

**DRUG (INTOXICANT) ADDICTION AND BUDDHISM:
PROBLEMS AND REMEDIES**

Arvind Kumar Singh

**Editor in Chief
Dr. Iromi Ariyaratne**

© Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy



DRUG (INTOXICANT) ADDICTION AND BUDDHISM: PROBLEMS AND REMEDIES

Arvind Kumar Singh¹

Abstract

Drug addiction is defined as a condition characterized by compulsive drug intake, craving and seeking, despite what the majority of society may perceive as the negative consequences associated with drug use. Buddhism is a global social movement that for 2600 years has been warning about the damage that drugs (intoxicants) cause in the minds of people. Buddhism argues that drug addiction is a symptom of existential dissatisfaction (*Dukkha*) or absence of Sense of Purpose (*Dhamma*) in the world, so that the individual flees from the present to surrender to an existence based on illusion. The growth of drug trafficking and addiction to drugs is evidence that people live more and more in a fictional world, lacking ethical goals and spiritual hopes.

The present paper has examined not just what Buddhism has to say directly about problems of drug (intoxicant) addiction, but has used the basic principles of Buddhism to explore such problems, raising the question of the appropriateness or correctness of such an approach. Applying the Buddha's teachings to this burning global issue of our time is not against the spirit of Buddhism as throughout its history Buddhism has adapted to the various needs of different peoples and cultures. To cover the main issues relating Buddhism to additions, this paper further deals with various topics in relation to the theme and has divided the content of this research under five sub-themes: Introduction, Buddhist Conception of Intoxicating Drinks (Drugs), Buddhist Perspectives on Intoxicating Drink, Drawbacks of Addiction to Intoxicating Drinks, and Advantages of being a Teetotaler.

Keywords

Drug, Intoxicant, *Surā*, *Meraya*, *Majja*, *Āsava*, *Dāna*, *Pañcasila*, *Bhāvanā*, *Paññā*, *Jātaka*, and *Vinaya*

Drug addiction is defined as a condition characterized by compulsive drug intake, craving and seeking, despite what the majority of society may perceive as the negative consequences associated with drug use.¹ World Health Organization (WHO) Expert Committee on Addiction-Producing Drugs have defined addiction

¹ Arvind Kumar Singh (PhD), Assistant Professor, School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization, Director, International Affairs, Gautam Buddha University, India. E-mail: aksinghdu@gmail.com

and habituation as components of drug abuse; Drug addiction is a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by the repeated consumption of a drug (natural or synthetic). Its characteristics include:

1. an overpowering desire or need (compulsion) to continue taking the drug and to obtain it by any means;
2. a tendency to increase the dose;
3. a psychic (psychological) and generally a physical dependence on the effects of the drug; and
4. detrimental effects on the individual and on society.

The reasons why people start to abuse substances may be many, such as curiosity, peer pressure, boredom, and the lack of self-confidence or even a secret spiritual longing. Nevertheless, substance abuse can generally be considered as a symptom of a conscious or unconscious deep crisis in one's life. Alcohol and drugs serve to cover up the existential frustration and the anxiety that are linked with it. Moreover, most drugs poison the body and create psychological and/or physical dependency. Long term drug abuse doesn't only lead to serious problems for one's health; it also very often leads to a decay of one's character: will power, sincerity, integrity and self-esteem are little by little sacrificed. One starts to nourish darkness instead of one's inner light. This inner misery then requires an increased 'anesthesia' through drugs. After some time, one finds oneself hopelessly caught in a self-destructive vicious circle.

Buddhism is a global social movement that for 2600 years has been warning about the damage that drugs (Intoxicants) cause in the minds of the people. Buddhism argues that drug addiction is a symptom of existential dissatisfaction (*Dukkha*) or absence of Sense of Purpose (*Dhamma*) in the world, so that the individual flees from the present to surrender to an existence of illusion. The growth of drug trafficking and addiction to drugs are evidence that people live more and more in a fictional world, lacking ethical goals and spiritual hopes.

