

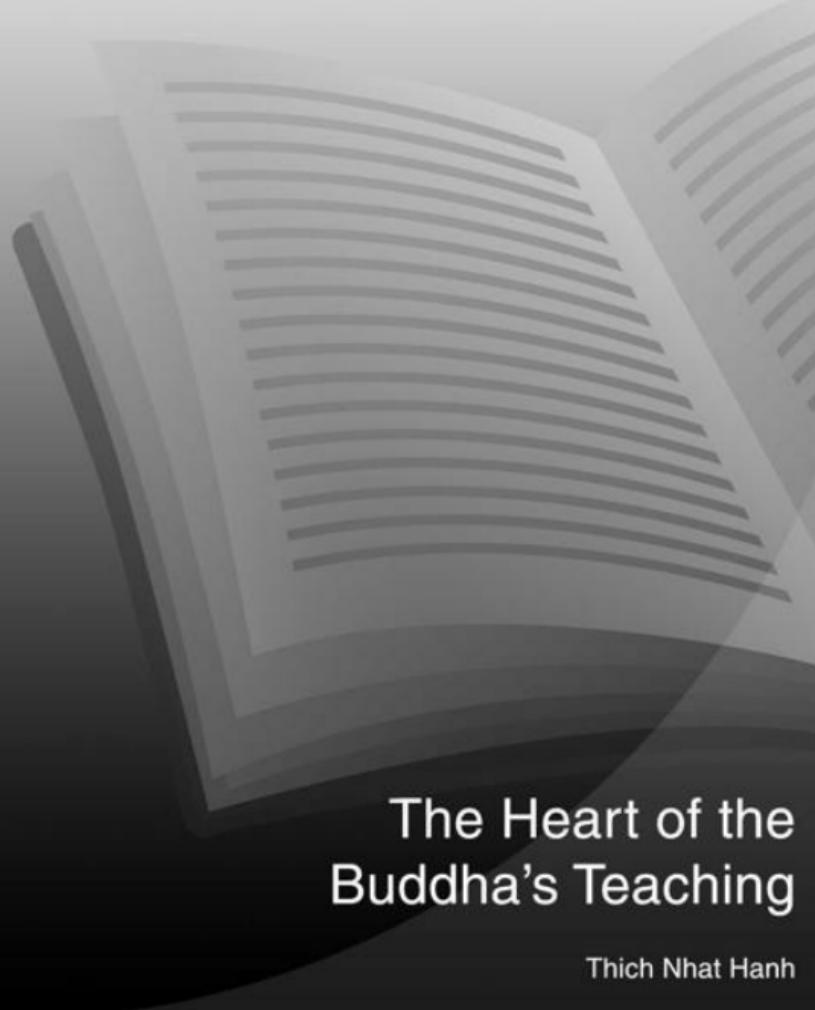
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# The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching

Thich Nhat Hanh

RANDOM HOUSE eBOOKS



The Heart of the  
Buddha's Teaching

Thich Nhat Hanh

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Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Zen master, poet, best-selling author and peace activist, has been a Buddhist monk for over 40 years. He was chairman of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace delegations during the Vietnam War and was nominated by Dr Martin Luther King for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1966 he visited the United States and Europe on a peace mission and was unable to return to his native land. Today he heads Plum Village, a meditation community in southwestern France, where he teaches, writes, gardens and aids refugees worldwide.

'Thich Nhat Hanh writes with the voice of the Buddha.'

*Sogyal Rinpoche*

'Thich Nhat Hanh is more my brother than many who are nearer to me in race and nationality, because he and I see things in exactly the same way.'

*Thomas Merton*

## Other Books by Thich Nhat Hanh

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# *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*

TRANSFORMING SUFFERING INTO  
PEACE, JOY, & LIBERATION:  
THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS,  
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH, AND  
OTHER BASIC BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

Thich Nhat Hanh



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*To the reader:*

Unless otherwise noted, the terms that appear in parentheses throughout the text are in Sanskrit. Sanskrit has been transliterated informally, without the diacritical marks. The s and s have been written as sh. Sanskrit and other foreign terms are italicized the first time they appear, and definitions are provided at that time. Textual sources are provided in full die first time they are cited; after that, only

author and tide are noted.

*The Heart of the  
Buddha's Teaching*

— 3 —

# **PART ONE**

## *The Four Noble Truths*

# CHAPTER ONE

## Entering the Heart of the Buddha

Buddha was not a god. He was a human being like you and me, and he suffered just as we do. If we go to the Buddha with our hearts open, he will look at us, his eyes filled with compassion, and say, "Because there is suffering in your heart, it is possible for you to enter my heart."

The layman Vimalakirti said, "Because the world is sick, I am sick. Because people suffer, I have to suffer." This statement was also made by the Buddha. Please don't think that because you are unhappy, because there is pain in your heart, that you cannot go to the Buddha. It is exactly because there is pain in your heart that communication is possible. Your suffering and my suffering are the basic condition for us to enter the Buddha's heart, and for the Buddha to enter our hearts.

For forty-five years, the Buddha said, over and over again, "I teach only suffering and the transformation of suffering." When we recognize and acknowledge our own suffering, the Buddha —

which means the Buddha in us — will look at it, discover what has brought it about, and prescribe a course of action that can transform it into peace, joy, and liberation. Suffering is the means the Buddha used to liberate himself, and it is also the means by which we can become free.

The ocean of suffering is immense, but if you turn around, you can see the land. The seed of suffering in you may be strong, but don't wait until you have no more suffering before allowing yourself to be happy. When one tree in the garden is sick, you have to care for it. But don't overlook all the healthy trees. Even while you have pain in your heart, you can enjoy the many wonders of life — the beautiful sunset, the smile of a child, the many flowers and trees. To suffer is not enough. Please don't be imprisoned by your suffering.

If you have experienced hunger, you know that having food is a miracle. If you have suffered from the cold, you know the preciousness of warmth. When you have suffered, you know how to appreciate the elements of paradise that are present. If you dwell only in your suffering, you will miss paradise. Don't ignore your suffering, but don't forget to enjoy the wonders of life, for your

sake and for the benefit of many beings.

When I was young, I wrote this poem. I penetrated the heart of the Buddha with a heart that was deeply wounded.

*My youth  
an unripe plum.  
Your teeth have left their marks on it.  
The tooth marks still vibrate.  
I remember always,  
remember always.*

*Since I learned how to love you,  
the door of my soul has been left wide open  
to the winds of the four directions.  
Reality calls for change.  
The fruit of awareness is already ripe,  
and the door can never be closed again.*

*Fire consumes this century,  
and mountains and forests bear its mark.  
The wind howls across my ears,  
while the whole sky shakes violently in the  
snowstorm.*

*Winter's wounds lie still,*

*Missing the frozen blade,  
Restless, tossing and turning  
in agony all night.<sup>1</sup>*

1 "[The Fruit of Awareness Is Ripe,](#)" in *Call Me By My True Names: The Collected Poems* of Thich Nhat Hanh (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1993), p. 59.

I grew up in a time of war. There was destruction all around — children, adults, values, a whole country. As a young person, I suffered a lot. Once the door of awareness has been opened, you cannot close it. The wounds of war in me are still not all healed. There are nights I lie awake and embrace my people, my country, and the whole planet with my mindful breathing.

Without suffering, you cannot grow. Without suffering, you cannot get the peace and joy you deserve. Please don't run away from your suffering. Embrace it and cherish it. Go to the Buddha, sit with him, and show him your pain. He will look at you with loving kindness, compassion, and mindfulness, and show you ways to embrace your suffering and look deeply into it. With understanding and compassion, you will be able to heal the wounds in your heart, and the wounds in

the world. The Buddha called suffering a Holy Truth, because our suffering has the capacity of showing us the path to liberation. Embrace your suffering, and let it reveal to you the way to peace.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### ***The First Dharma Talk***

Siddhartha Gautama was twenty-nine years old when he left his family to search for a way to end his and others' suffering. He studied meditation with many teachers, and after six years of practice, he sat under the bodhi tree and vowed not to stand up until he was enlightened. He sat all night, and as the morning star arose, he had a profound breakthrough and became a Buddha, filled with understanding and love. The Buddha spent the next forty-nine days enjoying the peace of his realization. After that he walked slowly to the Deer Park in Sarnath to share his understanding with the five ascetics with whom he had practiced earlier.

When the five men saw him coming, they felt uneasy. Siddhartha had abandoned them, they thought. But he looked so radiant that they could not resist welcoming him. They washed his feet and offered him water to drink. The Buddha said, "Dear friends, I have seen deeply that nothing can be by itself alone, that everything has to inter-be with everything else. I have seen that all beings are

endowed with the nature of awakening." He offered to say more, but the monks didn't know whether to believe him or not. So the Buddha asked, "Have I ever lied to you?" They knew that he hadn't, and they agreed to receive his teachings.

The Buddha then taught the Four Noble Truths of the existence of suffering, the making of suffering, the possibility of restoring well-being, and the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to well-being. Hearing this, an immaculate vision of the Four Noble Truths arose in Kondañña, one of the five ascetics. The Buddha observed this and exclaimed, "Kondañña understands! Kondañña understands!" and from that day on, Kondañña was called "The One Who Understands."

The Buddha then declared, "Dear friends, with humans, gods, brahmans, monastics, and maras<sup>1</sup> as witnesses, I tell you that if I have not experienced directly all that I have told you, I would not proclaim that I am an enlightened person, free from suffering. Because I myself have identified suffering, understood suffering, identified the causes of suffering, removed the causes of suffering, confirmed the existence of well-being, obtained well-being, identified the path to well-

being, gone to the end of the path, and realized total liberation, I now proclaim to you that I am a free person." At that moment the Earth shook, and the voices of the gods, humans, and other living beings throughout the cosmos said that on the planet Earth, an enlightened person had been born and had put into motion the wheel of the *Dharma*, the Way of Understanding and Love. This teaching is recorded in the *Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma* (*Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*).<sup>2</sup> Since then, two thousand, six hundred years have passed, and the wheel of the Dharma continues to turn. It is up to us, the present generation, to keep the wheel turning for the happiness of the many.

1 See footnote number 7 on p. 17.

2 *Samyutta Nikaya* V, 420. See p. 257 for the full text of this discourse. See also the *Great Turning of the Dharma Wheel* (*Taisho Revised Tripitaka* 109) and the *Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel* (*Taisho* 110). The term "discourse" (*sutra* in Sanskrit, *sutta* in Pali) means a teaching given by the Buddha or one of his enlightened disciples.

Three points characterize this sutra. The first is the teaching of the Middle Way. The Buddha wanted his five friends to be free from the idea that austerity is the only correct practice. He had learned firsthand that if you destroy your health, you have no energy left to realize the path. The other extreme to be avoided, he said, is indulgence in sense pleasures — being possessed by sexual desire, running after fame, eating immoderately, sleeping too much, or chasing after possessions.

The second point is the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. This teaching was of great value during the lifetime of the Buddha, is of great value in our own time, and will be of great value for millennia to come. The third point is engagement in the world. The teachings of the Buddha were not to escape from life, but to help us relate to ourselves and the world as thoroughly as possible. The Noble Eightfold Path includes Right Speech and Right Livelihood. These teachings are for people in the world who have to communicate with each other and earn a living.

*The Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma* is filled with joy and hope. It teaches us to recognize suffering as suffering and to transform

our suffering into mindfulness, compassion, peace, and liberation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### ***The Four Noble Truths***

After realizing complete, perfect awakening (*samyak sambodhi*), the Buddha had to find words to share his insight. He already had the water, but he had to discover jars like the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path to hold it. The Four Noble Truths are the cream of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha continued to proclaim these truths right up until his Great Passing Away (*mahaparinirvana*).

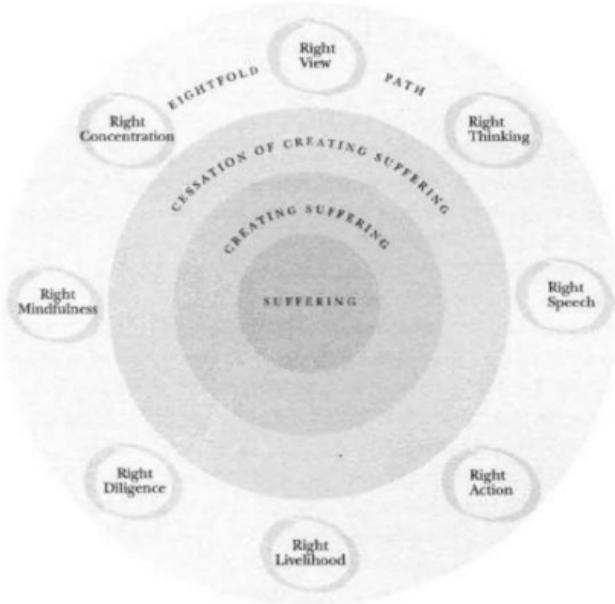
The Chinese translate Four Noble Truths as "Four Wonderful Truths" or "Four Holy Truths." Our suffering is holy if we embrace it and look deeply into it. If we don't, it isn't holy at all. We just drown in the ocean of our suffering. For "truth," the Chinese use the characters for "word" and "king." No one can argue with the words of a king. These Four Truths are not something to argue about. They are something to practice and realize.

The First Noble Truth is suffering (dukkha). The root meaning of the Chinese character for suffering is "bitter." Happiness is sweet; suffering

is bitter. We all suffer to some extent. We have some malaise in our body and our mind. We have to recognize and acknowledge the presence of this suffering and touch it. To do so, we may need the help of a teacher and a *Sangha*, friends in the practice.

The Second Noble Truth is the origin, roots, nature, creation, or arising (*samudaya*) of suffering. After we touch our suffering, we need to look deeply into it to see how it came to

***The Four Noble Truths & the Noble Eightfold Path***



*Figure One*

be. We need to recognize and identify the spiritual and material foods we have ingested that are causing us to suffer.

The Third Noble Truth is the cessation (*nirodha*) of creating suffering by refraining from doing the things that make us suffer. This is good news! The Buddha did not deny the existence of suffering, but he also did not deny the existence of

joy and happiness. If you think that Buddhism says, "Everything is suffering and we cannot do anything about it," that is the opposite of the Buddha's message. The Buddha taught us how to recognize and acknowledge the presence of suffering, but he also taught the cessation of suffering. If there were no possibility of cessation, what is the use of practicing? The Third Truth is that healing is possible.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the path (*marga*) that leads to refraining from doing the things that cause us to suffer. This is the path we need the most. The Buddha called it the Noble Eightfold Path. The Chinese translate it as the "Path of Eight Right Practices": Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.<sup>1</sup>

1 The Pali word for "Right" is *samma* and the Sanskrit word is *samyak*. It is an adverb meaning "in the right way," "straight," or "upright," not bent or crooked. Right Mindfulness, for example, means that there are ways of being mindful that are right, straight, and beneficial. Wrong mindfulness means that there are ways to practice that are

wrong, crooked, and unbeneficial. Entering the Eightfold Path, we learn ways to practice that are of benefit, the "Right" way to practice. Right and wrong are neither moral judgments nor arbitrary standards imposed from outside. Through our own awareness, we discover what is beneficial ("right") and what is unbeneficial ("wrong").

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Understanding the Buddha's Teachings**

When we hear a Dharma talk or study a sutra, our only job is to remain open. Usually when we hear or read something new, we just compare it to our own ideas. If it is the same, we accept it and say that it is correct. If it is not, we say it is incorrect. In either case, we learn nothing. If we read or listen with an open mind and an open heart, the rain of the Dharma will penetrate the soil of our consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

1 According to Buddhist psychology, our consciousness is divided into eight parts, including mind consciousness (*manovijñana*) and store consciousness (*alayavijñana*). Store consciousness is described as a field in which every kind of seed can be planted — seeds of suffering, sorrow, fear, and anger, and seeds of happiness and hope. When these seeds sprout, they manifest in our mind consciousness, and when they do, they become stronger. See fig. 5 on p. 208.

*The gentle spring rain permeates the soil of my soul.*

*A seed that has lain deeply in the earth for many years just smiles)<sup>2</sup>*

2 From Thich Nhat Hanh, "Cuckoo Telephone," in *Call Me By My True Names*, p. 176.

While reading or listening, don't work too hard. Be like the earth. When the rain comes, the earth only has to open herself up to the rain. Allow the rain of the Dharma to come in and penetrate the seeds that are buried deep in your consciousness. A teacher cannot give you the truth. The truth is already in you. You only need to open yourself—body, mind, and heart — so that his or her teachings will penetrate your own seeds of understanding and enlightenment. If you let the words enter you, the soil and the seeds will do the rest of the work.

The transmission of the teachings of the Buddha can be divided into three streams: Source Buddhism, Many-Schools Buddhism, and

Mahayana Buddhism. Source Buddhism includes all the teachings the Buddha gave during his lifetime. One hundred forty years after the Buddha's Great Passing Away, the Sangha divided into two schools: *Mahasanghika* (literally "majority," referring to those who wanted changes) and *Sthaviravada* (literally, "School of Elders," referring to those who opposed the changes advocated by the Mahasanghikas). A hundred years after that, the Sthaviravada divided into two branches — *Sarvastivada* ("the School that Proclaims Everything Is") and *Vibhajyavada* ("the School that Discriminates"). The Vibhajyavadins, supported by King Ashoka, flourished in the Ganges valley, while the Sarvastivadins went north to Kashmir.

For four hundred years during and after the Buddha's lifetime, his teachings were transmitted only orally. After that, monks in the Tamrashatiya School ("those who wear copper-colored robes") in Sri Lanka, a derivative of the Vibhajyavada School, began to think about writing the Buddha's discourses on palm leaves, and it took another hundred years to begin. By that time, it is said that there was only one monk who had memorized the whole canon and that he was somewhat arrogant.

The other monks had to persuade him to recite the discourses so they could write them down. When we hear this, we feel a little uneasy knowing that an arrogant monk may not have been the best vehicle to transmit the teachings of the Buddha.

Even during the Buddha's lifetime, there were people such as the monk Arittha, who misunderstood the Buddha's teachings and conveyed them incorrectly.<sup>3</sup> It is also apparent that some of the monks who memorized the sutras over the centuries did not understand their deepest meaning, or at the very least, they forgot or changed some words. As a result, some of the Buddha's teachings were distorted even before they were written down. Before the Buddha attained full realization of the path, for example, he had tried various methods to suppress his mind, and they did not work. In one discourse, he recounted:

<sup>3</sup> *Arittha Sutta (Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Catch a Snake)*, Majjhima Nikaya 22. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Thundering Silence: Sutra on Knowing the Better Way to Catch a Snake* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1993), pp. 47-49.

I thought, Why don't I grit my teeth, press my

tongue against my palate, and use my mind to repress my mind? Then, as a wrestler might take hold of the head or the shoulders of someone weaker than he, and, in order to restrain and coerce that person, he has to hold him down constantly without letting go for a moment, so I gritted my teeth, pressed my tongue against my palate, and used my mind to suppress my mind. As I did this, I was bathed in sweat. Although I was not lacking in strength, although I maintained mindfulness and did not fall from mindfulness, my body and my mind were not at peace, and I was exhausted by these efforts. This practice caused other feelings of pain to arise in me besides the pain associated with the austerities, and I was not able to tame my mind.<sup>4</sup>

*4 Mahasaccaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 36.*

Obviously, the Buddha was telling us not to practice in this way. Yet this passage was later inserted into other discourses to convey exactly the opposite meaning:

Just as a wrestler takes hold of the head or the shoulders of someone weaker than himself, restrains and coerces that person, and holds him

down constantly, not letting go for one moment, so a monk who meditates in order to stop all unwholesome thoughts of desire and aversion, when these thoughts continue to arise, should grit his teeth, press his tongue against his palate, and do his best to use his mind to beat down and defeat his mind.<sup>5</sup>

*5 Vitakka Santhana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 20.* This same passage was inserted into a Sarvastivada version of the Buddha's discourse on mindfulness, *Nian Chu Jing, Madhyama Agama 26, Taisho Revised Tripitaka.*

Often, we need to study several discourses and compare them in order to understand which is the true teaching of the Buddha. It is like stringing precious jewels together to make a necklace. If we see each sutra in light of the overall body of teachings, we will not be attached to any one teaching. With comparative study and looking deeply into the meaning of the texts, we can surmise what is a solid teaching that will help our practice and what is probably an incorrect transmission.

By the time the Buddha's discourses were

written down in Pali in Sri Lanka, there were eighteen or twenty schools, and each had its own recension of the Buddha's teachings. These schools did not tear the teachings of the Buddha apart but were threads of a single garment. Two of these recensions exist today: the Tamrashatiya and Sarvastivada canons. Recorded at about the same time, the former was written down in Pali and the latter in Sanskrit and Prakrit. The sutras that were written down in Pali in Sri Lanka are known as the Southern transmission, or "Teachings of the Elders" (*Theravada*). The Sarvastivada texts, known as the Northern transmission, exist only in fragmented form. Fortunately, they were translated into Chinese and Tibetan, and many of these translations are still available. We have to remember that the Buddha did not speak Pali, Sanskrit, or Prakrit. He spoke a local dialect called Magadhi or Ardhamagadhi, and there is no record of the Buddha's words in his own language.

By comparing the two extant sutra recensions, we can see which teachings must have preceded Buddhism's dividing into schools. When the sutras of both transmissions are the same, we can conclude that what they say must have been there before the division. When the recensions are

different, we can surmise that one or both might be incorrect. The Northern transmission preserved some discourses better, and the Southern transmission preserved others better. That is the advantage of having two transmissions to compare.

The third stream of the Buddha's teaching, Mahayana Buddhism, arose in the first or second century B.C.E.<sup>6</sup> In the centuries following the Buddha's life, the practice of the Dharma had become the exclusive domain of monks and nuns, and laypeople were limited to supporting the ordained Sangha with food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. By the first century B.C.E., many monks and nuns seemed to be practicing only for themselves, and reaction was inevitable. The ideal put forth by the Mahayanists was that of the bodhisattva, who practiced and taught for the benefit of everyone.

6 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Cultivating the Mind of Love: The Practice of Looking Deeply in the Mahayana Buddhist Tradition* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1996).

These three streams complement one another. It was impossible for Source Buddhism to remember

everything the Buddha had taught, so it was necessary for Many-Schools Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism to renew teachings that had been forgotten or overlooked. Like all traditions, Buddhism needs to renew itself regularly in order to stay alive and grow. The Buddha always found new ways to express his awakening. Since the Buddha's lifetime, Buddhists have continued to open new Dharma doors to express and share the teachings begun in the Deer Park in Sarnath.

Please remember that a sutra or a Dharma talk is not insight in and of itself. It is a means of presenting insight, using words and concepts. When you use a map to get to Paris, once you have arrived, you can put the map away and enjoy being in Paris. If you spend all your time with your map, if you get caught by the words and notions presented by the Buddha, you'll miss the reality. The Buddha said many times, "My teaching is like a finger pointing to the moon. Do not mistake the finger for the moon."

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, it is said, "If you explain the meaning of every word and phrase in the sutras, you slander the Buddhas of the three times — past, present, and future. But if

you disregard even one word of the sutras, you risk speaking the words of Mara.<sup>7</sup> Sutras are essential guides for our practice, but we must read them carefully and use our own intelligence and the help of a teacher and a Sangha to understand the true meaning and put it into practice. After reading a sutra or any spiritual text, we should feel lighter, not heavier. Buddhist teachings are meant to awaken our true self, not merely to add to our storehouse of knowledge.

7 Mara: the Tempter, the Evil One, the Killer, the opposite of the Buddha nature in each person. Sometimes personalized as a deity.

From time to time the Buddha refused to answer a question posed to him. The philosopher Vatsigotra asked, "Is there a self?" and the Buddha did not say anything. Vatsigotra persisted, "Do you mean there is no self?" but the Buddha still did not reply. Finally, Vatsigotra left. Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, was puzzled. "Lord, you always teach that there is no self. Why did you not say so to Vatsigotra?" The Buddha told Ananda that he did not reply because Vatsigotra was looking for a theory, not a way to remove

obstacles.<sup>8</sup> On another occasion, the Buddha heard a group of disciples discussing whether or not he had said such and such, and he told them, "For forty-five years, I have not uttered a single word." He did not want his disciples to be caught by words or notions, even his own.

*8 Samyutta Nikaya XIV, 10.*

When an archaeologist finds a statue that has been broken, he invites sculptors who specialize in restoration to study the art of that period and repair the statue. We must do the same. If we have an overall view of the teachings of the Buddha, when a piece is missing or has been added, we have to recognize it and repair the damage.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Is Everything Suffering?*

If we are not careful in the way we practice, we may have the tendency to make the words of our teacher into a doctrine or an ideology. Since the Buddha said that the First Noble Truth is suffering, many good students of the Buddha have used their skills to prove that everything on Earth is suffering. The theory of the Three Kinds of Suffering was such an attempt. It is not a teaching of the Buddha.

The first kind of suffering is "the suffering of suffering" (*dukkha dukkhata*), the suffering associated with unpleasant feelings, like the pain of a toothache, losing your temper, or feeling too cold on a winter's day. The second is "the suffering of composite things" (*samskara dukkhata*). Whatever comes together eventually has to come apart; therefore, all composite things are described as suffering. Even things that have not yet decayed, such as mountains, rivers, and the sun, are seen to be suffering because they will decay and cause suffering eventually. When you believe that everything composed is suffering, how can you

find joy? The third is "the suffering associated with change" (*viparinama dukkhata*). Our liver may be in good health today, but when we grow old, it will cause us to suffer. There is no point in celebrating joy, because sooner or later it will turn into suffering. Suffering is a black cloud that envelops everything. Joy is an illusion. Only suffering is real.

For more than two thousand years, students of Buddhism have been declaring that the Buddha taught that all objects of perception — all physical (table, sun, moon) and physiological phenomena and all wholesome, unwholesome, and neutral states of mind — are suffering. One hundred years after the Buddha passed away, practitioners were already repeating the formula, "This is suffering. Life is suffering. *Everything* is suffering." They thought that to obtain insight into the First Noble Truth, they had to repeat this formula. Some commentators said that without this constant repetition, the Four Noble Truths could not be realized.<sup>1</sup>

1 *Points of Controversy (Kathavatthu)*, a work belonging to the Southern Transmission that enumerates points on which the various schools of

Buddhism differed, says that the question, "Does the realization of the truth of suffering depend on the repetition of the words, '*Idam dukkham ti.*' '(This is suffering)?'" was answered affirmatively by many schools, including the Purvashaila, Aparashaila, Rajagirika, and Siddharthika. Also, when Mahadeva of the Mahasanghika School listed five reasons that an arhat is not fully awakened, one of the reasons he gave was that an arhat needs to repeat something constantly in order to be able to realize it.

Today, many people invoke the names of the Buddha or do similar practices mechanically, believing that this will bring them insight and emancipation. They are caught in forms, words, and notions, and are not using their intelligence to receive and practice the Dharma. It can be dangerous to practice without using your own intelligence, without a teacher and friends who can show you ways to practice correctly. Repeating a phrase like "Life is suffering" might help you notice when you are about to become attached to something, but it cannot help you understand the true nature of suffering or reveal the path shown to us by the Buddha.

This dialogue is repeated in many sutras:

"Monks, are conditioned things permanent or impermanent?"

"They are impermanent, World-Honored One."

"If things are impermanent, are they suffering or well-being?"

"They are suffering, World-Honored One."

"If things are suffering can we say that they are self or belong to self?"

"No, World-Honored One."

When we read this, we may think that the Buddha is offering a theory — "All things are suffering" — that we have to prove in our daily life. But in other parts of the same sutras, the Buddha says that he only wants us to recognize suffering when it is present and to recognize joy when suffering is absent. By the time the Buddha's discourses were written down, seeing all things as suffering must have been widely practiced, as the above quotation occurs more frequently than the teaching to identify suffering and the path to end

suffering.

The argument, "Impermanent, therefore suffering, therefore nonself" is illogical. Of course, if we believe that something is permanent or has a self, we may suffer when we discover that it is impermanent and without a separate self. But, in many texts, suffering is regarded as one of the Three Dharma Seals, along with impermanence and nonself. It is said that all teachings of the Buddha bear the Three Dharma Seals.<sup>2</sup> To put suffering on the same level as impermanence and nonself is an error. Impermanence and nonself are "universal." They are a "mark" of all things. Suffering is not. It is not difficult to see that a table is impermanent and does not have a self separate of all non-table elements, like wood, rain, sun, furniture maker, and so on. But is it suffering? A table will only make us suffer if we attribute permanence or separateness to it. When we are attached to a certain table, it is not the table that causes us to suffer. It is our attachment. We can agree that anger is impermanent, without a separate self, and filled with suffering, but it is strange to talk about a table or a flower as being filled with suffering. The Buddha taught impermanence and nonself to help

us not be caught in signs.

2 For an explication of the Three Dharma Seals, see chap. 18.

The theory of the Three Kinds of Suffering is an attempt to justify the universalization of suffering. What joy is left in life? We find it in nirvana. In several sutras the Buddha taught that nirvana, the joy of completely extinguishing our ideas and concepts, rather than suffering, is one of the Three Dharma Seals. This is stated four times in the *Samyukta Agama* of the Northern transmission.<sup>3</sup> Quoting from yet another sutra, Nagarjuna listed nirvana as one of the Three Dharma Seals.<sup>4</sup> To me, it is much easier to envision a state where there are no obstacles created by concepts than to see all things as suffering. I hope scholars and practitioners will begin to accept the teaching that all things are marked by impermanence, nonself, and nirvana, and not make too great an effort to prove that everything is suffering.

3 *Tsa A Han* 262 (*Taisho* 99).

4 *Mahaprajñaparamita Shastra*. See Étienne

Lamotte, *Le Traité de La Grande Vertu de Sagesse*  
(Louvain, Belgium: Institut Orientaliste, 1949).

Another common misunderstanding of the Buddha's teaching is that all of our suffering is caused by craving. In the *Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma*, the Buddha did say that craving is the cause of suffering, but he said this because craving is the first on the list of afflictions (*kleshas*). If we use our intelligence, we can see that craving can be a cause of pain, but other afflictions such as anger, ignorance, suspicion, arrogance, and wrong views can also cause pain and suffering. Ignorance, which gives rise to wrong perceptions, is responsible for much of our pain. To make the sutras shorter and therefore easier to memorize, the first item on a list was often used to represent the whole list. The word "eyes," for example, is used in many sutras to represent all six sense organs<sup>5</sup> and "form" is often used to represent all Five Aggregates (skandhas).<sup>6</sup> If we practice identifying the causes of our suffering, we will see that sometimes it is due to craving and sometimes it is due to other factors. To say, "Life is suffering" is too general. To say that craving is the cause of all our suffering is too simplistic. We need

to say, 'The basis for this suffering is such and such an affliction,' and then call it by its true name. If we have a stomachache, we need to call it a stomachache. If it is a headache, we need to call it a headache. How else will we find the cause of our suffering and the way to heal ourselves?

5 Six sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

6 The Five Aggregates are the elements that constitute a person, namely form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. See chap. 23.

It is true that the Buddha taught the truth of suffering, but he also taught the truth of "dwelling happily in things as they are" (*drishta dharma sukha viharin*).<sup>7</sup> To succeed in the practice, we must stop trying to prove that everything is suffering. In fact, we must stop trying to prove anything. If we touch the truth of suffering with our mindfulness, we will be able to recognize and identify our specific suffering, its specific causes, and the way to remove those causes and end our suffering.

7 *Samyutta Nikaya* V, 326, and many other places.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Stopping, Calming, Resting, Healing*

Buddhist meditation has two aspects — shamatha and vipashyana. We tend to stress the importance of vipashyana ("looking deeply") because it can bring us insight and liberate us from suffering and afflictions. But the practice of shamatha ("stopping") is fundamental. If we cannot stop, we cannot have insight.

There is a story in Zen circles about a man and a horse. The horse is galloping quickly, and it appears that the man on the horse is going somewhere important. Another man, standing alongside the road, shouts, "Where are you going?" and the first man replies, "I don't know! Ask the horse!" This is also our story. We are riding a horse, we don't know where we are going, and we can't stop. The horse is our habit energy pulling us along, and we are powerless. We are always running, and it has become a habit. We struggle all the time, even during our sleep. We are at war within ourselves, and we can easily start a war with others.

We have to learn the art of stopping — stopping our thinking, our habit energies, our forgetfulness, the strong emotions that rule us. When an emotion rushes through us like a storm, we have no peace. We turn on the TV and then we turn it off. We pick up a book and then we put it down. How can we stop this state of agitation? How can we stop our fear, despair, anger, and craving? We can stop by practicing mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful smiling, and deep looking in order to understand. When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy.

But our habit energies are often stronger than our volition. We say and do things we don't want to and afterwards we regret it. We make ourselves and others suffer, and we bring about a lot of damage. We may vow not to do it again, but we do it again. Why? Because our habit energies (vashana) push us.

We need the energy of mindfulness to recognize and be present with our habit energy in order to stop this course of destruction. With mindfulness, we have the capacity to recognize the habit energy

every time it manifests. "Hello, my habit energy, I know you are there!" If we just smile to it, it will lose much of its strength. Mindfulness is the energy that allows us to recognize our habit energy and prevent it from dominating us.

Forgetfulness is the opposite. We drink a cup of tea, but we do not know we are drinking a cup of tea. We sit with the person we love, but we don't know that she is there. We walk, but we are not really walking. We are someplace else, thinking about the past or the future. The horse of our habit energy is carrying us along, and we are its captive. We need to stop our horse and reclaim our liberty. We need to shine the light of mindfulness on everything we do, so the darkness of forgetfulness will disappear. The first function of meditation — shamatha — is to stop.

The second function of shamatha is calming. When we have a strong emotion, we know it can be dangerous to act, but we don't have the strength or clarity to refrain. We have to learn the art of breathing in and out, stopping our activities, and calming our emotions. We have to learn to become solid and stable like an oak tree, and not be blown from side to side by the storm. The Buddha taught

many techniques to help us calm our body and mind and look deeply at them. They can be summarized in five stages:

(1) Recognition — If we are angry, we say, "I know that anger is in me."

(2) Acceptance — When we are angry, we do not deny it. We accept what is present.

(3) Embracing — We hold our anger in our two arms like a mother holding her crying baby. Our mindfulness embraces our emotion, and this alone can calm our anger and ourselves.

(4) Looking deeply — When we are calm enough, we can look deeply to understand what has brought this anger to be, what is causing our baby's discomfort.

(5) Insight — The fruit of looking deeply is understanding the many causes and conditions, primary and secondary, that have brought about our anger, that are causing our baby to cry. Perhaps our baby is hungry. Perhaps his diaper pin is piercing his skin. Our anger was triggered when our friend spoke to us meanly, and suddenly

we remember that he was not at his best today because his father is dying. We reflect like this until we have some insights into what has caused our suffering. With insight, we know what to do and what not to do to change the situation.

After calming, the third function of shamatha is resting. Suppose someone standing alongside a river throws a pebble in the air and it falls down into the river. The pebble allows itself to sink slowly and reach the riverbed without any effort. Once the pebble is at the bottom, it continues to rest, allowing the water to pass by. When we practice sitting meditation, we can allow ourselves to rest just like that pebble. We can allow ourselves to sink naturally into the position of sitting — resting, without effort. We have to learn the art of resting, allowing our body and mind to rest. If we have wounds in our body or our mind, we have to rest so they can heal themselves.

Calming allows us to rest, and resting is a precondition for healing. When animals in the forest get wounded, they find a place to lie down, and they rest completely for many days. They don't think about food or anything else. They just rest, and they get the healing they need. When we

humans get sick, we just worry! We look for doctors and medicine, but we don't stop. Even when we go to the beach or the mountains for a vacation, we don't rest, and we come back more tired than before. We have to learn to rest. Lying down is not the only position for resting. During sitting or walking meditation, we can rest very well. Meditation does not have to be hard labor. Just allow your body and mind to rest like an animal in the forest. Don't struggle. There is no need to attain anything. I am writing a book, but I am not struggling. I am resting also. Please read in a joyful, yet restful way. The Buddha said, "My Dharma is the practice of non-practice."<sup>1</sup> Practice in a way that does not tire you out, but gives your body, emotions, and consciousness a chance to rest. Our body and mind have the capacity to heal themselves if we allow them to rest.

1 *Dvachatvarimshat Khanda Sutra (Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters)*. Taisho 789.

Stopping, calming, and resting are preconditions for healing. If we cannot stop, the course of our destruction will just continue. The world needs healing. Individuals, communities, and nations need healing.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Touching Our Suffering*

In the Pali version of the *Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma*, the Buddha told the five monks,

As long as the insight and the understanding of these Four Noble Truths in their three stages and twelve aspects, just as they are, had not been fully realized, I could not say that in this world with its gods, maras, brahmas, recluses, brahmans, and men, someone had realized the highest awakening. Monks, as soon as the insight and understanding of the Four Noble Truths in their three stages and twelve aspects, just as they are, had been realized, I could say that in this world with its gods, maras, brahmas, recluses, brahmans, and men, someone had realized the highest awakening.

In the Chinese version of the sutra, the Buddha said,

Monks, the experience of the three turnings of the wheel with regard to each of the Four Truths gives rise to eyes of awakened understanding, and

therefore I declare before gods, spirits, shramanas, and brahmans of all times that I have destroyed all afflictions and reached full awakening.

The wheel of the Dharma was put in motion twelve times — three for each of the Four Noble Truths. To understand the Four Noble Truths, not just intellectually but experientially, we have to practice the twelve turnings of the wheel.

The first turning is called "Recognition." We sense that something is wrong, but we are not able to say exactly what it is. We make some effort to escape, but we cannot. We try to deny our suffering, but it persists. The Buddha said that to suffer and not know that we are suffering is more painful than the burden endured by a mule carrying an unimaginably heavy load. We must, first of all, recognize that we are suffering and then determine whether its basis is physical, physiological, or psychological. Our suffering needs to be identified.

