

## Mental Health - Buddhist Perspective

1. Introduction
2. Mind
3. Mental illnesses and Causes for mental illnesses
4. Techniques and methods used in Buddhism for mental health

### Introduction

#### WHO - defines health:

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

#### Buddhism defines health:

1. Health is the most precious gain - Physical well-being
2. Contentment is the greatest wealth - Mental well-being
3. Trustworthiness is the greatest relative - Inter-personal relationship (Social well-being)
4. Nirvana is the greatest bliss - Spiritual well-being

Western Psychology - Birth to death

Buddhism - Person is recognized as a *sansaric* person.

### The Mind

- In Buddhism, mind is the starting point.
  - The Bible begins with the words: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth”
  - The Dhammapada starts, “Mind proceeds things, dominate them and create them.
  - *Mind is the forerunner of all things. Mind is their master. They are all mind-made. Speak or act with an impure mind, and sorrow will follow you as surely as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.*
  - *Mind is the forerunner of all things. Mind is their master. They are all mind-made. Speak or act with a pure mind, and happiness will follow you as your shadow, unshakeable.*
  - Mind is luminous by nature, but it is defiled by extraneous defilements
  - Whatsoever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil - all issues from mind
  - Whatsoever there is of good, connected with good, belonging to good - all issues from mind (AN 1)
  - Taming mind is very important, and it leads to good health (*Cittassa damato sādhu cittaṃ dantaṃ sukhāvahaṃ*)
  - A human can tame the mind not an animal - *Manasāya ussannatiti manusso*
  - In order to free the mind which is the final aim of Buddhism, one should develop the mind, in order to develop the mind, one should know the mind - Nyanaponika Thero
- 3 Steps to free the mind
1. Know the mind
  2. Develop (shape) the mind
  3. Free the mind

## Mental Illnesses

- 2 Illnesses (Roga Sutta, AN)
  1. Physical illnesses
  2. Mental illnesses
- A person could live physically healthy for about a year or 2 yrs. or 5 yrs. or 100 yrs. However, nobody could stay away from a mental illness even for a moment, except arahants.
- All ordinary people look like mentally ill (*Ummattakā viya sabbe puthujjanā dissanti*)
- Unwholesome (*Akusala*), defilements (*kilesa*), sin/evil (*pāpa*), cankers (*āsava*), hindrances (*nivarana*), fetters (*sanyojana*)
- Reflect upon getting sick.
- Dukkha - Suffering/satisfactoriness - Craving is the root cause for the origin of suffering
  - I. Birth (*jāti*)
  - II. Decay (*jarā*)
  - III. Disease (*vyādhī*)
  - IV. Death (*marana*)
  - V. Union with the unpleasant (*Appiyehi sampayogo*)
  - VI. Separation from the pleasant (*Piyehi vippayogo*)
  - VII. Not getting what one desires (*Yampiccam na labhati*)
  - VIII. In brief, clinging to the five aggregates (*Sankhittena pancupadanakkhanda dukkā*)

### 3 levels at which defilements operates

1. Latent level – (*Anusaya*)
2. Conscious mental level (*Pariyutthana*), in the form of thoughts
3. Action level (*Vītikāma*), in the form of bodily and verbal level

### 3 ways to remove mental illnesses

1. Substitution (*Tadanga pahāna*) – replacing negative thought with a positive thought
  - Ill-will – loving kindness
  - Harm – compassion
  - Jealousy - Sympathetic joy
  - Egotism (pride of self) – impermanence
2. Subduing the five mental hindrances (*Vikkhambhana pahāna*) – by means of meditative absorptions (*jhāna/dyāna*)
  - I. Sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*): the particular type of wanting that seeks for happiness through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and physical feeling.
  - II. Ill-will (*vyāpāda*; also spelled *byāpāda*): all kinds of thought related to wanting to reject; feelings of hostility, resentment, hatred and bitterness.
  - III. Sloth-and-torpor (*thīna middha*): heaviness of body and dullness of mind which drag one down into disabling inertia and thick depression.
  - IV. Restlessness-and-worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*): the inability to calm the mind.
  - V. Doubt (*vicikicchā*): lack of conviction or trust.

### 3. Uprooting fetters (*Samuccheda pahāna*) – by cultivating insight-meditation

❖ The first 2 are mundane and the third is supramundane

A Deity; A tangle within, a tangle without, people are entangled in a tangle. Gotama, I ask you this: who can untangle this tangle?

