

BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND HEALING*

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Abstract

This study was begun because of the recognition of the problems in health systems we are presently facing. Those health problems are not only due to the deficiency in scientific and administrative knowledge, but are also the result of the limitation of the paradigm that we currently use to generate the knowledge and the ways to solve health as well as other global problems. The objective of this study is to find an alternative paradigm for understanding health issues by investigating the Buddhist canons. The Thai Tipitaka on CD-ROM was used as the basic database for gathering Buddhist principles and perspectives on health and healing. Buddhism looks at all existences in term of integrated factors depending on processes of inter-dependent causal relationships governed by the Three Characteristics or the Dependent Origination. This premise deeply guides the disciples' perceptions and living styles. The broadest meaning of disease in Buddhism involves all kinds of human sufferings, while health is the state of being completely free from all suffering. Health quality is a collective product of previous actions starting from past lives and ending at your last second. While suitable care is given to a patient, he/she should realize the nature of this so fragile, no-self life. These principles will lead patients and their relatives to have less suffering and anxiety. It will be, moreover, a basic belief of a health system that concerns more with the spiritual aspect of life.

Keywords: Buddhist, Buddhism, health, healing, illness, sickness, paradigm.

Introduction

Recently, health problems have become one of the most serious issues of humankind. Health expenditure and new chronic, as well as infectious, diseases are increasing every year. Furthermore, the basic health problems such as diarrhea or malnutrition are still the most important causes of human death. Although a number of new strategies such as a primary health care and the universal coverage have been developed and applied to solve problems, the outcomes are still questionable. Most of the poor cannot get those basic health services. The needs for more health facilities and services seem to be unlimited projects. These facts imply that health problems are not technical matters that can be solved by scientific knowledge or administrative strategies. Capra (1982: xvii) pointed out that the health problem is only one facet of the crisis of our perceptions which are based on scientific reality. Although scientific reality has become the major belief system in Thai society that determines our current perception, Buddhist reality, which is deeply infused into Thai culture, has an important impact on the perception as well. An investigation of Buddhist principles and perspectives on health and healing offers an alternative perception for understanding health and illness that may lead to other approaches for managing or solving health problems.

Methodology

This work is a result of documentary research based on the Tipitaka, the three divisions of the Buddhist holy canon, and some other important Buddhist textbooks.

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A summarized book, *Tipitaka for lay people* (Suchiv Poonyanuparp, 1996), was used as a general guideline for understanding the structure and important content of the Tipiṭaka. Two versions of a Thai language Tipiṭaka on CD-ROM: the Dhammadāna version and the Mahāchulālongkornrājavidyālaya Alumni version were used as basic databases. Although both of them originated from the same official Thai version, Siam State, it is helpful for cross checking the results of searching. Many Thai words related to health and illness such as disease, healing, drug, etc., were used as keywords for gathering information.

Buddhadhamma (Phra Dhammapiṭaka (P.A. Payutto), 2000) and *Medicine in Buddhism* (Phra Dhammapiṭaka (P.A. Payutto), 1999) are the other two important textbooks used here. They are very necessary for the interpretation of the Buddhist canon. All of the collected information was thoroughly studied, interpreted, classified and grouped to present here as Buddhist principles and perspectives on health and healing. Nevertheless, the Buddha's words quoted here are traced back to English versions translated from the Pāli canon by many foreigners. Although there are some differences in meanings of those translations, English version is easier for the reader to get further information of each topic.

Important Principles of Buddhism

Buddhism was brought from India into Southeast Asia around the 3rd Century, CE. During the 13th Century, CE, Theravāda Buddhism from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was selected to be the only religion of the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai (Thida Saraya, 2002: 149-150; Srisakra Vallibhotama, 2001: 43). After that, Buddhist principles were integrated into local belief systems and then became the Thai worldview that shaped both cultural ways of life and the core of thought in Thai beliefs and political systems (Thida Saraya, 2002; Keyes, 1989; Chai Podhisita, 1985: 25-53). The impact of Buddhist basic beliefs has been gradually replaced by scientific beliefs and consumerism beginning a century ago, but the limitations of scientific applications turn many organizations toward investigating Buddhism as another point of view and an alternative method for problem solving.

