Comparison between postures of meditation Theravada Buddhism and Taoism

M. D. D. I. GUNATHILAKE ∗

Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to comparatively explore about sitting and walking meditation postures in term Taoism and Theravada Buddhism with regard implication in modern society as a treatment for the beings to get rid of the disorders and make their physiological and physical well-being. Taoism and Buddhism, both of them have meditation methods called Sitting and working. Those are very ancient traditions and fattsens. Sitting postures in both are so close with quite different and working posture is so different with quite similar. They are used seated posture keeping their right bent leg on their left bent leg with kept right palm on the left and straight body. In Theravada, they use very calm and quite style for the working meditation but in Taoism not it same manner. It is very close to dancing or physical exercise. Therefore, they strongly believe that meditation will positively impact physical well-being of the humans. This statement proves that there are meditation postures as they Owen. As for sitting and working. The Taoism probably focuses on the physical strength by the practicing of the meditation. Yet, in Theravada Buddhism strongly believing and arguing that both sitting and working meditation will positively impact physiological as well as physical well-being of the human and show how it happens? Historiography is the main methodological approach to analyze the main argument of this research. Therefore, the main source of methods such as historical Records, documents and various scholarly arguments have been critically used for the content analysis in this research. Postures of Meditations were comparatively discussed while also focusing on the positive effect of meditation for mental and physical diseases in both Taoism as well as Buddhism. Special attention has been given for this research on how physical and mental health was impacted by practicing these two types of meditations. It has proven that both sitting and working meditation have been positively correlated with physical and mental health of the people who are living with stressful, competitive, complicated and market oriented modern society. It has proved that there is a tremendous trend has erupted that higher ranking professionals and richest people have been engaging in both sitting and working meditation for their physical and mental well-being. It is not a local trend but also global one. Non Buddhism or Taoism countries like European people also innovatively have been engaging in meditation practices due to its physical and mental relaxations. This research has various significances to the modern world because of that, is the non epidemic diseases have been rise up due to mental stress. These two seated meditation postures frequently can be applied as a treatment of stress and physical well-being. And also, it leads to making easy all the daily routines in practical world. Academically, outcomes of this research can be utilized by the scholars who are desire to do a research on meditation and postures as their major, this study will help to them in their future research.

Keywords: Sitting Meditation, Working Meditation, Physical well-being, Physiological Well-Being, Taoism, Buddhism

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theravada Buddhism is the major religion in Sri Lanka which is closely associated with the Sri Lankan community. The influence of Theravada Buddhism is evident in social, economic and political aspects and the literature shows that Buddhism even has influenced the throning and dethroning of Kings in the past. Therefore, it is embedded in the sri lankan culture so tightly and it is the foundation of the human civilization of Sri Lanka as well.

Taoism is also the major religion in China, which was originated about 2000 years back. Taoist teachings cover a wide range of areas in peoples lives similar to Buddhism. China without Taoism can be interpreted as a tree, which is devoid of roots. Taoism is greatly involved in expanding the knowledge at individual and national levels in China. Among the teachings of Taoism the idea of symbiosis is an interesting phenomenon to society.

∗ Corresponding author: Gunathilake
1 Email: dunesh@sjp.ac.lk
There are many books written about these two religions which has a significant value in physical and psychological aspects, by several national and international writers. The researches and books written regarding the meditation practiced in these religions which bring about positive results in psychological as well as physical well being are very much of importance (Angriani, Ariffin, & Rahmawati, 2017; Cuyugan et al., 2017; Mongia, 2016; Nuchso, Tuntivivat, & Klayklueng, 2016; Shaw, 2006). Most of these researches discuss each meditation separately in various aspects. But so far there had been no comparative studies done regarding the meditations of Taoism and Theravada Buddhism. Thus my research became slight difficult during the literature survey and I have proceeded with my research after careful analysis on the literature written about each religion separately.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in my research was to make use of primary and secondary sources and to conduct discussions with scholars of Sri Lanka and China that are well versed in this subject. Another research methodology employed by myself here was to get a large number of facts revealed by conducting a discussion with a Buddhist monk in meditation center Sri Lanka.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A fact that becomes evident when meditation techniques of Buddhism and Tao religion are studied is the existence of similarities and differences between them. One of the meditation positions in Buddhism is the seated position (Shaw, 2006). In this position one sits on the floor and then bends the right leg and keeps it on the bent left leg. This while keeping the straight body one keeps the right palm in the left palm and continues meditating with the eyes half closed. This is also known as the seated posture method. The following diagram clarifies this.

