Approach to Spiritual counseling using Buddhism

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Abstract. This study was started in a critical mind to investigate that what kind of approach Buddhism has to spiritual counseling. Buddhist counseling teaches how to live wisely by a way to promote awareness and developing human, spiritual potential. Namely Buddhism thinks that reaching to liberation to realize one's nature, beyond the ego, is the fundamental solution to the human psychological problem.

Keywords: Buddhism, spiritual counseling, samatha, Vipassana

1 Introduction

The modern science of psychology starts to show its interest in spirituality as the important aspect of human life, providing the wisdom of healing to mankind. Consequently research on spiritual counseling also begins in the domain of counseling and psychotherapy.

Etymologically spirituality stands for the psychic nature or characteristics of soul (spiritus) and spirit (pneuma). In Christianity it tends to identify it with faith. In Philosophy of religion it may be defined as “spirit, sacred area, or kinds of sensitivity clawed back to the problem of religious value.” In the perspective of psychology or comparative religions, spirituality makes itself a subject of discussion in more general terms[1]. Buddhism regards spirituality in the nature of enlightenment as the overall action of bodily discovering oneself covered with stupidity and greed[2].

Given the concept of spirituality suggested in existing research about spirituality, in religious context it mainly relates to inner peace or mystical experience, higher consciousness, on the other hand in non-religious context, it has been studied mostly for existence problem in the perspective of philosophy and anthropology [3]. Huebner [4] suggested that it is necessary to remind the meaning of ‘spirit’ without reflecting any certain religion for preventing distortion of the concept itself. Wilber[5] refers spirituality as what transcend a rational or individual level, or special attitude, not a pre-personal · pre-rational level.

From the early 20th century in counseling clients’ interest in spirituality is continuing an increase trend, because it is the natural part of the development in personality.
Only a few years ago counseling and spirituality has been split, and it wasn’t until recently that spirituality begins to be included in the framework of general counseling. Richard and Bergin (1997) recommend evaluating the spiritual system of a client to counselors for getting a more accurate and complete diagnostic skills [6]. From this standpoint, when therapists conduct a Buddhist approach that includes therapeutic point of view and principle, it seems that they can have more in-depth approach to deep insight into humans, and consciousness of being rooted here.

The counseling system in the west aims at self-realization. Buddhist counseling has ‘abandoning of the ego’ or ‘transcending the ego’ for its object. Buddhist counseling teaches how to improve awareness, and live wisely with development of full humanistic, spiritual potential in human. Therefore Buddhism in spiritual counseling approaches clients’ problems as holistic healing.

2 Approach to spiritual counseling in Buddhism

In the early texts (Pāli-Nikāya), execution of Buddhism has two kinds; ‘samatha’ and ‘Vipassana. ‘Samatha practice (Samatha-bhāvanā)’ is called ‘Samadi practice (Samādhi-bhāvanā), because it develops concentration through stillness. ‘Vipassana practice (Vipassanā-bhāvanā)’ is called ‘Vanya practice (Paññā-bhāvanā) because it develops the wisdom of inner insight. In other words, samatha aims at calming down the excitement, and Vipassana is a kind of anga for removing MuMyeong (avijjā) [7].

2.1 Saseongje (catvāri-āryasatyāni)

Through the Saseongje, the process to resolve the problem of the client’s pain is as follows.

First, Pain to Notice Process (Goseongje)

The first stage of the Saseongje is to realize suffering. The first time when counselor meets client, it is the process of searching and evaluating what the pain of the client is. Also, this is the process that the client himself/herself discerns what their pain is on their own, so that the counseling goal can be set. It is about the facts that life is full of suffering, and a set of problem posing about the reality of ourselves and the world.

Second, to Reveal the Cause of Pain Process (Jibseongje)

This is the stage of realizing and understanding the cause of pain. Jib is get-together and its cause, namely the cause of pain, because it becomes the cause for objects to gather for happening. The cause should be recognized since the cause of pain is bound to agony.

Third, the Disappearance of Pain Process (Myeolseongje)

This is the process of dissipation of harmful psychological effects that disturb body and mind, and prevent sound judgement, only when what the pain of clients is, and the cause of it is aware of and realized.

Forth, Methods Process (Doseongje)
This is the process of achieving one’s object for nirvana which can be reached by practice the Paljeongdo(āryāṣṭāṅgika-mārga). Doseongje offer the eight kinds of asceticism. As such, the Saseongje allows people who don’t know what they look like, precisely to realize inconvenience and contradiction of reality.

2.2 Sanyeomcheo(cattāri sati-paññānāṁ)

The purpose of Vipassana practice is to look at the phenomenon as it is, and to acquire wisdom of eliminating the fundamental mental anguish of obsession or anger etc., and get insight into the characteristics of presence. On this wise, for Sanyeomcheo Vippassana to be used in the counseling scene, the counseling process based on the teaching of Buddha is as follow.

The First Stage: Faith
Client is guided to believe that it is possible to attain growth in terms of their innate spirituality, and bare their problem shamelessly, and be immersed in practice on their own. It should be aware what will cover out of client’s problems through Sanyeomcheo. Counselor ought to see client as they really are, and penetrate their mistaken beliefs that contribute to suffering.

The Second Stage: Understanding
Coinciding the time when the client opens their hearts, problems are naturally solved by identifying and understanding how suffering and false belief is associated. To remove the client’s mistaken view, once 12Yeongibeob is understood, through practice with a clear understanding the fact that Oon(pañca-skandha) is sure to come and go, they can see it as agony, and want to leave it.

The Third Stage: Action
Correctly be aware, looking to inhalation and exhalation. Perform the Paljeongdo, and be conscious of agony rising and disappearing through Sanyeomcheo practice.

The Forth Stage: Gain
Sanyeomcheo is the practice that allows performers to ‘realize’ themselves as an integrated whole person through ‘self-observation’ based on body. Intentionally every moment is without judgement, while paying attention to. Thus, psychological, spiritual healing would be experienced.

As for the development of universal human capability, Vipassana helps to get sound mind and spiritual growth, because it maximizes one’s own healing power such as self-control.

3 Conclusions

Samatha and Vipassana practice is to stop one’s swinging heart by constantly making an observation on target. In addition, through the phenomenon that is detected indirectly, it can be concluded that this Yeongi is for inducing the awareness of the truth.

As a result, the healing characteristics in spiritual counseling is firstly, with embodied spirituality bring into growth of spirituality via self-observation going through
improvement of harmonious self-control and contact consciousness over environment. Secondly, they lead to ‘conversion of awareness’ developing attentiveness and self-awareness resided in universal human ability. Thirdly, spiritual counseling allows us to change improper habits with ‘the perception of reality’ and ‘awareness expansion.’

References