Intoxicating Drinks (Drugs) in Buddhist Teachings

Alcohol is a chemical produced by fermentation, which suppresses the central nervous system and causes intoxication when ingested. Alcoholic drinks are usually made from fermented fruits and spirits made by distilling either beers or wines. Four main types of alcoholic drinks are mentioned in the *Tipiṭaka*. *Surā* was brewed from rice or flour,² *meraya* was distilled alcohol made from sugar or fruit and sometimes flavored with sugar, pepper or the bark of a certain tree.³ *Majja* was made from honey and *āsava* was made from the juice of the palmyra palm or the wild date palm and could be either just brewed or distilled.⁴ Many cultures have myths explaining the origins of alcohol, often including the notion that it was a gift from the gods.

In one of the *Jātaka* Stories, it gives a plausible explanation of how alcohol came into the world. Long ago in a certain forest there was a fruit tree which had a large forked trunk with a depression in it. Rain Water collected in the depression,

fruit fell into it and warmed by the Sun it fermented. In the summer, thirsty birds drank from the depression, became intoxicated, fell to the ground and after sleeping for a while, flew away. A hunter observed this and curious as to its cause, he too drank some of the liquid and became intoxicated. Later, he introduced it to his friends and so it was that alcohol became known. According to the *Jātaka*, this discovery became the cause of innumerable social ills.⁵

As per the *Kumbhajātaka* story of how a forester, *Surā*, accidentally discovered strong drink, and how, with the help of his accomplice, the ascetic Varuṇa, he spread abroad the discovery, which would have led to the destruction of all Jambudīpa, had Sakka not appeared on the earth and by his exposition of the evils of drink induced Sabbamitta, king of Sāvatti, to abstain from its use. The story was told in answer to a question by Visākhā as to the origin of drink. Another version relates that once during a drinking festival at Sāvatti, 500 women, friends of Visākhā visited Jetavana in her company. On the way they became drunk, which led to their behaving improperly in the monastery.⁶ The Buddha frightened them by his *iddhi* power and restored them to their senses.⁷ The story of the past is also given in the *Jātakamālā*.⁸

The term “drug” is interpreted differently under differing circumstances.⁹ A drug is any substance (other than food that provides nutritional support) that, when inhaled, injected, smoked, consumed, absorbed via a patch on the skin, or dissolved under the tongue causes a temporary physiological (and often psychological) change in the body. In Pāli, the term ‘*Majja*’¹⁰ refers to intoxicant, intoxicating drink, spirits¹¹. Besides, ‘*Surā*’¹² is also another term concerned with spirituous (intoxicating) liquor. In the original Buddhist text, *Surā* generally relates to a material thing such as whisky or brandy whereas *Meraya* is *Āsava* (defilement) and it is not a solely material thing but rather a mental phenomenon.

Among kinds of *Surā*, the following are mentioned in the Buddhist sacred scriptures;

1. A wine prepared from rice (*Piṭṭhasurā*)
2. Prepared from sweet cakes (*Pūvasurā*)
3. Prepared from boiled rice and also with ferment and spice (*Odanīyasurā*)
4. Prepared from dregs or sediments of *Surā* (*Kiṇṇapakkhittasurā*)
5. Prepared from cake or bread (*Sambhārasamyuttasurā*)
6. *Meraya*;
 - a. prepared with extracts of flowers (*Pupphāsava*)
 - b. prepared with extracts of fruits (*Phalāsavo*)
 - c. prepared with extracts honey (*Madhvāsavo*) and
 - d. prepared with extracts of sugar (*Guḷāsavo*) mixed with various spices

7. *Kāpotikā* and *Pasannā*: two other types of liquor mentioned in the *Vinaya*.¹³

So, according to Buddhism, it is mandatory for Buddhists to abstain from taking liquor as taking intoxicants makes for mental insanity (*Ummādanam*), creates a kind of stupefaction or hypnosis (*Mohanam*) and it thereby considered that only a fool takes liquor (*Bālakanta*). The Buddha made clear how harmful intoxicants are. He gave six points as the primary defects of liquor. According to the *Sigālovādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, *Surāmeraya* is the first thing that takes people to hell. In this context, the Buddha pointed out the following six defects.

