

An Explication of Healthy Living in Buddhist Perspective

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BACKGROUND

Healthy living in the contemporary world has been awfully threatened due to several discernible reasons although unprecedented material advancement has been achieved.

Poverty, starvation, illiteracy, unequal distribution of wealth, unequal distribution of profits originating from modern development in every field, lack of facilities for health, education and employment, transgression of human rights, environmental pollution, detrimental trading and unwholesome livelihood, gender and race bias, health hazardous food culture, crude entertainment and mean literature, absence of sustainable peace, riots, conflicts, terrorism, and hostilities among families, races, and nations as well as intense greed, ill-will, and delusion imperil healthy living. The absence or at least the diminution of these inimical factors conduces to healthier living.

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OBJECTIVE

Hence, the paramount objective of this paper is to explicate how the Buddhist teachings can immensely contribute to the establishment of healthy existence in the modern world in the face of all the above aforementioned tribulations while meeting the UN goals.

TWO ASPECTS OF HEALTHY LIVING

Healthy living, according to Buddhism, is mainly of twofold aspect as mental health and physical health. According to the Sukhavagga of the Dhammapada, health is the most precious gain; contentment is the greatest wealth ¹ (*ārogyaparamā lābhā - santuṭṭhī paramam dhanam*). Physical health is achieved through behavioral wellbeing and social wellbeing of a person in the absence of the problems mentioned above and mental health is gained through spiritual wellbeing.

SEVENFOLD ASPECT FOR HEALTHY LIVING

1. **Healthy Body, Healthy Food & Personal Hygiene** – absence of chronic and persisting severe ailments, healthy food and drink, moderation in food and drink, personal hygiene, sanitation etc.
2. **Good Dwelling and Environment for Healthy Living** – houses equipped with basic facilities, unpolluted environment devoid of hustle and bustle etc.
3. **Moral Behavior for Healthy Living** – moral actions – wholesome bodily actions and verbal actions and refrain from all forms of vices etc. observance of the Five Precepts – safeguarding of basic Human Rights.
4. **Right Livelihood and Good Wealth for Healthy Living** – right livelihood, balanced livelihood, rightly earned wealth and property.
5. **Mental Health or Healthy Mind for Healthy Living** – wholesome mental actions, right view, wholesome knowledge, wholesome attitudes, spiritual qualities, etc.

1. The Dhammapada Tra. Nārada Thera. Ch.15. V. 204. P.177

6. Social Harmony and Sixty One Reciprocal Obligations for Healthy Living – literacy, wholesome family, social, economic, educational and religious life etc.

7. Good Governance for Healthy Living – social equality, justice, peace, employment, equal distribution of wealth, prosperity, absence of poverty, starvation, malnutrition, etc.

HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY FOOD & PERSONAL HYGIENE FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Healthy Body

Healthy body means freedom from severe ailments and chronic diseases regardless of intermittent sicknesses. The Girimānanda Sutta introduces forty eight types of diseases² such as eye-disease, ear-disease, nose-disease, tongue-disease, body-disease, headache, mumps, mouth-disease, tooth-ache, cough, asthma, catarrh, heart-burn, fever, stomach ailment, fainting, dysentery, swelling, gripes, leprosy, boils, scrofula, consumption, epilepsy, ringworm, itch, eruption, tetter, pustule, plethora, diabetes, piles, cancer, fistula, and diseases originating from bile, from phlegm, from wind, from conflict of the humors, from changes of weather, from adverse condition (faulty deportment), from devices (practised by others), from results of kamma (kamma-vipāka); and cold, heat, hunger, thirst, excrement, and urine.

Prevention from ailments, wholesome dietary behavior to keep body healthy, healthy food, wholesome dietary culture advocated in the modern health science and the WHO, healthy dietary habits such as moderation in eating and eating at due times, personal hygiene, sanitation and pleasant appearance, fresh water and fresh air, good medicine, intelligent and meaningful care of the body as mentioned in the Cullavagga and the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka maintain a healthy body that conduces to the enhancement of healthy living. Cūḷaka

2. Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttara Nikāya) Vol. V. 10.60. Pali Text Society (PTS). P. 75

Theragāthā also emphasizes a sound body endowed with good health.³ Physical exercises are also helpful to maintain healthy and strong body. The Aṅguttara Nikāya mentions five advantages of physical exercises as (1) facilitation of long journeys, (2) facilitation of mind purification, (3) decrease of diseases and sufferings, (4) easy digestion of food and (5) establishment of concentration.⁴ According to modern health science, maintenance of physical fitness through regular exercises is highly advocated.

