

# **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

## **A Study of the Effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation on Employees**

Submitted towards Partial Fulfillment of PhD. Course requirements

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## 1. Introduction

"Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of this effort is his own personality."

- Erich Fromm

Vipassana, which means to see things as they really are, is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation. It was rediscovered by Gautam Buddha more than 2500 years ago and was taught by him as a universal remedy for universal ills i.e., an art of living.

Since ancient times, man has been searching for the meaning in life. The progress that mankind has achieved in different aspects of life is the overall result of this pursuit. Nevertheless, this is an ongoing process which will continue as long as human beings exist. Maslow explained it with his hierarchical pyramid model (Maslow, 1954) and Victor Frankl who introduced 'Logotherapy' talks about how one's attitude is the main determinant in any given set of circumstances even if they are as bleak as concentration camps (Frankl, 1959). He stated that life ultimately means taking responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill tasks that it constantly sets for each individual. In order to take responsibility in life there is a need to seek a balance between work, family, recreation and self-actualization. Considering that one's attitude is the main determinant, people have adapted various measures like development programs, meditation, yoga, physical fitness programs, and arts and so on. Vipassana meditation is a way of self-transformation through self-observation resulting in increased awareness and mental peace. There are many parallels between ideas of Buddhism and modern management. In fact, Buddha's concept of 'sangha' or organization was styled based on democratic principles in which the members of the sangha were taught to follow the laws for peaceful co-existence, and to share knowledge and wealth among all members of society. This is identical to today's concept of sustainable growth. Buddha emphasized the need for working on the self to achieve self transformation through self reliance (Gopalakrishna, 2006). Vipassana meditation (VM) aims at internal change which results in overall change in behaviour and personality

### 1.1 Vipassana Meditation

In the organizational context, at the individual level, to use Vipassana meditation technique is to enhance a sense of mind - body balance by increased self awareness. The experience of inner peace within oneself leads to non-delusion, better self control and greater clarity of thought. This has been acknowledged widely in society and in literature (Hart, 1987). To

meditate is to purify the mind. It is a mental exercise for man's inner sense of development.

The meditation consists of three sub-units:

- 1- Anapanasati (Mindfulness of breathing)
- 2- Vipassana (Insight meditation)
- 3- Metta Bhavana (Universal love and compassion)

## **1.2 Need and Relevance of the Proposed Work**

The proposed study has been taken up to understand the impact of Vipassana on behavior and personality of employees. Considering that the quality of productive activity is largely dependent on the individual employee's mental well-being, interpersonal skills, clarity of thought, it is my hypothesis that there may be a case to be made to include Vipassana meditation as a technique to be practiced in organizations.

## 2. Review of the literature

The literature review aims to situate the current study within the body of literature and to provide context for the reader. Such a review is of paramount importance in order to know the work already done in the research area and identify any existing research gaps. It is a source of secondary data.

For the present study, literature review was conducted by referring journals, articles and books, as well as web sites on:

1. Vipassana meditation (VM)
2. Effect of VM on employees

### 2.1 Vipassana Meditation:

“Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me.”

- Carl Rogers

**Goenka**, 1980, says that the direct experience of a mental-physical phenomenon within one's own self, this technique of self observation, is what is called Vipassana meditation. Vipassana is to observe things as they really are, not just as they seem to be. Vipassana is a technique of self-examination, a scientific method of self-observation that results in total purification of the mind and the highest happiness of full liberation.

Vipassana is a Pali term and it means insight, to see things as they really are. It is a scientific technique to explore the laws of nature (called Dhamma), within the framework of one's own mind and body. Also known as ‘Insight Awareness’ or ‘Mindfulness Meditation’, Vipassana is a very ancient meditation technique of India, laudatory references to which are found even in the Rig-Veda. Vipassana's ability to bring tranquility to the human mind, changing its turbulence to calmness with increased vitality, makes it a positive mental health measure and an excellent human potential development method. The meditator becomes free to live for higher values, richer goals: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and peacefulness. Vipassana is a way and means to such self-actualization or self-realization. It has also been equated with such terms as self-realization, optimal functioning, psychological health and individual autonomy (Pethe & Chokhani, 2010). Shostrom, 1973, described self-actualization

as an ongoing process of growth towards experiencing one's potential in terms of creative expression, interpersonal effectiveness and fulfillment in living. Vipassana thus leads people from narcissism to mature, social love, to a life of altruism. All these imply the highest stage of personality development or the optimal personality functioning and positive mental health (Goenka, 1988).

**Fleischman**, 1991, asserted that Vipassana is not merely an exercise to be performed in the special environment of a meditation retreat. The path of Vipassana is a continuous, disciplined pursuit of this experiential gnosis throughout life. Although Vipassana contains the core of what later has been called Buddhism, it is not organized religion, requires no conversion and is open to students of all faith, nationality, colour, or background. In its pure form, which can still be found and followed today, it is a non- sectarian art of living in harmony with the laws of nature. It is the ethical and social path that derives from an exploration of nature within the framework of one's own mind and body. Vipassana's goals are liberation from suffering and achieving spiritual transcendence. It leads to inner peace, which those who practice it learn to share with others. Healing-not disease cure, but the essential healing of human suffering-is the purpose of Vipassana. By walking down the path of Vipassana meditation, we arrive at experiences that season and mature our personalities. The personal transformation we each undergo becomes the catalyst for social change as we influence everything around us.

