

A Holistic Approach to COVID-19 Sequelae: Healing Through Dharma Practices

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Abstract

COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, has resulted in nearly 7 million deaths globally as of 2023 and remains a significant health challenge. Many patients continue to suffer from long-term complications, commonly known as "long COVID," for which no definitive cure has been found. This has prompted a surge in research on potential underlying mechanisms of immunity. In addition to scientific advancements, holistic approaches to recovery are gaining attention. This study explored the application of the Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, a Buddhist practice, in addressing both COVID-19 infection and its post-infection sequelae. By presenting a case study using this method, we examined the role of karma and collective retribution in the manifestation and healing of COVID-19. The findings suggest that integrating Dharma practices may complement conventional medical treatments, providing a holistic path to recovery for COVID-19 survivors.

Keywords: Post-COVID Syndrome, Collective Karma, Dharma, Rehabilitation.

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, was first identified in 2019 and quickly escalated into a global pandemic. It primarily targets the respiratory system. Its symptoms differ from individual to individual, which can range from mild such as fever, cough, and fatigue, to severe such as difficulty breathing, pneumonia, and organ failure. It has resulted in more than 760 million confirmed cases and nearly 7 million deaths worldwide as of 2023 [1]. It has also imposed significant social, economic, and public health challenges across the globe [2].

Today, the pandemic caused by COVID-19 is not over. It continues to pose a significant global public health threat, particularly to older adults, pregnant women, and individuals with underlying chronic conditions [3]. It has resulted in a substantial global health crisis, with effects extending far beyond the acute phase of infection [4]. There remains a critical need for continued vigilance, multidisciplinary care, and research to address the complications of COVID-19 and improve long-term health outcomes for survivors [4].

Beyond the infection itself, an urgent issue associated with the pandemic is "post-COVID

conditions", "post-COVID syndrome" or "long COVID." Many patients continue to experience prolonged symptoms such as fatigue, cognitive impairments or brain fog, muscle pain, and respiratory difficulties months after recovering from the initial infection [5]. These persistent symptoms have led to increased research on the underlying mechanisms, including immune system dysregulation, inflammation, and viral persistence [6]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized post-COVID conditions as a significant public health concern [7].

As medical science advances in its understanding of long COVID, holistic and complementary approaches to recovery are gaining recognition. In fact, the lessons learned from COVID-19 highlight the need for multidisciplinary collaboration. Our previous reports indicate that practicing the Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door has proven effective in treating 20 chronic conditions [8]. Moreover, this practice has also shown effective in addressing illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease [9], late-stage cancers [10], and asthma [11].

In this study, we explored whether the Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door can be applied to overcoming

COVID-19 infection and alleviating post-COVID conditions.

PATHOLOGY

From a scientific perspective, COVID-19 is a virus classified as a coronavirus. Like other viruses, it is composed of proteins, lipids, and genetic material—a single-stranded ribonucleic acid (RNA)—enclosed within a protective protein and lipid envelope. The lipid membrane, derived from the host cell, contains embedded viral surface proteins that facilitate the virus's entry into human cells [12]. The RNA serves as a set of instructions, enabling the virus to hijack human cells and reproduce more virus particles. However, the virus itself cannot survive or replicate outside a host, such as human cells, because it lacks the necessary cellular machinery. Once inside human cells, it uses the cell's resources to replicate and spread throughout the body.

The exact causes of post-COVID conditions are not yet fully understood, but research suggests several potential mechanisms. One possibility is that the immune system becomes dysregulated, continuing to attack healthy tissues even after the virus has been cleared, leading to persistent symptoms [13]. COVID-19 may also trigger a low-level chronic inflammatory response, resulting in prolonged symptoms [14]. In some cases, viral fragments or the virus itself may persist in certain tissues, causing lingering effects, or reactivating dormant viruses, exacerbating symptoms [15]. Additionally, COVID-19 can affect multiple organs, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, and brain, leading to long-term dysfunction, especially in patients who had severe infections [16]. The virus may also directly impact the nervous system, causing cognitive impairments, fatigue, headaches, and other chronic neurological issues [17].

Despite significant scientific advances in understanding COVID-19 at the molecular level—where complex interactions are often difficult for those outside the scientific community to grasp without years of specialized training—researchers are beginning to unravel its underlying pathogenic mechanisms. Paradoxically, however, this growing body of knowledge has not translated into substantial progress in solving the problem. By considering COVID-19 from alternative perspectives, we may uncover more effective solutions, revealing that the problem might not be as complex as it initially appears.

The understanding of virus pathology from a Dharma perspective differs significantly from scientific interpretations. Furthermore, in terms of post-conditions and recovery from spiritual ailments, Dharma offers its own unique insights. Below are 4 phone dialogues in which Dharma Master Jun Hong Lu addresses callers' questions regarding the nature of viruses and the issue of post-condition recovery.