*The Buddha:*

A man, wisely established in moral virtue, and cultivating the mind in wisdom, as a monk, ardent and adept is the one who disentangles this tangle

### **The Causes for mental illness**

#### 3 roots of unwholesome

In the *Adittapariyāya sutta* or the Fire Sermon, the Buddha said; “Monks, the whole world is on fire, the whole world is burning - burning with the fire of craving (*lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*).

1. Craving/desire (*lobha*) is the cause of suffering
  2. Ill-will (*dosa/vyāpāda*)
  3. Delusion (*moha*) = ignorance (*avijjā*)
- Craving (*taṇhā*) is the primary cause for social conflicts.  
Craving- search - achieve - judgment (like/dislike) - attachment/lust - me/my/mine - selfishness - protection - weapons - conflicts/war (*Mahanidāna Sutta, DN*)
  - Craving leads to conflicts, arguments, crying, suffering etc. (*Kalahavivāda Sutta, Su.N*)

### **Mental health**

#### Techniques and methods

4 Steps of solving a problem – by the Buddha

1. The truth of suffering – disease/diagnosis
2. The truth of the cause of suffering – pathology/physiology
3. The truth of cessation of suffering – treatment principal
4. The truth of the path to the end of suffering – prescription/treatment plan

#### *Vitakkasanthana Sutta* - The Removal of Distracting Thoughts

1. Substitution - replace unskillful thoughts with skillful thoughts (*tato nimittato aññam nimittam manasikatabbam*) just as experienced carpenter knocks out a coarse peg with a fine one
2. Reflect on the consequences/ examine the danger(s) (*adinavopaparikkhitabbo*) like a dead snake or animal carcass around the neck of a well-dressed person
3. Pay no attention (*asati amanasikaro*) – not looking at something that you do not like to see
4. Reflecting upon experiences of the hardness of having unskillful thoughts and the softness of having skillful thoughts, try to remove the root of the unskillful thoughts.  
(*vitakkasankharasanthanam manasikatabbam*) Just as a man walking fast, walk slowly, then stand, sit, lie down

5. Clench the teeth and press the tongue against the roof of mouth and subdue and beat down the (evil) mind by the (good) mind", just as stronger man might subdue and control a weaker one.

### Sabbāsava Sutta

5 ways to overcome cankers

1. Self-restraint - *dassanā*
2. Judicious use - *sanvarā*
3. Endurance - *patisevanā*
4. Avoidance - *adhivasanā*
5. Elimination - *parivajjanā*
6. Development - *bhāvanā*

### Counselling techniques used by the Buddha

- Patacara - depression -
- Kisagotami - depression - asked to bring mustard seeds from a home in which nobody had died
- Bhaddavaggiya princes - searching for yourself is more important than searching for others
- Cullapanthaka bhikkhu unable to pay attention - rajo haranam
- Akkosaka (one who abuses, scolds or reviles) bharadvaja
- Alavaka - non-human - aggressive behaviour

Balanced diet leads a healthy life. So, does balanced mind.

Appicchata santutthi - small is beautiful by EF Schumacher

Taming mind is very important, and it leads to good health (*Cittassa damato sadhu cittam dantam sukhavaham*)

One who wish to be free from sorrow, must not desire/cling to anything in the world. (*Asokam virajam patthayano piyam na kairatha kuhinci loke*).

Vedayita sukha - Sensual happiness - ordinary people

Avedayita sukha - Happiness of elimination - Arahants

Happiness is not having a lot, happiness is giving a lot

Buddha said to a poor person when he said he has nothing to give,

You can give your smile to others so that they are happy

Give kind words

Spread loving kindness

3 types of mental health

1. Sensual happiness (*āmisa sukha*) – food, music etc.
2. Mundane meditative (*jhānic*) pleasures
3. *Nibbanic* (*nirāmisa sukha*) happiness

#### 4 Ways of answering a question – by the Buddha

1. The Buddha answered some questions directly. (yes or no)
2. He analyzed some questions to determine what they meant. (What is a person? – five aggregates)
3. He answered some questions by replying with counter-questions. (everything is permanent – Is body permanent? If not permanent, is it happy?)
4. He put some questions off to the side (where is the end of the universe?)