

POPULAR TECHNIQUES OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION AS APPARATUS FOR MENTAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN THAILAND

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Abstract

During the Chatchai Government in the 1980's, Thailand had witnessed unprecedented growth in the country's economy. In 1997, however, the economic prosperity that the Thai had enjoyed blasted like bubbles. This economic downturn had resulted in an unemployment of over 2 million people. While most people talked about the dark side of this economic crisis, the author saw some glimmering bright side of the downturn. This was the time, the author argued, to heal the national illness by using culturally-based therapy: Buddhist meditation. This illness was of two kinds: (1) depression and anxiety from being "losers" in the turmoil; (2) materialism and consumerism which needed a long-term therapeutic measure.

The author proposed an application of the two popular techniques of meditation taught in Thailand as medication for healing the Thai people. One technique was tranquility meditation practised at the Dhammamongkol Temple in Bangkok. At the center, the author participated in and observed the practise. At that place, the

objective of the meditative exercise was to increase the power of the mind thereby leading to the attainment of the willpower point which would bring about some psychic powers such as clairvoyance, ability to cure some diseases, and knowledge of past lives. The normal practise of tranquility meditation, however, was to gain peacefulness to mind as the name suggested. On the other hand, the possessors of the psychic powers, if they were not bragging about these powers, could use these special abilities for the benefit of their fellow citizens such as disease curing. The other technique of meditation of which the author used the same participation-observation methodology to obtain the knowledge was insight meditation at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand. Here the practitioner would focus on *sati* or mindfulness in every moment of his or her body accompanied by the contemplation of the Buddhist percepts of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (non-self) which was interpreted as there was nothing as certain as uncertainty. Nothing was permanent thereby being applicable to names, titles, wealth, fame, and privileges. One should therefore curb worldly desires as well as decrease egoism. Application of the two techniques of meditation if undertaken by the Thai practitioners could generate the fundamentals for peaceful and altruism-

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oriented life. The author believed that under the current economic crisis Thailand has been experiencing, these two modes of meditation should be coalesced to create both curative and preventive immunity for the Thai community. It was curative because peacefulness and contemplation of the principle of impermanence of things from meditation exercise should alleviate the pain of those who suffered from the crisis; it was preventive because meditative practise should be in the long run taught to the younger generations of the nation, namely, school pupils and university students in order to become future quality citizens and consumers with wisdom (*paññā*), and with positive desire (*chanda*) to produce to balance the consumption.

Also, consumption of luxurious goods should be clarified to adolescent buyers that it signifies illusory egoism which should be prevented from happening by the intention to render oneself useful to others physically and spiritually to lesson self-importance. As an operational model, tranquility meditation should be made compulsory for primary and secondary school pupils whereas university students would have to learn both tranquility and insight meditation to derive wisdom for sustainable development of a sound society.

Introduction

The last decade witnessed high growth of some countries in Asia and among these were China, Malaysia, and Thailand. Both Thailand and Malaysia seemed to be the next candidate to be the fifth Asian NIC (tiger). The World Bank report at the end of 1980's cited a promising future for East Asia and praised the outward looking policies of these countries. This optimistic

view, however, did not last long. Weak institutional development and basic structural problems seemed to trigger the crisis. In the case of Thailand, the optimistic view of the situation resulted in a bubble economy and speculation on land and real estate. Other causes that led to economic downturn included a decline in stock prices due to loss of confidence in some investment projects, the free flow of funds and the lack of good reporting system, a rapid decline in export competitiveness, and last but not the least, an attack on Thai baht and the inability of the Bank of Thailand to cope with the situation. The decision to float the Thai baht on 2 July 1997 was followed by a drop in the country's international reserves to a minimum of 0.8 billion US dollars in August 1997 (from 33.8 billion US dollars in December 1996) (Ratanakomut, 1999). After the announcement, the value of Thai baht plunged from around 26.00 per US dollar at the end of May to the lowest 56.90 baht a dollar in January 1998.

At the time of the 1997 events, not many Thais understood the true extent of the crisis. However, on 30-31 May, just 2 days before the announcement, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* identified problems that they said had not yet been acknowledged by the Thai government. The paper said, "the bad debt situation is far worse than the government has recognized, the economy is slowing down sharply and the required bailout will be bigger and will hit the public harder than it realizes." (Krungthep Thurakij, 1997). Almost two years later, what the paper said has proved to be no overstatement. Thailand is still in deep crisis. There have been business closures, layoffs and job cuts, the crash of the stock market, falling land prices, and skyscrapers left unfinished.

