



A STUDY ON THE BUDDHIST STRATEGIES ADOPTED FOR COPING WITH STRESS

W.M. Dhanapala

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

wmd63@yahoo.com

This research study is concerned with the Buddhist strategies applied for the management of stress and tension. The transition of rural society from simple structure to complex structure seems to gather more and more stress and tension as people strive to achieve the social goals of modern society. As the coping strategies are concerned Buddhism plays a vital role assisting people to manage their stress and tension. Accordingly, the research problem was articulated to understand as to how Buddhist religious teachings, beliefs and rituals have been adopted as stress management strategies in the day to day life of people. The central objective of the research was to explore and explain coping strategies which had been adopted from Buddhist teachings and practices in Sri Lanka. A random sample of 50 families consisting 225 members were selected from a village in Uva province for the study. Data were gathered by means of a questionnaire and focused group interviews with selected families. As was evident from the research findings, some Buddhist teachings, Buddhist rituals, practices, religious consultations and pilgrimages had been adopted as coping strategies with Buddhist cultural and traditional interpretation of them in most of the cases. In particular, the concept of Karma, Impermanence, Loving kindness, Morality, Practice of listening to Dhamma, Bodhipuja, Chanting of Pirith and Seth Pirith, Dana-Alms Giving, Observance of the Eight Precepts on full moon day, Meditation, mindfulness, Discussions with Maha Sangha, and pilgrimage to selected Buddhist religious temples and sacred places and seeking of their blessings were identified as prominent traits of those strategies. One or some of these strategies had been adopted depending on the nature of and type of the source of stress and tension. Strategies of coping have been traditionally defined and interpreted for various problems of suffering and they seem to have been followed in compliance with those traditions. Accordingly it is contended and concluded that number of coping strategies have been adopted from Buddhist teachings and practices and they have been further culturally sophisticated and institutionalized with specific meanings for dealing with different source of stress.

Keywords: *Buddhist Strategies, Stress, Stress Management, Buddhist Teaching and Practices*