Recognizing and identifying our suffering is like the work of a doctor diagnosing an illness. He or she says, "If I press here, does it hurt?" and we say, "Yes, this is my suffering. This has come to be." The wounds in our heart become the object of

our meditation. We show them to our doctor, and we show them to the Buddha, which means we show them to ourselves. Our suffering is us, and we need to treat it with kindness and nonviolence. We need to embrace our fear, hatred, anguish, and anger. "My dear suffering, I know you are there. I am here for you, and I will take care of you." We stop running from our pain. With all our courage and tenderness, we recognize, acknowledge, and identify it.

The second turning of the wheel is called "Encouragement." After recognizing and identifying our pain, we take the time to look deeply into it in order to understand its true nature, which means its causes. After observing our symptoms, the doctor says, "I will look deeply into it. This illness can be understood." It may take him a week to conduct tests and inquire about what we have been eating, our attitudes, how we spend our time, and so on. But he is determined to understand our illness.

Our suffering — depression, illness, a difficult relationship,

### *The Twelve Turnings of the Wheel*

<b>FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS</b>	<b>TWELVE TURNINGS</b>
Suffering	<p>Recognition: This is suffering.</p> <p>Encouragement: Suffering should be understood.</p> <p>Realization: Suffering is understood.</p>
Arising of suffering	<p>Recognition: There is an ignoble way that has led to suffering.</p> <p>Encouragement: That ignoble way should be understood.</p> <p>Realization: That ignoble way is understood.</p>
Cessation of suffering (well-being)	<p>Recognition: Well-being is possible.</p> <p>Encouragement: Well-being should be obtained.</p> <p>Realization: Well-being is obtained.</p>
	Recognition: There is a noble path

<p>How well-being arises</p>	<p>that leads to well-being Encouragement: This noble path has to be lived. Realization: This noble path is being lived.</p>
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*Figure Two*

or fear — needs to be understood and, like a doctor, we are determined to understand it. We practice sitting and walking meditation, and we ask for guidance and support from our friends and, if we have one, our teacher. As we do this, we see that the causes of our suffering are knowable, and we make every effort to get to the bottom of it. At this stage, our practice can still be "set back" (*ashrava*).

The third turning of the wheel is called "Realization" and can be expressed as, "This suffering has been understood." We realize the efforts begun during the second turning. The doctor tells us the name and all the characteristics of our illness. After studying, reflecting upon, and practicing the First Noble Truth, we realize that we have stopped running away from our pain. We can now call our suffering by its specific name and

identify all of its characteristics. This alone brings us happiness, joy "without setbacks" (*anashrava*).

Still, after we have successfully diagnosed our ailment, for a time we continue to create suffering for ourselves. We pour gasoline on the fire through our words, thoughts, and deeds and often don't even realize it. The first turning of the wheel of the Second Noble Truth is the "Recognition": I am continuing to create suffering. The Buddha said, "When something has come to be, we have to acknowledge its presence and look deeply into its nature. When we look deeply, we will discover the kinds of nutriments that have helped it come to be and that continue to feed it."<sup>1</sup> He then elaborated four kinds of nutriments that can lead to our happiness or our suffering — edible food, sense impressions, intention, and consciousness.

1 *Samyutta Nikaya* II, 47. See also p. 269, *Discourse on Right View*.

The first nutrient is edible food. What we eat or drink can bring about mental or physical suffering. We must be able to distinguish between what is healthful and what is harmful. We need to practice Right View when we shop, cook, and eat.

The Buddha offered this example. A young couple and their two-year-old child were trying to cross the desert, and they ran out of food. After deep reflection, the parents realized that in order to survive they had to kill their son and eat his flesh. They calculated that if they ate such and such a proportion of their baby's flesh each day and carried the rest on their shoulders to dry, it would last the rest of the journey. But with every morsel of their baby's flesh they ate, the young couple cried and cried. After he told this story, the Buddha asked, "Dear friends, do you think the young man and woman enjoyed eating their son's flesh?" "No, Lord, it would not be possible for them to enjoy eating their son's flesh." The Buddha said, "Yet many people eat the flesh of their parents, their children, and their grandchildren and do not know it."<sup>2</sup>

*2 Discourse on the Son's Flesh, Samyukta Agama 373 (Taisho 99). Also Samyutta Nikaya II, 97.*

Much of our suffering comes from not eating mindfully. We have to learn ways to eat that preserve the health and well-being of our body and our spirit. When we smoke, drink, or consume

toxins, we are eating our own lungs, liver, and heart. If we have children and do these things, we are eating our children's flesh. Our children need us to be healthy and strong.

We have to look deeply to see how we grow our food, so we can eat in ways that preserve our collective well-being, minimize our suffering and the suffering of other species, and allow the earth to continue to be a source of life for all of us. If, while we eat, we destroy living beings or the environment, we are eating the flesh of our own sons and daughters. We need to look deeply together and discuss how to eat, what to eat, and what to resist. This will be a real Dharma discussion.

The second kind of nutriment is sense impressions. Our six sense organs — eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind — are in constant contact (*sparsha*) with sense objects, and these contacts become food for our consciousness. When we drive through a city, our eyes see so many billboards, and these images enter our consciousness. When we pick up a magazine, the articles and advertisements are food for our consciousness. Advertisements that stimulate our

craving for possessions, sex, and food can be toxic. If after reading the newspaper, hearing the news, or being in a conversation, we feel anxious or worn out, we know we have been in contact with toxins.

Movies are food for our eyes, ears, and minds. When we watch TV, the program is our food. Children who spend five hours a day watching television are ingesting images that water the negative seeds of craving, fear, anger, and violence in them. We are exposed to so many forms, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and ideas that are toxic and rob our body and consciousness of their well-being. When you feel despair, fear, or depression, it may be because you have ingested too many toxins through your sense impressions. Not only children need to be protected from violent and unwholesome films, TV programs, books, magazines, and games. We, too, can be destroyed by these media.

If we are mindful, we will know whether we are "ingesting" the toxins of fear, hatred, and violence, or eating foods that encourage understanding, compassion, and the determination to help others. With the practice of mindfulness, we will know that hearing this, looking at that, or touching this,

we feel light and peaceful, while hearing that, looking at this, or touching that, we feel anxious, sad, or depressed. As a result, we will know what to be in contact with and what to avoid. Our skin protects us from bacteria. Antibodies protect us from internal invaders. We have to use the equivalent aspects of our consciousness to protect us from unwholesome sense objects that can poison us.

The Buddha offered this drastic image: "There is a cow with such a terrible skin disease that her skin is almost no longer there. When you bring her close to an ancient wall or old tree, all the living creatures in the bark of the tree come out, cling to the cow's body, and suck. When we bring her into the water, the same thing happens. Even when she is just exposed to the air, tiny insects come and suck." Then the Buddha said, "This is our situation, also."

We are exposed to invasions of all kinds — images, sounds, smells, touch, ideas — and many of these feed the craving, violence, fear, and despair in us. The Buddha advised us to post a sentinel, namely mindfulness, at each of our sense doors to protect ourselves. Use your Buddha eyes to look

at each nutrient you are about to ingest. If you see that it is toxic, refuse to look at it, listen to it, taste it, or touch it. Ingest only what you are certain is safe. The Five Mindfulness Trainings<sup>3</sup> can help very much. We must come together as individuals, families, cities, and a nation to discuss strategies of self-protection and survival. To get out of the dangerous situation we are in, the practice of mindfulness has to be collective.

3 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Mindfulness Trainings*, Revised Edition (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1998). See also chaps. 12 and 13 of this book.

The third kind of nutriment is volition, intention, or will — the desire in us to obtain whatever it is that we want. Volition is the ground of all our actions. If we think that the way for us to be happy is to become president of a large corporation, everything we do or say will be directed toward realizing that goal. Even when we sleep, our consciousness will continue to work on it. Or suppose we believe that all our suffering and the suffering of our family has been brought about by someone who wronged us in the past. We

believe we will only be happy if we inflict harm on that person. Our life is motivated solely by the desire for revenge, and everything we say, everything we plan, is to punish that person. At night, we dream of revenge, and we think this will liberate us from our anger and hatred.

Everyone wants to be happy, and there is a strong energy in us pushing us toward what we think will make us happy. But we may suffer a lot because of this. We need the insight that position, revenge, wealth, fame, or possessions are, more often than not, obstacles to our happiness. We need to cultivate the wish to be free of these things so we can enjoy the wonders of life that are always available — the blue sky, the trees, our beautiful children. After three months or six months of mindful sitting, mindful walking, and mindful looking, a deep vision of reality arises in us, and the capacity of being there, enjoying life in the present moment, liberates us from all impulses and brings us real happiness.

One day, after the Buddha and a group of monks finished eating lunch mindfully together, a farmer, very agitated, came by and asked, "Monks, have you seen my cows? I don't think I can survive

so much misfortune." The Buddha asked him, "What happened?" and the man said, "Monks, this morning all twelve of my cows ran away. And this year my whole crop of sesame plants was eaten by insects!" The Buddha said, "Sir, we have not seen your cows. Perhaps they have gone in the other direction." After the farmer went off in that direction, the Buddha turned to his Sangha and said, "Dear friends, do you know you are the happiest people on Earth? You have no cows or sesame plants to lose." We always try to accumulate more and more, and we think these "cows" are essential for our existence. In fact, they may be the obstacles that prevent us from being happy. Release your cows and become a free person. Release your cows so you can be truly happy.

The Buddha presented another drastic image: "Two strong men are dragging a third man along in order to throw him into a fire pit. He cannot resist, and finally they throw him into the glowing embers." These strong men, the Buddha said, are our own volition. We don't want to suffer, but our deep-seated habit energies drag us into the fire of suffering. The Buddha advised us to look deeply into the nature of our volition to see whether it is

pushing us in the direction of liberation, peace, and compassion or in the direction of suffering and unhappiness. We need to be able to see the kinds of intention-food that we are consuming.

The fourth kind of nutriment is consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Our consciousness is composed of all the seeds sown by our past actions and the past actions of our family and society. Every day our thoughts, words, and actions flow into the sea of our consciousness and create our body, mind, and world. We can nourish our consciousness by practicing the Four Immeasurable Minds of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity,<sup>5</sup> or we can feed our consciousness with greed, hatred, ignorance, suspicion, and pride. Our consciousness is eating all the time, day and night, and what it consumes becomes the substance of our life. We have to be very careful which nutriments we ingest<sup>6</sup>

4 See chap. 4. n. 1, on p. 12.

5 See chap. 22.

6 In the year 255, Vietnamese Meditation Master Tang Hoi taught that our consciousness is like the ocean with the six rivers of our senses

flowing into it. Our mind and our body come from consciousness. They are formed by ourselves and our environment. Our life can be said to be a manifestation of our consciousness. Because of the food that our consciousness consumes, we are the person we are and our environment is what it is. In fact, the edible foods we take into our body and the foods of sense-impression and intention all end up in our consciousness. Our ignorance, hatred, and sadness all flow back to the sea of consciousness. We should know the kinds of food we feed our consciousness every day. When *vijñana* (consciousness) ripens, it brings forth a new form of life, *nama rupa* (mind/body). Rupa is our body or physical aspect, and nama is our mind or mental aspect. Body and mind are manifestations of our consciousness, and our consciousness is made of these kinds of food. We have to look at the Five Aggregates (skandhas) in us — form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. They are *nama rupa*. The first of the Five Aggregates is rupa, and the other four are nama. They are all products of our alayavijñana, our store consciousness.

The Buddha offered another dramatic image to illustrate this: "A dangerous murderer was

captured and brought before the king, and the king sentenced him to death by stabbing. 'Take him to the courtyard and plunge three hundred sharp knives through him.' At noon a guard reported, 'Majesty, he is still alive,' and the king declared, 'Stab him three hundred more times!' In the evening, the guard again told the king, 'Majesty, he is not yet dead.' So the king gave the third order: 'Plunge the three hundred sharpest knives in the kingdom through him.'" Then the Buddha said, "This is how we usually deal with our consciousness." Every time we ingest toxins into our consciousness, it is like stabbing ourselves with three hundred sharp knives. We suffer, and our suffering spills out to those around us.

When we practice the first turning of the First Noble Truth, we recognize suffering as suffering. If we are in a difficult relationship, we recognize, "This is a difficult relationship." Our practice is to be with our suffering and take good care of it. When we practice the first turning of the Second Noble Truth, we look deeply into the nature of our suffering to see what kinds of nutriments we have been feeding it. How have we lived in the last few years, in the last few months, that has contributed to our suffering? We need to recognize and identify

the nutriments we ingest and observe, "When I think like this, speak like that, listen like this, or act like that, my suffering increases." Until we begin to practice the Second Noble Truth, we tend to blame others for our unhappiness.

Looking deeply requires courage. You can use a pencil and paper if you like. During sitting meditation, if you see clearly a symptom of your suffering, write it down. Then ask yourself, "What kinds of nutriments have I been ingesting that have fed and sustained this suffering?" When you begin to realize the kinds of nutriments you have been ingesting, you may cry. Use the energy of mindfulness all day long to be truly present, to embrace your suffering like a mother holding her baby. As long as mindfulness is there, you can stay with the difficulty. Practice does not mean using only your own mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. You also have to benefit from the mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom of friends on the path and your teacher. There are things that even a child can see but we ourselves cannot see because we are imprisoned by our notions. Bring what you have written to a friend and ask for his or her observations and insights.

If you sit with a friend and speak openly, determined to discover the roots of your suffering, eventually you will see them clearly. But if you keep your suffering to yourself, it might grow bigger every day. Just seeing the causes of your suffering lessens your burden. Shariputra, one of the Buddha's great disciples, said, "When something takes place, if we look at it deeply in the heart of reality, seeing its source and the food that nourishes it, we are already on the path of liberation." When we are able to identify our suffering and see its causes, we will have more peace and joy, and we are already on the path to liberation.

In the second stage of the Second Noble Truth, "Encouragement," we see clearly that real happiness is possible if we can stop ingesting the nutriments that cause us to suffer. If we know that our body is suffering because of the way we eat, sleep, or work, we vow to eat, sleep, or work in ways that are healthier. We encourage ourselves to put an end to the causes of our suffering. Only by a strong intention not to do things in the same way can we keep the wheel in motion.

Mindfulness is the energy that can help us

stop. We investigate the kinds of nutriments we now ingest and decide which ones to continue to eat and which to resist. We sit and look together with our friends, with our family, and as a community. Mindfulness of ingestion, protecting our body and mind, protecting our families, society, and the environment are important topics for us to discuss. When we direct our attention toward our suffering, we see our potential for happiness. We see the nature of suffering *and* the way out. That is why the Buddha called suffering a holy truth. When we use the word "suffering" in Buddhism, we mean the kind of suffering that can show us the way out.

There are many practices that can help us face our suffering, including mindful walking, mindful breathing, mindful sitting, mindful eating, mindful looking, and mindful listening. One mindful step can take us deep into the realization of beauty and joy in us and around us. Tran Thai Tong, a great meditation master of thirteenth-century Vietnam, said, "With every step, you touch the ground of reality." If you practice mindful walking and deep listening all day long, that is the Four Noble Truths in action. When the cause of suffering has been seen, healing is possible. We vow to refrain from

ingesting foods that make us suffer, and we also vow to ingest foods that are healthy and wholesome.

In the third turning of the wheel of the Second Noble Truth, "Realization," we not only vow but we actually stop ingesting the nutriments that create our suffering. Some people think that to end suffering, you have to *stop* everything — body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness — but that is not correct. The third stage of the Second Noble Truth can be described as, "When hungry, I eat. When tired, I sleep." When someone has realized this stage, she has a certain lightness and freedom. What she wants to do is fully in accord with the mindfulness trainings, and she does nothing to cause herself or others harm.

Confucius said, "At thirty, I was able to stand on my own feet. At forty, I had no more doubts. At fifty, I knew the mandate of Earth and Sky. At sixty, I could do what I wanted without going against the path." The last of the ten ox herding pictures in the Zen tradition is called "Entering the Marketplace with Open Hands." You are free to come and go as you please. This is the action of

non-action. Suffering no longer arises. This stage is not something you can imitate. You have to reach this stage of realization within yourself.

At the end of the nineteenth century in Vietnam, Master Nhat Dinh asked the king for permission to retire from being abbot of a national temple so he could live in a mountain hut and take care of his aging mother. Many officials made offerings to the master and begged him to found another temple, but he preferred to live simply, in great peace and joy. One day his mother fell ill and needed fish to eat. He went down to the marketplace, asked some vendors for a fish, and carried it back up the mountain. Onlookers asked, "What is a Buddhist monk doing with a fish?" But someone of Master Nhat Dinh's realization could do as he pleased without going against the precepts. At the third stage of the Second Noble Truth, you only have to be yourself. The form is not important. But be careful! First there has to be genuine insight, genuine freedom.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### ***Realizing Well-Being***

When we have a toothache, we know that not having a toothache is happiness. But later, when we don't have a toothache, we don't treasure our non-toothache. Practicing mindfulness helps us learn to appreciate the well-being that is already there. With mindfulness, we treasure our happiness and can make it last longer. I always ask psychotherapists, "Why do you only talk to your clients about suffering? Why not help them touch the seeds of happiness that are also there?" Psychotherapists need to help their patients be in touch with the Third Noble Truth, the cessation of suffering. I encourage them to practice walking meditation and tea meditation with their patients in order to water the seeds of joy in them.

Please ask yourself, "What nourishes joy in me? What nourishes joy in others? Do I nourish joy in myself and others enough?" These are questions about the Third Noble Truth. The cessation of suffering — well-being — is available if you know how to enjoy the precious jewels you already have. You have eyes that can see, lungs that can

breathe, legs that can walk, and lips that can smile. When you are suffering, look deeply at your situation and find the conditions for happiness that are already there, already available.

When we begin the first stage of the Third Noble Truth, we already have some happiness, but we are not exactly aware of it. We are free, but we don't know that we are free. When we are young, we are strong and healthy', but we don't appreciate it. Even if someone tries to tell us, we cannot realize what we have. Only when we have difficulty walking do we realize how wonderful it was to have two healthy legs. The first turning of the Third Noble Truth is the "Recognition" of the possibility of the absence of suffering and the presence of peace. If we do not have peace and joy at this moment, we can at least remember some peace and joy we experienced in the past or observe the peace and joy of others. We see that *well-being is possible*.

The second turning is to "Encourage" ourselves to find peace and joy. If you want to garden, you have to bend down and touch the soil. Gardening is a practice, not an idea. To practice the Four Noble Truths, you yourself have to touch deeply the

things that bring you peace and joy. When you do, you realize that walking on the Earth is a miracle, washing the dishes is a miracle, and practicing with a community of friends is a miracle. The greatest miracle is to be alive. We can put an end to our suffering just by realizing that our suffering is not worth suffering for! How many people kill themselves because of rage or despair? In that moment, they do not see the vast happiness that is available. Mindfulness puts an end to such a limited perspective. The Buddha faced his own suffering directly and discovered the path of liberation. Don't run away from things that are unpleasant in order to embrace things that are pleasant. Put your hands in the earth. Face the difficulties and grow new happiness.

One student told me, "When I go to parties, people seem to be enjoying themselves. But when I look beneath the surface, I see so much anxiety and suffering there." At first, your joy is limited, especially the kind of joy that is just covering up suffering. Embrace your suffering, smile to it, and discover the source of happiness that is right there within it. Buddhas and bodhisattvas suffer, too. The difference between them and us is that they know how to transform their suffering into joy and

compassion. Like good organic gardeners, they do not discriminate in favor of the flowers or against the garbage. They know how to transform garbage into flowers. Don't throw away your suffering. Touch your suffering. Face it directly, and your joy will become deeper. You know that suffering and joy are both impermanent. Learn the art of cultivating joy.

Practice like this, and you come to the third turning of the Third Noble Truth, the "Realization" that suffering and happiness are not two. When you reach this stage, your joy is no longer fragile. It is true joy.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the way out of suffering. First the doctor looks deeply into the nature of our suffering. Then she confirms that the removal of our pain is possible, and she prescribes a way out. Practicing the first turning of the wheel of the Fourth Noble Truth, we "Recognize" that the Eightfold Path — Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration — can lead us out of suffering, but we do not yet know how to practice it.

In the second turning, we "Encourage" ourselves to *practice* this path. This is realized by learning, reflecting, and practicing. As we learn, whether by reading, listening, or discussing, we need to be open so we can see ways to put what we learn into practice. If learning is not followed by reflecting and practicing, it is not true learning.

In this stage, we see that the path has everything to do with our real difficulties in life. A practice that does not concern our real suffering is not a path we need. Many people are awakened during a difficult period in their lives, when they see that living irresponsibly has been the cause of their suffering, and that by transforming their lifestyle they can bring an end to their suffering. Transformation is gradual, but once we see clearly the causes of our suffering, we can make the effort to change our behavior and bring our suffering to an end. If we are aware that our heart is not working well and that alcohol, cigarettes, and cholesterol are causes of this, we try to stop ingesting these things. In the second stage of the path, there is an increase in freedom every day. The path becomes real as we put into practice what we have learned.

The Buddha advised us to identify the kinds of

nutriments that have been feeding our pain and then simply to stop ingesting them. We do our best, and we ask our brothers and sisters to help us. We can't expect our difficulties to go away by themselves. We have to do certain things and not do other things. The moment we resolve to stop feeding our suffering, a path appears in front of us, which is the Noble Eightfold Path to well-being. The Buddha is a physician. That is why he invited us to bring our suffering to him. We are also physicians. We must be determined to transform our difficulties, to confirm that well-being is possible. The Buddha identified the Noble Eightfold Path to well-being and urged us to follow it. The third turning of the wheel of the Fourth Noble Truth is the "Realization" that we are practicing this path.

When you are assigned a kung-an (koan) by your meditation instructor, such as, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or "Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?" you have to ask yourself, What does this have to do with my real suffering — my depression, my fear, or my anger? If it doesn't have anything to do with these real problems, it may not be a path you need. It may be just an escape. Practice your kung-an in a

way that your suffering is transformed.

"This is suffering. This suffering needs to be seen clearly. The roots of this suffering need to be clearly understood. I have seen this suffering. I have seen how it manifests. I have seen its content and its roots." These are practices, not mere proclamations. "Understanding things as they are" (*yatha bhuta jñana*) emerges from our life and our practice.

When the monk Gavampati heard his fellow monks say, "Whoever sees suffering sees the making of suffering, the ending of suffering, and the path," he added, "With my own ears I have heard the Buddha say, 'Bhikkhus, whoever sees suffering sees the making of suffering, the ending of suffering, and the path that leads to the end of suffering. Whoever sees the making of suffering sees suffering, the end of suffering, and the path. Whoever sees the ending of suffering sees suffering, the making of suffering, and the path. Whoever sees the path that leads to the end of suffering sees suffering, the making of suffering, and the ending of suffering."<sup>1</sup> Interbeing is an important characteristic of all the Buddha's teachings. When you touch one, you touch all.

1 *Gavampati Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya V, 436.*

It is important to understand the interbeing nature of the Four Noble Truths. When we look deeply into any one of the Four Truths, we see the other three. When we look deeply into the truth of suffering, we see how that suffering came to be. When we look deeply into the truth of suffering, we see how to end that suffering and touch well-being. When we look deeply into the truth of suffering, we see the efficacy of the path. Looking into the First Holy Truth, we see in it the Second, Third, and Fourth Truths. The Four Noble Truths are one.

We need suffering in order to see the path. The origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering are all found in the heart of suffering. If we are afraid to touch our suffering, we will not be able to realize the path of peace, joy, and liberation. Don't run away. Touch your suffering and embrace it. Make peace with it. The Buddha said, "The moment you know how your suffering came to be, you are already on the path of release from it."<sup>2</sup> If you know what has come to be and how it has come to

be, you are already on the way to emancipation.

*2 Samyutta Nikayn II, 47.*

Let us reframe the Four Noble Truths. "Cessation," the Third Noble Truth, means the absence of suffering, which is the presence of well-being. Instead of saying "cessation," we can simply say "well-being." If we do that, we can call the Fourth Noble Truth "the Noble Eightfold Path That Leads to Well-Being." Then, instead of just calling the Second Noble Truth "the origin of suffering," we can say that there is an ignoble eightfold path that leads to suffering, a "path of eight wrong practices" — wrong view, wrong thinking, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong diligence, wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration. We might like to renumber the Four Noble Truths, as follows, for the benefit of the people of our time:

- (1) Well-Being (traditionally number three, "cessation of suffering");
- (2) Noble Eightfold Path That Leads to Well-Being (traditionally number four);

- (3) Suffering (traditionally number one); and
- (4) Ignoble Eightfold Path That Leads to Suffering (traditionally number two, "arising of suffering").

If we live according to the Noble Eightfold Path, we cultivate well-being and our life will be filled with joy, ease, and wonder. But if our path is not noble, if there is craving, hatred, ignorance, and fear in the way we live our daily life, if we practice the ignoble eightfold path, suffering will naturally be the outcome. The practice is to face our suffering and transform it in order to bring about well-being. We need to study the Noble Eightfold Path and learn ways to put it into practice in our daily lives.

## **PART TWO**

### *The Noble Eightfold Path*

## *The Noble Eightfold Path*

When the Buddha was eighty years old and about to pass away, a young man named Subhadda came to see him. Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, thought it would be too exhausting for his master to see anyone, but the Buddha overheard Subhadda's request and said, "Ananda, please invite him in." Even as he was dying, the Buddha was willing to give an interview.

Subhadda asked, "World-Honored One, are the other religious teachers in Magadha and Koshala fully enlightened?" The Buddha knew he had only a short time to live and that answering such a question would be a waste of precious moments. When you have the opportunity to ask a teacher about the Dharma, ask a question that can change your life. The Buddha replied, "Subhadda, it is not important whether they are fully enlightened. The question is whether you want to liberate yourself. If you do, practice the Noble Eightfold Path. Wherever the Noble Eightfold Path is practiced, joy, peace, and insight are there."<sup>1</sup> The Buddha offered the Eightfold Path in his first Dharma talk, he continued to teach the Eightfold Path for forty-

five years, and in his last Dharma talk, spoken to Subhadda, he offered the Noble Eightfold Path — Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.<sup>2</sup>

1 *Mahaparinibbana Sutta, Digha Nikaya* 16.

2 See chap. 3, n. 1, on p. 11, regarding the use of the word "Right."

*Arya ashtangika marga* ("a noble path of eight limbs") suggests the interbeing nature of these eight elements of the path. Each limb contains all the other seven. Please use your intelligence to apply the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path in your daily life.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Right View*

The first practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right View (*samyag drishti*). Right View is, first of all, a deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths — our suffering, the making of our suffering, the fact that our suffering can be transformed, and the path of transformation. The Buddha said that Right View is to have faith and confidence that there are people who have been able to transform their suffering. Venerable Shariputra added that Right View is knowing which of the four kinds of nutriments that we have ingested have brought about what has come to be.<sup>1</sup>

1 See chap. 7, pp. 31-37. See also *Discourse on Right View*, p. 269.

Shariputra described Right View as the ability to distinguish wholesome roots (*kushala mula*) from unwholesome roots (*akushala mula*). In each of us, there are wholesome and unwholesome roots — or seeds — in the depths of our consciousness. If you are a loyal person, it is because the seed of loyalty is in you. But don't think that the seed of

betrayal isn't also in you. If you live in an environment where your seed of loyalty is watered, you will be a loyal person. But if your seed of betrayal is watered, you may betray even those you love. You'll feel guilty about it, but if the seed of betrayal in you becomes strong, you may do it.

The practice of mindfulness helps us identify all the seeds in our store consciousness<sup>2</sup> and water the ones that are the most wholesome. When one person comes up to us, the very sight of him makes us uncomfortable. But when someone else walks by, we like her right away. Something in each of them touches a seed in us. If we love our mother deeply, but feel tense every time we think of our father, it is natural that when we see a young lady who looks like our mother, we will appreciate her, and when we see a man who evokes the memory of our father, we will feel uncomfortable. In this way, we can "see" the seeds that are in us — seeds of love for our mother and seeds of hurt vis-à-vis our father. When we become aware of the seeds in our storehouse, we will not be surprised by our own behavior or the behavior of others.

2 See chap. 4, n. 1, on p. 12, for an explanation of store consciousness.

The seed of Buddhahood, the capacity to wake up and understand things as they are, is also present in each of us. When we join our palms and bow to another person, we acknowledge the seed of Buddhahood in him or her. When we bow to a child this way, we help him or her grow up beautifully and with self-confidence. If you plant corn, corn will grow. If you plant wheat, wheat will grow. If you act in a wholesome way, you will be happy. If you act in an unwholesome way, you water the seeds of craving, anger, and violence in yourself. Right View is to recognize which seeds are wholesome and to encourage those seeds to be watered. This is called "selective touching" We need to discuss and share with each other to deepen our understanding of this practice and the practice of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, especially the fifth, about the "foods" we ingest.<sup>3</sup>

3 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible*.

At the base of our views are our perceptions

*(samjña).* In Chinese, the upper part of the character for perception 想 is "mark," "sign," or "appearance," and the lower part is "mind" or "spirit." Perceptions always have a "mark," and in many cases that mark is illusory. The Buddha advised us not to be fooled by what we perceive. He told Subhuti, "Where there is perception, there is deception."<sup>4</sup> The Buddha also taught on many occasions that most of our perceptions are erroneous, and that most of our suffering comes from wrong perceptions.<sup>5</sup> We have to ask ourselves again and again, "Am I sure?" Until we see clearly, our wrong perceptions will prevent us from having Right View.

4 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajñaparamita Diamond Sutra* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992).

5 See, e.g., *The Honeyball Sutra, Majjhima Nikaya* 18.

To perceive always means to perceive *something*. We believe that the object of our perception is outside of the subject, but that is not

correct. When we perceive the moon, the moon is us. When we smile to our friend, our friend is also us, because she is the object of our perception.

When we perceive a mountain, the mountain is the object of our perception. When we perceive the moon, the moon is the object of our perception. When we say, "I can see my consciousness in the flower," it means we can see the cloud, the sunshine, the earth, and the minerals in it. But how can we see our consciousness in a flower? The flower *is* our consciousness. It is the object of our perception. It is our perception. To perceive means to perceive something. Perception means the coming into existence of the perceiver and the perceived. The flower that we are looking at is part of our consciousness. The idea that our consciousness is outside of the flower has to be removed. It is impossible to have a subject without an object. It is impossible to remove one and retain the other.

The source of our perception, our way of seeing, lies in our store consciousness. If ten people look at a cloud, there will be ten different perceptions of it. Whether it is perceived as a dog, a hammer, or a coat depends on our mind — our

sadness, our memories, our anger. Our perceptions carry with them all the errors of subjectivity. Then we praise, blame, condemn, or complain depending on our perceptions. But our perceptions are made of our afflictions — craving, anger, ignorance, wrong views, and prejudice. Whether we are happy or we suffer depends largely on our perceptions. It is important to look deeply at our perceptions and know their source.

We have an idea of happiness. We believe that only certain conditions will make us happy. But it is often our very idea of happiness that prevents us from being happy. We have to look deeply into our perceptions in order to become free of them. Then, what has been a perception becomes an insight, a realization of the path. This is neither perception nor non-perception. It is a clear vision, seeing things as they are.

Our happiness and the happiness of those around us depend on our degree of Right View. Touching reality deeply — knowing what is going on inside and outside of ourselves — is the way to liberate ourselves from the suffering that is caused by wrong perceptions. Right View is not an ideology, a system, or even a path. It is the insight

we have into the reality of life, a living insight that fills us with understanding, peace, and love.

Sometimes we see our children doing things that we know will cause them to suffer in the future, but when we try to tell them, they won't listen. All we can do is to stimulate the seeds of Right View in them, and then later, in a difficult moment, they may benefit from our guidance. We cannot explain an orange to someone who has never tasted one. No matter how well we describe it, we cannot give someone else the direct experience. He has to taste it for himself. As soon as we say a single word, he is already caught. Right View cannot be described. We can only point in the correct direction. Right View cannot even be transmitted by a teacher. A teacher can help us identify the seed of Right View that is already in our garden, and help us have the confidence to practice, to entrust that seed to the soil of our daily life. But we are the gardener. We have to learn how to water the wholesome seeds that are in us so they will bloom into the flowers of Right View. The instrument for watering wholesome seeds is mindful living — mindful breathing, mindful walking, living each moment of our day in mindfulness.

At a peace rally in Philadelphia in 1966, a reporter asked me, "Are you from North or South Vietnam?" If I had said I was from the north, he would have thought I was pro-communist, and if I had said I was from the south, he would have thought I was pro-American. So I told him, "I am from the Center." I wanted to help him let go of his notions and encounter the reality that was right in front of him. This is the language of Zen. A Zen monk saw a beautiful goose fly by and he wanted to share this joy with his elder brother who was walking beside him. But at that moment, the other monk had bent down to remove a pebble from his sandal. By the time he looked up, the goose had already flown by. He asked, "What did you want me to see?" but the younger monk could only remain silent. Master Tai Xu said, "As long as the tree is behind you, you can see only its shadow. If you want to touch the reality, you have to turn around." "Image teaching" uses words and ideas. "Substance teaching" communicates by the way you live.

If you come to Plum Village for one day, you have an idea about Plum Village, but that idea isn't really Plum Village. You might say, "I've been to Plum Village," but in fact you've really only been

to your idea of Plum Village. Your idea might be slightly better than that of someone who has never been there, but it's still only an idea. It is not the true Plum Village. Your concept or perception of reality is not reality. When you are caught in your perceptions and ideas, you lose reality.

To practice is to go beyond ideas, so you can arrive at the suchness of things. "No idea" 無念 conception. As long as there is an idea, there is no reality, no truth. "No idea" means no wrong idea, no wrong conception. It does not mean no mindfulness. Because of mindfulness, when something is right, we know it's right, and when something is wrong, we know it's wrong.

We are practicing sitting meditation, and we see a bowl of tomato soup in our mind's eye, so we think that is wrong practice, because we are supposed to be mindful of our breathing. But if we practice mindfulness, we will say, "I am breathing in and I am thinking about tomato soup." That is Right Mindfulness already. Rightness or wrongness is not objective. It is subjective.

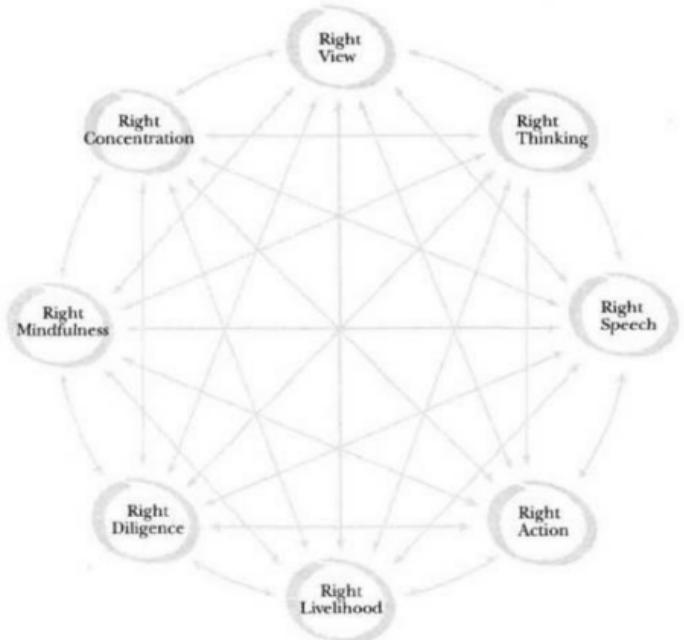
Relatively speaking, there are right views and

there are wrong views. But if we look more deeply, we see that *all views are wrong views*. No view can ever be the truth. It is just from one point; that is why it is called a "point of view." If we go to another point, we will see things differently and realize that our first view was not entirely right. Buddhism is not a collection of views. It is a practice to help us eliminate wrong views. The quality of our views can always be improved. From the viewpoint of ultimate reality, Right View is the absence of all views.

When we begin the practice, our view is a vague idea about the teachings. But conceptual knowledge is never enough. The seeds of Right View, the seed of Buddhahood, are in us, but they are obscured by so many layers of ignorance, sorrow, and disappointment. We have to put our views into practice. In the process of learning, reflecting, and practicing, our view becomes increasingly wise, based on our real experience. When we practice Right Mindfulness, we see the seed of Buddhahood in everyone, including ourselves. This is Right View. Sometimes it is described as the Mother of All Buddhas (*prajña paramita*), the energy of love and understanding that has the power to free us. When we practice

mindful living, our Right View will blossom, and all the other elements of the path in us will flower, also.

*The Interbeing of the Eight Elements of the Path*



*Figure Three*

The eight practices of the Noble Eightfold Path nourish each other. As our view becomes more "right," the other elements of the Eightfold Path in us also deepen. Right Speech is based on Right View, and it also nourishes Right View. Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration strengthen and deepen Right View. Right Action has to be based on Right View. Right Livelihood clarifies

Right View. Right View is both a cause and an effect of all the other elements of the path.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Right Thinking*

When Right View is solid in us, we have Right Thinking (*samyak samkalpa*). We need Right View at the foundation of our thinking. And if we train ourselves in Right Thinking, our Right View will improve. Thinking is the speech of our mind. Right Thinking makes our speech clear and beneficial. Because thinking often leads to action, Right Thinking is needed to take us down the path of Right Action.

Right Thinking reflects the way things are. Wrong thinking causes us to see in an "upside-down way" (*viparyasa*). But to practice Right Thinking is not easy. Our mind is often thinking about one thing while our body is doing another. Mind and body are not unified. Conscious breathing is an important link. When we concentrate on our breathing, we bring body and mind back together and become whole again.

When Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," he meant that we can prove our existence by the fact that our thinking exists. He concluded that

because we are thinking, we are really there, existing. I would conclude the opposite: "I think, therefore I am not." As long as mind and body are not together, we get lost and we cannot really say that we are here. If we practice breathing mindfully and touching the healing and refreshing elements that are already within and around us, we will find peace and solidity. Mindful breathing helps us stop being preoccupied by sorrows of the past and anxieties about the future. It helps us be in touch with life in the present moment. Much of our thinking is unnecessary. Those thoughts are limited and do not carry much understanding in them. Sometimes we feel as though we have a cassette player in our head — always running, day and night — and we cannot turn it off. We worry and become tense and have nightmares. When we practice mindfulness, we begin to hear the cassette tape in our mind, and we can notice whether our thinking is useful or not.