The practice of Vipassana meditation leads to activation of the experience of anicca, which in turn leads to maturation, not eradication, of personality. The great Vipassana meditation teacher, Sayagi U Ba Khin, wrote: "Impermanence (anicca) is, of course, the essential fact which must be first experienced and understood by practice." The direction of the path is so simple it can be explained in one sentence: transcend the suffering distraction involved in attachment to the self- mind and body- by observing objectively and peacefully the appearance and disappearance of everything comprising them, thereby cultivating insight into their essential transiency.

The path of Vipassana, as taught by the Buddha, leads away from craving and aversion that derive from a rigid self-concept, away from negativities of greed, hate, and delusion that derive from defense of the false, ephemeral self. The path opens into the virtues and qualities produced by experienced insight. The realization of anicca is a deep insight into ourselves and the world around us. It exposes the absurdity of clinging to a passing life in a passing world. It relaxes the clenched, false hopes of narcissism, and enables the flow of spontaneous identification with all other transient lives. Vipassana leads to a slow, cumulative social change by organizing individual lives around new sources of well-being. It points to a sense of

aliveness that is marked by a tenacious steady investment in the personal and real (Fleischman, 1991).

People from all backgrounds who practice Vipassana find that they become better human beings. If leading figures in the fields of religion, politics, economics, the professions, the arts, industry and business realize the potential for change which this technique offers, and use their influence wisely, much can be done to improve the level of harmony and well-being in Indian society and elsewhere (Hetherington, 2003).

**Prof. Dhar**, 2003, opines that clearly for the harmonious development of any society and for the harmonious development of any individual a proper integration of science and Dharma is essential. The term 'Dharma' literally means 'natural law'. Dharma is thus an exposition of the laws pertaining to our inner world, just as science deals with the laws pertaining to the outer world. An obvious prerequisite for such training is the scrupulous observance of basic moral precepts—in particular, abstinence from killing, stealing, false speech, sexual misconduct and intoxicants—since their willful violation would cause violent mental agitation, making it impossible to observe the mind-body complex objectively. Dharma is essentially a systematization of all the wisdom gained by humanity. Viewed in this way, Dharma and science emerge as two complementary aspects of human endeavour.

One of the greatest rulers in the history of the world, Emperor Ashoka claimed that his success was demonstrated by an improvement in the moral conduct of his people. Every rock edict of Ashoka speaks only of Dhamma. The inscriptions testify to the mass application of this technique, with the result of profound changes in society at that time. (Goenka, 1991).

### 2.1.1 Vipassana and Health:

**Khurana & Dhar**, 2002, reported that mild to moderately severe neurotic cases of anxiety, depression, and adjustment problems have shown complete recovery as a result of Vipassana. There have been number of studies for studying the impact of Vipassana on Health. Fleischman, 1991, documented that Vipassana is accepted by healing professionals as it is free from dogma, experientially based and focused on relieving human suffering. There are many case reports of mediators' who remain calm and peaceful even when they are suffering from excruciating pain due to illnesses like terminal cancer or other diseases (Vipassana Research Institute, 1990, 1995).

In a long-term prospective study, Khosla ,1989, documented that Vipassana meditation induced marked benefits in both normal and mental disorder groups, which were studied in

terms of ‘personality based hardiness’, and stress-related physiological and psychological symptoms, as well as, ways of coping with stress. Khosla further added that by the end of six months their general complaints about life diminished and the ability to withstand stress increased. These measured improvements were even greater by the end of the follow up study after one year. Sinha et al., 1976, have reported improved attention span, alertness and emotional stability in the subjects after attending Vipassana courses. Some of the physiological and biochemical measurements on Vipassana meditators support the hypothesis of built-in relaxation (Udupa et.al., 1975) indicating that the meditators were physically stable and in a more restful state, while mentally, they were more active and in a state of increased awareness. **Dillow & Davidson**, 1988, in their research report on, ‘Meditation and Changes in Perception and Cognition’ noticed a significant increase in visual sensitivity and a greater flexibility of cognitive set among the meditators. Pradhan, 2000, has documented that an electroencephalographic (E.E.G.) study of the meditators revealed novel neuro-physiological processes of synchronization appearing from the midline structures of the brain; these were more pronounced in the experienced meditators than in the novice. The clinical utility of Vipassana is considered to be more in providing a general psychological pattern of positive mental states rather than as a response to any particular presenting problem, which makes it a perfect anti-stress remedy and an excellent human potential development method (Chokhani, 1995). Also, the clinical study in healthy subjects by Chiesa ,2010, suggested that VM could enhance more mature defenses and coping styles. Nathawat et al., 1997 have reported the efficacy of Vipassana in managing anxiety, stress-related symptoms and other emotional problems.

