

Overview on Buddhist Meditation for Health and Patient as Depicted in the Discourses

Ven. Dr. Jatila (Namhsan)¹

Introduction

This research principally investigates an overview on Buddhist meditation for health and patient (gilāna) in the Discourse. Animate beings will undergo decay, disease and death. Possessing aggregates possesses physical disease and mental disease more or less. How a patient should contemplate on meditation for health to relief from painful feeling? What are Buddhist meditation techniques for health? Hearing and contemplating on perceptions and enlightenment factors can be utilized as protection, medication to cure the disease and preventive disease. The patient should also contemplate on the perception impurity of body, loathsome on food, perfection of death. As such samyutta and Aṅguttara-nikāya, Girimānanda sutta, Anāthapiḍiṅkovāda sutta and Chaṇṇovāda sutta, Anāthapiṇḍika sutta from Saṃyutta-nikāya. Although there are many scholarly works Buddhist meditation, however meditation for health is still required to examine thoroughly.

Methodology

This work approached to analytical and qualitative research. This investigation solves problems how the patient should take self-health care and meditate for health leading. Questioning, nursing, encouraging and counselling with the patient are conducive to relief from pain of the patient.

Results and Discussion

The pāti terms ‘ābādho hoti dukkhito bālḥagināno’ which mean ill, suffering and grievously sick are often used to express a patient. The patient should be mindful awareness of his/her health condition either getting worse or better. The patient should perform physical exercise for healthy, consume proper food and take medicine regularly, honestly disclose his health condition and endure painful of disease from the Pathama-upatṭhaka sutta (A III 144). The patient endowed with this health principles contributes for healthy and recovery from sickness.

1. Professor from Sītagū Buddhist Academy- Thanlyin-Yangon & IBPU (Naypyidaw), Myanmar
Phone: +959443454643. Email: takkasila2012@gmail.com

Questioning about health condition and mental encouragement play significant role in social welfare, and are helpful to relief from pain of the patient. The Buddha frequently inquired health condition of His disciples, nursed the patient: Pūtigatta Tissa Thera who was stinking body, and encouraged his disciples to nurse the patient. The patient should be encouraged to reflect good mental quality. Sāriputta Thera encouraged patient Anāthapiṇḍika to reflect the four factors of sotāpanna and ten right path recorded in the Anāthapiṇḍika sutta (SV 380-387). This mental encouragement leads Patient Anāthapiṇḍika to reflect how he has endowed with the four factors of Sotāpanna and followed ten right path. Consequently, Anāthapiṇḍika was relief from painful feeling and become healthy. This evidence highlights that reflecting on good mental quality generates healthy mind and relief from pain of the patient. Accordingly, the patient himself should not feel much depression on being unhealthy, but he should reflect on the thriple Gems and right path like a devotee Anāthapiṇḍika. The patient should be mindful awareness of death without fear and worry.

Patient himself/herself should also contemplate on insight meditation to eradicate clinging (upādāna) on beloved one or things. An evidence can be found in the case of Sāriputta Thera together with Ānanda Thera who urgently visited devotee Anāthapiṇḍika to inquire his health condition. Anāthapiṇḍika also replied about his serious sickness. Then, Sāriputta Thera further encouraged Patient Anāthapiṇḍika not to clinging on a particular of six internal sense faculties, six external sense objects, six consciousness etc., step by step as insight meditation. After hearing this insight meditation, Patient Anāthapiṇḍika wept and shed tears. Then Ānanda Thera asked him: “Are you founder, householder, are you sinking. “I am not foundering, Venerable Ānanda, I am not sinking. However, although I have long waited upon the Buddha and monks, worthy of esteem, never before have I heard such as talk on the dhamma”. Ānandā Thera replied that this insight meditation is not provided for lay people clothed in white, but delivered to those who have gone forth. Soon after the Sāriputta thera and Ānanda Thera left, Anāthapiṇḍika passed away and reappeared in the Tusitā heaven (M III 259-263). This evidence indicates how Buddhist monks should inquire health condition, and also preach insight meditation for health.