This is indicated as the easiest and most common position among the Buddhist meditation techniques Buddha hood was achieved by the Bosath in this position. Lord Buddha as well as his followers are mostly shown in this meditative position. This method is also known as being in a Samadhi.

There is also a method of meditation carried out in this manner in the Tao religion. The meditators cross their legs to create a base for sitting on the floor. The basic sitting postures described in (Taoism are Crossed legs, Half Lotus and Full Lotus postures) 1 2 3. The sitting on the wall to make base should be done crossing their legs. One of these postures. He who follow that are able to place the hands overlap inference of the dantien or on the knee.

1 Crossed legs: simply cross the legs in front of the body. Both feet are hid under the thigh. It is easier, and is recommended for beginner

2 Half Lotus: cross one leg on top of the other. Place one foot on top of the opposite thigh. The sole of the foot is to face upward. This posture requires greater flexibility of the leg, and the ankle. It is more difficult than the crossed leg, but it provides a stronger base. The foot that is facing upward can be used to channel down energy

3 Full Lotus: same as the Half Lotus except that both legs are cross, and both feet are on the opposite thigh. Both feet should face the sky. As your flexibility increases, the feet should come closer to the body. This posture is the most difficult, but it gives the meditator a solid base. The Full Lotus also provides the body with extra blood supply from the legs, as the legs were crossed. This enables more energy to travel upward to the higher centers.
Gunathilake / Comparison between postures

palm. Haven energy is received by this. The entire physical body is bathed by soles and fall lotus with together. Universal Chi is yang in nature will ascend towards the 1st crossed legs; legs are simply crossed in front of the body and hid under the thigh. It is the easiest one most appropriate to beginner. Three half lotus; one cross top other and place one on opposite thigh. There would be very flexible legs and ankles. This is difficult more than crossed one. If it so provides stronger base. The upward facing foot can be used as channel down energy.

Full Lotus; Same to half lotus but not crossed legs and foot on opposite thigh. Feet should turn to sky. The feet should close to body as the flexibility. This is the most difficult one. The Solid base is provided. This has provided extra blood supplier to body from legs. These facts are more energy to upwards. The general Rule of this sitting posture is to be comfortable which ever done.

Analyzing the above facts the sitting postures of both meditation techniques it becomes evident that postures described in both religions are the same. Both Theravada Buddhists and Taoist teachings suggest that the best sitting posture is the full Lotus posture. However, for beginners both religions approve the half lotus position and crossed leg position.

The position of hands in Theravada meditation is always on the lap with hands overlapping each other (usually right palm over the left palm) and in contrast in Taoist sitting posture the hand could be kept either overlapped in front of the dantien (Lap) or on the knee palms up.

Two postures are more basic for meditation in the Taoist meditation. They have seated posture and standing postures. In Theravada there are no such postures described by Lord Buddha as postures of meditation.

In seated posture, the mediator sits on a chair with a flat sitting area. It should have the same height as the mediators knees (B. Frantzis, 2009). He must sit with feet flat on the floor. These feet should.

Be kept apart as the shoulders. According to standing posture, the practitioner should stand since about one. However it might seem like person are not doing anything. But workloads are equal physically and mentally. Taoist called to this Seeking motion within stillness The Practitioners are doing energetic patterns in inner and outer.