More than 2 million people have been made unemployed.

With the aforementioned background², this paper proposes to do the following: (1) it will describe the characteristics of therapy for these two kinds of illness, i.e. meditation, and (2) it will elaborate on the therapeutic process of using meditation as curative and preventive methods for the national illness, and will make some suggestions regarding the medication and the responsible organizations.

Part one: Characteristics of the therapy: meditation or mind development

Meditation is a form of mind development. A word such as “contemplation” may have been used at other times to mean the process to a central point, focusing until a person’s mind reaches one-pointedness (Phra Debvedi, B.E. 2534). The popular techniques that will be discussed in this paper comprise the tranquility meditation as practised at the Dhammamongkol Temple (hereafter referred to as the Dhammamongkol technique) and the insight meditation as practised at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (hereafter referred to as the YBAT technique). Before proceeding, we should understand the working of brain waves at different levels of serenity in the mind so we can appreciate the practise of meditation.

² By the time of the writing of this paper, the Miyazawa Plan, the 53,000 million baht loan from the Japanese Government to help stimulate Thailand’s economic growth, is being implemented and is expected to create jobs for 486,000 people (*Daily News*, 30 March, 1999). Whether or not the plan is successful, the author still maintains that meditation is needed to inculcate certain values for sustainable development of Thailand.

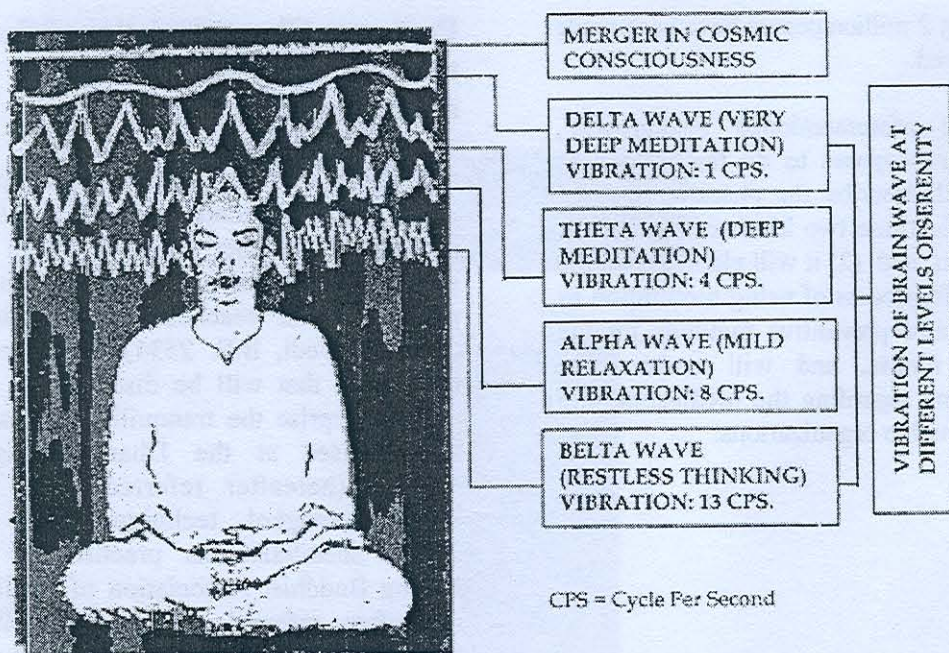


Figure 1: Meditation and the working of the brain waves

Under normal conditions when the brain responds to various stimuli as normal restless consciousness, its entitative rhythm (vibration) as measured by the Electric Brain Pattern (Electro-Encephalogram or EEG) will assume irregular wavy shapes (Acarya 1991). These kinds of waves are called beta waves which have the vibrate at 13 cps. (cycle per second). We experience beta waves during our waking moments, when our eyes are open and our minds are racing with thoughts. These waves are associated with normal cognition, and also with anxiety. When a person is a little more serene but still alert, the brain waves will vibrate at a rate of 8 cps.. These kinds of waves are called alpha waves. In this condition, the human brain is not passive but is mildly relaxed leading to a pleasant feeling. Following this stage of brain activity, when a person is more calm,

for instance being in a meditative state which lies between wakefulness and sleep, the brain waves, called theta waves, will move at 4 cps.. Often, when a person experiences theta waves, he has access to information in his subconscious mind. He frequently sees images from the past or has vivid daydreams. When he calms his mind until it becomes fully relaxed, he will reach the stage of the superconscious mind. This stage of superconscious mind, called supramental mind, is when the mind can be pacified through the repetition of mantra (Acarya, 1991). The person also sometimes experiences deep personal insights. He frequently has creative ideas, and is adept at creative problem solving. Theta brain waves combine a pleasant, relaxed feeling with extreme alertness and if that person becomes more and more absorbed in deeper meditation, the vibration of the brain waves will remain at

1 cycle per second and become transformed into delta waves. These delta waves occur also when people sleep (Khalsa, 1997).

