

USING SATIPATTHĀNA BHĀVANĀ TO HELP IMPROVE THE MENTAL WELLNESS OF LGBTQ PEOPLE

by Zhong Haoqin*

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the population of the sexual minority, who are identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ for short), keeps growing. It is reported that in 2005, 8 million, or 3.5% of the USA population claim to be LGBTQ (Fritzges 2008). Accordingly, in China, the figure of male homosexuals in 2002 was assessed to be about 20 million, while the figure of female homosexuals about 10 million (BAO 2012).

LGBTQ people are now more accepted by the society than ever before. However, that does not automatically make all LGBTQ people accept their own identities, instead, they would experience shame and guilty related to internalized homophobia, which will deleteriously affect their mental health and overall wellness. The LGBTQ suicide epidemic continues. Hence, it remains a challenge for the contemporary society to attend the emotional and psychological needs of LGBTQ people. The research on psychological treatments for improving the wellness of LGBTQ people, helping them to fully accept their minority sexual orientation identity, is now in the ascendant. Buddhist-derived practices have also been generally introduced to help the wellness of LGBTQ

* The Center of Buddhist Studies of Hong Kong University, Hong Kong

people, for example, mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation (Fritzges 2008), though there remains a paucity of detailed and well-directed studies.

This essay will introduce traditional Buddhist meditation, *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*, especially, the mindfulness on the body, *Kāyānupassanā*, as a potential supportive, healing practice for LGBTQ people. *Kāyānupassanā* will not only serve as psychological treatment, but also a religious practice to affect the mental health of LGBTQ individuals positively. A detailed analysis on *Kāyānupassanā* would be given. The procedures on how such meditation could be done to improve the perception of self-esteem of LGBTQ people, and to mitigate the negative feelings such as shame and guilty of them would also be discussed.

1. WHAT IS LGBTQ AND *SATIPATṬHĀNA BHĀVANĀ*

1.1. Definition for LGBTQ

The definitions for LGBTQ are listed as follows:

Lesbian: “A female with romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to females.”

Gay: “A male with romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to males.”

Bisexual: “a person with romantic, emotional, sexual attracted to both men and women.”

Transgender: “a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with his birth sex.”

Queer: “An umbrella term used to refer to the entire LGBTQ community.” (Bieschke, Perez, and DeBord 2007).

2.2. *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā* and *Kāyānupassanā bhāvanā*

2.2.1. *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*

The word ‘*satipaṭṭhāna*’, a Buddhist Pāli term, is derived from the combination of two words as: ‘*sati+upatṭhāna*’, which means attending closely to the mindfulness or awareness. In addition, the meaning of *sati* can be listed as “memory, recognition, consciousness, intentness of mind, wakefulness of mind, mindfulness alertness, etc.” (Davids 1993). And the word ‘*upatṭhāna*’ refers to attendance,

waiting on, looking after, service, care, ministering, etc. (Davids 1993). Hence *satipatthāna* literally can be understood and translated as attending to the mindfulness.

The general English translation of *Bhāvanā* is ‘meditation’. However, the term ‘*bhāvanā*’ has a wider and a more comprehensive implication than ‘meditation’. The term *bhāvanā* is derived from the root *v/bhū*, of which the verbal form of is *bhavati* and *bhāveti*. While *bhavati* refers to become, *bhāveti* means to cultivate or develop within, as the commentary explains: “*bhāveti akusala dhamme āsevati vaddheti etāyati bhāvanā*” (cultivate the wholesome dhammas, associate it and increase or develop it, by this mean it is *bhāvanā*). Furthermore, it is also defined as the arising, cultivating and developing of wholesome deeds: “*bhāvetīti janeti uppādeti, vaddheti ayam tāva idha bhāvanāya attho*”.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta, Buddha emphasized ‘*satipatthāna bhāvanā*’ as the direct and only path (*ekāyanam maggo*) for the liberation.