The World and Existences

For Buddhism, a religion that denies the existence of one God or other creators, the world and all existences are believed to have originated from many causes that are governed by the natural law. There is no primary cause or a basic component that works as a determinant causing something or an event to happen. Each cause or determinant relates to others while all are interdependent. The results of those inter-related create a variety of effects. The world, in Buddhism, is not perceived as a material entity or a planet that we have to discover its origin or its components. Buddhism is more concerned with the world as a sense-object and mind-object which are observed or recognized by humans through the six sense-organs or bases: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The boundary of the world or all existences is concluded in the realm of consciousness that comes from the twelve bases (āyatana). Existences, in Buddhism, perceive as far beyond the material world (the existence) to include the immaterial spheres that cannot be detected by normal sense-organs and scientific tools. The Buddha mentioned about many other beings or places such as Deva (diety), Yakkha (demon), Peta (hungry ghost), heaven, Niraya Hell, downfall, etc. in many suttas in the Tipiṭaka. For example he stated: "Monks, in the whole world, with the world of Devas, of Maras, of Brahmas... of devas and humankind, a Tathāgata is conqueror, unconquered, all-seeing, omnipotent. Therefore is he called 'Tathāgata.'" (A.II. 23 in Woodward, 1995: 25).

Buddhism looks at all existences in term of integrated factors. There is no real self or essence in or out of them. When all of the elements composing one's being are divided and separated, no self remains even in parts that consist of the combination of other smaller parts. Therefore, when Buddhism says that something exists it must be understood that it exists in terms of combinations of various elements (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 53). One basic principle that is used to explain life as a compound existence is the Five Aggregates (pañcakkhanda). According to this principle, all of life is made up of the five groups (khandhas): rūpa or material form; vedanā, feeling; saññā, perception; saṅkhāra, volitional impulse; and viññāṇa, consciousness. There is no the owner or the director of the khandhas, either within them or outside of them. A person's existence depends upon processes of inter-dependent, causal relationships under the natural law: the Three Characteristics (tilakkhaṇa) or the Dependent Origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) (P.A. Payutto, 1994: 19-20).

Nature of Life

Life under the principle of the Three Characteristics maintains itself in a condition of aniccata—impermanent and unstable; anattata—containing no intrinsic self; and dukkhatā—constantly oppressed by arising and cessation, and primed to cause suffering whenever there is association based on ignorance. Because of the mistaken clinging to one or other features of natural processes of inter-dependent causes as being the self, we want this 'self' to proceed in some desired way. When things do not conform with desires, the resulting stress causes frustration and subsequently more intense clinging. These mistaken ideas are embedded in the mind, from where they direct our behavior, shape our personality, and influence the fortunes of our lives, both overtly and covertly. In general, they are the cause of suffering for all unenlightened beings. (ibid.: 19-20).

Another Buddhist concept that explains human life is Kamma. It is one part of the natural law that refers to the working of intention, or the process of mental proliferation and its consequences. In essence, this is summarized in the words, 'good deeds bring good results, bad deeds bring bad results' (Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, 1993: 1-2). According to Buddhism, intention is the agent or prompting force in all human creations and destructions, therefore it is the actual essence of kamma, as is given in the Buddha's words, "Bhikkhus! Intention, I say, is kamma. Having willed, we create kamma, through body, speech and mind." (A.III. 415, in ibid.: 6). In the Buddhist view of kamma, when there is kamma there are immediate results. Even just one little thought, although not particularly important, is nevertheless not void of consequence. Since Buddhism does not believe in any power that transcends nature or can be attributed to luck or fate (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 149), nothing comes true by praying, but by intentional activities. Thus, we ourselves should have intentions to do the best things right now. The Buddha stressed that: "Purity and impurity are personal responsibilities. No one else can make you pure." (Dh. 165 in Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, 1993: 103)

Human Destination

In the Buddhist view, human life is so short and it is easy to get sick or die. We should practice hard and do everything to develop ourselves to live with wisdom. A life of wisdom can be looked at from two perspectives. Inwardly, it is characterized by serenity, cheerfulness, awareness, and freedom. Experiencing an agreeable sensation, the mind is not intoxicated or deluded by it. When deprived of comforts, the mind is firm, unshaken and untroubled. Happiness and suffering are no longer invested into external objects. The outer level is characterized by fluency, efficiency, flexibility and

freedom from cumbersome complexes and delusions (P. A. Payutto, 1994: 23). This stage of pure freedom includes not only the process for bringing about the cessation of all sufferings, but also the state of cessation itself.