Thinking has two parts — initial thought (vitarka) and developing thought (vichara). An initial thought is something like, "This afternoon I have to turn in an essay for literature class." The development of this thought might be to wonder whether we are doing the assignment correctly,

whether we should read it one more time before turning it in, whether our teacher will notice if we hand it in late, and so on. Vitarka is the original thought. Vichara is the development of the original thought.

In the first stage of meditative concentration (*dhyana*), both kinds of thinking are present. In the second stage, neither is there. We are in deeper contact with reality, free of words and concepts. While walking in the woods with a group of children last year, I noticed one of the little girls thinking for a long time. Finally, she asked me, "Grandfather monk, what color is that tree's bark?" "It is the color that you see," I told her. I wanted her to enter the wonderful world that was right in front of her. I did not want to add another concept.

There are four [practices related to Right Thinking](#):

(1) "*Are You Sure?*"— If there is a rope in your path and you perceive it as a snake, fear-based thinking will follow. The more erroneous your perception, the more incorrect your thinking will be. Please write the words "Are you sure?" on a large piece of paper and hang it where you will see

it often. Ask yourself this question again and again. Wrong perceptions cause incorrect thinking and unnecessary suffering.

(2) "What Am I Doing?"— Sometimes I ask one of my students, "What are you doing?" to help him release his think about the past or the future and return to the present moment. I ask the question to help him *be* — right here, right now. To respond, he only needs to smile. That alone would demonstrate his true presence.

Asking yourself, What am I doing? will help you overcome the habit of wanting to complete things quickly. Smile to yourself and say, Washing this dish is the most important job in my life. When you ask, What am I doing?, reflect deeply on the question. If your thoughts are carrying you away, you need mindfulness to intervene. When you are really there, washing the dishes can be a deep and enjoyable experience. But if you wash them while thinking about other things, you are wasting your time, and probably not washing the dishes well either. If you are not there, even if you wash 84,000 dishes, your work will be without merit.

Emperor Wu asked Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism in China, how much merit he had earned by building temples all over the country. Bodhidharma said, "None whatsoever." But if you wash one dish in mindfulness, if you build one small temple while dwelling deeply in the present moment — not wanting to be anywhere else, not caring about fame or recognition — the merit from that act will be boundless, and you will feel very happy. Ask yourself, What am I doing? often. When your thinking is not carrying you away and you do things in mindfulness, you will be happy and a resource for many others.

(3) "*Hello, Habit Energy.*" — We tend to stick to our habits, even the ones that cause us to suffer. Workaholism is one example. In the past, our ancestors may have had to work nearly all the time to put food on the table. But today, our way of working is rather compulsive and prevents us from having real contact with life. We think about our work all the time and don't even have time to breathe. We need to find moments to contemplate the cherry blossoms and drink our tea in mindfulness. Our way of acting depends on our way of thinking, and our way of thinking depends

on our habit energies. When we recognize this, we only need to say, "Hello, habit energy," and make good friends with our habitual patterns of thinking and acting. When we can accept these ingrained thoughts and not feel guilty about them, they will lose much of their power over us. Right Thinking leads to Right Action.

(4) *Bodhichitta*. — Our "mind of love" is the deep wish to cultivate understanding in ourselves in order to bring happiness to many beings. It is the motivating force for the practice of mindful living. With bodhichitta at the foundation of our thinking, everything we do or say will help others be liberated. Right Thinking also gives rise to Right Diligence.

The Buddha offered many ways to help us to transform troublesome thoughts. One way, he said, is to replace an unwholesome thought with a wholesome one by "changing the peg," just as a carpenter replaces a rotten peg by hammering in a new one.<sup>1</sup> If we are constantly assailed by unwholesome patterns of thought, we need to learn how to change the peg and replace those patterns with wholesome thoughts. The Buddha also likened unwholesome thinking to wearing a dead

snake around your neck. The easiest way, he said, to keep unwholesome thoughts from arising is to live in a wholesome environment, a community that practices mindful living. With the help and presence of Dharma sisters and brothers, it is easy to sustain Right Thinking. Dwelling in a good environment is preventive medicine.

1 *Discourse on Removing Distracting Thoughts* (*Vitakkasanthana Sutta*), *Majjhima Nikaya* 20.

Right Thinking is thinking that is in accord with Right View. It is a map that can help us find our way. But when we arrive at our destination, we need to put down the map and enter the reality fully. "Think non-thinking" is a well-known statement in Zen. When you practice Right View and Right Thinking, you dwell deeply in the present moment, where you can touch seeds of joy, peace, and liberation, heal and transform your suffering, and be truly present for many others.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Right Mindfulness*

Right Mindfulness (*samyak smriti*) is at the heart of the Buddha's teachings. Traditionally, Right Mindfulness is the seventh on the path of eight right practices, but it is presented here third to emphasize its great importance. When Right Mindfulness is present, the Four Noble Truths and the seven other elements of the Eightfold Path are also present. When we are mindful, our thinking is Right Thinking, our speech is Right Speech, and so on. Right Mindfulness is the energy that brings us back to the present moment. To cultivate mindfulness in ourselves is to cultivate the Buddha within, to cultivate the Holy Spirit.

According to Buddhist psychology (*abhidharma*, "super Dharma"), the trait "attention" (*manaskara*) is "universal," which means we are always giving our attention to something. Our attention may be "appropriate" (*yoniso manaskara*), as when we dwell fully in the present moment, or inappropriate (*ayoniso manaskara*), as when we are attentive to something that takes us away from being here and

now. A good gardener knows the way to grow flowers from compost. Right Mindfulness accepts everything without judging or reacting. It is inclusive and loving. The practice is to find ways to sustain appropriate attention throughout the day.

The Sanskrit word for [mindfulness, smriti](#), means "remember." Mindfulness is remembering to come back to the present moment. The character the Chinese use for "mindfulness" 念 has two parts: the upper part means "now," and the lower part means "mind" or "heart." The First Miracle of Mindfulness is to be present and able to touch deeply the blue sky, the flower, and the smile of our child.

The Second Miracle of Mindfulness is to [make the other](#) — the sky, the flower, our child — present, also. In the Vietnamese epic poem *Tale of Kieu*, Kieu returns to the apartment of her [beloved](#), Kim Trong, and finds him fast asleep at his desk, his head resting on a pile of books. Kim Trong hears Kieu's footsteps, but, not quite awake, he asks, "Are you really there, or am I dreaming?" Kieu replies, "Now we have the opportunity to

see each other clearly. But if we do not live deeply this moment, it will be only a dream." You and your loved one are here together. You have the chance to see each other deeply. But if you are not fully present, everything will be like a dream.

The Third Miracle of Mindfulness is to nourish the object of your attention. When was the last time you looked into the eyes of your beloved and asked, 'Who are you, my darling?" Don't be satisfied by a superficial answer. Ask again: "Who are you who has taken my suffering as your suffering, my happiness as your happiness, my life and death as your life and death? My love, why aren't you a dewdrop, a butterfly, a bird?" Ask with your whole being. If you do not give right attention to the one you love, it is a kind of killing. When you are in the car together, if you are lost in your thoughts, assuming you already know everything about her, she will slowly die. But with mindfulness, your attention will water the wilting flower. "I know you are here, beside me, and it makes me very happy." With attention, you will be able to discover many new and wonderful things — her joys, her hidden talents, her deepest aspirations. If you do not practice appropriate attention, how can you say you love her?

The Fourth Miracle of Mindfulness is to believe the other's suffering. "I know you are suffering. That is why I am here for you." You can say this with words or just by the way you look at her. If you are not truly present, if you are thinking about other things, the miracle of relieving suffering cannot be realized. In difficult moments, if you have a friend who can be truly present with you, you know you are blessed. To love means to nourish the other with appropriate attention. When you practice Right Mindfulness, you make yourself and the other person present at the same time. "Darling, I know you are there. Your presence is precious to me." If you do not express this while you are together, when she passes away or has an accident, you will only cry, because before the accident happened, you did not know how to be truly happy together.

When someone is about to die, if you sit with him stably and solidly, that alone may be enough to help him leave this life with ease. Your presence is like a mantra, sacred speech that has a transforming effect. When your body, speech, and mind are in perfect oneness, that mantra will have an effect even before you utter a word. The first

four miracles of mindfulness belong to the first aspect of meditation, shamatha — stopping, calming, resting, and healing. Once you have calmed yourself and stopped being dispersed, your mind will be one-pointed and you will be ready to begin looking deeply.

The Fifth Miracle of Mindfulness is looking deeply (vipashyana), which is also the second aspect of meditation. Because you are calm and concentrated, you are really there for deep looking. You shine the light of mindfulness on the object of your attention, and at the same time you shine the light of mindfulness on yourself. You observe the object of your attention and you also see your own storehouse full of precious gems.

The Sixth Miracle of Mindfulness is understanding. When we understand something, often we say, "I see." We see something we hadn't seen before. Seeing and understanding come from within us. When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, we can see and listen deeply, and the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy. Understanding is the very foundation of love. When you understand

someone, you cannot help but love him or her.

The Seventh Miracle of Mindfulness is transformation. When we practice Right Mindfulness, we touch the healing and refreshing elements of life and begin to transform our own suffering and the suffering of the world. We want to overcome a habit, such as smoking, for the health of our body and mind. When we begin the practice, our habit energy is still stronger than our mindfulness, so we don't expect to stop smoking overnight. We only have to know that we are smoking when we are smoking. As we continue to practice, looking deeply and seeing the effects that smoking has on our body, mind, family, and community, we become determined to stop. It is not easy, but the practice of mindfulness helps us see the desire and the effects clearly, and eventually we will find a way to stop. Sangha is important. One man who came to Plum Village had been trying to stop smoking for years, but he couldn't. At Plum Village, he stopped his first day, because the group energy was so strong. "No one is smoking here. Why should I?" It can take years to transform a habit energy, but when we do, we stop the wheel of *samsara*, the vicious cycle of suffering and confusion that has gone on for so

many lifetimes.

Practicing the Seven Miracles of Mindfulness helps us lead a happy and healthy life, transforming suffering and bringing forth peace, joy, and freedom.

In the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta),<sup>1</sup> the Buddha offers four objects for our mindfulness practice: our body, our feelings, our mind, and the objects of our mind. Monks and nuns in many Buddhist countries memorize this discourse, and it is the text that is read to them as they leave this life. It is helpful to read the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness at least once a week, along with the Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing<sup>2</sup> and the Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone.<sup>3</sup> You might like to keep these three books by your bedside and take them with you when you travel.

<sup>1</sup> Majjhima Nikaya 10. In Chinese, *Madhyama Agama* 98. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing: Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).

2 *Anapanasati Sutta*, Majjhima Nikaya 118. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1996). The *Anapanasati Sutta* was available in Vietnam as early as the third century. Dhyana master Tang Hoi, the first Dhyana patriarch of Viet nam, wrote a preface to this sutra that is still available in the Chinese Canon.

3 *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*, Majjhima Nikaya 131. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Our Appointment with Life: The Buddha's Teaching on Living in the Present* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).

The Four Establishments of Mindfulness are the foundation of our dwelling place. Without them, our house is abandoned; no one is sweeping, dusting, or tidying up. Our body becomes unkempt, our feelings full of suffering, and our mind a heap of afflictions. When we are truly home, our body, mind, and feelings will be a place of refuge for ourselves and others.

The first establishment is "mindfulness of the body in the body." Many people hate their bodies. They feel their body is an obstacle, and they want to mistreat it. When Sister Jina, a nun at Plum

Village, teaches yoga, she always begins by saying, "Let us be aware of our bodies. Breathing in, I know I am standing here in my body. Breathing out, I smile to my body." Practicing this way, we renew our acquaintance with our body and make peace with it. In the *Kayagatasati Sutta*, the Buddha offers methods to help us know what is happening in our body.<sup>4</sup> We observe nondualistically, fully in our body even as we observe it. We begin by noting all of our body's positions and movements. When we sit, we know we are sitting. When we stand, walk, or lie down we know we are standing, walking, or lying down. When we practice this way, mindfulness is there. This practice is called "mere fgnition."

4 *Majjhima Nikaya* 119.

The second way the Buddha taught us to practice mindfulness of the body in the body is to recognize all of our body's parts, from the top of our head to the soles of our feet. If we have blonde hair, we recognize and smile to that. If we have gray hair, we recognize and smile to that. We observe whether our forehead is relaxed and whether it has wrinkles. With our mindfulness, we touch our nose, mouth, arms, heart, lungs, blood,

and so on. The Buddha described the practice of recognizing thirty-two parts of our body as being like a farmer who goes up to his loft; brings down a large bag of beans, grains, and seeds; puts the bag on the ground; opens it; and, as the contents fall onto the floor, recognizes rice as rice, beans as beans, sesame as sesame, and so on. In this way, we recognize our eyes as our eyes and our lungs as our lungs. We can practice this during sitting meditation or while lying down. Scanning our body with our mindfulness in this way might take half an hour. As we observe each part of our body, we smile to it. The love and care of this meditation can do the work of healing.

The third method the Buddha offered for practicing mindfulness of the body in the body is to see the elements that it is made of: earth, water, fire, and air. "Breathing in, I see the earth element in me. Breathing out, I smile to the earth element in me." "Earth element" refers to things that are solid. When we see the earth element inside and outside of us, we realize that there is really no boundary between us and the rest of the universe. Next, we recognize the water element inside and outside of us. "Breathing in, I am aware of the element of water in my body." We meditate on the fact that

our body is more than seventy percent water. After that, we recognize the fire element, which means heat, inside and outside of us. For life to be possible, there must be heat. Practicing this, we see over and over that the elements inside and outside our body belong to the same reality, and we are no longer confined by our body. We are everywhere.

The fourth element of our body is air. The best way to experience the air element is the practice of mindful breathing. "Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out." After saying these sentences, we can abbreviate them by saying "In" as we breath in, and "Out" as we breath out. We don't try to control our breathing. Whether our in-breath is long or short, deep or shallow, we just breathe naturally and shine the light of mindfulness on it. When we do this, we notice that, in fact, our breathing does become slower and deeper naturally. "Breathing in, my in-breath has become deep. Breathing out, my out-breath has become slow." Now we can practice, "Deep/slow." We don't have to make an effort. It just becomes deeper and slower by itself, and we recognize that.

Later on, you will notice that you have become

calmer and more at ease. "Breathing in, I feel calm. Breathing out, I feel at ease. I am not struggling anymore. Calm/ease." And then, "Breathing in, I smile. Breathing out, I release all my worries and anxieties. Smile/release." We are able to smile to ourselves and release all our worries. There are more than three hundred muscles in our face, and when we know how to breath in and smile, these muscles can relax. This is "mouth yoga." We smile and we are able to release all of our feelings and emotions. The last practice is, "Breathing in, I dwell deeply in the present moment. Breathing out, I know this is a wonderful moment. Present moment/wonderful moment." Nothing is more precious than being in the present moment, fully alive and fully aware.

*In, out  
Deep, slow  
Calm, ease  
Smile, release  
Present moment, wonderful moment*

If you use this poem during sitting or walking meditation, it can be very nourishing and healing. Practice each line for as long as you wish.

Another practice to help us be aware of our breathing is counting. As you breathe in, count "one," and as you breathe out, count "one" again. Then "Two/two," "Three/three," until you arrive at ten. After that, go back in the other direction: "Ten/ten," "Nine/nine," and so on, until you arrive back at one. If you don't get lost, you know that you have good concentration. If you do get lost, go back to "one," and begin again. Relax. It's only a game. When you succeed in counting, you can drop the numbers if you like and just say "in" and "out." Conscious breathing is a joy. When I discovered the *Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing*, I felt I was the happiest person on Earth. These exercises have been transmitted to us by a community that has been practicing them for 2,600 years.<sup>5</sup>

5 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive.*

The second establishment is mindfulness of the feelings in the feelings. The Abhidharma authors listed fifty-one kinds of mental formations. Feelings (vedana) is one of them. In us, there is a river of feelings in which every drop of water is a different feeling. To observe our feelings, we just

sit on the riverbank and identify each feeling as it flows by and disappears. Feelings are either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

When we have a pleasant feeling, we may have a tendency to cling to it, and when we have an unpleasant feeling, we may be inclined to chase it away. But it is more effective in both cases to return to our breathing and simply observe the feeling, identifying it silently: "Breathing in, I know a pleasant (or unpleasant) feeling is in me. Breathing out, I know there is a pleasant (or unpleasant) feeling in me." Calling a feeling by its name, such as "joy," "happiness," "anger," or "sorrow," helps us identify and see it deeply. Within a fraction of a second, many feelings can arise.

If our breathing is light and calm — a natural result of conscious breathing — our mind and body will slowly become light, calm, and clear, and our feelings also. Our feelings are not separate from us or caused just by something outside of us. Our feelings *are* us, and, for that moment, we *are* those feelings. We needn't be intoxicated or terrorized by them, nor do we need to reject them. The practice of not clinging to or rejecting feelings is an

important part of meditation. If we face our feelings with care, affection, and nonviolence, we can transform them into a kind of energy that is healthy and nourishing. When a feeling arises, Right Mindfulness identifies it, simply recognizes what is there and whether it is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Right Mindfulness is like [a mother](#). When her child is sweet, she loves him, and when her child is crying, she still loves him. Everything that takes place in our body and our mind needs to be looked after equally. We don't fight. We say hello to our feeling so we can get to know each other better. Then, the next time that feeling arises, we will be able to greet it even more calmly.

We can embrace all of our feelings, even difficult ones like anger. Anger is a fire burning inside us, filling our whole being with smoke. When we are angry, we need to calm ourselves: "Breathing in, I calm my anger. Breathing out, I take care of my anger." As soon as a mother takes her crying baby into her arms, the baby already feels some relief. When we embrace our anger with Right Mindfulness, we suffer less right away.

We all have difficult emotions, but if we allow

them to dominate us, we will become depleted. Emotions become strong when we do not know how to look after them. When our feelings are stronger than our mindfulness, we suffer. But if we practice conscious breathing day after day, mindfulness will become a habit. Don't wait to begin to practice until you are overwhelmed by a feeling. It may be too late.

The third establishment is [mindfulness of the mind](#) (*chitta*) *in the mind*. To be aware of the mind is to be aware of the mental [formations](#) (*chitta samskara*). "Formations" (*samskara*) is a technical term in Buddhism. Anything that is "formed," anything that is made of something else, is a formation. A flower is a formation. Our anger is a formation, a mental formation. Some mental formations are present all the time and are called "universal" (contact, attention, feeling, perception, and volition). Some arise only under particular circumstances (zeal, determination, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom). Some are uplifting and help us transform our suffering (wholesome, or beneficial, mental formations), and others are heavy and imprison us in our suffering (unwholesome, or unbeneficial, mental formations).

There are mental formations that are sometimes wholesome and sometimes unwholesome, such as sleepiness, regret, initial thinking, and developing thought. When our body and mind need rest, sleep is wholesome. But if we sleep all the time, it can be unwholesome. If we hurt someone and regret it, that regret is wholesome. But if our regret leads to a guilt complex that colors whatever we do in the future, that regret can be called unwholesome. When our thinking helps us see clearly, it is beneficial. But if our mind is scattered in all directions, that thinking is unbeneficial.

There are many beautiful aspects of our consciousness, like faith, humility, self-respect, non-craving, non-anger, non-ignorance, diligence, ease, care, equanimity, and nonviolence. Unwholesome mental formations, on the other hand, are like a tangled ball of string. When we try to untangle it, we only wind it around ourselves until we cannot move. These mental formations are sometimes called afflictions (kleshas), because they bring pain to ourselves and others. Sometimes they are called obscurations because they confuse us and make us lose our way. Sometimes they are called leaks or setbacks (ashrava), because they are like a cracked vase. The basic unwholesome mental

formations are greed, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, and views. The secondary unwholesome mental formations, arising from the basic ones, are anger, malice, hypocrisy, malevolence, jealousy, selfishness, deception, guile, unwholesome excitement, the wish to harm, immodesty, arrogance, dullness, agitation, lack of faith, indolence, carelessness, forgetfulness, distraction, and lack of attention. According to the Vijñanavada School of Buddhism, altogether there are fifty-one kinds of mental formations, including feelings. Since feelings is, by itself, the second establishment of mindfulness, the other fifty fall into the category of the third establishment of mindfulness.

Every time a mental formation arises, we can practice mere recognition. When we are agitated, we just say, "I am agitated," and mindfulness is already there. Until we recognize agitation as agitation, it will push us around and we will not know what is going on or why. To practice mindfulness of the mind does not mean not to be agitated. It means that when we are agitated, we know that we are agitated. Our agitation has a good friend in us, and that is mindfulness.

Even before agitation manifests in our mind consciousness, it is already in our store consciousness in the form of a seed. All mental formations lie in our store consciousness in the form of seeds. Something someone does may water the seed of agitation, and then agitation manifests in our mind consciousness. Every mental formation that manifests needs to be recognized. If it is wholesome, mindfulness will cultivate it. If it is unwholesome, mindfulness will encourage it to return to our store consciousness and remain there, dormant.

We may think that our agitation is ours alone, but if we look carefully, we'll see that it is our inheritance from our whole society and many generations of our ancestors. Individual consciousness is made of the collective consciousness, and the collective consciousness is made of individual consciousnesses. They cannot be separated. Looking deeply into our individual consciousness, we touch the collective consciousness. Our ideas of beauty, goodness, and happiness, for example, are also the ideas of our society. Every winter, fashion designers show us the fashions for the coming spring, and we look at their creations through the lens of our collective

consciousness. When we buy a fashionable dress, it is because we see with the eyes of the collective consciousness. Someone who lives deep in the upper Amazon would not spend that amount of money to buy such a dress. She would not see it as beautiful at all. When we produce a literary work, we produce it with both our collective consciousness and our individual consciousness.

We usually describe mind consciousness and store consciousness as two different things, but store consciousness is just mind consciousness at a deeper level. If we look carefully at our mental formations, we can see their roots in our store consciousness. Mindfulness helps us look deeply into the depths of our consciousness. Every time one of the fifty-one mental formations arises, we acknowledge its presence, look deeply into it, and see its nature of impermanence and interbeing. When we practice this, we are liberated from fear, sorrow, and the fires burning inside us. When mindfulness embraces our joy, our sadness, and all our other mental formations, sooner or later we will see their deep roots. With every mindful step and every mindful breath, we see the roots of our mental formations. Mindfulness shines its light upon them and helps them to transform.

The fourth establishment is [mindfulness of phenomena \(dharmas\)](#) in phenomena. "Phenomena" means "the objects of our mind." Each of our mental formations has to have an object. If you are angry, you have to be angry at someone or something, and that person or thing can be called the object of your mind. When you remember someone or something, that is the object of your mind. There are fifty-one kinds of mental formations, so there are fifty-one kinds of objects of mind.

When we are attentive to a bird singing, that sound is the object of our mind. When our eyes see the blue sky, this is the object of our mind. When we look at a candle, an idea or image of the candle arises in our mind. That object of perception is a [sign \(lakshana\)](#). In Chinese, the character for perception 想 is composed of the ideograms for sign and mind. A perception is a sign, an image in our mind.

"[Investigation of dharmas](#)" (*dharmapravichaya*) is one of the Seven [Factors of Awakening](#) (*bodhyanga*).<sup>6</sup> When observing

dharma, five kinds of meditation can help us calm our minds: (1) counting the breath, (2) observing interdependent arising, (3) observing impurity, (4) observing with love and compassion,<sup>7</sup> and (5) observing the different realms.

6 The Seven Factors of Awakening are mindfulness, investigation of phe nomena, diligence, joy, ease, concentration, and letting go. See chap. 26.

7 The Pure Land School replaces this meditation with contemplating Amida Buddha. In fact, when we contemplate Amida Buddha, we are observing with love and compassion, because any Buddha is an embodiment of love and compassion. What does *Buddhanusmriti*, "mindfulness of Buddha," mean? What does it mean to recite the name of the Buddha? It means to invite someone precious to come into our living room. Every moment that the Buddha seed is in our mind consciousness, it plants seeds of love and understanding. If we invite Mara in, it will not plant those seeds. Mindfulness means, above all, remembering the Buddha nature that is in us.

What are the different realms? First, there are

the Eighteen Elements (*dhatus*): eyes, forms (the objects of our vision), and the consciousness that makes sight possible, which we can call eye-consciousness; ears, sound, and the consciousness connected with hearing; nose, smell, and the consciousness connected with smelling; tongue, taste, and the consciousness connected with tasting; body, touch, and the consciousness connected with touching; mind, the object of mind, and mind-consciousness. These Eighteen Elements make the existence of the universe possible. If we look deeply into the Eighteen Elements and see their substance and their source, we will be able to go beyond ignorance and fears.

In the Discourse on the Many Realms (*Bahudhatuka Sutta*),<sup>8</sup> the Buddha taught that all our anxieties and difficulties come from our inability to see the true face, or true sign of things, which means that although we see their appearance, we fail to recognize their impermanent and interbeing nature. If we are afraid or insecure, at the root of our fear or insecurity is that we have not yet seen the true face of all dharmas. If we investigate and look deeply into the Eighteen Elements, we can transform our ignorance and

overcome fear and insecurity.

8 Majjhima Nikaya 115.

One day during sitting meditation, the Venerable Ananda realized that all anxieties, fears, and misfortunes arise because we do not understand the true nature of physical and psychological phenomena. Later, he asked the Buddha if this was correct, and the Buddha said yes, first explaining the need to penetrate the Eighteen Elements.

Ananda then asked, "Is it possible to penetrate the Eighteen Elements in another way?" and the Buddha replied, "Yes, we can say that there are Six Elements." These are the Four Great Elements (mahabhuta) of earth, water, fire, and air, plus space and consciousness. All physical phenomena are made up of these Six Elements. If we observe these Six Elements inside us and around us, we see that we are not separate from the universe. This insight frees us from the idea of birth and death.

The Buddha then taught Ananda the Six Realms — happiness (sukha), suffering (dukkha), joy (mudita), anxiety (Pali: domanassa), letting go

(*upeksha*), and *ignorance (avidya)*). Happiness can be true happiness or deception, so we have to look into its substance and go beyond attachment. True happiness will be of benefit and nourish ourselves and others. Deceptive happiness brings temporary pleasure and helps us forget our suffering, but is not of lasting benefit and can actually be harmful, like a cigarette or a glass of wine. When something causes us to suffer, if we look deeply into it, we may see that it is exactly what we need to restore our happiness. In fact, suffering is essential for happiness. We have to know the suffering of being too cold to enjoy and appreciate being warm. If we look deeply into the realm of joy, we can see whether it is authentic or whether it is just covering up our suffering and anxiety. Anxiety, the illness of our time, comes primarily from our inability to dwell in the present moment.

Letting go is an ongoing *practice*, one that can bring us a lot of happiness. When a Vietnamese woman who escaped her country by boat was robbed on the high seas of all her gold, she was so distraught that she contemplated suicide. But on shore, she met a man who had been robbed of even his clothes, and it helped her very much to see him smiling. He had truly let go. Letting go gives us

freedom, and freedom is the only condition for happiness. If, in our heart, we still cling to anything — anger, anxiety, or possessions — we cannot be free.

The Buddha taught another list of Six Realms: craving (kama), freedom from craving (nekkhama),<sup>9</sup> anger (vyapada), absence of anger (avyapada), harming (vihiṃsa), and non-harming (avihimṣa or ahimsa). If we look deeply into our craving, we see that we already have what we crave, because everything is already a part of everything else. This insight can take us from the realm of craving into the realm of freedom. The fire of anger burns in us day and night and causes us to suffer — even more than the one at whom we are angry. When anger is absent, we feel light and free. To live in the realm of non-harming is to love. Our world is full of hatred and violence, because we do not take the time to nourish the love and compassion that are already in our hearts. Non-harming is an important practice.

<sup>9</sup> Nekkhama is Pali, and there is no Sanskrit equivalent for it. We do not know what word was used in the original Sanskrit texts, since they have been lost.

There are three further realms: the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. The form and formless realms describe certain states of meditative concentration. In the form realm, material things are somewhat subtle. In the formless realm, they are very subtle. In the desire realm, material things are present in their grossest form, and human beings do not meditate there. These three realms are produced by our mind. If our mind has craving, anger, and harming, we are like a house on fire. If craving, anger, and harming are absent from our minds, we produce a cool, clear lotus lake.<sup>10</sup> Every time we practice Right Mindfulness, it is like jumping into that cool lake. If we are standing, we only have to know that we are standing. If we are sitting, we only have to know that we are sitting. We don't have to add or take away anything. We only need to be aware.

10 In the "Universal Door" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, it is said that the mindfulness of the Bodhisattva of Compassion can transform the fires that are about to burn us into a cool, clear lotus lake.

Finally, the Buddha taught the meditation on

the Two Realms — the realm of the conditioned (samskrita) and the realm of the unconditioned (asamskrita). In the conditioned realm, there is birth, death, before, after, inner, outer, small, and large. In the world of the unconditioned, we are no longer subject to birth and death, coming or going, before or after. The conditioned realm belongs to the historical dimension. It is the wave. The unconditioned realm belongs to the ultimate dimension. It is the water. These two realms are not separate.

To arrive at liberation from narrow views and to obtain fearlessness and great compassion, practice the contemplations on interdependence, impermanence, and compassion. Sitting in meditation, direct your concentration onto the interdependent nature of certain objects. Remember that the subject of knowledge cannot exist independently from the object of knowledge. To see is to see something. To hear is to hear something. To be angry is to be angry about something. Hope is hope for something. Thinking is thinking about something. When the object of knowledge is not present, there can be no subject. Meditate and see the interbeing of the subject and the object. When you practice mindfulness of

breathing, then the breathing *is* mind. When you practice mindfulness of the body, then your body is mind. When you practice mindfulness of objects outside yourself, these objects are mind. Therefore, the contemplation of the interbeing of subject and object is also the contemplation of the mind. Every object of the mind is itself mind. In Buddhism, we call the objects of mind the dharmas.

Contemplation on interdependence is a deep looking into all dharmas in order to pierce through to their real nature, in order to see them as part of the great body of reality and in order to see that the great body of reality is indivisible. It cannot be cut into pieces with separate existences of their own.

The object of our mind can be a mountain, a rose, the full moon, or the person standing in front of us. We believe these things exist outside of us as separate entities, but these objects of our perceptions *are* us. This includes our feeling. When we hate someone, we also hate ourselves. The object of our mindfulness is actually the whole cosmos. Mindfulness is mindfulness of the body, feelings, perceptions, any of the mental formations, and all of the seeds in our

consciousness. The Four Establishments of Mindfulness contain everything in the cosmos. Everything in the cosmos is the object of our perception, and, as such, it does not exist only outside of us but also within us.

If we look deeply at the bud on the tree, we will see its nature. It may be very small, but it is also like the earth, because the leaf in the bud will become part of the earth. If we see the truth of one thing in the cosmos, we see the nature of the cosmos. Because of our mindfulness, our deep looking, the nature of the cosmos will reveal itself. It is not a matter of imposing our ideas on the nature of the cosmos.

Sitting and watching our breath is a wonderful practice, but it is not enough. For transformation to take place, we have to practice mindfulness all day long, not just on our meditation cushion. Mindfulness is the Buddha. Just as vegetation is sensitive to sunlight, mental formations are sensitive to mindfulness. Mindfulness is the energy that can embrace and transform all mental

formations. Mindfulness helps us leave behind "upside-down perceptions," and wakes us up to what is happening. When Thich Quang Duc made himself into a human torch, people all over the world had to recognize that Vietnam was a land on fire, and they had to do something about it. When we practice mindfulness, we are in contact with life, and we can offer our love and compassion to lessen the suffering and bring about joy and happiness.

Do not lose yourself in the past. Do not lose yourself in the future. Do not get caught in your anger, worries, or fears. Come back to the present moment, and touch life deeply. This is mindfulness. We cannot be mindful of everything at the same time, so we have to choose what we find most interesting to be the object of our mindfulness. The blue sky is wonderful, but the beautiful face of a child is also wonderful. What is essential is to be alive and present to all the wonders of life that are available.

In many talks, the Buddha spoke about the Threefold Training of precepts, concentration, and insight. The practice of the precepts (*shila*) is the practice of Right Mindfulness. If we don't practice

the precepts, we aren't practicing mindfulness. I know some Zen students who think that they can practice meditation without practicing precepts, but that is not correct. The heart of Buddhist meditation is the practice of mindfulness, and mindfulness is the practice of the precepts. You cannot meditate without practicing the precepts.<sup>11</sup>

11 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible*. See also chap. 13.

When we practice mindfulness, we generate the energy of the Buddha within us and around us, and this is the energy that can save the world. A Buddha is someone who is mindful all day long. We are only part-time Buddhas. We breathe in and use our Buddha eyes to see with the energy of mindfulness. When we listen with our Buddha ears, we are able to restore communication and relieve a lot of suffering. When we put the energy of mindfulness into our hands, our Buddha hands will protect the safety and integrity of those we love.

Look deeply into your hand, and see if the Buddha eye is in it. In Tibetan, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese temples, there is a

bodhisattva with one thousand arms — it takes that many arms to help others — and in the palm of each hand there is an eye. The hand represents action, and the eye represents insight and understanding. Without understanding, our actions might cause others to suffer. We may be motivated by the desire to make others happy, but if we do not have understanding, the more we do, the more trouble we may create. Unless our love is made of understanding, it is not true love. Mindfulness is the energy that brings the eyes of a Buddha into our hand. With mindfulness, we can change the world and bring happiness to many people. This is not abstract. It is possible for every one of us to generate the energy of mindfulness in each moment of our daily life.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Right Speech*

"Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small." This is the Fourth Mindfulness Training.<sup>1</sup> and it offers a very good description of Right Speech (*samyag vac*).

1 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible*. See also chap. 13.

In our time, communication techniques have become very sophisticated. It takes no time at all

to send news to the other side of the planet. But at the same time, communication between individuals has become very difficult. Fathers cannot talk to sons and daughters. Husbands cannot talk to wives, nor partners to partners. Communication is blocked. We are in a very difficult situation, not only between countries but person to person. Practicing the Fourth Mindfulness Training is very important.

The classical explanation of Right Speech is:

- (1) Speaking truthfully. When something is green, we say it is green, and not purple.
- (2) Not speaking with a forked tongue. We don't say one thing to one person and something else to another. Of course, we can describe the truth in different ways to help different listeners understand our meaning, but we must always be loyal to the truth.
- (3) Not speaking cruelly. We don't shout, slander, curse, encourage suffering, or create hatred. Even those who have a good heart and don't want to hurt others sometimes allow toxic words to escape from their lips. In our mind are seeds of Buddha and also many fetters or internal formations (*samyojana*). When we say something poisonous, it is usually because of our habit energies. Our words are very powerful. They can give someone a complex, take

away their purpose in life, or even drive them to suicide. We must not forget this. (4) Not exaggerating or embellishing. We don't dramatize unnecessarily, making things sound better, worse, or more extreme than they actually are. If someone is a little irritated, we don't say that he is furious. The practice of Right Speech is to try to change our habits so that our speech arises from the seed of Buddha that is in us, and not from our unresolved, unwholesome seeds.<sup>2</sup>

2 See *Samyukta Agama* 785 and *Majjhima Nikaya* 117. See also Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible*.

Right Speech is based on Right Thinking. Speech is the way for our thinking to express itself aloud. Our thoughts are no longer our private possessions. We give earphones to others and allow them to hear the audiotape that is playing in our mind. Of course, there are things we think but do not want to say, and one part of our consciousness has to play the role of editor. If there is something we think we will be criticized for saying, the editor will censor it. Sometimes when a friend or a therapist asks us an unexpected question, we are provoked into telling the truth we

wanted to hide.

Sometimes, when there are blocks of suffering in us, they may manifest as speech (or actions) without going through the medium of thought. Our suffering has built up and can no longer be repressed, especially when we have not been practicing Right Mindfulness. Expressing our suffering can harm us and other people as well, but when we don't practice Right Mindfulness, we may not know what is building up inside us. Then we say or write things we did not want to say, and we don't know where our words came from. We had no intention of saying something that could hurt others, yet we say such words. We have every intention of saying only words that bring about reconciliation and forgiveness, but then we say something very unkind. To water seeds of peace in ourselves, we have to practice Right Mindfulness while walking, sitting, standing, and so on. With Right Mindfulness, we see clearly all of our thoughts and feelings and know whether this or that thought is harming or helping us. When our thoughts leave our mind in the form of speech, if Right Mindfulness continues to accompany them, we know what we are saying and whether it is useful or creating problems.

Deep listening is at the foundation of Right Speech. If we cannot listen mindfully, we cannot practice Right Speech. No matter what we say, it will not be mindful, because we'll be speaking only our own ideas and not in response to the other person. In the *Lotus Sutra*, we are advised to look and listen with the eyes of compassion. Compassionate listening brings about healing. When someone listens to us this way, we feel some relief right away. A good therapist always practices deep, compassionate listening. We have to learn to do the same in order to heal the people we love and restore communication with them.

When communication is cut off, we all suffer. When no one listens to us or understands us, we become like a bomb ready to explode. Restoring communication is an urgent task. Sometimes only ten minutes of deep listening can transform us and bring a smile back to our lips. The Bodhisattva Kwan Yin is the one who hears the cries of the world. She has the quality of listening deeply, without judging or reacting. When we listen with our whole being, we can defuse a lot of bombs. If the other person feels that we are critical of what they are saying, their suffering will not be relieved.

When psychotherapists practice Right Listening, their patients have the courage to say things they have never been able to tell anyone before. Deep listening nourishes both speaker and listener.

Many of us have lost our capacity for listening and using loving speech in our families. It may be that no one is capable of listening to anyone else. So we feel very lonely even within our own families. That is why we have to go to a therapist, hoping that she is able to listen to us. But many therapists also have deep suffering within. Sometimes they cannot listen as deeply as they would like. So if you really love someone, train yourself to be a listener. Be a therapist. You may be the best therapist for the person you love if you know how to train yourself in the art of deep, compassionate listening. You must also use loving speech. We have lost our capacity to say things calmly. We get irritated too easily. Every time we open our mouths, our speech becomes sour or bitter. We know it's true. We have lost our capacity for speaking with kindness. This is the Fourth Mindfulness Training. This is so crucial to restoring peaceful and loving relationships. If you fail in this training, you cannot succeed in restoring harmony, love, and happiness. That is why

practicing the Fourth Mindfulness Training is a great gift.