1. Wealth is wasted in front of one's eyes (loss of wealth) (*sandiṭṭhikā dhanajāni*)
2. Increasing conflict in society (*kalahappavaḍḍhanī*)
3. Increasing various diseases (*rogānam āyatanam*)
4. Losing his senses (*kopīnanidaṃsanī*)
5. Evil Reputation (*akittisañjananī*)
6. Weakening the wisdom of the person (*Paññāyadubbhikāraṇī*)

Problem of Addiction to Intoxicating Drinks

In order to maintain and develop the economic balance for each individual, the Buddha advised the householders to avoid being addicted to intoxicating liquors because of its six dangers or consequences (*Surāmerayassachāādīnavā*) as mentioned in the *Sigālovādasutta*:

1. Actual Loss of Wealth (*sandiṭṭhikā dhanajāni*)
2. Increase of quarrels (*kalahappavaḍḍhanī*)
3. Susceptibility to Disease (*rogānam āyatanam*)
4. Earning an Evil Reputation (*akittisañjananī*)
5. Shameless Exposure of Body (*kopīnanidaṃsanī*) and
6. Weakening intellect (*Paññāya dubbhikāraṇī*).¹⁴

Surāmeraya is addiction to intoxicant drinks in canonical texts. There are two more things that ruin people's life, addiction to woman and gambling. When one addicts to these three things, one will destroy what he gained. Therefore, he will not be prosperous but will go to hell as these three things are called *Apāyamukkha* or the entrance leading to unpleasant result. Moreover, the user of intoxicants will be reborn in woeful abodes. Even when he is freed from there and is again reborn as a human being, he will encounter the following evil consequences;

1. Lack of intelligence,
2. Being lazy,
3. Lack of mindfulness,
4. Being ungrateful,
5. Lack of moral shame and moral dread,
6. Insanity and
7. Tendency to commit all evil deeds.¹⁵

However, not only Buddhism bans Buddhists from drinking but also other religions have promulgated commandments not to drink. This prohibition of alcohol is a widespread religious viewpoint and outlook. But, in society there is not any article of law strictly prohibiting drinking. Actually, in order to maintain one's health and a happy life, one should not drink intoxicating liquors because of the dangers as mentioned above as well as over 25 advantages¹⁶ that a man could enjoy by refraining from taking alcoholic drinks of any kind as listed in the commentary to the *Khuddakapāṭha*.¹⁷ The taking of intoxicants is defined as the volition leading to the bodily act of ingesting distilled or fermented intoxicants. It can be committed only by one's own person (not by command to others) and only occurs through the bodily door. For the precept to be violated four factors are required;

1. the intoxicant
2. the intention of taking it
3. the activity of ingesting it and
4. the actual ingestion of the intoxicant.

The motivating factor of the violation is greed coupled with delusion.

Remedies to Get Rid of Intoxicating Drink

Buddhists are advised to follow the ethical teachings as taught by the Buddha. They are guided to make merit from three bases of merit making, charity or donation (*dāna*) precept (*sīla*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*). Again, in the three main bases of individual development or education (*tisikkhā*) Buddhists are encouraged to fulfill three levels of development or three trainings, moral code (*sīla*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā, prajñā*). These ethical teachings are applicable for lay devotees. In this study, the focus is laid upon the moral code or precept. In this section, the attention will be paid to the moral code as its contents deal with drug addiction. According to Buddhist moral codes, there are three sets of precepts, a minor set of precepts (*cūlasīla*) consisting of five items of good behaviour, a medium set of precepts (*majjhimasīla*) consisting of eight items of good behaviour (*aṭṭhasīla*) and a great set of precepts (*mahāsīla*) consisting of 227 rules for monks of the Theravada sect and 250 rules for monks of the Mahayana sect. Generally speaking, precepts or moral rules in Buddhism can also be categorized as mutually overlapping set of five, eight and ten (*pañcasīla, aṭṭhasīla and dasasīla*). Each item of which commands a specific prohibition.