Healthy Food & Use of Fresh Water

Food for the nourishment of bodily health is of utmost importance. All beings subsist on food (sabbe sattā aharaṭṭhitikā). Healthy food taken timely and in moderation is a support for mental health. For instance, a good breakfast, a moderate lunch and a slight supper will make one feel comfortable. Nevertheless, junk food, food containing harmful preservatives and artificial flavorings causing abdominal problems and indigestion, heavy food which makes digestion difficult, food in excessive amount and food taken inopportunely are unsuitable as they make body uncomfortable and sick. Acceptance of a water-strainer, a water-strainer cylinder (a regulation water pot),⁵ a filter cloth,⁶ a water jar by the Buddha means the use of fresh water for healthy drinking. The sekhiyas of the Suttavibhaṅga mentions that water should not be polluted by passing feces, urine and spit (na udake agilāno uccaraṃ va passavaṃ va khelaṃ va karissamiti sikkhā karaṇiyati). Passing feces, urine, and spits into the water was promulgated as an offence.⁷

Types of Food to Maintain Health

The three main classes of food — staple food, non-staple food, and juice drink. The Buddhist Monastic Code I Chapter 8.4 classifies food into two groups: *bhojanīya* (consumables) and *khādanīya* (chewables).

3. Psalm of Brethren (Theragāthā) CLXVI. 211-212. PTS. P. 154

4. GS (AN) Vol. III PTS. P. 30

5. The Book of Discipline (Vinaya Piṭaka) Cv.V.13.1. PTS. P. 162

6. Ibid.V.13.3. PTS. P. 163

7. BD (Vin) Snp. VI. PTS. P. 206

All fruit that is non-staple ⁸ and eight types of juice drinks: mango juice drink, rose apple juice drink, seed-banana juice drink, seedless banana juice drink, *madhu* juice drink, grape juice drink, water-lily root juice drink and juice drink are allowed. Conjeý and honey-lumps are allowed to be drunk early in the morning and ten advantages of conjeý were introduced by the Buddha, viz. (1) it gives life, (2) beauty, (3) ease, (4) strength, (5) intelligence; conjeý, when it is drunk, (6) dispels hunger, (7) keeps off thirst, (8) regulates wind, (9) cleanses the bladder and (10) digests raw remnants of food.⁹ The five products of a cow: milk, curds, buttermilk, butter, ghee can be taken.¹⁰ All vegetables and all non-staple foods made with flour are allowed.¹¹ Monks or recluses are allowed to make use of fruits in five ways, viz. if it is damaged by fire, damaged by a knife, damaged by one's nails, if it is seedless or if the seeds are discharged.¹² These healthy habits can be followed by anybody to prevent from physical illness. Modern health science also advises people to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables to keep the body healthy.

Flesh of human beings,¹³ elephants, horses, dogs, snakes, lions, tigers, leopards, bears, and hyenas should not be consumed.¹⁴ The Commentary adds comments here: These prohibitions cover not only the meat of these animals but also their blood, bones, skin, and hide. The WHO (The World Health Organization) has issued a communiqué advising people to eat less meat but to eat a lot of vegetables and fruits.

As revealed in the Kitāgiri Sutta,¹⁵ the Buddha advised monks to abstain from the night-time meal so that they will sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength and a comfortable abiding. Having a light meal or no meal is also good for healthy life of

8. BD (Vin) Mv.VI.38.1. PTS.P. 347

9. Ibid.VI.24.5-7. PTS. P.302

10. Ibid.VI.34.21. PTS.P. 336

11. Ibid.VI.36.8. PTS. P. 344

12. BD (Vin) Cv. V. 5.2. PTS.P. 147

13. BD (Vin) Mv. VI. 23.9. PTS.P. 298

14. Ibid.VI.23.10-15. PTS.P. 298 -300

15. Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikāya) 70. Buddhist Publication Society (BPS). P. 577

a person. Fatty food, salty food, junk food and heavy meals should be avoided to maintain good health.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