So many families, couples, and relationships have been broken because we have lost the capacity of listening to each other with calmness and compassion. We have lost the capacity of using calm and loving speech. The Fourth Mindfulness Training is very important to restore communication between us. Practicing the Fourth Training on the art of listening and the art of loving speech is a great gift. For example, a family member may suffer very much. No one in the family has been able to sit quietly and listen to him or her. If there is someone capable of sitting calmly and listening with his or her heart for one hour, the other person will feel a great relief from his suffering. If you suffer so much and no one has been able to listen to your suffering, your suffering will remain there. But if someone is able to listen to you and understand you, you will feel relief after one hour of being together.

In Buddhism, we speak of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, Kwan Yin, a person who has a great capacity of listening with compassion and true presence. "Kwan Yin" means the one who can

listen and understand the sound of the world, the cries of suffering. Psychotherapists try to practice the same. They sit very quietly with a lot of compassion and listen to you. Listening like that is not to judge, criticize, condemn, or evaluate, but to listen with the single purpose of helping the other person suffer less. If they are able to listen like that to you for one hour, you feel much better. But psychotherapists have to practice so that they can always maintain compassion, concentration, and deep listening. Otherwise, their quality of listening will be very poor, and you will not feel better after one hour of listening.

You have to practice breathing mindfully in and out so that compassion always stays with you. "I am listening to him not only because I want to know what is inside him or to give him advice. I am listening to him just because I want to relieve his suffering." That is called compassionate listening. You have to listen in such a way that compassion remains with you the whole time you are listening. That is the art. If halfway through listening irritation or anger comes up, then you cannot continue to listen. You have to practice in such a way that every time the energy of irritation and anger comes up, you can breathe in and out

mindfully and continue to hold compassion within you. It is with compassion that you can listen to another. No matter what he says, even if there is a lot of wrong information and injustice in his way of seeing things, even if he condemns or blames you, continue to sit very quietly breathing in and out. Maintain your compassion within you for one hour. That is called compassionate listening. If you can listen like that for one hour, the other person will feel much better.

If you don't feel that you can continue to listen in this way, ask your friend, "Dear one, can we continue in a few days? I need to renew myself. I need to practice so I can listen to you in the best way I can." If you are not in good shape, you are not going to listen the best way you can. You need to practice more walking meditation, more mindful breathing, more sitting meditation in order to restore your capacity for compassionate listening. That is the practice of the Fourth Mindfulness Training — training oneself to listen with compassion. That is very important, a great gift.

Sometimes we speak clumsily and create internal knots in others. Then we say, "I was just telling the truth." It may be the truth, but if our

way of speaking causes unnecessary suffering, it is not Right Speech. The truth must be presented in ways that others can accept. Words that damage or destroy are not Right Speech. Before you speak, understand the person you are speaking to. Consider each word carefully before you say anything, so that your speech is "Right" in both form and content. The Fourth Mindfulness Training also has to do with loving speech. You have the right to tell another everything in your heart with the condition that you use only loving speech. If you are not able to speak calmly, then don't speak that day. "Sorry, my dear, allow me to tell you tomorrow or the next day. I am not at my best today. I'm afraid I'll say things that are unkind. Allow me to tell you about this another day." Open your mouth and speak only when you are sure you can use calm and loving speech. You have to train yourself to be able to do so.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, a bodhisattva named Wondrous Sound was able to speak to each person in his or her own language. For someone who needed the language of music, he used music. For those who understood the language of drugs, he spoke in terms of drugs. Every word the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound said opened up

communication and helped others transform. We can do the same, but it takes determination and skillfulness.

When two people are not getting along, we can go to one and speak in a positive way about the other, and then go to the other and speak constructively about the first. When person "A" knows that person "B" is suffering, A has a much better chance of understanding and appreciating B. The art of Right Speech needs Right View, Right Thought, and also correct practice.

Letter writing is a form of speech. A letter can sometimes be safer than speaking, because there is time for you to read what you have written before sending it. As you read your words, you can visualize the other person receiving your letter and decide if what you have written is skillful and appropriate. Your letter has to water the seeds of transformation in the other person and stir something in his heart if it is to be called Right Speech. If any phrase can be misunderstood or upsetting, rewrite it. Right Mindfulness tells you whether you are expressing the truth in the most skillful way. Once you have mailed your letter, you cannot get it back. So read it over carefully.

several times before sending it. Such a letter will benefit both of you.

Of course you have suffered, but the other person has suffered also. That is why writing is a very good practice. Writing is a practice of looking deeply. You send the letter only when you are sure that you have looked deeply. You don't need to blame anymore. You need to show that you have a deeper understanding. It is true that the other person suffers, and that alone is worth your compassion. When you begin to understand the suffering of the other person, compassion will arise in you, and the language you use will have the power of healing. Compassion is the only energy that can help us connect with another person. The person who has no compassion in him can never be happy. When you practice looking at the person to whom you are going to write a letter, if you can begin to see his suffering, compassion will be born. The moment compassion is born in you, you feel better already, even before you finish the letter. After sending the letter, you feel even better, because you know the other person will also feel better after reading your letter. Everyone needs understanding and acceptance. And now you have understanding to offer. By writing a letter like this,

you restore communication.

Writing a book or an article can be done in the same way. Writing is a deep practice. Even before we begin writing, during whatever we are doing — gardening or sweeping the floor — our book or essay is being written deep in our consciousness. To write a book, we must write with our whole life, not just during the moments we are sitting at our desk. When writing a book or an article, we know that our words will affect many other people. We do not have the right just to express our own suffering if it brings suffering to others. Many books, poems, and songs take away our faith in life. Young people today curl up in bed with their walkmen and listen to unwholesome music, songs that water seeds of great sadness and agitation in them. When we practice Right View and Right Thinking, we will put all of our tapes and CDs that water only seeds of anguish into a box and not listen to them anymore. Filmmakers, musicians, and writers need to practice Right Speech to help our society move again in the direction of peace, joy, and faith in the future.

Telephone meditation is another practice that can help us cultivate Right Speech:

*Words can travel thousands of miles.  
May my words create mutual understanding and  
love.  
May they be as beautiful as gems,  
as lovely as flowers.<sup>3</sup>*

3> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Present Moment Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), p. 69.

You may like to write this gatha on a piece of paper and tape it near your telephone. Then, every time you are about to make a phone call, place your hand on the phone and recite these words. This gatha expresses the determination to practice Right Speech. Even as you say the words, your mind already becomes more peaceful and your insight more clear. The person you are calling will hear the freshness in your voice, and your words will bring her great happiness and not cause suffering.

As our meditation practice deepens, we are much less caught in words. Capable of practicing silence, we are free as a bird, in touch with the essence of things. The founder of one of the

schools of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism wrote, "Don't ask me anything else. My essence is wordless."<sup>4</sup> To practice mindfulness of speech, sometimes we have to practice silence. Then we can look deeply to see what our views are and what internal knots give rise to our thinking. Silence is a time for looking deeply. There are times when silence is truth, and that is called "thundering silence." Confucius said, "The heavens do not say anything." That also means, the heavens tell us so much, but we don't know how to listen to them. If we listen out of the silence of our mind, every bird's song and every whistling of the pine trees in the wind will speak to us. In the *Sukhavati Sutra*, it is said that every time the wind blows through the jeweled trees, a miracle is produced. If we listen carefully to that sound, we will hear the Buddha teaching the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Right Mindfulness helps us slow down and listen to each word from the birds, the trees, and our own mind and speech. Whether we say something kind or respond too hastily, we hear what we are saying.

4 Vô Ngôn Thông d. 826.

Words and thoughts can kill. We cannot

support acts of killing in our [thinking or in our speech](#). If you have a job in which telling the truth is impossible, you may have to change jobs. If you have a job that allows you to speak the truth, please be grateful. To practice social justice and non-exploitation, we have to use Right Speech.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## *Right Action*

Right Action (*samyak karmanta*) means Right Action of the body. It is the practice of touching love and preventing harm, the practice of nonviolence toward ourselves and others. The basis of Right Action is to do everything in mindfulness.

Right Action is closely linked with four (the first, second, third, and fifth) of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.<sup>1</sup> The First Training is about reverence for life: "Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life." We may be killing every day by the way we eat, drink, and use the land, air, and water. We think that we don't kill, but we do. Mindfulness of action helps us be aware so we can stop the killing and begin saving and helping.

1 The Fourth Mindfulness Training is about Right Speech. See chap. 12.

The Second Mindfulness Training is about generosity: "Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I will practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth." This training tells us not just to refrain from taking what is not ours or exploiting others. It also exhorts us to live in a way that brings about justice and well-being in society. We have to learn how to live simply so that we do not take more than our share. When we do something to promote social justice, that is Right Action.

The Third Mindfulness Training is about sexual responsibility: "Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating

responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct."

Loneliness cannot be alleviated just by the coming together of two bodies, unless there is also good communication, understanding and loving kindness. Right Mindfulness helps us protect ourselves and others, including children, from further suffering. Sexual misbehavior creates so much suffering. To protect the integrity of families and individuals, we do our best to behave responsibly and encourage others to do the same. Practicing this training, we not only protect ourselves and those dear to us, but we protect the whole human species, including children. When Right Mindfulness shines its light on our daily life, we are able to keep this training steadily.

Sexual misbehavior has broken so many

families. There has been so much suffering because people do not practice sexual responsibility. A child who is sexually abused will suffer his or her whole life. Those who have been sexually abused have the capacity to become bodhisattvas, helping many children. Your mind of love can transform your own grief and pain, and you can share your insight with others. This is Right Action, and it frees you and those around you. When you practice to help others around you, at the same time, you are helping yourself.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training encourages mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. This is linked to the Four Noble Truths and all of the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, but especially Right Action: "Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that

contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society." Right Action means bringing into our body and mind only the kinds of food that are safe and healthy. We practice mindful eating, [mindful drinking](#), not eating things that create toxins in our body, not using alcohol or drugs, for ourselves, our family, and our society. We [consume mindfully](#) so that life will be possible for all of us. We practice [mindful consumption](#) to protect our body and our consciousness from ingesting toxins. Certain [television programs](#), books, magazines, and conversations can bring into our consciousness violence, fear, and despair. We have to practice mindful consumption to protect our body and consciousness and the collective body and consciousness of our family and our society.

When we practice not drinking alcohol, we

protect ourselves, and we also protect our family and our society. A woman in London told me, "I have been drinking two glasses of wine every week for the last twenty years, and it has done me no harm at all. Why should I give it up?" I said, "It's true that two glasses of wine do not harm you. But are you sure they do not harm your children? You may not have the seed of alcoholism in you, but who knows whether the seed of alcoholism is in your children. If you give up wine, you'll be doing it not only for yourself but also for your children and for your society." She understood, and the next morning she formally received the Five Mindfulness Trainings. That is the work of a bodhisattva, doing it not for herself alone but for everyone.

The Ministry of Health in France advises people not to drink too much. They advertise on television, "One glass is okay, but three glasses invite destruction." They want you to be moderate in drinking. But if the first glass were not there, how could there be a third glass? Not having the first glass of wine is the highest form of protection. If you refrain from having a first glass, you are protecting not only yourself, but all of us at the same time. When we consume mindfully, we

protect our body, our consciousness, and the body and consciousness of our family and society. Without the Fifth Training, how can we transform the difficult situation of our society? The more we consume, the more we suffer, and the more we make our society suffer. Mindful consumption seems to be the only way out of this current situation, the only way to stop the course of destruction for our body, our consciousness, and the collective body and consciousness of our society.

Looking deeply, we can see the interbeing nature of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the Eightfold Path. We apply Right Mindfulness to see whether our eating, drinking, and consuming is Blight Action. Right View, Right Thinking, and Right Speech are all present when we put the Fifth Mindfulness Training into practice. The Five Mindfulness Trainings are interpenetrated by the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, especially Right Action.

Right Action is based on Right View, Right Thinking, and Right Speech, and is very much linked to Right Livelihood. Those who earn their living by manufacturing weapons, depriving others

of their chance to live, destroying the environment, exploiting nature and people, or producing items that bring us toxins may earn a lot of money, but they are practicing wrong livelihood. We have to be mindful to protect ourselves from their wrong action. If we don't have Right View and Right Thought and are not practicing Right Speech and Right Livelihood, even if we feel we are trying to go in the direction of peace and enlightenment, our effort may be wrong action.

A good teacher only needs to observe a student walking or inviting the bell to sound to know how long he has been in the practice. You look at his Right Action and see all the things that are contained in it. Looking this way into any of the elements of the path, you can measure the realization of that person as far as the whole path is concerned.

There are so many things we can do to practice Right Action. We can protect life, practice generosity, behave responsibly, and consume mindfully. The basis of Right Action is Right Mindfulness.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Right Diligence*

Right Diligence (*samyak pradhana*), or Right Effort, is the kind of energy that helps us realize the Noble Eightfold Path. If we are diligent for possessions, sex, or food, that is wrong diligence. If we work round-the-clock for profit or fame or to run away from our suffering, that is wrong diligence also. From outside, it may appear that we are diligent, but it is not Right Diligence. The same can be true of our meditation practice. We may appear diligent in our practice, but if it takes us farther from reality or from those we love, it is wrong diligence. When we practice sitting and walking meditation in ways that cause our body and mind to suffer, our effort is not Right Diligence and is not based on Right View. Our practice should be intelligent, based on Right Understanding of the teaching. It is not because we practice hard that we can say that we are practicing Right Diligence.

There was a monk in Tang Dynasty China who was practicing sitting meditation very hard, day and night. He thought he was practicing harder

than anyone else, and he was very proud of this. He sat like a rock day and night, but his suffering was not transformed. One day a teacher<sup>1</sup> asked him, "Why are you sitting so hard?" and the monk replied, "To become a Buddha!" The teacher picked up a tile and began polishing it, and the monk asked, "Teacher, what are you doing?" His master replied, "I am making a mirror." The monk asked, "How can you make a tile into a mirror?" and his teacher replied, "How can you become a Buddha by sitting?"

1 Master Huariang (667-744).

The four practices usually associated with Right Diligence are: (1) preventing unwholesome seeds in our store consciousness that have not yet arisen from arising, (2) helping the unwholesome seeds that have already arisen to return to our store consciousness, (3) finding ways to water the wholesome seeds in our store consciousness that have not yet arisen and asking our friends to do the same, and (4) nourishing the wholesome seeds that have already arisen so that they will stay present in our mind consciousness and grow stronger. This is called the Fourfold Right Diligence.

"Unwholesome" means not conducive to liberation or the Path. In our store consciousness there are many seeds that are not beneficial for our transformation, and if those seeds are watered, they will grow stronger. When greed, hatred, ignorance, and wrong views arise, if we embrace them with Right Mindfulness, sooner or later they will lose their strength and return to our store consciousness.

When wholesome seeds have not yet arisen, we can water them and help them come into our conscious mind. These seeds of happiness, love, loyalty, and reconciliation need watering every day. If we water them, we will feel joyful, and this will encourage them to stay longer. Keeping wholesome mental formations in our mind consciousness is the fourth practice of Right Diligence.

The Fourfold Right Diligence is nourished by joy and interest. If your practice does not bring you joy, you are not practicing correctly. The Buddha asked the monk Sona, "Is it true that before you became a monk you were a musician?" Sona replied that it was so. The Buddha asked, "What happens if the string of your instrument is

too loose?"

"When you pluck it, there will be no sound," Sona replied.

"What happens when the string is too taut?"

"It will break."

"The practice of the Way is the same," the Buddha said. "Maintain your health. Be joyful. Do not force yourself to do things you cannot do."<sup>2</sup> We need to know our physical and psychological limits. We shouldn't force ourselves to do ascetic practices or lose ourselves in sensual pleasures. Right Diligence lies in the Middle Way, between the extremes of austerity and sensual indulgence.

*2 Vinaya Mahavagga Khuddaka Nikaya 5.*

The teachings of the Seven Factors of Awakening<sup>3</sup> are also part of the practice of Right Diligence. Joy is a factor of awakening, and it is at the heart of Right Diligence. Ease, another Factor of Awakening, is also essential for Right Diligence. In fact, not only Right Diligence but also Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration need joy and

ease. Right Diligence does not mean to force ourselves. If we have joy, ease, and interest, our effort will come naturally. When we hear the bell inviting us for walking or sitting meditation, we will have the energy to participate if we find meditation joyful and interesting. If we do not have the energy to practice sitting or walking meditation, it is because these practices do not bring us joy or transform us, or we do not yet see their benefit.

3> The Seven Factors of Awakening — mindfulness, investigating phenomena, diligence, joy, ease, concentration, and letting go. See chap. 26.

When I wanted to become a novice monk, my family thought that a monk's life would be too difficult for me. But I knew it was the only way I could be happy, and I persisted. Once I became a novice, I felt as happy and free as a bird in the sky. When it came time for chanting sutras, I felt as though I had been invited to a concert. Sometimes on moonlit nights, when the monks were chanting the sutras standing by the crescent pond, I thought I was in paradise listening to angels. When I could not attend morning chanting because I had another

task, just hearing the words of the *Shurangama Sutra* coming from the Buddha Hall brought me happiness. Everyone at Tu Hieu Pagoda practiced with interest, joy, and diligence. There was no forced effort, just the love and support of our teacher and brothers in the practice.

At Plum Village, children participate in sitting and walking meditation and silent meals. At first, they do it just to be with their friends who are already practicing, but after they taste the peace and joy of meditation, they continue on their own because they want to. Sometimes it takes adults four or five years of practicing the outer form before they taste the true joy of practice. Master Guishan said, "Time flies like an arrow. If we do not live deeply, we waste our life."<sup>4</sup> Someone who can devote her life to the practice, who has a chance to be near her teacher and friends in the practice, has a wonderful opportunity that can bring her great happiness. If we lack Right Diligence, it is because we have not found a way to practice that is true for us, or have not felt deeply the need to practice. A mindful life can be wonderful.

4 From "Encouraging Words," in Thich Nhat

Hanh, *Stepping into Freedom: An Introduction to Buddhist Monastic Training* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1997), pp. 89-97. Guishan (771-853) was one of the great Tang Dynasty meditation masters.

*Waking up this morning, I smile.  
Twenty-four brand new hours are before me.  
I vow to live fully in each moment  
and to look at all beings with eyes of compassion!*<sup>5</sup>

5 Thich Nhat Hanh, *Present Moment Wonderful Moment*, p. 3.

Reciting this gatha can give us energy to live the day well. Twenty-four hours are a treasure-chest of jewels. If we waste these hours, we waste our life. The practice is to smile as soon as we wake up, recognizing this day as an opportunity for practicing. It is up to us not to waste it. When we look at all beings with eyes of love and compassion, we feel wonderful. With the energy of mindfulness, washing the dishes, sweeping the floor, or practicing sitting or walking meditation are all the more precious.

Suffering can propel us to practice. When we are anxious or sad and see that these practices bring

us relief, we will want to continue. It takes energy to look into suffering and to see what has brought about that suffering. But this insight will lead us to see how to end our suffering, and the path needed to do so. When we embrace our suffering, we see its origins, and we see that it can end because there is a path. Our suffering is at the center. When we look into the compost, we see the flowers. When we look into the sea of fire, we see a lotus. The path that does not run away from but embraces our suffering is the path that will lead us to liberation.

It is not always necessary for us to deal directly with our suffering. Sometimes we can just allow it to lie dormant in our store consciousness, and we use the opportunity to touch the refreshing and healing elements within us and around us with our mindfulness. They will take care of our pain, like antibodies taking care of the foreign bodies that have entered our bloodstream. When unwholesome seeds have arisen, we have to take care of them. When unwholesome seeds are dormant, our job is to help them sleep peacefully and be transformed at the base.

With Right View, we see the way we need to

go, and our seeing gives us faith and energy. If we feel better after practicing walking meditation for an hour, we will have the determination to continue the practice. When we see how walking meditation brings peace to others, we will have even more faith in practice. With patience, we can discover the joys of life that are all around us, and we will have more energy, interest, and diligence.

The practice of mindful living should be joyful and pleasant. If you breathe in and out and feel joy and peace, that is Right Diligence. If you suppress yourself, if you suffer during your practice, it probably is not Right Diligence. Examine your practice. See what brings you joy and happiness of a sustained kind. Try to spend time with a Sangha, brothers and sisters who are creating a field of mindful energy that can make your practice easy. Work together with a teacher and with a friend to transform your suffering into compassion, peace, and understanding, and do it with joy and ease. That is Right Diligence.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Right Concentration*

The practice of Right Concentration (*samyak samadhi*) is to cultivate a mind that is one-pointed. The Chinese character for concentration means, literally, "maintaining evenness," neither too high nor too low, neither too excited nor too dull. Another Chinese term sometimes used for concentration means "the abode of true mind."

There are two kinds of concentration, active and selective. In active concentration, the mind dwells on whatever is happening in the present moment, even as it changes. This poem by a Buddhist monk<sup>1</sup> describes active concentration:

1 Poem by Vietnamese Dhyana Master Huong Hai (Ocean of Fragrance),

*The wind whistles in the bamboo  
and the bamboo dances.  
When the wind stops,  
the bamboo grows still.*

The wind comes and the bamboo welcomes it.

The wind goes, and the bamboo lets it go. The poem continues:

*A silver bird  
flies over the autumn lake.  
When it has passed,  
the lake's surface does not try  
to hold on to the image of the bird.*

As the bird flies over the lake, its reflection is lucid. After it is gone, the lake reflects the clouds and the sky just as clearly. When we practice active concentration, we welcome whatever comes along. We don't think about or long for anything else. We just dwell in the present moment with all our being. Whatever comes, comes. When the object of our concentration has passed, our mind remains clear, like a calm lake.

When we practice "[selective concentration](#)," we choose one object and hold onto it. During sitting and walking meditation, whether alone or with others, we practice. We know that the sky and the birds are there, but our attention is focused on our object. If the object of our concentration is a math problem, we don't watch TV or talk on the phone. We abandon everything else and focus on the

object. When we are driving, the lives of the passengers in our car depend on our concentration.

We don't use concentration to run away from our suffering. We concentrate to make ourselves deeply present. When we walk, stand, or sit in concentration, people can see our stability and stillness. Living each moment deeply, sustained concentration comes naturally, and that, in turn, gives rise to insight.

Right Concentration leads to happiness, and it also leads to Right Action. The higher our degree of concentration, the greater the quality of our life. Vietnamese girls are often told by their mothers that if they concentrate, they will be more beautiful. This is the kind of beauty that comes from dwelling deeply in the present moment. When a young lady moves inattentively, she does not look as fresh or at ease. Her mother may not use these words, but she is encouraging her daughter to practice Right Concentration. It is a pity she does not encourage her son to do the same. Everyone needs concentration.

There are nine levels of meditative concentration. The first four are the Four Dhyanas.

These are concentrations on the form realm. The next five levels belong to the formless realm. When practicing the first dhyana, you still think. At the other eight levels, thinking gives way to other energies. Formless concentrations are also practiced in other traditions, but when they are practiced outside of Buddhism, it is generally to escape from suffering rather than to realize the liberation that comes with insight into our suffering. When you use concentration to run away from yourself or your situation, it is wrong concentration. Sometimes we need to escape our problems for relief, but at some time we have to return to face them. Worldly concentration seeks to escape. Supra-mundane concentration aims at complete liberation.

To practice samadhi is to live deeply each moment that is given us to live. Samadhi means concentration. In order to be concentrated, we should be mindful, fully present and aware of what is going on. Mindfulness brings about concentration. When you are deeply concentrated, you are absorbed in the moment. You *become* the moment. That is why samadhi is sometimes translated as "absorption." Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration lift us above the realms of

sensual pleasures and craving, and we find ourselves lighter and happier. Our world is no longer gross and heavy, the realm of desires (*karma dhatu*). It is the realm of fine materiality, the realm of form (*rupa dhatu*).

In the form realm, there are four levels of dhyana. Mindfulness, concentration, joy, happiness, peace, and equanimity continue to grow through these four levels. After the fourth dhyana, the practitioner enters a deeper experience of concentration — the four formless dhyanas — where he or she can see deeply into reality. Here, sensual desire and materiality reveal their illusory nature and are no longer obstacles. You begin to see the impermanent, nonself, and interbeing nature of the phenomenal world. Earth, water, air, fire, space, time, nothingness, and perceptions inter-are. Nothing can be by itself alone.

The object of the fifth level of concentration is limitless space. When we begin to practice this concentration, everything seems to be space. But as we practice more deeply, we see that space is composed of and exists only in "non-space elements," like earth, water, air, fire, and consciousness. Because space is only one of the six

elements that make up all material things, we know space does not have a separate, independent existence. According to the teachings of the Buddha, nothing has a separate self. So space and everything else inter-are. Space inter-is with the other five elements.

The object of the sixth level of concentration is limitless consciousness. At first, we see only consciousness, but then we see that consciousness is also earth, water, air, fire, and space. What is true of space is also true of consciousness.

The object of the seventh level of concentration is nothingness. With normal perception, we see flowers, fruit, teapots, and tables, and we think they exist separately of one another. But when we look more deeply, we see that the fruit is in the flower, and that the flower, the cloud, and the earth are in the fruit. We go beyond outward appearances or signs and come to "signlessness." At first, we think that the members of our family are separate from one another, but afterwards we see that they contain each other. You are the way you are because I am the way I am. We see the intimate connection between people, and we go beyond signs. We used to think that the universe

contains millions of separate entities. Now we understand "the nonexistence of signs."

The eighth level of concentration is that of neither perception nor non-perception. We recognize that everything is produced by our perceptions, which are, at least in part, erroneous. Therefore, we see that we cannot rely on our old way of perceiving and we want to be in direct touch with reality. We cannot stop perceiving altogether, but at least now we know that perception is perception of a sign. Since we no longer believe in the reality of signs, our perception becomes wisdom. We go beyond signs ("no perception"), but we do not become perceptionless ("no non-perception").

The ninth level of concentration is called cessation. "Cessation" here means the cessation of ignorance in our feelings and perceptions, not the cessation of feelings and perceptions. From this concentration is born insight. The poet Nguyen Du said, "As soon as we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, we open ourselves to suffering." We long to be in a state of concentration where we cannot see or hear anything, in a world where there is no perception. We wish to become a pine tree

with the wind singing in our branches, because we believe that a pine tree does not suffer. The search for a place of non-suffering is natural.

In the world of non-perception, the seventh (*manas*) and the eighth (*alaya*) consciousnesses continue to function as usual, and our ignorance and internal formations remain intact in our store consciousness, and they manifest in the seventh consciousness. The seventh consciousness is the energy of delusion that creates the belief in a self and distinguishes self from other. Since the non-perception concentration does not transform our habit energies, when people emerge from that concentration, their suffering is intact. But when the meditator reaches the ninth level of concentration, the stage of arhat, *manas* is transformed and the internal formations in the store consciousness are purified. The greatest internal formation is ignorance of the reality of impermanence and nonself. This ignorance gives rise to greed, hatred, confusion, pride, doubt, and views. Together, these afflictions produce a war of consciousness called manas, which always discriminates self from other.

When someone practices well, the ninth level of

concentration shines light on the reality of things and transforms ignorance. The seeds that used to cause you to be caught in self and nonself are transformed, alaya is freed from the grip of manas, and manas no longer has the function of making a self. Manas becomes the Wisdom of Equality that can see the interbeing and interpenetrating nature of things. It can see that others' lives are as precious as our own, because there is no longer discrimination between self and other. When manas loses its grip on store consciousness, store consciousness becomes the Wisdom of the Great Mirror that reflects everything in the universe.

When the sixth consciousness (*manovijñana*) is transformed, it is called the Wisdom of Wonderful Observation. Mind consciousness continues to observe phenomena after it has been transformed into wisdom, but it observes them in a different way, because mind consciousness is aware of the interbeing nature of all that it observes — seeing the one in the many, all the manifestations of birth and death, coming and going, and so on — without being caught in ignorance. The first five consciousnesses become the Wisdom of Wonderful Realization. Our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body that previously caused us to suffer become

miracles that bring us to the garden of suchness. Thus, the transformation of all levels of consciousness is realized as Four Wisdoms. Our wrong consciousness and wrong perceptions are transformed, thanks to the practice. At the ninth level of concentration, all eight consciousnesses are functioning. Perception and feeling are still there, but they are different from before, because they are free from ignorance.<sup>2</sup>

2 This is described in chap. 27.

The Buddha taught many concentration practices. To practice the Concentration on Impermanence, every time you look at your beloved, see him as impermanent, and do your best to make him happy today. If you think he is permanent, you may believe that he will never improve. The insight into impermanence keeps you from getting caught in the suffering of craving, attachment, and despair. See and listen to everything with this insight.

To practice the Concentration on Nonself, touch the nature of interbeing in everything you contact. This will bring you a lot of peace and joy and prevent you from suffering. The practice of

the [Concentration on Nirvana](#) helps you to touch the ultimate dimension of reality and establish yourself in the realms of no-birth and no-death. The Concentrations on Impermanence, Nonself, and Nirvana are enough for us to practice our whole lives. In fact, the three are one. If you touch the nature of impermanence deeply, you touch the nature of nonself (interbeing) and nirvana. One concentration contains all concentrations. You don't need to do everything.

In Mahayana Buddhism, there are hundreds of other concentrations, such as the *Shurangama Samadhi* (the Concentration of the Heroic March), the *Saddharmapundarika Samadhi*, and the *Avatamsaka Samadhi*. Each is wonderful and important. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, we have to live in the historical and ultimate dimensions of reality at the same time. We have to live deeply our life as a wave so we can touch the substance of water in us. We walk, look, breathe, and eat in a way that we touch the absolute dimension of reality. We transcend birth and death and the fears of being and nonbeing, one and many.

The Buddha is not found only on Gridhrakuta, the Vulture Peak. If you were to hear on the radio

that the Buddha is going to reappear on Gridhrakuta Mountain and the public is invited to join him for walking meditation, all the seats on all the airplanes to India would be booked, and you might feel frustrated, because you want to go, also. Even if you were lucky enough to get a seat on that plane, it still might not be possible for you to enjoy practicing walking meditation with the Buddha. There would be *so* many people, most of whom don't know how to practice breathing in and out and dwelling in the present moment while walking. What is the use of going there?

Look deeply at your intention. Do you want to fly halfway around the world so that later you can say you were with the Buddha? Many people want to do just that. They arrive at a place of pilgrimage, unable to be in the here and the now. After a few minutes of seeing the place, they rush to the next place. They take pictures to prove they were there, and they are eager to return home to show their friends. "I was there. I have proof. That is me standing beside the Buddha." That would be the desire of many of the people who would go there. They are not able to walk with the Buddha. They are not able to be in the here and the now. They only want to say, "I was there, and this is

me standing beside the Buddha." But it is not true. They were not there. And that is not the Buddha. "Being there" is a concept, and the Buddha that you see is a mere appearance. You cannot photograph the real Buddha, even if you have a very expensive camera.

If you don't have the opportunity to fly to India, please practice walking at home, and you can really hold the hand of the Buddha while you walk. Just walk in peace and happiness, and the Buddha is there with you. The one who flies to India and returns with his photo taken with the Buddha has not seen the real Buddha. You have the reality; he has only a sign. Don't run around looking for photo opportunities. Touch the real Buddha. He is available. Take his hand and practice walking meditation. When you can touch the ultimate dimension, you walk with the Buddha. The wave does not need to die to become water. She is already water. This is the Concentration of the *Lotus Sutra*. Live every moment of your life deeply, and while walking, eating, drinking, and looking at the morning star, you touch the ultimate dimension.

## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

### *Right Livelihood*

To practice Right Livelihood (*samyag ajiva*), you have to find a way to earn your living without transgressing your ideals of love and compassion. The way you support yourself can be an expression of your deepest self, or it can be a source of suffering for you and others.

The sutras usually define Right Livelihood as earning a living without needing to transgress any of the Five Mindfulness Trainings: not dealing in arms, in the slave trade, the meat trade, the sale of alcohol, drugs, or poisons; or making prophecies or telling fortunes. Monks and nuns must be careful not to make unreasonable demands on the laity for the four requisites of medicine, food, clothes, and lodging, and not to live with material requisites in excess of immediate needs. Bringing awareness to every moment, we try to have a vocation that is beneficial to humans, animals, plants, and the earth, or at least minimally harmful. We live in a society in which jobs are sometimes hard to find, but if it happens that our work involves harming life, we should try to find another job. Our

vocation can nourish our understanding and compassion, or erode them. We should be awake to the consequences, far and near, of the way we earn our living. So many modern industries are harmful to humans and nature, even food production. Chemical pesticides and fertilizers can cause a lot of harm to the environment. Practicing Right Livelihood is difficult for farmers. If they do not use chemicals, it may be difficult for them to compete commercially. This is just one example. When you practice your profession or trade, observe the Five Mindfulness Trainings. A job that involves killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, or selling drugs or alcohol is not Right Livelihood. If your company pollutes the rivers or the air, working there is not Right Livelihood. Making weapons or profiting from others' superstitions is also not Right Livelihood. People have superstitions, such as believing that their fate is sealed in the stars or in the palms of their hands. No one can be sure what will occur in the future. By practicing mindfulness, we can change the destiny astrologers have predicted for us. Moreover, prophecies can be self-fulfilling.

Composing or performing works of art can also be livelihood. A composer, writer, painter, or

performer has an effect on the collective consciousness. Any work of art is, to a large extent, a product of the collective consciousness. Therefore, the individual artist needs to practice mindfulness so that his or her work of art helps those who touch it practice right attention. A young man wanted to learn how to draw lotus flowers, so he went to a master to apprentice with him. The master took him to a lotus pond and invited him to sit there. The young man saw flowers bloom when the sun was high, and he watched them return into buds when night fell. The next morning, he did the same. When one lotus flower wilted and its petals fell into the water, he just looked at the stalk, the stamen, and the rest of the flower, and then moved on to another lotus. He did that for ten days. On the eleventh day, the master asked him, "Are you ready?" and he replied, "I will try." The master gave him a brush, and although the young man's style was childlike, the lotus he drew was beautiful. He had *become* the lotus, and the painting came forth from him. You could see his naïveté concerning technique, but deep beauty was there.

Right Livelihood is not just a personal matter. It is our collective karma. Suppose I am a

schoolteacher and I believe that nurturing love and understanding in children is a beautiful occupation. I would object if someone were to ask me to stop teaching and become, for example, a butcher. But when I meditate on the interrelatedness of things, I see that the butcher is not the only person responsible for killing animals. We may think the butcher's livelihood is wrong and ours is right, but if we didn't eat meat, he would not have to kill. Right Livelihood is a collective matter. The livelihood of each person affects everyone else. The butcher's children might benefit from my teaching, while my children, because they eat meat, share some responsibility for the butcher's livelihood. Suppose a farmer who sells his cattle as meat wants to receive the Five Mindfulness Trainings. He wants to know if he can, in light of the first training to protect life. He feels that he gives his cattle the best conditions for their well-being. He even operates his own slaughterhouse, so that there is no unnecessary cruelty inflicted on the animals when he puts an end to their lives. He inherited his farm from his father, and he has a family to support. This is a dilemma. What should he do? His intentions are good, but he has inherited his farm and his habit energies from his ancestors.

Every time a cow is slaughtered, it leaves an impression on his consciousness, which will come back to him in dreams, during meditation, or at the moment of death. It is Right Livelihood to look after his cows so well while they are alive. He has the wish to be kind to his cows, and he also wants the security of regular income for himself and his family.

He should continue to look deeply and practice mindfulness with his local Sangha. As his insight deepens, the way out of the situation where he finds himself killing to make a living will present itself.

Everything we do contributes to our effort to practice Right Livelihood. It is more than just the way we earn our paycheck. We cannot succeed at having a Right Livelihood one hundred percent, but we can resolve to go in the direction of compassion and reducing suffering. And we can resolve to help create a society in which there is more Right Livelihood and less wrong livelihood.

Millions of people, for example, make their living in the arms industry, helping directly or indirectly to manufacture conventional and nuclear

weapons. The U.S., Russia, France, Britain, China, and Germany are the primary suppliers of these weapons. Weapons are then sold to Third World countries, where the people do not need guns; they need food. To manufacture or sell weapons is not Right Livelihood, but the responsibility for this situation lies with all of us — politicians, economists, and consumers. We have not yet organized a compelling national debate on this problem. We have to discuss this further, and we have to keep creating new jobs so that no one has to live on the profits from weapons' manufacture. If you are able to work in a profession that helps realize your ideal of compassion, be grateful. And please try to help create proper jobs for others by living mindfully, simply, and sanely. Use all of your energy to try to improve the situation.

To practice Right Livelihood means to practice Right Mindfulness. Every time the telephone rings, hear it as a bell of mindfulness. Stop what you are doing, breathe in and out consciously, and then proceed to the telephone. The way you answer the phone will embody Right Livelihood. We need to discuss among ourselves how to practice mindfulness in the workplace, how to practice Right Livelihood. Do we breathe when we hear the

telephone ringing and before we pick up the phone to make a call? Do we smile while we take care of others? Do we walk mindfully from meeting to meeting? Do we practice Right Speech? Do we practice deep and total relaxation after hours of hard work? Do we live in ways that encourage everyone to be peaceful and happy and to have a job that is in the direction of peace and happiness? These are very practical and important questions. To work in a way that encourages this kind of thinking and acting, in a way that encourages our ideal of compassion, is to practice Right Livelihood.

If someone has a profession that causes living beings to suffer and oppresses others, it will infect their own consciousness, just as when we pollute the air that we ourselves have to breathe. Many people get rich by means of wrong livelihood. Then they go to their temple or church and make donations. These donations come from feelings of fear and guilt rather than the wish to bring happiness to others and relieve others of suffering. When a temple or church receives large donations, those responsible for receiving the funds must understand this; they should do their best to help the donor transform by showing him or her a way

out of that wrong livelihood. Such persons need, more than anything, the teachings of the Buddha.