This stage can be obtained by the complete elimination of defilements such as *avijjā*—being ignorant of the truth, seeing things as self; *taṇhā*—wanting this imagined self to attain various things or states; and *upādāna*—clinging and attachment to these mistaken ideas and all that they imply. The Middle Path or the Noble Eightfold Path or *magga* is only one way leading people to reach this goal—ending of all suffering. Eight components of the Path are not eight different ways, but related factors of one path. In the course of practicing of these aspects of the Path, the knowledge, understanding, and the beliefs established along the way, as essential assets of the Path, will gradually evolve and grow through dependence on this mental training. Finally, wisdom will increase to the point of understanding all things according to their true nature. This will lead to the attainment of enlightenment (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 193, 195). The person who practices can reach this human destination, *nibbāna* or *nirvāna*, within this life.

Buddhism and Health

These important principles of nature work as a frame of thinking and acting for the one who understands and accepts the basic beliefs. This perception of reality will shape the meanings and the ways of understanding health and illness for that person. These principles also deeply determine the methods of investigating causes and the ways of eliminating symptoms of those afflictions as well as offering the methods for maintaining health. In short, these basic principles could shape a specific health belief and health system for a community. In this part, we will present Buddhist perspectives on health and illness in relation to some important points such as the meaning of health and diseases, their causes, or the methods of caring and curing.

Meaning of Health

The meaning of health is a very significant issue showing impacts of Buddhist principles on health perceptions and activities. The understanding about ‘What is health?’ or ‘What is illness?’ affects all areas of health. It operates as a norm for determining health status which leads to other health criteria. Some examples are: What kinds of symptoms should be called disease?; When can someone be called a patient?; When will they turn back to be normal?; or Who is healthy? The meaning of health, moreover, relates to the ways of managing health including the ways to investigate causes of illness, the ways to care for patients, or the ways to promote health. Because of the outstanding principles in Buddhism, the meanings of health and illness are very clear and quite different from those of the bio-medical understanding today where scientific principles dominate.

The meaning of health and disease in Buddhism can be divided into two related areas. “Monks, there are these two diseases. What two? Disease of body and disease of mind.” (A.II. 143 in Woodward, 1995: 146). The former links to a conventional truth (*sammatisacca*) which is similar to today meaning while the latter associates with the ultimate Truth (*lokuttaradhamma*).

The disease of the mind or mental disease is very important issue in Buddhism. Lord Buddha said:

“Monks, there are to be seen beings who can admit freedom from suffering from bodily disease for one year, for two years, for three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years: who can admit freedom from bodily disease for even a hundred years. But, monks, those beings are hard to find in the world who can admit freedom from mental

disease even for one moment, save only those in whom the āsavas [defilements] are destroyed.” (A.II. 143 in *ibid.*: 146).

The broadest meaning of mental disease in this quotation involves all kinds of sufferings (Phra Dhammapīṭaka (P. A. Payutto), 1999: 110). Except for the perfected one, the arahant, all beings including human and non-human, a baby or adult, a healthy person or a patient, a monk or a layman, have one or more diseases. Many pleasurable sensations are also interpreted as diseases if they contain some of the defilements. For the other mental side, health in its highest meaning is the state of completely free from all suffering that is nibbāna (*ibid.*: 126). Lord Buddha said in the Māgaṇḍiya Sutta that: “This is that health, this is that nibbāna” (M.I 511 in Horner, 1989: 190) or “Health is the highest gain, nibbāna the highest bliss; And of ways, the Eightfold leads to deathlessness, to security.” (M.I 510 in *ibid.*: 189) It does not mean that the arahants are free from all physical diseases or do not have any pain, but all of those ailments cannot disturb his/her mind or cannot be any more causes of their suffering.

