrated and it is not possible to develop samadhi independently. These three act together supporting each other. Virtue contributes to concentration and concentration in its turn strengthens wisdom. Thus Buddha helps in seeing life as arising and passing (*udaya - vaya*). The Buddha says that by a gradual training and gradual practice, the individual rids himself of all defilements, eradicates them and attains nibbana. Thereby the experiences of all evil deeds, hatred, greed and delusion are extinguished. With that he attains **Nibbana**. Thus the eightfold path, which is an integration of morality concentration and wisdom is the path of meditation.

The majority of people need a set of stepping stones to help them across impediments of greed, hatred and delusion. By allowing the wholesome qualities to gather force through a gradual process, the individual reaches an important aspect of meditations-*satipatthana*- the setting up (application of mindfulness). This means creating an interest and awareness with respect to an object, and bring into play, the controlling faculty, the power, the enlightenment factor and the path of mindfulness. This is *satipatthana* the setting up of mindfulness.

The discourse on *satipatthana* occurs twice in the Buddhist canon. The Buddha enunciates it thus “*satipatthana*; is the one and only way (*ekayano ayam maggo*) for the participation of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the abandonment of pain and grief, the righ path and realising **nibbana**.”¹

It aims at clearing the mind of all disturbances, impurities, such as avarice, hatred, worries, doubts, greed and developing such qualities as concentration, intelligence, creativity, will, energy, joy, tranquility - leading finally to the attainment of supreme wisdom, and attainment of Nibbana.

Meditation is twofold:

1. Samatha - which is one pointedness or unification of the mind. Samatha or concentration has the ability of calming the mind. It is also considered as calmness tranquility or quiescence.
2. Insight - (Vipassana) - It is effort which develops a calm, concentrated mind that see clearly the true nature of all phenomenal things and contributes to attainment of nibbana.

Meditation begins with concentration (*Samatha*), Samatha according to Buddhism culminates with jhana. With Jhana an individual gains perfect concentrative tranquility or calm. Vipassana means extraordinary insight or vision. This means seeing things as they really are. It means seeing the three characteristics of an individual as phenomena as impermanent, suffering, insubstantial (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*). This enables one to see reality and attain **Nibbana**.

In India samatha is a common meditation technique. But vipassana is unique to Buddhism. It did not exist before Buddha. Buddha is the founder of *vipassana* (insight) meditation.

The Buddha categorically stated that both tranquility and insight are necessary for the realisation of his doctrine and to attain **Nibbana**. The Buddha avers 'when tranquility is developed, the mind is developed and lust is abandoned, when insight is developed ignorance is extinguished. The mind defiled with lust is not liberated, when there is defilement through ignorance, right understanding is not developed.'¹

The setting up of mindfulness is fourfold: application of mindfulness with regard to the body (*kayanupassana*) (2) faculty of sensation (*vedananupassana*) (3) activities of the mind (*cittanupassana*) mental objects (*dhammanupassana*).

Anapana sati (*Kayanupassanasati*) which is the contemplation of the body, is the method known as anapana sati, mindfulness of in breathing and out breathing. This is the basis for insight (*vipassana*) meditation. It is all important to both the laymen and the clergy. In the Tripitaka it occurs in 27 suttas. In the Majjhima Nikaya four major steps are given. With subsections it comes to 16. The Buddha had discussions on anapanasati whenever he lived or sojourned. There is no other discourse that has had the Buddha attention so much as this. When he resided at Jetavanaramaya, he preached on this meditation, in the *Rahulovada Sutta, Eka Dhamma Sutta, Bojjhangam Sutta, Suddhaka Sutta, Arathi Sutta, Kappina Sutta, Deepa Sutta, Kayagata Sutta, Sati Sutta*. When he lived at Purvaramaya, he preached in great detail on *Anapana sati*. This is a very popular form of meditation practiced in the world over. The Buddha himself

practised this meditation when striving for enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and the Buddha emphasised the need for practising it. The Buddha described it as “peaceful, sublime, unadulterated, happy living (*Santo ceva panito ca asecanakin sukho ca vihara*)”.¹ Knowing Dhamma by reading discussing and intellectually assimilating it will not help a person to attain **Nibbana**. The path should be tread by practising. No path can help a person without meditation. The only kind of meditation that will help an individual to deliver him out of Samsara is vipassana preceded by samatha.