As we study and practice the Noble Eightfold Path, we see that each element of the path is contained within all the other seven elements. We also see that each element of the path contains the Noble Truths of suffering, the making of suffering, and the ending of suffering.

Practicing the First Noble Truth, we recognize our suffering and call it by its name — depression, anxiety, fear, or insecurity. Then we look directly into that suffering to discover its basis, and that is practicing the Second Noble Truth. These two practices contain the first two elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right View and Right Thinking. All of us have a tendency to run away from suffering, but now with the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path we have the courage to face our suffering directly. We use Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration to look courageously at our suffering. The looking deeply that shows us clearly the basis of our suffering is

Right View. Right View will not show one reason for our suffering, but layers upon layers of causes and conditions: seeds we have inherited from our parents, grandparents, and ancestors; seeds in us that have been watered by our friends and the economic and political situations of our country; and so many other causes and conditions.

Now the time has come to do something to lessen our suffering. Once we know what is feeding our suffering, we find a way to cease ingesting that nutriment, whether it is edible food, the food of sense-impression, the food we receive from our intentions, or the food from our consciousness. We do this by practicing Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, remembering that Right Speech is also listening deeply. To practice these three aspects, we take the Mindfulness Trainings as our guide. Practicing according to the Mindfulness Trainings, we see that when we speak, act, or earn our living, we do it with Right Mindfulness. Right Mindfulness lets us know when we say something that is not Right Speech or do something that is not Right Action. Once Right Mindfulness is practiced along with Right Diligence, Right Concentration will follow easily and give rise to insight or Right View. In fact, it is

not possible to practice one element of the Noble Eightfold Path without practicing all seven other elements. This is the nature of interbeing, and it is true for all of the teachings offered by the Buddha.

## **PART THREE**

### *Other Basic Buddhist Teachings*

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *The Two Truths*

According to Buddhism, there are two kinds of truth, relative or worldly truth (*samvriti satya*) and absolute truth (*paramartha satya*). We enter the door of practice through relative truth. We recognize the presence of happiness and the presence of suffering, and we try to go in the direction of increased happiness. Every day we go a little further in that direction, and one day we realize that suffering and happiness are "not two."

A Vietnamese poem says:

*People talk endlessly about their suffering and their joy.*

*But what is there to suffer or be joyful about?  
Joy from sensual pleasure always leads to pain,  
and suffering while practicing the Way always  
brings joy.*

*Wherever there is joy, there is suffering.  
If you want to have no-suffering, you must accept  
no-joy.*

The poet is trying to leap into absolute truth

without walking the path of relative truth. Many people think that in order to avoid suffering, they have to give up joy, and they call this "transcending joy and suffering." This is not correct. If you recognize and accept your pain without running away from it, you will discover that although pain exists, joy also exists. Without experiencing relative joy, you will not know what to do when you are face-to-face with absolute joy. Don't get caught in theories or ideas, such as saying that suffering is an illusion or that we have to "transcend" both suffering and joy. Just stay in touch with what is actually going on, and you will touch the true nature of suffering *and* the true nature of joy. When you have a headache, it would not be correct to call your headache illusory. To help it go away, you have to acknowledge its existence and understand its causes.

We enter the path of practice through the door of knowledge, perhaps from a Dharma talk or a book. We continue along the path, and our suffering lessens, little by little. But at some point, all of our concepts and ideas must yield to our actual experience. Words and ideas are only useful if they are put into practice. When we stop discussing things and begin to realize the teachings

in our own life, a moment comes when we realize that our life *is* the path, and we no longer rely merely on the forms of practice. Our action becomes "non-action," and our practice becomes "non-practice." The boundary has been crossed, and our practice cannot be set back. We do not have to transcend the "world of dust" (*saha*) in order to go to some dust-free world called nirvana. Suffering and nirvana are of the same substance. If we throw away the world of dust, we will have no nirvana.

In the *Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma*, the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path. But in the *Heart Sutra*, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara tells us that there is no suffering, no cause of suffering, no cessation of suffering, and no path.<sup>1</sup> Is this a contradiction? No. The Buddha is speaking in terms of relative truth, and Avalokiteshvara is teaching in terms of absolute truth. When Avalokiteshvara says there is no suffering, he means that suffering is made entirely of things that are not suffering.<sup>2</sup> Whether you suffer or not depends on many circumstances. The cold air can

be painful if you are not wearing warm enough clothes, but with proper clothing, cold air can be a source of joy. Suffering is not objective. It depends largely on the way you perceive. There are things that cause you to suffer but do not cause others to suffer. There are things that bring you joy but do not bring others joy. The Four Noble Truths were presented by the Buddha as relative truth to help you enter the door of practice, but they are not his deepest teaching.

1 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajñaparamita Heart Sutra* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1988).

2 See pp. 126-127 for a fuller explication of this sentence. See also pp. 135-137.

With the eyes of interbeing, we can always reconcile the Two Truths. When we see, comprehend, and touch the nature of interbeing, we see the Buddha.

*All conditioned things are impermanent.  
They are phenomena, subject to birth and death.  
When birth and death no longer are,*

*the complete silencing is joy.<sup>3</sup>*

*3 Ekottara Agama 18.*

This verse (*gatha*) was spoken by the Buddha shortly before his death. The first two lines express relative truth, while the third and fourth lines express absolute truth. "All conditioned things" includes physical, physiological, and psychological phenomena.<sup>4</sup> "Complete silencing" means nirvana, the extinction of all concepts. When the Buddha says, "The complete silencing is joy," he means that thinking, conceptualizing, and speaking have come to an end. This is the Third Noble Truth in absolute terms.

4 "Form-conditioned things" (*rupa-samskara*), like a teapot or a flower, can be seen with our eyes. "Mind-conditioned things" (*chitta-samskara*), such as anger or sadness, are psychological.

The Buddha recommends that we recite the "Five Remembrances" every day:

(1) I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old.

(2) I am of the nature to have ill-health. There is no way to escape having ill-health.

(3) I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death.

(4) All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.

(5) My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground on which I stand.

The Five Remembrances help us make friends with our fears of growing old, getting sick, being abandoned, and dying. They are also a bell of mindfulness that can help us appreciate deeply the wonders of life that are available here and now. But in the *Heart Sutra*, Avalokiteshvara teaches that there is no birth and no death. Why would the Buddha tell us that we are of the nature to die if there is no birth and no death? Because in the Five Remembrances, the Buddha is using the tool of relative truth. He is well aware that in terms of absolute truth, there is no birth and no death.

When we look at the ocean, we see that each wave has a beginning and an end. A wave can be compared with other waves, and we can call it more or less beautiful, higher or lower, longer lasting or less long lasting. But if we look more deeply, we see that a wave is made of water. While living the life of a wave, it also lives the life of water. It would be sad if the wave did not know that it is water. It would think, Some day, I will have to die. This period of time is my life span, and when I arrive at the shore, I will return to nonbeing. These notions will cause the wave fear and anguish. We have to help it remove the notions of self, person, living being, and life span if we want the wave to be free and happy.

A wave can be recognized by signs — high or low, beginning or ending, beautiful or ugly. But in the world of the water, there are no signs. In the world of relative truth, the wave feels happy as she swells, and she feels sad when she falls. She may think, "I am high," or "I am low," and develop a superiority or inferiority complex. But when the wave touches her true nature — which is water — all her complexes will cease, and she will transcend birth and death.

We become arrogant when things go well, and we are afraid of falling, or being low or inadequate. But these are relative ideas, and when they end, a feeling of completeness and satisfaction arises. Liberation is the ability to go from the world of signs to the world of true nature. We need the relative world of the wave, but we also need to touch the water, the ground of our being, to have real peace and joy. We shouldn't allow relative truth to imprison us and keep us from touching absolute truth. Looking deeply into relative truth, we penetrate the absolute. Relative and absolute truths inter-embrace. Both truths, relative and absolute, have a value.

Sitting in the northern hemisphere, we think we know which direction is above and which is below. But someone sitting in Australia will not agree. Above and below are relative truths. Above what? Below what? There is no absolute truth of above and below, old age and youth, etc. For me, old age is fine. It is nice to be old! There are things young people cannot experience. Young people are like a source of water from the top of the mountain, always trying to go as quickly as possible. But when you become a river going through the

lowland, you are much more peaceful. You reflect many clouds and the beautiful blue sky. Being old has its own joys. You can be very happy being an old person. When I sit with young monks and nuns, I feel that they are my continuation. I have done my best, and now they are continuing my being. This is interbeing, nonself.

This morning, before giving a Dharma talk, I was having breakfast with my attendant, a lovely novice monk. I paused and said to him, "Dear one, do you see the cow on the hillside? She is eating grass in order to make my yogurt, and I am now eating the yogurt to make a Dharma talk." Somehow, the cow will offer today's Dharma talk. As I drank the cow's milk, I was a child of the cow. The Buddha recommends we live our daily life in this way, seeing everything in the light of interbeing. Then we will not be caught in our small self. We will see our joy and our suffering everywhere. We will be free, and we won't see dying as a problem. Why should we say that dying is suffering? We continue with the next generations. What is essential is to be our best while we are here. Then we continue to be through our children and grandchildren. Motivated by love, we invest ourselves in the next generations.

Whether birth and death are suffering depends on our insight. With insight, we can look at all these things and smile to them. We are not affected in the same way anymore. We ride on the wave of birth and death, and we are free from birth and death. This insight liberates us.

All "formations" (samskara) are impermanent. This sheet of paper is a physical formation formed by many elements. A rose, a mountain, and cloud are formations. Your anger is a mental formation. Your love and the idea of nonself are mental formations. My fingers and my liver are physiological formations.

Look into the self and discover that it is made only of non-self elements. A human being is made up of only non-human elements. To protect humans, we have to protect the non-human elements — the air, the water, the forest, the river, the mountains, and the animals. The Diamond Sutra is the most ancient text about how to respect all forms of life on earth, the animals, vegetation, and also minerals. We have to remove the notion of human as something that can survive by itself alone. Humans can survive only with the survival of other species. This is exactly the teaching of the

Buddha, and also the teaching of deep ecology.

When we look deeply into living beings, we find out that they are made of non-living-being elements. So-called inanimate things are alive also. Our notions about living beings and inanimate things should be removed for us to touch reality.

The fourth notion to be removed is life span. We think that we exist only from this point in time until this point in time, and we suffer because of that notion. If we look deeply, we will know that we have never been born and we will never die. A wave is born and dies, is higher or lower, more or less beautiful. But you cannot apply these notions to water. When we see this, our fear will suddenly vanish.

Within us, we carry the world of no-birth and no-death. But we never touch it, because we live only with our notions. The practice is to remove these notions and touch the ultimate dimension — nirvana, God, the world of no-birth and no-death. Because of the notions we carry, we are unable to touch it, and we live in constant fear and suffering. When the wave lives her life as a wave deeply, she touches the dimension of water that is within her,

and suddenly her fears and notions vanish, and she is truly happy. Before that, her happiness was just a kind of band-aid. The greatest relief is to touch nirvana, the world of no-birth and no-death.

The Third Holy Truth is about relative well-being, which is impermanent. Your toothache is impermanent, but your non-toothache is also impermanent. When you practice deep Buddhism, you remove all these notions and touch the world of no-birth and no-death. With that insight, you look at birth, death, old-age, ups and downs, suffering, and happiness with the eyes of a sage, and you don't suffer anymore. You smile, no longer afraid.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the cessation of the causes of suffering. When we put an end to our suffering, we feel relative joy. But when all of our concepts of suffering and not suffering cease, we taste absolute joy. Imagine two hens about to be slaughtered, but they do not know it. One hen says to the other, "The rice is much tastier than the corn. The corn is slightly off." She is talking about relative joy. She does not realize that the real joy of this moment is the joy of not being slaughtered, the joy of being alive.

When we practice the Four Holy Truths in the dimension of relative truth, we obtain some relief. We are able to transform our suffering and restore our well-being. But we are still in the historical dimension of reality. The deeper level of practice is to lead our daily life in a way that we touch both the absolute and the relative truth. In the dimension of relative truth, the Buddha passed away many years ago. But in the realm of absolute truth, we can take his hand and join him for walking meditation every day.

Practice in a way that gives you the greatest relief. The wave is already water. To enter the heart of the Buddha, use your Buddha eyes, which means your insight into interbeing. Approach the heart of the Buddha in the realm of absolute truth, and the Buddha will be there with you. When you hear the sound of the bell, listen with your ears, and also listen with the ears of your ancestors, your children, and their children. Listen in the relative and absolute dimensions at the same time. You don't have to die to enter nirvana or the Kingdom of God. You only have to dwell deeply in the present moment, right now.

The *Avatamsaka Sutra* says that all dharmas (phenomena) enter one dharma, and one dharma enters all dharmas. If you go deeply into any one of the teachings of the Buddha, you will find all of the other teachings in it. If you practice looking deeply into the First Holy Truth, you can see the Noble Eightfold Path revealed. Outside of the First Holy Truth, there cannot be any path, holy or unholy. That is why you have to embrace your suffering, hold it close to your chest, and look deeply into it. The way out of your suffering depends on how you look into it. That is why suffering is called a Holy Truth. Look deeply into the nature of the path, using your Buddha eyes. The truth of the path is one with the truth of suffering. Every second I am on the path that leads out of suffering, suffering is there to guide me. That is why it is a holy path.

This book began with the sentence, "Buddha was not a god. He was a human being . . ." What does this mean? What is a human being? If the trees and the rivers were not there, could human beings be alive? If animals and all other species were not there, how could we be? A human being is made entirely of non-human elements. We must

free ourselves of our ideas of Buddha and of human beings. Our ideas may be the obstacles that prevent us from seeing the Buddha.

"Dear Buddha, are you a living being?" We want the Buddha to confirm the notion we have of him. But he looks at us, smiles, and says, "A human being is not a human being. That is why we can say that he is a human being." These are the dialectics of the *Diamond Sutra*. "A is not A. That is why it is truly A." A flower is not a flower. It is made only of non-flower elements — sunshine, clouds, time, space, earth, minerals, gardeners, and so on. A true flower contains the whole universe. If we return any one of these non-flower elements to its source, there will be no flower. That is why we can say, "A rose is not a rose. That is why it is an authentic rose." We have to remove our concept of rose if we want to touch the real rose.

Nirvana means extinction — first of all, the extinction of all concepts and notions. Our concepts about things prevent us from really touching them. We have to destroy our notions if we want to touch the real rose. When we ask, "Dear Buddha, are you a human being?" it means we have a concept about what a human being is. So

the Buddha just smiles at us. It is his way of encouraging us to transcend our concepts and touch the real being that he is. A real being is quite different from a concept.

If you have been to Paris, you have a concept of Paris. But your concept is quite different from Paris itself. Even if you've lived in Paris for ten years, your idea of Paris still does not coincide with the reality. You may have lived with someone for ten years and think that you know her perfectly, but you are living only with your concept. You have a concept of yourself, but have you touched your true self? Look deeply to try to overcome the gap between your concept of reality and reality itself. Meditation helps us remove concepts.

The Buddhist teaching of the Two Truths is also a concept. But if we know how to use it, it can help us penetrate reality itself.

## **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

### *The Three Dharma Seals*

The Three Dharma Seals (*Dharma mudra*) are impermanence (*anitya*), nonself (*anatman*), and nirvana. Any teaching that does not bear these Three Seals cannot be said to be a teaching of the Buddha.<sup>1</sup>

1 In the Southern Transmission, the Three Dharma Seals are often said to be impermanence, suffering (*dukkha*), and nonself. But in the *Samyukta Agama*, the Buddha taught impermanence, nonself, and nirvana as the Three Dharma Seals. See chaps. 4 and 5 for a fuller explication of why the author has chosen to include nirvana rather than dukkha as a Dharma Seal.

The First Dharma Seal is impermanence. The Buddha taught that everything is impermanent — flowers, tables, mountains, political regimes, bodies, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. We cannot find anything that is permanent. Flowers decompose, but knowing this does not prevent us from loving flowers. In fact,

we are able to love them more because we know how to treasure them while they are still alive. If we learn to look at a flower in a way that impermanence is revealed to us, when it dies, we will not suffer. Impermanence is more than an idea. It is a practice to help us touch reality.

When we study impermanence, we have to ask, "Is there anything in this teaching that has to do with my daily life, my daily difficulties, my suffering?" If we see impermanence as merely a philosophy, it is not the Buddha's teaching. Every time we look or listen, the object of our perception can reveal to us the nature of impermanence. We have to nourish our insight into impermanence all day long.

When we look deeply into impermanence, we see that things change because causes and conditions change. When we look deeply into nonself, we see that the existence of every single thing is possible only because of the existence of everything else. We see that everything else is the cause and condition for its existence. We see that everything else is in it.

From the point of view of time, we say

"impermanence," and from the point of view of space, we say "nonself." Things cannot remain themselves for two consecutive moments, therefore, there is nothing that can be called a permanent "self." Before you entered this room, you were different physically and mentally. Looking deeply at impermanence, you see nonself. Looking deeply at nonself, you see impermanence. We cannot say, "I can accept impermanence, but non-self is too difficult." They are the same.

Understanding impermanence can give us confidence, peace, and joy. Impermanence does not necessarily lead to suffering. Without impermanence, life could not be. Without impermanence, your daughter could not grow up into a beautiful young lady. Without impermanence, oppressive political regimes would never change. We think impermanence makes us suffer. The Buddha gave the example of a dog that was hit by a stone and got angry at the stone. It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not.

We need to learn to appreciate the value of impermanence. If we are in good health and are

aware of impermanence, we will take good care of ourselves. When we know that the person we love is impermanent, we will cherish our beloved all the more. Impermanence teaches us to respect and value every moment and all the precious things around us and inside of us. When we practice mindfulness of impermanence, we become fresher and more loving.

Looking deeply can become a way of life. We can practice conscious breathing to help us be in touch with things and to look deeply at their impermanent nature. This practice will keep us from complaining that everything is impermanent and therefore not worth living for. [Impermanence](#) is what makes transformation possible. We should learn to say, "Long live impermanence." Thanks to impermanence, we can change suffering into joy.

If we practice the art of mindful living, when things change, we won't have any regrets. We can smile, because we have done our best to enjoy every moment of our life and to make others happy. When you get into an argument with someone you love, please close your eyes and visualize yourselves three hundred years from now. When you open your eyes, you will only

want to take each other in your arms and acknowledge how precious each of you is. The teaching of impermanence helps us appreciate fully what is there, without attachment or forgetfulness.

We have to nourish our insight into impermanence every day. If we do, we will live more deeply, suffer less, and enjoy life much more. Living deeply, we will touch the foundation of reality, nirvana, the world of no-birth and no-death. Touching impermanence deeply, we touch the world beyond permanence and impermanence. We touch the ground of being and see that which we have called being and nonbeing are just notions. Nothing is ever lost. Nothing is ever gained.

The Second Dharma Seal is nonself. Nothing has a separate existence or a separate self. Everything has to inter-be with everything else.

The first time I tasted peanut butter cookies, I was at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in California, and I loved them! I learned that to make peanut butter cookies, you mix the ingredients to prepare the batter, and then you put each cookie onto a cookie sheet using a spoon. I imagined that the moment each cookie leaves the bowl of dough

and is placed onto the tray, it begins to think of itself as separate. You, the creator of the cookies, know better, and you have a lot of compassion for them. You know that they are originally all one, and that even now, the happiness of each cookie is still the happiness of all the other cookies. But they have developed "discriminative perception" (*vikalpa*), and suddenly they set up barriers between themselves. When you put them in the oven, they begin to talk to each other: "Get out of my way. I want to be in the middle." "I am brown and beautiful, and you are ugly!" "Can't you please spread a little in that direction?" We have the tendency to behave this way also, and it causes a lot of suffering. If we know how to touch our nondiscriminating mind, our happiness and the happiness of others will increase manifold.

We all have the capacity of living with nondiscriminating wisdom, but we have to train ourselves to see in that way, to see that the flower is us, the mountain is us, our parents and our children are all us. When we see that everyone and everything belongs to the same stream of life, our suffering will vanish. Nonself is not a doctrine or a philosophy. It is an insight that can help us live life more deeply, suffer less, and enjoy life much

more. We need to live the insight of nonself.

Tolstoy wrote a story about two enemies. "A" suffered greatly because of "B," and his only motive in life was to eradicate "B." Every time he heard the name of B, every time he thought about B's image, he became enraged. Then one day A visited the hut of a sage. After listening to A deeply, the sage offered him a glass of refreshing water, and then he poured the same water onto A's head and washed him. When they sat down for tea, the sage told him, "Now you are B."

A was astonished! "That is the last thing I want to be! I am A, and he is B! There cannot be any connection."

"But you are B, whether you believe it or not," the sage said. Then he brought him a mirror, and sure enough when A looked in it, he saw B! Every time he moved, B in the mirror did exactly the same. The sound of A's voice became the sound of B's. He began to have B's feelings and perceptions. A tried to come back to himself, but he couldn't. What a wonderful story!

We should practice so that we can see Muslims

as Hindus and Hindus as Muslims. We should practice so that we can see Israelis as Palestinians and Palistinians as Israelis. We should practice until we can see that each person is us, that we are not separate from others. This will greatly reduce our suffering. We are like the cookies, thinking we are separate and opposing each other, when actually we are all of the same reality. We *are* what we perceive. This is the teaching of nonself, of interbeing.

When Avalokiteshvara declared that eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are empty, he meant that they cannot be by themselves alone.<sup>2</sup> They have to inter-be with everything else. Our eyes would not be possible without non-eye elements. That is why he can say that our eyes have no separate existence. We have to see the nature of interbeing to really understand. It takes some training to look at things this way.

2 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding*.

Nonself means that you are made of elements which are not you. During the past hour, different elements have entered you and other elements have

flown out of you. Your happiness, in fact your existence, comes from things that are not you. Your mother is happy because you are happy. And you are happy because she is happy. Happiness is not an individual matter. The daughter should practice in a way that she can understand her mother better and her mother can understand her better. The daughter cannot find happiness by running away from home, because she carries her family in her. There is nothing she can leave behind. There is nothing she can get rid of, even if she runs away and tells no one where she is going. Her store consciousness carries all the seeds. She cannot get rid of a single one.

The teachings of impermanence and nonself were offered by the Buddha as keys to unlock the door of reality. We have to train ourselves to look in a way that we know that when we touch one thing, we touch everything. We have to see that the one is in the all and the all is in the one. We touch not only the phenomenal aspects of reality but the ground of being. Things are impermanent and without self. They have to undergo birth and death. But if we touch them very deeply, we touch the ground of being that is free from birth and death, free from permanence and impermanence,

self and nonself.

Nirvana, the Third Dharma Seal, is the ground of being, the substance of all that is. A wave does not have to die in order to become water. Water is the substance of the wave. The wave is already water. We are also like that. We carry in us the ground of interbeing, nirvana, the world of no-birth and no-death, no permanence and no impermanence, no self and no nonself. Nirvana is the complete silencing of concepts. The notions of impermanence and nonself were offered by the Buddha as instruments of practice, not as doctrines to worship, fight, or die for. "My dear friends," the Buddha said. "The Dharma I offer you is only a raft to help you to cross over to the other shore." The raft is not to be held onto as an object of worship. It is an instrument for crossing over to the shore of well-being. If you are caught in the Dharma, it is no longer the Dharma. Impermanence and nonself belong to the world of phenomena, like the waves. Nirvana is the ground of all that is. The waves do not exist outside the water. If you know how to touch the waves, you touch the water at the same time. Nirvana does not exist separate of impermanence and nonself. If you know how to use the tools of impermanence and nonself to

touch reality, you touch nirvana in the here and the now.

Nirvana is the extinction of all notions. Birth is a notion. Death is a notion. Being is a notion. Nonbeing is a notion. In our daily lives, we have to deal with these relative realities. But if we touch life more deeply, reality will reveal itself in a different way.

We think that being born means from nothing we become something, from no one we become someone, from nonbeing we become being. We think that to die means we suddenly go from something to nothing, from someone to no one, from being to nonbeing. But the Buddha said, "There is no birth and no death, no being and no nonbeing," and he offered us impermanence, nonself, interbeing, and emptiness to discover the true nature of reality. In the *Heart Sutra*, we repeat over and over that there is no birth and no death. But reciting is not enough. The *Heart Sutra* is an instrument to investigate the true nature of ourselves and the world.

When you look at this sheet of paper, you think it belongs to the realm of being. There was a

time that it came into existence, a moment in the factory it became a sheet of paper. But before the sheet of paper was born, was it nothing? Can nothing become something? Before it was recognizable as a sheet of paper, it must have been something else — a tree, a branch, sunshine, clouds, the earth. In its former life, the sheet of paper was all these things. If you ask the sheet of paper, "Tell me about all your adventures," she will tell you, "Talk to a flower, a tree, or a cloud and listen to their stories."

The paper's story is much like our own. We, too, have many wonderful things to tell. Before we were born, we were also already in our mother, our father, and our ancestors. The koan, "What was your face before your parents were born?" is an invitation to look deeply, to identify ourselves in time and space. We usually think we did not exist before the time of our parents, that we only began to exist at the moment of our birth. But we were already here in many forms. The day of our birth was only a day of continuation. Instead of singing "Happy Birthday" every year, we should sing "Happy Continuation."

"Nothing is born, nothing dies" was a statement

made by the French scientist Lavoisier. He was not a Buddhist. He did not know the *Heart Sutra*. But his words are exactly the same. If I burn this sheet of paper, will I reduce it to nonbeing? No, it will just be transformed into smoke, heat, and ash. If we put the "continuation" of this sheet of paper into the garden, later, while practicing walking meditation, we may see a little flower and recognize it as the rebirth of the sheet of paper. The smoke will become part of a cloud in the sky, also to continue the adventure. After tomorrow, a little rain may fall on your head, and you will recognize the sheet of paper saying, "Hello." The heat produced by the burning will penetrate into your body and the cosmos. With a sophisticated enough instrument, you will be able to measure how much of this energy penetrates you. The sheet of paper clearly continues, even after it is burned. The moment of its so-called dying is actually a moment of continuation.

When a cloud is about to become rain, she is not afraid. She may even be excited. Being a cloud floating in the blue sky is wonderful, but being rain falling on the fields, the ocean, or the mountains is also wonderful. As she falls down as rain, the cloud will sing. Looking deeply, we see that birth

is just a notion and death is a notion. Nothing can be born from nothing. When we touch the sheet of paper deeply, when we touch the cloud deeply, when we touch our grandmother deeply, we touch the nature of no birth and no death, and we are free from sorrow. We already recognize them in many other forms. This is the insight that helped the Buddha become serene, peaceful, and fearless. This teaching of the Buddha can help us touch deeply the nature of our being, the ground of our being, so that we can touch the world of no-birth and no-death. This is the insight that liberates us from fear and sorrow.

Nirvana means extinction, above all the extinction of ideas — the ideas of birth and death, existence and nonexistence, coming and going, self and other, one and many. All these ideas cause us to suffer. We are afraid of death because ignorance gives us an illusory idea about what death is. We are disturbed by ideas of existence and nonexistence because we have not understood the true nature of impermanence and nonself. We worry about our own future, but we fail to worry about the future of the other because we think that our happiness has nothing to do with the happiness of the other. This idea of self and other

gives rise to immeasurable suffering. In order to extinguish these ideas, we have to practice. Nirvana is a fan that helps us extinguish the fire of all our ideas, including ideas of permanence and self. That fan is our practice of looking deeply every day.

In Buddhism we talk about the Eight Concepts: birth, death, permanence, dissolution, coming, going, one, and many. The practice to end attachment to these eight ideas is called the Eight No's of the Middle Way — no birth and no death, no permanence and no dissolution, no coming and no going, no one and no many. In the thirteenth century in Vietnam, someone asked Master Tue Trung a question following a Dharma talk, and he replied, "Having offered complete release from the Eight Concepts, what further explanation could I possibly give?"

Once these eight ideas have been destroyed, we touch nirvana. Nirvana is release from the Eight Concepts, and also from their opposites — impermanence, nonself, Interdependent Co-Arising, emptiness, and the Middle Way. If we hold onto the Three Seals as fixed ideas, these ideas also have to be destroyed. The best way to do this is by putting these teachings into practice in our

daily lives. Experience always goes beyond ideas.

Tenth-century Vietnamese master Thiện Hoi told his students, "Be diligent in order to attain the state of no-birth and no-death." One student asked, "Where can we touch the world of no-birth and no-death?" and he responded, "Right here in the world of birth and death." To touch the water, you have to touch the waves. If you touch birth and death deeply, you touch the world of no birth and no death.

Impermanence, nonself, Interdependent Co-Arising, and the Middle Way are all keys to open the door of reality. There is no point in leaving them in your pocket. You have to use them. When you understand impermanence and nonself, you are already free of much suffering and in touch with nirvana, the Third Dharma Seal. Nirvana is not something to look for in the future. As a Dharma Seal, it is present in every one of the Buddha's teachings. The nirvana-nature of the candle, the table, and the flower are revealed in the teachings, just as their impermanent and nonself nature are.

Imagine a meeting in which everyone is stating

his own opinions and disagreeing with everyone else's. After the meeting is over, you are exhausted by all these ideas and discussions. You open the door and go out into the garden, where the air is fresh, the birds are singing, and the wind is whistling in the trees. Life out here is quite different from the meeting with its words and anger. In the garden, there are still sounds and images, but they are refreshing and healing. Nirvana is not the absence of life. *Drishtadharma nirvana* means "nirvana in this very life." Nirvana means pacifying, silencing, or extinguishing the fire of suffering. Nirvana teaches that we already are what we want to become. We don't have to run after anything anymore. We only need to return to ourselves and touch our true nature. When we do, we have real peace and joy.

*This morning, I wake up and discover  
that I've been using the sutras as my pillow. I hear  
the excited buzzing of the diligent bees  
preparing to rebuild the universe.  
Dear ones, the work of rebuilding  
may take thousands of lifetimes,  
but it has already been completed  
just that long ago.<sup>3</sup>*

3 From Thich Nhat Hanh, "butterflies over the Golden Mustard Fields," in *Call Me By My True Names*, p. 75.

In the *Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters*, the Buddha says, "My practice is non-action, non-practice, and non-realization."<sup>4</sup> It means that what we seek does not lie outside of ourselves.

4 *Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters*. Taisho 789.

Any teaching that does not bear the mark of the Three Dharma Seals, the Four Holy Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path is not authentically Buddhist. But sometimes only Two Dharma Seals are taught — suffering and nirvana. Sometimes Four Dharma Seals are taught — impermanence, nonself, nirvana, and suffering. But suffering is not a basic element of existence. It is a feeling. When we insist on something that is impermanent and without self being permanent and having a self, we suffer. The Buddha taught that when suffering is present, we have to identify it and take the necessary steps to transform it. He did not teach that suffering is always present. In Mahayana Buddhism, there is also the teaching of One

Dharma Seal — the seal of the True Mark. The teachings of one, two, and four Dharma Seals were all introduced after the Buddha passed away.

We practice the Three Dharma Seals to realize liberation. If you memorize a 5,000-page book on the Three Dharma Seals but do not apply the teachings during your daily life, that book is of no use. Only by using your intelligence and putting the teachings into practice can they bring you happiness. Please base your practice on your own life and your own experiences — your successes and your failures. The Buddha's teachings are jewels, but we have to dig deep in order to touch them fully.

There are other criteria that can help us navigate the sutras and determine whether a teaching represents a correct understanding of the Dharma. These include the Two Relevances, the Four Standards of Truth, and the Four Reliances.

The first of the Two Relevances is "Relevance to the Essence." The essence is the Three Dharma Seals. If someone teaches the Dharma, what he or

she says must be in accord with the Buddha's teachings on impermanence, nonself, and nirvana. When you understand the Three Dharma Seals deeply, you will bring them into every situation of your daily life.

The Second Relevance is "Relevance to the Circumstance." When someone shares the Dharma, what she says must fit the situation and the mentality of those she is addressing so that the teaching is appropriate. If it is not appropriate, it is not the true Dharma, even if it sounds like the Dharma. She mustn't just repeat some words of the Buddha. If she acts like a tape player and just pops in a cassette, that is not speaking in accord with the Relevance to the Circumstance. She must ask, To whom am I speaking? On what stage is their life set? What are their beliefs, concerns, and aspirations? Looking deeply this way will bring love and compassion into whatever she says. One cannot offer the right medicine without knowing the patient's illness.

When you are in a Dharma discussion, each word you say should be Relevant to the Essence and to the Circumstance. Please speak in accord with the teachings of impermanence, nonself, and

nirvana; and speak directly to those present, taking into account their experience, their knowledge, and their insight. There may be things you consider important but cannot say to this particular group. The Two Relevances require you to speak with skillfulness, tolerance, and care.



The Four Standards of Truth (*siddhanta*) are another guide to help us understand the Buddha's teachings. The First Standard is "the worldly." The teaching is offered in the language of the world so that those in the world will be able to understand. We have to take into account the contemporary cosmologies, arts, philosophies, metaphysics, and so forth and deal with them. For example, we call the days of the week Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. We divide time into days, months, and years to express truth relatively, for our convenience. When the Buddha tells us that he was born in Lumbini, it is in accord with the First Standard.

The Second Standard is "the person." We must remember as we read the Buddha's discourses that

his words varied according to the needs and aspirations of his listeners. When the Buddha taught, he was deeply aware of the particular assembly, and what he said was specifically addressed to them.

The Third Standard is "healing." When the Buddha spoke, it was always to cure the particular illness of those he was addressing. Everyone has some illness that needs to be healed. When you speak to express healing, what you say will always be helpful.

The Fourth Standard is "the absolute." The Buddha expressed absolute truth directly and unequivocally. He said there is no self even when people did not believe or agree with him. He said it because he knew it was true. Fifteenth-century explorers said the world was round even when the community threatened to imprison them for saying so. We can use these Four Standards of Truth to understand the sutras as we read them.

A third list to help us study the Dharma is called the Four Reliances. It was formulated by

later teachers, not by the Buddha. The First Reliance is that we should rely on the teaching and not the person. It means we can learn even from a teacher who does not practice everything he teaches. My fifth grade teacher, Miss Lien, often wore high-heeled shoes. One day she wrote on the blackboard, "Never wear high-heeled shoes. You might twist your ankle." I couldn't understand why she did not apply that teaching to herself. Another teacher who was a heavy smoker taught us about the health hazards of smoking even sixty years ago! The class laughed, and he replied, "Do as I say, not as I do." Later, when I attended the Institute of Buddhist Studies, we were told that if a precious jewel is in a garbage can, you have to dirty your hands. Remember the monk who had memorized all the sutras. He was not an easy person or a good practitioner, but the other monks had to put up with him and encourage him to recite the sutras so they could write them down.

To me, the relationship between a teacher and a student is based on the trust that the teacher has practiced and continues to practice what he teaches. This is teaching by example, by the way we live. Perhaps the ancestral teachers thought it was so rare to find someone who could teach by

his or her life's example that if we just wait for someone like that to come along, we might miss the chance to benefit from the teachings that are available now.

The Second Reliance is to rely only on discourses where the Buddha taught in terms of absolute truth and not on those whose means are relative truth. I feel uneasy about this standard also, because it does not show us how discourses that explain by means of absolute truth are related to those that explain by means of relative truth. In fact, sutras that teach absolute truth can be better understood in the light of sutras that teach relative truth. We should not think that discourses about practical matters like the Five Mindfulness Trainings<sup>5</sup> are not worthy of our attention and that we only should study the *Avatamsaka* and *Lotus Sutras*.<sup>6</sup> We need to know how to go from down-to-earth sutras to less down-to-earth sutras. When we train ourselves in understanding the most basic discourses, we will be able to grasp more easily those that are more esoteric.

5 *The Discourse on the White-Clad Disciple (Upasaka Sutra)*, Madhyama Agama 128,

*Anguttara Nikaya III*, 211. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible*, pp. 199-247.

6 See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Cultivating the Mind of Love*.

The Third Reliance is that we should rely on the meaning and not on the words. When we have an overall view of the way the Buddha teaches and understand the context and circumstances of a particular teaching, we will not extrapolate inappropriately or use the Buddha's words out of context. Then, when there is an error due to inaccurate transmission, we can rectify it by ourselves.

The Fourth Reliance is that we should rely on the insight of looking deeply (*jñana*) rather than on differentiation and discrimination (*vijñana*). However, it is important to be able to discriminate when we are reading the sutras so that we know according to which of the Four Standards of Truth the Buddha is teaching. We can rely on discriminative as well as nondiscriminative wisdom.

The teachings of the Two Truths, Three

Dharma Seals, Two Relevances, Four Standards of Truth, and [Three Doors of Liberation](#) are important guides to help us understand the language the Buddha used when he taught. Without understanding the Buddha's language, we cannot understand the Buddha.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *The Three Doors of Liberation*

The Three Dharma Seals<sup>1</sup> are the keys we can use to enter the Three Doors of Liberation — emptiness (*shunyata*), signlessness (*animitta*), and aimlessness (*apranihita*). All schools of Buddhism accept the teaching of the Three Doors of Liberation.<sup>2</sup> These Three Doors are sometimes called the Three Concentrations.<sup>3</sup> When we enter these doors, we dwell in concentration and are liberated from fear, confusion, and sadness.

1 Impermanence, nonself, and nirvana (see chap. 18).

2 The Theravada School does not emphasize this wonderful teaching, but it is there.

3 See chap. 15, on Right Concentration.

The First Door of Liberation is emptiness, shunyata. Emptiness always means empty of something. A cup is empty of water. A bowl is empty of soup. We are empty of a separate, independent self. We cannot be by ourselves alone.

We can only inter-be with everything else in the cosmos. The practice is to nourish the insight into emptiness all day long. Wherever we go, we touch the nature of emptiness in everything we contact. We look deeply at the table, the blue sky, our friend, the mountain, the river, our anger, and our happiness and see that these are all empty of a separate self. When we touch these things deeply, we see the interbeing and interpenetrating nature of all that is. Emptiness does not mean nonexistence. It means Interdependent Co-Arising, impermanence, and nonself.

