




Application of Teachings in the Sabbāsavasutta for Managing Stress

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[Abstract]

The purpose of this article is to study the ways to apply teachings in the Sabbāsavasutta to manage stress. First of all an introduction to the severity of the stress and significance of finding new ways to overcome stress is given. Then the way to apply the method of seeing has been analytically presented. The importance of obtaining a clear view is emphasized in this step. Afterwards the ways to apply the methods of restraining, using, endurance, avoidance, removal have been presented accordingly. Finally the ways to apply the method of development has been elaborated emphasizing the fact that the development of positive factors is essential as well as the control and elimination of the negative aspects.

Keywords: application, stress, management, removal, development

Introduction

The physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the human condition are all intimately connected. Studies now indicate that between 70 and 80 percent of all disease is strongly related to, if not directly associated with, stress. Diseases, such as cancer and coronary heart disease, are leading causes of death; both seem to have direct links to the stress response (Seaward, 2015: xxii). Stress has been linked to all the leading causes of death, including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis, and suicide. Stress is very common mental aspect of humans living in the modern world. In fact the American Institute of Stress cites the following statistics that 43 percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects due to stress. And 80 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress related complaints or disorders (Seaward, 2015: 4).

Emotional stress is thought to be a primary cause of insomnia. Not only can stress affect quality and quantity of sleep, the rebound effect of poor sleep can, in turn, affect stress levels, making the poor sleeper become more irritable, apathetic, or cynical (Seaward, 2015: 17). Exposure to stress tends to overload the cognitive circuits decreasing the processing and recall abilities needed to make sound decisions as well as the ability to communicate them. Stress can create a series of obstacles on the road to spiritual development, making path to one's higher-self difficult, if not entirely inaccessible (Seaward, 2015: 23). Physiological reactions to the stress are; rapid beating of the heart, perspiration, the rise of blood pressure, the dilation of the pupil of the eyes, feeling a lump in the pit of the stomach, lump in the throat, feeling tight in the chest (Humphrey, 2002: 6-7).

Recently medical researchers have learned that emotions can suppress the immune system, an idea thought to be inconceivable and ludicrous not long ago (Seaward, 2015: 21). One of the more recent findings has been that there is evidence linking stress and the body's ability to fight disease. Some studies suggest the possibility of immune system malfunction under stress by comparing the infection fighting capability of white blood cells taken from normal and severely stressed individuals (Humphrey, 2002: 14). Stress related conditions are diabetes, cirrhosis of the liver, high blood

pressure, peptic ulcer, migraine headaches, multiple sclerosis, herpes, lung disease, injury due to accidents, mental breakdown, cancer and coronary disease (Humphrey, 2002: 13-14).

Recently there are many researches and explorations for new methods to cure these adverse mental aspects and promote mental health (Slade, 2017: 3). The holistic approach is such approach which seeks new ways from spiritual and traditional methods to deal with adverse mental aspects and maintaining mental wellbeing. (Slade, 2017: 3). There is possibility of finding ways to overcome stress by applying Buddhist Teachings as Buddhism is mainly focusing on overcoming negative mental aspects and development of positive mental aspects. So that methods to overcome stress through the teachings in the Sabbāsavasutta which the Buddha recommended to apply in overcoming negative mental aspects can possibly provide an alternative way to overcome stress.

The Buddha preached this sutta titled Sabbāsāvasutta or Sabbāsavasamvarasutta to a group of monks while residing in Jetavana Monastery in the city of Sāvattī. At the beginning of the sutta the Buddha introduced the theme or the subject of the preaching by stating that “Sabbāsava samvara pariyayam vo bhikkhave desessāmi” meaning "Bhikkhus, I shall teach you a discourse on the restraint of all the taints (Ñānamoli and Bodhi, 2005: 19). According to the commentary, the method of controlling all cankers means the technique which, by itself, acts to control and gets rid of all cankers. That is to say, the means by which the cankers are cleared and put away in a manner that they are destroyed, abandoned and never recur, as implied by such terms as extinguished, irreversible, etc. what is indicated by a method of controlling is an effective practical device (Buddharakkhitha, 2011: 20).