**Kutz et al.**, 1985, have drawn and advocated the use of a framework, wherein Vipassana meditation and dynamic psychotherapy are integrated. They have discussed the synergistic advantages of the combination, considering the psychobiological nature of meditation, the relaxation response (Benson, 1975) and its use as an effective cognitive technique for the development of self-awareness. Vipassana has been used as a form of consciousness therapy since it helps in exploring the deeper reaches of one’s mind and in developing better insight and self-understanding, known to facilitate healthy and lasting changes in one’s lifestyle (Chandiramani, 2001).

### 2.1.2 Impact of Anapana (first step of Vipassana): Mindfulness

**Ven Nyanaponika Thera**, 1996, expressed that mindfulness of breathing is very effective in quietening bodily and mental unrest or irritation. It is the simple way to the initial states of concentration used either as a prelude to other exercises or as a practice in its own right.

Anapana develops concentration, focusing the attention on breathing, removing the distractions which cause stress and strain affecting the health of the individual. Continuous practice of Anapana, removes stress, negativity and improves interpersonal relations, productivity and profitability.

**Epstein**, 2001, says, “Mindfulness means paying attention, on purpose, to one’s own thoughts, feelings and judgements ... It is the practice of being fully present in our attention to where we are, what we are doing, and what is happening at the moment”, (p. 64).

Mindfulness practice, inherited from the Buddhist tradition, is being employed in psychology to alleviate a variety of mental and physical conditions, including obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, and the prevention of relapse in depression and drug addiction.

Awareness has always been associated with autonomous functioning; however it was only recently that the ‘Self-Determination Theory’ (SDT) researchers incorporated the idea of mindfulness and its relationship with autonomous functioning and emotional well being in their research (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Brown & Ryan concluded that when individuals act mindfully, their actions are consistent with their values and interest.

**Goldin**, 2001, in his *Mindfulness Meditation Research Findings* observed that when two groups were subjected to meditation or cognitive self-observation procedure both groups showed reliable increases in dimensions of self-actualization and decreases in common stress-related symptoms. Adhikari, 2012, in the ‘Study of Effect of Vipassana on Anxiety and Depression’, states that the practice of Anapana for greater control over the mind is helpful in handling harmful impulses and wishes.

**Sharma et al.**, 2012, have documented that Mindfulness has shown considerable decrease in anxiety disorder. Miller et al., 1995, reported long-term beneficial effects in the treatment of anxiety disorder patients following an intensive but time-limited group stress reduction intervention based on mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness has been useful in relieving pain by reducing the experience of suffering via cognitive reappraisal in chronic pain patients, who had not improved with traditional medical care (Kabat-Zinn J., 1982; Kabat-Zinn et al, 1984). Several therapists have reported using Anapana as relaxation therapy in clinical practice

(Fleischman, 1991). Ayyar, 1990, has been using Anapana meditation in neurotic and psychosomatic disorders as a supplementary form of treatment with good clinical response. Since 1986, thousands of school children ranging between the ages of 8 and 15 have attended Anapana meditation courses tailored to meet the specific needs, interests and capabilities of the children. In the studies on the impact of these courses, Adaviyappa, 1994, explains that the immediate and long-term benefits are clearly significant in helping children to become established in lives of positive action with a strong moral foundation at an early age. The academic performance of those children who continue to meditate at home or at school improved because the meditation helps to improve their concentration, memory and self-control.

### 2.1.3 Metta – Loving kindness

**Ven. Narada**, 1988, expresses, “It is universal love/loving kindness, that works as the antidote against hatred, ill-will and anger. It develops goodwill and love towards every living being, without any discrimination; fostering harmonious relationship. Metta is a state of true friendship, which softens one’s heart. It is defined as the sincere wish for the welfare and genuine happiness of all living beings without exception”, (p. 614).

**Fredrickson**, 2001, in *The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology* opines that the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions asserts that people's daily experiences of positive emotions compound over time to build a variety of consequential personal resources. Fredrickson et al., 2008 reported that their research results showed that loving-kindness meditation practice increased daily experiences of positive emotions over time, which, in turn, produced increases in a wide range of personal resources (e.g., increased mindfulness, purpose in life, social support, and decreased illness symptoms).

## 2.2 Effect of Vipassana on employees

“A human being is not one thing among others; things determine each other, but man is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes--within the limits of endowment and environment--he has made out of himself”,

- Victor Frankl

### 2.2.1 Preamble:

The literature review was conducted to understand the effect of VM on employees and to uncover research gaps that exist.

Human resources at all levels are the main barriers to change. Therefore, organizations focus on altering the attitudes of employees to adapt, grow and evolve. Buddha emphasizes the need for acceptance of change at the experiential level for the positive development of an individual, which then positively impacts organizational growth. Buddha advised the continuous practice of meditation , Anapana – Vipassana – Metta Bhavana – leading to a healthy mind and body, and naturally paving the way for harmonious relations. This in turn improves productivity and leads to better performance (Gopalakrishna, 2006).

**Rarick**, 2007, says that, while the Buddha did not directly address managerial or economic issues, his teachings influence managerial decision making in Buddhist countries. The wisdom of the Buddha can also provide timeless advice for modern day managers regardless of religious orientation. The Buddha's recommendations for modern managers could be summarized as follows:

- be mindful
- be compassionate
- consider the fact that you are only part of a complex and dynamic situation, be flexible and open minded
- Recognize that nothing is permanent – not the organization, not strategies that may work now, not you, or your leadership style.

