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Self-insight to healing

Shubhrastha



Mastery over self: A Vipassana session for children. Photo: K. Manikandan

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The age-old Buddhist meditation technique of Vipassana is being increasingly used by medical practitioners

Gautam Buddha discovered the meditation technique of Vipassana some 2,500 years ago. However, it was gradually lost to India. Fortunately, Myanmar preserved the technique through an unbroken chain of practitioners and teachers.

According to its practitioners, Vipassana leads to the development of insight into one's own nature by which one may recognise and eliminate the causes of suffering.

Taking cue, medical practitioners believe that this development of self-insight helps patients of various psychological and mental disorders to delve deep into their own psyche to discover gradually the root cause of their sufferings within their own minds.

Mumbai-based Dr. Malti Sharan explains, "Often patients come with hallucinatory tendencies. Some are agitated beyond measure, always insecure about their well-being. More often than not the reason for their acute suffering resides outside their control...Through Vipassana, I have observed patients gradually get out of this frustrated attempt to blame other causes or people for what's happening to them. And once that's achieved, it is easier for medication to deliver benefits."

Herself a severe migraine patient once, she shares, "My expanding business took a toll on my health. Migraine became a huge problem until I tried Vipassana. After some persistent practice, I discovered that this disease got cured permanently."

Its practitioners believe that Vipassana sends message to the brain to calm it down — resulting in reduction of the intensity of mental restlessness or pain.

Dr. Anirban Malhotra maintains that by concentrated and neutral observation one can get rid of mild pains and body aches without any drug medication.

One of the techniques used is *anapana-sati*. It calls to observe one's breath without any regulation or self modification over a triangular area between the nose and mouth. This, medical professionals believe, "allows one to

sharpen the attention span without any stress”.

Shaswat, a IIT-Kharagpur student says, “With regular practice of Vipassana, I have discovered a huge leap in my attention and concentration span.”

anapana

Sonia Mangwana, a psychiatrist based in England and a regular practitioner of the meditation for seven years, observes, “The core philosophy of Vipassana that everything is impermanent, *anicca*, gradually informs the mind to treat desires and cravings as similar entities. And slowly, The patients who I recommend the same, learn to just observe even their greatest addictions as just a matter of time bound reality.”

What more, Vipassana was even taught to Tihar jail inmates. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has been reportedly planning to introduce the course in all Indian prisons.

Keywords: [Buddhist meditation technique](#), [Vipassana](#), [anapana-sati](#), [suffering treatments](#)

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