It is very important to maintain personal hygiene that is physical cleanliness and sanitation. Poor state of hygiene and sanitation is susceptible to make one unhealthy and unpleasant. A good standard of cleanliness and pleasant physical pleasantness makes the mind pleasant and pleased. The personal hygienic matters mentioned in the Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga) as minor or lesser impediments to health¹⁶ should be avoided. Long head hair, body hair and nails should be cut. The five disadvantages of not cleaning teeth were introduced by the Buddha, viz. it is bad for the eyes, mouth becomes nasty smelling, the channels of taste are not purified, phlegm and mucus get on food and one's food is not enjoyed.¹⁷ Cleaning teeth is a hygienic requisite for health. The Buddha introduced five advantages in cleaning teeth: It makes the mouth attractive, the mouth does not smell foul, the taste buds are cleaned, bile and phlegm do not coat one's food and one enjoys one's food.¹⁸

GOOD DWELLING AND ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Good houses equipped with basic facilities are essential for healthy living. According to the UN Human Rights Convention, shelter for people is a basic need and the absence of permanent shelter harms healthy living and it causes family and social problems. Having dwelling in a peaceful area and keeping the dwellings tidy, clean and neat is mandatory for healthy living. It is very much fortunate for a person to be born, growing, studying, living, and working in a good environment. This is the foremost prerequisite for the existence of healthy living. The maintenance of dwellings and environment is

16. The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga) Tr. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli. Ch. IV. Para 20. P. 126

17. The Book of Discipline (Vin) Cv.V.31.1. PTS. P. 192

18. Op.cit.

mentioned in the Visuddhimagga.

A calm and quiet surrounding, peaceful area, place, suitable monastery, forest, grove, good weather etc. are environmental prerequisites for being engaged in meditational practices directing one's mind to spiritual development through meditation. The Ariyapariyesana Sutta reveals that pleasant environment replete with natural beauty may enhance spiritual development.¹⁹ Similarly, people should have dwellings in a peaceful environment devoid of four major pollution – land, water, air, and sound but replete with vegetation, fresh water, fresh air, fresh food and fruits and good neighborhood. The presence of these factors enhance good standard of living and in turn contribute to healthy living.

MORAL BEHAVIOR FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Aspects of Right Conduct

Moral behavior which is of utmost significance with regard to healthy existence encompasses moral actions – basically skillful bodily actions and skillful verbal actions, abstinence from all forms of malevolent verbal and bodily deportments, refrain from vices and detrimental deeds and the observance of the five moral precepts which safeguards Human Rights.

The Two aspects of Right Conduct – right conduct in body (*kāya-sucaritaṃ*) and right conduct in speech (*vacī-sucaritaṃ*)²⁰ mentioned in the Sangīti Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya are the wholesome behavioral prerequisites that form the principal basis for healthy behavior. The two grounds based on merit that lead wholesome conduct: that of giving (*dānamayaṃ puñña-kiriya-vatthu*) and of morality (*sīlamayaṃ puñña-kiriya-vatthu*),²¹ the Ten Meritorious Deeds etc. restore and enhance healthy living. The good practice of body and good practice

19. MLDB (MN) 26. BPS. P. 259

20. The Long Discourse of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya) 33 (4) WPB. P. 483

21. Ibid. 33 (38) WPB. P. 483

of speech,²² the purity of body and purity of speech²³ and the two perfections, to wit: perfection of body and perfection of speech²⁴ can be taken as the highest healthy behavior for healthy existence.

Skillful Verbal and Bodily Actions

The four ways, in which one is made pure by skillful verbal actions mentioned in the Cunda Kammāraputta Sutta²⁵ contribute to healthy living by restoring truthfulness and amiability. (1) By abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech, speaks the truth and holds to the truth. He is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world; (2) by abandoning divisive speech and abstaining from divisive speech, he reconciles those who have broken apart or strengthening those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord and speaks things that create concord; (3) by abandoning abusive speech and abstaining from abusive speech, he speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large. Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter; and (4) by speaking in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the truth and morality (the Dhamma and the Vinaya). He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, and connected with the goal. The three kinds of skillful bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma and righteous conduct – (1) abandoning the killing of living beings and becoming one who abstains from killing living beings, (2) abandoning the taking of what is not given and becoming one who abstains from taking what is not given and (3) abandoning misconduct in sexual desires and becoming one who abstains from misconduct in sexual desires introduced in the Sāleyyaka Sutta²⁶ bring about peace, harmony, trustworthiness and wholesome rapport in and among individuals establishing healthy and harmonious living.

