

BUDDHIST HEALTH-CARE FROM AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Maintenance of health and control of disease has been age – old problem for all societies. Traditionally, to tackle the problem’ societies all over the world have developed health care system. Prior to the advent of modern medicine diver’s societies has their own notions and concepts of health, disease and forms of treatments. Today the WHO definition that identified physical mental and social and later on the fourth dimension of spiritual of health is universally accepted. Yet today both people and medical practitioners seem be preoccupied with curative aspect of health rather than holistic well-being. Equally important are the preventive and promotive aspects of health. In the above context this paper seeks to highlight the insights of Buddhism not only in maintaining physical health but also on promoting wellbeing along the health dimensions stated by W.H.O.

The study of old dispersed Buddhist writings, particularly, in The Vinaya Pitaka and The Sutta-Pitaka helps to understand the Buddhist perspective and practices to healthy living. Buddha was keen on the prosperity of the people in each stage of life. One of life’s most focal concerns is great wellbeing. Buddhism greatly emphasized the importance of mental or psychological health as

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the ultimate goal of human society and towards this end, expected everyone to address the issues of attachment (moha), anger (raga) and delusion (dosa), which cause psychological suffering.

Even today, in the Indian subcontinent, people link non-communicable diseases to psychological and temperament and turn to meditation and other age-old practices. The Buddhist teachings are culturally rooted in the Indian subcontinent. They are of relevance today and are in practice. People take recourse to formal and professional centers for meditation and Vipashana.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sickness and healing are the core in the picture of the literature that grew up around Buddha. It was the impermanence of the life and awareness of the universal nature of sickness, old age and death that is said to have prompted the young prince Siddhartha to reject the pleasures of the palace to seek a way out of the painful cycle of rebirth. That journey finished with the snapshot of his Enlightenment, an occasion so phenomenal that the debilitated were wonderfully restored and the visually impaired could see. Shakyamuni the Buddha, though not a doctor himself, was typically known as “the nice medication king”. Through contemplation he came to the conclusion that enlightenment, or Buddha hood, is that the final medication, through which we tend to draw forth the innate knowledge and vitality necessary to cure our physical and mental ills. Therefore, the chief aim of Buddhist medication is to assist people develop their natural self – healing powers by cultivating enlightenment within themselves (Salguero, 2017).

The preamble to the World Health Organization charter reads; “health could be a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the absence of unwellness of frailness” (web version). In Buddhist tradition one of the most important aspects is to help people to recognize the truth of suffering, impermanence and egolessness and that is meditation. Practicing of Buddhist meditation contributes to numerous aspects like keeping kindness and caring for people, perspective to and treatment of the plants, place of humanity in nature, non-harming of animals, positive-aspects of human temperament. Therefore, learning aspects of health

care which facilitate and influence human issues, to resolve social pollution, and to bring true happiness in human life.

In the above context the present research article aims:

To understand Buddhist perspective on the concept of health & disease and interrelationships between physical health and mental/psychological state

To discuss teaching of classical Vipassanā meditation

To document present day perception and practice of Vipassanā meditation in the context of developing mindfulness and its application in maintain of health to control disease.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study is based both on secondary and primary data. Secondary data were obtained to understand classical approach to Vipassanā meditation. The primary data are of two types:

Case Study of Vipassanā Meditation Center and

People's Perceptions and practices in relation to Vipassanā Meditation.

For the case study the material was collected from vipassana meditation centers. The methodology incorporates physical health care and mental psychological health care, theoretical and methodological approaches to the practice of meditation, in addition the technique of vipassana meditation reconstruction, structural and practical ways, philosophical and system analysis of the revealed sutta were applied for contextual analysis.

To study people's perceptions and practices in relation to Vipassanā Meditation data were collected from Dharamsala, New Delhi, Bihar, Aurangabad, Pune in India and Lumbini in Nepal. People who came to India from 30 different countries were interviewed through participant observation, unstructured interview schedule.

3. VIPASSANA: CLASSICAL APPROACH

What is Vipassanā? We find the dictionary meaning of the word Vipassanā is inward vision, insight institution or introspection

(Stede, 1959). Origin of Vipassanā and technique? Vipassanā means to see things as they are: to see things in their true perspective, in their true nature. In other words, Vipassanā is a technique of self observation and the cultivation of such potentialities to perfection and the development of the precepts.

