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MEDITATION FOR STRESS REDUCTION: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT: -

Stress is the emotional condition in which there is fear and uncertainty about. The mind of stress is in turmoil. It is another word for mental suffering. Stress is the member of grief that afflicts every ordinary person who is not yet free from defilements. All ordinary people wandering in the cycle of life are bound to be struck with grief such as stress. Stress is really painful states of mind. They endanger the mind creating intense stress. In reality, they blaze the heart and burn the mind without giving up a single benefit. According to Buddha's teaching, stress is undesirable object. So it is a type of feeling that is born from ill-will. Since it is unwholesome it produces bad results of mind and body. When people get stress, mind and body feels unpleasant or unhappy. That can make us to decrease all things or lost.

These different mental states create problems in our daily life. According to the Buddha's teaching, mental sufferings such as depression, disappointment, despair and stresses can be occurred when human beings feel ill-well. Actually, they all are mental sufferings. It has the characteristic of experiencing an undesirable object, the function of partaking of the undesirable aspect of the object, manifestation as mental affliction, and its proximate effect is the heart-base. In this world people said "suffering" (Dukkha) whenever they suffer from physical pain. But the Buddha said that it is possible to escape from mental suffering by practicing insight meditation of mindfulness while experiencing physical suffering.

KEYWORDS: stress, reduction, training, meditation and solving.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays virtually all humans work from dawn to dusk every day, every time to provide them with food, shelter and clothing. Sometimes they work well without difficulties. Sometimes they have to work under difficult circumstances. When it is convenient for them, they get pleasure and when they face a difficulty, they are stressed. Nobody want to be under stress situation because it is undesirable feeling in life. There is a reason that stress makes physical and mental pain and suffering. When one suffer physically and mentally, he will have no more longing to do anything and will be in the throes of suffering. If so, he is a failure in life. Subsequently, one may end his or her life in a vain hope of finding ways to alleviate stress.

Ordinary people cannot exactly know whether the way of overcoming and reduction stress is right or wrong because their minds are clouded with doubt and



delusion. The Buddha's teaching gives right spiritual guidance of meditation which is specifically needed. This paper, thus, will make a presentation of that all ordinary people can reduce the stress by practicing insight meditation. In Lord Buddha's teaching there is rich with teachings of mental training aimed at the cultivation of meditation for stress reduction and happiness.

The main purpose of this paper is to introduce meditation to the people who are stressed in mind and to help them to cope with or reduce stress by training their minds with positive feelings of contentment and helpfulness. The Buddhist meditation aspires at freeing the barrier of mind, such as hatred, anger, sloth, restlessness and worries. Being practicing such superiority as awareness, intelligence, concentration, confidence, and joy, the meditator can gain mental calmness or tranquility in terms of inner peace or happiness.

The cause of Stress

One who is immersed in the ordinary world is not easy to be free from these unpleasant mental states of stresses. Their stresses are due to various commitments and responsibilities they have. Their stresses come in many various guises. They feel inadequate when they compare themselves with others and they are afraid of being criticized, attacked by others or censured by their superiors. They are afraid to present their ideas or opinions before a crowd for fear of being ridiculed. Some of them are stressful about their families (father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, and their properties). Some may have to face problems in their workplace. In fact, the list of stresses people face daily would be endless. Human existence is full of stresses which lurk within the dark inner corners of the mind. Of all adverse mental states, one of the most unhealthy and dangerous is prolonged stresses. People are stressful because of the concept "self" or what is known in Buddhism as the "Delusion of self." From this belief of self, a person develops wrong ideas of personality-belief together with all cravings, selfish desires, conceit, pride and other unwholesome thoughts. This concept of "self" is the main source of all problems ranging from personal conflicts to wars amongst nations. When we feel stress, we experience tension, pain in our chest, burning in our stomach, blurred eyesight.

Our reasoning becomes unclear or our speeches turn harsh and unpleasant. If we face these factors, doctors said that these common manifestations of stresses have serious consequences for our health such as high blood pressure, nightmares, insomnia, ulcers. Other bad effect of stresses is also disruptive to our relationship. No one wants to associate with whom in the grip of stresses. Stresses may arise in different forms and in various ways such as work pressure at work places which are offices, factories, companies, schools, markets and so on. Work stresses may cause due to overwork, urgency of work, priority of work, etc. For example, in business fields, the seller wants to get credit sale just in time. Employees are stressful about being punished and being removed from services for their negligence and incapability of their works etc.