22. Itivuttaka – As It was Said Tra. FL.Woodward 3.6 (55) London Geoffrey Cumberlege (LGC). P. 157

23. Ibid. 3. 7 (56) LGC. P. 157 – 158

24. Ibid. 3.8 (56) LGC. P. 158

25. GS (AN) Vol. V. 10.176 PTS. P.175

26. Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. (MN) 41. BPS. P.380

The Basis of Morality

Virtue (*sīla*) which is the right conduct or behavior is the foundation of the entire healthy existence. The observance of the five moral Precepts (*pañcasīla*) entirely prevents the transgression of the five major aspects of human rights advocated in the UN Human Rights Conventions. Namely, (1) every person has the right to protect one's life, (2) every person has the right to safeguard one's wealth and property, (3) every person has the right to lead a peaceful family life, (4) every person has the right to know true information and (5) every person has the right to maintain peace of mind. These basic rights are well preserved by the observance of the five moral precepts.

The violation of moral precepts through bodily and verbal actions is inwardly propelled by the noxious trio – greed, hatred and delusion. Refrain from the violation of the moral discipline reinforces the outward suppression of harmful mental factors and in turn helps one to suppress the inward detrimental mental factors. As a whole, moral restraint and moral purity establish sound outward conditions which help inward progress bringing about healthy living. The practice of virtue by an individual for his own benefit and for that of others elucidated the Sikkhā Sutta shows the importance of morality for the healthy existence of individual and society.²⁷

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AND GOOD WEALTH FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Right livelihood, balanced livelihood, rightly earned wealth and property restore and maintain healthy living. Right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*), refrain from wrong livelihood (*micchā ājīva*) and adoption of the Four Types of Bliss of a man, etc. establish peaceful, meaningful, wholesome life which conduces to healthy living.

Right Livelihood

Right livelihood, according to the Maggavibhaṅga Sutta ²⁸

27. MLDB (MN).73. WPB. P. 595

28. Connected Discourses of the Buddha (SN) 45.8 WPB. P. 1528 -1529

is the abandonment of dishonest livelihood and keeping one's life going with right livelihood. The Buddha mentioned in the Vanijjā Sutta five types of occupations or business or trading that one should not be engaged in as they are wrong livelihood; business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison.²⁹ These types of occupations cause harm to individuals, family, society, and the environment, bringing destruction to peace and harmony. The mind of one who is engaged in such wrong business or occupation becomes unkind, ruthless, rough, wicked, cruel, and immoral causing unhealthy living. Right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) which refers to the engagement in wholesome occupations which helps a man to earn money through righteous means not through detrimental ways is a preliminary requisite acquired by any one for healthy living.

Balanced Livelihood

According to balanced livelihood (*sama-jīvikatā*) revealed in the Dīghajānu Sutta, a man knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income. Earning or wealth in righteous way is also conducive to healthy existence. The four sources for the increase of amassed wealth through right livelihood or right living – (1) abstinence from debauchery, (2) abstinence from drunkenness, (3) non-indulgence in gambling, (4) friendship, companionship and intimacy with the good should be developed to lead a simple and balanced life.³⁰ The same sutta reveals that a man lives healthy life in the present life when he is active in doing good, heedful and circumspective, equanimous in livelihood and careful with his savings (*uṭṭhātā kammadheyyesu, appamatto vidhānavā, Samam kappeti jīvikam sambhataṃ anurakkhati*). The Six

29. GS (AN) Vol. III. 5.177 PTS. P.153

30. GS (AN) Vol. IV. 8.54 PTS. P. 189

Channels of Dissipation of wealth as revealed in the Sigālovāda Sutta - (1) Indulgence in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness, (2) Sauntering in streets at unseemly Hours, (3) Frequenting theatrical shows, (4) Indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness, (5) Association with evil companions and (6) The habit of idleness and the Six Faults that Dissipate Wealth and Property: laziness, heedlessness, lack of action, lack of restraint, sleepiness and sloth as mentioned in the Najīrati Sutta of the Sāmyutta Nikāya should be avoided to protect wealth that supports the maintenance of healthy living. The four types of bliss that a man can enjoy immensely enhance healthy living.