Similar evidence is patient Channa Thera who was unable to bear his painful feeling, even made decision to do suicide himself from Channovāda Sutta (M III 264-6). Sāriputta Thera offered to nurse him by serving suitable food, medicine and attendant, and inquired about insight meditation. This encouragement stimulated him to contemplate on insight meditation to become Arahant. Accordingly, questioning about health condition, mental encouragement and preaching insight meditation play significant role for the patient. Even nearly death, the patient should contemplate on insight meditation like a Channa Thera.

Next, the patient should contemplate on the factors of enlightenment as Dhamma medicine and meditation. According to Theravāda tradition, Buddhists believe that patient can be cured by hearing, reciting and reflecting on the Bojjhaṅga sutta like the cases of Mahākassapa Thera, Mahāmoggallāna, etc. Myanmar Buddhists also traditionally recite the Bojjhaṅga sutta as protection for health. Srilankan Buddhists also follow this chanting on the Mahākassapatherabojjhaṅga sutta, Mahāmoggalānatherabojjhaṅga sutta and Mahācundatherabojjhaṅga sutta and Girimānanda sutta (S V 79-81) as protection for health.

Ven.Prof. Chandawimala 'The Explanation of the Factors of Enlightenment (2014: 239)' encourages that patient's name should be inserted in chanting the Bojjhaṅga sutta so that the patient becomes healthy. If the patient's name is difficult to insert, you should chant by using the common names like avuso, bhante, upasaka, upasika, kumāra or kumārī. This suggestion highlights more effective in chanting the Bojjhaṅga sutta to the patients for health. The patient himself/herself should also be either hearing, chanting or contemplating on the Bojjhaṅga Sutta as protection for health and meditation for spiritual development. The deeper level is discerning the appearance and disappearance of bojjhaṅga factors. This contemplation leads to increase the progress of insight knowledge and the supramundane paths and fruits.

The next meditation for health contemplates on perceptions as recorded in the Girimānanda sutta (A V 109-113). Once, Ānanda Thera approached the Buddha and reported thus: Oh, the Blessed One, Girimānanda Thera was grievously sick. It would be good, if the Buddha would go to the Girimananda Thera out of compassion. The Buddha advised to Ānanda that if you go the bhikkhu Girimānanda and recite to him about the ten perceptions, namely aniccasaññā, anattasaññā, asubhasaññā, ādīnavasaññā, pahānasaññā, virāgasaññā, nirodhasaññā, sabbaloke anabhiratasaññā, sabbasaṅkhāresu aniccasaññā, and ānāpānasati. On being have been heard ten perceptions recited by Ānanda Thera., Patient Girimānanda Thera recovered from sickness.

Meditation conformity with a patient can also be found the Gilāna sutta, Pañcaka-nipāta (A III 142) expounded by the Buddha. The patient is encouraged to contemplate on the impurity of body (asubhānupassī), perception of loathsome on food (āhāre patikkūlasaññā), non-delight perception all over the world (sabbaloke anabhiratasaññā), contemplating impermanence on all formations (sabbasaṅkhāresu aniccānupassī) and perception of death (maraṇasaññā). These five meditation should not be abandoned by the patient. The patient engaged with these five meditation can destroy canker, obtain the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom, and has potential to become either Anāgamī or Arahant.

Conclusion

The above mentioned facts have examined Buddhist meditation for health and patient reflected in the discourses. Questioning about health condition and mental encouragement contribute for the patient to relief from pain. The seven enlightenment factors are not unhealthy factors, but healthy mental factors that should be cultivated for health and meditation. The patient should also contemplate on ten perceptions, impurity of body, etc., for healthy body and health mind, even liberation from saṃsāra suffering.

Keywords: Patient, Meditation, Bojjhaṅga, Saññā, Healthy

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