OVERCOMING STRESS

Stresses arising due to pressure of work and mental tensions are forms of hatred, quite common in our lives. One should be able to cope with such stresses. The important thing is to be cool and calm under stresses. How does one manage or overcome to cope with such stresses is one may apply insight meditation expounded by The Lord Buddha in our daily life. The Buddha instructed to develop four sublime states that are *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita* and *upekkha* (loving kindness, compassion, appreciated joy and equanimity). According to the Buddha's teaching, we can replace with loving-kindness dealing with stresses. When one is stressful, he does not see the truth clearly. The best antidote of stresses is tolerance, loving-kindness and compassion. Tolerance means buying time with mindfulness so that one can act rightly.

Loving-kindness does not mean the love as we ordinarily understand it. Love between man and woman is erotic lust. It is always changing in accordance with the situation. It can change to hatred. The true loving-kindness never changes into hatred as circumstances change. Loving-kindness motivates us to behave kindly and gently to all beings either in their presence or in their absence without exception. It has no limitations, no boundaries, and no discriminations in thirty-one planes of existence. There are no barriers between persons. Loving-kindness is more powerful than weapons. Loving-kindness helps beings live in peace and harmony. Even towards our enemies or the hated persons, we may diffuse loving-kindness. It is wonderful.

To whom the hated persons are free from pains, dissatisfactions, afflictions, tensions and stresses, they would no longer have reason to be our disagreeable persons. Compassion is a melting of the heart of others suffering. Sympathetic joy is being glad to others' success and welfare or prosperity. If everyone holds this loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, we will have peace on earth. There would be no more fighting each other. Everything would be smooth and no stresses at all. To apply the effort for stress reduction, mindfulness is required. With morality as a base, and with the effort, by being mindful on the present moment of the objects again and again to increase the wisdom, we should apply in our daily life. And the Buddha taught us to hold "wise attention and to avoid unwise attention.

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

The term meditation, especially "mindfulness" has been successfully implemented in a stress-reduction program in the field of medicine. Buddhist mindfulness meditation is for the possibility of applying it to the field of stress reduction. To begin with, the word "meditation" is an insufficient substitute for the original *Pali* term *Bhavana* (meditation). *Bhavana* means to cultivate mindfulness meditation. In Buddhism, this state of mind is called the "monkey mind." Naturally, this shaky mind flits to wherever it will. In the Buddhist explanation, this mind is attracted towards various attachments (*lobha*) and focuses on people and worldly things. It is important to know that because the things that the mind is attracted to be impermanent; when these things disappear the untrained mind becomes disappointed, sad or even angry. For example, when one loves somebody, he or she may experience strong sorrow and emotional pain on the departure or death of the loved one.

If he or she is not fully aware or mindful of their own upset thoughts and emotions, they may not be able to cope well with their disturbed mental state. Therefore, Meditation aims to realize the nature of this "wild" mind and to purify the mind of negative thoughts and disturbances, such as worries and restlessness. Meditation is the cultivation of such as awareness, concentration, intelligence, and tranquility. This type of mental cultivation or mental development can lead to the attainment of the highest wisdom in which the person sees the nature of things as they truly are without delusion. Meditation helps us to understand the internal causes of stress, such as an undisciplined mind, or negative behaviours. Through meditation or mental cultivation, one may create the energy to eliminate unwholesome thoughts or feelings, which are the internal causative factors of stress.

There are two main forms of Buddhist meditation. One meditator is the progress of mental concentration (*samatha*), also known as one-pointedness of mind. The other is "insight meditation" known as *vipassana*, discovered by the Buddha. The term "insight" refers to insight into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of mental suffering and the realization of *Nibbana* or enlightenment which is a state of mind free from sensual desires or craving. With this realization, there will be no longer any harmful desires such as anger, enmity, and jealousy in the mind, but fully beneficial thoughts such as compassion arise in the mind due to the absence of harmful desires. Meditation in Buddhism is not a method of escaping or avoiding everyday life; it is instead a way to develop mindfulness and awareness of our normal life, our daily activities, our sorrows and joys, our words and thoughts, our moral and intellectual occupations.