When we first hear about emptiness, we feel a little frightened. But after practicing for a while, we see that things do exist, only in a different way than we'd thought. Emptiness is the Middle Way between existent and nonexistent. The beautiful flower does not *become* empty when it fades and dies. It is already empty, in its essence. Looking deeply, we see that the flower is made of non-flower elements — light, space, clouds, earth, and consciousness. It is empty of a separate, independent self. In the *Diamond Sutra*, we are taught that a human being is not independent of other species, so to protect humans, we have to protect the non-human species. If we pollute the

water and air, the vegetables and minerals, we destroy ourselves. We have to learn to see ourselves in things that we thought were outside of ourselves in order to dissolve false boundaries.

In Vietnam, we say that if one horse is sick, all the horses in the stable will refuse to eat. Our happiness and suffering are the happiness and suffering of others. When we act based on nonself, our actions will be in accord with reality, and we will know what to do and what not to do. When we maintain awareness that we are all linked to each other, this is the Concentration on Emptiness (shunyata samadhi). Reality goes beyond notions of being and nonbeing. To say that the flower exists is not exactly correct, but to say that it does not exist is also not correct. True emptiness is called "wondrous being," because it goes beyond existence and nonexistence.

When we eat, we need to practice the Door of Liberation called emptiness. "I am this food. This food is me." One day in Canada, I was eating lunch with the Sangha, and a student looked up at me and said, "I am nourishing you." He was practicing the concentration on emptiness. Every time we look at our plate of food, we can contemplate the

impermanent, nonself nature of food. This is deep practice, because it can help us see Interdependent Co-Arising. The one who eats and the food that is eaten are both, by nature, empty. That is why the communication between them is perfect. When we practice walking meditation in a relaxed, peaceful way, it is the same. We step not just for ourselves, but for the world. When we look at others, we see how their happiness and suffering are linked to our happiness and suffering. "Peace begins with me."

Everyone we cherish will, someday, get sick and die. If we do not practice the meditation on emptiness, when it happens, we will be overwhelmed. The Concentration on Emptiness is a way of staying in touch with life as it is, but it has to be practiced and not just talked about. We observe our body and see all the causes and conditions that have brought it to be — our parents, our country, the air, and even future generations. We go beyond time and space, me and mine, and taste true liberation. If we only study emptiness as a philosophy, it will not be a Door of Liberation. Emptiness is a Door of Liberation when we penetrate it deeply and we realize Interdependent Co-Arising and the interbeing nature of everything that is.

The Second Door of Liberation is signlessness, animitta. "Sign" here means an appearance or the object of our perception. When we see something, a sign or image appears to us, and that is what is meant by "lakshana." If water, for example, is in a square container, its sign is "squareness." If in a round container, its sign is "roundness." When we open the freezer and take out some ice, the sign of that water is solid. Chemists call water " $H_2O$ ." The snow on the mountain and the steam rising from the kettle are also  $H_2O$ . Whether  $H_2O$  is round or square, liquid, gaseous, or solid depends on circumstances. Signs are instruments for our use, but they are not absolute truth, and they can mislead us. The *Diamond Sutra* says, "Wherever there is a sign, there is deception, illusion." Perceptions often tell us as much about the perceiver as the object of perception. Appearances can deceive.

Practicing the Concentration on Signlessness is necessary for us to free ourselves. Until we can break through the signs, we cannot touch reality. As long as we are caught by signs — round, square, solid, liquid, gas — we will suffer. Nothing

can be described in terms of just one sign. But without signs, we feel anxious. Our fear and attachment come from our being caught in signs. Until we touch the signless nature of things, we will continue to be afraid and to suffer. Before we can touch H<sub>2</sub>O, we have to let go of signs like squareness, roundness, hardness, heaviness, lightness, up, and down. Water is, in itself, neither square nor round nor solid. When we free ourselves from signs, we can enter the heart of reality. But until we can see the ocean in the sky, we are still caught by signs.

The greatest relief is when we break through the barriers of sign and touch the world of signlessness, nirvana. Where should we look to find the world of no signs? Right here in the world of signs. If we throw away the water, there is no way for us to touch the suchness of water. We touch the water when we break through the signs of the water and see its true nature of interbeing. There are three phases — water, not water, true water. True water is the suchness of water. Its ground of being is free from birth and death. When we can touch that, we will not be afraid of anything.

"If you see the signlessness of signs, you see the Tathagata." This is a sentence from the *Diamond Sutra*. *Tathagata* means "the wondrous nature of reality."<sup>4</sup> To see the wondrous nature of water, you need to look beyond the sign (appearance) of the water, and see that it is made of non-water elements. If you think that water is only water, that it cannot be the sun, the earth, or the flower, you are not correct. When you can see that the water *is* the sun, the earth, and the flower, that just by looking at the sun or the earth you can see the water, this is "the signlessness of signs." An organic gardener who looks at a banana peel, dead leaves, or rotting branches can see flowers, fruit, and vegetables in them. She is able to see the nonself nature of flowers, fruit, and garbage. When she can apply this insight to all other spheres, she will realize complete awakening.

4 See also definition in footnote 3, p. 158.

Politicians, economists, and educators need to practice signlessness. We put many young men in jail. But if we meditate on signlessness, we will discover where their violence comes from. What is our society like? How are our families organized?

What is taught at our schools? Why should we lay all the blame at the feet of the young people? Why can't we acknowledge our own co-responsibility? Young people harm themselves and others because life has no meaning for them. If we continue to live the way we do and organize society the way we do, we will continue to produce so many thousands of young people who will need to be imprisoned.

Signlessness is not just an idea. When we look deeply into our children, we see all the elements that have produced them. They are the way they are because our culture, economy, society, and we ourselves are the way we are. We can't simply blame our children when things go wrong. Many causes and conditions have contributed. When we know how to transform ourselves and our society, our children will transform also.

Our children learn reading, writing, math, science, and other subjects in school that can help them earn a living. But very few school programs teach young people how to live — how to deal with anger, how to reconcile conflicts, how to breathe, smile, and transform internal formations. There needs to be a revolution in education. We

must encourage schools to train our students in the art of living in peace and harmony. It isn't easy to learn to read, write, or solve math problems, but children manage to do it. Learning how to breathe, smile, and transform anger can also be difficult, but I have seen many young people succeed. If we teach children properly, by the time they are around twelve, they will know how to live harmoniously with others.

When we go beyond signs, we enter the world of no-fear and no-blame. We can see the flower, the water, and our child beyond time and space. We know that our ancestors are present in us, right here and right now. We see that the Buddha, Jesus, and all of our other spiritual ancestors have not died. The Buddha cannot be confined to 2,600 years ago. The flower cannot be limited to its brief manifestation. Everything manifests by means of signs. If we get caught by the signs, we become afraid of losing that particular manifestation.

When an eight-year-old boy who had lived at Plum Village suddenly died, I asked his father to be fully aware of the presence of his son in the air he was breathing and in the blades of grass beneath his feet, and he was able to do this. When a well-

known Vietnamese meditation teacher passed away, his disciple wrote this poem:

*Dharma brothers, do not be attached to the sign.*

*The mountains and rivers around us are our teacher.<sup>5</sup>*

5 The disciple was a court official in the Ly Era (1010-1225). His name was [Doan Van Kham](#).

The *Diamond Sutra* enumerates four signs — self, [person](#), living being, and life span. We get caught in the sign "self," because we think there are things that are not self. But when we look deeply, we see that there is no separate, independent self, and we become free of the sign of self. We see that to protect ourselves, we have to protect everything that is not ourselves.

We get caught in the sign "person." We separate humans from animals, trees, and rocks, and feel that non-humans — the fish, the cows, the vegetation, the earth, the air, and the seas — are there for our exploitation. Other species also hunt for food, but not in such an exploitative way. When we look deeply at our own species, we can

see the non-human elements in it, and when we look deeply at the animal, vegetal, and mineral realms, we see the human element in them. When we practice the Concentration on Signlessness, we live in harmony with all other species.

The third sign is "living being." We think that sentient beings are different from insentient beings. But living or sentient beings are made of non-living or non-sentient species. When we pollute the so-called non-living species, like the air or the rivers, we pollute living beings as well. If we look deeply into the interbeing of living and non-living beings, we will stop acting this way.

The fourth sign is "life span," the period of time between our birth and our death. We think we are alive for a specific period of time that has a beginning and an end. But when we look deeply, we see that we have never been born and we will never die, and our fear dissolves. With mindfulness, concentration, and the Three Dharma Seals, we can unlock the Door of Liberation called signlessness and obtain the greatest relief.

The Third Door of Liberation is aimlessness, apranihita. There is nothing to do, nothing to

realize, no program, no agenda. This is the Buddhist teaching about eschatology. Does the rose have *to do* something? No, the purpose of a rose is *to be* a rose. Your purpose is to be yourself. You don't have to run anywhere to become someone else. You are wonderful just as you are. This teaching of the Buddha allows us to enjoy ourselves, the blue sky, and everything that is refreshing and healing in the present moment.

There is no need to put anything in front of us and run after it. We already have everything we are looking for, everything we want to become. We are already a Buddha so why not just take the hand of another Buddha and practice walking meditation? This is the teaching of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. Be yourself. Life is precious as it is. All the elements for your happiness are already here. There is no need to run, strive, search, or struggle. Just be. Just being in the moment in this place is the deepest practice of meditation. Most people cannot believe that just walking as though you have nowhere to go is enough. They think that striving and competing are normal and necessary. Try practicing aimlessness for just five minutes, and you will see how happy you are during those five minutes.

The *Heart Sutra* says that there is "nothing to attain." We meditate not to attain enlightenment, because enlightenment is already in us. We don't have to search anywhere. We don't need a purpose or a goal. We don't practice in order to obtain some high position. In aimlessness, we see that we do not lack anything, that we already are what we want to become, and our striving just comes to a halt. We are at peace in the present moment, just seeing the sunlight streaming through our window or hearing the sound of the rain. We don't have to run after anything. We can enjoy every moment. People talk about entering nirvana, but we are already there. Aimlessness and nirvana are one.

*Waking up this morning, I smile.  
Twenty-four brand new hours are before me.  
I vow to live fully in each moment  
and to look at all beings with the eyes of love.<sup>6</sup>*

6 Thich Nhat Hanh, *Present Moment Wonderful Moment*, p. 3.

These twenty-four hours are a precious gift, a gift we can only receive fully when we have opened the Third Door of Liberation, aimlessness.

If we think we have twenty-four hours to achieve a certain purpose, today will become a means to attain an end. The moment of chopping wood and carrying water is the moment of happiness. We do not need to wait for these chores to be done to be happy. To have happiness in this moment is the spirit of aimlessness. Otherwise, we will run in circles for the rest of our life. We have everything we need to make the present moment the happiest in our life, even if we have a cold or a headache. We don't have to wait until we get over our cold to be happy. Having a cold is a part of life.

Someone asked me, "Aren't you worried about the state of the world?" I allowed myself to breathe and then I said, "What is most important is not to allow your anxiety about what happens in the world to fill your heart. If your heart is filled with anxiety, you will get sick, and you will not be able to help." There are wars — big and small — in many places, and that can cause us to lose our peace. Anxiety is the illness of our age. We worry about ourselves, our family, our friends, our work, and the state of the world. If we allow worry to fill our hearts, sooner or later we will get sick.

Yes, there is tremendous suffering all over the

world, but knowing this need not paralyze us. If we practice mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful sitting, and working in mindfulness, we try our best to help, and we can have peace in our heart. Worrying does not accomplish anything. Even if you worry twenty times more, it will not change the situation of the world. In fact, your anxiety will only make things worse. Even though things are not as we would like, we can still be content, knowing we are trying our best and will continue to do so. If we don't know how to breathe, smile, and live every moment of our life deeply, we will never be able to help anyone. I am happy in the present moment. I do not ask for anything else. I do not expect any additional happiness or conditions that will bring about more happiness. The most important practice is aimlessness, not running after things, not grasping.

We who have been fortunate enough to encounter the practice of mindfulness have a responsibility to bring peace and joy into our own lives, even though not everything in our body, mind, or environment is exactly as we would like. Without happiness we cannot be a refuge for others. Ask yourself, What am I waiting for to make me happy? Why am I not happy right now?

My only desire is to help you see this. How can we bring the practice of mindfulness to the widest spectrum of society? How can we give birth to the greatest number of people who are happy and who know how to teach the art of mindful living to others? The number of people who create violence is very great, while the number of people who know how to breathe and create happiness is very small. Every day gives us a wonderful opportunity to be happy ourselves and to become a place of refuge for others.

We don't need to become anything else. We don't need to perform some particular act. We only need to be happy in the present moment, and we can be of service to those we love and to our whole society. Aimlessness is stopping and realizing the happiness that is already available. If someone asks us how long he has to practice in order to be happy, we can tell him that he can be happy right now! The practice of apranihita, aimlessness, is the practice of freedom.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### *The Three Bodies of Buddha*

It is natural for human beings to want to fifty qualities like love, freedom, and understanding. It was in this spirit that the Buddha came to be represented as having "three bodies": Dharmakaya, the source of enlightenment and happiness; Sambhogakaya, the body of bliss or enjoyment; and Nirmanakaya, the historical embodiment of the Buddha viewed as one of the many transformation bodies sent forth by the Dharmakaya. *Kaya* means "body."

When he was about to pass away, the Buddha told his disciples, "Dear friends, my physical body will not be here tomorrow, but my teaching body (Dharmakaya) will always be with you. Consider it to be the teacher who never leaves you. Be islands unto yourselves, and take refuge in the Dharma. Use the Dharma as your lamp, your island." The Buddha meant that in order to have nirvana available to us in every moment, we have to practice the Dharma, the Way of Understanding and Love. That is the birth of Dharmakaya, the body of the teaching, the body of the Way, the

source of enlightenment and happiness. The original meaning of Dharmakaya was quite simple — the way to realize understanding and love.

The Dharmakaya is the embodiment of the Dharma, always shining, always enlightening everything. Anything that can help us wake up is part of the Dharmakaya — trees, grass, birds, human beings, and so on. When I hear a bird sing, if I return deeply to myself and breathe and smile, that bird reveals the Buddha's Dharma body. People who are awake can hear the Dharma being preached in a pebble, a bamboo, or the cry of a baby. Anything can be the voice of the Dharma if you are awake. Every morning, when you open the window and see the light streaming in, know that it, too, is part of the Dharmakaya.

*Opening the window,  
I look out onto the Dharmakaya.  
How wondrous is life!  
Attentive to each moment,  
my mind is clear like a calm river.<sup>1</sup>*

1 Thich Nhat Hanh, *Present Moment Wonderful Moment*, p. 4.

The living Dharma is not just a library of sutra books or audio or video cassettes of inspiring Dharma talks. It is mindfulness manifesting in your daily life. When I see you walking mindfully in peace and joy, a deep presence is also awakened in me. When you walk like this, the sun of the Dharmakaya in both of us shines brightly. When you take good care of yourself, your brothers, and your sisters, I recognize the living Dharma. When you are really there, the Dharmakaya is easy to touch.

Dharmakaya is expressed not only through words and actions, but also through non-action. Look at the tree in the garden. An oak tree is an oak tree, and that is all it has to do. Every time we look at it, we feel stable and confident. It offers us air to breathe and shade to protect us during the summertime. If an oak tree is less than an oak tree, we will all be in trouble. We can learn the Dharma from an oak tree, so we can say that it is part of the Dharmakaya. Each pebble, each leaf, and each flower is preaching the *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*.<sup>2</sup> The Buddha has his Dharma body, and we Buddhas-to-be must express the Dharma through our own Dharma bodies. When someone says

something challenging, if we can smile and return to our breathing, our Dharma will be a living Dharma, and others will be able to touch it. Sometimes, through non-action, we can help more than if we do a lot. Like a calm person on a small boat during a storm, just by being there, we can change the situation.

<sup>2</sup> See Thich Nhat Hanh, "Beckoning," in *Call Me By My True Names*, p. 107.

The Dharma body is the Buddha that is everlasting. Mahayana Buddhists later began to call the Dharmakaya Vairochana, the ontological Buddha, the soul of the Buddha, the spirit of the Buddha, the true Buddha, the ground of all being, the ground of enlightenment. Finally, Dharmakaya became equivalent to suchness, nirvana, and Tathagatagarbha ("the womb of the tathagata").<sup>3</sup> This is a natural development. But if we spend too much time talking about these things, it will be less valuable than learning how to touch our own Dharma body through dwelling in peace and mindfulness. When you touch the Dharmakaya, you touch the Buddha. The Buddha said very clearly that his Dharma body is even more

important than his physical body. For his Dharmakaya to continue, the Buddha relies on us, on our practice.

3 Tathagata is a title of the Buddha meaning "he or she who has come from the world of suchness (ultimate reality)."

The Sambhogakaya is the Buddha's body of bliss, enjoyment, celebration, results, or rewards. Because the Buddha practices deeply, he experiences boundless peace, joy, and happiness; and Sambhogakaya is the fruit of his practice. When we practice mindfulness, we, too, can enjoy this fruit. Breathing in and looking at the blue sky, drinking our tea in mindfulness, we can feel happy just being alive. This is our body of enjoyment, Sambhogakaya.

I once read a story about a Christian man whose faith in God was not firm. He was hunting in the jungles of Africa when he lost his way. After some time, still lost, he decided to pray for help, but because his faith was weak, he prayed weakly. "God, if you exist, please come and save me now." As soon as he finished speaking, an African man appeared. The man showed him the way to a

village, and he was saved. But then he wrote in his diary, "I called upon God, but only a Negro appeared." In fact, the man who saved him was God himself, but because he was ignorant, he failed to see that. We can say that the man who saved him was the Sambhogakaya Buddha. Buddha and God appear in many forms. The Buddha is not only in the cloud. He is in our hearts, and in the hearts of many others.

Every time we touch something beautiful, in harmony and peace, we touch the Sambhogakaya Buddha. This is called "self-enjoyment." When we feel happy and peaceful, our happiness and peace radiate around us, and others can enjoy it as well. This is called "the enjoyment of others of our body of bliss." When we do this, many Sambhogakayas are born into the world. Each of us has the capacity to bring joy to others and to help relieve them of their suffering, if we know how to cultivate the seeds of awakening within ourselves. Like the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya body of the Buddha is available, if we know how to touch it.

Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, is the Nirmanakaya, a beam of light sent into the world

by the sun of the Dharmakaya to help relieve the suffering of living beings. Shakyamuni Buddha was a real human being and the Dharmakaya was embodied by his presence. The living Buddha is still available to us as an embodiment, as a ray of the sun of the Dharmakaya. If that ray is not apparent to you, don't worry. There are many other rays, or transformation bodies, expounding the Dharma — the trees, the birds, the violet bamboo, and the yellow chrysanthemum. Shakyamuni is just one of these transformation bodies. You can be in touch with the Nirmanakaya through him or through any of these others.

Each of us has three bodies — a Dharma body, an enjoyment body, and a physical body. Please discover your own Dharma body, your own body of bliss, and your own body of transformation. These bodies are deep within you; it is only a matter of discovery. When you practice walking meditation and release some of your sorrow and your anger, when you look deeply into things and shed some of your misperceptions, cravings, and attachments, you discover the body of the Dharma, the body of bliss, and the body of transformation within you. When you touch these three bodies of yourself and of the Buddha, you

will suffer less. The Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya are available. Allow yourself to be struck by the beams of light emanated by the Buddha and to be transformed. When we know how to discover the seeds of enlightenment within ourselves, we realize our capacity to transform many others as well. The Buddha depends on us to live mindfully, to enjoy the practice, and to transform ourselves, so we can share the body of the Dharma with many other living beings.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

## *The Three Jewels*

*I take refuge in the Buddha,  
the one who shows me the way in this life.*

*I take refuge in the Dharma,  
the way of understanding and love.*

*I take refuge in the Sangha,  
the community that lives in harmony and  
awareness.*

Taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is a fundamental practice in Buddhism. These are universal values that transcend sectarian and cultural boundaries. When we were in our mother's womb, we felt secure, protected from heat, cold, hunger, and other difficulties. To seek for refuge means to look for a place like that that is safe, a place we can rely on.

Faith (shraddha), in Buddhism, does not mean accepting a theory that we have not personally verified. The Buddha encouraged us to see for ourselves. Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is not blind faith; it is the fruit of our practice. At first,

our Buddha may be a book we've read, our Dharma a few encouraging words we've heard, and our Sangha a community we've visited once or twice. But as we continue to practice, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha reveal themselves to us more fully.

Faith is important for all religions. Some people say, "If we believe in God and it turns out that He does exist, we'll be safe. And if He doesn't, we won't have lost anything." Theologians speak of a "leap of faith," like a child jumping off the table into the arms of his father. The child is not one hundred percent sure his father will catch him, but he has enough faith to jump. In Buddhism, our faith is concrete, not blind, not a leap. It is formed by our own insight and experience. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we express trust in our capacity to walk in the direction of beauty, truth, and deep understanding, based on our experience of the efficacy of the practice. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we enter the path of transformation, the path to end suffering. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we focus our energies on building a community that dwells in mindfulness, harmony, and peace. When we touch these Three Jewels directly and experience their capacity to bring

about transformation and peace, our faith is strengthened even further. The Three Jewels are not notions. They are our life.

In Chinese and Vietnamese, practitioners always say, "I go back and rely on the Buddha in myself." Adding "in myself makes it clear that we ourselves are the Buddha. When we take refuge in Buddha, we must also understand, "The Buddha takes refuge in me." Without the second part, the first is not complete. There is a verse we can recite when planting trees and other plants:

*I entrust myself to Earth,  
Earth entrusts herself to me.  
I entrust myself to Buddha,  
Buddha entrusts herself to me.*

To plant a seed or a seedling is to entrust it to the earth. The plant will live or die because of the earth. But the earth also entrusts herself to the plant. Each leaf that falls down and decomposes will help the soil be alive. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we entrust ourselves to the soil of understanding. And the Buddha entrusts himself or herself to us for understanding, love, and compassion to be alive in the world. Whenever I

hear someone recite, "I take refuge in the Buddha," I also hear, "The Buddha takes refuge in me."

*Going back, taking refuge in the Buddha in myself,*

*I vow, together with all beings, to realize the Great Way in  
order to give rise to the highest mind (bodhichitta).*

*Going back, taking refuge in the Dharma in myself*

*I vow, together with all beings, to realize understanding and  
wisdom as immense as the ocean.*

*Going back, taking refuge in the Sangha in myself,*

*I vow, together with all beings, to help build a Sangha  
without obstacles.*

During the Buddha's last months, he always taught, "Take refuge in yourselves, not in anything else. In you are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Don't look for things that are far away. Everything is in your own heart. Be an island unto yourself." Whenever you feel confused, angry, or lost, if you

practice mindful breathing and return to your island of self, you will be in a safe place filled with warm sunlight, cool shade trees, and beautiful birds and flowers. Buddha is our mindfulness. Dharma is our conscious breathing. Sangha is our Five Aggregates<sup>1</sup> working in harmony.

1 For an explanation of the Five Aggregates (skandhas), the components of our "self," see chap. 23.

If I am ever in an airplane and the pilot announces that the plane is about to crash, I will practice mindful breathing while reciting the Three Refuges. When you receive bad news, I hope you will do the same. But don't wait until a critical moment to go back to your island of self. Go back each day by living mindfully. If the practice becomes a habit, when difficulties arise, it will be easy for you to touch the Three Jewels in yourself. Walking, breathing, sitting, and eating mindfully are all ways to take refuge. This is not blind faith. It is faith based on your real experience.

Dharma books and tapes are valuable, but the true Dharma is revealed through our life and our practice. Whenever the Four Noble Truths and the

Noble Eightfold Path are practiced, the living Dharma is there. There are said to be 84,000 Dharma doors. Sitting meditation is one door, and walking meditation is another. To take refuge in the Dharma is to choose the doors that are most appropriate for us. Dharma is great compassion, understanding, and love.<sup>2</sup> To realize these qualities, we need a Sangha.

2 For a further explication of the Second Jewel, Dharma, see chap. 20, 'The Three Bodies of Buddha.'

Sangha is the fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, as well as the other elements that support our practice — our cushion, our walking meditation path, the trees, the sky, and the flowers. In my country, we say that when a tiger leaves his mountain and goes to the lowlands, he will be caught by humans and killed. When a practitioner leaves her Sangha, she may abandon her practice and "die" as a practitioner. Practicing with a Sangha is essential. Even if we have a deep appreciation for the practice, it can be difficult to continue without the support of friends.

It is well worth investing in a Sangha. If you sow seeds in arid land, few seeds will sprout. But if you select a fertile field and invest your wonderful seeds in it, the harvest will be bountiful. Building a Sangha, supporting a Sangha, being with a Sangha, receiving the support and guidance of a Sangha is the practice. We have individual eyes and Sangha eyes. When a Sangha shines its light on our personal views, we see more clearly. In the Sangha, we won't fall into negative habit patterns. Stick to your Sangha. Take refuge in the Sangha, and you'll have the wisdom and support you need.

When members of a Sangha live in harmony, their Sangha is holy. Don't think that holiness is only for the Pope or the Dalai Lama. Holiness is also within you and within your Sangha. When a community sits, breathes, walks, and eats together in mindfulness, holiness is there. When you build a Sangha that has happiness, joy, and peace, you'll see the element of holiness in the Sangha. [King Prasenajit](#), a close friend and disciple of the Buddha, told the Lord, "When I look at the Sangha, I have faith in the Buddha and the Dharma." Looking at the monks and nuns who were calm, peaceful, joyful, and free, who walked, stood, and

sat in mindfulness, he saw the Buddha and the Dharma in them. Dharma and Sangha are the doors through which we enter the heart of the Buddha.

One day, the Buddha went with Ananda to a monastery in Koshala. All the monks had gone out on alms round except one monk who had dysentery. He was lying exhausted, his robes and bedding covered in filth. When the Buddha saw this, he asked, "Where have the other monks gone? Why is no one looking after you?" The unwell monk replied, "Lord, all my brothers have gone out on alms round. At first, they looked after me, but when I was getting no better, I told them I would look after myself." The Buddha and Ananda bathed the monk, cleaned his room, washed his robes, and gave him a fresh robe to wear. When the monks returned, the Buddha said, "Friends, if we do not look after each other, who will look after us? When you look after each other, you are looking after the Tathagata."<sup>3</sup>

3 See p. 158, n. 3.

There are true jewels and jewels that are not authentic. If someone gives spiritual teachings that contradict the Three Seals of impermanence,

nonself, and nirvana, that is not authentic Dharma. When a community has mindfulness, peace, joy, and liberation, it is a true Sangha. A Sangha that does not practice mindfulness and is not free, peaceful, or joyful cannot be called a true Sangha. The Buddha also can be true or false. In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha says, "If you look for me in forms and sounds, you will never see the Tathagata."

Looking into any of the Three Jewels, you see the other two. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha inter-  
are. If you look after the Sangha, you are looking after the Buddha. When your Sangha is happy and advancing in the practice, the holiness of the Sangha increases, and the presence of the true Buddha and true Dharma become clearer. When you walk in mindfulness, you are taking good care of the Dharma. When you make peace with another member of your Sangha, you are looking after the Buddha. Going into the meditation hall, offering incense, and tidyng the altar are not the only ways to look after the Buddha. Taking someone's hand or comforting someone who suffers is also to look after the Buddha. When you touch the true Sangha, you touch the Buddha and the Dharma. The Dharma cannot exist without a

Buddha and a Sangha. How could the Dharma exist if there were no practitioners? A Buddha is a Buddha when the Dharma is in him or her. Each jewel contains the other two. When you take refuge in one jewel, you take refuge in all three. This can be realized in every moment of our life.

Traditionally, we chant the Three Refuges three times. During the first recitation, we turn in the direction of greater mindfulness, understanding, and love. During the second recitation, we begin to embody the Three Jewels. When we recite the third time, we vow to help others realize the Way of Understanding and Love and become a source of peace.

Our problems today are no longer as simple as those encountered by the Buddha. In the twenty-first century, we will have to practice meditation collectively — as a family, a city, a nation, and a community of nations. The Buddha of the twenty-first century — Maitreya, the Buddha of Love — may well be a community rather than an individual. Sanghas that practice loving kindness and compassion are the Buddha we need. We can prepare the ground for bringing that Buddha to life, for our sake and for the sake of countless others,

by transforming our own suffering and cultivating the art of Sangha-building. It is the most important work we can do.

*Buddha is the teacher showing the way,  
the perfectly awakened one,  
beautifully seated, peaceful and smiling,  
the living source of understanding and  
compassion.*

*Dharma is the clear path  
leading us out of ignorance  
bringing us back  
to an awakened life.*

*Sangha is the beautiful community  
that practices joy,  
realizing liberation,  
bringing peace and happiness to life.*

*I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows  
me the way in  
this life.*

*I take refuge in the Dharma, the way of  
understanding and of  
love.*

*I take refuge in the Sangha, the community that lives in harmony and awareness.*

*Dwelling in the refuge of Buddha, I see clearly the path of light and beauty in the world.*

*Dwelling in the refuge of Dharma, I learn to open many doors on the path of transformation.*

*Dwelling in the refuge of Sangha, I am supported by its shining light that keeps my practice free of obstacles.*

*Taking refuge in the Buddha in myself, I aspire to help all people recognize their own awakened nature and realize the mind of love.*

*Taking refuge in the Dharma in myself, I aspire to help all people grasp the way of practice and walk together on the*

*path of liberation.*

*Taking refuge in the Sangha in myself, I aspire  
to help all  
people build fourfold communities and encourage  
the  
transformation of all beings.*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### The Four Immeasurable Minds

During the Buddha's lifetime, those of the Brahmanic faith prayed that after death they would go to Heaven to dwell eternally with Brahma, the universal God. One day a Brahman man asked the Buddha, "What can I do to be sure that I will be with Brahma after I die?" and the Buddha replied, "As Brahma is the source of Love, to dwell with him you must practice the 'Brahma Abodes,' (*Brahmaviharas*) or Four Immeasurable Minds — love, compassion, joy, and equanimity." Love in Sanskrit is *maitri*; in Pali it is *metta*. Compassion is *karuna* in both languages. Joy is *mudita*. Equanimity is *upeksha* in Sanskrit and *upekkha* in Pali. A *vihara* is an abode or a dwelling place. The Four Brahmaviharas are the abodes of true love. This address is much greater than a four-star hotel. It is a 1,000-star dwelling. The Four Brahmaviharas are called "immeasurable," because if you practice them, they will grow in you every day until they embrace the whole world. You will become happier, and everyone around you will become happier, also.

The Buddha respected people's desire to practice their own faith, so that is why he encouraged the Brahman man in his own language. If you enjoy walking meditation, practice walking meditation. If you enjoy sitting meditation, practice sitting meditation. But preserve your Jewish, Christian, or Muslim roots. That is the best way to realize the Buddha's spirit. If you are cut off from your roots, you cannot be happy.

If you learn to practice love, compassion, joy, and equanimity, you will know how to heal the illnesses of anger, sorrow, insecurity, sadness, hatred, loneliness, and unhealthy attachments.

Some sutra commentators have said that the Brahma-viharas are not the highest teaching of the Buddha, that they cannot put an end to all suffering and afflictions, but that is not correct. One time the Buddha said to Ananda, "Teach these Four Immeasurable Minds to the young monks, and they will feel secure, strong, and joyful, without afflictions of body or mind. For the whole of their lives, they will be well equipped to practice the pure way of a monk."<sup>1</sup> On another occasion, a group of the Buddha's disciples visited the monastery of a nearby sect, and the monks

there asked, "We have heard that your teacher Gautama teaches the Four Immeasurable Minds of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Our master teaches this also. What is the difference?" The Buddha's disciples did not know how to respond. When they returned to their monastery, the Buddha told them, "Whoever practices the Four Immeasurable Minds together with the Seven Factors of Awakening, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path will arrive deeply at enlightenment."<sup>2</sup> Love, compassion, joy, and equanimity are the very nature of an enlightened person. They are the four aspects of true love within ourselves and within everyone and everything.

1 *Madhyama Agama* 86, *Taisho* 26.

2 *Samyukta Agama* 744, *Taisho* 99.

The first aspect of true love is maitri, the intention and capacity to offer joy and happiness. To develop that capacity, we have to practice looking and listening deeply so that we know what to do and what not to do to make others happy. If you offer your beloved something she does not need, that is not maitri. You have to see her real

situation or what you offer might bring her unhappiness.

In Southeast Asia, many people are extremely fond of a large, thorny fruit called durian. You could even say they are addicted to it. Its smell is extremely strong, and when some people finish eating the fruit, they put the skin under their bed so they can continue to smell it. To me, the smell of durian is horrible. One day when I was practicing chanting in my temple in Vietnam, there was a durian on the altar that had been offered to the Buddha. I was trying to recite the *Lotus Sutra*, using a wooden drum and a large bowl-shaped bell for accompaniment, but I could not concentrate at all. I finally carried the bell to the altar and turned it upside down to imprison the durian, so I could chant the sutra. After I finished, I bowed to the Buddha and liberated the durian. If you were to say to me, "Thây, I love you so much I would like you to eat some of this durian," I would suffer. You love me, you want me to be happy, but you force me to eat durian. That is an example of love without understanding. Your intention is good, but you don't have the correct understanding.

Without understanding, your love is not true

love. You must look deeply in order to see and understand the needs, aspirations, and suffering of the one you love. We all need love. Love brings us joy and well-being. It is as natural as the air. We are loved by the air; we need fresh air to be happy and well. We are loved by trees. We need trees to be healthy. In order to be loved, we have to love, which means we have to understand. For our love to continue, we have to take the appropriate action or non-action to protect the air, the trees, and our beloved.

Maitri can be translated as "love" or "loving kindness." Some Buddhist teachers prefer "loving kindness," as they find the word "love" too dangerous. But I prefer "love." Words sometimes get sick and we have to heal them. We have been using the word "love" to mean appetite or desire, as in "I love hamburgers." We have to use language more carefully. "Love" is a beautiful word; we have to restore its meaning. The word "maitri" has roots in the word *mitra*, which means friend. In Buddhism, the primary meaning of love is friendship.

We all have the seeds of love in us. We can develop this wonderful source of energy, nurturing

the unconditional love that does not expect anything in return. When we understand someone deeply, even someone who has done us harm, we cannot resist loving him or her. Shakyamuni Buddha declared that the Buddha of the next eon will be named "Maitreya, the Buddha of Love."

The second aspect of true love is karuna, the intention and capacity to relieve and transform suffering and lighten sorrows. Karuna is usually translated as "compassion," but that is not exactly correct. "Compassion" is composed of *com*, ("together with") and *passion* ("to suffer"). But we do not need to suffer to remove suffering from another person. Doctors, for instance, can relieve their patients' suffering without experiencing the same disease in themselves. If we suffer too much, we may be crushed and unable to help. Still, until we find a better word, let us use "compassion" to translate karuna.

To develop compassion in ourselves, we need to practice mindful breathing, deep listening, and deep looking. The [Lotus Sutra describes Avalokiteshvara](#) as the bodhisattva who practices "looking with the eyes of compassion and listening deeply to the cries of the world." Compassion

contains deep concern. You know the other person is suffering, so you sit close to her. You look and listen deeply to her to be able to touch her pain. You are in deep communication, deep communion with her, and that alone brings some relief.

One compassionate word, action, or thought can reduce another person's suffering and bring him joy. One word can give comfort and confidence, destroy doubt, help someone avoid a mistake, reconcile a conflict, or open the door to liberation. One action can save a person's life or help him take advantage of a rare opportunity. One thought can do the same, because thoughts always lead to words and actions. With compassion in our heart, every thought, word, and deed can bring about a miracle.

When I was a novice, I could not understand why, if the world is filled with suffering, the Buddha has such a beautiful smile. Why isn't he disturbed by all the suffering? Later I discovered that the Buddha has enough understanding, calmness, and strength; that is why the suffering does not overwhelm him. He is able to smile to suffering because he knows how to take care of it and to help transform it. We need to be aware of

the suffering, but retain our clarity, calmness, and strength so we can help transform the situation. The ocean of tears cannot drown us if karuna is there. That is why the Buddha's smile is possible.

The third element of true love is mudita, joy. True love always brings joy to ourselves and to the one we love. If our love does not bring joy to both of us, it is not true love.

Commentators explain that happiness relates to both body and mind, whereas joy relates primarily to mind. This example is often given: Someone traveling in the desert sees a stream of cool water and experiences joy. On drinking the water, he experiences happiness. Drishta dharma sukha viharin means "dwelling happily in the present moment." We don't rush to the future; we know that everything is here in the present moment. Many small things can bring us tremendous joy, such as the awareness that we have eyes in good condition. We just have to open our eyes and we can see the blue sky, the violet flowers, the children, the trees, and so many other kinds of forms and colors. Dwelling in mindfulness, we can touch these wondrous and refreshing things, and our mind of joy arises naturally. Joy contains

happiness and happiness contains joy.

Some commentators have said that mudita means "sympathetic joy" or "altruistic joy," the happiness we feel when others are happy. But that is too limited. It discriminates between self and others. A deeper definition of mudita is a joy that is filled with peace and contentment. We rejoice when we see others happy, but we rejoice in our own well-being as well. How can we feel joy for another person when we do not feel joy for ourselves? Joy is for everyone.

The fourth element of true love is upreksha, which means equanimity, nonattachment, nondiscrimination, even-mindedness, or letting go. *Upa* means "over," and *iksh* means "to look." You climb the mountain to be able to look over the whole situation, not bound by one side or the other. If your love has attachment, discrimination, prejudice, or clinging in it, it is not true love. People who do not understand Buddhism sometimes think upreksha means indifference, but true equanimity is neither cold nor indifferent. If you have more than one child, they are all your children. Upeksha does not mean that you don't love. You love in a way that all your children

receive your love, without discrimination.

Upeksha has the mark called *samatajñana*, "the wisdom of equality," the ability to see everyone as equal, not discriminating between ourselves and others. In a conflict, even though we are deeply concerned, we remain impartial, able to love and to understand both sides. We shed all discrimination and prejudice, and remove all boundaries between ourselves and others. As long as we see ourselves as the one who loves and the other as the one who is loved, as long as we value ourselves more than others or see ourselves as different from others, we do not have true equanimity. We have to put ourselves "into the other person's skin" and become one with him if we want to understand and truly love him. When that happens, there is no "self and no "other."

