

Tapa and Dhyāna:
From Vedas to Buddha to ‘Back to the Vedas’

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*Yoga ve jayati bhuri, ayoga bhurisankhyo
etam dvedhpatham natva, bhavaya vibhavaya ca
tatha ttanam niveseyya, yattha bhuri pavaddhati.*

From earnest meditation is wisdom born, without meditation
wisdom is lost. With knowledge of the two fold paths of loss and
gain of wisdom, if one conducts oneself, the wisdom may increase –
(Dhammapada, verse 282)

One of the greatest challenges faced by the mankind of twenty-first century is struggle with oneself. The technology driven world has brought all the possible comforts at the doorsteps. The revolution in social media has connected every user with thousand likes of men from the virtual world but has distanced him from the real one. The lesson has been well learned to post a happy picture of oneself on virtual social platforms, which in most of the cases is just the opposite of reality. The fast pacing world has burdened the shoulders with high expectations and man has succumbed to them. This has created anxiety that is directly proportional to the mental health and inversely proportional to the physical health. The mental health is as important as the physical fitness. If the physical well being is important to put work in action; a sound mind is required for healthy functioning of cognitive and psychological health - the foundation of the ‘social’ for the *homo sapien sapien*. Imbalance in mental health can lead to depression, anxiety, diseases related to personality disorders such as bipolar personalities, autism, alzheimer, schizophrenia, delusions, paranoia only to name a few along with several addictive behaviors. Aggravated mental illness can bring in unexplained physical pain and suicidal thoughts. The gravitas of mental illness in one of the most developed nations of the world, The United States of America, can be gauged from the data released by the *American Psychiatric Association*, where one in five (19%) of adults experience mental illness, one in twenty four (4.1%) have serious mental illness and one in 12 (8.5%) have diagnosable stage of mental illness.¹ The table below summarises data released by the *World Health Organisation* on severe mental illness worldwide, through which one can assess the urgency for treatments.²

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Table 1: Worldwide data on Mental Illness released by WHO, 2019

Mental disease/illness	Data world wide	Symptoms
Depression	264 million	Most common mental disorder that also results in physical disability. Severest form lead to suicides. It is characterized by sadness, loss of interests, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, tiredness, and poor concentration, multiple physical complaints with no apparent physical cause.
Bipolar Disorder	45 million	High mood swings, elated and depressed feelings at the same time, racy thoughts, unable to process thought and speech and restlessness.
Schizophrenia	20 million	Delusion, hallucinations, negative thoughts, disorganized thinking and abnormal motor behaviour.
Dementia	50 million	Progressive nature leads to deterioration in cognitive function related to memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgment. It is commonly accompanied with deterioration in emotional control and social behaviour.

The irony with mental illness is that though it is widespread, it becomes diagnosable only in progressive stages. Many a times symptoms are not even considered worth treating and all of this is topped with social taboo. The affect of mental illness is not restricted to the person affected but people surrounding him face the adverse impact and hence the illness disrupts the social harmony too. Looking at the cause-effect and ubiquity of mental illness, the clinical world has geared up and does not want to leave any stone unturned for therapy. Along with medication, several therapeutic techniques are used for treatment. Meditation, which is a technique of concentrating the mind on a particular object and allow the free flow of thoughts for couple of minutes which when practised for longer period of time can be extended for several hours. This technique is believed to train the mind for attention and awareness and hence balances the emotions and controls the voluntary actions. The psychological world is fast incorporating meditation as a part of therapy to treat mental illness. There is a growing body of scientific researches carried out on in several countries that supports meditation as a resourceful technique to control depression, bipolar personality disorders and reduce the anxiety levels.³ The symbiotic relationship between meditation and mindfulness is gaining ground not only among the clinicians but even among people who desire to optimize performance in everyday life and care about self beyond materialism.

