

Study of Addiction from the Perspective of Lord Buddha and Vethathiri Maharishi

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Abstract: A lot of miseries is borne by families across the globe when a family has a member addicted to some substance or a bad habit. Addiction is nothing but a collection of attachments. It can be addiction to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, food, pornography, sex, exercise, TV, mobile phone, cinema or even shopping. If we see the source of addiction, it generally starts as an interest. This interest gradually develops as preference, then creates an attachment to that something which later strengthens its gravity. The person slowly becomes more and more attentive to that interest and succumbs to the effect and becomes increasingly dependent in body, mind and spirit. This fundamental concept of addiction has been already dealt by Buddha (563 BC to 483 BC) who lived 2600 years ago. Lord Buddha taught that desire is the cause of all miseries. Vethathiri Maharishi also taught that desires have to be moralized otherwise it will lead to misery. This can be interpreted in the same way, within a small compass in the light of knowledge from the perspective of Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharishi, the saint of the modern age who lived in the present century. Panchashila and Gnana Kalinjyiam stand literary testimony to the greatness of Gautama Buddha and Vethathiri Maharishi respectively. Their teachings on the ethical code of conduct stand true for ever, leading the mankind eternally. World Community Service Centre (WCSC), a spiritual oriented educational centre (founded by Vethathiri Maharishi) is taking steps towards deaddiction through its various camps and imparting Simplified Kundalini Yoga (SKY) (devised by Vethathiri Maharishi) to the rural masses in their Village Service Projects (VSP) across various parts of our country

Keywords: Addiction, Buddha, Vethathiri Maharishi, Panchashila, Gnana Kalinjyiam, World Community Service Centre, SKY Yoga

1. Introduction



You shall not eat or drink anything that may intoxicate - Lord Buddha



The two objectives of Religion everywhere Are Awareness of God and the path of Virtue- Vethathiri Maharishi

Before we go into the concept of Buddhism and Vethathiriyam, we need to understand the nuances of addiction and its effect on the ethical code of conduct of a person. A lot of miseries is borne by families across the globe when a family has a member addicted to some substance or a bad habit. Addiction is nothing but a collection of attachments. It can be addiction to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, food, pornography, sex, exercise, TV, mobile phone, cinema or even shopping. If we see the source of addiction, it generally starts as an interest. This interest gradually develops as preference, then creates an attachment to that something which later strengthens its gravity leading to greediness. The person slowly becomes more and more attentive to that interest and succumbs to the effect and becomes increasingly dependent in body, mind and spirit. This fundamental concept of addiction has been already dealt by Buddha (563 BC to 483 BC) who lived 2600 years ago. Lord Buddha taught that desire is the cause of all miseries. Vethathiri Maharishi also taught that desires have to be moralized otherwise it will lead to misery. This can be interpreted in the same way, within a small compass in the light of knowledge from the perspective of Yogiraj

Vethathiri Maharishi, the saint of the modern age who lived in the present century.

'Drunkenness is the cause of the loss of goods and reputation, of quarrels, diseases, immodesty of dress, disregard of honour and incapacity of learning'- Sigalovada Sutta. The use of intoxicating drinks was exceedingly common in ancient India. The Vedic Brahmans indulged largely both in soma beer and strong spirits. The most acceptable and grateful offering to their gods was soma beer. Alcohol is more, a heat – producer than a tissue-former. It is certain that a portion of the alcohol absorbed undergoes combustion but a great part of it is disengaged in the form of vapor, as is proved by the breath of drunkards, and the combustion takes place without any special benefit of the regeneration of the tissues. Even the experiments of Dr. Atwater have not proved alcohol to be a veritable food, that is to say, something which is capable of being incorporated into the organism. Alcohol employed in small doses acts as a stimulant to the nervous system; in very feeble doses and in certain cases, it may be useful as a medicine. But its abuse is more productive of mischief than good. (Lakshmi Narasu, 1993)

Buddhism

'Bud' means a person with enlightenment. 'Religion' means the teaching from an enlightened person. Buddhism declares how or what the truth is and how we should behave. (Payotto, 2011). Buddha taught 500 years before Christ, and his words were full of blessings. Never a curse came from his lips nor from his life said Swami Vivekananda. *'Buddham caranam gacchami'* is the mantra.