This way of complete mindfulness helps us to manage our daily lives: we become free of our own discriminations, our own violence, abuse towards other and even reducing our mistakes. According to the *Satipatthan-sutta*, mindfulness has to follow in the four areas of: (1) the physical body, (2) feelings or sensations, (3) consciousness, and (4) various moral objects such as loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity. It should be clearly put in mind that the form of 'meditation' may take, the essential focus is mindfulness, awareness, attention or observation. This form of practice becomes helpful for people when they implement it into their daily lives.

For the next step of developing mindfulness, the *Satipatthana Sutta* introduces one of the best known and beneficial techniques on meditation connected with the body. It is called "The Mindfulness or awareness of in-and-out breathing" (*anapanasati*). The mindfulness of breathing in-and-out meditation has a particular and definite posture that is described in the *Visuddhimagga*: one should sit down, having folded one's legs crosswise and keeping the body erect and mindfully. But sitting cross-legged is not easy for some people. Therefore, those

who find it difficult to sit down or maintain the cross-legged posture may sit on a chair. It is helpful to have the hands placed comfortably on the lap and to close the eyes lightly. After the meditator has prepared for the meditation by sitting properly, the *Satipatthana Sutta* explains the procedure of the breathing meditation technique: Breathing in a long, the mediator knows 'I breath in a long breath'; breathing out a long, he knows 'I breath out a long'; breathing in a short breath, the mediator knows 'I breath in a short breath'; breathing out a short breath, he knows 'I breath out a short breath.'

'Conscious of the whole body, I shall breath in', thus he trains himself. 'Conscious of the whole body, I shall breath out', thus he trains himself. 'Calming the bodily function of breathing, I shall breath in', thus he trains himself; 'Calming the bodily function of breathing, I shall breath out', thus he trains himself. This breathing meditation procedure can be used in daily life, but this doesn't mean that we can focus on the breath all the time. The training program of breathing meditation is for a set time each day. However, the meditators may eventually be able to practice mindfulness of the breath from time to time throughout the day, especially at those times when they are feeling stressed. As a first step of meditation, when meditators are mindful on their breath, it helps them to calm the mind and the body.

This calmness of the mind and the body helps them to be aware of emotions and feelings with a greater clarity. Whenever feelings arise, they can become aware of these feelings and how they change. In mindfulness one becomes aware how anger arises, stays awhile and disbands, and that it is not permanent. This may lead one to calm down his mind. Many people get stressed or troubled due to uncontrolled anger or ill-will. It seems to me that they may not be "aware" of their anger before they express it in an outburst, and that they only realize it after they express it. At the beginning, one will find that it is not easy to bring his mind to concentrate on his breathing even for few a seconds. One will be amazed to see how the mind becomes distracted, by external sounds and internal conditions such as racing thoughts. He may be frustrated and disappointed by these disturbances and distractions. But if one continues this practice at least once daily, morning or evening, for about five to ten minutes at a time, without giving up his effort, one will gradually begin to concentrate the mind on his breathing. After a certain period, depending on one's own ability and determination, one will experience a fully concentrated and peaceful mind.

according to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, another useful preparation for the meditator, by practicing of mindfulness, is to be mindful and aware of whatever he do, both of physical and verbally, during the daily routine of their lives. This is called "contemplation of the body" (*kayanupassana*). The *Satipatthana Sutta* state the method as follows: "He applies clear comprehension in drinking, eating, and savouring, he makes clear understanding the calls of nature, he makes clear analyzing in standing, standing, sitting, etc, and he applies clear comprehension". Therefore, one should be in the present moment and in their present actions. This does not mean that they should not think of the past or not to plan for the future. But they should do so in relation to the present action. This is the "clear comprehension" of present action. Contemplation of feelings In addition to the mindfulness of the body, there is a second method of cultivating mindfulness called "contemplation of feelings" (*vedananupassana*). *Satipatthana Sutta* explains: he dwells thus practicing contemplation of feeling on feelings internally, or externally, or both of internally and externally. For example, when one has feelings the anger to someone, he should not be thinking that it is "my anger" towards that person, but notices that it is an angry feeling. Contemplation of the state of mind The third aspect of mindfulness with regard to minds is called the contemplation of the state of mind (*cittanupassana*). The meditators should be fully aware of their minds whether they are passionate or detached, whether they are overpowered by hatred, ill-will, jealousy, or are full of love and compassion; whether their minds are deluded or have a clear and right understanding of their feelings.