2.2.2. Kāyānupassanā bhāvanā

Kāyānupassanā refers to the contemplation of the body that comprises six sections (*pabba*), namely:

- Awareness of breathing (*Ānāpānāsati*),
- Awareness of bodily posture (*Iriyāpatha sati*),
- Clear knowledge regarding bodily activities (*Sampajañña*),
- Analyzing the body into anatomical parts (*Paṭikkūlamanasikāra*),
- Analyzing the body into four elementary qualities (*Dhātumanasikāra*)
- Contemplating the nine stages of decay of a dead body (*Navasīvatika*).

According to the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, only a person who can dwell with full awareness of his body, he is ardent, cautious and can handle greed and distress mindfully: “*ye kāyānupassi viharati ātapi sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjā domanassam*”.

3. WHY APPLY *SATIPATTHĀNA BHĀVANA* TO IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF LGBTQ

3.1. Mental Health of LGBTQ people

Although the society generally shows more tolerance towards diverse people nowadays compared with the past, there are still some challenges with a minority sexual orientation identity. The challenges include self-esteem, interpersonal relationship, and prejudice and judgment from the society (Kuyper and Fokkema 2011). When LGBTQ people cannot fit into certain social norms, they would tend to internalize the message as they are wrong, sick, unhealthy and even defective.(Bieschke, Perez, and DeBord 2007).

Hence, it is understandable that LGBTQ people face more minority stress and social isolation than common heterosexual, and therefore are at higher risk of deleterious effects of untreated mental health conditions (Michael King et al. 2008), most obviously, depression, which is directly related to substance abuse, self-injury, suicide, and other negative consequences. Therefore, the mental health of LGBTQ people calls for more attention and care by the society than that of the common heterosexual people.

3.2. LGBTQ and Religiosity

In the modern culture, with the society's values shifting from survival to self-expression, and with the development of economic and political systems, religious attitudes have a greater effect on public opinion (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009). Religion plays a more role in people's daily life and spirituality, which are often interpreted with synonymous meanings (Chickering 2006, Johnson 2013).

Religion belief and counseling have a common goal in providing approaches of coping with all kinds of stresses. Research has proved that religiosity would be a coping mechanism against mental distress and even physical disease for generally healthy people (Kocet and Curry 2013). Engagement in religion is always found to reduce depressive symptoms (Gattis, Woodford, and Han 2014) and to improve self-esteem, optimism, and the sense of empowerment (Johnson 2013); therefore affect health, mental health and subjective well-being positively (White 2007, Lease, Horne, and

Noffsinger-Frazier 2005).

However, when it comes to the LGBTQ community, the situation is quite complicated. On one hand, there is a great spiritual hunger in the LGBTQ community (Ratigan 2001), and they are reported as more often seeking personal authenticity and opportunities related to spirituality and religion, to make meaning of their sexual identity (Johnson 2013). On the other, Gattis notes that, for LGBTQ, religion can be protective or risky relying on the denomination's position toward homosexuality (Gattis et al., 2014). The process of LGBTQ identity development requires introspection and self-analysis (Lease, Horne, and Noffsinger-Frazier 2005). If a religion is gay-affirming, it can be a defense mechanism against depression triggered by prejudice and discrimination; however, if the religious setting is unfriendly to LGBTQ people, it would be the strongest factor influencing the mental health of them, making them feel rejection and disapproval.

In fact, some religions require conformity to a strict set of rules and guidelines regarding sexual identify, and non-conformity to these principles intriguers punishment and even ostracism. To make things worse, most of them show less tolerance to LGBTQ positions, for example, Christian, Islam and Judaism. In such religious settings, LGBTQ individuals would frequently experience judgment, shame, and rejection (Super and Jacobson 2011). Nowadays, with the society's values shifting from survival to self-expression, and with the development of economic and political systems, religious attitudes have a greater effect on public opinion (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009). Religion plays a more pivotal role in people's daily life and spiritual life. However, sexual orientation is equally vital. When the two crush, great stress is generated, accompanied with self-hatred, self-judgment, self-harm, self-denial (Yang 2010); and it would be detrimental to the psychological wellness of them. Finding a spiritual community to belong to, and finding a refuge and safety in a religious environment are not so easy for LGBTQ people.