Western Interest and Buddha

The origin of meditation is credited to ancient Indian traditions. Buddhism has become one of the most popular world religions and Buddha, the symbol of mindfulness and serenity. The popular statues of Buddha are in *abhayamudrā*, *dhyānamudrā* and *bhūmisparśa mudrā*. Thereby, Buddha has become the face of meditative mind. West woke up to Buddha with the writing of Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*, published in 1879. It was so well received by readers that it got translated into several foreign languages and went through numerous editions in England and America. George Cobbold, an Anglican clergyman in 1894, described it as the book which drew the English people to Buddhism and wrote ‘Men and women have risen from perusal of the Light of Asia [sic] with a sense of damage done to their Christian faith, and with a feeling ... that in Gautama Buddha they have been confronted with a formidable rival to Jesus Christ’.⁴ Max Muller, the author of the volumes on the *Sacred Books of the East*, wrote that among the heathenish religions, Buddhism was praised by all English men and women for its purity and humanitarian approach.⁵ Monier-Williams, who was least sympathetic of Oriental scholars, in an address given to the World’s Missionary Conference in London, expressed his surprise that even educated persons fall into rapture over the doctrines of Buddhism.⁶ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, galaxy of scholars wrote on Buddhism that comprised of Spence Hardy, Thomas Rhys Davids, Monier-Williams, Carl Koeppen, Oldenberg, Barthelemy St. Hilaire and Eugene Burnouf. Journals like *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Academy*, *British Quarterly Review*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *Fortnightly Review*, *The Edinburgh Review*, *London Quarterly Review* added information about Buddhism and played a crucial role in spreading awareness about Buddhism to the European world. The enormous literature resulted into the establishment of *Buddhist Society in Great Britain and Ireland* in 1907 and thus led the foundation of several Buddhist societies in the western world in due course of time. The journey of enlightenment became popular among general readership.

With the increasing interest in Buddha, the Buddhist philosophy became a matter for inquiry, debate and discussions among the academia. Anxiety ridden minds of common man got attracted towards the *dhyāna mudrā* of Buddha, stylised in the idols that exuberated calmness and smile. And thus, meditation and its benefits were credited to Buddha in popular perception. Buddha and

Buddhism was the product of sixth century BCE India, thence the inquiry - is *dhyāna* as old as Buddha or older than him?

Meditation and the Vedic Traditions

The statue of a male bust and seal of Paśupati both found at Mohenjo-daro are the first few material remains of a meditative postures found in the Indian subcontinent. The male bust, interpreted as 'priest' or 'king' is kept in Karachi (in the National Museum of Pakistan). It has half closed eyes and expression of tranquillity on face. The seal of Paśupati is kept in Delhi (in the National Museum of India). It is an engraving of a seated *yogi* on a steatite seal. In the textual sources, the Vedic literature refers to a set of words which later culminates into the world of meditation. The *Ṛg Veda*, earliest of the Vedic literature, dated to 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE mentions word *tapas* and *tapo*.⁷ The word *tapas* was derived from the root *tapa-* that means to burn, brighten and to cause pain. It is a power which is present in deities, through which they protect, create and destruct. Agni, one of the most revered gods of *Ṛg Veda*, is instilled with the energy of *tapas*. The very opening verse of the *Ṛg Veda* elucidates on Agni and his power of *tapa*.

*Agnimīle purohitam yajñasya
devamṛtvijam, hotāram ratnadhātāmam.*

Agni, who I adore, who stands before the lord, the god who
sees truth, the warrior, strong disposer of delight.
(*Ṛg Veda*, 1.1.1)

Significant god, it stands before all sacrifices, he has Burning eyes that can gaze straight at truth, and he is the warrior and destructs the ignorance that disrupts the *yogi*. He is the protector of divine energy because he is endowed with *tapas*. Indra, another important deity of *Ṛg Veda* acquired the power of *tapa*, he had thunderbolt as a form of energy and won over battles. Indra conquered heaven after performing *tapas*.⁸ Yajña was performed and performer wished that Indra be on his side and grant him victory.⁹ In the later chapters of *Ṛg Veda*, *tapas* became a power that can be achieved by humans through inflicting physical austerities, primarily shunning off the comforts of life; disciplining oneself. The power that comes after leading an ascetic life ensured protection, victory in battle and destruction of evil. *Tapas* had the definite sense of ascetic practices. *Tapas* was regarded as an activity in which the ascetic exposed oneself to the fire like mortification and imbibed the power to radiate from it, which could be used by the person as a weapon. *Tapas* granted the power to control different energies circulating in the body

and once the art of control came in, the person (sage) was endowed with similar energies of Agni.¹⁰ In the later Vedic texts, *tapas* is considered as medium to enter the divine world.¹¹ The power of *tapas* was not restricted to destruction and protection but it also was a source for creation.¹² By end of the Rg Vedic age, i.e., 1000 BCE, the connotation of *tapas* transcended from physical austerities, mortification, and self disciplining oneself to achieve material gains; to a means that could lead a soul to the divine world. *Tapas* became a tool to wash away sins committed in one's life. The materialism was taking a back seat and *tapas* was being performed for spiritual gain.¹³