There are seven methods for the control of all cankers as stated in the Sabbāsāvasuta. They are; abandoning by seeing (dassanā), abandoning by restraining (samvarā), abandoning by using (paṭisevanā), abandoning by enduring (adhivāsanā), abandoning by avoiding (parivajjanā), abandoning by removing (vinodanā), and abandoning by developing (bhāvanā). Even though the Buddha taught these methods for the abandoning of taints they can be applied to overcome other mental illness that people encounter today.

Therefore in this research the application of these seven methods to overcome stress will be studied and presented. First of all the method of seeing can be applied to understand stress better. Then other methods of restraining, using, abandoning, avoiding, removing can be applied to eradicate negative aspects associated with stress. And the last method of developing can be applied to develop positive aspects to support the overcoming of stress.

Application of the Method of Seeing (Dassanā)

The way to apply the method of seeing to overcome stress is applying wise consideration (*yoniso manasikāra*) to clearly understand, what stress is, what the cause or causes of stress are, what the cessation of stress is and what the ways to eradicate or overcome stress are. First of all one must wisely observe and understand the real nature of the situation. This method is compatible with the discovery of most modern psychologists stating that it is not things in themselves which trouble us, but the opinions we have about these things. (Rowe, 2003 : 13) Buddhism also agrees with this opinion that's why in Buddhism "yoniso Manasikāra" or "wise consideration" given priority and suggested to follow prior to any other practice. When a person considers wisely and get to know the problem and the cause of the specific problem clearly then he can look for a solution for that particular problem. If there is a way out of it he can proceed with that way to get out of that particular problem.

It is agreed by modern psychologists that understanding stress well and knowing how stress impact one's life one can build stress resilience (Mcintosh, 2017: 13). This method of seeing is comparable with the modern method of dissolution of habitual patterns of perception. It is explained that human beings are mostly governed by rigid and fixed patterns of thinking, feeling, and reactions. Many of these patterns are unhealthy and cause neurotic and psychotic problems. Most of the unhealthy habitual patterns are due to our identification with emotions that we are not able to control and regulate. With detached observation, emotions and thoughts lose their power and practitioner is able to identify the unhealthy patterns of behavior

and remove them with healthy ones (Hussain and Bhushan, 2010: 446). Stress phenomena appear if the appraisal has a negative outcome, and the situation is perceived to be potentially damaging and hard to cope with (Herman, 2004:13). Western psychology points out that a situation or external event does not cause stress; it is your interpretation of that situation that leads to a stressful flight or fight response (Tyson and Pongruengphant, 2007: 352). Psychologically speaking stress is a state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping abilities (Seaward, 2015: 6). Stress is a certain relationship between a person and his or her environment which is perceived as a burden by him or her, or as being unequal to their coping mechanisms and therefore threatening their wellbeing (Koster, 2007: 4).

Stress is the difference between what is and what we think is, created by our motivations, needs, desires, and expectations. We have learned many irrational fears, beliefs, stereotypes, and opinions that are wrong or do not apply to the present situation. Western science and psychology with its empirical methods and particular interest in self-constructs have described, in exquisite detail, the influence of constructs on perception, attention, cognition, emotion, social and environmental interactions (Tyson and Pongruengphant, 2007: 354).

Stress can be explained as any factor, acting internally or externally, that makes it difficult to adapt and that induces increased effort on the part of a person to maintain a state of equilibrium both internally and with the external environment (Humphrey, 2002: 2). Stress becomes unhealthy or frustrating when unnecessary obstacles arise as we strive to achieve our aims, or when stress is continuous, frequent, or significant (Koster, 2007: 6). According to Lazarus' paradigm stress is not an imbalance between real demands in the environment and the person's actual ability to adequately cope with the demands, but an imbalance between perceived demands and a person's appraisal of their ability to cope with the demands. Stress is self-generated, if people do not perceive a real threat or have a delusional belief they can master the situation, then stress will not be experienced. (Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007: 352). Stress is, after all, subjective. Something that causes stress in one person needs not to be experienced as

stressful by another (Dhammika, 2013: 2).