For the bodily diseases, Buddhist principles are closer to today’s meaning of health and diseases which embrace both physical and mental health. However, in Buddha’s time, the way of explaining health and the criteria for grouping diseases depended upon the knowledge and the beliefs about health in those days in Northern India. Since the boundaries of the world and all existences are far beyond the material world, the scope of health in Buddhism is wider than physical and mental aspects and includes the state of perfect mind. Physical ailments or death are only one part of our diseases or sufferings. While this perspective of health expands our concept of destination of life to living with wisdom, it grounds the important status of health problems in its suitable place. This insight opens our perceptions that there are more important issues to do with the body than to keep our comfortableness and to extend the end of this life. This Buddhist position on health problems gives us more choices to care for our lives and leaves more room for internal development as well.

Causes of Diseases

The Buddha explained the cause of diseases (dukkhasamudaya) in different ways according to the goal of his explanations. ‘Defilements’ is a common term that refers to the basic cause of all diseases in both physical and mental meanings. Defilements, however, do not exist as basic entities that generate our suffering and wait for elimination. In the principle of Dependent Origination, causes of suffering are divided into three components: ignorance (avijjā), craving (taṇhā), and clinging (upādāna), while in the Four Noble Truths these causes are indicated as ‘the three roots of evil’ composed of greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha) (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 72-73; 109). The Buddha said that clinging in one’s self or one’s suppositions were also the cause of suffering. He said:

“A supposition, monk, is an ill, a supposition is an imposthume, a supposition is a barb. Monk, when he has gone beyond all suppositions the sage is said to be at peace. But, monk, a sage who is at peace is not born, does not age, is not agitated, does not envy.” (M.III 246 in Horner, 1990: 293)

Although the process of eliminating defilements could not directly cure the physical diseases, it will not increase both physical and mental pain or sufferings. For that reason, the one who is in the process of eliminating defilements will have less suffering from illness than the one who is not. The correct understanding of the nature of life will guide that person to proper health practices leading to neither self-indulgence nor self-mortification.

For the other more physical understanding of health, effects of microorganisms, chemical agents, the degeneration of organs, and other environmental or psychological

factors, are only material or detectable causes of diseases. From a Buddhist view, causes of diseases are not only these detectable etiologies, but also karmas and other undetectable beings. Non-human beings such as a demon (yakkha) and ghosts are also the causes of illness. In this case, Lord Buddha allowed the monks who had ailments caused by ghosts to eat raw flesh and to drink raw blood as medicine (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 274; D.III 195 in T.W. and Davids, 1991: 189).

The intention of actions (cetanā) is karma in Buddhism (Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, 1993: 6). When there is karma there are immediately results. However, it does not mean that one intentional action brings only one result or one result is caused by one previous action. In fact, one action brings multiple results and one result is caused by multiple actions (Phra Dhammapitaka (P. A. Payutto, 2001: 193). A disease is the results of collective karma, but it is impossible for normal people to know all of those causes. An example of the Buddha's words that showed relationship between karma and disease is:

“Brahman youth, here some woman or man is by nature harmful to creatures with his hand or with a clod of earth or with a stick or with a sword. Because of that deeds, accomplished thus, firmly held thus, he, at the breaking up the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, the bad born, the Downfall, Niraya Hell. But if, at the breaking up of the body after dying he does not arise in... Niraya Hell but comes to human status, then wherever he is born (in a new existences) he has many illness. This course is conducive to many illness, brahman youth, that is to say being by nature harmful to creatures with his hand... or with sword.” (M.III 204 in Horner, 1990: 250)

Good health, under Buddhist principles, is a result of previous good actions starting from last second, last year, or from the last life. Nevertheless, karma law is only one section of the natural law. Thus, health or disease is governed by the natural law as well. This understanding turns the responsibilities of health back to each individual. In this respect, the role of health professionals will be smaller. It reminds us to realize that scientific knowledge and methodology is not the single route leading to the solutions of all health problems. Neither modern nor alternative medicines are perceived as the best or only technologies for eliminating diseases. Their position is as one among various elements that can support the healing process. Preventive medicine could be a part of the same principle and activities of the Noble Eight-fold Path practice. This explanation is also beneficial when answering questions that have no good answers from a scientific reasoning such as ‘Why does the disease happen to me?’ or ‘Why this time?’ etc.