Sanyāsa was another word that has been referred in the Vedic texts along with *tapa*. *Sanyāsa* is a way of life that aims at living in bare minimum, one who leaves the worldly comfort and contemplates. *Sanyāsa* signifies the renunciatory life, which Buddha became a symbol of in the popular perception. *Sanāyisi*, *Sādhu*, *Yati*, *Bhikṣu*, *Pravrajitā* and *Parivrajaka* were the words used for persons who followed the renunciatory life.¹⁴ *Keśin* (who has long matted hair) and *munī* (who observes silence) of *Rg Veda* refers to person with a personality who had shed away the idea of being 'attractive' to the world and hence had denounced the worldly opinions and norms and practiced silence, thereby concentrated more on the virtues of listening - listening to oneself; observing the world and nature; and putting them into contemplation. These attributes were associated with asceticism. Asceticism or *sanyāsa* was a combination of discipline and mull. This exercise was primarily for material gains in the early Vedic age. Mysticism was a later addition to Vedic ascetics.

The physical austerities led to purification of the body that was followed by the mental purification which in turn came from *jñāna* (knowledge). *Jñāna* was sharpened and made perfect through the process of deep thinking. The characteristics of physical sufferings were almost similar to what was practiced in the early Vedic days, i.e., oriented to denial of worldly comforts, pleasures, observing abstinence. Deep thinking in *sanyāsa* resulted into realisation of body being ephemeral and hence there was a need to perform *tapa* in order to leave the body behind and merge the soul residing in the body with the eternity. The objective of salvation brought in the element of mysticism and hence philosophised the practice of *tapa* and *sanāyasa*. By the period

of early *Upaniṣads*, knowledge, *tapa*, ascetism and *mokṣa* became interlaced while materialism took a back seat.¹⁵

In the *Ṛg Veda*, *vrata* occupied a very important place and had been found in association with many gods. Kane followed the ancient etymology of Yāska, who gave three meanings of *vrata*, i.e., action, vow and food. ‘If a man imposes upon himself certain restrictions as to his behaviour or good to win the favour of the gods that becomes a sacred vow or religious observance.’¹⁶ Thus *vrata* can be interpreted as law, duty, religious or moral practices, observance, sacred or solemn vow/or undertaking, or pattern of conduct.¹⁷ *Vrata* had been associated with celestial bodies that add certain sense of sanctity to it. *Ṛg Veda* informs that goddess Usā never broke the divine laws. Gods did not break the *vrata* of Indra.¹⁸ The wise sages never violated his *vrata*.¹⁹ The wise were said to follow the *vratas* of Indra and gods, such as Varuṇa and Sūrya followed *vrata* of Indra.²⁰ *Vrata*, when observed by performer of the *yajña*, the sense is of determination or vow rather than law. Agni and Soma guarded the *vrata* of the sacrificer;²¹ Varuṇa was given the task of protecting the *vrata*.²² *Vrata* in the vedic literature is considered as efficacious as *tapas*. The determination of reaching a goal had gained prominence in the Vedas. The concept of *dharma* in Rig Veda is yet another word that can be read along with the above referred words. *Dharma* was more about law. Law is believed to have been created by god to run the world smoothly. Agni was *adhyakṣa* of *dharma* and Indra was *dharmakṛta*.²³ The early *Upaniṣads* that shared the chronology with the age of the Buddha had philosophised all the above discussed words, i.e., *tapa*, *sanyāsa*, *vrata*, *dharma*, *mokṣa*, *gyāna*. In the *Upaniṣads*, *tapas* had been associated with *yajña* as well as *jñāna*, where *jñāna* superseded sacrifice and at many a places have either declared latter as useless. *Tapas* had been categorised under lower and higher degree, where *tapas* that emphasize on sacrifice and its merit is considered as the lower form.²⁴ Among the four *aśramas* delegated to a brahmanical life cycle, the *vānprastha* was considered as the most meritorious way of achieving the fruit of *tapas* than performing sacrifice, as this phase initiated one into denouncing the worldly affair and contemplation of *ātman*.²⁵ The ascetics with *jñāna* were considered worthy than the ones who performed *yajña*.²⁶ Thence, by 800 BCE the Vedic literature had shifted its focus on *tapas* from sacrificial performance to *tapas* that gave utmost importance to the union of soul with the eternal energy; the argument that was to gain significance in the Buddhist teachings. If the teachings already existed in the Vedic texts prior to