Fortunately, unlike some religions, sometimes provoking homophobia, Buddhism is so benevolently non-judgmental about gender issues, and therefore is perceived to be a baggage-free refuge for those religiously dispossessed, unmoored, but still huger for

religious experience (O’Neal 1998). No wonder, LGBTQ people are among the most committed and passionate members for the Buddhist community in western countries (O’Neal 1998). The religious experience in Buddhism for LGBTQ people, including spiritual practice and spiritual faith, will improve their overall mental health, with the former calming down their body and brain, and the latter satisfying their religious need to seek a sense of personal authenticity (Lindholm and Astin 2006), and to experience something greater than one’s own limitation(Yang 2010).

The next chapter will discuss the openness of Buddhism towards gender issues in detail.

3.3. Queer Essence of Buddhism

Queer Theologists argue that gender and desire are not stable, and “gender is not expressive of some inner nature but performative”. The spirit of Queer theory is that “there is no essential sexuality or gender”(Stuart 1999). Just as Queer Theology in Christian, Buddhology also could be queered. Queer, applied here regarding religion, is used as an umbrella term, a transgressive action, and most important, as “erasing all the boundaries ” (Cheng 2012).

The ‘queering’ of Buddhism should give much credit to feminist Buddhologists. Rita Gross, one of the feminist Buddhologists, holds that “the identification of men and women as male or female in their essence is merely a mental fabrication” from unskillful mind, as “there is no such a thing called inherent femaleness or inherent maleness”, according to Buddhist teaching(Gross 1993). Queer scholars put things a bit further. Roger Corless holds that, queer consciousness replaces dualistic thinking with non-dual consciousness, and that after all, the Buddha Nature is queer without dualism (Corless 2007). There is no gender in the values of wisdom, compassion, and generosity.

A convincing evidence to the friendliness of Buddhism towards LGBTQ lies in its core idea of Bodhisattva, which is related to transgender and homosexuality (Conner, Sparks, and Sparks 1996). In Buddhism, Hoben(方便法門), the expedient means, allows a bodhisattva to manifest as any form, including a homoerotic lover, which will nurture enlightenment. Such acceptance of LGBTQ is

never seen in other regions.

Though the essence of Buddhism could be interpreted as queer, the Buddhist precept about sexual misconduct has been interpreted bit hostile towards LGBTQ people in certain circumstances, for example, in some Chinese Mahayana scripts. However, it is well-known that Buddhist scripts have always been modified by mainstream social and culture standards in the society. The aversion to LGBTQ shown in Chinese Mahayana scripts could be explained away by the influence of Chinese culture. In fact, the Buddha never give out any specific explanation on what could be defined as “sexual misconducts” in the Pali suttas. The Buddha only emphasized that, “above all, do no harm to others or to oneself” (BAO 2012). Therefore, following this logic, we could infer that sexual misconduct defined by the Buddha is the sexual behavior harming others or oneself (BAO 2012). Since LGBTQ relationship never harms both partner, it should not be categorized as “sexual misconduct”.

In all, LGBTQ never violates the core teaching of Buddhism; and different schools or sects of Buddhism generally show much acceptance towards LGBTQ individuals. **Theravada Buddhism** emphasizes much on the monastic tradition, in which sex, including both homosexuality and heterosexuality, is forbidden. In the *Vinaya*'s listings of prescribed activities, sex between monks and women, hermaphrodites, transvestites, men, dead bodies, animals and inanimate objects are described in equivalent terms (Jackson 1995), none being described as more morally reprehensible. However, this rule is for the monastics only, and homosexuality in laymen are not mentioned. **Mahayana Zen Buddhism** criticizes both hedonism and ascetic masochism as violating of the “Middle Path.” However, the love between LGBTQ is valued as it is “a mutually loving and supportive relationship” (Knox and Groves 2006). Ample evidence could be found in Zen tradition, especially Japanese Zen tradition, where such relationship is encouraged and appreciated. And such relationships unquestionably did and do occur in a great number of sects of Japanese Buddhism, among which the most noticeable were Tendai, Hokke-shu, and Shingon (Conner, Sparks, and Sparks 1996). As far as **Tibetan Buddhism** is concerned, nowadays, the

positions of Dalai Lama could represent the attitudes of Tibetan Buddhism towards LGBTQ mainly. Dalai Lama has criticized publicly violence against LGBTQ people and has said, “If the two people have taken no vows [of chastity], and neither is harmed why should it not be acceptable?” (Knox and Groves 2006) The discourse of Dalai Lama reflects the core Buddhist teaching discussed above. If the relationship is mutual-loving and supportive, and does no harm to others, it should be cherished. No matter it is homosexual or heterosexual oriented.