The *Dhammikasutta* in the *Suttanipāta* is very important regarding refraining from taking liquor as for all of the other four precepts of *Pañcasīla* have only one stanza, but for the fifth *sīla*, pertaining to abstaining from alcohol, there are two stanzas. The fifth precept reads: *Surāmeraya majjapamādaṭṭhānā veramanisikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* (I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented and distilled intoxicants which are the basis for heedlessness). The word *Meraya* means fermented liquors, whereas *surā* means liquors which have been distilled to increase their strength and flavor. The word *majja*, meaning an

intoxicant, can be related to the rest of the passage either as qualified by *surāmeraya* or as additional to them. In the former case the whole phrase means fermented and distilled liquors which are intoxicants, in the latter it means fermented and distilled liquors and other intoxicants. If this second reading is adopted the precept would explicitly include intoxicating drugs used non-medicinally, such as the opiates, hemp, and psychedelics. But even on the first reading the precept implicitly proscribes these drugs by way of its guiding purpose, which is to prevent heedlessness caused by the taking of intoxicating substances.¹⁸ Hence, the precept implicitly prescribes these drugs by way of its guiding purpose, which is to prevent heedlessness caused by the taking of intoxicating substances.¹⁹

The taking of intoxicants is defined as the volition leading to the bodily act of ingesting distilled or fermented intoxicants. It can be committed only by one's own person (not by command to others) and only occurs through the bodily door. For the precept to be violated four factors are required;

1. the intoxicant
2. the intention of taking it
3. the activity of ingesting it and
4. the actual ingestion of the intoxicant.

The motivating factor of the violation is greed coupled with delusion. No gradations of moral weight are given. In taking medicines containing alcohol or intoxicating drugs for medical reasons no breach of the precept is committed. There is also no violation in taking food containing a negligible amount of alcohol added as a flavoring.²⁰

This fifth precept differs from the preceding four in that the others directly involve a man's relation to his fellow beings while this precept ostensibly deals solely with a person's relation to himself — to his own body and mind. Thus, whereas the first four precepts clearly belong to the moral sphere, a question may arise whether this precept is really ethical in character or merely hygienic. The answer is that it is ethical, for the reason that what a person does to his own body and mind can have a decisive effect on his relations to his fellow men. Taking intoxicants can influence the ways in which a man interacts with others, leading to the violation of all five precepts. Under the influence of intoxicants, a man who might otherwise be restrained can lose self-control, become heedless, and engage in killing, stealing, adultery, and lying.²¹

The Buddha prohibited drinking liquor which includes fermented²² and unfermented types as laid down in the fifth precept for lay Buddhists. The use of alcohol or intoxicants or other forms such as drugs, narcotics, etc. is regarded as a cause for one's downfall as shown in the story of the monk *Sāgata*. There are many examples of various evil actions springing from the influence of intoxication. As the Buddha taught to advise the layman in the *Suttanipāta*:

He should not take intoxicating drinks. The householder who likes this teaching should not urge others to drink and should not condone drinking, knowing that it ends in madness. Through drunkenness foolish people commit evils and cause them to be committed by other foolish people. Avoid that which is a realm of evil, maddening, deluding and the delight of the foolish.²³

Not only Buddhist lay disciples, but also Buddhist monks are also forbidden to partake intoxicants. When those who aspire to become monks seek admission to the Order as novices, they take upon themselves the observance of ten precepts²⁴ including restraint from the “occasion of sloth fermented liquor, spirits and strong drink.” For those monks who have received the Higher Ordination, if they partake of intoxicants, it is an offence coming under Expiation.²⁵ There are three aspects of not taking liquor.

1. One should not take liquor
2. One should not get others to take liquor and
3. One should not give consent to take liquor

Among the 550 *Jātaka* stories, there are many stories related to drinking alcohol, and most of these stories are mainly concerned with the adverse consequences of drinking alcohol. In the *Kumbhajātaka*, it has been mentioned that how a forester, *Surā*, accidentally discovered strong drink, and how, with the help of his accomplice, the ascetic *Vāruṇi*, he spread abroad the discovery, thus leading to the destruction of all Jambudīpa, had Sakka not appeared on earth and by his exposition of the evils of drink induced Sabbamitta, king of Sāvatti, to abstain from its use. The story was told in answer to a question by Visākhā as to the origin of drink. Once during a drinking festival at Sāvatti five hundred women, friends of Visākhā visited Jetavana in her company. On the way they became drunk, which led to their behaving improperly in the monastery. The Buddha frightened them by his *iddhi* (Psychic) power and restored them to their senses.²⁶ The following *Jātakas* are associated with drinking alcohol: *Vāruṇijātaka*, *Puṇṇapatijātaka*, *Andhabhūtajātaka*, *Illisajātaka*, *Surāpānajātaka*, *Sigālijātaka*, *Dubbacajātaka*, *Gūthapānajātaka*, *Nānacchandajātaka*, *Bhadraghaṭhajātaka*, and *Kumbhajātaka*. All these *Jātaka* stories give a clear cut message related to the grave consequences of drinking intoxicants (alcohol and various drugs).