The Attitude to Disease

Although health is a preferable condition for every life, for Buddhism, afflictions as well as death, are seen as very common events of human beings. They are normal events for every being that originates from multi-related factors processed and determined by the natural law, the Three Characteristics or the Dependent Origination. While everyone has his/her duty to maintain health, one should keep in mind that both this body and mind are not existent as a separate self. It is impossible to run away from ailments or death, but we can create suitable causes that lead to the state of more perfect life by practicing the Eightfold Path that relate closely to the previous meaning of health. The Buddha always informed his disciples that this life is so fragile and short. He told them that it was helpful to regularly contemplate on this fact. In his words:

For what good reason should man or woman, layfolk or monk, often contemplate on the fact that they are ‘sure to become sick and cannot avoid it’? Beings while healthy take pride in their good health; and infatuated by that pride of health their lead an evil

life in deeds, words, and thoughts. But in him who often contemplates on the fact (of the certainty of illness), the pride in being healthy will either vanish entirely or will be weakened. For that good reason, the fact (of sickness) should be often contemplated. (A.V 57 in Nyanaponika Thera, 1975: 12)

Illness is not a suitable condition for the Dhamma practices. Lord Buddha said that birth, aging, sickness, and death are the four unavoidable dangers of humanity. He tried to support ill monks to encourage rapid recovery. There are many topics in Buddhist disciplines that support the ill monk to live an easier life such as the Buddha allowed monks who were ill to behave differently: “Monks, you should not enter a village with your sandals on. Whoever should (so) enter it, there is an offence of wrongdoing... I allow, monks, a monk if he is ill to enter a village with his sandals on.” (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 260)

Diseases, in Buddhism, are not perceived only in a bad way. Although those uncomfortable symptoms are unwanted conditions, it does not imply that they are useless. Everyone can gain an advantage from an ailment if he/she realizes its nature. The diseases remind us that this body is so fragile and impermanent. Naturally, life tends to decay and break down all the time, and contains a lot of waste and diseases. Awareness of these realities can reduce the degree of desire and attachment in our body. In addition, it alerts us to try harder and practice faster moving ourselves closer to the destination, nibbāna.

The afflictions also strengthen Buddhist principles by confirming that these principles are relevant to nature and applicable to everyone. They are not for Buddhists only. The patients who learn these principles thoroughly will realize that all diseases are the result of kamma and are under natural law. They will have less suffering and anxiety when they become ill. When the well-trained patients face mild or serious afflictions they will calmly accept that result of kamma, and know that they have authority to determine their future health status today by performing the right ways of living. They will not overlook their responsibilities to care for themselves by getting healthy. That is a useful condition for the effective practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

From this point of view, it appears that a dreadful image of diseases is not a self-contained reality, but it may partly be a product of modern society where scientific and consumerism-based concepts become important and powerful ways of thought. These two concepts emphasize the material part of human and give higher value to our consumption. Whatever disturbs the joyful consumption, is a very serious issue especially for in death that completely shuts down all consumption. Unlimited needs of health and higher health expenditure are also increased by a dreadful image of diseases and scientific and consumerism ways of thinking.

Health Care and Prevention

The Noble Eightfold Path, in its broader meaning, is a way to prevent all diseases. By practicing the Middle Path, basic causes of mind diseases such as ignorance, craving, clinging, etc. are gradually diminished. That means we recover from our diseases little by little and will reach complete health one day. The Buddha, moreover, stressed two more important components: wise consideration and the association with the virtuous that will smoothly help his/her progression in the developing process. Because of the very close relationship between mind and body, although this method focuses on the recover from internal sufferings or mind diseases, it benefits the physical body as well. To live in harmony with nature and with less attachment will lead to a calm mind. That is an important factor for a healthy life.

For physical health, Buddhism encourages its followers to take care for their bodies in a proper way. They must not promote health by any methods those are against the Noble Eightfold Path and should harmonize what they do with the law of nature. The Buddha never allowed his followers to kill any beings to protect or promote their lives. The reasons for establishing some rules for monks were based on health objectives. Some examples are: the Buddha allowed monks to make windows in the dwelling-place because if there were no-windows it was bad for the eyes and nasty smelling (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 207); he allowed monks to leave the resident place, during the rains, without an offence when they were short of food or medicine (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 198).