Q&A 1: Contagious Diseases Are Spiritual Illnesses

This Dharma dialogue occurred on April 10, 2016 (Wenda20160410 24:13).

Caller: Hello, Master! Is dengue fever a spiritual illness or a karmic illness?

Master: Dengue fever, like any contagious disease, is a spiritual illness. Contagious diseases are caused by spiritual elements that attach to you, being mobile in nature, so you must be especially careful. Diseases like this require blessings from Bodhisattvas. Such illnesses are particularly harmful to the blood. Any illness affecting the blood, as well as other conditions related to the meridians and nerves, are actually related to spiritual disturbances.

Q&A 2: Collective Karma Causing Many People Get the Flu at the Same Time

This Dharma dialogue took place on December 24, 2017 (Wenda20171224A 40:58).

Caller: Hello, Master! In some areas, when it gets cold in winter, the flu breaks out, and children are given injections and medications. Is this due to their frequent consumption of meat, a form of collective karma, or is it simply because they lack immunity? How should we view this issue from a Buddhist perspective?

Master: Collective karma occurs when people engage in wrongdoing together. Even if you didn't directly participate, if you didn't stop it, you're still involved.

Caller: Yes. The news reported that in some classes, ten children got the flu. Is that considered collective karma?

Master: Yes, collective karma. When ten people catch the flu, that's quite serious.

Caller: I understand.

Q&A 3: The Karmic Cause of a Virus Outbreak

This Dharma dialogue took place on August 6, 2017 (Wenda20170806B 24:58).

Caller: Hello, Master! In some areas, there's an outbreak of flu viruses, and some people have even died. What is the karmic cause behind this kind of flu virus?

Master: Collective karma—eating live sea animals, killing, and sexual misconduct are all factors. Our ancient Chinese sages were very wise. They said, "Of all evils, lust is the worst," and "Of all virtues, filial piety comes first." Filial piety isn't just about being dutiful to parents; it includes respect for teachers, elders, and Dharma masters. Isn't that also filial piety?

Caller: Yes, yes, I understand.

Q&A 4: Lingering effects after the departure of a spirit

This Dharma dialogue occurred on January 4, 2020 (Zongshu20200104 03:52).

Caller: Hello, Master! I'm grateful to you and Guan Yin Bodhisattva for your life-saving help. Last month, I realized that I needed to recite Buddhist scriptures and Little Houses to ascend the spirits of my karmic creditors. I now understand that my illness is not physical but spiritual. Could you please check if the spirit has been ascended? I was born in 1998, in the year of the Tiger.

Master: You are very pure and kind-hearted, with a compassionate nature. The spirit has now left you—I don't see it on your body anymore.

Caller: I still feel heaviness in my legs, and my stomach feels bloated.

Master: That's because even though the spirit has left, there are lingering effects. It has been affecting your legs and stomach, so even after it's gone, those areas will still have aftereffects. It won't heal immediately after the spirit departs.

Caller: Oh, I see. Do I still need to...

Master: Recite 29 more Little Houses.

Caller: Okay.

Master: Let me give you an example: even after a fever subsides and the inflammation is gone, don't you still feel weak all over? It's the same concept.

Caller: Got it. So 29 Little Houses will be enough?

Master: Yes, recite 29 for now.

Caller: Alright. Do I need to perform a fish release?

Master: Yes, release fish regularly, okay? You still have lingering karmic debts from the past.

Caller: Alright.

From the Dharma perspective, the pathology of COVID-19 is seen differently than in modern science. While science has made significant progress in understanding viruses at the molecular level, effective solutions remain limited. Dharma offers an alternative view, focusing on spiritual dimensions rather than just physical mechanisms. Concepts such as spiritual illnesses, collective karma, and karmic retribution are central to understanding the spread and manifestation of contagious diseases.

In the four Q&A Dharma dialogues, Master Lu emphasizes that contagious diseases are consequences of collective karma and spiritual disturbances. When groups of people engage in immoral actions, such as killing or sexual misconduct, these actions accumulate into collective karma, eventually leading to disease outbreaks. To address these spiritual ailments, Master Lu recommends repentance, recitation of Buddhist scriptures like the *Great Compassion Mantra* and *Heart Sutra*, and performing virtuous deeds such as releasing captive animals [8-11].

Master Lu also explains that the lingering physical effects of spiritual disturbances can persist even after the spirit responsible for the illness has been ascended. He recommends Dharma practices, such as reciting Little Houses and releasing fish, to facilitate complete healing and clear any remaining karmic debts.

In summary, the key issue is ensuring that our understanding of COVID-19 follows the right direction. Buddhism, by accurately recognizing the spiritual essence of infectious diseases, can help mitigate their harmful effects during infection and alleviate lingering

symptoms in the recovery phase. At the same time, Buddhism embraces the use of medicines in treating spiritual diseases [8], offering a more holistic approach to healing.