Generally, people are more accustomed to looking at other people's attitude and behavior, rather than their own mind. In meditation, it helps to have a humble attitude: this helps one to observe one's own mind dispassionately. One should make the effort to correct one's false views, as if looking in a mirror. When feeling come into awareness, the meditator should not cling to them because they are pleasant nor avoid them because they are unpleasant. There should be no attitude of criticizing or judging between good and bad or right and wrong. One should simply observe, watch, examine and, most importantly, let go of them. In doing so, one is a

not a judge, but should be like a scientist. When people observe their own mind, they can start to see its true nature clearly; a thought and feeling arises, persists and disbands, and another thought comes and follows the same process. By observing this arising and passing away, one is no longer deluded into thinking that thoughts are permanent. When they see the true nature of the mind, they may become dispassionate with regard to their emotions and thoughts. Thus they may become more detached and free, further able to regard feelings and sensations as impermanent. People who are under acute stress due to overpowering anger and hatred are, paradoxically, often not self-reflexively really aware that they are angry. The moment a person becomes aware and mindful of the state of anger in his mind that is the moment he "sees" his anger.

Then he faces the choice of whether to act out the anger or abandon it. When mental afflictions arise in their daily lives, people can use their mindfulness or awareness to track them down and comprehend their basis or origin. The basis of each of these mental states is within the self. If they don't, for instance, have the basis of hatred, nobody can make them angry, for it is the basis of their anger that reacts to somebody's actions or words. If they are mindful, they will diligently use their wisdom to look into their own mind. If they don't have hatred in them, they will not be concerned when someone points out their shortcomings or blames them for some reason. But this doesn't mean that they have to be victims to others who themselves are not mindful of their own anger and hatred. The accused should not 'take on' the emotions of others, but should respond intelligently and appropriately, without becoming angry. Contemplation on mental objects According to the Satipatthana Sutta, the fourth and final method of mindfulness meditation is contemplation on mental objects (*Dhammanupassana*). In Buddhism, these mental objects include the five hindrances (*panchanivarana*): (1) sensual desire (2) ill-will, hatred or anger (3) drowsiness (4) worry and restlessness (5) doubts. "These kinds of five are regard as hindrances to clear understanding, and to any kind of progress. When people start to meditate, they may soon find that there are certain thoughts that keep coming up and giving them difficulties.

They may notice that their mind cannot stay with one thought for more than a few seconds and that it wanders and clings to various thoughts like a wild monkey jumping in a tree, clinging to the various branches of the tree. This is the "monkey mind." According to the *Satipatthana Sutta* text, when a hindrance arises in the mind, the meditator should apply be aware and mindfulness and that the hindrance has arisen. One should try to identify the nature of the hindrance and then let it go. If the meditator finds it impossible to let go of a hindrance, then the meditator should use mindfulness repeatedly until it disappears. It is important that the meditator should not get upset over the hindrances, thinking that they should not be there. He or she should think it is normal for everyone to have these hindrances. The meditator should not try to control or suppress these obstacles, but instead should think about their condition. Whatever thoughts arise in the present are the result of past actions and thoughts.

CONCLUSION

Everybody needs rest and peace of mind. The best means of attaining real peace of mind is meditation. The main object of Buddhist meditation is the realization of the ultimate goal of life leading to *Nibbana*. Experience, however proves that the process of meditation inevitably involves two important aspects of present day life, namely, acquisition of mental equilibrium and of physical fitness. A person who has undergone courses of Buddhist meditation is able to make quick decisions, correct and sound judgments and a concerted effort and mental capabilities which definitely contribute to success in life. At the same time, by the same process of purification of mind, physical body becomes automatically cleansed and physical fitness is ensured.

To attain these objectives, the correct method or technique of meditation is essential. If one practices the correct method or technique of meditation of concentration by tranquility meditation (*samatha bhavana*) or insight meditation (*vipassana bhavana*) he will be definitely sure to overcome stresses at everywhere. One may feel happy whenever he thinks of it. Helping others is a sure way of finding happiness. It is important that one should maintain one's indignity and remain calm and composed in the life space of ups and downs of life. The purifying the mind of negative feelings and emotions and cultivating people's dispositions are most important in today's world environment filled with stress.

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