The *samatha* practice is to concentrate with effort and awareness until one is one-pointed. The normal spontaneous flow of breath should be observed. What is aimed at is the power of concentration. It is therapeutic, as psychologists have proved that this eases the tension of mind and body. Its objective is to free oneself from all defilements and to attain purity of mind namely tranquility. Concentration alone will bring him calm and tranquility. This samatha meditation should be practiced until one attains the stage of *upacara samadhi* (access concentration). The most essential aspect in attaining mindfulness (*sati*) and attending to it is *anupassana*.

It is this mindfulness that helps an individual to understand his own behaviour and avoid any misdirections and avoid unwholesome behaviour and guide and direct him in the right path.

Right mindfulness sharpens the power of the mind and contributes to right thinking and right understanding.

The discourse explains clearly how the individual becomes cognisant of his own behaviour and mindfully watch each and every thought, be it good or evil. Right mindfulness leads to concentration, promotes right understanding and right living. It is a contributory factor in all one's actions, speech and thinking both worldly and spiritual. Thus meditation is mind culture, and the ideal form of life itself. It is through meditation that the mind can be directed on the right path.

Samyutta Nikaya enumerates the 16 steps of *anapana sati* which would lead one to arahatship in this birth itself. It was preached to the two chief disciples including the great bhikkhu like Maha *Kasyapa*, *Kaccayana*, Anurudha at the Purvarama Temple. The Buddha was in great joy where he stated “Monks because of this practice of *anapana sati* I am delighted. Because of this practice, there has dawned in me great joy. Monks begin striving to attain arahatship, or if you have failed to attain arahatship, try the lesser steps for enlightenment and attainment of Nibbana, “monks *anapana sati* practised many a time generates very good results. It fulfills the four aspects given in *Satipattana*. It brings about freedom of thought. One can achieve the highest results attainable

in this birth as well as after death. One is disciplined by it. One gains full comprehensive super wisdom of all aspects of mind and body.”¹

The Samatha method should be practiced until the individual reaches the stage of Upacara samadhi (access concentration). The five hindrances (Nivarana) are almost subdued at this stage. They are sensual pleasures ill-will, sloth, worry, skeptical doubt. The five hindrances are totally subdued when the individual enters (*apanna-samadhi*) jhanas. When the individual attains the first *jhana*, he will experience the five jhana factors, namely applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicara*), rapture (*piti*), bliss (*sukha*) and one pointedness (*ekaggata*) when he attains the second jhana he transcends the first two factors and is left with rapture, bliss and one pointedness. On crossing over to the third jhana, he has only bliss and one-pointedness. In the fourth jhana he is left with only one-pointedness. There are no distinctive jhanas which are discernable by the individual and it is really difficult to say in which stage of jhana an individual is.

The Buddha was the founder of *vipassana* (insight) meditation. He says he attained enlightenment - only under the Bo-tree. Although he had attained even the eighth jhana he had not attained enlightenment. He attained insight wisdom later under the Bo-tree with insightful meditation (Vipassana) It was attained only after introducing mindful-ness to samatha meditation.

This is given in detail in the four applications of mind-fulness in the Satipatthana Sutta. The Buddha maintained that it was the only way to final deliverance. At this stage, the individual must comprehend clearly the three factors of an individual (*tilakkhana*) namely impermanance of the body and mind; (*anicca*) suffering (*dukkha*) and substantiality of body (*anatta*). In the Satispatthana Sutta mindfulness is concerned with body, feelings, mind and mental objects. It is to be observed objectively. In this connection Buddha's teaching to Bahiya makes it very clear. Bahiya who was the leader of a religious Sect, assumed that he was an arahant.

But later he went to the Buddha requesting him to explain the techniques of becoming an arahant. The Buddha's teaching was as follows:

“Bhaiya thus should you train yourself. In what is seen there should be to you only the seen, in the heard there should be only the heard, in what is sensed (as smell, taste and touch) there should be only what is sensed, in the cognizing these should be only the cognizing. This kind of attention removes stress and it calms the disciple, who has gained calm sees things as they really are (*Samadhi bhavatha samahita yatha bhutam pajanati*).