3.1 The primary source of our knowledge of Vipassanā meditation

(Meshram, 2003) mentions that: “In Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta of Saṃyutta Nikāya Vol. IV and Vinaya Mahāvaggo. Vol. 1. While addressing the Pañavaggiya Bhikkhus in Migadāya Vana at Varāṇasī the Enlightened One, the Buddha said, “there is a Middle Path, O Bhikkhus, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathāgata – a path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which lead to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full Enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is to say, Sammā - Diṭṭhi, Sammā - Saṅkappo, Sammā - Vācā, Sammā - Kammanto, Sammā - ājīvo, Sammā - Vāyāmo, Sammā - Sati, Sammā - Sammādhī” (Meshram, 2003). The Buddhist meditation has long gone beyond the standard Buddhist act and lately it has come to be a world phenomenon. The study of old dispersed Buddhist writings, particularly, in The Vinaya Pitaka and The Sutta-Pitaka help to understand the Buddhist perspective and practices to healthy living. Buddha was keen on the prosperity of the people in each stage of life. One of life’s most focal concerns is great wellbeing. Buddhism greatly emphasized the importance of mental or psychological health as the ultimate goal of human society and towards this end, expected everyone to address the issues of attachment (lobha), anger (dosa) and delusion (moha), which cause psychological suffering.

As we find in the Majjhima Nikaya the Buddha taught in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta the foundations of Mindfulness. This is one of the fullest and most important suttas by the Buddha dealing with meditation, with particular emphasis on the development of insight. The Buddha begins by declaring the four foundations of mindfulness to be the direct path for the realization of Nibbāna, then gives detailed instructions on the four foundations: the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind and mind – objects (Bodhi, 1995: 62). And the Sutta describes the application of mindfulness as follows:

“This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and misery, for the destruction of pain and grief, for gaining the knowledge, for attainment of Nibbāna, the four arousing of mindfulness”.

3.2 How Vipassanā helps to maintain health?

We may feel proud that the Vipassanā form of meditation is a distinct contribution to health care, vipassanā is now, as ever has been, woven into the pattern of life. We find here in brief what vipassanā is. Then only we shall be able to assess its quantum of influence in our life and the role it plays in purifying our life. The word vipassanā is composed of prefix vi and root pas which means to see, vipassanā thus means seeing in a special manner. If one practices vipassanā he develops special power in him to see things as they are without reacting to them which we do in ignorance. By practicing vipassanā we develop, (non –attachment) and purify our mind which is polluted by our desire for the various objects of the world.

3.3 What is the Buddhist health care perspective from the standpoint of anthropology

Comparative perspective and evolutionary perspective; the branch of anthropology studies phenomena from the past to present. So Vipassanā came during the Buddha’s time around 2600 years ago. From then to now it continues, but certain aspects are changed. Why they changed, what is the nature today? From an evolutionary perspective, medical anthropology studies the health care system of tribal societies and even modern health care system practiced by people from different cultural backgrounds. Even the people who are following modern health care system go for traditional medicine. Cultural perception and mechanism work on how this health care system got modernized. For each and every health related problem the physician suggests medicine. But in the process they forget the root of mind and culture perception. Today the followers of modern medical systems forget about the mental health.

Now the question arises how Vipassanā helps to add to the health aspect? Health is both physical and mental. Vipassana

meditation in general is for mental health. In his teachings the Buddha said that: “These two conditions lead to knowledge Samatha and Vipassanā”. If cultivated, what benefit does Samatha confer? The mind is cultivated. What benefit we get from a cultivated mind? All lust is abandoned. Monks, if Vipassanā is to cultivate the Insight is cultivated insight would be cultivated. What benefit does it confer? All ignorance is abandoned. A mind defiled by lust, monks, is not set free; nor can insight defiled by ignorance be cultivated. Indeed, monks, the freedom from lust leads to release of the tranquility of mind, the freedom ignorance leads to the release of the insight” (Kashyap, 1960). The purpose of Samatha is to induce concentration in the mind and free it from all distraction. The essence of Vipassanā is to see the truth as it is. The two jointly act as a single harmonious entity as the way to Nibbāna (Kashyap, 1960:25). Now the question arises how is it practiced? First of all, a man, selects the object of meditation or Vipassanā, and then selects a place for practice of the Vipassana. The texts has mentioned that the suitable places for the purpose of Vipassanā are the secluded dwellings, a forests, the foot of a tree, a mountain, an open sky and the heap of straw. (Kashyap, 1960: 61).