Leading a Simple Life

Leading a simple life endowed with contentment (*santussaka*), having few activities (*appakicca*), light living (*sallahuka*), and modesty (*appagabbha*) as mentioned in the Mettā Sutta ³¹ is a prerequisite for healthy existence as a simple life has fewer attachments, bonds, and ties. This does not mean that one is to neglect duties, responsibilities and obligations. Most of the people in the modern society are extremely busy with unnecessarily self-assigned or alienated activities, which cause strong attachments and craving. This is directly conducive to the harm of mental peace and relaxation, making the existence unhealthy, stressful and suffering. A simple life with a fewness of wishes, less attachment, and less craving restores healthy living.

Preservation of Wealth & Generosity

The Buddha, in the Vyagghapajja Sutta,³² instructs wealthy people how to preserve and increase their prosperity and how to avoid loss of wealth. Wealth alone, however, does not make a complete man or a harmonious society. Possession of wealth often multiplies man's desires, and he is ever in the pursuit of amassing more wealth and

31. Suttanipāta PTS. P. 125

32. GS (AN) Vol. IV. 8.54 PTS. P. 187 ff.

power. This unrestrained craving, however, leaves him dissatisfied and impedes his inner growth. It creates conflict and disharmony in society through the resentment of the underprivileged who feel themselves exploited by the effects of unrestrained craving. Therefore, the Buddha advises men to gain material welfare with four essential conditions for spiritual welfare: confidence in the Buddha's Enlightenment, virtue, generosity and wisdom. These four will instill in man a sense of higher values. He will then not only pursue his own material concern, but also be aware of his duty toward society. To mention only one of the implications: a wisely and generously employed liberality or generosity will reduce exploitation, poverty, starvation, theft, corruption, tensions and conflicts in the society. Thus, the observing of these conditions of material and spiritual welfare will make healthy living in a healthy society.

MENTAL HEALTH OR HEALTHY MIND FOR HEALTHY LIVING

The mind overwhelmed by the noxious trio—greed (*lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) harms mental health. Intense greed (*abhijjhā*), intense ill-will (*vyāpāda*) and intense delusion (*avijjā* or *micchādiṭṭhi*) should be abandoned to maintain mental health. Wholesome mental actions, right view, confidence (*saddhā*) wholesome knowledge, wholesome attitudes, spiritual qualities, etc. conduce to healthy life.

Confidence (*saddhā*)

Confidence in the Fully Enlightened One, the Doctrine and the enlightened disciples of the Fully Enlightened One known as the Triple Jewel is of utmost significance. As the flawless doctrine expounded by the Fully Enlightened Buddha perpetuated by the Enlightened Saṅgha shows us the path endowed with right view leading to happiness, peace and total mental health.

Skillful Mental Actions

One is made pure in three ways by skillful mental actions that bring about mental health. They are mentioned in the Sāleyyaka

Sutta as the three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma are (1) not being covetous and not being a coveter of another's property, (2) having no mind of ill-will, with the intention of a mind unaffected by hate and (3) having right view, undistorted vision that there is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed, and there is fruit and ripening of good and bad karmas, and there is this world and the other world and mother and father and spontaneously (born) beings, and good and virtuous monks and brahmins that have themselves realized by direct knowledge and declared this world and the other world.³³

Non-Remorse

The two kinds of thought that cause no remorse or repentance conduce to mental health and so one should do two things that cause non-remorse.

1. The thought that what is admirable has been done, what is skillful has been done and the protection to those in fear has been given.
2. The thought that nothing which is evil, savage, or cruel has been done.³⁴

Recollection of Virtue

Recalling your own virtues is also an obligatory requisite for mental health. As the Mahānāma Sutta reveals, one's own virtues should be recollected thinking that they are as untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, conducive to concentration. When a disciple is recollecting virtue, his mind is not overcome with passion, not overcome with aversion, not overcome with delusion. His mind heads straight, based on virtue. And when the mind is headed straight, he gains a sense of the goal, gains a sense of the Dhamma, gains joy connected with the Dhamma. In one who is joyful, rapture arises. In one who is rapturous, the body grows calm. One whose body is calmed experiences ease. In one at ease, the mind becomes concentrated. One who does this dwells in tune among those