“Two things (*dhamma*) monks should be developed for the understanding of lust, hatred and delusion... What two? Calm and insight. These two things should be developed for the abandonment, extinction and cessation of lust, hatred and delusion.²

The Buddha reiterates “Two things are important monks, partake of knowledge (*vijja - bhagiya*), calm and insight. When calm is developed, mind is developed, through developed mind lust is abandoned. When insight is developed,- wisdom is developed. Through developed insight, ignorance is abandoned. The mind polluted with lust is not liberated. When there is pollution through ignorance, wisdom is not developed.”

The discourse on setting up of Mindfulness (*satipatthana*) sutta repeats the saying “He lives independent, clinging to nothing in the world” (*anissito ca viharati na ca kimciloke upadigati*). This is what the meditator reaps.

Vipassna meditation results in gaining knowledge by direct observation. It is the real experiencing of life itself, as it goes beyond the intellect, beyond theory, beyond conceptual interpretation.

There are forty different kinds of meditation enunciated by the Buddha. As the prime objective of an individual is the attainment of **Nibbana**. Anapanasati and Vipassana form the two meditation techniques sufficient for attainment of **Nibbana**.

The mind is a colossal form of activity, unwieldy, complex, extremely powerful, a kind of energy unlimited in its capacity for enormous action. This mind has to be trained with meticulous care. Hence the Buddha has included forty different ways of achieving it by meditation. That does not mean that this type of meditation is relevant to the two major techniques of meditation. They supplement these two and contribute to achieving continuous mind culture and thereby **Nibbana**.

Buddhanussati: Meditation suggests two kinds of meditation. One method is to think of the physical feature in a Buddha statue. The individual should look sharply at the statue from top to bottom. One's eyes should not be distracted, it should concentrate on the statue. When one practices in this manner for a number of days, one gets the feeling that the Buddha is before you. By concentrating on this one gains immense joy.

The other method is to contemplate on the virtuous qualities of the Buddha. One should be in a shrine room or a quiet place closing one's eyes, contemplating on the great virtue of the Buddha. One should concentrate on

such as these. “ The Buddha is all comprehending, he knows the cause and effect of all phenomena. He possesses great kindness, he has suffered enormously to save all mankind, he has guided us to attain **Nibbana**. He has extinguished all vice, he is worthy of worship, etc. Then after consistent practice one gains immense joy. The two methods form one meditation technique.

Maranannussati Meditation: This technique is based on concentrating on the fact that death is inevitable as no one can overcome death.

Kavagata sati Meditation: One contemplates on various parts and components of the body 32 in number such as hair, blood, nails, teeth, skin, urine, stool, tears, etc. One should understand each and every section, its colour, position in the body whether up or down, or on a side, one has to recite this. All 32 should not be taken at one time. It should be divided into 6 different sections, it should be evaluated, and recited.

Most individuals have attained arahantship by this technique. It is possible to attain the first jhana by this method. It can be further developed to vipassana meditation too.

Brahmanvihara (Sublime State) Meditation

It is a technique for developing universal love. Such as love for others, friendliness, not opposing others, wishing the well being of others, concurring with others. These are two methods. The individual who resorts to this technique shall contemplate the evil effects of hatred and jealousy, before starting this method.

Metta (Loving Kindness) Meditation

One has to identify a person to whom one can be compassionate. One should select a person objectively. It should not be a foe, a friend, a parent, or loved one. The person whom you select should be a virtuous person who is of exemplary character. Though there are many words to describe the virtues of a person, one has to select only one statement in order to attain *samadhi* or concentration.

To begin with one should love oneself. But by this method jhana is not attained. This enables one to realise that others also value happiness like oneself, imagine that person is before you and cast your mind on the frontal lobe connecting the eye brows, just above the bridge of the nose. Meditate concentrating that this person may be healthy, repeating it a number of times. Then one can gain the jhana concentrating on this individual. This should be

extended to one's self, one's foes, friends and neutral beings. By being compassionate to all these four categories, one develops unbounding compassion.

This can be performed verbally and in different ways; by generating compassion to oneself and others. If it is not genuine, nothing worthwhile will be achieved.

Karuna (Compassion) Meditation

Just as one cannot tolerate one's own suffering, one should be empathic to suffering of others. These thoughts if they arise consistently in the individual, one is achieving kindness meditation.