Enlightened management is about accepting change, creating harmony, and respecting and treating colleagues with dignity. Referred to as “Buddhist economics” (Puntasen, 2002), the concept maintains that quality of life is not dictated solely by maximizing one's utility, but also includes non-material factors as well. For example, living in peace and harmony with others needs to be valued in economic decision-making. Considering that a spiritual workplace is not just a more harmonious workplace but a more profitable workplace as well, companies are looking at different methods to fulfill spiritual needs of their workforce. According to Fry, 2003, spirituality includes two essential elements in a person's life: (a) transcendence of self, manifesting in a sense of calling or destiny, and (b) belief that one's activities have meaning and value beyond economic benefits or self-gratification.

**Witten & Rinpoche**, 1999, stated that as long as emotional and spiritual needs at their deepest level are not acknowledged and the gap between the two selves namely the professional and personal selves is not reconciled, no amount of self-improvement will make an employee truly happy. An untamed flurry of emotions and desires will continue to rage on the inside, resulting in unhappiness and frustration. They further added that without internal harmony, external harmony in the work environment will be impossible and business will continue to be ruled by contention and inefficiency.

**Bhatnagar**, 2014, while explaining the effects of Vipassana meditation on employees' level of motivation says that ethical behavior, attention stability and emotional transformation all work together, along with practices such as meditation, to redirect motivation along healthier, more transpersonal directions. This facilitates a reduction in the intensity and the compulsivity of motivation and a change in its direction focus. As motivation becomes less scattered and more focused, the things desired become more subtle, more internal. There is less emphasis on getting and more on giving. Desires gradually become less self-centered and more self-transcendent. Traditionally this motivational shift was seen as 'purification' or as 'giving up attachment to the world'. In contemporary terms it is movement up Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The reduction of compulsive craving is said to result in a corresponding reduction in intra-psychic conflict and suffering, a claim now supported by studies of advanced meditators (Walsh, 2003).

### 2.2.2 Effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation

The literature is reviewed with reference to emotional intelligence, workspace spirituality, coping with stress and interpersonal relationships.

#### **Emotional Intelligence (EI):**

Since Goleman's, 1995, book on emotional intelligence (EQ), *Emotional Intelligence - Why it can matter more than IQ*, EQ has been considered as a key to success. Goleman's, 2004, work in the area of emotional intelligence is consistent with a Buddhist approach to management. His five components of emotional intelligence at work relate closely to a Buddhist philosophy of dealing with others. Goleman found that self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills constituted the key aspects of emotional intelligence, and that emotional intelligence was more predictive of managerial success than cognitive intelligence. Again the Buddha offers his advice: "There are four bases of empathy. What four? Charity,

kind speech, doing good, and treating all alike.” Following the advice of the Buddha produces a management style with greater emotional intelligence.

The popularity of the concept of emotional intelligence during the past decade has led researchers to examine its potency in various areas of human functioning. Among the areas with the strongest connections to EI is developmental, educational, clinical and counseling, industrial and organizational psychology. Thus, it has been found that trait or ability EI are related to life success (Goleman, 1995), life satisfaction and well-being (Palmer et al., 2002), interpersonal relationships (Fitness, 2001), academic achievement (Van der Zee et al., 2002), occupational stress (Bar-On et al., 2000), etc. Many studies have concluded that emotional intelligence plays an important role in performing manager’s job (Goleman, 1995), i.e. assortment of non-cognitive skills, capabilities, and competencies that influences a person’s ability to succeed in coping with demands and pressures of the environment. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in how emotional reactions and experiences affect both physical as well as psychological health.

Comparatively, very few studies have been carried out on the impact of meditation on emotional intelligence. Some of the studies carried out are:

**Tamwatin**, 2012, reported that meditation helps to gradually cultivate mindful awareness and concentration, resulting in a direct effect of enhancing emotional intelligence and self-perception of leadership skills. Insight competence resulting from meditation, if utilized in an appropriate way, can be a potential tool for enhancing the skills of business leaders.

**Chandra Mohan and Prasad**, 2002, in “Intelligence and self motivational factors for managerial effectiveness in corporate world”, state that, emotional intelligence is a dynamic force which acts as a guide to professional success.

### **Workplace spirituality (WS):**

WS is being put forward as a universal cure to the ills of modern management. Cavanagh, 1999, asserts that the field of spirituality in the workplace expanded rapidly during the 1990s. For instance, Biberman and Whitty, 1997, suggest that spirit in the workplace can lead to greater kindness and fairness, and even to industrial democracy, also known as co-management or power-sharing. Indeed, they assert, “rekindling the spirit in work is not only good business, but also subconsciously sought after by workers and managers alike” (p. 135).