To put things in a nutshell, in Buddhism, it is encouraged to transcend all forms of sexual activities and profane desire in order to attain the final goal of ***Nibbāna***. In the context of Buddhism’s general ascetic attitude, though homosexual behavior is never advocated, it is never singled out for special condemnation. As Buddha nature is neither homosexual or heterosexual, the acceptance of queer-identified person in a Buddhist community is well-noted.

3.4. Benefits of Satipaṭṭhāna and Kāyānupassanā

Buddhist principles, which emphasize disrupting speculative thoughts and redirecting awareness to the present moment, offer a way to increase positive mental factors, including “acceptance, forgiveness, and letting go etc.” (Leppma and Young 2016). The efficiency of some Buddhist practices has been valued for thousands of years, and is still advocated by Buddhist nowadays who strive for a balanced life, and their final goal of enlightenment.

Among all the Buddhist practices, Buddhist meditation has been studied by much scholarship for its broad applicability and usefulness. Currently, mindfulness practices, a secular derivative of traditional Buddhist meditation, which emphasize focusing on the present moment, are confirmed for their effectiveness in ameliorating the suffering and improving positive feelings in a variety of populations (Rapgay and Bystrisky 2010). Jessica L. Fritzges has well explained how meditation could reduce the side effects of stress by using the stress model of Lazarus and Folkman (Fritzges 2008).

What is more, the study of Jessica L. Fritzges (Fritzges 2008) also suggests that Buddhist meditation practices are also beneficial

to the LGBTQ community. In this study, brief mindfulness and loving-kindness exercises are utilized, and short-term changes did occur in participants' mental status.

However, the exercise utilized in Fritzges' work is just watching some ten-minute online video about compassion and love instead of orthodoxy Buddhist meditation. As discussed above, Buddhism satisfies the religious needs of LGBTQ. When Buddhist-derived psychosocial practice is helpful to the mental health of LGBTQ people, it is natural to put things a bit further by utilizing orthodoxy Buddhist meditation to improve the mental health of LGBTQ people. With religious ideas empowering the community, Buddhist meditation would be expected to be more effective than mere Buddhist-derived psychosocial practice introduced in past studies.

Therefore, a more detailed Buddhist method of meditation, *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Kāyānupassanā* is introduced in this essay, aiming to help improve the mental health of LGBTQ people for a long run. The benefits of *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Kāyānupassanā bhāvanā* will be introduced in the following.

Satipaṭṭhāna, an express path for the ultimate liberation (*ekāyanam ayam bhikkhave maggo*), has five purposes or benefits of cultivating mindfulness in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Trenckner 1979):

- *Sattānam visuddhiya*: for purification, meaning that purifying the impurity of defilement of lusts, etc. and purifying the sub-defilements of covetousness, etc.
- *Sokapariddavānam samatikkamāya*: for triumphing lamentation
- *Dukkhadomanassānam atthagamāya*: for overcoming pain and woe by surmounting physical - mental suffering and displeasure.
- *Ñāyassa adhigamāya*: for attaining of the real path, referring to understanding of eight nobles with knowledge
- *Nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*: for realizing Nibbāna.

It is quite clear that *Satipaṭṭhāna* will help eradicate the unhealthy feeling of shame, guilty and suffering caused by minority

stress, as its five goals include overcoming mental suffering and surmounting lamentation.

Among different types of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, *Kāyānupassanā* is especially recommended to LGBTQ people, as the latter aims to realize that a body is nothing other than a product of conditions (Anālayo 2000). If the body is merely a product of conditions, the desire towards same gender is also a product of conditions. If LGBTQ individuals view bodies and desire just as bodies and desire conditioned by all the conditions, there will not arise internalized homophobia, which leads to unhealthy mental state.