the coming of Buddha, what made common man associate them with the Buddha? The Upanishadic traditions failed to percolate the teachings to popular culture. It was Buddha who became the face of all the elements of *tapas* that emphasized on the importance of knowledge. He practiced the teachings on himself first, went through physical austerity that purified the body, self-disciplined, went through *tapa*, took *vrata* to follow the virtue of *alpa*, contemplated about life and the sufferings inflicted by the world, practiced *dhyāna* that aligned the mind, body and soul, which was coined as ‘meditation’ in the modern world and then, propagated the observations and result to the common man.

Urbanisation in 600 BCE

If *tapa*, *sanyāsa*, *vrata*, *dharma*, *dhyāna* were older than Buddha, then one contemplates was it just the self practise of Buddha and his propagation that led to the popularity of Buddhist tenets or was the age, 600 BCE, impregnated with factors that were ready for a democratic change and an alternative religious practise? To look for a response one needs to re-visit the century in which Buddha lived. The economic historians, on the basis of textual and archaeological evidences, have termed sixth century BCE as the phase of Second Urbanisation in ancient India. The narratives of Buddhists texts are in and around the Ganga - Yamuna landscape, where the stories of flourishing economy and social turmoil go hand in glove with each other. The economic potentiality of this region has been assessed on factors such as: the average annual rainfall was between 114cm to 140 cm; two perennial rivers, Ganga and Yamuna brought in abundant alluvial soil and dense forests rich in timber and other natural products were located in this area. The later brahmanical texts refer to *kṛṣṇayasa* that has been associated with iron metal. The durability of iron as a metal in comparison to copper and wood implements has been credited for the expansion of settlement in the 600BCE. The iron tools were used in clearing forests and ploughing fields. The expansion of agricultural fields resulted in expedition of the surplus agricultural production, as one would see that the early Buddhist texts have categorised arable land on the quality of its production; usage of irrigation and detailed account of rejuvenating the productivity of arable land. The surplus agricultural production and better animal husbandry laid the foundation for the emergence of towns in sixth century BCE. The archaeological excavations had produced material remains of sixty cities in different parts of the country, out of which

twenty cities were extremely important in terms of trade and connectivity.²⁷ The cities were located in the North-West region, Gangetic valley, Central India and Deccan.

Table 2: Names of forty important cities located in different regions of the Indian subcontinent during 600BCE.

Regions of India	Cities	Dates
The North -West region	Charsda & Taxila	600BCE-200BCE
Indo Gangetic Divide, the Upper Ganga Valley and the Doab	Kashipur, Ropar, Agroha, Purana Qila, Hastinapur, Mathura, Sonkh, Kampilya, Ahichchatra, Ayodhya, Kausambhi, Sringerapur	1000 BCE -200BCE
The Middle and Lower Ganga Valley	Rajghat, Saravasti, Kapilvastu, Vaishali, Rajagriha, Champa, Chandraketurgh, Tamluk, Wari Bateshwar, Mahasthangarh, Kausambi, Kara, Sringerapur, Bhita, Jhansi, Ahichchatra, Atranjikhara, Jakhera	800 BCE- 200 BCE
Central India & Deccan	Tripuri, Airakin, Eran, Ujjaini, Vidisha, Paithan, Nasik, Tagara, Adam, Nagal, Broach	750 BCE- 200 BCE