**Kale & Shrivastava**, 2003, stated that notion of ‘spirituality in the workplace’ continues to receive growing attention in practitioner as well as academic circles. Realizing that a spiritual

workplace is not just a more harmonious workplace but a more profitable workplace as well, companies are looking at means and methods to fulfill the spiritual needs of their workforce

**Ashmos and Duchon**, 2000, defined WS as “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community” (p.137). They argued that WS is comprised of three main elements: (1) inner life; (2) meaningful work; and (3) conditions for community in workplace. These three WS dimensions have been deployed extensively by previous studies to measure spirituality in the workplace (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). Geigle, 2012, reported that many of the empirical studies demonstrate a positive effect of WS on job commitment, satisfaction, and performance. His study documents the workplace spirituality empirical research including defining and measuring; demographics; implementation; effect on attitudes; impact on performance; and WS effect on ethical decision making. In addition, the empirical research on workplace spirituality has demonstrated results in enhancing altruism and conscientiousness, self-career management, reduced inter-role conflict, reduced frustration, organization based self-esteem, involvement, retention, and ethical behavior. In his research paper on ‘Individual spirituality and Work place Spirituality’, Pawar, 2009, suggests that workplace spirituality can be encouraged at both the individual and the organizational levels and his research findings provide some relevant inputs for leadership actions and organization development efforts aimed at implementing workplace spirituality in organizations.

In their research, ‘Workspace Spirituality, Meditation and Work performance’, Petchsawanga and Duchon, who measured the effectiveness of 8-days meditation training program, on novice meditators, reported that there was no appreciable change in workspace spirituality and their work performance. However in the second group, employees, who regularly practice insight meditation showed higher workplace spirituality scores. The more spiritual people are, the more they practice meditation and the more they practice meditation, the better they perform their work. The research provides empirical evidence of a significant, positive relationship between spirituality and actual work outcomes (Petchsawanga & Duchon, 2012). The overall connection between spirituality and work performance supports the findings reported by Duchon and Plowman, 2005, and confirms a theoretical assumption that bringing spirituality to the workplace positively affects organizational outcomes.

## **Coping with Stress:**

Stress is a psychological and physical response of the body that occurs whenever an individual has to adapt to the changing conditions in different life situations at work, at home and in social situations. Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, stated that, “Stressors are external, objective events that have the potential to create negative outcomes for individuals”. They argued that perception is a necessary component of this type of psychological stress process. That is, stress and strain will only occur if the individual perceives the situation as negative or stressful.

Extensive research over the years has focused on identifying stressors (Colligan & Higgins, 2006), coping mechanisms (Nelson & Sutton, 1990), and ways that both individual employees and organizations can employ to effectively manage stress (Kram & Hall, 1989). In employee’, work stress is usually associated with too much or too little work, conflicting job demands and work life balance (Mathis & Jackson, 2004).

A number of moderating factors that can reduce or eliminate the negative effects of organizational stress have been identified including: coping styles (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), level of control (Spector, 1986); and social support (House, 1981). To study the coping process, Lazarus and his colleagues developed a measure called ‘Ways of coping’ (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). An attempt to change the person-environment realities behind negative emotions or stress is called problem-focused coping and to relate to an internal element and try to reduce negative emotional state is called emotion-focused coping.

Research has demonstrated that identifying the sources of stress and equipping participants with an understanding of stress management can have a positive influence on the stress levels of professional employees (Taugis, 2002).

**Bhatnagar**, 2014, says “Vippassana Meditation is a way to control works related stress as well as stress arising due to family and other social problems”. He reported that Vipassana meditation is a scientific and non-sectarian technique. It was found effective in reducing stress and increasing productivity of the employees. After observing these benefits, some state governments of India have introduced it in various government services.

**Szekeres and Wertheim**, 2014, in their study examined effects of a standardized, community-based Vipassana course, on subjective stress, well-being, self-kindness and trait mindfulness in a community sample. Findings, including intention-to-complete analyses, suggested positive effects of the Vipassana course in reducing subjective stress and increasing well-being, self-kindness and overall mindfulness.

**Madhu**, 2007, concluded in his research findings that Vipassana had reconstructed new moral, social, and philosophical structures with significant cognitive, behavioral, cathartic, and social benefits. It was effective for managing stress, facilitating empathy, compassion, altruism, supportive communication, and for increasing productivity in the work environment

### **Interpersonal relations:**

Psychologist Carl Rogers put forth interpersonal relationship as – “assuming a minimal mutual willingness to be in contact and to receive communications, we may say that the greater the communicated congruence of experience, awareness, and behavior on the part of one individual, the more the ensuing relationship will involve a tendency toward reciprocal communication with the same qualities, mutually accurate understanding of the communications, improved psychological adjustment and functioning in both parties, and mutual satisfaction in the relationship.”

Interpersonal relationships are formed in the context of social, cultural and other influences. Interpersonal relationships are dynamic systems that change continuously during their existence. Practices for the cultivation of empathy, compassion, and other qualities with consequences for interpersonal behavior have a long tradition in the meditative disciplines (Walsh, 1999). Mindfulness practice, for example, is believed to lead to a felt sense of trust and closeness with others and an enhanced ability to approach stressful interpersonal events as challenges rather than threats (Kabat-Zinn, 1996), perhaps by promoting a capacity to witness thought and emotion so as not to react impulsively and destructively. Meditation may foster not only day-to-day interpersonal functioning but also adaptive responses to social conflict.

