

Accepting Old Age and Working on Own Well-being with the Help of Satipaṭṭhāna sutta

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Introduction

According to human developmental theory, aging is a natural phenomenon. Modern science has proposed many different theories of aging, but the most popular theories are the stochastic theory, which is known as the ‘wear-and-tear theory of aging’, and the prolonged theory known as ‘telomeres’ (Baron Robert A., 2022). In the Pali literature, it’s known as the term jarā. It is explained in this way; “*jarā, jīraṇatā, khaṇḍiccaṃ, pāliccaṃ, valittacatā; āyuno samhāni, indriyānaṃ paripāko*” (MSP; DN). Methodology of the human growth is well defined by the Buddha. The term jarā in its most general sense is maturing in a positive sense, and it's described with all the physiological features (Bhikkhu, 2005). In ancient India, old age was defined as Sanyas; the renunciation phase starts at the age of 75+ (Kakar, 1978). But nowadays social structure and norms have changed with time. There is no chaturāśram tradition. In India, the job retirement age is 60-65. So, now aging start at 60 years with the change in social structure, lifestyle, social needs, and societal demands. In the last, few technologically driven decades, psychological and physiological illnesses are rising quickly. Illnesses affect the state of well-being in elderly people. Lots of studies were done on the matter of well-being but the area has not been studied properly from a Buddhist studies perspective yet. According to the research, it is denoted by mental state. This state is explained in hedonia, which is known as subjective well-being, and eudaimonia known as; a positive psychological state of well-being (Disabato et al., 2016; Huta, 2016). In various studies, well-being is defined by various domains like; Emotional health, Physical health, Healthy Behaviors, Work environment, Basic health access, Basic community access, and Basic community access (Evers et al., 2012; Hackert, van Exel and Brouwer, 2021). All these domains can help to maintain a balanced state of well-being at the age of sixty. It’s based on a combination of past and present life.

This work focused on health-related issues in elderly people in India. In this present era at the age of sixty or above people have various chronic diseases. Approximately 21% of elderly Indians reportedly have at least one chronic

disease. In rural areas 17% and 29% of urban areas elderly people are suffering from chronic diseases (Jana and Chattopadhyay, 2022). The elderly population of India has been diagnosed with a series of diseases like; diabetes mellitus-83%, hypertension- 77%, chronic heart diseases- 74%, chronic lung disease- 72%, cancer- 75%, stroke- 58%, bones, and joint pain diseases- 56%, neurological and psychiatric diseases- 41%. For the problems mentioned above, practicing Buddhist philosophy for increasing awareness of age-related issues and their consequences can be a solution. The study of mindfulness and well-being is a co-related subject. Mindful meditation can increase the power of memory in an individual (Alberts and Thewissen, 2011). Mindful meditation can slow down neurological and psychological diseases (Bapi and Ghosh, 2021). Physical activity can enhance the state of well-being. Physical activity helps to slow down stress issues, neuro-psychological diseases, chronic issues like; diabetes blood sugar, thyroid related issues (Fave et al., 2018). In this paper, a study has been carried out to understand the social crisis in India and the ways to spread awareness of this crisis with the study of the first truth (dukkha). The role of seven awakening factors in developing a state of well-being Along with the effects of five hindrances at the age of sixty or above was also studied. This work is framed in this way; research methodology, discussion and findings of this research, and conclusion.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this research work is an empirical study with theoretical analysis. The study has been conducted based on primary and secondary sources. The Harvard methodology as well as style and citation has been followed throughout the study.

Brief introduction of the sutta

The satipaṭṭhāna sutta is the practical explanation of the mindful meditation (*vipassanā*) technique. This method is practically experienced by the Buddha. Purposefully he preached this method to his disciples (monks) for introducing the path of liberation. In the first three sections, the practitioner should focus the observation on the body, mind, and the sensation which arise in the body. When the sensation arises in the body the practitioner cannot react or respond to the sensations. When mindfully observing and seeing all the sensations the practitioner is experiencing what is produced is destroyed in a moment, then the observer can realize all these sensations are not permanent. Through this experienced practitioners develop the concept of anattā. And the last section dhammanupassanā, deals with contemplation of the things. In this section, Buddhas focused on the nature of the law; four truths, good and bad qualities of the mind; awakening factors, and hindrances, the fuel of attachments; constituents (mind and matter), and external-internal sense sphere. Seven awakening factors and five hindrances

are the ethical qualities of the mind (Bhikkhu, no date). In this work *bojjhaṅga* denoting as good qualities and *nivaraṇa* as bad qualities. This present study focused on the last section of the sutta. While an individual can understand and start to contemplate things and then develop a state of well-being with the help of acceptance, awareness, and mindfulness.

Discussion and Findings

“Handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādetthā!” (Bhikkhu, 2008)

According to a World Health Organization report, the world’s population aged 60 and over is projected to reach around 2.1 billion by 2050. According to base on World Population Prospects report, the elderly population in India is expected to grow to 158.7 million by 2025, which would be 11.1% of the total population. In another report by WHO, about chronic diseases, in low- and middle-income countries, chronic diseases account for 80% of all deaths. In India, one in five elderly is suffering from chronic diseases (Jana and Chattopadhyay, 2022). Based on all these reports, chronic diseases have turned into a social crisis for elderly people. This crisis is a result of an individual’s unhealthy lifestyle, habits, and ignorance about the truth.