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Morality in Buddhism: The Buddhists were the first to enjoin total abstinence from strong drinks in India. The reason why the Dharma prohibits strong drink is that intoxication incapacitates a man for rational deliberation without hindering him from acting irrationally. Drunkenness lead the drunkard to treat others irrationally and possibly to abuse himself and others. (Lakshmi Narasu, 1993)

Buddhism shows the way of practice of good conduct by including three parts to the Noble Eightfold Path. (a) right speech (b) right action and (c) right livelihood. The third part includes the way of practice of morality which is living in a way that does not violate the basic moral values. Five kinds of livelihood are discouraged for Buddhists; trading in animals for slaughter, slaves, arms, poisons and **intoxicants like drugs and alcohol**. These five are not recommended because they contribute to the ills of the society and violate the values of respect for life and for the welfare of others. All these trades contribute to insecurity, discord, and suffering in the world. (Peter Della Santina, 1998). *‘The ignorant commit sins in consequence of drunkenness, and also make others drink. You should avoid it as it is the cause of demerit, insanity and ignorance – though it be pleasing to the ignorant’ - Dhammika Sutta.* (Lakshmi Narasu, 1993)

Buddhist Yoga and Panchashila : The goal of Buddhism is the freedom from sorrow and suffering. This cannot be attained except by the destruction of all selfish cravings. Accordingly, the Enlightened One laid down virtues that are to be practiced by all Buddhists. (Lakshmi Narasu, 1993) Sandhinirmochana sutra` scripture unlocking the mysteries is a complete classical sourcebook of Buddhist Yoga which is divided into eight sections. (Thomas Cleary, 1995). The five precepts ie. Panchashila in Pali constitute the basic ethical norms which the Buddhists hope to follow and forms the layman`s code of conduct refraining from intoxicants and abstaining from liquor and spirits. *‘Surameraya majja pama dahana veramani sikkha pada samadiyami’* written in Pali mean avoiding such things like alcohols and drugs which lead to confusion of the mind. (Arun tiwari, 2006). The result of the preliminary practices in the Mahayana Path is two fold : (1) enthusiasm for an elevated and exalted goal, the goal of Buddhahood; and (2) disengagement from or renunciation of, all attachment to the things of this life and to the cycle of samsara as a whole. (Peter Della Santina, 1998)

Dhammapada: It contains the essence of teachings of Buddha compiled in the Tipitaka Buddhist scriptures. It remains as a handbook in three ancient Indian languages Pali, Prakrit and Sanskrit and contains 26 chapters. (Silananda Brahmachari, 2001)

Craving in Buddhist context: There are three main factors which lead contradiction among humans – desire, power and a narrow mind ie. craving, pride/ ego and false views cause all conflicts / contradictions in today`s world. Desire also called `Craving` or `Tanha` stated as aspirations towards benefits, consumption or materials or food and to be economically wealthy. This craving is the main

characteristic for the contradictory factor leading humans into strife. (Payutto, 2011)

Verse 3 of Chapter 24 Tanha Vagga of Dhammapada (the craving) states in Pali

*Yo cetam sahati jamamim tanham loke duraccayam
Soka tamha papatanti ubabinduva pokkharn*

Meaning: Sorrow`s fall away from him like water drops from a lotus, who overcomes base formidable craving.

Explanation: One who is under the sway of craving finds no end to sufferings. But one who conquers craving by dint of spiritual cultivation, drinks deep in the fountain of bliss of Nibbana (realized freedom)

Verse 7 of Chapter 24 Tanha Vagga of Dhammapada (cut the root of craving) states in Pali

*Savatt sabbadhi sota lata ubbhijja titthuti
Tanca disva latam jatam mulam pannaya chindatha*

Meaning: Everywhere flows the current of craving. It sprouts like a creeper. Cut the root thereof with the weapon wisdom as and when you see it springs up.

Explanation: Whatever one sees or hears or smells or tastes or touches or thinks, one feels attracted towards that, if the sensation is agreeable. The attraction is `craving` which entangles one`s mind as does the creeper, a tree. Although the creeper of craving is very firm and formidable, yet is not undestroyable. The wise free themselves from its clutches and plunge in the depth of peace and bliss. Hence Lord Buddha`s advice is to `cut the root of craving with the weapon of wisdom`.