Vipassana meditation is encouraged in many private organizations like Surya Foundations, Mahindra and Mahindra, Speed Engineering, Toshniwal Instrumentations, and Anand Engineers Pvt. Ltd., who depute their employees to attend Vipassana courses. Also, a large number of personnel from the government sector have been attending Vipassana courses.

In a case study of Anand Engineers Pvt. Ltd. (Mumbai), Shah, 1994, reports that adoption of Vipassana courses by multiple levels in the organization resulted in enhanced ownership, which facilitated consensus decisions, team spirit and self motivation in the work-force. Sixty percent of the employees have attended courses. About half of those have done more than one course. The ultimate result was an increase in group efficiency and profits accompanied by improvement in mental health and interpersonal relations. Productivity was improved by 20%. In another case study, “Productivity and Harmony through Vipassana”, Gupta, 1997, reports enhanced industrial productivity and harmony through the practice of Vipassana meditation

during the period 1986-1996 in Anand Engineers Pvt. Limited. There were no strikes or any other form of labor unrest in the company. Individual employees reported reduction in anger, calmness of mind and greater tolerance and overall harmony as a result of Vipassana meditation.

**Joshi**, 1994, has reported on the positive effect of Vipassana on the work environment resulting in a positive change in the behaviour of Vipassana students and a new dimension of trust, commitment and co-operation with others, and a remarkable rise in goodwill. There was a decrease in hatred or strong dislike towards others, short-temperedness, mental fatigue, jealousy, negative feelings towards others, and confrontation because of jealousy, ego, guilt-feelings, etc.

**Dr. Gopalakrishna**, 2006, in *Buddhism and Contemporary Management*, mentions that an empirical study has shown that respondents who underwent Vipassana meditation courses had achieved mental peace, developed personal, interpersonal and professional effectiveness irrespective of gender, age, education and position.

A multifaceted study on Vipassana in Government, by Parihar, 2004, shed light on the impact of Vipassana in reducing negative feelings in the personal and professional lives of government officials. Agrawal and Bedi, 2002, in their study on effects of Vipassana on Delhi Police Trainees, reported that the results indicated improvement in the interpersonal relationships of the subjects.

**Macdonald**, 2003, in, 'Dhamma - its role in current social problems', states that Dhamma help us bear the stress of competitiveness, crowded or polluted environments and the seeming injustices of life and gives us strength to serve and improve our society.

In *Vipassana and Business Management*, Jayantilal Shah, 1994, states that the real aim of an economic venture is to create wealth which combines money with health and happiness. Vipassana makes a significant contribution towards improving the mental health and happiness of individuals- vital components of wealth.

The civil service career of Sayagyi U. Ba Khin, Acharya S. N. Goenka's meditation teacher, is an example of the transformative effect of Vipassana on government administration. He was the first Accountant General of independent Burma, now Myanmar. He held many positions as head of several government departments. Sayagyi used Vipassana as an instrument of change and reform. He succeeded in instilling a heightened sense of duty, discipline and morality in the officials working under him by teaching them Vipassana meditation. As a result, efficiency dramatically increased, and corruption was eliminated. His outstanding achievements in

reforming the administration indicate clearly that Vipassana facilitates quick decisions based upon sound judgments (Ba Khin, 1991).

The findings by Kumar, indicate that the Vipassana meditation process has a high influence on professional and personal effectiveness of managers. This research study highlights the importance of holistic education to the management graduates that ensure the development of physically stable, mentally alert and professionally matured students for better operations and business excellence (Kumar, 2012).

**Marques & Satinder**, 2009, have documented that Vipassana has tremendous potential in enhancing workplace well-being through communications, efficient meetings, optimum performance and better decisions. If change within is a prerequisite to a change without, then insight meditation accords the best place to begin the journey of inner transformation, personally and professionally. In the ultimate analysis, one can only determine the efficacy of the practice of insight meditation by practicing it diligently. “Ehipassiko”, said the Buddha, “come and see for yourself”.

### 2.2.3 Mindfulness meditation in organizations

**Gordon et al.**, 2014 assert that work-related mental health issues like work addiction and stress impose a significant health and economic burden on both the employee and organization. One of the interventions that can be empirically shown to improve levels of work-related mental health—especially those with the potential to concurrently improve employee levels of work performance—is mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs). Based on preliminary empirical findings and on the outcomes of MBI studies with clinical populations, it is concluded that MBIs appear to be viable and cost-effective interventional options for organizations.

**Shiera & Graham**, 2014,, concluded that being mindful affected respondents overall Subjective Well-Being (SWB). Respondents observed that there were particular aspects of their life about which they needed to be mindful. These included reflecting on and developing a personal identity, thinking about issues related to control and openness, being aware of oneself internally and externally, reflecting on pivotal moments in one's life, and maintaining a balance between work and personal life.

**Brewer et al.**, 2011, opine that many philosophical and contemplative traditions teach that ‘living in the moment’ increases happiness. However, the default mode of humans appears to be that of mind-wandering, which correlates with unhappiness, and with activation in a

network of brain areas associated with self-referential processing. They investigated brain activity in experienced meditators and matched meditation-naive controls as they performed several different meditations such as Concentration, Loving-Kindness, and Choiceless Awareness. It was found that the main nodes of the default-mode network (medial prefrontal and posterior cingulate cortices) were relatively deactivated in experienced meditators across all meditation types. Their findings further demonstrate differences in the default-mode network that are consistent with decreased mind-wandering. As such, these results provide a unique understanding of possible neural mechanisms of meditation.