Early Buddhist texts refer to a wide range of non- agricultural occupations carried out in rural and urban areas of sixth century BCE.²⁸ People engaged in different agricultural activities are quite common in the textual sources but what startles a reader is the range of non agricultural professions. All most all the occupations that one could think of in modern day urban life was present in the sixth century BCE. Estate managers (*peṭṭanikas*), police men (*rāja-bhaṭṭa*) wage workers (*kāmmakāras*) craftsmen, washermen, barbers, tailors, painters, cook, soldiers (*yodhajīvas*), physician (*vejja bhīṣakka*), scribes (*lekha*), actor (*naṭa*), dancer (*nāṭaka*), magician (*śokajjayaka*), acrobat (*laṅghika*), drummer (*kumbhathunika*), fortune teller (*ikkhānika*), courtesan (*gaṇikā*), prostitute (*vesī*), vehicle maker (*yānakāra*), ivory maker (*daṇṭakāra*), metal smith (*kāmmara*), goldsmith (*suvaṇakāra*), silk weaver (*koṣiyakāra*), carpenter (*pālaganda*), needle maker, reed worker, garland maker, potter are only few professions to name here that one encounters in the narrative of the texts. *Śreṇi*, *nigama*, *puga*, and *sangha* were different kinds of business organizations prevalent in cities. The Jātakas mention about eighteen guilds that shared close association with the kings. The markets were regulated in coins and different

denominators were termed as *kahapaṇa*, *nikka*, *kamṣa*, *pada*, *maśaka* and *kaṇika*. The coins though regulated by kings, were minted by different merchant houses.²⁹

The trade and commerce in the cities changed the social milieu of sixth century BCE. The virtue of wealth added new dimensions to social relationships. *Gahapati*, who was head of the house, the principle sacrificer of *yajña* in 1500BCE, turned in to a peasant proprietor, when land was taking a definite shape of property and expansion of agriculture was taking off; and by the sixth century BCE, *Gahapati* became affluent enough to finance several royal activities. The famous Anāthapiṇḍikā was one such *Gahapati*, who donated Jetavana to Buddha. The Jātakas provide a picture of *Gahapatīs* who were wealthy enough to command respect and run finances of the then time period. The narratives of the Jātakas present a picture of the growing divide between rich and poor. The tribal ideals of kinship based on social relation of the Vedic age were fading away fast and inequality was not confined to professions but encompassed people based on *varṇa*. *Varṇa*, that had a colour connotation in 1500 BCE, had become the defining criteria of social status for a person living in 600 BCE. *Varṇa dharma* was defined for Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. The set of norms and rules were codified for each of them in the brahmanical texts. Kings were given the task to ensure that the *varṇa dharma* was followed in his kingdom. Several dos and don'ts were laid down especially for the last two *varṇas*. Sixth century became an age full of contradictions; commerce and markets of cities were impregnated with possibilities of professions that could change the lives but the Vedic religious culture of villages and towns had restricted the opportunities in the name of *varṇā dharma*. Ironically, the *dharma* defined in brahmanism was affecting most of the producer communities. The farmers were being deprived of cattles as large number of them was given in *dāna* to the priests for performing *yajña* and the infertile and old ones were sacrificed in the name of rituals. The traders and merchants had to follow several don'ts, for instance, overseas trade was not allowed, and usury was considered sin.

Vedic Religious practices and Social Norms

In 600 BCE, prior to the religious protests, people at large were practising Vedic rituals that were coded in *slokas* and *suktas* of Vedas and Vedangas. These texts were primarily dedicated to *yajña* and invocation of deities to fulfill the desires of devotee. The priest was the mediator