Advantages of Being a Teetotaler

According to the commentary to the *Khuddakapāṭha*, there are thirty advantages of not taking alcohol:²⁷

1. Swift recognition of past, present and future tasks to be done
2. Constant establishment of mindfulness
3. Freedom from madness
4. Possession of knowledge

5. Non-procrastination
6. Non-stupidity
7. Non-drivellingness
8. Non-intoxication
9. Non-negligence
10. Non-confusion
11. Non-timorousness
12. Non-presumption
13. Un-enviousness
14. Truthfulness
15. Freedom from malice and harsh speech
16. Freedom from dullness both night and day
17. Gratitude
18. Gratefulness
19. Non-avariciousness
20. Liberality
21. Virtuousness
22. Rectitude
23. Non-angriness
24. Possession of conscience
25. Possession of shame
26. Rectitude of view
27. Great understanding
28. Wisdom
29. Learnedness and
30. Skill in understanding good from harm.

Ledi Sayadaw, a Pali scholar and founder of the Burmese Vipassanā meditation method, who knew the *Tipiṭaka* inside-out, shared some explicit observations about abstaining from intoxicants, which may surprise some modern-day readers. Referring to *The Book of the Eights of the Gradual Sayings*, Ledi Sayadaw states that,

“drinking intoxicants, if done frequently or habitually,” leads to being reborn as a mad person, or in hell, or as an animal, or as a hungry ghost.²⁸

Taking intoxicants constitutes unwholesome kamma and has two evil consequences: bad consequences in the present life, and an unfortunate future rebirth. Indulging in intoxicants should be taken seriously, because it also leads to one of the four states of misery: hell, animals, ghosts, and demons.²⁹ Unwholesome needs and deeds burn the mind and consciousness, resulting in suffering. Intoxicants even damage our genes and chromosomes. So we need to understand how craving intoxicants affects the mind and body: As a result of drunkenness . . . one performs bodily, vocal, and mental misdeeds, increasing harmful *kammas*. Killing, lying, and abuse are common consequences of drinking alcohol.³⁰

Indulgence in alcohol sows seeds of evil *kamma* which ripen as future suffering. A drunkard who continues accumulating evil *kamma* will be reborn in one of the lower realms after death. Having committed evil actions in past lives, while wandering endlessly in the rounds of *samsāra*, one should perform wholesome deeds in order to correct the imbalance of unwholesome *kamma*. In coarser realms, the *Buddhadhamma* is seldom if ever heard due to the prevalence of unwholesome *kammas* in thought, word and deed.³¹

As long as taking intoxicants continues, one’s evil *kamma* will keep ripening, resulting in rebirth in various hells as past misdeeds mature. Although beings may have performed good deeds in the past, such good deeds will not ripen to fruition due to the preponderance of present bad *kamma*. If one dies without abandoning evil, one will have failed to create the conditions necessary for escape from the effects of evil *kamma*.

When past evil *kamma* s ripen into unfavorable results, one may reach the *Roruva* hell. In *roruva*, there are two hells: *Jālaroruva* and *Dhūmaroruva*. So those who abuse alcohol must know about this danger and heed the Buddha’s warning. *Jālaroruva* is the fourth of eight great hells for serious crimes. It is beneath this earth and is just like a deep, wide cave of molten iron. Gamblers and drunkards suffer in this hell after their death. Their bodies resemble mountains. Their sense-doors look like streams. Streams of hot iron enter their mouths, noses, and ears. Their bodies are scorched by burning hot liquids without let-up. For one hundred thousand years or more they have to endure intense suffering, and absolutely no chance of happiness exists.

Dhūmaroruva exists beneath *Jālaroruva*. It looks like a great cave with a molten iron base. Those who indulge in drugs, heroin, marijuana, hashish, cocaine, etc., after their death, reach this hell. Their bodies look like mountains. Their eyes, ears, and nose resemble running streams. Hot and acrid smoke enters through the nine orifices to the interior of the body. They suffer this torture for at least one hundred thousand years. Bodily and mental pain are so intense that they defy description. So addicts should fear this danger and reform their behavior.