We hypothesize that the etiology of COVID-19 infection and sequelae is similar to that of rare and intractable diseases, specifically involving karma and spirits. This hypothesis is supported by two key points: first, Master Lu has taught that any illness that cannot be cured by conventional medical treatment may be karmic or spiritual in nature [8], second, this assertion has been validated across a range of seemingly unrelated conditions, such as temporomandibular joint dislocation [8], dementia [9], advanced carcinoma [10], asthma [11], glutaric aciduria [18], arthritis [19], eczema [20], depression [21], and others. When karma is resolved, and spirits are ascended, patients can regain their health.

To test this hypothesis, the following case serves as evidence to validate Dharma teachings and the effectiveness of our speculation.

RESULTS

Complete Recovery from Post-COVID Complications through Practicing Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door

In March 2022, our area experienced a sudden COVID-19 outbreak. I became extremely fatigued and weak, prompting me to stay in the dormitory to avoid spreading the virus to others. While there, I developed severe coughing fits that filled me with fear and caused anxiety among my dormitory mates. To ease their concerns, I decided to move to a different dormitory, where I lived in isolation.

Little did I know, my condition worsened rapidly. Around March 22nd, in the evening, as I lay in bed, I began to struggle to breathe. Desperately, I cried out, "Guan Yin Bodhisattva, please save me, Guan Yin Bodhisattva, please save me..." After calling out the sacred name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva tens of times, my breathing gradually returned to normal. I am truly grateful to Guan Yin Bodhisattva; She is indeed compassionate and responsive to prayers! Master Lu has taught us in *Buddhism in Plain Terms* that in emergencies, we should recite the sacred name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva without delay! Guan Yin Bodhisattva will definitely hear our cries for help and come to our rescue. Her compassion and responsiveness are truly miraculous!

After that night, I remembered that Master Lu had instructed us to recite the *Medicine Buddha Dharani* to avoid the epidemic. I dared not slack off; I diligently did my recitations every day, reciting the *Medicine Buddha Dharani* and the *Guan Yin Ling Gan Dharani* (as instructed by the Bodhisattva in my dream).

Around the evening of March 26, 2022, I experienced severe throat pain and difficulty swallowing. I immediately sent a message to my wife who is also a fellow Buddhist practitioner in our Dharma Door, asking her to promptly burn and repay some Little Houses for my karmic creditors the next morning to heal my throat. Master Lu has taught us that infectious diseases are spiritual diseases.

The next day, after my wife burned the Little Houses for my karmic creditors, my throat miraculously healed, and my swallowing became smooth again! I am immensely grateful to Guan Yin Bodhisattva for bringing such a wonderful Dharma Door to this world to save us suffering sentient beings.

At the same time, I also experienced pain in the left and right sides of my waist. Realizing that the virus or spiritual afflictions were still affecting my body, I urgently requested my wife to burn Little Houses for my karmic creditors again. After burning about 80 sheets, my body basically recovered!

However, I still felt that my physical condition was not as healthy as before the illness, and I was much weaker.

As the epidemic was effectively controlled, I was finally able to return home and pay my respects to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas by bowing and offering incense. At this point, I was left with many post-COVID complications, such as very poor kidney function, lung issues, and loss of appetite. However, I knew that once I returned home, these lingering effects would improve. With a Buddhist altar at home, our great Buddha Shakyamuni would bless me, and our great Guan Yin Bodhisattva would also heal my post-COVID complications. As long as we sincerely recite the *Medicine Buddha Dharani*, the great Medicine Buddha will come to help us heal. Additionally, all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and our compassionate Master will bless our entire family with health!

By July 18, 2022, nearly four months had passed, and all my post-COVID complications had completely vanished! This remarkable transformation highlights the profound difference between those who practice Buddhism and those who do not. How truly fortunate we are to have encountered such deep and transformative Buddhist teachings; where there is Buddhism, there is always a way! This experience underscores the importance of diligently applying the Five Golden Buddhist Practices in our daily lives.

With deep gratitude, I thank the great Buddha Shakyamuni, Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and Master Lu for bringing to humanity—especially during this Age of Dharma Decline—a Dharma Door so accessible and powerful, perfectly suited for lay practitioners to cultivate at home. It has proven exceptionally effective in relieving the suffering of sentient beings like us.

Without the practice of Buddhism, I might have struggled with my post-COVID complications for the rest of my life. Words cannot express my gratitude—just endless thankfulness, over and over again!

Respectful fellow practitioners, we must cherish the final Dharma Vessel bestowed upon us by Guan Yin Bodhisattva in this Age of Dharma Decline. Let us respect our master, diligently practice, never regress, and attain enlightenment in this lifetime to repay the benevolence of the Buddha!