between the devotee and the deity. Ritual performances and adherence to certain way of life was the solution suggested for any kind of problem faced in one's life. The correct performance of *yajña* was cardinal. A complete text, *Yajurveda*, dedicated to it proves the point in case. The nature of *yajña* transformed over a period of time. It began as a personal affair and was performed as daily sacrifice (*agnihotra*) within the precincts of home, by the head of the family; to a public affair that involved years of preparation, under the supervision of several qualified priests and enormous gifts ranging from cereals to *dāśas* and *dāśis* were given as gift to the priests. The *Āśvamedha* and *Vājapeya yajña* could be used as examples to present the pompous of sacrifice practice of the later and post Vedic age. The *yajña* was only for the *dvījas* that constituted of *Brāhmaṇa* and *Kṣatriya*. There was no religious respite to the lowest *varṇas*, even if the Vedic norms were followed entirely, as the birth in a particular *varṇa* was resultant of *karmas* performed in the previous birth. The rigidity and orthodoxy of the main stream Vedic practices aggravated the seething anguish among the people who felt left out in the society. *Vaiśyas*, the main producer of the society was given third rank in the social hierarchy and were ripped off the *dvīja* status which they enjoyed in the early Vedic period, despite them being the financiers of several religious and royal events. *Śūdras* were meant only to serve the upper three *varṇas*. *Kṣatriyas* were the protector of the society but they too were below the *brāhmaṇas* in the social rank. The non believers in the Vedic culture faced different set of social problems. They were either manoeuvred to join the sanskritic tradition or were pushed to the margins of seclusion and exclusion. Thence, the religious practices in the rural and urban areas had become priestly and costly affair where most of the people were mere spectator.

The first reaction to pompous and imperious Vedic ritual practices came from within the fold of Vedic tradition, where the learned and curious minds shunned off the comfortable life and moved to forest. They led a life of *sanyāsa* performed *tapa* and *yoga*, observed *vrata* and contemplated about the existence and purpose of life. They philosophised the connection between *ātmā* and *brahma*. The Vedic religion now had a fellow brother that contemplated and criticised the ritual practices of the Vedic sacrifices. The philosophy of early *Upaniṣads* emphasized on search within than outside. A thread of which could be traced in the practice and philosophy of Buddha.

Buddha and Contextualisation of Philosophy

Gautam, a prince from Śākya clan ruling in the foothills of Himalayas; practiced *tapa*, *yoga* and *sanyāsa* in Uruvelā and received enlightenment under a peepal tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) on the banks of Niranjanā river. After enlightenment, he was named as the Buddha and the tree was named after him, *Bodhī Vṛkṣa*. Buddha went to Sarnatha for his first sermon and formulated *cattāri ariyasaccāni*, *samudaya*, *nirodha*, *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga* and *nibbana*. *Sukha* was considered temporary and knowledge, the only path to *nibbana*. The knowledge could be attained by aligning the body, mind and soul and in the process of contemplation, free flow of thoughts and then concentrating one object or thought became central. *Alpa* was a virtue that needed to be inculcated in one's life. Buddha went on to propagate his teachings and created large number of followers in the process. Buddha's approach to democratise the teachings, opened the gates to everyone unlike, the philosophy of Brahmanism which opened the doors only to the ignited minds of the time, created a marked difference. The philosophical quest of Upanishads remained restricted in the circles of *araṇyakas*. The exposition of the philosophies was complex for general consumption. People who felt humiliated in the Vedic religious practices were common man. They were looking for an alternative philosophy that could connect them with the eternity and the exposition needed to be as simple as their daily life. Buddha gifted them the simplicity. The simplicity began with the usage of Pāli, the common man's language, in sermons unlike the usage of Saṁskṛta, the language of learned brāhmaṇs, popularly known as the god's language. Buddha divided his teachings in two phalanges, one for laity and the other for monks and nuns who took to monasteries. *Dhyāna*, contemplation, living on alms, following rules that could lead souls closer to *nibbana* were emphasized for monastic lives; and the ones who wanted to follow his teachings living a domestic life were asked to follow *madhyamika magga*, the middle path or the path of balance. The four noble truths, eight noble paths, causation and removal of cause of pain and fragility of happiness were the foci of Buddha's philosophy. Buddha contextualised the philosophy that could address the anxiety and provide solutions to the needy unlike the Vedic philosophy that criticised the pompous rituals but gave exposition within the boundaries of Vedic standards. Buddha considered life as *dukkha*. This generalisation