Sometimes, Lord Buddha recommended that the monks do some activities that were good for health. For instance, monks could, in general, eat more than one meal before noon, but the Buddha recommended that monks should have only one meal, in the Kitāgiri Sutta:

“I monks, do not eat a meal at night. Not eat a meal at night, I, monks, am aware of good health and of being without illness and of buoyancy and strength and living in comfort. Come, do you too, monks, not eat a meal at night.” (M.I 473 in Horner, 1989: 146-147)

In another place, the Buddha talked about the usefulness of chewing tooth-wood:

“Now at that time monks did not chew tooth-wood; their mouth came to smell nasty. They told this matter to the Lord. He said: “Monks, there are these five disadvantages in not chewing tooth-wood: it is bad for the eyes, the mouth becomes nasty smelling, the channels of test are not purified, phlegm and mucus get on food, one’s food is not enjoyed... “Monks, a long piece of tooth-wood should not be chewed. Whoever should chew one, there is an offence of wrong-doing. I allow, monks, a piece of tooth-wood to be eight finger breadths (in length) at the most... four finger breadths (in length) at the least. (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 192)

Everyday activities of monks are also good for health such as waking up in the early morning and walking for a long distance to receive food-offerings, walking up and down for meditation, or sweeping the monastery yard. In addition, many rules of the monks are related to the sanitation of dwelling-places (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 204-216) and toilets (ibid.: 196-197) supporting good health and good environment. Although, these disciplines were created specifically for bhikkhus, they are applicable for lay persons who want to live in simple ways. These disciplines imply that Buddhism is concerned about health issues and tries to support proper methods to promote health.

Ways to Care for Patients

To eliminate all diseases of mind that are found in everybody is the goal of Buddhism. All activities or situations that support everyone’s practice or continuously develop his/her life in line with the Noble Eightfold Path should be created and maintained. Although afflictions are common events, a healthy physical body and fewer ailments are a preferable circumstance for practitioners. Thus, Buddhism supports all techniques that are good for health unless they brake the Noble Eightfold Path.

The methods to cure or reduce sufferings, in Buddhism, are not only medicines and other physical treatments, but also Dhamma and mind practice. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment or the Seven Limbs of Wisdom (Bojjhaṅga) is one Dhamma that is used to get rid of severe ailments. A serious physical illness of Lord Buddha, of the venerable Kassapa the Great, and of the venerable Moggallāna the Great were eliminated after hearing through chanting the explanation of the Seven Factors of

Enlightenment (S.V. 78-80 in Woodward, 1994: 66-68). The Atanata word-rune is another verse used for preventing sickness or danger from non-human beings (such as demons) especially for one who lives alone in a cave or forest (D.III 195 in T.W. and Davids, 1991: 189). The Strong Effort of the Will is another Dhamma that the Buddha used to eliminate his dire sickness late of his life (D.II 99 in T.W. and Davids, 1989: 106). One more Dhamma for curing disease is the Ten Contemplations (*saññā* 10) which Lord Buddha let the venerable Ānanda explain to Bhikkhu Girimānanda who was ill. After listening to the Ten Contemplations, the afflictions were immediately cured (A.V. 109 in Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 1972: 1). The efficacy of these methods of curing depends upon many factors especially the condition or state of the mind of patients. There is no general application for all situations.

For the physical treatments, there are many rules that benefit the sick monks as well as the ones who care for them. Most of the violations of rules have exceptions for ill monks who cannot properly perform as those rules indicated. For example, monks must not live separately from his three robes, even for one night, but there is an exception for the ill. The Buddha said, "I allow you, monks, to give a monk who is ill the agreement (to be regarded) as not away, separated from the three robes..." (Vin.II, ii in Horner, 1982: 15). Some other examples: "I allow, monks, one who is ill (to use) an unshaped scrubber." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 143); "I allow you, monks, on account of a disease, to examine a mark on the face in a mirror or in a water-bowl." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 145); "Now at that time a certain monk came to be ill. While he was eating he was not able to hold a bowl in his hand. They told this matter to the Lord. He said: "I allow, monks, a stand." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 171); or "Monks, a walking staff with string on it should not be carried. Whoever should carry one, there is an offence of wrong-doing... I allow you, monks, to give an ill monk the agreement as to a walking staff and string." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 183); "Now at that time a certain monks come to have a sore on his head; he was not able to shave the hair of his head with a razor... I allow you, monks, to cut off the hair of the head with scissors in the case of illness." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 186).