The benefits of *Kāyānupassanā* are also detailed in the sutras. *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* and *Jhānavagga* in *Anguttara Niyaka* (Richard 1976) reference that it helps one to attain four *jhāna* and then the three immaterial states, the super mundane paths and finally the threefold knowledge which includes the higher knowledge ‘*āsavakkhaya*’ leading to ultimate liberation. Furthermore, the sutras mention ten benefits of contemplating the body as following:

- He conquers happiness and unhappiness.
- He conquers fear and anxiety.
- He is resistant to ... abusive, hurtful language; he can endure bodily feelings ... painful, distasteful, or deadly...
- He attains the four *jñanas*.
- He has supernormal powers.
- He has divine ear.
- He knows the thoughts of others.
- He recollects his own past lives.
- He has divine eyes.
- He remains free from awareness. (*M III*) (Chalmers 1977)

The 4th to 10th benefits of *Kāyānupassanā* are super-normal attainments, which seem quite difficult for normal people to attain. However, the 1st to 3rd are important to cultivate mental health for all the people, especially LGBTQ. Mindfulness of body is mentioned to be source of joy: “*amatam te bhikkhave paribhuñjante*

ye kāyagatāsatim paribhuñjantīti", (A I)(Richard 1976) If they can conquer displeasure, fear, dread and abusive language etc. caused by the cumulative effects of interpersonal and institutional stress in their lives judgment from the society, they will have the ability to live in peace with kindness in heart and wisdom in mind, no matter how difficult are the external conditions of the world. Their mental health will surely be in a great condition.

4. HOW TO PRACTICE *KĀYĀNUPASSANĀ BHĀVANĀ* TO IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF LGBTQ

4.1. Mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpānāsati*)

According to the *Satipatthāna sutta*, there are four steps to practice *Ānāpānāsati bhāvanā*. Meanwhile, *Ānāpānāsati Sutta* adds another twelve steps. Therefore, there are 16 steps in all.

The four steps in *Satipatthāna sutta* are listed as follows:

"*Dīgham vā assasanto: dīgham assasāmīti pajānāti, dīgham vā passasanto: dīgham passasāmīti pajānāti*". (He knows that he breathes in long while doing so; and he knows that he breathes out long while doing so).

"*Rassam vā assasanto rassam assasāmīti pajānāti, rassam vā passasanto: rassam passasāmīti pajānāti*" (He knows that he breathes in short while doing so; and he knows that he breathes out short while doing so).

"*Sabbakāyapaṭisamivedi assasissāmīti sikkhati, sabbakāyapaṭisamivedi passasissāmīti sikkhati*" (He trains himself to breathe in and out experiencing the whole body)

"*Passambhayam kāyasankhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati, passambhayam kāyasankhāram passasissāmīti sikkhati.*" (He trains himself to breathe in and out calming the body). (MI)(Trenckner 1979)

It is said that when one achieves the fourth step, his body and breath are so calmed, that it is difficult to see the breath beyond his nostril. If LGBTQ people could make their bodies so peaceful and calm, no bad emotions would harm their mental health.

The twelve stages of breathing meditation mentioned in *Ānāpānāsati sutta* are listed as such:

Pītipaṭisamvedi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Pītipaṭisamvedi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on rapture.)

Sukhapaṭisamvedi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Sukapaṭisanivedi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on pleasure).

Cittasamkhārapaṭisamvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati;
Cittasamkhārapaṭisamivedi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on mental fabrication).

Passambhayamīcittasamkhārami assasissāmīti sikkhati; Passambhayamī cittasamkhārami passasissāmīti sikkhati (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on calming mental fabrication).

Cittapaṭisamvedi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Cittapaṭisamvedi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on the mind).

Abhippamodayamī cittamī assasissāmīti sikkhati; abhippamodayamī cittamī passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on nourishing the mind.)

Samādahamī cittamī assasissāmīti sikkhati; Samādahamī cittamī passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on calming the mind)

Vimocayamī cittamī assasissāmīti sikkhati; Vimocayamī cittamī passasissāmīti sikkhati (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on emancipating the mind)

Aniccānupassi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Aniccānupassi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on impermanence).

