

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

June 20, 2011

VIPASSANA. Ever hear of it? Let me tell you what little I know. It is an intense ten-day meditation retreat that appears to work profound changes in those who complete it. For free-world people with steady jobs it would be hard to get away for a ten-day retreat with no outside contact. Vipassana has been introduced into prisons in India and the U.S. The documentaries and books detailing the results of those prison-based programs are very moving.

First of all, prison staff must complete the retreat before they are allowed to oversee the prisoners who take it. Only people who have completed it can minister to the needs of the participants during the retreat. They will not even accept donations from people who have not completed the retreat.

When I was at Oakhill, two women who had completed vipassana came to speak to us at our film group where the documentaries were shown. After looking at them and listening to them, all I can say is I want what they have and a mere ten days of meditation to attain such a state is a sound investment for such a fabulous return.

Don't ask me what they have. I don't have words for it. I guess you'll have to see for yourself. I'm attaching the daily vipassana schedule I copied out of one of the books I read. I assume you can get more info off the internet. There are vipassana retreats in the U.S., one of which is in Rockford, IL.

Good Luck and I hope every person who seeks it is able to complete a vipassana retreat.

I just realized that putting the schedule on my blog from the book would be copyright infringement so I'll just describe it. You get up at 4:00 am and start meditating a half hour later for two hours. Then there's 1½ hour breakfast break, one hour group meditation, 2 hour solitary meditation, hour for lunch, hour break or interview with instructor, 1½ hours of solitary meditation, hour of group meditation, 1½ hours solitary meditation, 1 hour meal break, hour meditation, teacher lecture, group meditation, question time and finally go to bed at 9:30 pm.

That's it in a condensed form. Grueling, yes. But also enlightening.