Intoxicants may provide a false sense of peace, but their side-effects harm the both mind and body, which is reflected clearly in the below passage.

Mentally, intoxicants make the mind vulnerable to evil forces. Addicts' bodies will be full of toxins and deteriorate physically. The mind becomes clouded by intoxicants, so it inclines more easily toward sensual pleasures and wrong views. Addicts become dependent on alcohol and drugs for mental peace, and cannot bear to be without them. Their befuddled minds long for these poisons, and when they fail to get them, their minds yearn for more. Although meritorious deeds should produce good results a thousand-fold, those who are addicted to alcohol cannot fulfill their potential due to mental impurities because of weakened mind states. When drinking intoxicants, one's mind is clouded by bad thoughts. The madness of intoxication corrupts the heart, even a good person's mind changes. A civilized state of mind becomes impossible as drunkenness wreaks havoc. The effects of past good deeds become weaker and weaker as their force diminishes. As only one thought can exist in the mind at any one time, memories of previously performed meritorious deeds cannot enter the mental process. Every time alcohol is taken, positive thoughts are lost. The mind is permeated with confusion, negligence, heedlessness, and coarseness, leading to various evil deeds. This state of mind overwhelms and inhibits the power of past good deeds, so they cannot produce positive results. Bad behavior weakens good character. Alcohol drives away pure thoughts and disrupts rational thinking. In this world are demons, hungry ghosts, and inferior Earth-bound deities. Spirits and demons live on islands, in wildernesses, and other remote places. Since drunkards and habitual drinkers are reborn in such existences, they undergo rebirth in states of loss, dependent on further bad *kamma*. Those who do not abstain from alcohol, even though they may call themselves Buddhists, will wander on in a series of low existences following the inexorable Law of *Kamma*.³²

The Fifth Precept is interpreted somewhat differently in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Bhikkhu Bodhi explains in that the Fifth Precept can be translated from the Pali to prohibit "*fermented and distilled liquors which are intoxicants*" or "*fermented and distilled liquors and other intoxicants*." Either way, clearly the guiding purpose of the precept is "*to prevent heedlessness caused by the taking of intoxicating substances*." According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, violating the precept requires an intoxicant, an intention to take an intoxicant, the activity of ingesting the intoxicant, and the actual ingestion of the intoxicant. Taking medication containing alcohol, opiates or other intoxicants for genuine medical reasons does not count, nor does eating food flavored with a small amount of liquor. Otherwise, Theravada Buddhism considers the Fifth Precept to be a clear prohibition of drinking. Although Theravada monks generally don't march around calling for prohibition, lay people are discouraged from drinking. In Southeast Asia, where Theravada Buddhism dominates, the monastic *saṅgha* often calls for bars and liquor stores to be closed on major *uposatha* days.

For the most part, Mahayana Buddhists follow the precepts as explained in the Mahayana *Brahmajālasūtra* (Brahma Net). In this *sūtra*, drinking liquor is a

"minor" offense, but selling it is a major breach of the precepts. To drink liquor hurts only oneself, but selling (and, perhaps, distributing it for free) hurts others and is a violation of the Bodhisattva vows. Within the several schools of Mahayana, there are some sectarian differences on the matter of drinking, but the Fifth Precept often is not treated as an absolute prohibition. Further, the meaning of 'intoxicant' is broadened to include anything that distracts us from the path, not just alcohol and drugs. Zen teacher Reb Anderson says, "In the broadest sense, anything we ingest, inhale, or inject into our system without reverence for all life becomes an intoxicant."³³ He describes the act of intoxication as bringing something into yourself to manipulate your experience. This "something" can be "coffee, tea, chewing gum, sweets, sex, sleep, power, fame, and even food." This doesn't mean we are prohibited from having coffee, tea, chewing gum, etc. It means to take care not to use them as intoxicants, as ways of soothing and distracting ourselves from the direct and intimate experience of life. In other words, whatever we use to distract ourselves into heedlessness is an intoxicant.