brought all lives across the *varṇas* on a single measuring scale unlike the Vedic concept that segregated lives according to *karma* of previous birth and life of first two *varṇas* were always kept on the high pedestal. The transient nature of happiness had echoes in the Vedic philosophy but the co- relation between desire and sorrow was explained to the common man in the simplest way by the Buddha, which attracted people towards his teachings. The denial to desires catered solution to several problems of the society. Desire changed in every stage of life and hence was the main cause for unhappiness. The desire could encompass material or ritual satisfaction, both if not fulfilled had the potential to cause pain. Buddha explained the causation and encouraged people to live life in bare minimum by following the eight fold paths. He completely discarded the idea of performing rituals for religious merits. The idea that knowledge could lead one to *nibbana* and not the performance of certain set of rituals opened the gate for contemplation and *tapa* to everyone across the *varṇa*; which the Vedic philosophy could not open its heart to. The democratic approach of Buddha's philosophy and his simple and lucid explanations and aptitude to contextualise the teachings with the ongoing turmoil of society made Buddha and his practices popular.

NOTES:

¹Report of *American Psychiatric Association*,
URL:<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>, accessed on 24/6/2020

²Report of *World Health Organisation* on mental illness, URL:
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders> accessed on 24/6/2020

³Refer to the article, William R. Marchand, MD, 'Mindfulness Meditation Practices as Adjunctive Treatments for Psychiatric Disorders', *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, Vol. 36, Issue 1, March 2013, and article by Tania Perich, Vijaya Manicavasagar et al., 'Association Between Meditation Practice and Treatment Outcome in Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Bipolar Disorder', *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Vol. 51, Issue 7, July 2013. Both the articles based on scientific research helps in assessment of the clinical benefits of mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) and mindfulness based stress reduction therapy (MBSR) and the usage of meditation for patients with mental illness.

⁴ G.A. Cobbold, *Religion in Japan: Shintoism-Buddhism-Christianity*, London, 1905, p. 17.

⁵ F. Max Müller, *Lecture on Buddhist Nihilism*, A.K. Butts & Company, 1869, p. 132.

⁶ Phillip C. Almond, *The Discovery of Buddhism*, CUP, Cambridge, 1988, p.4

⁷ Ralph Griffith (trans.), *The Hymns of Rig Veda*, Benaras, 1896; RV I. 105. 8; III. 53. 22

⁸ RV 1.6.10; 1.12.1; 1.52.10

⁹ RV I.53.4

¹⁰ As cited in, W.O. Kaelber, *Tapta Marga : Asceticism and Initiation in Vedic India*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1989, p. 52.

¹¹ J. Eggeling (trans.), *The Śathapatha Brāhmaṇa*, London, 1900, SB 10.4.4.4

¹² RV 6.61.1; 10.154.5

¹³ Ralph Griffith (trans.), *The Hymns of Atharva Veda*, Benaras, 1895, AV 4.34.1; 6.133.4

¹⁴ Patrick Olivelle, 'Contributions to the Semantic History of Saṃnyāsa', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 101, No. 3, 1981, pages 265-274.

¹⁵ Daniel H. H. Ingalls, 'Dharma and Moksha', *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 7, No. 1/2 (Apr. - Jul., 1957), pp. 41-48

¹⁶ Kane, P.V. *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol.5, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1958, p.6.

¹⁷ Kane, 'The word Vrata in the R̥g Veda', *JBBRAS*, Vol.29. (1954). pp.1-28.

¹⁸ RV. III. 32.8

¹⁹ RV. VII 31.11;

²⁰ RV. I.101.3.

²¹ RV. 1.93.8.

²² RV. VII. 83.9

²³ RV. VIII. 98.1

²⁴ *Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.1-2

²⁵ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 2.23.1

²⁶ *Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad*, 6.2.15-16

²⁷ See for the detailed account of cities emerging in 600BCE in D.K. Chakrabarti, *The Archaeology of Ancient Indian Cities*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2001 and by the same author in *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology: The Archaeological Foundations of Ancient India, Stone Age to 13th Century*, Delhi, Oxford University Press. 2006.

²⁸ See for different kinds of professions carried out in 600 BCE in Narendra Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Bombay Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1963.

²⁹ Refer for the history of coins in Ancient India, Upender Thakur, *Mint and Minting in Ancient India*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Delhi, 1972 and Rekha Jain, *Ancient Indian Coinage: A Systematic Study of Money Economy from Janapada Period to Early Medieval Period (600 BC to AD 1200)*, D.K. Printworld, Delhi, 1995.