Furthermore, the seventy-five rules for training (*sekhiya*) were set for monks to have well-mannered looks. If monks disobey these rules, these are offences of wrong-doing. However, there is no offence if that monk is ill or mad or in a few other situations. Examples of these rules are: monks should wear orderly robes; should not make a loud noise or laugh loudly in a house; should not sit with bending the body or the arms or place the arms akimbo on one side or both in a house. These rules include the suitable ways of accepting and eating alms-food such as: should not inattentively or disrespectfully accept or eat alms-food; should not eat too much curry; should not look at others' bowls; should not put whole hand into the mouth while eating; should not eat smacking the lips or make a hissing sound; or should not lick the finger or the bowl. (Vin.III 185-206 in Horner, 1983: 120-152)

For ill monks, the Buddha allowed many medicines and healing techniques used in that period of time in Northern India. He recommended five kinds of food could be used as general medicines for ill monks and allowed some methods for keeping them. These medicines are ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, and molasses. These medicines may be stored for at most seven days. Otherwise there is an offence of expiation involving forfeiture (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 131). Monks were allowed to accept these five medicines and to make use of them both at the right time and also at the wrong time (after noon, 12.00) (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 270). The Buddha also elaborated on some details of each medicine such as "ghee is called ghee from cows or ghee from she-goats, or ghee from buffaloes; ghee from those whose meat is suitable... Oil

means: sesamum oil, oil of mustard seeds, oil containing honey, oil of castor-oil plant, oil from tallow.” (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 132) He also limited the over usage by declaring that: “Whatever are sumptuous foods, that is to say, ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, molasses, fish, meat, milk, curds—whatever monk who is not ill, having asked for sumptuous foods such as these for himself, should eat them, there is an offence of expiation.” (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 342)

In addition, the Buddha did not allow monks to ask for medicine that is not to be used as medicine, and did not allow them to ask for one medicine that may be used as a different medicine. This is an offence of expiation. (Vin.II in Horner, 1982: 372)

For specific diseases, Lord Buddha allowed many kind of medicines, or tools that fit for each disease such as medicines for eye disease, for headache, for an affliction of wind, for rheumatism in the limbs and joints, for a snake bite, for constipation, for jaundice, etc. Some special techniques of therapies were also allowed for reducing the pain or suffering of each symptom such as sweating in the sauna with all kinds of herbs; letting blood by cupping with a horn; treatment with a lancet; and a fumigation (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 274-281). Many drugs are used in different dosage forms including paste or ointment, powder, astringent water, strong (alcoholic) drink in a decoction (of oil), a concoction (of dung), prepared and unprepared broth, meat broth, etc. (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 274-281)

To care for a patient, the Buddha indicated that a preceptor has a responsibility to tend the one who shares a cell, and a teacher has a responsibility to tend his pupils. While the one who shares a cell or his pupils should take care their teacher or preceptor at the same time. The Buddha announced that a senior monk who is not competent to tend or to get another to tend his pupil (or one who shares a cell) who is ill, must not be a preceptor (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 83). Lord Buddha also gave the guideline for caring for patients such as the ways that the preceptor should take care of his ill monk or novice:

“If the one who shares a cell becomes ill [his preceptor should]: having got up early, he should give tooth-wood, he should give water for rinsing the mouth, he should make ready a seat. If there is conje, having washed a vessel, conje should be placed near him. When he has drunk the conje, having given him water, having received the vessel, having lowered it, having washed it properly without rubbing it, it should be put away. When the one who shares a cell has got up, the seat should be removed. If that place is soiled, that place should be swept...” (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 318)

If there is nobody to tend the patients, the Buddha pointed that it was a responsibility of the Order or every monk to care for that ill monk, in his words:

“Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks, do not tend one another, then who is there who will tend you? Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick...”