33. MLDB (MN) 41. BPS. P.380-381

34. MLDB. 2.3 (25) LGC. P. 133

who are out of tune, dwells without malice among those who are malicious and having attained the stream of Dhamma, he develops the recollection of virtue.³⁵

Recollection of Generosity

One should recollect his own generosity: It is a gain, a great gain for him, that — among people overcome with the stain of possessiveness — he lives at home, his awareness cleansed of the stain of possessiveness, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms. At any time when a disciple is recollecting generosity, his mind is not overcome with passion, not overcome with aversion, not overcome with delusion. His mind heads straight, based on generosity. And when the mind is headed straight, the disciple of the noble ones gains a sense of the goal, gains a sense of the Dhamma, gains joy connected with the Dhamma. In one who is joyful, rapture arises. In one who is rapturous, the body grows calm. One whose body is calmed experiences ease. In one at ease, the mind becomes concentrated. One who does this dwells in tune among those who are out of tune, dwells without malice among those who are malicious, and having attained the stream of Dhamma, he develops the recollection of generosity.³⁶

A detailed account of these (six) recollections (*cha-anussatiniddesa*) – recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, generosity, deities and death together with their benefits elaborated in the Path of Purification under the title “Description of Concentration”³⁷ conduce to mental health.

Development of Wholesome Mental Qualities

The development of Four Sublime Abodes – loving – kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*)

35. GS (AN) Vol. V. 11.12 PTS. P. 209 ff.

36. Ibid

37. The Path of Purification (Vism) Ch. VII. Para 1. P. 204 ff.

and equanimity (*upekkhā*) and the Five Faculties – confidence (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*) mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) restores mental health. For instance, Ill-will, cruelty, resentment, irritation, passion, conceit etc implied in the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta are internal impediments to mental health. They should be suppressed at least to a certain extent to make way for the development of mental health.³⁸ Good will is to be developed so as to abandon ill-will. Compassion is to be developed in order to abandon cruelty. When altruistic joy is developed, resentment will be abandoned. When equanimity is developed, irritation will be abandoned. Passion will be abandoned when the unattractive is developed. The perception of inconstancy should be developed to abandon the conceit “I am”. When mindfulness of in-and-out breathing is developed and pursued, it is of great fruit and great benefit.³⁹

SOCIAL HARMONY AND RECIPROCAL OBLIGATIONS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Social harmony and peace, absence of poverty, starvation, malnutrition, unequal distribution of wealth, illiteracy and unemployment, wholesome family, and social life, etc, also restore healthy living. Disharmony among people, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment etc. cause a multitude of social problems like robbery, bribery, fraud, environmental pollution, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc., destroying peaceful living.

Social Wellbeing

The Sikkhā Sutta elucidates that an individual who practises virtue for his own benefit and for that of others abstains from the taking of life and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from the taking of life. He himself abstains from stealing and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from stealing. He himself abstains from sexual misconduct and encourages others in undertaking

38. MLDB (MN) 62 WPB. P. 530 ff.

39. Ibid. P.530 -531

abstinence from sexual misconduct. He himself abstains from lying and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from lying. He himself abstains from intoxicants that cause heedlessness and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from intoxicants that cause heedlessness.⁴⁰ The individuals endowed with these qualities contribute to social harmony and peace.

Wholesome Relations

A good friend (*kalyāṇamitta*), good neighbours, good family members, social ethics, wholesome social relations, wholesome, family, cultural, economic, educational, religious etc. contribute to the development of healthy living in the society. The association of the four types of good-hearted friends introduced in the Sigālovāda Sutta highly conduces to healthy living in the society.⁴¹ The Six things which are conducive to communal living (*sārāṇīyā dhammā*) mentioned in the Saṅgīti Sutta are also wholesome social prerequisites that contribute to peaceful co-existence which, in turn, favours mental development.