This work directly focused on the nature of the things with contemplation. Individuals figure out the steps then they might be overcoming their issues; 1st step is accepting their age and gladly accepting age-related sufferings. The 2nd step is to understand their social status, the 3rd step is to understand the family condition, the 4th step is to understand their health condition, the 5th step is to be aware of health-related issues in old age, and the 6th step is awareness of the government policies (health and financial), and opportunities made available by the NGO’s for elderly people.

Old age Suffering: In the four truths suffering is defined by *jāti, jarā, maraṇa, sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā*, appiyehi sampayogo, piyehi vippayogo, yam-picchaṃ na labhati, saṅkhittena pañcūpādānakkhandhā. This study focuses on *jarā* or old age. During the stage of old age sufferings like- fear of separation from loved ones due to death, fear of death, unfulfilled desires, illness, etc. make people deeply anxious about the future and themselves.

“Sāraṇ ca sārato ṇatvā asāraṇ ca asārato

Te sāraṃ adhigacchanti sammā saṅkappagocarā” . (Dhammapada-12)

Firstly people should be enhancing their state of well-being by understanding their self. In old age, they should try to understand their likings and dislikings. Active hobbies enhance the state of well-being. Chatting with

friends generates new hobbies. The Satipaṭṭhāna sutta is focused on enhancing the state of mindfulness and awareness towards the inner and outer world of individuals. Enhancing both the state with the help of kāya (body), citta (mind), vedanā (sensation), and dhamma (mental factor). According to Satipaṭṭhāna, if an individual understands the good and bad qualities of mental factors, the root cause, and the nature of truth then the individual can work on their state of well-being. They are mindfully aware of the changes in the body, acquire new identities with time, start new relationships with other people, accept the truth and observe the circumstances to live the rest of their life being enlightened.

“Yāya vā so sati-ādikāya sattadhammasāmaggiyā sambujjhati kilesaniddāto utthāti, Saccāni vā paṭivijjhati, sā dhammasāmaggī Sambodhi”

According to dhammānupassanā, sattabojjhaṅga is known as the seven awakening factors. The seven awakening factors are the good qualities of the human being, they are; *Sati* (mindfulness), *dhammavicaya* (investigation of the nature of things), *virīya* (energy), *pīti* (joyful interest), *passaddhi* (calmness), *samādhi* (concentration), *upekkhā* (equanimity). In pali literature, the term bojjhaṅga is derived from √ budh primal meaning which is to awaken. Development of the character of bodhi is to increase the level of understanding and enlightening (Bhikkhu, 2005). Understanding the consequences of practicing good qualities is to maintain the state of well-being then the individual can concentrate on reinforcing their good emotional health. Mindfulness, and energy, insisting on developing good healthy behaviors, such as; eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly. All these behaviors can help to slow down aging and its health-related issues. Calmness and equanimity can help to reduce stress. At the age of sixty or above, individuals generally experience religious faith. Practicing seven awakening factors help to live an active life.

Asubhanupassim viharantaṃ indriyesu susaṃvutaṃ

Bhojanamhi ca mattaññuṃ saddhaṃ āradhāvīriyaṃ

Taṃ ve nappasahati māro vāto selaṃ’va pabbataṃ. (Dhammapada; 8)

Secondly, a list of *pañcanivarāṇa* (five hindrances) is; *kāmacchanda* (sensual desire), *byāpāda* (ill-will), *thīnamiddha* (sloth and torpor), *uddhaccakukkucca* (agitation and worry), *vicikicchā* (doubt). The awakening factors are dominated by hindrances. According to current Indian elderly people's health reports, people might be dominated by hindrances. According to the Abhidhamma philosophy rupa (form) is caused and conditioned by the four elements; *utu*, *kamma*, *citta*, *āhāra*. This philosophy understands by the making process of an earthen doll. The earthen doll is made with- dust, water, wind, and sun. Only dust or soil particles do not make a doll because the particles will not cohere but be blown away. After

adding some water, the doll does take a shape but remains fragile. Then the doll must be dried by wind and sunlight so that it can retain its shape. As for chronic diseases, the hindrances mentioned above are responsible. It is the precipitating factor of chronic diseases and kamma, citta, āhāra are the perpetuating factors .

Subhānupassim vihararantaṃ indriyesu asaṃvutaṃ

Bhojanahi amattaññuṃ kusitaṃ hīnaviriyaṃ

Taṃ ve pasahati maro vāto rukkhaṃ 'va dubbalaṃ. (Dhammapada-7)

Precipitating Factors	Perpetuating Factors	Chronic Diseases
<i>Āhāra</i> (food habit)	<i>kāmacchanda</i> (sensual desire)	diabetes mellitus
<i>Citta</i> (mind)	<i>byāpāda</i> (ill-will), <i>uddhaccakukkucca</i> (agitation and worry), <i>vicikicchā</i> (doubt)	Hypertension, heart diseases
<i>Kamma</i> (bad did for health)	<i>thīnamiddha</i> (sloth and torpor)	neurological and psychiatric diseases

Conclusion

This study finds the social crisis in India and describes the way to spread awareness of this crisis with the study of the first truth (dukkha). The seven awakening factors are developing a state of well-being. Along with the effects of five hindrances on elderly people. Based on dhammanupassana from the Satipatthana helps to understand the ethical state of the human mind and its contribution to the functionality of the human mind and activities. Accepting the truth of sufferings that come from old age, individuals can work to enhance their well-being by themselves. For future work, this study can be extended by collecting social and health data on the ethical state and concept of being well for people in the age group of sixty or above.

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