It can be concluded then, that during economic crisis were Thai people to turn to meditation, neurologically when their minds reach certain levels of serenity, the brain waves particularly theta waves, will function effectively thereby providing a mental strength which will be beneficial to them as individual units in helping to solve their own problems and those of their own community.

Popular techniques of Buddhist meditation at the Dhammamongkol Temple and at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand

As the name implies, tranquility meditation aims at achieving serenity of the mind. However, at the Dhammamongkol Temple where the author participated in and observed the practise for 200 hours, the restoration/increase of the power of the mind was the prime objective. (This will be discussed later.) On the other hand, the purpose of insight meditation at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand where the author attended the meditation course for 100 hours, was to contemplate the *Tilakkhaṇa*: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering or unsatisfactoriness), and *anattā* (non-self) until one realized that nothing was permanent and that one should seek *nibbāna* or complete extinction of clinging to body or soul in order to end all sufferings.

The different objectives of these two techniques of meditation obviously lead to different emphasis in their practise. This discussion will concentrate on the walking

meditation and the sitting meditation together with the philosophy behind each process.

The walking meditation

In the tranquility meditation at the Dhammamongkol Temple, the meditators walk at an ordinary pace with natural movements of feet and body and their hands crossed over their abdomens. They internally recite a mantra '*Buddho*' meaning the Knower which is one of the quality of the Buddha, that is the enlightened one. This mantra is a two-syllable word which is pulsative, that is, in harmony with our rhythms of breathing. Concentration on the mantra is primarily a technique to help adjust an individual brain wave vibration to move concurrently with the universal vibration. While meditating, the mantra moving pattern slackens and regulates the restless waves in our brain thereby gradually leading the mind into its serene condition. When asked about his philosophy on the walking meditation, the Abbot instructor (Phra Rajadhammacetiayacarn, B.E. 2541) explained,

I have no set rules for you to have restrained movements in walking because when you meditate on walking only a shallow level of concentration is achieved since your eyes are still opened. However, be mindful of what you are doing that is, walking and repeating mantra. And since you will have a shallow level of concentration, this is the time to release your tension, to think things over, and to let go on your emotions. Do not suppress them. Work them out until your mind calms down and be prepared for

the sitting meditation. (The sitting meditation is scheduled after the walking meditation).

Through interviews with several meditators, the walking meditation period was found to be very fruitful to release of tension.

At the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, however, the walking meditation assumed different rhythms. The meditators were asked to be mindful of the minute process of walking, that is, standing, intending to walk, standing, intending to turn, turning, intending to walk. To recapitulate (see Figure 2).

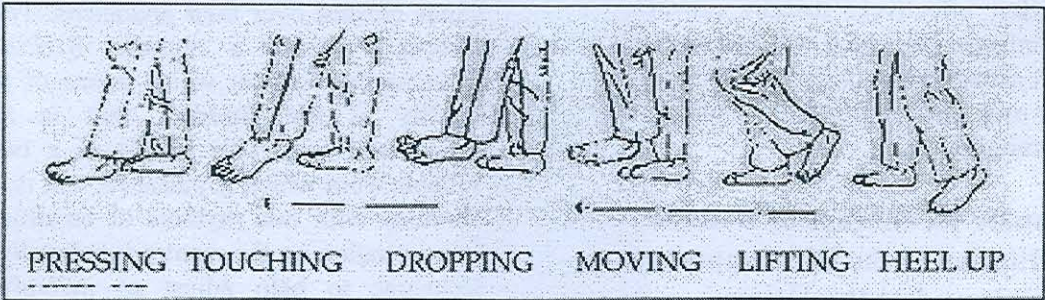


Figure 2: Different rhythms of walking meditation

- For exercise one: the left (foot) goes thus; the right (foot) goes thus.
- For exercise two: lifting; treading.
- For exercise three: lifting; moving, treading.
- For exercise four: heel up; lifting; moving; treading.
- For exercise five: heel up; lifting, moving, dropping, treading.
- For exercise six: heel up; lifting; moving; dropping; touching; pressing.