Without upeksha, your love may become possessive. A summer breeze can be very refreshing; but if we try to put it in a tin can so we can have it entirely for ourselves, the breeze will die. Our beloved is the same. He is like a cloud, a breeze, a flower. If you imprison him in a tin can, he will die. Yet many people do just that. They rob their loved one of his liberty, until he can no

longer be himself. They live to satisfy themselves and use their loved one to help them fulfill that. That is not loving; it is destroying. You say you love him, but if you do not understand his aspirations, his needs, his difficulties, he is in a prison called love. True love allows you to preserve your freedom and the freedom of your beloved. That is upreksha.

For love to be true love, it must contain compassion, joy, and equanimity. For compassion to be true compassion, it has to have love, joy, and equanimity in it. True joy has to contain love, compassion, and equanimity. And true equanimity has to have love, compassion, and joy in it. This is the interbeing nature of the Four Immeasurable Minds. When the Buddha told the Brahman man to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds, he was offering all of us a very important teaching. But we must look deeply and practice them for ourselves to bring these four aspects of love into our own lives and into the lives of those we love. In many sutras, the Buddha says that if you practice the Four Immeasurable Minds along with the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, you will never again descend into the realms of

suffering.<sup>3</sup>

3 For a full explication on the Four Immeasurable Minds and related teachings, see Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1997).

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE**

### *The Five Aggregates*

According to Buddhism, a human being is composed of Five Aggregates (skandhas): form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The Five Aggregates contain everything — both inside us and outside of us, in nature and in society.

Form (*rupa*) means our body, including our five sense organs and our nervous system. To practice mindfulness of the body, you might like to lie down and practice total relaxation. Allow your body to rest, and then be mindful of your forehead. "Breathing in, I am aware of my forehead. Breathing out, I smile to my forehead." Use the energy of mindfulness to embrace your forehead, your brain, your eyes, your ears, and your nose. Every time you breathe in, become aware of one part of your body, and every time you breathe out, smile to that part of your body. Use the energies of mindfulness and love to embrace each part. Embrace your heart, your lungs, and your stomach. "Breathing in, I am aware of my heart. Breathing out, I embrace my heart." Practice scanning your

body with the light of mindfulness and smiling to each part of your body with compassion and concern. When you finish scanning in this way, you will feel wonderful. It takes only half an hour, and your body will rest deeply during those thirty minutes. Please take good care of your body, allowing it to rest and embracing it with tenderness, compassion, mindfulness, and love.

Learn to look at your body as a river in which every cell is a drop of water. In every moment, cells are born and cells die. Birth and death support each other. To practice mindfulness of the body, follow your breathing and focus your attention on each part of the body, from the hair on your head to the soles of your feet. Breathe mindfully and embrace each part of the body with the energy of mindfulness, smiling to it with recognition and love. The Buddha said that there are thirty-two parts of the body to recognize and embrace. Identify the form elements in your body: earth, water, air, and heat. See the connection of these four elements inside and outside of your body. See the living presence of your ancestors and future generations, as well as the presence of all other beings in the animal, vegetal, and mineral realms. Become aware of the positions of your body

(standing, sitting, walking, lying down) and its movements (bending, stretching, taking a shower, getting dressed, eating, working, etc.). When you master this practice, you will be able to be aware of your feelings and your perceptions as they arise, and you will be able to practice looking deeply into them.

See your body's nature of impermanence and interbeing. Observe that your body has no permanent entity, and you will no longer identify yourself solely with your body or consider it to be a "self." See the body as a formation, empty of any substance that might be called "self." See your body as an ocean filled with hidden waves and sea monsters. The ocean might be calm at times, but at other times you can be caught in a storm. Learn to calm the waves and master the monsters without allowing yourself to be carried away or caught by them. With deep looking, the body ceases to be an aggregate of grasping (*upadana skandha*), and you dwell in freedom, no longer caught by fear.

The Second Aggregate is feelings (vedana).

There is a river of feelings within us, and every drop of water in that river is a feeling. To observe our feelings, we sit on the bank of the river and identify each feeling as it flows by. It may be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. One feeling lasts for a while, and then another comes. Meditation is to be aware of each feeling. Recognize it, smile to it, look deeply into it, and embrace it with all our heart. If we continue to look deeply, we discover the true nature of that feeling, and we are no longer afraid, even of a painful feeling. We know we are more than our feelings, and we are able to embrace each feeling and take good care of it.

Looking deeply into each feeling, we identify its roots as being in our body, our perceptions, or our deep consciousness. Understanding a feeling is the beginning of its transformation. We learn to embrace even our strong emotions with the energy of mindfulness until they are calmed down. We practice mindful breathing, focusing our attention on the rise and fall of our abdomen and take good care of our emotions just as we would take good care of our baby brother or sister. We practice looking deeply into our feelings and emotions and identify the nutriments that have brought them

into being.<sup>1</sup> We know that if we are able to offer ourselves nutriments that are more wholesome, we can transform our feelings and emotions. Our feelings are formations, impermanent and without substance. We learn not to identify ourselves with our feelings, not to consider them as a self, not to seek refuge in them, not to die because of them. This practice helps us cultivate non-fear, and it frees us from the habit of clinging, even clinging to suffering.

1 See chap. 7, pp. 31-39.

The Third Aggregate is perceptions (samjña). In us there is a river of perceptions. Perceptions arise, stay for a period of time, and cease to be. The aggregate of perception includes noticing, naming, and conceptualizing, as well as the perceiver and the perceived. When we perceive, we often distort, which brings about many painful feelings. Our perceptions are often erroneous, and we suffer. It is very helpful to look deeply into the nature of our perceptions, without being too sure of anything. When we are too sure, we suffer. ["Am](#)

I sure?" is a very good question. If we ask this, we'll have a good chance to look again and see if our perception is incorrect. The perceiver and the perceived are inseparable. When the perceiver perceives wrongly, the things perceived are also incorrect.

A man was rowing his boat upstream when, suddenly, he saw another boat coming toward him. He shouted, "Be careful! Be careful!" but the boat plowed right into him, nearly sinking his boat. The man became angry and began to shout, but when he looked closely, he saw that there was no one in the other boat. The boat had drifted downstream by itself. He laughed out loud. When our perceptions are correct, we feel better, but when our perceptions are not correct, they can cause us a lot of unpleasant feelings. We have to look deeply into things so we will not be led into suffering and difficult feelings. Perceptions are very important for our well-being.

Our perceptions are conditioned by the many afflictions that are present in us: ignorance, craving, hatred, anger, jealousy, fear, habit energies, etc. We perceive phenomena on the basis of our lack of insight into the nature of impermanence and

interbeing. Practicing mindfulness, concentration, and deep looking, we can discover the errors of our perceptions and free ourselves from fear and clinging. All suffering is born from wrong perceptions. Understanding the fruit of meditation, can dissolve our wrong perceptions and liberate us. We have to be alert always and never seek refuge in our perceptions. The *Diamond Sutra* reminds us, "Where there is perception, there is deception." We should be able to substitute perceptions with *prajña*, true vision, true knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

2 For more [on perceptions](#), see pp. 52-54.

The Fourth Aggregate is [mental formations](#) (*samskara*). Anything made from another element is a "formation." A flower is a formation, because it is made from sunshine, clouds, seeds, soil, minerals, gardeners, and so on. Fear is also a formation, a mental formation. Our body is a formation, a physical formation. Feelings and perceptions are mental formations, but because they are so important, they have their own

categories. According to the Vijñanavada School of the Northern Transmission, there are fifty-one categories of mental formations.

This Fourth Aggregate consists of forty-nine of these mental formations (excluding feelings and perceptions). All fifty-one mental formations are present in the depths of our store consciousness in the form of seeds (*bijas*). Every time a seed is touched, it manifests on the upper level of our consciousness (mind consciousness) as a mental formation. Our practice is to be aware of the manifestation and the presence of mental formations and to look deeply into them in order to see their true nature. Since we know that all mental formations are impermanent and without real substance, we do not identify ourselves with them or seek refuge in them. With daily practice, we are able to nourish and develop wholesome mental formations and transform unwholesome ones. Freedom, non-fear, and peace are the result of this practice.

The Fifth Aggregate is consciousness (vijñana).

Consciousness here means store consciousness, which is at the base of everything we are, the ground of all of our mental formations. When mental formations are not manifesting, they reside in our store consciousness in the form of seeds — seeds of joy, peace, understanding, compassion, forgetfulness, jealousy, fear, despair, and so on. Just as there are fifty-one categories of mental formations, there are fifty-one kinds of seeds buried deep in our consciousness. Every time we water one of them or allow it to be watered by someone else, that seed will manifest and become a mental formation. We have to be careful about which seeds we and others water. If we let the negative seeds in us be watered, we can be overwhelmed. The Fifth Aggregate, consciousness, contains all the other aggregates and is the basis of their existence.

Consciousness is, at the same time, both collective and individual. The collective is made of the individual, and the individual is made of the collective. Our consciousness can be transformed at its base through the practice of mindful consuming, mindfully guarding our senses, and looking deeply. The practice should aim at transforming both the individual and the collective

aspects of our consciousness. It is essential to practice with a Sangha to produce such a transformation. When the afflictions within us are transformed, our consciousness becomes wisdom, shining near and far and showing the way to liberation to both individuals and the whole society.



These Five Aggregates inter-are. When you have a painful feeling, look into your body, your perceptions, your mental formations, and your consciousness to see what has brought about this feeling. If you have a headache, your painful feeling comes from the First Aggregate. Painful feelings can also come from mental formations or from perceptions. You might, for example, think someone hates you who actually loves you.

Look deeply into the five rivers of yourself and see how each river contains the other four. Look at the river of form. In the beginning you may think that form is just physical and not mental. But every cell in your body contains all aspects of yourself. It is now possible to take one cell of your

body and duplicate your whole body. It is called "cloning." The one contains the all. One cell of your body contains your entire body. It also contains all of your feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, and not only yours, but also your parents' and your ancestors'. Each aggregate contains all the other aggregates. Each feeling contains all perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Looking into one feeling, you can discover everything. Look in the light of interbeing, and you will see the all in the one and the one in the all. Don't think that form exists outside of feelings or that feelings exist outside of form.

In the Turning the Wheel Sutra, the Buddha said, "The Five Aggregates, when grasped at, are suffering." He did not say that the Five Aggregates are, in themselves, suffering. There is a helpful image in the Ratnakuta Sutra. A man throws a clod of earth at a dog. The dog looks at the clod and barks at it furiously. The dog does not realize that it is the man and not the clod of earth that is responsible. The sutra goes on to say, "In the same way, an ordinary person caught in dualistic conceptions thinks that the Five Aggregates are the cause of his suffering, but in fact the root of his

suffering is his lack of understanding about the impermanent, nonself, and interdependent nature of the Five Aggregates.<sup>3</sup> It is not the Five Aggregates that make us suffer, but the way we relate to them. When we observe the impermanent, nonself, and interdependent nature of all that is, we will not feel aversion for life. In fact, this knowing will help us see the preciousness of all life.

3 *Ratnakuta Sutra*, chap. 23. *Taisho* 310.

When we do not understand correctly, we become attached to things and get caught by them. In the *Ratnakuta Sutra*, the terms "aggregate" (skandha) and "aggregate of clinging" (upadana skandha) are used. Skandhas are the Five Aggregates that give rise to life. Upadana skandhas are the same Five Aggregates as the objects of our grasping. The root of our suffering is not the aggregates but our grasping. There are people who, because of their incorrect understanding of what the root of suffering is, instead of dealing with their attachments, fear the six sense objects and feel aversion for the Five Aggregates. A Buddha is someone who lives in peace, joy, and freedom, neither afraid of nor attached to anything.

When we breathe in and out and harmonize the Five Aggregates within us, this is true practice. But to practice is not to confine ourselves to the Five Aggregates within ourselves. We are also aware that the Five Aggregates in us have their roots in society, in nature, and in the people with whom we live. Meditate on the assembly of the Five Aggregates in yourself until you are able to see the oneness of your own self and the universe. When the Bodhisattva Avalokita looked deeply into the reality of the Five Aggregates, he saw the emptiness of self, and he was liberated from suffering. If we contemplate the Five Aggregates in a diligent way, we, too, will be liberated from suffering. If the Five Aggregates return to their sources, the self no longer exists. To see the one in the all is to break through the attachment to the false view of self, the belief in the self as an unchanging entity that can exist on its own. To break through this false view is to be liberated from every form of suffering.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### *The Five Powers*

As children growing up in central Vietnam, my brothers, sisters, and I used to run out to the yard every time it rained. It was our way of taking a shower. We were so happy! Sometime later, our mother would call us and serve us a bowl of rice with pickled bean sprouts or salty fish. We'd take our bowls and sit in the doorway, eating and continuing to watch the falling rain. We were free of all worries and anxieties, not thinking about the past, the future, or anything at all. We just enjoyed ourselves, our food, and each other. On New Year's Day, Mother served us special cakes, and we went outside and ate the cakes while playing with the cat and the dog. Sometimes our New Year's clothes were so starchy that they squeaked as we walked. We thought we were in paradise.

Growing up, we began to worry about homework, the right clothes, a good job, and supporting our family, not to mention war, social injustice, and so many other difficulties. We thought our paradise was lost, but it was not. We only had to remember how to water the seeds of

paradise in ourselves, and we were able to produce true happiness again. Even today, you and I can return to our own paradise every time we breathe in and out mindfully. Our true home was not only in the past. It is present now. Mindfulness is the energy we can produce in our daily lives to bring our paradise back.

The [Five Faculties](#), or Bases (*indriyani*) are the power plants that can help us generate this energy in ourselves. The [Five Powers \(\*balani\*\)](#) are that energy in action. The Five Faculties and Powers are faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and insight. When practiced as bases, they are like factories that produce electricity. When practiced as powers, they have the capacity to bring about all the elements of the Eightfold Path, just as electricity manifests as light or heat.

The first of the five is faith (shraddha). When we have faith, a great energy in us is unleashed. If our faith is in something unreliable or false, not informed by insight, sooner or later it will lead us to a state of doubt and suspicion. But when our faith is made of insight and understanding, we will touch the things that are good, beautiful, and reliable. Faith is the confidence we receive when

we put into practice a teaching that helps us overcome difficulties and obtain some transformation. It is like the confidence a farmer has in his way of growing crops. It is not blind. It is not some belief in a set of ideas or dogmas.<sup>1</sup>

1 See chap. 21, pp. 161-162, for more on faith.

The second power is diligence (virya), the energy that brings joy into our practice. Faith gives birth to diligence, and this diligence continues to strengthen our faith. Animated with diligent energy, we become truly alive. Our eyes shine, and our steps are solid.<sup>2</sup>

2 See chap. 14 and also chap. 26, pp. 216-217, for more on virya, dili gence.

The third power is mindfulness (smriti). To look deeply, to have deep insight, we use the energy of Right Mindfulness. Meditation is a power plant for mindfulness. When we sit, eat a meal, or wash the dishes, we can learn to be mindful. Mindfulness allows us to look deeply and see what is going on. Mindfulness is the plow, the hoe, and the irrigation source that waters insight. We are the gardener — plowing, sowing, and

watering our beneficial seeds.<sup>3</sup>

3 See chap. 11 for more on mindfulness.

The fourth power is concentration (*samadhi*). To look deeply and see clearly, we need concentration. When we eat, wash dishes, walk, stand, sit, lie down, breathe, or work in mindfulness, we develop concentration. Mindfulness leads to concentration, and concentration leads to insight and to faith. With these four qualities, our life is filled with joy and the energy of being alive, which is the second power.<sup>4</sup>

4 See chap. 15 for more on concentration.

The fifth power is insight, or wisdom (prajña), the ability to look deeply and see clearly, and also the understanding that results from this practice. When we can see clearly, we abandon what is false, and our faith becomes Right Faith.<sup>5</sup>

5 See chap. 25, pp. 210-212, for more on prajña.

When all five power plants are working,

producing electricity, they are no longer just faculties. They become the Five Powers. There is a difference between producing something and having the power that it has generated. If there is not enough energy in our body and mind, our five power plants need repair. When our power plants function well, we are able to produce the energy we need for our practice and for our happiness.

Our store consciousness contains the seeds of all of these energies. When joy or anger is not present in our mind consciousness, we may say, "I don't have that," but we do. It's below, in our store consciousness. Under the right conditions, that seed will manifest. We may say, "I'm not angry. I don't have anger in me," but anger is still there in our unconscious mind. Everyone has a seed of anger lying dormant, below, in our store consciousness. When we practice, our effort is to water positive seeds and let the negative seeds remain dormant. We don't say, "Until I've gotten rid of all my bad seeds, I can't practice." If you get rid of all your unwholesome seeds, you won't have anything to practice. We need to practice now with all the unwholesome seeds in us. If we don't, the negative seeds will grow and cause a great deal of suffering.

Practicing [the Five Powers](#) is a matter of cultivating the earth of our store consciousness and sowing and watering good seeds. Then, when they arise into our mind consciousness and become flowers and fruits, they will scatter more good seeds throughout our store consciousness. If you want wholesome seeds to be in your mind consciousness, you need the condition of continuity. "Fruits of the same nature" will resow wholesome seeds in you.<sup>6</sup>

6 See chap. 27, pp. 224-225.

The *Lotus Sutra* says, "All sentient beings have the [Buddha nature \(Buddhata\)](#)." With the right conditions, the seed of Buddha nature in us will grow. We could also call that seed the seed of Right Mindfulness or the seed of insight, wisdom, or right faith. These are, in fact, one seed. To practice means to help that wonderful seed manifest. When we are mindful, concentration is already there. When we are concentrated, there is insight and wisdom. When we have faith, there is energy. Mindfulness is the seed of Buddha in us. Concentration is, therefore, already present in this seed of mindfulness in us.

The appellation "Buddha" comes from the root of the verb *budh* — which means to wake up, to understand, to know what is happening in a very deep way. In knowing, understanding, and waking up to reality, there is mindfulness, because mindfulness means seeing and knowing what is happening. Whether our seeing is deep or superficial depends on our degree of awakening. In each of us, the seed of Buddha, the capacity to wake up and understand, is called Buddha nature. It is the seed of mindfulness, the awareness of what is happening in the present moment. If I say, "A lotus for you, a Buddha to be," it means, "I see clearly the Buddha nature in you." It may be difficult for you to accept that the seed of Buddha is in you, but we all have the capacity for faith, awakening, understanding, and awareness, and that is what is meant by Buddha nature. There is no one who does not have the capacity to be a Buddha.

But the treasure we are looking for remains hidden to us. Stop being like the man in the *Lotus Sutra*, who looked all over the world for the gem that was already in his pocket. Come back and receive your true inheritance. Don't look outside

yourself for happiness. Let go of the idea that you don't have it. It is available within you.

The Bodhisattva Never-Despising could not dislike anyone, because he knew that each of us has the capacity to become a Buddha. He would bow to every child and adult and say, "I do not dare to underestimate you. You are a future Buddha." Some people felt so joyful upon hearing this that faith arose in them. But others, thinking that he was making fun of them, shouted and hurled stones at him. He continued this practice for his whole life, reminding others they had the capacity to wake up. Why wander all over the world looking for something you already have? You are already the richest person on Earth.

How can we help someone who feels she cannot love herself? How can we help her be in touch with the seed of love already in her, so it can manifest as a flower and she can smile? As a good friend, we have to learn to look deeply into our own consciousness and into the consciousness of others. We can help our friend cultivate that seed and realize her capacity to love.

There is a sixth power called "capacity" or

"inclusiveness" (*kshanti*). The capacity to be happy is very precious. Someone who is able to be happy even when confronted with difficulties, has the capacity to offer light and a sense of joy to herself and to those around her. When we are near someone like this, we feel happy, also. Even when she enters hell, she will lighten up hell with the sound of her laughter. There is a bodhisattva named Kshitigarbha whose practice is to go into the places of deepest suffering and bring light and laughter to others. If your Sangha has one person like that, someone who can smile, be happy, and have faith in all circumstances, it is a good Sangha.

Ask yourself, "Am I like that?" At first glance, you might think not. You might have an inferiority complex, which is the second kind of pride.<sup>7</sup> Please follow the advice of Never-Despising Bodhisattva and look deeply into your store consciousness to accept that the seed of happiness, the capacity to love and to be happy, is there. Practice joy. You may think that washing dishes is menial work, but when you roll up your sleeves, turn on the water, and pour in the soap, you can be very happy. Washing the dishes mindfully, you see how wonderful life is. Every moment is an opportunity

to water the seeds of happiness in yourself. If you develop the capacity to be happy in any surroundings, you will be able to share your happiness with others.

7 The Three Kinds of Pride are: (1) thinking I am better than the other(s); (2) thinking I am worse than the other(s); and (3) thinking I am just as good as the other(s).

Otherwise you might think, This is an unhappy situation. I must go somewhere else. And you'll go from place to place wandering like the prodigal son. When you realize your own capacity to be happy anywhere, you can put down roots in the present moment. You can take whatever the conditions of the present moment are and make them the foundation of your life and your happiness. When the sun is shining, you are happy. When it is raining, you are also happy. You don't need to go anywhere else. You don't need to travel into the future or return to the past. Everything in the present moment belongs to your true home. All the conditions for happiness are here. You only have to touch the seeds of happiness that are already in you.

When you enter a well-tended garden and see a fresh, beautiful rose, you want to pick it. But to do so, you have to touch some thorns. The rose is there, but the brambles are also there. You have to find a way to understand the thorns so you can pick the rose. Our practice is the same. Don't say that because there are thorns you cannot be happy. Don't say that because there is still anger or sadness in your heart, you cannot enjoy anything at all. You have to know how to deal with your anger and sadness so you don't lose the flowers of joy.

When our internal formations (samyojana) and suffering are dormant in our store consciousness, it is a good time to practice watering the positive seeds. When feelings of pain come into our conscious mind, we have to breathe mindfully and practice walking meditation in order to deal with those feelings. Don't lose the opportunity to water the seeds of happiness, so that more seeds of happiness will enter your store consciousness.

When the Buddha was about to pass away, his attendant Ananda cried and cried. The Buddha comforted him, saying, "Buddhas in the past had good attendants, but none were as good as you,

Ananda." He was watering the seeds of happiness in Ananda, because Ananda had looked after Buddha with all his heart. He said, "Ananda, have you seen the wonderful fields of golden rice stretching out to the horizon? They are very beautiful." Ananda replied, "Yes, Lord, they are very beautiful." The Buddha was always reminding Ananda to notice the things that are beautiful. Ananda was anxious about taking care of the Buddha well, and he wasn't able to pick the rose of his daily life. When you see a cloud in the sky, ask your friend, "Do you see that cloud? Isn't it splendid?" How can we live so that the seeds of happiness in us are watered every day? That is the cultivation of joy, the practice of love. We can practice these things easily when we have the energy of mindfulness. But without mindfulness, how can we see the beautiful rice fields? How can we feel the delightful rain? Breathing in, I know the rain is falling. Breathing out, I smile to the rain. Breathing in, I know that rain is a necessary part of life. Breathing out, I smile again. Mindfulness helps us regain the paradise we thought we had lost.

We want to return to our true home, but we are in the habit of running away. We want to sit on a

lotus flower, but instead we sit on burning charcoal, and we want to jump off. If we sit firmly in the present moment, it is as though we are sitting on a lotus. The Buddha is always represented as sitting peacefully on a lotus flower, because he was always at home. He didn't need to run anymore. To enjoy sitting in the present moment is called "just sitting" or "non-action." Venerable Thich Quang Duc was able to sit peacefully even while fire was blazing all around him. He was burning, but he was still sitting on a lotus. That is the ultimate capacity to sit peacefully in any circumstance, knowing that nothing is lost.

The capacity to feel at peace anywhere is a positive seed. The energy to run away is not. If we practice mindfulness, whenever the energy of wanting to run away arises, we can smile at it and say, "Hello, my old friend, I recognize you." The moment we recognize any habit energy, it loses a little of its power. Every time Mara appeared, the Buddha said, "I know you, my old friend," and Mara fled.

In the Samiddhi Sutra, we are taught to practice so that our happiness is present here and now. It

isn't necessary to run away or abandon our present home and look for an illusory home, a so-called paradise that is really just a shadow of happiness. When we produce faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and insight in our power plants, we realize that our true home is already filled with light and power.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

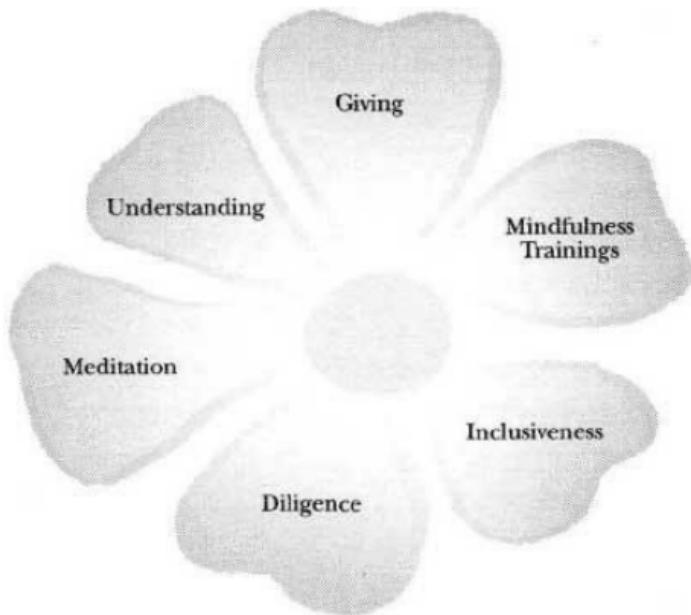
### The Six Paramitas

The Six Paramitas are a teaching of Mahayana Buddhism. *Paramita* can be translated as "perfection" or "perfect realization." The Chinese character used for paramita 度 Pmeans "crossing over to the other shore," which is the shore of peace, non-fear, and liberation. The practice of the paramitas can be the practice of our daily lives. We are on the shore of suffering, anger, and depression, and we want to cross over to the shore of well-being. To cross over, we have to do something, and that is called paramita. We return to ourselves and practice mindful breathing, looking at our suffering, anger, and depression, and smile. Doing this, we overcome our pain and cross over. We can practice "perfection" every day.

Every time you take one mindful step, you have a chance to go from the land of sorrow to the land of joy. The Pure Land is available right here and now. The Kingdom of God is a seed in us. If we know how to plant that seed in moist soil, it will become a tree, and birds will come and take refuge. Please practice crossing over to the other

shore whenever you feel the need. The Buddha said, "Don't just hope for the other shore to come to you. If you want to cross over to the other shore, the shore of safety, well-being, non-fear, and non-anger, you have to swim or row across. You have to make an effort." This effort is the practice of the Six Paramitas.

### *The Six Paramitas*



*Figure Four*

- (1) *dana paramita* – giving, offering, generosity.
- (2) *shila paramita* – precepts or mindfulness trainings.
- (3) *kshanti paramita* – inclusiveness, the capacity to receive, bear, and transform the pain inflicted on you by your enemies and also by those who love you.
- (4) *virya paramita* – diligence, energy, perseverance.
- (5) *dhyana paramita* – meditation.
- (6) *prajña paramita* – wisdom, insight, understanding.

Practicing the Six Paramitas helps us to reach the other shore — the shore of freedom, harmony, and good relationships.

The first practice of crossing over is the perfection of giving, *dana paramita*. To give means first of all to offer joy, happiness, and love. There

is a plant, well-known in Asia — it is a member of the onion family, and it is delicious in soup, fried rice, and omelets — that grows back in less than twenty-four hours every time you cut it. And the more you cut it, the bigger and stronger it grows. This plant represents dana paramita. We don't keep anything for ourselves. We only want to give. When we give, the other person might become happy, but it is certain that we become happy. In many stories of the Buddha's former lives, he practices dana paramita.<sup>1</sup>

1 See any of the translations of the *Jataka Tales*.

The greatest gift we can offer anyone is our true presence. A young boy I know was asked by his father, "What would you like for your birthday?" The boy hesitated. His father was wealthy and could give him anything he wanted. But his father spent so much time making money that he was rarely at home. So the boy said, "Daddy, I want you!" The message was clear. If you love someone, you have to produce your true presence for him or for her. When you give that gift, you receive, at the same time, the gift of joy. Learn how to produce your true presence by practicing meditation.

Breathing mindfully, you bring body and mind together. "Darling, I am here for you" is a mantra you can say when you practice this paramita.

What else can we give? Our stability. "Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain. Breathing out, I feel solid." The person we love needs us to be solid and stable. We can cultivate our stability by breathing in and out, practicing mindful walking, mindful sitting, and enjoy living deeply in every moment. Solidity is one of the characteristics of nirvana.

What else can we offer? Our freedom. Happiness is not possible unless we are free from afflictions — craving, anger, jealousy, despair, fear, and wrong perceptions. Freedom is one of the characteristics of nirvana. Some kinds of happiness actually destroy our body, our mind, and our relationships. Freedom from craving is an important practice. Look deeply into the nature of what you think will bring you happiness and see whether it is, in fact, causing those you love to suffer. You have to know this if you want to be truly free. Come back to the present moment, and touch the wonders of life that are available. There are so many wholesome things that can make us

happy right now, like the beautiful sunrise, the blue sky, the mountains, the rivers, and all the lovely faces around us.

What else can we give? Our freshness. "Breathing in, I see myself as a flower. Breathing out, I feel fresh." You can breathe in and out three times and restore your floweriness right away. What a gift!

What else can we offer? Peace. It is wonderful to sit near someone who is peaceful. We benefit from her peace. "Breathing in, I see myself as still water. Breathing out, I reflect things as they are." We can offer those we love our peace and lucidity.

What else can we offer? Space. The person we love needs space in order to be happy. In a flower arrangement, each flower needs space around it in order to radiate its true beauty. A person is like a flower. Without space within and around her, she cannot be happy. We cannot buy these gifts at the market. We have to produce them through our practice. And the more we offer, the more we have. When the person we love is happy, happiness comes back to us right away. We give to her, but we are giving to ourselves at the same time.

Giving is a wonderful practice. The Buddha said that when you are angry at someone, if you have tried everything and still feel angry, practice dana paramita. When we are angry, our tendency is to punish the other person. But when we do, there is only an escalation of the suffering. The Buddha proposed that instead, you send her a gift. When you feel angry, you won't want to go out and buy a gift, so take the opportunity now to prepare the gift while you are not angry. Then, when all else fails, go and mail that gift to her, and amazingly, you'll feel better right away. The same is true for nations. For Israel to have peace and security, the Israelis have to find ways to ensure peace and security for the Palestinians. And for the Palestinians to have peace and security, they also have to find ways to ensure peace and security for the Israelis. You get what you offer. Instead of trying to punish the other person, offer him exactly what he needs. The practice of giving can bring you to the shore of well-being very quickly.

When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. That is the message he

is sending. If you are able to see that, offer him what he needs — relief. Happiness and safety are not an individual matter. His happiness and safety are crucial for your happiness and safety. Wholeheartedly wish him happiness and safety, and you will be happy and safe also.

What else can we offer? Understanding. Understanding is the flower of practice. Focus your concentrated attention on one object, look deeply into it, and you'll have insight and understanding. When you offer others your understanding, they will stop suffering right away.

The first petal of the flower of the paramitas is dana paramita, the practice of giving. What you give is what you receive, more quickly than the signals sent by satellite. Whether you give your presence, your stability, your freshness, your solidity, your freedom, or your understanding, your gift can work a miracle. Dana paramita is the practice of love.

The second practice is the perfection of the precepts, or mindfulness trainings, shila paramita.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings help protect our body, mind, family, and society. The First Mindfulness Training is about protecting the lives of human beings, animals, vegetables, and minerals. To protect other beings is to protect ourselves. The second is to prevent the exploitation by humans of other living beings and of nature. It is also the practice of generosity. The third is to protect children and adults from sexual abuse, to preserve the happiness of individuals and families. Too many families have been broken by sexual misconduct. When you practice the Third Mindfulness Training, you protect yourself and you protect families and couples. You help other people feel safe. The Fourth Mindfulness Training is to practice deep listening and loving speech. The Fifth Mindfulness Training is about mindful consumption.<sup>2</sup>

2 For more on the Five Mindfulness Trainings, see chaps. 12 and 13 on Right Speech and Right Action. See also Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future To Be Possible*.

The practice of the Five Mindfulness Trainings is a form of love, and a form of giving. It assures the good health and protection of our family and

society. Shila paramita is a great gift that we can make to our society, our family, and to those we love. The most precious gift we can offer our society is to practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we protect ourselves and the people we love. When we practice shila paramita, we offer the precious gift of life.

Let us look deeply together into the causes of our suffering, individually and collectively. If we do, I am confident we will see that the Five Mindfulness Trainings are the correct medicine for the malaise of our times. Every tradition has the equivalent of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Every time I see someone receive and practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I feel so happy — for him, his family, and also for myself — because I know that the Five Mindfulness Trainings are the most concrete way to practice mindfulness. We need a Sangha around us in order to practice them deeply.



The third petal of the flower is inclusiveness,

kshanti paramita. Inclusiveness is the capacity to receive, embrace, and transform. Kshanti is often translated as patience or forbearance, but I believe "inclusiveness" better conveys the Buddha's teaching. When we practice inclusiveness, we don't have to suffer or forbear, even when we have to embrace suffering and injustice. The other person says or does something that makes us angry. He inflicts on us some kind of injustice. But if our heart is large enough, we don't suffer.

The Buddha offered this wonderful image. If you take a handful of salt and pour it into a small bowl of water, the water in the bowl will be too salty to drink. But if you pour the same amount of salt into a large river, people will still be able to drink the river's water. (Remember, this teaching was offered 2,600 years ago, when it was still possible to drink from rivers!) Because of its immensity, the river has the capacity to receive and transform. The river doesn't suffer at all because of a handful of salt. If your heart is small, one unjust word or act will make you suffer. But if your heart is large, if you have understanding and compassion, that word or deed will not have the power to make you suffer. You will be able to receive, embrace, and transform it in an instant.

What counts here is your capacity. To transform your suffering, your heart has to be as big as the ocean. Someone else might suffer. But if a bodhisattva receives the same unkind words, she won't suffer at all. It depends on your way of receiving, embracing, and transforming. If you keep your pain for too long, it is because you have not yet learned the practice of inclusiveness.

When Rahula, the Buddha's son, was eighteen, the Buddha delivered to him a wonderful Dharma talk on how to practice inclusiveness. Shariputra, Rahula's tutor, was there, and he listened and absorbed that teaching, also. Then, twelve years later, Shariputra had the chance to repeat this teaching to the full assembly of monks and nuns. It was the day after the completion of the three-month rainy-season retreat, and every monk was getting ready to leave the compound and go off in the ten directions to offer the teachings to others. At that time, one monk reported to the Buddha, "My Lord, this morning as Venerable Shariputra was leaving, I asked him where he was heading, and instead of answering my question, he pushed me to the ground and did not even say, 'I'm sorry.'"

The Buddha asked Ananda, "Has Shariputra

gone far yet?" and Ananda said, "No, Lord, he left just an hour ago." So the Buddha asked a novice to find Shariputra and invite him to come back. When the novice brought Shariputra back, Ananda summoned all the monks who were still there to gather. Then, the Buddha stepped into the hall and asked Shariputra formally, "Shariputra, is it true that this morning when you were going out of the monastery, a brother of yours wanted to ask you a question and you did not answer him? Is it true that instead you pushed him to the ground and didn't even say you were sorry?" Thereupon, Shariputra answered the Buddha, in front of all his fellow monks and nuns:<sup>3</sup>

3 *Shariputra's Lion's Roar, Anguttara Nikaya IX, 11.* Also, *Mahaparinirvana Sutra.*

"Lord, I remember the discourse you gave twelve years ago to Bhikshu Rahula, when he was eighteen years old. You taught him to contemplate the nature of earth, water, fire, and air in order to nourish and develop the virtues of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity.<sup>4</sup> Although your teaching was directed to Rahula, I also learned from it, and I have tried to observe and practice that

teaching.

4 The Buddha also taught the Four Immeasurable Minds — love, compassion, joy, and equanimity — to help us make our hearts bigger, so we don't have to suffer every time others inflict pain and injustice upon us. See chap. 22. See also Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love*.

"Lord, I have tried to practice like the earth. The earth is wide and open and has the capacity to receive, embrace, and transform. Whether people toss pure and fragrant substances such as flowers, perfume, or fresh milk upon the earth, or toss unclean and foul-smelling substances like excrement, urine, blood, mucus, and spit upon the earth, the earth receives them all equally, without grasping or aversion. No matter what you throw into the earth, the earth has the power to receive, embrace, and transform it. I try my best to practice like earth, to receive without resisting, complaining or suffering.

"Lord, I practice mindfulness and loving kindness. A monk who does not practice mindfulness of the body in the body, of the actions of the body in the actions of the body, could knock

down a fellow monk and leave him lying there without apologizing. But it is not my way to be rude to a fellow monk, to push him to the ground and walk on without apologizing.

"Lord, I have learned the lesson you offered to Rahula to practice like the water. Whether someone pours a fragrant substance or an unclean substance into the water, the water receives them all equally without grasping or aversion. Water is immense and flowing and has the capacity to receive, contain, transform, and purify all these things. I have tried my best to practice like water. A monk who does not practice mindfulness, who does not practice becoming like water, might push a fellow monk to the ground and go on his way without saying 'I'm sorry.' I am not such a monk.

"My Lord, I have practiced to be more like fire. Fire burns everything, the pure as well as the impure, the beautiful as well as the distasteful, without grasping or aversion. If you throw flowers or silk into it, it burns. If you throw old cloth and other foul-smelling things into it, the fire will accept and burn everything. It does not discriminate. Why? Because fire can receive, consume, and burn everything offered to it. I have

tried to practice like fire. I am able to burn the things that are negative in order to transform them. A monk who does not practice mindfulness of looking, listening, and contemplating might push a fellow monk to the ground and go on without apologizing. Lord, I am not such a monk.