Virāgānupassi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Viragānupassi passasissāmīti sikkhati (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on dispassion).

Nirodhānupassi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Nirodhānupassi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out with a focus on cessation).

Paṭinissaggānupassi assasissāmīti sikkhati; Paṭinissaggānupassi passasissāmīti sikkhati. (He trains himself to breathe in and out

with a focus on relinquishment). (*M III*) (*Chalmers 1977*).

The significant of breathing meditation is that one can also practice the rest three mindfulness meditations (*vedanānupassanā*, *Cittānupassanā*, *dhammānupassanā*) together with this. For instance, the first four stages here regard bodily awareness (*kāyānupassanā*). From the fifth to eighth stages, they are awareness of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). From the ninth to twelve stages, they are awareness of mind (*Cittānupassanā*). And from thirteen to sixteen stages, they regard awareness of dhammas (*dhammānupassanā*) (*Anālayo 2000*). When a trained person aware of body, feeling and dhamma, he will not be interfered by judgement from the society, and therefore overall balanced body and good mental health.

4.2. Mindfulness of Postures

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta mentions that one should be aware of the fourfold postures and should wisely know the changing of postures. The fourfold posture is thus:

Gacchanto vā: gacchāmīti pajānāti: while walking, he knows that he is walking.

Thito vā: thito mhīti pajānāti: while standing, he knows that he is standing.

Nisinno vā: nisinno 'mhīti pajānāti: while sitting, he knows that he is sitting.

Sayāno vā: sayāno 'hīti pajānāti: while lying down, he knows that he is lying down. (*M I*) (*Trenckner 1979*)

The four postures mentioned above imply doing something. Hence, this suggests being aware of every activity. Being aware of his activity and paying more attention for the present moment, LGBTQ people will pay less time on mental fabrication about their difference from heterosexual people, and therefore be happier surely.

4.3. Mindfulness and clearly knowing (Satisampajañña)

When one has become fully aware of four postures, he can turn to the next step, '*satisampajañña*', being mindful and clearly knowing bodily activities. This step covers all the bodily activities, movements, and motions as the sutras says:

Abhikkante paṭikkante sampajānakāri hoti: he knows what he is doing while going forwards and backwards.

Ālokite vilokite sampajānakāri hoti: He knows what he is doing while looking forwards and backwards.

Samiñjite pasārite sampajānakāri hoti: he knows what he is doing while

folding and stretching his limbs.

Saṅghātipattacīvaraḍhārane sampajānakāri hoti: he knows what he is doing while wearing a robe and carrying a bowl.

Asite pite khāyite sāyite sampajānakāri hoti: he knows what he is doing while eating and drinking.

Uccāraassāvakamme sampajānakāri hoti: he knows what he is doing while excreting.

Gate thite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsite tuṇhibhāve sampajānakāri hoti he knows what he is doing while walking, sitting, sleeping, awake, talking, and keeping silent. (M I) (Trenckner 1979)

This step regards full-time awareness of every activities and motions. Hence, by practicing this, LGBTQ people can conquer unwholesome thoughts like shame, guilty, inferior and internalized homophobia.

4.4. Contemplating the anatomical constitution of the body (Paṭikkūlamanasikāra)

Contemplating the actual nature of body from top to toe covered by skin, as a collection of impurity is the meditation of '*paṭikkūla manasikāra*'. In the sutra, thirty-two anatomical parts are described, with the first twenty parts related to earth element (*paṭhavi dhātu*) and the rest twelve related to water element (*āpo dhātu*). The sutta shows the way to contemplate the thirty-two facts inside body including head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth... etc. (M I) (Trenckner 1979).

Just as a surgeon can see the inside of a body while he is doing a surgery, a meditator who contemplates these thirty-two anatomic constitutions sees every part of body through the mental cognition.

When he sees these through mental cognition, he will realize that body is not made of single unit, but some anatomic elements. And when he sees impurity of his own body through his mind, he will not take any body as a beautiful, attractive, arousing phenomenon and therefore be free of extreme attraction of a body. However, this contemplation has another meaning for LGBTQ people. As everyone's body is made up of thirty-two anatomical parts, there is no difference between LGBTQ and common heterosexual people. Since all the bodies are impure, why should LGBTQ people feel inferior for their sexual orientation?