When consider above mentioned factors it becomes clear that in order to deal with stress the right understanding through wise consideration is essential. When one clearly understand the reality of the stress then he is possessing a new perception about the stress and the stressors. It is stated in the modern psychological studies that the cognitive interpretation or meaning we give to a stressful situation is very important and can increase or decrease stress. Adequately counteracting stress by means of another interpretation is called cognitive restructuring (Koster, 2007: 61).

Awareness is fundamental to preventing stress or coping with it in a skillful way. When we recognize the aspects of stress and become aware of them, we often get more insight into their causes as well. This makes it easier for us to create extra space for recovery or change to more effective strategies for dealing with the stress (Koster, 2007: 161). This method of contemplation and reasoning is actually recommended by modern psychological studies. There are various forms of rational therapies that focus on cognitive restructuring. The best known of these is perhaps the Rational Emotive Therapy, which was developed by the American Albert Ellis. This therapy works on the premise that emotional and behavioral problems are caused mainly by irrational or dysfunctional thoughts (Frits Koster, 2007: 63). This method also has some similarities with the another modern psychotherapeutic approach called Cognitive behavioral Therapy (CBT) which has become one of the mainstays of stress management. CBT is a form of psychotherapy that targets irrational or inaccurate thoughts or beliefs to help individuals break out of a distorted way of thinking (Hales, 2018: 45). So, having a rational understanding of any situation has been proven to be effective in overcoming stress.

Another method that can be recommended to be applied to alleviate stress is understanding the norm of the worldly conditions and accepting them without getting stressed by them. They are gain and loss, disrepute and fame, blame and praise, and pleasure and pain. Most of the people tend to get overexcited when experienced gain, fame, praise, and pleasure and cling into it as permanent, happy, and belong to oneself. When most of the

people are faced with loss, disrepute, blame and pain they tend to get very depressed and think of them as permanent, unhappy and belong to oneself. It is important to understand that these eight conditions come and go from time to time. Therefore it is essential to understand that “these eight worldly conditions that one has met are impermanent, suffering, and subject to change.”(A 8 6) Then we can let it go and not to get stressed when faced with these conditions. Every conditioned thing is subject to these characteristics. When we keep this fact in mind we can make our mind to be calm amidst these inevitable conditions.

K. Sri Dhammananda (2004: 13) advocates this method stating that it is hard for us to maintain mental wellbeing as the world is full of disappointment. Things do not happen as we wish them to. This being so we must train ourselves to face any situation with fortitude. We may not be able to change them but certainly we can change ourselves. If a thing is unalterable then there is no alternative but to submit to it or maintain a happy sense of resignation at the inevitable . But this is not fatalistic. We accept unsatisfactory experiences because we understand the nature of life, that things cannot always work in our favor. This method in Buddhism is compatible with another modern psychotherapeutic method of rational therapy that is being used to overcome stress called reality therapy developed by the American psychiatrist William Glassner. In this approach the main focus is on learning to accept the facts as they are : “accept reality, learn to live and work with it” (Koster, 2007:63).

Application of the Method of Restraining (Saṃvara)

The method of restraining or controlling of the faculties or sense bases is another step that must be implemented to overcome stress. The hedonistic attitude to life depicted in the habit of seeking sensual enjoyment is one of the extremes as outlined in the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta. It is termed as Self-Indulgence (kāmasukhallikānuyoga) which advocates the best of pleasures for the senses. Basing their argument on materialist view of life, some of the philosophers argued that as there is nothing surviving death, one should enjoy life by whatever means, as long as one lives (Gnanarama,

2000: 66). After experimenting this lifestyle which is attachment to sensual pleasures along with the life of self-mortification the Buddha found out that the middle way between these two extreme paths is the way to mental wellbeing and liberation (Gombrich, 1988: 45).