The study by Banerjee, 2012, in his paper on ‘Alleviating Business Challenges’ confirms that if we train our employee’s brain by practicing meditation they will be more focused, attentive, composed, and this will give them an edge over any other untrained employee. Avey et al., 2008, have documented that mindful employees have greater opportunity to become aware of thinking patterns that challenge their ability to be hopeful, efficacious, optimistic, and resilient at work, especially during times of organizational change.

#### 2.2.4 Metta: Loving kindness

**Stone**, 2002, in his research paper ‘Forgiveness in the workplace’, reports that true forgiveness supports the retention of valued employees, allows for greater creativity and innovation, leads to increased profitability, and generates greater flexibility in adapting to changing market conditions.

### 3. Scope and Statement of the Problem

The scope of the problem that is being addressed is limited to studying the effectiveness of Vipassana meditation on employees working in organizations operating in India. In identifying the problem to be addressed we have limited our literature review to the views and research findings published during the last twenty five years. The literature review on the impact of Vipassana meditation and mindfulness has clearly shown that organizations that have adopted these practices have experienced a positive change in the mental attitude of employees, leading to greater teamwork, better management of conflicts, and enhancement in goal congruence. Employees have reported positive correlation among personal, interpersonal and professional effectiveness leading to progressive enterprise growth and development for government/corporate enterprise through Vipassana meditation. However, this evidence is anecdotal and little empirical research has been conducted to measure the actual impact of the practice of Vipassana meditation on the behavior and personality of employees, and more so on the employees who are regular Vipassana meditators. Also, even though Emotional Intelligence, Workplace Spirituality, Coping with stress and Interpersonal relationships have been studied in the context of employee behavior and performance in organisations, hardly any such study has been conducted with reference to Vipassana meditation.

#### Statement of the Problem:

In the present context, there is a lack of original research that measures the effectiveness of Vipassana meditation on employees through statistical & comparative analysis. There is a need for more than just anecdotal mention of the impact of Vipassana meditation on behavior & personality of employees, particularly in terms of measurable changes with reference to Emotional Intelligence, Workspace spirituality, Coping with stress and Interpersonal relationships.

#### **NOTE:**

In order to facilitate the proposed research the researcher has already obtained permission (April, 2014) from the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) to include their meditators who are employed in organizations as respondents, for the proposed study. Their participation will be voluntary. The Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) has been recognized as a Scientific Research Organization (The SIRO) by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

#### **4. Objectives of the study**

- 1- To explore the effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation on employees' behavior, and,
- 2- To explore the effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation on employees' personality:  
With reference to;
  - a) Emotional Intelligence
  - b) Work Space spirituality (WS)
  - c) Coping with stress
  - d) Interpersonal relationships.
- 3- To compare experimental results between the non-meditators and meditators.

#### **5. Hypothesis or research questions**

Research questions:

- 1) What is the effect of VM on behavioural measures?
- 2) What is the effect of VM on personality characteristics?

Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis = H<sub>0</sub>; Alternative Hypothesis = H<sub>1</sub>.

Hypothesis A:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relation between VM and employees' behavior.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a relation between VM and employees' behavior.

Hypothesis B:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relation between VM and employees' personality.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a relation between VM and employees' personality.

## 5.1 Special words and concepts

The special words and concepts in this study are defined as under:

The proposed research includes Vipassana Meditation as an independent variable.

Vipassana meditation has three parts:

1-Anapanasati: In Buddhist meditation, it means 'mindfulness of breathing' ("sati" means mindfulness; "ānāpāna" refers to inhalation and exhalation), Anapanasati has been used as a basis for developing meditative concentration. It has a quietening effect bodily and mental unrest (Nyana Ponika Thera, 1996). Anapanasati is most commonly practiced with attention centered on the breath, without any effort to change the breathing. The practice of focusing one's attention helps in improving thinking capacity, retention power and aids in brain development. (Arambawala E., 1982).

2- Vipassana: Awareness and equanimity are the two main aspects of Vipassana meditation which help us to deal with all types of situations in life effectively. Vipassana meditation purifies the mind by developing positive qualities like wisdom, peace and harmony.

3-Metta Bhavana (Maitry Bhavana): It is universal love and compassion for all the beings. Loving kindness is unconditional love which means just well-wishing, wishing the goodness, the wellness of ourselves and of other beings and not expecting anything in return (Venerable Dhammarakkhita, 2001).

10-day Vipassana course: Is a 10 day residential program as taught by, Late Shri S. N. Goenka, principle teacher of Vipassana Research Institution.

Old meditator: Is a meditator who has undergone minimum one 10 day Vipassana course.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness is the capability of producing a desired result. When something is deemed effective, it means it has an intended or expected outcome, or produces a deep, vivid impression

The dependent variables are:

- a) Behaviour: The actions by which an organism adjusts to its environment
- b) Personality: Is that pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguishes one person from another and that persists over time and situations.