The turning of the feet when one walked to the end of the walking path would follow the following pattern (see Figure 3).

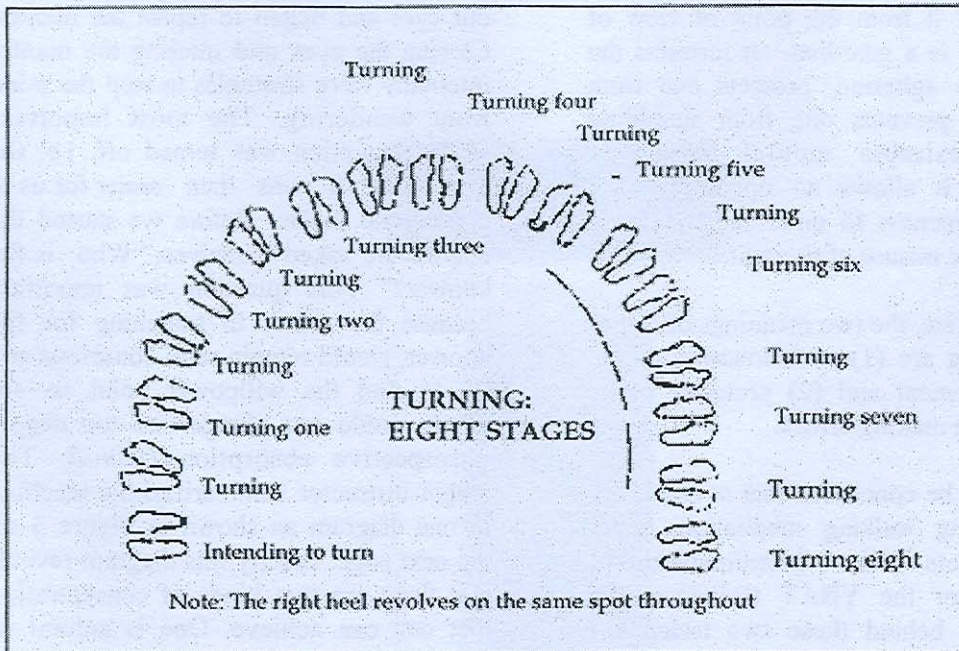


Figure 3: The turning of feet pattern

Definitely there is a philosophical explanation behind this kind of regulated and structured practise. This is the training of *sati* which refers to mindfulness, to bear in mind or bring to mind. In the walking meditation, *sati* is operationally defined as "mindfulness of the present moment as manifested in four major movements of the body: standing, walking, sitting, and sleeping, and in various uncountable minor movements such as eating, talking, bathing, driving, counting, washing, reading, writing, listening, etc.. *Sati* as defined in the *Tipitaka* is a synonym for the principles of the *Four Satipatthāna*. The four elements of this group have the names of (Phra Debvedi, 1998);

1. *Kāyānupassanā* meaning contemplation or mindfulness of the body and its behavior
2. *Vedanānupassanā* meaning contemplation or mindfulness of feelings of pleasure and pain
3. *Cittānupassanā* meaning contemplation or mindfulness of mind
4. *Dhammānupassanā* meaning contemplation or mindfulness of different sorts of phenomena such as things existing as opposites: love-hate, gain-lose, meet-depart, etc.

The primary feature of the working of *sati* is that it prevents the mind from drifting. It does not allow mental states to pass unheeded. It prevented the mind from becoming agitated and restless.

Looking at it from the point of view of ethics, *sati* is a guardian. It restrains the mind from agitation, protects one from error, and prevents one from stumbling into undesirable mental states or situations. It allows no opportunity for unwholesomeness to enter the mind and prevents the misuse of thought.

To summarize, the two meanings of *sati* as the walking are (1) consciousness of the present moment and (2) protector of its owner from making errors.

It can then be concluded that at one level, in practising walking meditation, either one selects the Dhammamongkol technique or the YBAT technique, the philosophy behind these two techniques can prove useful to the practitioners.

The sitting meditation

At the Dhammamongkol meditation center, the author, like all other practitioners, had been told at the beginning of the course that the objective of the meditation was to increase the power of the mind. The Abbot lecturer explained that human mental strength could be divided into two parts: the major part comprised 60 percent of our mental power whereas the minor formed about 40 percent. We had to use our minor mental strength every day to do our daily activities. Meditation, therefore, helped us restore this consumed strength. It was like a battery being recharged each day to accumulate and substitute power.

