



THE GOALS OF VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION

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Abstract

Vipassanā meditation, often referred to as insight meditation, is a practice rooted in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition that aims to cultivate a deep understanding of the nature of reality. The primary goals of Vipassanā meditation include the development of mindfulness (sati), insight (vipassanā), and ultimately, the attainment of liberation (nibbāna). This meditation technique encourages practitioners to observe their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations without attachment, fostering a clear awareness of the impermanence of all phenomena. Through systematic observation and introspection, Vipassanā aims to transform one's relationship with suffering and enhance overall mental clarity, emotional resilience, and equanimity. This research article explores the specific objectives of Vipassanā meditation, its psychological and philosophical underpinnings, and its practical applications in contemporary contexts, highlighting its relevance for personal growth and spiritual development.

Keywords: Vipassanā meditation, mindfulness, insight, nibbāna, Theravāda Buddhism, psychological transformation, impermanence, suffering, equanimity, spiritual development.

Introduction



Liberation is the supreme goal of all Buddhist theory and practice systems. The mission and role of Buddhism are propagating the true path and methods to practice that path to achieve complete emancipation, just as the Buddha postulated, “All I teach is suffering and the end of suffering.” He likewise declared that the path to realizing awakening is the path resulting in the termination of suffering. That path is the sole and direct way of meditation practice, established on the threefold training of strict observance of precepts (sīla), developing concentration (samādhi), and a basis for attaining wisdom (paññā). With this foundation of Buddha's teachings, the meditative approach emerged, found in most Theravada Buddhist meditation systems to this day - insight (Vipassanā) meditation. This strand is an integral part of practice, which can assist meditators in reaching their goals to attain the ultimate enlightenment. This paper will determine some outstanding goals of the Vipassanā approach and briefly elaborate on those practices in the following details based on the reading resources of Maha Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22), Assapura Sutta (MN 39), and the second chapter Introduction of Buddhist Meditation of the book Buddhist Meditation in Tibet authored by Halkias (2021).

The Goals of Vipassanā Meditation

According to Theravada Buddhist tradition, *satipaṭṭhāna*, the four foundations of mindfulness, is regarded as the ‘direct path’ to Nibbana and presented as a detailed treatment in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya. In this sutta, the Exalted One declared that the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surpassing of sorrow and lamentation, for the dissolution of pain and distress, for the attainment of the due method, and for the realization of complete emancipation is the ardent, mindful, and alert practice of remaining focused on satipaṭṭhāna-body, feelings, mind, and mental objects (DN II 290). In other words, practicing



Vipassanā or insight meditation is the straight and shortest path to extinguish human misery through reaching its following goals.

Developing Detached Mind

In the first stage of practice, there is the wakefulness and alertness of the awakened ability, called ‘mindfulness,’ which is the attempt to focus on a subject so that the mind fails to be distracted. The Blessed One taught His followers to practice both day and night by practicing walking and sitting meditation during the day (MN I 274). Practitioners need to be aware of all other body-mind activities, such as eating, drinking, sitting, standing, lying down, awaking, talking, and being quiet; they will act with alertness (DN II 293). The meditator fully perceives the subject through the senses but is not clinging or reacting. By always remaining in ‘wakefulness, mindfulness, and alertness,’ when meditating, the cultivators' mind thoroughly discerns what is happening outside or inside the body, but their mind is not attached. If there are any pleasant or uncomfortable feelings or sensations, the meditator simply observes them but does not hold on to them.

For example, to remain focused on the mind in and of itself, the meditator can pay attention to their different mental states according to DN II 300. When the mind has covetousness, the practitioner is conscious that the mind has covetousness. When the mind is deprived of covetousness, they perceive that the mind is deprived of covetousness. When the mind has enmity, they are aware that the mind has enmity. When the mind is devoid of enmity, they notice that the mind is devoid of enmity. When the mind has ignorance, they are mindful that the mind has ignorance. When the mind is absent from ignorance, he discerns that the mind is absent from ignorance. In this manner, they remain concentrated inside on the mind in and of itself, or outside on the mind in and of itself, or both inside and outside on the mind in and of itself. They discern



“There is a mind” that is maintained to the extent of comprehension and remembrance. Thus, they stay independent and unsustained by not attaching to phenomena in the world.