Dharma practitioner: A49

DISCUSSION

The earliest recorded instance of collective karma in human history dates back 2,500 years to the time of the Buddha when King Crystal massacred Kapilavastu, the Buddha's homeland. Near Kapilavastu, there once was a village where the inhabitants sustained themselves by fishing. One day, two large fish were caught from a nearby lake. Although a child from the village did not directly participate in the fishing and did not eat the fish, he patted one of the fish on the head three times. Those who fished that day were later reborn as members of the Shakya clan. One of the fish was reborn as King Crystal, while the other became Ghatikara, the Brahmin who helped King Crystal annihilate the Shakya people. The villagers of that time were reborn as the Shakya people who were killed. The child who patted the fish's head became the Buddha.

This tragic event demonstrates the inexorable law of cause and effect, where the collective karma of the villagers could not be altered, not even by the Buddha. Even the great supernatural powers of Venerable Maudgalyayana were unable to prevent this karmic retribution. This illustrates the terrifying nature of collective karma: when individuals commit offenses together, they must also face retribution together. Because the Buddha had patted the fish's head three times, He experienced headaches for three days in this life.

Being killed in this life by those who were victims in a previous life is one form of karmic retribution. There are many other forms as well—epidemics and natural disasters are also manifestations of retribution. In fact, all disasters in the world are caused by collective karma from Dharma perspective [22, 23].

Epidemics may seem to be caused by natural viruses infecting humans, appearing as a mere natural phenomenon. However, the deeper, underlying cause is the collective negative karma humanity has accumulated, which ripens and manifests as retribution according to the law of cause and effect, bringing consequences for humanity's collective karma. While the way the virus harms people differs from how King Crystal annihilated

the Shakya clan, and the scale of harm may vary, the retributive consequences for humanity remain the same.

What kinds of negative karma have humans committed? According to Master Lu's teachings, killing karma ranks first, followed by other offenses such as sexual misconduct. When this collective karma manifests as epidemics, no one can fully escape its effects, whether directly or indirectly. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists may become infected. However, the difference is significant: Buddhists can mitigate their karmic obstacles, transforming major issues into minor ones and minor issues into nothing. This has been observed in cases with cancer patients [10].

Buddhist practitioner A49 is one of the victims of the 760 million COVID-19 infections. His personal testimony illustrates this alternative perspective of Dharma during COVID-19 infection and on post-COVID-19 recovery. Despite worsening symptoms, including difficulty breathing and throat pain, he continued his daily recitations and requested his wife to burn Little Houses—an offering in Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door intended to repay karmic creditors and help spirits ascend [8-21]. Miraculously, his symptoms subsided after burning the Little Houses, and he began to recover.

Like many who experience post-COVID sequelae, A49 noticed that his recovery was incomplete. Lingering issues such as kidney and lung dysfunction persisted. Once he was able resume his Dharma practice in front of his Buddhist altar, he reported that his health gradually improved through the continued recitation of the Buddhist scriptures and sincere repentance in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Four months later, he was fully recovered. Considering there is currently no cure for long COVID-19, and the average length of recovery and proportion of patients who fully recover is still unknown [24, 25], A49's case is a very valuable reference for patients suffering post-COVID-19 conditions.

This case highlights the holistic approach of integrating Dharma practices alongside medical treatments for infectious diseases. While science provides a deeper understanding of the physiological mechanisms of COVID-19 at molecular level, Dharma practices offer a complementary path focused on karmic resolution. Reciting Buddhist scriptures, making offerings, and addressing karmic debts can be powerful tools for mitigating the impact of diseases and facilitating recovery from their long-term effects.

CONCLUSION

A49's experience underscores the importance of combining scientific knowledge with Dharma practice for comprehensive healing. For Dharma practitioners, addressing the spiritual roots of illness through practices like the recitation of the Buddhist scriptures can help

alleviate both the immediate symptoms and the long-term effects of COVID-19. This integrative approach—combining modern medical insights with the wisdom of Dharma teachings—provides a path to healing that embraces both the physical and spiritual dimensions of health.

This case supports our hypothesis that COVID-19 and its sequelae may have karmic or spiritual roots, which can be effectively addressed through Buddhist practices.

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Ethical Statement

The author did not involve any part of the experimental design, experimental treatments and result analysis of the patient. All the experimental procedures and practices by the presenter were done by himself independently.

Statement by Translator and Writer

The story in the text were translated from Chinese to English based on its intended meaning rather than a word-for-word approach. The remaining portions of the paper were written based on my limited understanding of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. If there are any inaccuracies or deviations from the true meaning of the Chinese version, or if the content does not accurately reflect Master Lu's teachings, I sincerely seek forgiveness from the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Dharma Protectors, and Master Jun Hong Lu.

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