The fifth Precept which all Buddhists undertake to practice is *to abstain from consuming alcohol or any other recreational drugs*. In the case of alcohol, this is mainly because alcoholic intoxication clouds the mind, while the whole rationale of Buddhism is to clarify the mind. However, drinking alcohol may also result in several other personal and social disadvantages. The Buddha says that,

"There are these six dangers of drinking alcohol: loss of wealth, increase of quarrels, ill-health, a bad reputation, making a fool of oneself and impaired intelligence"³⁴

The Buddhist Tradition says that if one breaks the fifth Precept, this can easily lead to breaking the others. In the course of our lives, most of us develop mental and physical habits that enable nice, cozy states of heedlessness. The challenge of working with the Fifth Precept is to identify what those are and deal with them. From this perspective, the question of whether to abstain from alcohol entirely or drink in moderation is an individual one that requires some spiritual maturity and self-honesty. Here, I would like to quote Bhikkhu Bodhi, who is of the view that,

"to dispel any doubt about his reasons for prescribing this precept, the Buddha has written the explanation into the rule itself: one is to refrain from the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs because they are the cause of heedlessness (*pamāda*). Heedlessness means moral recklessness, disregard for the bounds between right and wrong. It is the loss of heedfulness (*appamāda*), moral scrupulousness based on a keen perception of the dangers in unwholesome states. ... The use of alcohol/drug blunts the sense of shame and moral dread and thus leads almost inevitably to a breach of the other precepts. One addicted to liquor will have little hesitation to lie or steal, will lose all sense of sexual decency, and

may easily be provoked even to murder. Hard statistics clearly confirm the close connection between the use of alcohol and violent crime, not to speak of traffic accidents, occupational hazards, and disharmony within the home. Alcoholism is indeed a most costly burden on the whole society".³⁵

The problem is not drinking with your friends/colleagues; the problem is the recklessness that inevitably follows from surrendering the self-control. "*Losing inhibitions*" is the equivalent of losing awareness of its effect on others.³⁶ At the societal level, intoxicants are probably responsible for inciting more mayhem than any other individual cause. David R. Loy pointed out the "no harmful intoxicants that cloud the mind, traditionally emphasizing alcohol although applicable to many other legal and illegal drugs as well"³⁷ In this connection he quoted the Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh's statement. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, this precept can be understood as,

"...no abuse of delusion producing substances, which (depending on how we use them) could therefore include television, Walkmans, cellular phones, the internet and other technological devices that many of us addicted to. Silicon chip miniaturization continues to provide us with more opportunities to divert and distract ourselves anytime and anywhere."³⁸

Conclusion

To sum up, I can say that the Buddhist doctrines throw ample light upon intoxicating drinks, how they arise, their results, and also how addiction to these substances can be managed by applying the words of the Buddha as depicted in the canonical literature even today. The Buddhist emphasis on observing the five precepts with emphasis on the fifth precept (*Pañcasīla*) makes such careful and mindful keeping of the precepts pertinent to the causes and mechanisms of addictions and also to possible healing from addiction. Certain Buddhist teachings relevant to addictions are presented within the context of Buddha's teachings as applied to contemporary approaches.

Methodology for the research includes exploring changing ethical behaviour and the use of Buddha's teachings as an adjunct to orthodox treatment for drug and alcohol addiction and as a means of self-change principles derived from Buddhism. This may be widely applied for helping many people with addiction problems in the contemporary world.

Abbreviations

- A. *Āṅguttaranikāya*
- D. *Dīghanikāya*
- DhA. *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*
- J. *Jātaka*