If he has a preceptor he should be tended for life by the preceptor, who should wait for his discovery. If he has a teacher he should be tended for life by the teacher, who should wait for his discovery. If he has one who shares a dwelling-place... If he has a pupil... If he has a fellow-preceptor... If he has a fellow-teacher he should be tended for life by the fellow-preceptor, who should wait for his discovery. If he has neither a preceptor nor a teacher nor one who shares a dwelling-place nor a pupil nor a fellow-preceptor nor a fellow-teacher, he should be tended by the Order. If it should not tend him, there is an offence of wrong-doing” (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 432)

The one who cares for an ill monk is an important person in Buddhist views. Some rules are not an offence to the monk who is a caregiver. The Buddha allowed that monks could stay in the army for more than three days if there is something to be

done for one who is ill (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 377-378). He allowed monks who had to stay in one place during the rains (3 months) but who went to take care or to visit a monk, a nun, a probationer, a novice, a woman novice or their parents, even if not sent for by invitations, to stay for at most seven days (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 189, 195). Moreover, after an ill monk passed away the Buddha indicated that the Order should give the three robes and the bowl of the dead monk to the monk who previously tended the dying monk (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 434).

Preparing for Death

Although dying in Buddhism is realized as a normal event of human existence, it is one of the dangers that blocks the process of mind development. It is a very important situation to help or support the one who is dying by helping them develop their mind. The condition of the mind during the death process is a powerful factor determining the state of the next existence. Thus, Lord Buddha and other competent disciples were usually invited to teach or talk to severely ill patients. After asking about the symptoms and feelings, the Buddha and those disciples always examined the patients' understanding of the Truth and then they either re-corrected it if some points were not correct or confirmed those that were right understandings. For example, the words of venerable Cunda talking to the venerable Channa:

“When this had been said, the venerable Cunda the Great spoke thus to the venerable Channa: “Wherefore, revered Channa, this teaching of the Lord should always be attained to: ‘For him who clings there is wavering; for him who clings not there is no wavering; if there is no wavering there is impassability; if there is impassability there is no yearning; if there is no yearning, there is no coming and going; if there is no coming and going, there is no ‘here’ itself nor ‘yonder’ nor ‘in between the two.’ This is itself the end of anguish.” (M.III 266 in Horner, 1990:317-318)

The faithful Anāthapiṇḍika, after listening to the Dhamma from the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Ānanda, passed away and become a young deva (M.III 263 in Horner, 1990: 315). Although this ritual can support the mind of the dying, its power depends on the patients' kamma as well. Thus, everyone should not be careless with his/her life because it is so fragile and impermanent. In the Buddhist view, all social and individual activities should support the process of the Middle Path including the methods of caring for patient until he/she reaches the end of life.

Conclusions

Buddhist perspectives started from the premise that all beings exist in terms of integrated factors and are governed by natural law, the Three Characteristics or the Dependent Origination. The ultimate destination of Buddhists is nibbāna, a state of perfect health while is free from all suffering. The meaning of diseases, therefore, involve not only physical or psychological diseases, but also all kinds of human sufferings especially mental suffering. Health status is a collective product of kamma for each individual. We should maintain our bodies to provide more suitable conditions for practicing the Noble Eightfold Path. However, every situation including good health, poor health, or death, in the Buddhist view, is recognized as valuable opportunities to develop our mind for the ultimate destination. These perceptions are quite different from those of scientific medicine that focus directly on the physical health and the destination is to keep the person breathing.

These Buddhist principles form fundamental belief system for its faithful followers that shape their perceptions and guide their living styles. This understanding about nature of all existences will lead patients to take more responsibility for their health as

well as having less misery or anxiety when they get sick or die. Under Buddhist principles, neither scientific nor alternative therapies are refused unless they block or disrupt the way to the Buddhist destination. Although Buddhism is the national religion of Thailand, its principles today are contaminated with other local beliefs and global knowledge. Re-implementing these basic principles and demonstrating Buddhist living styles in society may be one of the most effective and suitable ways to solve or reduce health problems in Thailand.

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