K.Sri Dhammananda (2006: 46) points out that people are always craving for pleasures, wealth and property. They are deluded with the idea that happiness lies in the satisfaction of their desires. Such a belief is particularly prevalent in a materialistic society such as ours. This is not to say that all pleasure is evil and must be avoided. As sense creatures, gratification of the senses is natural, even necessary for our wellbeing. But as wise people we must not be enslaved by craving for pleasure. One should not be led into thinking that sensual gratification is the only source of happiness or that it constitutes the highest form of happiness.

Fascinating sights, enchanting music, fragrant scents, delicious taste and tempting body contacts mislead and deceive us, only to make us slaves of worldly pleasures. Worldly desires can never be entirely satisfied because the moment we obtain something we want, we soon become dissatisfied with it and crave for something else. When the changes and decay occur in the many things we cling to, we experience unhappiness. The enjoyment of sensual pleasure is not real happiness (Dhammananda: 2004: 122). The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and the mind as bases for contact if untamed unguarded, unprotected, unrestrained are bringer of suffering. On the other hand these six bases for contact, if well tamed, well-guarded, well protected, well restrained, are bringers of happiness (Bodhi, 2000: 1173).

This method of restraint is explained as control by mindfulness (*sati samvara*). Control or restraint by mindfulness is guarding the faculties, entering upon restraint of the faculties (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 2005:11). The method of abandoning by restraining (*samvarā*), is having control over the sense-organs of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind (Buddharakkhitha, 2011: 23). According to the explanation given in the middle length discourses the primary factor responsible for exercising this restraint over the sense faculties is mindfulness (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 2005:1171). More details about the mindfulness and how to practice mindfulness will be analysed under the method of development.

Application of the Method of Using (Paṭisevanā)

This method is described in the Sabbāsāvasutta as reflecting wisely the practitioner uses his robes, consumes food, uses residence, takes medicine just for the purpose of it and not for the temptation of his desires. When a person uses these requisites with contentment then he will not seek for more and more as most of the people do.

K.Sri Dhammananda (2004: 36) confirms this by stating that one of the best advices given by the Buddha for us to practice as a principle is contentment is the highest wealth. For more than twenty five centuries, men and women in the community of Buddhist monks and nuns have lived such lives. They had only four requisites: food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. And many Buddhist householders too have lived contentedly not allowing their greed to overtake their basic needs. A contented man is indeed a lucky man because his mind is free from all those disturbances. When a person thinks ‘this much is enough for me and for my family and I do not want anything beyond that is contentment. When we maintain this contentment, jealousy can never cloud our mind and thereby we allow others also to enjoy their lives.

Happiness cannot be found in the material things about us, such as wealth, power or fame. Those who spend a lifetime harvesting and accumulating more wealth than they need will be disillusioned and disappointed when they discover, only too late, that all the money in the world cannot buy a grain of lasting happiness. No one is happy unless there is contentment within (Dhammananda, 2006: 150-151). Wealth is not something for you to accumulate for craving’s sake. For one’s personal happiness he should acquire wealth righteously. Blessed are they who earn their living without harming others says the Buddha (Dhammananda, 2004: 146-147).

Application of the method of using (paṭisevanā) is the solution to stress associated with materialism. Materialism is insatiable attachment to worldly possessions and is believed to be making consumers selfish, egoistic and non-social. It therefore has a detrimental effect on social relationships, rendering consumers lonely, dissatisfied and unhappy. Materialism causes a person to be stressful (Khalid & Quardee, 2018: IX). It is suggested

in modern researches that the way to improve social relationships and wellbeing is to engage in dematerialization of lifestyle and to adopt a socio-centric consumption pattern (Khalid & Quardee, 2018: 26). These findings are compatible with the application of the method of using to use things with wise consideration.