The constructs used are:

I) Emotional Intelligence: The ability to express and regulate our own emotions is important, but so is our ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This ability is emotional intelligence which is a combination of head and heart; it could be more important than IQ. The cognitive model, where it is conceptualized as an aptitude, suggests that EQ includes four types of abilities- 1) Perceiving emotions 2) Using emotions 3) Understanding emotions and 4) managing emotions.

II) Workspace spirituality: Is “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”, ( Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

III) Stress: Stress is defined as a dynamic condition in which the individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Robbins, 2001).

IV) Coping: Is defined as ‘the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them.

V) Interpersonal relationship: is a strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people that may range in duration from brief to enduring.

## **6. Methodology, tools & techniques**

In this research project experimental research will be conducted as it enables the study of causal relationship between the variables. The research involves studying human behavior and responses by using the intervention of Vipassana meditation, qualitative as well as quantitative research methodologies will be employed for the research work. This empirical study is based on primary and secondary data.

### **6.1 Sample Design:**

Population or Universe: Employees coming for Vipassana courses at Vipassana Centers in South India from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

Respondent’s profile:

i) Employees who have not done 10 day Vipassana course (Zero or control group)

ii) Employees who have done minimum three 10 day Vipassana courses and have been practicing VM regularly for the past one year.

## 6.2 Pilot study

A qualitative survey for a sample size of 30 people in each Group (Gr) will be undertaken:

- 1- No Vipassana course – Control Group - (Gr I)
- 2- Sample group that has done at least three 10-day Vipassana courses and one year regular practice – (Gr II)

The input obtained will be used to determine the appropriate variables for the study. These variables will be combined with variables obtained by the literature review to arrive at the variables on which the structured Instrument will be formulated. There will be three instruments:

- a) Instrument I: Vipassana/mindfulness Questionnaire (Pre-tested)
- b) Instrument II: Questionnaire based on the constructs
- c) Instrument III: Psychological-well-being (Pre-tested)

A five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree will be used for all the Instruments (Instru). In case of Instru II, subject expert's opinion will be taken to arrive at a final set of variables and then the final Instrument will be designed.

The instruments will be administered to 30 people for conducting a pilot study as below:

- Gr I (Instru-II, Instru-III)
- Gr II (Instru-I, Instru-II, Instru-III)

Based on the feedback, if required, the Instru-II will be modified in order to fine tune it and will be administered.

## 6.3 Data collection

Prior permission has been taken from VRI for collecting the data (April, 2014). The participation will be voluntary and only for research purpose. No personal information such as name and contact details will be captured in any of the three Instruments. Each above mentioned group will have a sample size of 150 each. Care will be taken to match the

demographic as well as gender details of Gr-I and Gr-II. The Instruments will be administered in the manner described for the pilot study. For collecting data judgement sampling method will be used and the Instruments will be made available online or made available to the sample groups by volunteers from VRI.

In addition:

- a) In the case of Gr-II, inputs on the behavioral information of the participants will also be gathered by interviewing their family members
- b) Feedback from the registration forms of the old meditators', indicating changes in their behavior and personality, will be documented without divulging their personal identity.

#### 6.4 Technique for analyzing the data

Once the data is collected the detailed analysis of data will be carried out in a scientific manner by using statistical tools. For the statistical analysis, appropriate tools will be used. The analysis will be composed of:

- 1- Measurement of reliability and validity
- 2- Descriptive statistical techniques.
- 3- Variance Analysis (ANOVA method)

### **7. Schedule of the proposed work**

The proposed work will be carried out in the following sequence:

- 1- July' 14 to January' 15:
  - a) Formation of questionnaires by using MICMAC analysis
  - b) Pilot survey for a sample size of 20
  - c) Literature Review
- 2- January to July' 15:
  - a) Analysis of pilot survey and making necessary modifications in the Instruments.
  - b) Collection of data for
    - i) Control group(Gr I) – No Vipassana Group
    - ii) For Vipassana group (Gr II)
    - iii) Rearranging the data of Gr I & Gr II in SPSS format
  - c) Literature Review

- 3- July'15 to January'16:
  - a) Ongoing collection of data for
    - i) Control group (Gr I)
    - ii) For Vipassana group (Gr II)
    - iii) Rearranging the data of Gr I and Gr II in SPSS format.
    - iv) Detailed statistical analysis of the data collected
  - b) Literature Review
- 4- January to July'16:
  - a) Ongoing statistical analysis of the data collected, as explained
  - b) Completion of the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of interpretation of the results and inferences
  - c) Completion of the 1st draft of the 2nd Chapter – Literature Review
  - d) Completion of the 1st draft of the thesis
- 5- July'16 to January'17:
  - a) Completion of the synopsis writing and submitting it to the Research Committee
  - b) Presenting the Synopsis in front of the Research Committee
  - c) Completion of the 2nd draft of the thesis after incorporating Research guide's feedback
- 6- January to July'17:
  - a) Implementing the feedback from the Research Committee and Research guide
  - b) Completion of the thesis writing
  - c) Getting OK from the Research Committee
  - d) Submission of the Ph. D. thesis.

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