How then can peacefulness come to the mind if the restoration of mental power becomes the main objective? Peacefulness or tranquility is like the other side of the coin. While sitting to meditate, we closed

our eyes and began to repeat the mantra. Closing the eyes and uttering the mantra internally were strategies to stop the mind from wandering. The most important sense perception was turned off, i.e. the sight, and it was then easier for us to concentrate inside. Before we started the mantra, we asked ourselves, "Who is the knower?" This question was important because the mind, in searching for the knower, would remain semi-conscious and try to find the willpower point so our minds would not plunge into too deeply introspective absorption (*jhāna*). The Abbot instructor summarized his teaching in one diagram as shown in Figure 3 on the next page. Briefly this diagram reveals that there are two kinds of concentration that one can achieve. One is natural or *inborn concentration* that one attains every night through one's sleep. This is called in Buddhism natural absorption. And the other one is *constructed concentration* achieved through one's practise of meditation. Constructed concentration can build or restore the power of the mind once one has started uttering the mantra and mind has gone through several stages of absorption (*jhāna*) known as primary, secondary, tertiary, and quadrary. The Abbot explained that as laymen faced with temporal problems, only the primary and secondary stages of absorption were needed in order to build the power of the mind or restore mental strength to help the brain in its function to think, to calculate, and to lay plans for the future. However, one interesting point in the diagram is the central one labeled willpower point. The Abbot explained that a person, after reaching the quadrary introspect absorption, could attain the willpower point which could serve as the foundation for either *vipassanā ñāṇa* (knowledge for complete extinction of

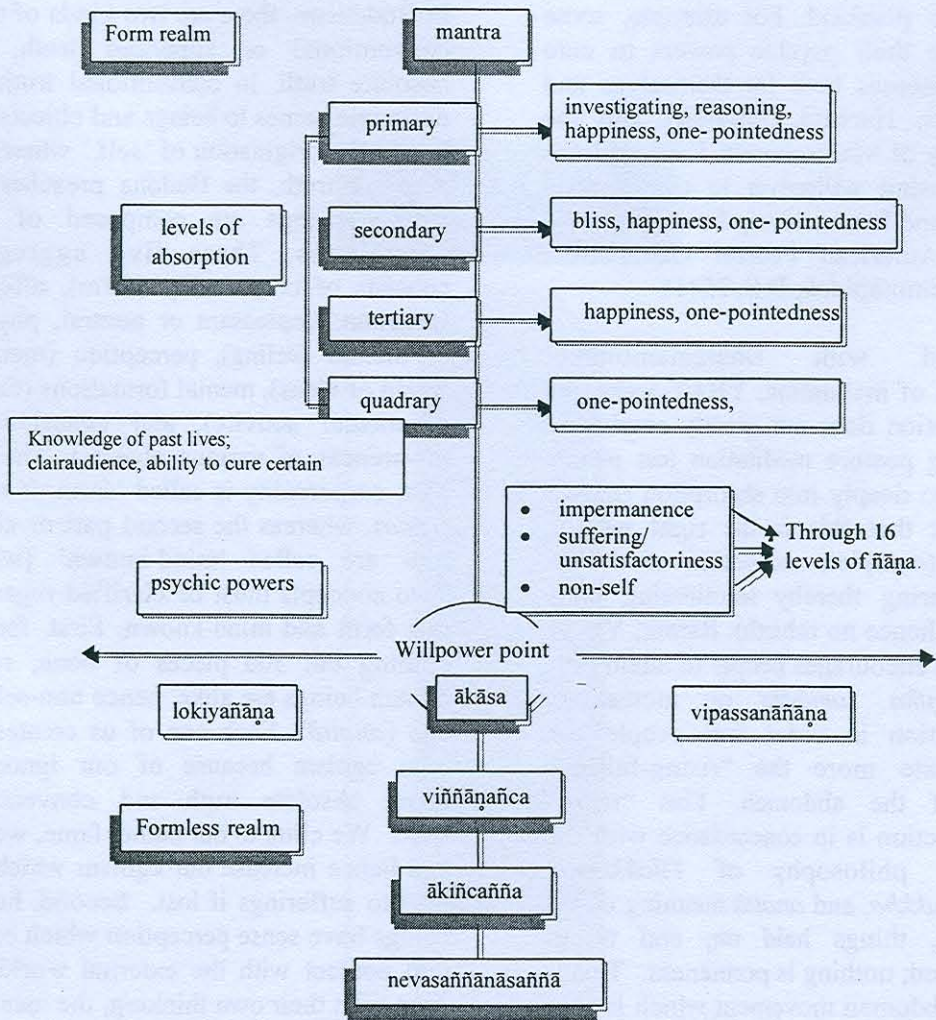


Figure 4

suffering because one has no more desires) or *lokiya ñāṇa* (knowledge leading to temporary abolition of desires because one still aims at possessing some psychic powers such as the ability to cure diseases, the ability to recall past lives, clairvoyance, etc.). Below the willpower point are the realms of the formless in which the meditators are warned against perpetuating in their deep introspect absorption which is not the purpose of