This doesn't mean that Buddhism opposes to the moderate usage of basic utilities. Indeed poverty is regarded as very horrible thing in human life . Furthermore, it is explained that poverty is a factor that causes one to become stressful. So that, poverty must be eliminated in order to overcome stress associated with it. Another important economic principle that Buddhism contributes to the world in relation to consumption, which positively minimizes the problem of poverty is a balanced livelihood (samajīvikatā). It is explained that knowing his income and expenditure one leads a balanced life without being either too extravagant or too niggardly, thinking my income can be in excess in my expenditure but not in excess of income (Abhayawansa, 2014, 4-5).

It is rational that when one is contented, leading a balanced livelihood and not fallen into materialism he will not need to borrow from others. Not failing into debt (anana sukha) is another source of happiness if we are contented with what we have and if we are economical, we need not be in debt. Debtors live in mental agony and are under obligation to their creditors. Though poor, when debt free, we feel relieved and are mentally happy (Dhammananda, 2004: 96).

There are physical benefits from the application of the method of using as well. One of the Buddhist principles relating to consumption is that one should know the right amount in food (bhojane mattaññutā). Taking too much food or overeating is recognized as a factor not only for uneasiness but also for various illnesses. It is reported that the Buddha proposed one meal for a day to his monastic members knowing that taking less food is contributory to less illness (appātankatā) and physical comfort (appābādhatā),(Abhayawansa, 2014: 10) lightness of the body (lahuṭṭhān), power (balaṃ) and easy living (phāsuvihāra) (Kariyawasam, 2014: 59). Physical illness is a stressor that causes a person to be stressful (Fink, 2000: 36.). When one is physically well the stress that originates from physical

illness will not arise.

Consumption of food, drinks, or drugs, that may become a stressor, which is any situation or problem that causes stress, should be controlled. Drug or alcohol abuse is proven to be a stressor that causes a person to be stressful. If any bad consumption is capable of causing stress then one should stop doing it. For example if addiction to alcohol or any substance brings about all the physical psychological social problems one should quit that addiction. It is true that stress is major factor that leads a person to use alcohol thinking that it will alleviate the stressful feelings but in the meantime addiction to alcohol becomes a major factor that increases stress.

Application of the Method of Endurance (Adhivāsanā)

The fourth method is to consciously and deliberately endure difficulties and afflictions caused by external circumstances, harsh treatment by others, and adversity in general (Buddharakkhita, 2011: 105). According to the Sabbāsāvasutta one reflecting wisely, bears cold and heat, hunger and thirst, and contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things; he endures ill-spoken, unwelcome words and arisen bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, distressing, and menacing to life.

Patience is mainly beneficial to overcome stress originated from anger. Anger is indeed an emotion that can stimulate stress (Humphrey, 2002: 3). Apart from that when one is trying to perform something positive in order to overcome stress there arise difficulties from many factors. In such situation if we can develop patience and continue doing that positive task we will be able to achieve desired objective and overcome stress.

It is elaborated in the Kāyagatāsatisutta that practicing mindfulness of the body is a way to cultivate patience. Additionally to cultivate patience one could practice walking meditation as it is recommended in the Pancakanipāta of the Anguttaranikāya that by practicing walking meditation one can practice patience.

Application of the Method of Avoidance (Parivajjanā)

Application of the method of avoidance can be implemented to avoid stressors that cause stress. When we become aware of situations that are causing negative stress, we can sometimes avoid these situations altogether. In a modern study concerning stress this method is recommended as a preliminary step towards a situation where a person has to deal with a person who can cause recurring feelings of insecurity, fear, and stress (Koster, 2007: 59). Next is avoiding sitting on unsuitable seats, wandering to unsuitable resorts, which is concerned with avoiding unsuitable environments and living in a suitable environment. Many modern researches have stated the fact that environment plays a great role in increasing and decreasing of stress (Rose, 1994: IX). Similarly according to Buddhism it is considered 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 mentioned in the Visuddhimagga as a calm and quiet surrounding, peaceful area, place, suitable residence, forest, grove, good weather, etc. are environmental prerequisites for being engaged in meditational practices directing one's mind to spiritual development. 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 (Rathnasiri, 2014: 91).