Vethathiriyam: Yogiraj Shri Vethathiri Maharishi (1911–2006) was a spiritual leader and founder-trustee of the **World Community Service Center (WCSC)** in 1958. As of Jan 2020, there are around 400 trusts and 2300 sub centres registered and affiliated to WCSC. He composed 1854 poems on philosophical subjects in Tamil compiled as *‘Gnana Kalanjiam’*. *‘Vazhga Valamudan’* is the mantra and Vethathiri Maharishi`s lifetime works are called *Vethathiriyam*.

SKY Yoga: Through sustained research in philosophies of Tamil Siddha Saints and self-realization by Deep Meditations, Vethathiri Maharishi formulated a complete science of living for the betterment of the society. He evolved the **SKY YOGA** for Holistic Health (Physical, Mental, Spiritual and Social Health) and offered it to the humanity as a spiritual education. His teachings are lucid and a holistic blend of science and philosophy, which would build brotherhood, harmony and understanding leading to world peace and happiness which are suitable to the present world.

SKY Yoga consists of four major yogic practices:

- 1) Simplified Physical Exercises for the body
- 2) Meditation for the mind
- 3) Kaya kalpa for the soul

4) Self-introspection for leading a ethical life

Five fold Culture for a peaceful modern society : Like Panchashila in Buddhism, Vethathiri Maharishi advocates a five fold culture for a peaceful society. In one of his poems, Vethathiri Maharishi has written that drug usage should be abolished to imbibe a new culture suitable for the modern age.

Need of a new culture to the world

Abolishing drug, war, lie and smoke,

Let`s implement with sincerity

No extra burden

- 1) every one decide to live based on their knowledge, energy and physical work
- 2) high order not to trouble other`s mind , body by erring knowledge
- 3) penance not to kill other lives for food
- 4) as a general rule respect and maintain others belongings and freedom to live and
- 5) ove to clear other`s suffering.

(Gnana Kalinjyay Verse. 1843 written on 02.04.1999)

Handling addiction in the Vethathiriyam way

Introspection is the rein to rein the wandering mind. SKY Yoga gives a detailed Analysis of Thought and teaches a person how to moralize the desires. If one masters Vethathiriyam, there is no scope for addiction of any sort and a person can live with eternal bliss.

*Kallam, soram, kadan, kudi, perumbalum
Mella adhikarikkum vishamokkum iyal budaithu ;
Ulla sugam pokkum ; uzhiraiyum bali kollum
Killi erivom ; kilaikum bothe ivarrai.*

(Ref : Vethathiri Maharishi; Gnanakalinjyay (Tamil)-
Verse 1604; 30.12.1953)

Vethathiri Maharishi wrote the above poem in Tamil wherein he categorically stated that alcohol addiction is a poisonous vice which has to be eradicated at the beginning itself. Otherwise this habit will destroy the happiness and even lead to the death of the addict.

Practical Application of SKY YOGA in deaddiction camps of Village Service Project

In Village Service Project conducted by World Community Service Centre, shortly called as VSP, SKY Yoga is taught free of cost to villagers by WCSC. Already 170 villages have got benefited in this WCSC-VSP scheme and 17 projects are going live. According to statistics, 4 villages are identified for inauguration in March 2020 making the total VSP villages to 191. The SKY professors who stay in the village during the project teach SKY Yoga practices to the villagers at their convenience and make them aware of addiction as a disease. Villagers diagnosed with the disease are identified and counselling /support provided to the needy by the professionals through the De-addiction camp. Motivation and handholding is extended throughout to ensure sobriety and methods / techniques provided to avoid relapse. Professional help from counsellors from eminent de addiction treatment centre/hospital is provided to the

villagers free of cost to help them come out of the addiction. It is heartening to note that during the last year 2019, around 100 alcoholic addicts belonging to Eichur, Nergunapattu, Karanai and Suradimangalam villages in the Kancheerpuram District, Tamilnadu State have been put into the rehabilitation path towards sobriety, thanks to the efforts taken by the VSP team sponsored by MAPS, Kalpakkam.

2. Conclusion

From the perspective of a Buddhist, addiction is considered to be the archetype of attachment and craving is the source of human suffering. Vethathiri Maharishi says that the habit of addiction has to be nipped in the bud. Both the perspectives agree on the powerful common ground on the addiction science. Both the perspectives agree that prevention is critically important. Buddhism and Vethathiriyam both advocate training the brain and meditation could be the best neuro science based technology to assist in strengthening the self control circuits. Both Buddhist Yoga and Simplified Kundalini Yoga advocate self discipline as a moral code of conduct by following spiritual practices of meditation and self introspection.

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