practicing meditation. And it is the achievement if this willpower point which leads further to acquiring some psychic power that is the ultimate goal of this meditation center. Tranquility meditation in this perspective has mainly been criticized for its objective of development of psychic powers which appear non-scientific. The author, however, would point out that these psychic powers, if geared in the right direction, will bring

benefit to mankind. For example, some could use their psychic powers to cure certain diseases both for themselves and for others. Harvard University and the University of Massachusetts have initialed therapy using willpower to cure certain diseases and have actively been supported by the American Federal Government (Phra Dhammapidok, B.E. 2541).

Compared with Dhammamongkol technique of meditation, YBAT technique of meditation does not greatly emphasize the sitting posture meditation lest people plunge too deeply into absorption (*jhāna*) and think that this is the right way to *nibbāna* (complete extinction of desires and suffering thereby terminating body and soul, hence no rebirth). Rather, YBAT technique encourages people to attain only the *khaṇika samādhi* or momentary concentration in order that people can contemplate more the “rising-falling” action of the abdomen. This “rising-falling” action is in concordance with the Buddhist philosophy of *Tilakkhaṇa*: *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* meaning things happened, things held on, and things deteriorated; nothing is permanent. This is like the abdomen movement which is easy to observe: it rises and it falls consecutively. The action did not last. From a wider perspective, this was compared to the cycle of human life: birth, old age, illness, and death. Nobody could escape from this cycle and therefore one should be mindful (possession of *sati* as aforementioned) of what one was doing in this present life so one would not suffer in the next life and one should try to attain *nibbāna*.

Before proceeding, the infrastructure of the insight meditation should be presented to clarify the whole concept (The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, 1999).

In Buddhism, there are two kinds of truth: conventional or supposed truth, and absolute truth. In conventional truth, we designate names to beings and objects, and this is the origination of ‘self,’ whereas in absolute truth, the Buddha preaches that human beings are composed of Five Aggregates. These five aggregates consists of corporeality (form), affection (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, physical or mental feeling), perception (memory, world of ideas), mental formations (faculty of mental activity), and consciousness (awareness of various objects). The first part, corporeality is called ‘form or body’ (*rūpa*), whereas the second part or all the four are called ‘mind-known’ (*nāma*). Two concepts must be clarified regarding this form and mind-known. First, form is nothing but 300 pieces of bone, so all human beings are alike, hence non-self, no ego (*anattā*). Each one of us creates our own egoism because of our ignorance about absolute truth and conventional truth. We cling to our name, fame, wealth, and hence increase our egoism which can lead to sufferings if lost. Second, human beings have sense perception which comes into contact with the external world and even with their own thinking, the idea then is that if we cannot stop the functioning of the senses, we have to be mindful of the activity of mental formation as much as possible because it is this mental formation that brings about desires (*kilesa*) which can lead to all sorts of unhappiness. The sitting exercise, as well as the walking exercise for tranquility, are methods to induce the practitioners with serenity and power of mind whereas the insight meditation is geared more towards the giving up by contemplating the impermanence of beings and objects and the suffering brought about by desires. The next part deals with the application of these two techniques of meditation as

therapy for the Thai people and the responsible organizations for the medication process.

Part two: The medication process and the responsible organizations

Application of two popular techniques of meditation as therapeutic process

In achieving peacefulness of mind through tranquility meditation, this peacefulness is very forceful and can be served as the locale for wisdom or *paññā*. One should not, however, be contented with only this peacefulness of mind but should use it to generate wisdom. The characteristic of the mind that accomplishes concentration can be described as 'forceful like a mainstream flowing on one direction, yet calm and clear like still water that has no pollutants. This mind is suitable for thoughtful or reflective activities' (Phra Debvedi, B.E. 2534:6). This is the wisdom that helps solve temporal problems.