Another applicable method recommended in this method is to avoid association with bad people. Peer pressure is another proven factor that causes a person to get into stressful situations. It is agreed by modern psychologists that social support plays an important role in how people deal with challenges and threats. Supportive interactions and the presence of supportive relationships in people's lives have been shown to play a major role in physical health, emotional well-being, and work performance. Social support helps people manage the uncertainties associated with stress and increase their sense of personal control or efficiency over their environment (Charles, et al, 1996: 3).

Avoidance of bad people is not enough but in return the association of good people is advocated in this section by stating one should not associate with somebody because the other good people may not accept him for associating with that person. Acceptance by good people is given an importance in Buddhism. Even in modern scientific studies about stress it has been stated that not only the sense of support that facilitate the coping with stress but also the sense of acceptance plays a significance role in facilitating with overcoming stress (Charles, et all, 1996: 20).

Furthermore the modern psychotherapeutic approaches advocate the method of association with good companion. It is recommended in modern psychological literature concerning stress that sometimes we can cope on our own, or with help from loved ones, but if is getting intolerable stressful, you might consider finding a good therapist to help you get your stress under control. It is recommended that one may seek professional help from psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical counselors, social workers, and religious leaders (Mcintosh, et all, 2017: 208).

Application of the Method of Removing (Vinodanā)

In most of the modern psychological studies the elimination of the factors or the situations that cause stress is recommended as a very efficient method to overcome stress. It is stated that cross-cultural comparisons of stress and coping in North America, Europe, and Asia have found problem solving the most effective strategy for dealing with stress (Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007: 354). Unlike Buddhism modern psychological studies have not concerned much regarding the eradication of negative mental aspects that deeply rooted in the human mind. In contrary in Buddhism the eradication of the deeply rooted negative mental aspects is recommended to overcome mental illness and following problems.

K. Sri Dhammananda (2004: 51) after analyzing stress according to the modern findings stated that man experiences stress and suffering because of five psychological states which envelop his whole personality. They are called Nīvarana in Pāli language, meaning hindrances. They hinder happiness and overcloud man's vision of himself, his environment and the interaction

between the two. The thicker and more strong these hindrances, the greater the stress and suffering man experiences. The thinner and more sparse these hindrances, the less his suffering with a corresponding increase in happiness. These five hindrances are the desire for sensual pleasures, anger, indolence, worry and doubt. Therefore the elimination or at least momentary control of hindrances is essential to overcome stress and achieve mental wellbeing. And also the removal of sensual desire, ill will, cruelty or any other evil unwholesome thought as instructed in Sabbāsavasutta is totally applicable to get rid of mental aspects that are capable of causing stress. This method of removal is not very much advocated in modern psychological researches.

Application of the Method of Development (Bhāvanā)

To overcome stress not only the elimination of negative aspects but also the development of positive elements is essential. First of all one must develop mindfulness (sati). Mindfulness is practiced through the four foundations of mindfulness by contemplating the body as a body, contemplating feelings as feelings, contemplating mind as mind, and contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 2005: 145).

The practice of mindfulness is often coupled with another quality, clear comprehension (sampajañña), which is mentioned within the basic formula and also separately. Clear comprehension is explained with reference to the bodily postures and routine activities of everyday life, with reference to the arising and passing away of feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. The commentaries explain clear comprehension to have a fourfold application: as full awareness of the purpose of one's actions; as prudence in the choice of means; as engagement of the mind with the meditation subject; and as discernment of things in their true nature, free from delusion (Bodhi, connected, 1507). The process of cultivating awareness according to the Mahāassaputasutta is one should train in full awareness when going forward and returning; when looking ahead and looking away; when flexing and extending our limbs; when wearing our robes and carrying our outer robe and bowl; when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; when defecating and urinating; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 2005: 366).