4.5. Contemplating the elements (Dhātumanasikāra)

Seeing the four great elements within his own body is called '**Dhātumanasikāra**'. The sutta explains '**Dhātumanasikāra**' as thus: "*imam eva kāyam yathāthitam yathāpañihitam dhātusu paccavekkhati: atthi imasmīni kāye paṭhavidhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātūti*". (M I)(Trenckner 1979) (He views the body as consisted by four elements, namely the earth element, the fire element, the water element, and the air element, no matter how this body is placed or disposed,)

Same as **Paṭikkūlamanasikāra**, when one is skillful in **Dhātumanasikāra**, he sees the body more analytically and therefore will be capable to be free of ignorance and bodily attachment. And for LGBTQ people, just as **Paṭikkūlamanasikāra**, **Dhātumanasikāra** has other significance. Firstly, they will be aware that all the bodies are constituted of four elements without exception. To this extent, all people are born equal. Secondly, with different dispose of the four elements, different bodies have different characters including sexual orientation. Homosexuality might arise because of certain dispose of the four elements, therefore, homosexuality is merely a conditioned phenomenon, which should not receive moral judgment.

4.6. Corpse in decay and meditation on death (Navasīvathika)

This meditation practice is to contemplate on corpse in decay and meditate on death (**navasīvathika**) as such:

"Puna ca parami bhikkhave Bhikkhu seyyathā pi passeyya sarīram sivathikāya chadditam ekāhamatam vaa dvihamatam vā

tiahamatani vā uddhumātakamī vinīlakamī vipubbakajātamī: Puna ca paramī bhikkhave Bhikkhu seyyathā pi passeyya sarīrami sivathikāya chadditamī kākehi vā khajjamānamī kulalehi vā khajjamānamī gijjhehi vā khajjamānamī supānehi vā khajjamānamī sigālehi va khajjamānamī vividhehi vā pānakakātehi khajjamānamī... "(M I)(Trenckner 1979)

To put in a nutshell, the sutra here requires the practice of visualizing the gradual decay of dead body. And the actioner should compare his own body with the corpse, and think this way: this body has a same nature as the corpse and it will decay like that corpse. There is no exemption.

This method is used for arising revulsion of one's own body (Anālayo 2000). However, for LGBTQ people, visualizing the gradual decay of the body will not only provoke revulsion of his own body, but also all the bodies, including normal heterosexual people. As all the bodies are conditioned and doomed to be dead and decay, such equality would put the mind of LGBTQ people to a broad vision, and prevent them from differentiating their different sexual orientation.

5. CONCLUSION

Though the society generally shows more tolerance towards a minority sexual orientation identity, some rigid religious settings and cultures still put LGBTQ people under minority stress. Therefore, LGBTQ people are at higher risk of deleterious effects of untreated mental health conditions. The mental health needs of LGBTQ people remain urgent.

With religion helping people cope with stress, a religion with aversion to LGBTQ would cause internal homophobia, shame and guilty in them. Therefore, a LGBTQ-friendly religion- Buddhism is of great help to LGBTQ people, who are eager for religious experience and more positive mental state. Hence, it is undoubtedly logical to introduce orthodoxy Buddhist meditation practice to LGBTQ people to improve their self-esteem and mitigate their negative feelings. In this essay, *Satipatthāna bhāvanā*, especially, *Kāyānupassanā*, are introduced in detail as a potential supportive, healing practice for LGBTQ people. With a faith in Buddhism bringing a sense of being part of the dharma family, with dharma