Psychic powers from the tranquility meditation are practical but hard to acquire and some people object to them as the way not leading to *nibbāna* (complete extinction of defilements) because sometimes the possessors of these powers are obsessed with them and exploit them for the purpose of showing off. *Nibbāna* from the insight meditation, on the other hand, may sound transcendental hence hard to achieve. One recommendation for this is to always have *sammā samādhi* (right concentration). The base of *sammā samādhi* would require morality (*sīla*). With such awareness, one will start meditating with purity of the intention. This will counteract against egoistic tendency. As laymen, meditation that

constitutes wisdom seems the best apparatus to help alleviate the pain as well as uphold spirit to continue living in this world. It is this wisdom derived from right concentration and right mindfulness achieved through meditation that knows how to behave prudently, and how to cope with desires. Following are some measures conceptualized as the *curative* method derived from meditation. The measures range from a less transcendental approach to a relatively more transcendental approach which implies that as the target 'patients' are laymen, they can move along the continuum in their solution finding.

A less transcendental approach emphasizes contemplation of fame, wealth, property, etc. as something impermanent (*anicca*) hence they can be lost. After attainment of peacefulness from meditation, realization of the changeability of worldly beings and things should make the mind calm down and restrain them from hurting themselves and at the same time meditation should render strength to desperate people to stand up again. Coupled with this strength should be *sati* or mindfulness of investing, overborrowing, overspending, and economizing. A more transcendental approach focuses on the principle of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (non-self): 'The emptier we are of desires, the fuller we are of happiness.' thereby giving up more and more worldly cravings. This may prove useful to those who have had enough and are now searching for a more balanced living between materialistic and spiritual world after the crisis.

Some *preventive* measures generated by meditation can be operationalized as a more transcendental and a comparatively less transcendental approach as well.

A more transcendental approach emphasizes *sati* or mindfulness before we consume. The idea is that since we cannot stop sense perception from functioning, we should be *mindful* of our mental formation right at that moment, that is, once we have seen, heard, smelt, etc. something, we tell ourselves, 'seeing,' 'hearing,' 'smelling,' and stop promptly at that point, meaning no more elaboration and terminating of our line of thinking, hence our craving. A less transcendental approach in this preventive measure pays attention to the lay normal way of living which is directed towards materialism and consumerism. The proposition is 'if one has to consume, consume with wisdom (*paññā*), consume with intention to produce in reciprocity (*chanda*), and consume with awareness of the non-self (*anattā*). An example of consumption with wisdom might be to recognize that a hire purchase or installment system very popular among Thai people is the system of money already spent (and overspent probably) which has not yet been earned and the Thai should be cautioned against this in the future. Consumption with productiveness refers to the concept, for instance, of trying to balance the trade deficit of the country with the exportation. *Chanda* is desire geared in a positive way in order to generate perseverance, will, and effort to accomplish a task. And last, consumption with awareness of the non-self philosophy will be relayed to those students obsessed with buying luxurious goods, for example, so that at least they are conscious of not trying to build their image or ego through the use of brand name products. Rather, they should be taught to make themselves useful to society, to learn to give to others which would lessen the self-centeredness. In Buddhism this is physical and spiritual alms giving.

In sum, under the current economic crisis Thailand has been experiencing, these two popular techniques of meditation are coalesced to create both curative and preventive immunity for the Thai community. It is curative because peacefulness and contemplation of the impermanence of beings and things from meditation should alleviate the anxiety and depression; it is preventive because meditation should be taught so that the Thai community becomes consumers with wisdom, consumers with productive mind, and consumers with the intention to give back to society to lessen egoism hence moving towards the concept of non-self.

Responsible organizations

The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (B.E. 2540-2544) stipulates that the nation should take care to promote mind development but so far little attention has been given to it. For instance, in the case of the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, the government allocates only 150,000 baht each year to finance the Association while the actual expenses total about 2,400,000 baht annually (Sutirajanont, 1999). The Association runs its activities almost on the public donation basis. The author then investigated several modes of meditation operation and offer recommendations. Those adults who are in normal mental condition or who are experiencing anxiety or depression can either take courses on 'tranquility meditation or insight meditation which are offered by several temples and semi-public or private organizations such as the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand which are free of charge. Normally, each course will last 8 days 7 nights and the participants will have to stay the night at the Association for maximum effectiveness of practise. At

several temples, short courses on meditation have been offered which are usually free of charge.