Naturally, Legs strength and Standing opens the hands and feet. It can also teach that energy is ground to the earth. Standing posture comes from the crown of the head. And earth chi come from the sole of the feet. As a result of that standing has used to cultivate the chi.

In Buddhism there is another posture identified for meditation. That is waking (Hanh & Anh-Huong, 2006). Lord Buddha introduced this to the world during the periods of first seven weeks after gaining Buddha hood (Gethin et al., 1998). This meditation is conducted in the following manner.

Walking meditation is a method of keeping the mind on a common focus. It can be practiced anywhere, anytime, for the rest of our life. It can also produce very deep concentration and clear insights into the mind/body.

Figure 2. Posture
processes, as in sitting meditation. Therefore, every sitting meditation should be preceded by walking, of at least ten minutes, because walking centers the mind and provides the necessary preparation for a mindful sitting. The walking path should be between three to ten meters in length, ideally about six meters. Walk with eyes cast down about two meters ahead of your steps. Hold your hands in front or behind. Before changing posture from sitting to walking, practitioners should make a note in the intending mind as intending. When the practitioners reach the other end of the walking path, they stop, stand and turn while closing their eyes. Sometimes sensations may interrupt during walking meditation such as a headache or a dizzy spell etc. Then practitioners should stop and note dizziness, or headache. The practitioners react to them as earlier mentioned in sitting meditation. Remember, whatever sensations occur in the body, the mind (knowing) and actions must come together on every occasion. The action standing should be carried out slowly. Physical movement of the foot in walking meditation has six parts (Hanh & Anh-Huong, 2006).

Figure 3. Walking meditation

Figure 4. Positions
The practitioners must follow the whole process of the movements of the feet very attentively, closely and slowly. They can see the walking process of six parts when the mind is subtle with its skills of attention. Beginners should spend time noting Part 1 for two or three days. After that they can go straight to the noting of the next parts. For experienced practitioners, they should spend about five minutes noting Part 1 first and then go to the next steps.

A reason for noting attention, or wishing, or wanting before changing postures is because every action is the work of bodily and mental processes. The aim of awareness is to realize them in their true nature. Therefore, this meditation is not just for concentration but for realization of mental physical processes too. This realization is called Vipassana Ñana, insight knowledge that leads to enlightenment (Gyatso, 2008).

The following description about the walking meditation in Tao religion shows that it bears a similarity to this. For meditative waking, it is good to walk in gardens. A quiet environment is the pre-condition. The air is cleaner than on the street and the surrounding plants increase the supply of oxygen. Concentrate the mind without tension. Cast the eyes forward and place the tongue against the palate then walk with the body erect.

Relax the shoulders and loosen the elbows and knee joints. The arms hang naturally; at the sides swinging neither too high nor too low in coordination with the steps. As in Tai chi chuan the fingers should not be separate but should be together and curve naturally. Direct the bulk of your weight to below the navel the foot touching the ground will bear the brunt of your weight while the other foot remains light and weightless. Wear shoes that are roomy enough to let the toes and feet move comfortably. Thus when you place the whole bottom of the foot on the ground while walking the pressure of the step stimulates the veins, arteries nerve lines and glands contained there. Meditative walking is auxiliary to sitting meditation (B. K. Frantzis, 2001).

CONCLUSION

According to the above analysis, there are close similarities in the ways how the body is positioned in this posture. Similarities are seen in the manner the hands are kept the activity of eyes selection of a suitable environment and the way of walking. But differences are seen among the objectives of meditation. While the Theravada Buddhism keeps one of the 41, kammahna (objects of meditation) as the objective the Tao religion does not speak about any such objective. Therefore, this could be introduced as a posture of meditation taught based on worldly objectives.

REFERENCES


advancement program. Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, 2(2), 87-95. doi:https://doi.org/10.26500/jarssh-02-2017-0202

Mongia, B. M. (2016). Overcoming the trauma through the psychedelic in one flew over the cuckoos nest. Journal of Advances in Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(3), 156-167. doi:https://doi.org/10.20474/jahss-2.3.4