It has been proven by modern researches that cultivation of mindfulness produces beneficial effects on wellbeing and improves psychiatric and stress-related symptoms. Mindfulness meditation has therefore increasingly been incorporated into psychotherapeutic interventions. Many researches document the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions in the treatment of various clinical disorders, including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, and chronic pain. Furthermore, mindfulness meditation positively influences aspects of physical health, including improved immune function, reduced blood pressure and cortisol levels, and increased telomerase activity. Not only has mindfulness successfully been used in the treatment of disorders and improvement of health but it also been shown to produce positive effects on psychological wellbeing in healthy participants and to enhance cognitive functioning (Fazekas, 2017: 110).

It is further confirmed that there are many programs devoted to the mindfulness path to human well-being and happiness: mindfulness-based stress reduction, dialectical behavior therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. Cultivating emotional balance (CEB), developed by Ekman and Wallace was started as an educational venture as well development of mindfulness based emotion focused therapy. Training and practice, drawn from contemplative science, is also a core feature of CEB. Contemplative practice can lead to well-being through the alleviation of tensions and anxieties (Silva, 2014: 88).

To all those who care for mental stability and sanity through a systematic utilization of human deliberation and effort in order to transform the mechanical processes of thought in such a way that one could gain mastery over one's thought resulting in overcoming self-produced psychological suffering, the practice of mindfulness is considered to take the highest priority. It is for this reason that in the field of modern psychotherapeutic practice the term mindfulness has become one used frequently in the vocabulary of the therapists. There is no doubt that a considerable number of modern psychotherapists, engaged in the use of mindfulness as their principal method of therapy for psychological illness, acknowledge their indebtedness to what they have gained as theoretical information and practical experience regarding the role of mindfulness in the Buddhist soteriological system (Pemasiri, 2017: 130).

Another factor that must be developed to overcome stress is viriya (energy), which literally means ‘virility’, ‘manliness’ or ‘heroism’(from vīra, man, hero). Viriya is one of the five spiritual faculties and powers (bala), one of the seven factors of enlightenment (bojjhanga), and identical with right effort of the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Atṭhāngika Magga) (Nyanatiloka, 1988 366). The faculty of effort along with other faculties has as its final goal the removal of lust, the removal of hatred, the removal of delusion (Bodhi, 2000: 1707).

How viriya (energy) which is one of the seven enlightenment factors operates can be explained in the following manner. In the process of developing enlightenment factors when one who investigates and examines any state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it, tireless energy is aroused. On whatever occasion tireless energy is aroused in a bhikkhu who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it, on that occasion the energy enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment in him. In one who has aroused energy, unworldly rapture arises (Ñānamoli & Bodhi,2005: 942).

Development of Passaddhi which is tranquility, calmness or relaxation is another aspect that can be applied to cope with stress. Passaddhi which is one of seven factors of enlightenments consists of tranquility of mental factors (kāyapassaddhi) and tranquility of consciousness (citta passaddhi) (Nyanatiloka, 1988: 240). Moreover paṭipassaddhi pahāna (overcoming by tranquillization) is one of the five ways of overcoming negative factors (Nyanatiloka,1988: 228).

According to modern psychological studies relaxation is one of the primary components of all kinds of meditation which induce a pleasant and deep relaxed state of body and mind. Herbert Benson developed a therapeutic technique called “relaxation response” which is a form of meditation. His whole concern with meditation was to reduce stress and hypertension by inducing a state of deep relaxation. Furthermore it is affirmed that relaxation is essential to overcome stress ignited by anxiety. The method called Systematic Desensitization which invented through Joseph Wolpe’s behav-

journal therapy is especially instrumental in reducing anxiety. This therapy is based on state of relaxation. (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010: 446).