The four grounds for the bonds of fellowship discussed in Saṅgha Sutta are (1) generosity, (2) kind words, (3) beneficial help and (4) reliability.⁴² These great qualities help each other greatly for the development of the moral and spiritual qualities. A trustworthy person is the best kinsman (*visvāsaparamā ñāti*) according to the Sukhavagga.⁴³ The Rāga-vinaya Sutta also details about four individuals out of one who practises for the subduing of passion within himself and encourages others in the subduing of passion; practises for the subduing of aversion within himself and encourages others in the subduing of aversion; practises for the subduing of delusion within himself and encourages others in the subduing of delusion.⁴⁴

The six conditions that are conducive to amiability, that engender

40. GS (AN) Vol. II. 4.99 PTS. P. 107

41. GS (AN) Vol. II. 4.99 PTS. P. 178 ff.

42. Ibid. Vol. II 4.32 PTS. P. 36

43. The Dhammapada Ch.15. V.204. P.177

44. GS (AN) Vol. II 4. 96 PTS. P. 105

feelings of endearment, engender feelings of respect, leading to a sense of fellowship, a lack of disputes, harmony and a state of unity are mentioned in the Saraṇiya Sutta.⁴⁵ A monk is set on bodily acts of good will with regard to his fellows in the holy life, to their faces and behind their backs. The monk is set on verbal acts of good will with regard to his fellows in the holy life, to their faces and behind their backs. The monk is set on mental acts of good will with regard to his fellows in the holy life, to their faces and even behind their backs. Even the people in the society should follow these ethics to make society suitable for healthy living.

The adoption of the sixty one reciprocal obligations exposed in the Sigālovāda Sutta that restore wholesome relations in family, educational, social, economic and religious contexts that establish social harmony and peace is conducive to healthy co-existence.

GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR HEALTHY LIVING

The contemporary society overwhelmed by avariciousness, political extremism, despotism, nepotism, detrimental trading and occupations, immoral entertainments and literature, transgression of rights, racism, extreme poverty, exploitation, oppression etc. imperils **peace** and harms **harmony** destroying healthy living in the current society. It is externally due to bad governance based on unsuitable policies of economic system, education that increase intense greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) and mismanagement of both human and natural resources. This also causes damages to the world resources as they are exploited to amass wealth for rulers and their intimates to lead a life in the lap of luxury at the expense of their citizens whose living standards are below the poverty line. As a whole, evil consequence of all these is the destruction of healthy existence.

Good governance which restores social equality, justice, reciprocal obligations, law and order etc. and prevents unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth and property, poverty, illiteracy, social vices,

45. Ibid. 6.12. PTS. P. 208

riots, conflicts etc. and other detriments should be adopted for making the modern society suitable for healthy living.

The Seven Conditions of a Nation's Welfare (*satta aparihāṇīya dhamma*) revealed in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta,⁴⁶ the duties of an Ariyan Wheel Turning Monarch, according to Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta as revealed in the Kūṭadanta Sutta,⁴⁷ the rightfulness and righteousness of a wheel-turning monarch who had conquered the land in four directions and ensured the security of his realm, possessed the seven treasures, whose kingdom is rich and prosperous and just like the Deva-City of Ālakamandā discussed in the Mahāsudassana Sutta⁴⁸ can bring about law and order, prosperity, justice and equality in a country. Thus, the Four Virtuous Qualities (*satara saṅgha vatthu*) – liberality, kind speech, beneficial actions and impartiality, the Ten Obligations of Universal Monarch (*dasasakvittivat*), the Ten Duties of Good Governance (*dasarājadharma*), etc which should be executed by a ruler can be adopted to restore peaceful and healthy living in the context of virtuous and righteous governance.

CONCLUSION

Healthy living, which is mainly of two aspects as physical health and mental health according to Buddhist teaching, is intercepted and destroyed by detrimental (unskillful) bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions instigated by the noxious trio – greed, hatred and delusion. Healthy living can be restored and developed by wholesome (skillful) bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions supported through the seven major aspects; namely, (1) Healthy body, healthy food and personal hygiene that accords with the modern health science advocated by the WHO, (2) Good dwellings and environment devoid of pollution, (3) Moral Behavior that safeguards basic Human Rights advocated by the UN Conventions, (4) Right livelihood and balanced livelihood that preserves righteous wealth and property for healthy living,

46. The Long Discourses of the Buddha (DN) 16, WPB. P. 231.

47. LDB (DN) 5. WPB. P. 136.

48. LDB (DN) 17 WPB. PP.279-280

(5) Mental health or healthy mind designated by Buddhist teaching for healthy living, (6) Social harmony and reciprocal obligations for healthy living and (7) Good governance that restores social equality, justice, prosperity and peace for healthy living. The absence of these seven aspects is the absence of healthy living and the development of these seven aspects discussed above conduces to healthy living in every echelon of the contemporary society.