3.4. How do we practice it?

Chaudhary, 2003:165) said that “in the beginning a moral foundation is laid. The practitioner takes a vow to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and using intoxicants “In a ten day workshop concentration is sharpened during the first three days through sustained observation of our breath going in and coming out which in words of Acāryā S.N. Goenka provides ‘a bridge between known and unknown’. First of all we take a small area below our nostril and observe pressure, pain, lightness, number of sensations which cause desires in us. The third that comes a little later when insight dawns on us is that we lose our temper our brows are arched, our first are closed, our teeth are set, our eyes become red and we are full of tensions. A chain of reactions set in causing us incalculable harm. All of this can be stopped if we develop equanimity through Vipassanā” (Chaudhary, 2003:165).

This technique of purifying mind and realizing Nibbāna, this

unique technique of purifying oneself was completely in India, its reintroduction to the land of its origin has a very interesting story: “Sri S.N. Goenka a business magnate of Burma suffered terribly from migraine and had to use morphine to kill the pain he suffered from but that also he could do temporarily. He consulted practically all the best doctors of the world, spent a huge amount of money but he was not recued. Then he was advised by one of his friends to go to U – Ba Khin a Vipassanācarya who also worked as Accountant General in Burma. Uba - khin taught him to practice Vipassanā which had a miraculous effect on him. The monstrous migraine was gone. He was then convinced of the efficacy of this form of meditation. Setting aside his material business of crores of rupees, he took to the spiritual business of imparting this technique to all people belonging to all races and religions and it is he who brought this technique from Burma to India in its pristine form. Vipassanā (insight meditation) goes a long way in removing the heaps of impurities dumped in our mind in our several previous lives due to our own actions and free us of our mental tensions and cures us of our psychosomatic diseases. In the words of Vipassanacarya Goenka: ““Meditation is an art of living. We must train our minds not to run away from problems but to go to the depths, to find their causes and then eradicate them. The mind has accumulated so much negativity anger, hatred, aversion, fear, jealousy and passions. We have to free ourselves of these” (Chaudhary, 2003).

3.5 When to use Vipassanā?

This form of meditation can be practiced anywhere and everywhere in all situations of life and anybody can practice it. Its growing popularity is an indication of the fact that Vipassanā is a distinct contribution of Buddhism to world health care. Buddhist meditation has gone beyond the traditional Buddhist practice and today it has become a world phenomenon.

4.VIPASSANĀ: PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE IN THE PRESENT-DAY WORLD

Primary meditation: health care happiness attained through fulfillment of such selfish desires is happiness in narrow sense. In a wider sense happiness is to love and to be loved. It is not to be

attained through self gratification, but through fidelity to a worth purpose, by giving it to someone else. Nowadays, many people want to Vipassanā meditation to reduce sickness contribution to health care to help people overcome of suffering. (Analayo, 2011) claims the approach to the development of vipassanā taught by the Burmese monk Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982) who follows the commentarial notion of dry insight, in that it dispenses with the formal development of samatha. The vipassanā taught by the Indian S.N. Goenka (1942 - 2013), a disciple of the Burmese meditation teacher U Ba Khin (1899 – 1971), centres on observation of Vedanā. The method taught by the Burmese monk Pa Auk Sayadaw (1934) gives considerable room to the development of concentration; in fact ideally a practitioner should develop all four jhānas with the help of each of the meditation subjects listed in the Visuddhmagga.

4.1 Vipassana centre: Case study

Name of the Vipassanā centre: - Name: Dhamma Ānanda (Dhammānanda) Pune Riverside Maharashtra, India Vipassanā Centre, the Vipassanā Centre was established in March 1997.

Location: the situated on the bank of the Indrayani River, about one hour drive from the heart of Poona city. That is opposed Nehru Stadium near Anand Mangal Karyalaya, Pune, Maharashtra 411002.

Course instructions are given in the following language (s): Hindi/ Marathi/ English.

N°	Name of course	Duration	Medium of instruction	Participant
1	Long course	10-days	Hindi/ Marathi/ English	For any students
2	Satipatthana courses	8-days		For old students
3	Short course	3 days		For old students
4	Teenagers' Course	1-day Every Month Second Thursday and Fourth Sunday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm		(Boys) - (Girls)
5	Children Course	Every Month first Sunday (8 am to 3 pm)		Children

Nowadays, there are many centers for Vipassanā meditation in the world such as Pune Vipassanā Meditation center and it opens two or three courses in a month. There are many options for any people who are interested in Vipassanā meditation such as the course for Teenagers' and Children's Courses, for women, for men, for service people. Before enrolling into the course, we don't need to pay anything, they don't take any money, and they give everything for free even food. We just offer what we want after finishing the course.