Mudita (Sympathetic Joy) Meditation

If one can rejoice at the joys of others, one can gain *jhana* by practicing that meditation. An individual concentrating on another enjoying life in the company of his wife, children, kinsman and friends, who are healthy, living with abundance of food, and in luxury wish "Let those persons prosper more and more." This meditation is on sympathetic Joy.

Upekkha (Equanimity) Meditation

Equanimity in all vicissitudes of life is contemplated. By this method, one can achieve only the fifth *jhana*. This even can be achieved by a person who has already attained the first, second, third and fourth *jhana* by some other meditation technique.

One should realise the eight vicissitudes of life namely profit and loss, fame and disgrace, happiness and sorrow, praise and condemnation. One achieves happiness as a result of kamma. One has to reconcile oneself to these vicissitudes of life. By meditating one should be happy. By contemplating that these beings are experiencing, joy and sorrow as a result of their kamma one can gain equanimity.

These are some of the benefits accrued by an individual following meditation. Even when one has attained tranquility state (*Samadhi*) it is possible to commit a sin, which would result in birth in hell. One has to do insight meditation based on *jhana* to gain **Nibbana**. An individual who does insight meditation can attain Nibbana by becoming *Sotapanna*, *Sakadagamy*, *Anagami* and *Arahat*. Then it is very easy to attain tranquility and *jhana* and thereby attain **Nibbana**.

Samadhi in Buddhism has some close parallel with the T M Technique of the West. Transcendental Meditation is a simple and effective procedure. It involves a real and measurable process of physiological refinement. It makes use of the potential of the nervous system to refine its own functioning. This technique aims at mental activity to be transcendental so that the individual is left with no thoughts or sensations but only experience of pure awareness lively in itself. It cultures the nervous system to maintain a state of pure consciousness - a state referred to as *Samadhi* by Patanjali. It differs from *Samadhi* in Buddhism as it uses sutra in a very specific way. Using these sutras it develops extraordinary psycho-physiological functioning and mind -body coordination. It stabilizes the experience of pure consciousness, thus developing growth of higher states of consciousness.

In the last 10 years Physicists have proved that the properties of consciousness are quite similar to the dynamical qualities of matter and energy. According to the findings during TM technique a state of calm alertness is produced. This state is characterized by physiological and biochemical changes and a marked increase in EEG's alpha and theta coherence. It has also been proved that it generates higher states of consciousness, such as faster recovery from stressful stimuli, reduction of blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, improvement in asthma, insomnia and mental ill health, faster reaction time and better performance on perceptual motor tasks, learning and memory tests.

Regular practice generates an increase in intelligence, creativity, concept learning, moral reasoning and interpersonal relationships. It was found that long term meditation had a significant younger biological age which was 12 to 15 years younger than their chronological age, than non meditating controls and norms for the general population. These are associated with higher state of consciousness.

Einstein's theory of special relativity, is that matter is - not indestructible, but is rather a form of energy that may be transformed into other forms of energy or matter. Matter is a condensation of vibrating energy.

In Buddhism the individual is mind and matter. In meditation mind transform the energy to higher states. The Buddha regarded matter as vibrating energy. It is the coordination of mind and matter.

In Buddhism the individual is the five aggregates of matter, sensation, perception, cognition and consciousness. Physicists do not use the same language but the principle involved is very much in tune with this technique of *hnapana sathif* Buddhism. By practicing *hnapana sathi* meditation technique the benefits accrued as stated are calm, serenity, tranquility, bliss, happiness, high

intellectual prowess. Thus meditation is the strongest tool in Buddhism, in attaining Nibbana.

The knowledge of how to attain higher states of consciousness, and eventually enlightenment is stated by the Buddha. It contains many procedures designed to purify and refine the body and mind. The state of enlightenment thus depends upon the perfect harmonious coordination of mind and body. It involves meditation procedures. The Buddha's concept of *jhana* is a state of mental purity where disturbing urges, attraction and passions are subdued and enters into a state of clear consciousness and mindfulness. This alone does not lead to the attainment of **Nibbana**. It is insight meditation that contributes to the attainment of **Nibbana**.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Majjhima Nikaya (PTS edition).
2. Anguttara Nikaya led. Dcavamitta Thera, Colombo 1929.
3. Samyutta Nikaya (PTS edition).