Abandoning Defilements (kilesa)

When a wise, clever, skillful, and ardent meditator dwell contemplating the body as a body, feelings as feelings, consciousness as consciousness, mental qualities as mental qualities, is rewarded with mindfulness and full awareness, and withdraws from covetousness and distress for the world, their mind becomes concentrated, and their defilements are ceased (DN II 291).

Abolishing the Five Hindrances (kāmacchanda)

With constant mindfulness practice, Buddha's disciples can cleanse their minds of avarice concerning the mortal world, ill will and anger, sloth and drowsiness, restlessness and anxiety, and uncertainty (MN I 275). They can dwell with an awareness devoid of avarice, devoid of ill will but sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings, devoid of sloth and drowsiness but mindful, alert, percipient of light, devoid of restlessness and anxiety but undisturbed and inwardly stilled mind, and have crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity regarding skillful mental qualities.

Transparent Comprehension and Wisdom

The insight meditation approach is the state of mind being cultivated and let it be discerned by mindfulness (sati), which plays the role of a forerunner and is concurrently associated with attempt (ātāpī) and an apparent comprehension (sampajāno), and let them observe whatever the occurrences arisen at one's sense-doors: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind as they truly are (Soma Thera, 1981). With the application of the marks of existence: impermanence (anicca), unsatisfactoriness (dukkha), and no ego (anatta) to be aware of any events as they arise, the mind can be released from clinging to things as being eternal, agreeable, or 'mine.' Such perception is intuitive wisdom appeared from practitioners' mind, so it diverges from education through the



memory of wisdom from reading and listening to the teachings (sutamayāpaññā). Accordingly, meditators can realize and have manifest comprehension upon encountering the reality of truth in front of them, and “the meditated subjects to be observed are no other than the five aggregates, twelve sense-base, eighteen elements, twenty-two faculties, the Four Noble Truths, and Twelve dependent origination, all of which are merely materiality and mentality and being manifested as meditation ground” (Srithavornsuk, 2017, p. 69). That is why numerous Buddhist meditation methods have an emphasis on propelling awareness and wisdom, the ability to be mindful and differentiate, and the intuitive ‘knowing’ (jāna) that can be developed through meditation exercise (Halkias, 2021).

Insight (paññā)

During Vipassanā meditation practice, the cultivator is invariably incentivized to just observe the objects, detach from any experiences, and perceive them in the light of the three common characteristics (tilakkhaṇa) (Halkias, 2021). All encounters, albeit delighted and peaceful, engage in impermanence, discomfort and fail to contribute to a perpetual or an everlasting ‘ego.’ They emerge depending on conditions and cannot be controlled as the experience and phenomena are not ‘mine,’ and are, therefore ‘non-self’ (anatta). To strengthen insight and wisdom (paññā), one can practice based on the Rathavinīta-Sutta, one of the prominent texts in the Pali canonical literature. Providing the seven stages of the purification of insight, it compares each stage to a stage in a chariot race. The practitioner commences with morality (sīla), undergoes the second stage of serenity (samatha), and then experiences seven levels of insight: the purification of virtue, the purification of mind, the purification of view, the purification of overcoming doubt, the purification by knowledge and vision of what is path and not-path, the purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and the purification by knowledge and vision.



Through being aware and discerning, the path ahead becomes manifest: direct wisdom of phenomena appears, and there is a ‘secluding’ from clinging to the constant flux in the mind and physical events. This contains ‘equanimity about formations,’ in which the meditator surpasses apprehension, dread, or delight. Ultimately, the critical purification that will lead to enlightening can be cognitive: the meditator eventually diminishes all attachment or rejection concerning events and conditions, and nibbana, the unconditioned or indescribable, is realized (Halkias, 2021).

Conclusion

Vipassanā meditation is the genuine way to realise the impermanent nature of universal phenomena, the no-self nature of mentality (nāma) and materiality (rūpa) and the unsatisfactory nature of everything. It results in purifying human being’s mind so that they can transcend suffering and grief, eliminate sorrow and lamentation leading to attain noble fruits, just as the Omniscient One declared, “Indeed, monks, whoever practices this fourfold establishing of awareness in this manner for seven years, he may expect one of two results: in this very life highest wisdom or if a substratum of aggregates remains, the stage of non-returner” (DN II 315). Therefore, reaching the above Buddhist insight meditation goals is the proper way to surmount misery and then arrive at the Nibbana.

Abbreviations

DN Dīgha Nikāya

MN Majjhima Nikāya

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