Khp. *Khudakapāṭha*
M. *Majjhimanikāya*
Sn. *Suttanipāta*
V. *Vinaya*

Endnotes

- ¹ Principles | National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014
- ² Sn. V. I. : pp. 205 - 398
- ³ M. I: p 238
- ⁴ V. II: p. 294
- ⁵ J. V: pp. 12-20
- ⁶ Ibid. : p. 14
- ⁷ Ibid. : p. 11
DhA. III: p. 100
Gives a slightly different version of the doings of Visākhā's friends
- ⁸ J. I.: p. 165
- ⁹ EB, Vol. IV, 1979: pp. 679-687
- ¹⁰ PED, 1994: p. 514
V. I : p. 205
Horner, 1993: p. 280
D. III: pp. 62-63
Norman, 1995: p. 43
- ¹¹ Ratnapala, 1993: p. 139.
'Spitits' could be extracted from flowers, fruits, honey, and sugar and is mixed with other ingredients.
- ¹² PED, 1994: p. 720
V. II: pp. 295-301
Horner, 1992: pp. 410-418
Davids, 1992: pp. 182
Chalmers, 1990: pp. 78-120
- ¹³ Ratnapala, 1993: p. 169
- ¹⁴ D. III. : pp. 182-183
- ¹⁵ Ministry Of Religious Affairs Kaba-Aye, 2007: pp. 144-5
- ¹⁶ EB, Vol. IV, 1979: p. 690.
- ¹⁷ *Khp.*: p. 34
- ¹⁸ Bodhi, 1998
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ratnapala, 1993: p. 139
- ²³ Sn. VV: pp. 398-400
Norman, 1995: p. 43
- ²⁴ V. IV: pp. 105-106
- ²⁵ V. II: p. 328
- ²⁶ J. V: p. 11
DhA. III: p.100

Gives a slightly different version of the doings of Visākhā's friends.

²⁷ *Surāmerayamajjapamādatthānā veramaṇiyā atītānāgatapaccuppannesu sabbakiccakaraṇīyesu khippaṃ paṭijānanatā sadā upaṭṭhitasatitā anumattakatā nāṇavantatā analasatā ajaḷatā anelamūgatā amattatā appamattatā asammohatā acchambhitā asārambhitā anussaṅkitā saccavāditā apisuṇāpharusāsamphalāpavāditā rattindivamatanditatā kataññutā kataveditā amaccharitā cāgavantatā silavantatā ujutā akkodhanatā hirimanatā ottappitā ujudiṭṭhikatā mahāpaññatā medhāvitā paṇḍitatā atthānatthakusalatāti evamādīni phalāni. Evamettha pāṇātipātādiveramaṇīnaṃ samuṭṭhānavedanāmūlakammaphalatopi viññātabbo vinicchayo.*
Khpa. : p. 34

²⁸ Holmes, 2019

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Surāmerayapānaṃbhikkhaveāseviṭaṃbhāvitāṃbahulīkatāṃniraya saṃvattanikaṃtiracchānayanisaṃvattanikaṃpettivisayasaṃvattanikaṃyosabbalāhus urāmerayapānassavipāko, manussabhūtassaummattakasaṃvattanikohotī 'ti."
A. IV: p. 247

³³ Anderson, 2001: p. 137

³⁴ *D. III:* p. 182

³⁵ Bodhi, 1998

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ David, 2007

³⁸ Ibid.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Dialogues of the Buddha (Dīghanikāya). Translated by T.W.R. Davids, 1992. Oxford: P.T.S.

The Group of Discourses (Suttanipāta) Volume II. Translated by K.R. Norman, 1995. Oxford: P.T.S.

Stories of the Buddha's Former Births (The Jātaka). Translated by R. Chalmers, 1990. Oxford: P.T.S.

The Book of the Discipline (Vinayapiṭaka). Translated by I. B. Horner, 1993. Oxford: P.T.S.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, R., 2001. *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts.* Berkeley, Ca. Rodmell Press.

Bodhi, B., 1998. *A Discipline of Sobriety.* [Online] Accesstoinsight.org. Available at: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_36.html> [Accessed 1 December 2013].

Davids, T. and Stede, W., 2001. *Pali-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

Holmes, D., 2019. *Concerning Intoxicants | Buddhistdoor*. [Online] Buddhistdoor.net. Available at: <<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/concerning-intoxicants>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

Ministry Of Religious Affairs Kaba-Aye. *The Teachings of the Buddha (Basic Level)*. 2007. Yangon: Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the S-Łsan-Ł.

National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2014. Principles | National Institute on Drug Abuse. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.nida.nih.gov/PODAT/PODAT2.html>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

Ratnapala, N., 1993. *Buddhist Sociology*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

Ratnapala, N., 1993. *Crime and Punishment in the Buddhist Tradition*. Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Thao, P., 2019. *Socio-Economic Philosophy of Buddhism*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers Ltd.