practices cultivating inner peace and wisdom, the mental health of LGBTQ people will be much improved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamczyk, A., and C. Pitt. 2009. "Shaping attitudes about homosexuality: The role of religion and cultural context." *Social Science Research* 38:338-351.
- Anālayo, Bhikhu. 2000. *Satipatthāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- BAO, Huai. 2012. "Buddhism: Rethinking Sexual Misconduct" *Journal of Community Positive Practices* 2:303-322.
- Bieschke, K., R. Perez, and K. DeBord. 2007. *Handbook of counseling and psychotherapy with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender clients* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Chalmers, B. 1977. *Majjhima-Nikāya Vol. III* (ed.) London: Pali Text Society.
- Cheng, Patrick S. 2012. *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chickering, Arthur W. 2006. "Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education: My Orientation." *Journal of College and Character* 7 (1):2-5.
- Conner, Randolph, David Sparks, and Mariya Sparks. 1996. "The Gay Way of Buddhism." *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 3 (4):22-30.
- Corless, Roger. 2007. "Towards a queer dharmology of sex." *Culture and Religion* 5 (2):229-243.
- Davids, Rhys. 1993. In *Pali English Dictionary*. London: Pali Text Society.
- Fritzges, Jessica L. 2008. "The Effects of Buddhist Psychological Practices on the Mental Health and Social Attitudes of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People." Doctor of Philosophy, Clinical Psychology, Walden University.
- Gattis, M. N., M. R. Woodford, and Y. Han. 2014. "Discrimination

and depressive symptoms among sexual minority youth: Is gay-affirming religious affiliation a protective factor?" *Archival Sexual Behavior* 43:1589-1599.

Gross, R. M. 1993. *Buddhism after patriarchy: a feminist history, analysis, and reconstruction of Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Jackson, Peter Anthony. 1995. "Thai Buddhist Account of Male Homosexuality and AIDS in the 1980s." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (3):140-154.

Johnson, Danielle Marie. 2013. "The relationship between spirituality and sexual identity among lesbian and gay undergraduate students: A qualitative analysis." Ph.D, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, the State University of New York.

Knox, Harry, and Sharon Groves. 2006. "World Religions and the Struggle for Equality." *Conscience* XXVII (1):40/45.

Kocet, M., and J. Curry. 2013. "Finding the spirit within: Spirituality issues in the lgbt community." *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 5:160-162.

Kuyper, L., and T. Fokkema. 2011. "Minority Stress and Mental Health among Dutch LGBs: Examination of Differences between Sex and Sexual Orientation." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 5:222-233.

Lease, S., S. Horne, and N. Noffsinger-Frazier. 2005. "Affirming faith experiences and psychological health for Caucasian lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52 (3):378-388.

Leppma, Monica, and Mark E Young. 2016. "Loving-Kindness Meditation and Empathy: A Wellness Group Intervention for Counseling Students." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 94 (3):297–305.

Lindholm, J.A., and H.S Astin. 2006. "Understanding the "interior" life of faculty: How important is spirituality?" *Religion and Education* 33 (2):64-90.

Michael King, Joanna Semlyen, Sharon See Tai, Helen Killaspy,

David Osborn, Dmitri Popelyuk, and Irwin Nazareth. 2008. "A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people." *BMC Psychiatry* 8 (70).

O'Neal, Dave. 1998. "Buddhism for a New World." *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 5 (2):49-52.

Rapgay, L, and A Bystrisky. 2010. " Classical mindfulness: an introduction to its theory and practice for clinical application. 1172.Longevity(2010):148-162." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1127:148-162.

Ratigan, Bernard. 2001. "Growing up Catholic, Growing up Gay." *The Furrow* 52 (2):90-100.

Richard, M. 1976. *Anguttara-Nikāya Vol. I* (ed.). London: Pali Text Society.

Stuart, Elizabeth. 1999. "Christianity is a queer thing: The development of queer theology." *The Way* 39 (4):371-381.

Super, J., and L. Jacobson. 2011. "Religious abuse: Implications for counseling lesbian,gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals." *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 5:180-196.

Trenckner, V. 1979. *Majjhima- Nikāya Vol. I* (ed.). London: Pali Text Society.

White, W. 2007. "The intersection of religion, aging and sexual orientation from the perspective of lesbian older adults." Gerontological Society of America's 60th Annual Scientific Meeting, San Francisco.

Yang, Larry. 2010. "Coming Home to Who We Are: Buddhist Spiritual Practice and Transformation." *Tikkun* 25 (4):47-48.