Posture mindfulness is recommended to relax one's body as well as the mind. According to the author of the book titled a technique of living, the essence of the adapted practice of posture mindfulness is to give special attention to the various muscle groups of the body, searching for unwanted tension in the muscles and consciously relaxing them. While the mindful and systematic application of consciousness to tense muscles is generally effective in relaxing them, they may soon afterwards become just as tense again. One must consciously and deliberately tense the muscles so as to make the tension-process accessible to consciousness and to remove it from the realm of subconscious activity (Bullen, 1982: 23).

Another factor which is one of the most important factors in overcoming stress is the factor of equanimity (upekkhā). Upekkhā, Upa = impartially, justly +√ ikkh, to see, to view, to look. Upekkhā is to view impartially, i.e., neither with attachment nor with aversion. It is the balanced state of mind. Attachment and aversion are eliminated by Upekkhā. Impartial attitude is its chief characteristic. Upekkhā does not mean mere neutral feeling, but a sterling virtue is implied thereby. Equanimity is the closest equivalent. That term, too, conveys only one aspect of Upekkhā. It is this Upekkhā that is elevated to a Bojjhanga factor. Upekkhā embraces all good and bad ones, loved and unloved ones, agreeable and disagreeable things, pleasure and pain and all such similar opposite pairs (Mahathera, 1987: 137). And greed and resentment are its far enemies. Therefore equanimity must be practiced free from fear of that, for it is not possible to look on with equanimity and be inflamed with greed or be resentful simultaneously (Ñānamoli, 2010: 313). Equanimity is characterized as promoting the aspect of neutrality towards beings. Its function is to see equality in beings. It is manifested as the quieting of resentment and approval. Its proximate cause is seeing ownership of deeds kamma thus: "Beings are owners of their deeds". It succeeds when it makes resentment and approval subside, and it fails when it produces the equanimity of unknowing, which is that worldly-minded indifference of ignorance based on the house life (Ñānamoli, 2010: 312).

It has been elucidated in the Numerical Discourses that it is impossible and inconceivable that one might develop and cultivate the liberation of the mind by equanimity, make it one's vehicle and basis, carry it out, consolidate it, and properly undertake it, yet lust could still obsess one's mind. The liberation of the mind by equanimity is the escape from lust (Bodhi, 2012: 868). Furthermore the Buddha advised to develop meditation on equanimity for when one develops meditation on equanimity any aversion will be abandoned. The method of developing equanimity can be seen in many suttas. According to the *Vatthūpamasutta* the practitioner abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with equanimity, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 2005: 435).

Apart from development of the above mentioned factors development of any positive factor that will act as an antidote and counteract the negative aspects and factors associated with stress is essential to overcome stress and to achieve mental wellbeing which is the expected benefit of overcoming stress.

Conclusion

The seven methods found in the *Sabbāsavasutta* which has been instructed by the Buddha for the overcoming of cankers are applicable to the managing of stress. The method of seeing is applicable to get a better vision of the stress and ways to deal with stress. The method of restraint is applicable to control one's faculties so he or she will not be enslaved to the craving and desires of gratification of the senses. Application of the method of using will be beneficial to overcome the materialistic addiction and overconsumption of foods and drugs. The method of endurance is applicable to overcome stress caused by anger and impatience. The method of avoidance will be helpful in avoiding stressful environments. Method of removal will be applicable in getting rid of negative mental aspects that are the root cause of the mental illness. This method can be said as a unique method advocated in Buddhism. The application of the method of development will enable the development of positive mental factors that are helpful and essential

in overcoming stress. In overall application of these seven methods will cover many aspects of human life and will be helpful in managing stress and maintaining mental wellbeing amidst all these stressors we encounter in daily life.

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