Anyone can attend the meditation course at the Pune center. Depending upon Centre and the nature of the course it may take three days or ten days, and during the course we should follow the rules such as everyone should keep noble silence, no use of phone, eating on time, wake up on time and sleep on time also. It takes around 14 hours per day for meditation as per the time schedule of the Vipassanā center which is given below.

4:00 a.m. Morning wake up bell.

4:30 – 6:30 Meditation in hall or residence

6:30 – 8:00 breakfast break

8:00 – 9:00 Group Meditation in hall

9:00 – 11:00 Meditation in hall or residence, as per instructions of the teacher.

11:00 – 12:00 Lunch

12:30 – 1:00 Rest

1:00 – 2:30 Group Meditation in hall or residence

2:30 – 3:30 Meditation in hall or residence, as per instructions of the Teacher.

3:30 – 5:00

5:00 – 6:00 Tea break

6:00 – 7:00 Group meditation in hall

7:00 – 8:30 Teacher's discourse in hall

8:30 – 9:00 Group meditation in hall

9:00 – 9:30 question time in hall

9:30 Retire to own room, Light out:

4.2 Interview of the teacher:

Why people come to do meditation? I asked one teacher and she said that: “because of suffering, from communities, from people introduced, from internet” other people said that, they want to be happy. They wanted to be peaceful. And there were one story: “she suffered because of her husband has other girl and her husband did not take care for her, earlier, her husband love her a lot and anyway she walks her husband follows her. Since then, her friend introduced her enrolled Vipassana centre to attend one course. Beginning the course she was very suffering and cries a lot because of leg pain and missing her husband but after completing two-three course, she was very happy and her mind is at peace and she comeback to introduce her friend attend to Vipassana course and now she feels thankful to her husband because of leaving him, she could achieve freedom and

has time to attend Vipassana meditation course forever.” Other one said that: “she was suffering about her friend and she came here to find peace, happiness and confidence.”

4.3 Interview of vipassana practitioners

4.3.1. Common people

My professor and me visited many Buddhist places in India, and Vipassana centres and I interviewed the participants and asked them why did they want to do meditation, All (100%) respondents said that meditation make them free, less worry, less stress and could develop concentration, compassion, kindness, found it easy to forget other’s mistakes and feels less sickness also. And most of them practice meditation two times a day even just for 10 minutes.

Case narrative: An Indian girl named Manisha said : “Meditation changed her life and she explains that “We just have to stick with it. Slowly but surely it will calm down our mind and help us realize how we add so much stress to our life through maladaptive thoughts and beliefs. If we meditate we will begin to notice how our thoughts create all our emotions. If we feel anxiety for example, and meditate, gradually it will calm our mind down and allow us to abandon the thoughts that cause anxiety in our life. There are lots of different meditations we can do to gradually rewire our mind (neuroplasticity). Just stick with it”

Interview with Nuns: Two Nuns narrated their individual experiences. One Vietnamese nun said that when she meditated, her whole body was hot and reduces all bad smell from her body. Some time she felt cold, some time she felt bad smell and at some time cool and hot.

Nun Sila said that: she did Vipassana to observe all the feelings between mind and body. She observes breath in and breath out. She felt peace, happy and light. Before entering into monastery, she felt sleepy, lazy and stressed. But after becoming a nun, she meditated for an hour a day and is feeling more concentrated, comfortable and relaxed. Now she feels new awareness and feels less stressed and sleepy, good and strong. And she talks that earlier her nose was

running and she was suffering from cough but after concentrating her mind through meditation, her nose has stopped running and she felt very happy and as if she is in peace and found new strength. Other example she said that when she practice concentration, her body became hot and after some time running nose was stop and she being stronger. One more example that she gave is, when she was in Myanmar, she was having high fever and she did concentrated her mind by meditation after some time her fever reduced and she was fine.