For a long-term psychological treatment for school and university students, the Ministries of Education and of University Affairs have taken some action. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Education has prescribed that Buddhism be a mandatory course in both the primary and secondary schools as evidenced in the textbooks on Buddhism and meditation is one chapter in every textbook ranging from simple to complex content. Practically, however, from interviews with school pupils of various schools with different ages and grades, they reported that the teachers have not paid much attention to the chapter on meditation. Most of the time, the teachers would skip this chapter and some even did not know how to teach it. Upon being asked, all 20 pupils and students said they had practised meditation only once or twice during their school years from grade 1 to grade 12. As for the university students, Buddhism is an elective in General Education courses. The fact is that even if students do choose Buddhism, meditation exercise is not taught. In sum, university students, as well as primary and secondary pupils, rarely have a chance to study meditation.

The author then proposes that primary and secondary school pupils start with tranquility meditation practise which is simpler in its approach and university students will continue with the insight meditation practise together with the philosophy behind it so the students can appreciate more the higher concepts in Buddhism. Also, the Ministries of Education and of University Affairs should work hand in hand. They can start by training the teaching personnel both in

Bangkok and in the rural areas so that these people can correctly transfer their knowledge and practise to the pupils and the students. One thousand monks graduating each year from two Buddhist universities, the Mahamakut Rajavidyalai and Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalai, can be contacted to teach meditation to students (Phra Sripariyatmolee, 1999). The students should take meditation as credit course and should study every year during their four years in the university. There might be some contention, however, those students are crammed with their professional courses and that meditation should not be counted as credit course. To this the author will argue that mental development courses should be given more weight now if we want to bring sustainable growth to our country. Also, emphasis should be made to students that they should practise meditation every day even after they have graduated and enter the real career world. Even if the students are not Buddhist, courses can be arranged so that every student has a chance to develop his or her own mind to make it a birthplace for wisdom as well as calm mind. One psychiatrist remarked that there are only 300-400 psychiatrists all over Thailand and everyone can be psychiatrist in his or her own home provided that that person is cool-headed and has a calm personality. Such characteristics, the doctor emphasized, is obtained from practicing meditation (Sornpaisan, 1999).

Conclusion

Despite the negative picture the economic crisis presents, we draw some hope out of it. That is the hope to cure the nation's illness through the use of meditation. Meditation itself is found to be of great use to the working of brainwaves because

it brings serenity to the mind of those who practise it. Of the meditation exercise in Thailand, two popular techniques were discussed by the author. Both comprise mainly the walking and the sitting parts. The walking exercise of the Dhammamongkol Temple gives a chance for aspiring meditators to let go their feelings, to think things over so that their emotion will no more be suppressed thereby leading to a release of tension. The walking exercise of the YBAT technique, on the other hand, emphasizes *sati* or mindfulness of the present moment so one is aware of every movement one makes. *Sati* also guards oneself against committing errors and this is a very virtuous function. In the sitting exercise of the Dhammamongkol version, we see two purposes juxtaposing one another: to build the power of the mind and to bring serenity to the mind. Both work dialectically and can be of great use to the owner who can achieve both peacefulness of the mind and who can possess some psychic powers that will help not only himself or herself but other fellow citizens. As for the sitting exercise of the YBAT version, it is expected to bring the practitioners into realizing the impermanence, sufferings, and non-self of each of us in this world thereby leading to the cessation of clingings to all sorts of desires and working towards attainment of complete extinction of body and soul.

Application of the two techniques of meditation depicts a picture of Thai meditators who use their wisdom (*paññā*) based on practise of meditation (*samādhi*). Peacefulness of mind should be used as route towards creation of wisdom. Meanwhile, contemplation of impermanence, sufferings, and non-self leading to *nibbāna*

might be the ultimate goal hard to attain. Along the way is the practise of mind exercise to generate wisdom or ability to think and solve the problems.

Recommendations have been made regarding the intensive meditation courses offered free of charge at several temples and semi-public or private organizations. As for the pupils, they should practise meditation with tranquility of mind as the starting objective because it is more simple followed by meditation to achieve insight in the Buddhist sense as they have advanced towards their university studies. It is hoped that popular techniques of meditation being investigated, the practitioner, be it an adult, a pupil, or a student will find this useful apparatus for mental development either in a normal or in a critical situation and will carry on with the practise which will be fruitful as both the curative and preventive methods. It is curative because tranquility obtained from meditation alleviates the mental pain from the crisis and makes the 'losers' mindful of the uncertainty of things. It is preventive because mindfulness restrains one from committing financial errors again as in the past by injecting wisdom, generating positive desire to produce in return for consumption, and inculcating the virtue of giving to society in order to lessen self-centeredness hence gearing towards the concept of non-self.

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