Nun Pannha said that: “in present time, we could not see our mind and we did meditation because, every day our life is controlled by five hindrances such as Sensory desire, Ill-will, Sloth-and-torpor, Restlessness-and-worry, Doubt, the mental factors that hinder progress in our daily live. Why the fruit that is ready to eat comes down? Because whatever is placed high will automatically come down. If she eats, she will know how to eat otherwise we will eat by lust, when she talks, she will know what to talk, and otherwise we will talk by hatred and delusion. By observing meditation, the breath lust, hatred and delusion may be overcome and we can easily control our actions.

4.3.2. Information from youtube

According to one of the preaching of Dr.Oz. in Youtube, Meditation help us to handle stress in a meaningful way even if we manage to practice it for 5 minutes a day.

Inspired by ancient Buddhist practice of meditation American doctors in the 1970s developed a secular version of meditation to combat stress called “mindfulness meditation”.

Anybody can practice meditation because of all have mental as well as physical health related concerns.

Meditation also helps us looking for more clarity and presence in our life and to look forward to come home after a long day of work and to just actually be home instead riding the momentum of the day and worrying about all the email that we have to take care of and how does it materially impact on stress etc.

So when we look at what causes stress, it's when our perceived

demands in any given moment are greater than our personal and social resources to meet those demands.

5. CONCLUSION

India has a long history and heritage of traditional medical systems (Ashok D. B. Vaidya, 2005:44). The Ayurveda, Yoga and Siddha, which are a few thousand years old, originated in India. Ayurveda, Siddha Unani and Homeopathy use medicines or drug for treatment whereas Yoga and Vipassana meditation are drugless therapies. Traditional medicine (TM) is a comprehensive term which refers to such medical systems as the traditional Chinese medical system, Indian Ayurveda and Arabic Unani systems as well as; to various forms of indigenous medicine, (WHO Traditional medicine Strategy-2002-2005). In countries where the dominant health care system is based on allopathic or modern medicine, or where traditional medicine has not been incorporated into the national health care system, traditional medicine is often termed as “complementary” and “alternative” or CAM. Vipassana meditation comes under drugless therapy and can be considered as complementary. It is also used exclusively as prevent disorders and promote health. Since the last decade and half there is a renewed focus on traditional medicine. Policy perspectives and recommendations at international levels, such as ‘Health for All by 2000’, urge governments to accord high priority to utilization of traditional medical practitioners and traditional birth attendants. In this context the present study focused Vipassana meditation.

Cultural Anthropology particularly from the perspective of medical anthropology has a focus area dealing with the medical systems of different societies from comparative and evolutionary perspective. Charles Leslie a medical anthropologist has extensively studies Asian medical systems and has documented professionalization of traditional medicine. Since the last few decades there is a renewed focus on Vipassana meditation. However the practice of Vipassana meditation today is at based on modern professional mode and not the classical system.

Professionalization of Tradition

The case study of the Vipassana meditation center

demonstrates the professionalization that has taken place. Today it is characterized by:

- Formal institutions of teaching and practice
- Syllabus and theory and practical courses for trainers and teachers
- Customized courses for different age groups and gender
- Well defined and preplanned practice sessions
- Duration and timing of sessions are worked out to suit the requirement of people
- Voluntary fee payment
- Use of media and audio-visual aids

Thus in tune with time the traditional system has become more formal and professional. At the same time it seeks to maintain the core of the classical tradition.

Health seeking behavior of people

The World Health Organization (2001:2-3), has noted that there is growing acceptance of traditional medicine as 'alternative approach to health care', and 'appropriateness and effectiveness of traditional medicine in the developed countries have contributed to the resurgence of traditional medicine. Various studies show that people may use modern bio-medicine or and traditional medicine exclusively depending on perceive health problem or a combination of both or purely traditional medicine which may be drug-less system. Thus for example a person suffering from acidity may take allopathic (bio-medicine) medicine to immediately control the problem. But knowing the temporary nature of relief he/she may approach traditional medicine for permanent cure. Similarly a person suffering from heart ailment may seek help of modern allopathic doctor and also engage in Yoga or Vipassana meditation as a preventive and promotive measure to reduce mental tension associated with health ailment. General everyday life is full of strain and stress and Vipassana meditation is seen as an answer, at least in part, by a growing number of people in India and abroad.

Scientific literature has proven association between non-com-

municable diseases to psychological causes and temperament. More and more people are turning to meditation and other age-old practices. The Buddhist teachings are culturally rooted in the Indian subcontinent. They are of relevance today and are in practice. People take recourse to formal and professional centers for meditation and Vipassanā.

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