"Lord, I have tried to practice to be more like air. The air carries all smells, good and bad, without grasping or aversion. The air has the capacity to transform, purify, and release. Lord Buddha, I have contemplated the body in the body, the movement of the body in the movement of the body, the positions of the body in the positions of the body, the feelings in the feelings, and the mind in the mind. A monk who does not practice mindfulness might push a fellow monk to the ground and go on without apologizing. I am not such a monk.

"My Lord, I am like an untouchable child with nothing to wear, with no title or any medal to put on my tattered cloth. I have tried to practice humility, because I know that humility has the power to transform. I have tried to learn every day. A monk who does not practice mindfulness can push a fellow monk to the ground and go on without apologizing. My Lord, I am not such a

monk."

Shariputra continued to deliver his "Lion's Roar," but the other monk could stand it no longer, and he bared his right shoulder, knelt down, and begged for forgiveness. "Lord, I have transgressed the *Vinaya* (rules of monastic discipline). Out of anger and jealousy, I told a lie to discredit my elder brother in the Dharma. I beg the community to allow me to practice Beginning Anew." In front of the Buddha and the whole Sangha, he prostrated three times to Shariputra. When Shariputra saw his brother prostrating, he bowed and said, "I have not been skillful enough, and that is why I have created misunderstanding. I am co-responsible for this, and I beg my brother monk to forgive me." Then he prostrated three times to the other monk, and they reconciled. Ananda asked Shariputra to stay for a cup of tea before starting off on his journey again.

To suppress our pain is not the teaching of inclusiveness. We have to receive it, embrace it, and transform it. The only way to do this is to make our heart big. We look deeply in order to understand and forgive. Otherwise we will be caught in anger and hatred, and think that we will feel better only after we punish the other person.

Revenge is an unwholesome nutriment. The intention to help others is a wholesome nutriment.

To practice kshanti paramita, we need the other paramitas. If our practice of inclusiveness does not bear the marks of understanding, giving, and meditation, we are just trying to suppress our pain and drive it down to the bottom of our consciousness. This is dangerous. That kind of energy will blow up later and destroy ourselves and others. If you practice deep looking, your heart will grow without limits, and you will suffer less.

The first disciple I ordained was a monk named Thich Nhat Tri. Brother Nhat Tri went with Sister Chn Khng and me on many missions to rescue flood victims in central Vietnam, and he spent many months in a poor hamlet because I had asked him to. We were setting up the School of Youth for Social Service, and we needed to learn the real situation of the people in the rural areas. We wanted to find ways to apply nonviolence and loving kindness to help poor people improve their standard of living. It was a beautiful movement for social improvement. Eventually, we had 10,000 workers. The communists said our Buddhist

movement was pro-American, and the mass media said that we Buddhist monks were disguised communists trying to arrange a communist takeover. We were just trying to be ourselves, not aligned with any warring party. In 1967, Brother Nhat Tri and seven other social workers were kidnapped by a group on the extreme right, and he has not been heard from since then.

One day, Nhat Tri was walking on the streets of Saigon, when an American soldier standing on a military truck spit on his head. Brother Nhat Tri came home and cried and cried. Being a young man, he was tempted to fight back, and so I held him in my arms for half an hour in order to transform that feeling of being deeply hurt. I said, "My child, you were not born to hold a gun. You were born to be a monk, and your power is the power of understanding and love. The American soldier considered you to be his enemy. That was a wrong perception of his. We need 'soldiers' who can go to the front armed only with understanding and love." He stayed on with the School of Youth for Social Service. Then he was kidnapped and probably killed. Thich Nhat Tri is a big brother of the monks and nuns at Plum Village. His handwriting looked almost exactly like mine. And he wrote beautiful

songs for buffalo boys to sing in the country side.

How can we wash away that kind of injustice? How can we transform the injustice received by whole nations? Cambodians, Bosnians, Palestinians, Israelis, Tibetans, all of us suffer from injustice and intolerance. Instead of being brothers and sisters to each other, we aim guns at each other. When we are overtaken by anger, we think that the only response is to punish the other person. The fire of anger continues to burn in us, and it continues to burn our brothers and sisters. This is the situation of the world, and it is why deep looking is needed to help us understand that all of us are victims.

I told Brother Nh Tri, "If you were born into a family along the coast of New Jersey or California and if you read the kinds of newspapers and magazine articles that those soldiers read, you would also believe that all Buddhist monks are communists, and you would spit on the head of a monk, too." I told him that American G.I.s were trained to look on all Vietnamese as enemies. They were sent here to kill or be killed. They are victims, just like the Vietnamese soldiers and Vietnamese civilians. The ones who hold the guns and shoot at

us, the one who spit at you, they are not the makers of the war. The war makers are in comfortable offices in Beijing, Moscow, and Washington, D.C. It was a wrong policy born of a wrong understanding. When I went to Washington in 1966, I met with [Robert McNamara](#), and what I told him about the nature of war was entirely true. Half a year later, he resigned as Secretary of Defense, and recently he wrote a book and confessed that the [war in Vietnam](#) was a terrible mistake. Perhaps I helped plant some seeds of understanding in him.

A wrong perception was responsible for a wrong policy, and a wrong policy was responsible for the deaths of many thousands of American and Vietnamese soldiers, and several million Vietnamese civilians. The people in the countryside could not understand why they had to die like that, why the bombs had to fall on them day and night. I was sleeping in my room close to the Buddha Hall on the School of Youth for Social Service campus when a rocket was fired into that hall. I could have been killed. If you nourish your hatred and your anger, you burn yourself. Understanding is the only way out. If you understand, you will suffer less, and you will

know how to get to the root of injustice. The Buddha said that if one arrow strikes you, you'll suffer. But if a second arrow hits you in the same spot, you'll suffer one hundred times more.<sup>5</sup> When you are a victim of injustice, if you get angry, you will suffer one hundred times more. When you have some pain in your body, breathe in and out and say to yourself, "It is only a physical pain." If you imagine that it is cancer and that you will die very soon, your pain will be one hundred times worse. Fear or hatred, born of ignorance, amplifies your pain. Prajña paramita is the savior. If you know how to see things as themselves and not more than that, you can survive.

*5 Samyutta Nikaya V, 210.*

I love the Vietnamese people, and I tried my best to help them during the war. But I also saw the American boys in Vietnam as victims. I did not look at them with rancor, and I suffered much less. This is the kind of suffering many of us have overcome, and the teaching is born out of that suffering not from academic studies. I survived for Brother Nhât Tri and for so many others who died in order to bring the message of forgiveness, love, and understanding. I share this so they will not

have died in vain.

Please practice deep looking, and you will suffer much less from disease, injustice, or the small pains within you. Deep looking leads to understanding, and understanding always leads to love and acceptance. When your baby is sick, of course you do your best to help him. But you also know that a baby has to be sick a number of times in order to get the immunity he needs. You know that you can survive, too, because you have developed antibodies. Don't worry. "Perfect health" is just an idea. Learn to live in peace with whatever ailments you have. Try to transform them, but don't suffer too much.

During his lifetime, the Buddha suffered too. There were plots to compete with him and even to kill him. One time, when he had a wound in his leg and people tried to help him, he said it was only a small wound, and he did his best to minimize the pain. Another time, five hundred of his monks went off to set up an alternative Sangha, and he took it very much in stride. Finally, the difficulties were overcome.

The Buddha gave very concrete teachings on

how to develop inclusiveness — maitri (love), karuna (compassion), mudita (joy), and upeksha (equanimity).<sup>6</sup> If you practice these Four Immeasurable Minds, you will have a huge heart. Because bodhisattvas have great compassion, they have the capacity of receiving, embracing, and transforming. Because they have great understanding, they don't have to suffer. This is a great gift for the world and for the people we love.

6 See chap. 22 on the Four Immeasurable Minds.

The fourth petal of the flower is virya paramita, the perfection of diligence, energy, or continuous practice. The Buddha said that in the depth of our store consciousness, alayavijñana, there are all kinds of positive and negative seeds — seeds of anger, delusion, and fear, and seeds of understanding, compassion, and forgiveness. Many of these seeds have been transmitted to us by our ancestors. We should learn to recognize every one of these seeds in us in order to practice diligence. If it is a negative seed, the seed of an affliction like

anger, fear, jealousy, or discrimination, we should refrain from allowing it to be watered in our daily life. Every time such a seed is watered, it will manifest on the upper level of our consciousness, and we will suffer and make the people we love suffer at the same time. The practice is to refrain from watering the negative seeds in us.

We also recognize the negative seeds in the people we love and try our best not to water them. If we do, they will be very unhappy, and we will be unhappy, also. This is the practice of "selective watering." If you want to be happy, avoid watering your own negative seeds and ask others not to water those seeds in you. Also, avoid watering the negative seeds in others.

We also try to recognize the positive seeds that are in us and to live our daily life in a way that we can touch them and help them manifest on the upper level of our consciousness, manovijñana. Every time they manifest and stay on the upper level of our consciousness for a while, they grow stronger. If the positive seeds in us grow stronger day and night, we will be happy and we will make the people we love happy. Recognize the positive seeds in the person you love, water those seeds,

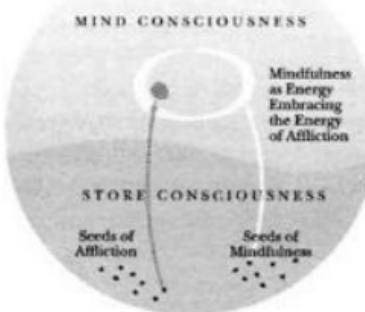
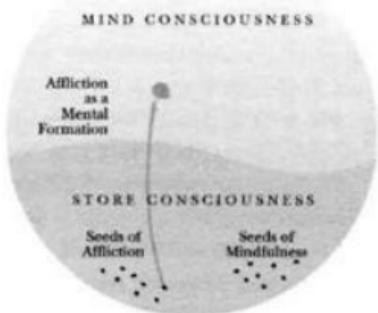
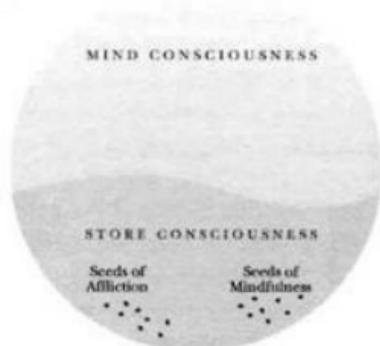
and he will become much happier. In Plum Village, we practice "[flower watering](#)," recognizing the best seeds in others and watering them. Whenever you have time, please water the seeds that need to be watered. It is a wonderful and very pleasant practice of diligence, and it brings immediate results.

Imagine a circle divided in two. Below is the store consciousness and above is mind consciousness. All mental formations lie deep down in our store consciousness. Every seed in our store consciousness can be touched and manifests itself on the upper level, namely our mind consciousness. Continued practice means trying our best not to allow the negative seeds in our store consciousness to be touched in our daily life, not to give them a chance to manifest themselves. The seeds of anger, discrimination, despair, jealousy, and craving are all there. We do what we can to prevent them from coming up. We tell the people we live with, "If you truly love me, don't water these seeds in me. It is not good for my health or yours." We have to recognize the kinds of seeds not to be watered. If it happens that a negative seed, the seed of an affliction, is watered and manifests itself, we do everything in our

power to embrace it with our mindfulness and help it return to where it came from. The longer such seeds stay in our mind consciousness, the stronger they become.

The Buddha suggested a practice called "[changing the peg](#)." When a peg of wood is not the right size or is rotting or in disrepair, a carpenter will replace it by putting another peg on exactly the same spot and driving the new peg into the old one. If you have a mental formation arising that you consider to be unwholesome, one way to practice is to invite another mental formation to replace it. Many seeds in your store consciousness are wholesome and beautiful. Just

### *[Seeds of Mindfulness](#)*



### *Figure Five*

breathe in and out and invite one of them to come up, and the other seed will go down. This is called "changing the peg."

The third practice is to touch as many positive seeds in your store consciousness as you can so that they will manifest in your mind consciousness. On a television set, if you want a certain program, you push the button to bring you that program. Invite only pleasant seeds to come up and sit in the living room of your consciousness. Never invite a guest who brings you sorrow and affliction. And tell your friends, "If you love me, please water the wholesome seeds in me every day." One wonderful seed is mindfulness. Mindfulness is the Buddha in us. Use every opportunity to touch that seed and help it to manifest on the upper level of your consciousness.

The fourth practice is to keep a wholesome seed as long as possible once it has manifested. If mindfulness is maintained for fifteen minutes, the seed of mindfulness will be strengthened, and the next time you need the energy of mindfulness, it

will be easier to bring up. It is very important to help the seeds of mindfulness, forgiveness, and compassion to grow, and the way to do this is to help them be present in your mind consciousness as long as possible. This is called transformation at the base — *ashraya paravritti*. This is the true meaning of virya paramita, the perfection of diligence.



The fifth crossing-over is dhyana paramita, the perfection of meditation. Dhyana is pronounced *zen* in Japanese, *chan* in Chinese, *thien* in Vietnamese, and *son* in Korean. Dhyana, or meditation, consists of two aspects.<sup>7</sup> The first is stopping (shamatha). We run our whole life chasing after one idea of happiness or another. Stopping is to stop our running, our forgetfulness, our being caught in the past or the future. We come home to the present moment, where life is available. The present moment contains every moment. Here we can touch our ancestors, our children, and their children, even if they have not been born yet. Shamatha is the practice of calming our body and emotions through the practice of

mindful breathing, mindful walking, and mindful sitting. Shamatha is also the practice of concentrating, so we can live deeply each moment of our life and touch the deepest level of our being.

7 See chap. 6.

The second aspect of meditation is looking deeply (vipashyana) to see the true nature of things. You look into the person you love and find out what kinds of suffering or difficulty she has within herself and what aspirations she holds. Understanding is a great gift, but your daily life conducted in mindfulness is also a great gift. Doing everything mindfully is the practice of meditation, as mindfulness always nourishes concentration and understanding.

The sixth petal of the flower is prajña paramita, the perfection of understanding. This is the highest kind of understanding, free from all knowledge, concepts, ideas, and views. Prajña is the substance of Buddhahood in us. It is the kind of understanding that has the power to carry us to the other shore of freedom, emancipation, and

peace. In Mahayana Buddhism, prajña paramita is described as the Mother of All Buddhas. Everything that is good, beautiful, and true is born from our mother, prajña paramita. She is in us; we only need to touch her to help her manifest herself. Right View is prajña paramita.

There is a large literature on prajña paramita, and the *Heart Sutra* is one of the shorter discourses in that collection. The *Diamond Sutra* and the *Ashtasahasrika Prajñaparamita (Discourse in 8,000 Verses)* are among the earliest discourses in that collection. Prajña paramita is the wisdom of nondiscrimination.

If you look deeply into the person you love, you'll be able to understand her suffering, her difficulties, and also her deepest aspirations. And out of that understanding, real love will be possible. When someone is able to understand us, we feel very happy. If we can offer understanding to someone, that is true love. The one who receives our understanding will bloom like a flower, and we will be rewarded at the same time. Understanding is the fruit of the practice. Looking deeply means to be there, to be mindful, to be concentrated. Looking deeply into any object, understanding will

flower. The teaching of the Buddha is to help us understand reality deeply.

Let us look at a wave on the surface of the ocean. A wave is a wave. It has a beginning and an end. It might be high or low, more or less beautiful than other waves. But a wave is, at the same time, water. Water is the ground of being of the wave. It is important that a wave knows that she is water, and not just a wave. We, too, live our life as an individual. We believe that we have a beginning and an end, that we are separate from other living beings. That is why the Buddha advised us to look more deeply in order to touch the ground of our being, which is nirvana. Everything bears deeply the nature of nirvana. Everything has been "nirvanized." That is the teaching of the *Lotus Sutra*. We look deeply, and we touch the suchness of reality. Looking deeply into a pebble, flower, or our own joy, peace, sorrow, or fear, we touch the ultimate dimension of our being, and that dimension will reveal to us that the ground of our being has the nature of no-birth and no-death.

We don't have to *attain* nirvana, because we ourselves are always dwelling in nirvana. The wave does not have to look for water. It already is water.

We are one with the ground of our being. Once the wave realizes that she is water, all her fear vanishes. Once we touch the ground of our being, once we touch God or nirvana, we also receive the gift of non-fear. Non-fear is the basis of true happiness. The greatest gift we can offer others is our non-fear. Living deeply every moment of our life, touching the deepest level of our being, this is the practice of *prajña paramita*. *Prajña paramita* is crossing over by understanding, by insight.

Perfect understanding is present in all the other perfections. Perfect understanding is like a container. If the container is not baked well in the kiln, there will be cracks, and the liquid in it will flow out. *Prajña paramita* is the mother of all the paramitas, the Mother of All Buddhas. *Prajña paramita* is like the wings of the bird that can carry it anywhere. Without Right Understanding, none of the other paramitas can go very far.

These are the practices of the Six Paramitas offered by the Buddha. Each of the six contains the other five. Understanding is giving, meditation is

giving, continued practice is giving, inclusiveness is giving, and mindfulness training is giving. If you practice giving deeply, you are also practicing understanding, meditation, and so on. In the same light, we see that giving is mindfulness training, understanding is mindfulness training, meditation is mindfulness training, continued practice is mindfulness training, and inclusiveness is mindfulness training. If you practice one paramita deeply, you practice all six. When there is understanding and insight, meditation will be true meditation, continued practice will be true continued practice, inclusiveness will be true inclusiveness, mindfulness training will be true mindfulness training, and giving will be true giving. Understanding increases the quality of the other five practices.

Look into your situation and see how rich you are inside. See that what you have in the present moment is a gift. Without waiting any longer, begin to practice right away. The moment you begin to practice, you'll feel happy right away. The Dharma is not a matter of time. Come and see for yourself. The Dharma can transform your life.

When you are caught in your sorrow, your

suffering, your depression, your anger, or your fear, don't stay on the shore of suffering. Step over to the shore of freedom, non-fear, and non-anger. Just practice mindful breathing, mindful walking, and deep looking, and you will step onto the shore of freedom and well-being. You don't have to practice five, ten, or twenty years to be able to cross over to the other shore. You can do it right now.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### *The Seven Factors of Awakening*

The Seven Factors of Awakening (*sapta-bodhyanga*) are mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, diligence, joy, ease, concentration, and letting go. Bodhyanga is made up of two words: *bodhi* and *anga*. *Bodhi* ("awakening" "enlightenment") comes from the root *budh-*, which means "to wake up," to be aware of what is going on within and all around you. A Buddha is "One Who Is Awakened." *Anga* means limb. Sapta-bodhyanga can also be translated as the Seven Limbs, or Factors, of Enlightenment.

After sitting in meditation at the foot of a *ficus religiosa*, known by Buddhists as the bodhi tree, when the morning star arose, the Buddha realized enlightenment and said, "How amazing that all living beings have the basic nature of awakening, yet they don't know it. So they drift on the ocean of great suffering lifetime after lifetime." It means that the potentialities of the Seven Factors of Awakening are already in us, but we don't know it.

It is said that the Buddha was reluctant at first

to share the insight he experienced under the bodhi tree. Only after continuing his meditation did he realize that many beings would benefit if he offered concrete ways to help them wake up. The Seven Factors of Awakening offer a description of both the characteristics of awakening as well as a path to awakening. Imagine a tree with seven large limbs, each representing one Factor of Awakening. Every year, each of these branches grows longer and sends out new shoots with new leaves. Enlightenment is growing all the time. It is not something that happens once and is then complete. It is reassuring that the Buddha regarded joy and ease among these seven elements.

The First and main Factor of Awakening — the first limb of the bodhi tree — is mindfulness (smriti). Smriti literally means "remembering," not forgetting where we are, what we are doing, and who we are with. Mindfulness always arises in the context of a relationship with ourselves, other people, or things. It is not something we keep in our pocket and take out when we need it. When we see a friend on the street and recognize her, we have not taken "recognition" out of our pocket. It arose in the context of the situation. Our breathing, walking, movements, feelings, and the phenomena

around us are all parts of the "relationship" in which mindfulness arises. With training, every time we breathe in and out, mindfulness will be there, so that our breathing becomes a cause and condition for the arising of mindfulness.

You might think, "I am the cause for mindfulness being present." But if you look around, you will never find an "I." The telephone's ring, the clock's chime, your teacher, and your Sangha can be favorable causes for mindfulness being present. Imagine yourself doing walking meditation on a beach, when suddenly the thought arises, "Do I have enough money in the bank?" If you return your awareness to your feet making contact with the sand, that is enough to bring you back to the present moment. You can do this because you have practiced walking meditation before. But it is your feet and not "I" that remind you to be present.

In the *Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness*, the Buddha asks, "If you practice the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, how long will it take to become enlightened?" First he answers, "Seven years," but then he says, "It can be as short as half a month." It means that

awakening is always available. It only needs favorable conditions. The sun is there, even when it is behind the clouds. The Buddha said, "By practicing the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, you will realize the Seven Factors of Awakening."<sup>1</sup>

1 *Satipatthana Sutta*. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*.

Investigation of phenomena (dharma-pravichaya) is the Second Factor of Awakening. We humans love to investigate things. Often we want the results of our investigations to fit a certain mold or prove a certain theory, but at times, we are open and allow things simply to reveal themselves. In the latter case, our knowledge and our boundaries expand. When we want to investigate the bud on the branch of the tree, we might ask, "Where have you come from? Where are you going? Are you really that small?" The bud might reply, "I will grow into a leaf — green in the summer, orange in the fall. Then I will fall to the earth, and in two years I'll become a part of the earth. I am really not small. I'm as large as the earth." With mindfulness, investigation takes us deeply into life and into reality.

The Third Factor of Awakening is virya, which means energy, effort, diligence, or perseverance. Energy comes from many sources. Sometimes just thinking about what we might gain in the future gives us energy. In Buddhism, the sources of our energy are mindfulness, investigation, and faith in the practice. When we look deeply, we see that life is a miracle beyond our comprehension. But for many young people today, life is meaningless. Many thousands of young people commit suicide every year. In some countries, more young people die from suicide than from traffic accidents. We need to help young people cultivate the life-energy that comes from experiencing the wonders of life. We need to help their lives have meaning.

Even if we are in pain, if we can see meaning in our life, we will have energy and joy. Energy is not the result of good health alone or the wish to achieve some goal — material or spiritual. It is a result of feeling some meaning to our life. Making an effort at the wrong time or place dissipates our energy. Sitting in meditation for lengthy periods before we have developed good concentration might cause us to dislike meditation, and even to stop sitting altogether. When Siddhartha practiced

meditation under the bodhi tree, his concentration was already highly developed. When Kashyapa told Ananda that Ananda would not be invited to attend the first Council of the Buddha's disciples because he did not have a high enough degree of awakening, Ananda sat in meditation all night, and by dawn he realized "the fruit of arhatship."<sup>2</sup> When Ananda arrived at the council, Kashyapa and the others recognized that he had had a breakthrough. His shining presence was proof enough.

2 "The fruit of arhatship": the transformation of all afflictions.

The Fourth Factor of Awakening is ease (prashrabdhih). Diligence is always accompanied by ease. In the so-called Third World, one often feels more ease than in the "overdeveloped" countries of the First World. Here, everyone is under enormous pressure, and people need stress-reduction programs. Their stress comes from constant thinking and worrying and from their lifestyles. We have to learn ways to bring our energy from our head down to our abdomen. At least once every fifteen minutes, we need to practice letting go.

When we are sick, we stay in bed and do nothing. Often we don't even eat or drink. All of our energy is directed toward healing. We need to practice resting even when we are not sick. Sitting meditation, walking meditation, and mindful eating are good opportunities for resting. When you feel agitated, if you are able to go to a park or a garden, it is an opportunity for rest. If you walk slowly and remember to take it easy, if you are able to sit and do nothing from time to time, you can rest deeply and enter a state of true ease.

The Fifth Factor of Awakening is joy (*priti*). Joy goes with happiness (*sukha*), but there are differences. When you are thirsty and a glass of water is being served to you, that is joy. When you are actually able to drink the water, that is happiness. It is possible to develop joy in your mind, even when your body is not well. This will, in turn, help your body. Joy comes from touching things that are refreshing and beautiful, within and outside of ourselves. Usually we touch only what's wrong. If we can expand our vision and also see what is right, this wider picture always brings joy.

The Sixth Factor of Awakening is concentration

(samadhi). *Sam-* means together, *a-* is bringing to a certain place, and *-dhi* is the energy of the mind. We collect the energy of our mind and direct it toward an object. With concentration, our mind is one-pointed and still, and quite naturally it stays focused on one object. To have mindfulness, we need concentration. Once mindfulness is developed, concentration, in turn, becomes stronger.

Concentration is not wholesome in itself. A thief needs concentration to break into a house. The object of our concentration is what makes it beneficial or not. If you use meditative concentration to run away from reality, that is not beneficial. Even before the time of the Buddha, many meditators practiced concentration to remove themselves from the world. Practicing this kind of concentration, the Buddha was not able to liberate himself from suffering. So he learned to use his concentration to shine light upon his suffering, and he was able to go deeply into life and develop understanding, compassion, and liberation.

The Seventh Factor of Awakening is equanimity, or letting go (upeksha). Equanimity is an aspect of true love.<sup>3</sup> It is far from indifference.

Practicing equanimity, we love everyone equally.

3 See chap. 22 on the Four Immeasurable Minds.

In the *Kakacupama Sutta* (*Example of the Saw*), the Buddha says, "Even if robbers cut your limbs off with a saw, if anger arises in you, you are not a follower of my teachings. To be a disciple of the Buddha, your heart must bear no hatred, you must utter no unkind words, you must remain compassionate, with no hostility or ill-will."<sup>4</sup> As a young monk, I memorized these words and even put them to music. This teaching touches our most noble intention, but it is the opposite of our strong habit energies. To transform these habit energies and realize our noblest intention, the Buddha and the Venerable Shariputra taught us: (1) to practice equanimity in the face of harsh words; (2) to learn not to feel annoyance, bitterness, or dejection; and (3) not to feel elated when praised, because we know that any praise is not for us as an individual, but for many beings, including our parents, teachers, friends, and all forms of life.

4 *Majjhima Nikaya* 21.

In the *Greater Discourse on the Example of the Elephant's Footprint*,<sup>5</sup> Shariputra shows the way to meditate on the Four Great Elements in order to practice equanimity. When we meditate on the elements of earth, water, fire, and air inside and outside our bodies, we see that we and they are the same. When we transcend our idea of a separate self, our love will contain equanimity, knowing that we and others are truly the same.

*5 Majjhima Nikaya 28.*

These Seven Factors are limbs of the same tree. If mindfulness is developed and maintained, the investigation of phenomena will meet with success. Joy and ease are wonderful feelings nourished by diligence. Concentration gives rise to understanding. When understanding is there, we go beyond comparing, discriminating, and reacting, and realize letting go. Those who arrive at letting go have the bud of a half-smile, which proves compassion as well as understanding. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if practiced diligently, lead to true understanding and emancipation. The Buddha said that the Four Immeasurable Minds of love practiced with the Seven Factors of Awakening bring Complete, Perfect Enlightenment.

The Seven Factors of Awakening are, therefore, the practice of love.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### The Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising (*pratitya samutpada*, literally "in dependence, things rise up") is a deep and wonderful teaching, the foundation of all of Buddhist study and practice. *Pratitya samutpada* is sometimes called the teaching of cause and effect, but that can be misleading, because we usually think of cause and effect as separate entities, with cause always preceding effect, and one cause leading to one effect. According to the teaching of Interdependent Co-Arising, cause and effect co-arise (*samutpada*) and everything is a result of multiple causes and conditions. The egg is in the chicken, and the chicken is in the egg. Chicken and egg arise in mutual dependence. Neither is independent. Interdependent Co-Arising goes beyond our concepts of space and time. "The one contains the all."

The Chinese character for cause 因 has the character "great" inside of a rectangle. Cause is

great, yet, at the same time, limited. The Buddha expressed Interdependent Co-Arising very simply: "This is, because that is. This is not, because that is not. This comes to be, because that comes to be. This ceases to be, because that ceases to be." These sentences occur hundreds of times in the discourses of both the Northern and Southern transmissions. They are the Buddhist genesis. I would like to add this sentence: "This is like this, because that is like that."

In the sutras, this image is given: "Three cut reeds can stand only by leaning on one another. If you take one away, the other two will fall." For a table to exist, we need wood, a carpenter, time, skillfulness, and many other causes. And each of these causes needs other causes to be. The wood needs the forest, the sunshine, the rain, and so on. The carpenter needs his parents, breakfast, fresh air, and so on. And each of those things, in turn, has to be brought about by other conditions. If we continue to look in this way, we'll see that nothing has been left out. Everything in the cosmos has come together to bring us this table. Looking deeply at the sunshine, the leaves of the tree, and the clouds, we can see the table. The one can be seen in the all, and the all can be seen in the one.

One cause is never enough to bring about an effect. A cause must, at the same time, be an effect, and every effect must also be the cause of something else. Cause and effect inter-are. The idea of a first or only cause, something that does not itself need a cause, cannot be applied.

After the Buddha passed away, many schools of Buddhism began to describe Interdependent Co-Arising more analytically. In the *Visuddhimagga* (*Path of Purification*) of the Theravada School, Buddhaghosa listed twenty-four kinds of "conditions" (Pali: *paccaya*), "the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to arise": (1) root-cause, (2) object, (3) predominance, (4) priority, (5) continuity, (6) co-na-scence, (7) mutuality, (8) support, (9) decisive support, (10) pre-nascence, (11) post-nascence (a cause can be born after the effect), (12) repetition, (13) karma, (14) karma-result, (15) nutrient, (16) faculty, (17) dhyana, (18) path, (19) association, (20) dissociation, (21) presence, (22) absence, (23) disappearance, and (24) non-disappearance.

In the Sarvastivada School, four kinds of conditions (*pratyaya*) and six kinds of causes were taught, and this later became part of the teachings

of the Vijñanavada School of Buddhist psychology. According to this analysis, all four kinds of conditions must be present for every thing that exists.

The first of the four kinds of conditions is the "cause condition," "seed condition," or "root condition" (*hetu-pratyaya*), just as the seed is the cause condition of the flower. There are said to be six kinds of "cause conditions":

(1) Motivating or creative force (*karana-hetu*). Each conditioned dharma is the "general cause" for all things except itself. It is a copresent cause, offering no obstacles, because no dharma constitutes an obstacle to the arising of dharmas prone to arising. This condition has the function of empowering and not restricting.

(2) Concurrent condition (*sahabhu-hetu*). Sometimes two root conditions need to be present at the same time. If we draw a line "AB," A and B both have to be there. The same is true of lamp and lamplight. All pairs of opposites are like that; one cannot be present without the other. Above and below come into existence at the same time, as do the ideas "being" and "nonbeing." These coexistent

dharma<sup>s</sup> mutually condition one another.

(3) Seed condition of the same kind (*sabhaga-hetu*). Similars cause similars. Rice produces rice. Wholesome causes bring about wholesome effects. Faith and joy, for example, make a stable practice possible. And unwholesome causes bring about unwholesome effects.

(4) Associated condition (*samprayukta-hetu*). A wholesome and an unwholesome seed support each other in giving rise to something. This is called "association" or "correspondence," and it applies only to mental events. Someone gives money to his church because he feels guilty about the wrong livelihood that has allowed him to make the money. The seed of guilt due to wrong livelihood is unwholesome. Giving is wholesome. The result is that the elders of the church tell him that they want him to transform his livelihood more than they want his money. This will hurt his pride, but can lead to much happiness in the future and can help alleviate his guilt.

(5) Universal condition (*sarvatraga-hetu*). The cause is present everywhere, in every part of our body as well as throughout the universe. The Six

Elements of earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness are examples of universal conditions.

(6) Ripening condition (*vipaka-hetu*). In our store consciousness, not everything ripens at the same time. When we bring home bananas, some ripen before the others. When we hear a Dharma talk, some of the seeds sown ripen right away, while others might take many years. A seed of one kind can also transform and ripen into something different. At first, an orange is a blossom, then it is something green and sour, and later it ripens into a sweet fruit. A seed of love can ripen as a seed of anger. When we begin our sitting meditation, we may feel confined and agitated. After a while, our meditation may ripen into something quite relaxing and enjoyable.

The second kind of condition, according to the Sarvastivadins, is called "condition for development" (*adhipati-pratyaya*). This can help certain seeds develop or can obstruct their development. Everyone has a seed of faith, or confidence, for example. If you have friends who water this seed in you, it will grow strong. But if you meet only favorable conditions, you will not

realize how precious this seed is. Obstacles along the path can help our determination and compassion grow. Obstacles teach us about our strengths and weaknesses, so that we can know ourselves better and see in which direction we truly wish to go. One could say that the Buddha's practice of austerity was unfavorable to the development of his path, but if he had not undertaken those practices and failed in them, he would not have learned and later taught the Middle Way. When your intention is strong, unfavorable conditions will not dishearten you. In difficult moments, you will stick to your friends, fortify your convictions, and not give up.

The third kind of condition is the "condition of continuity" (*samanantara-pratyaya*). For something to exist there needs to be a continuous succession, moment after moment. For our practice to develop we need to practice every day — walking meditation, listening to Dharma teachings, practicing mindfulness of the four foundations in all our activities, staying with the same Sangha, and practicing the same teachings. If we put a frog on a plate, it will jump right off. If you do not practice steadily, you'll be like a frog on a plate. But when you decide to stay in one place until your practice

fully develops, we can say that you have reached the state of "froglessness" and have begun to practice "continuity."

The fourth kind of condition is "object as condition" (*alambana-pratyaya*). If there is no object, there cannot be a subject. For us to have confidence, there has to be an object of our confidence. When we feel despair, we feel despair about something — our idea of the future, our idea of happiness, or our idea of life. When we are angry, we have to be angry at someone or something. According to the Buddha, all phenomena are objects of mind. When we perceive the image or sign of any phenomenon, we know that the object of our perception resides within our own consciousness.

Can we live in a way that helps us see the causes that are present in the effects and the effects that are present in the causes? When we see this way, we begin to have insight into Interdependent Co-Arising, and this is Right View. In early Buddhism, we speak of Interdependent

Co-Arising. In later Buddhism, we use the words interbeing and interpenetration. The terminology is different, but the meaning is the same.

After hearing the Buddha teach about Interdependent Co-Arising, Ananda said, "Venerable Lord, the teaching of Interdependent Co-Arising appears to be deep and subtle, but I find it quite simple." The Buddha replied, "Do not say that, Ananda. The teaching of Interdependent Co-Arising is indeed deep and subtle. Any one who is able to see the nature of Interdependent Co-Arising is able to see the Buddha."<sup>1</sup> Once you can see into the nature of Interdependent Co-Arising, you will be guided by your insight and you will not lose your practice.

1 *Mahanidana Sutta, Digha Nikaya 15.*

The teaching of impermanence is implicit in the teaching of Interdependent Co-Arising. How could we live if we were not nourished by multiple causes and conditions? The conditions that make it possible for us to exist and to change come from what is not us. When we understand impermanence and nonself, we understand Interdependent Co-Arising.

In this gatha, Nagarjuna links Interdependent Co-Arising with emptiness:

*All phenomena that arise interdependently,  
I say that they are empty.*

*Words come to an end, because their message is  
false.*

*Words come to an end, because there is a Middle  
Way.<sup>2</sup>*

## *2 Mahaprajñaparamita Shastra.*

All teachings of Buddhism are based on Interdependent Co-Arising. If a teaching is not in accord with Interdependent Co-Arising, it is not a teaching of the Buddha. When you have grasped Interdependent Co-Arising, you bring that insight to shine on the three baskets (tripitaka) of the teachings.<sup>3</sup> Interdependent Co-Arising allows you to see the Buddha, and the Two Truths<sup>4</sup> allow you to hear the Buddha. When you are able to see and hear the Buddha, you will not lose your way as you traverse the ocean of his teachings. The Buddha said that there are twelve links (*nidanas*) in the "chain" of Interdependent Co-Arising.<sup>5</sup> The first is ignorance (avidya). *Vidya* means seeing,

understanding, or light. Avidya means the lack of light, the lack of understanding, or blindness. Although ignorance is usually listed as the first link, it does not mean that ignorance is a first cause. It is also possible to begin the list with old age and death.

3 The three baskets are Sutras (teachings of the Buddha), Vinaya (rules of conduct), and Abhidharma (systematized presentations of the teachings).

4 See chap. 17.

5 The earliest discourse in which the Buddha talked about a chain of causes was the *Mahanidana Sutta*, *Digha Nikaya* 15, although in that discourse, only nine links are given. In later teachings, the list was expanded to twelve.

The second link is volitional action (*samskara*), also translated as formations, impulses, motivating energy, karma formations, or the will to cling to being. When we have a lack of understanding, anger, irritation, or hatred can arise.

The third link is consciousness (*vijñana*).

Consciousness here means the whole of consciousness — individual and collective, mind consciousness and store consciousness, subject and object. And consciousness here is filled with unwholesome and erroneous tendencies connected with ignorance that are of the nature to bring about suffering.

The fourth link is mind/body, or name and form (nama rupa). "Name" (nama) means the mental element and "form" (rupa) means the physical element of our being. Both mind and body are objects of our consciousness. When we look at our hand, it is an object of our consciousness. When we touch our anger, sadness, or happiness, these are also objects of our consciousness.

The fifth link is the six *ayatanas*, which are the six sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind) accompanied by their objects (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and objects of mind). These six ayatanas do not exist separately from mind/body (the fourth link), but are listed separately to help us see them more clearly. When a sense organ comes into contact (the sixth link) with a sense object, there has to be sense consciousness (which lies within the

*The Wheel of Life*



*Figure Six*

third link). We are beginning to see how the Twelve Links inter-are, how each link contains all the other links.

The sixth link is the contact (sparsha) between sense organ, sense object, and sense consciousness. When eyes and form, ears and sound, nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and touch, and mind

and object of mind come into contact, sense consciousness is born. Contact is a basis for feelings. It is a universal mental formation, present in every mental formation.

The seventh link is feelings (*vedana*), which can be pleasant, unpleasant, neutral, or mixed. When a feeling is pleasant, we may become attached (the ninth link).

The eighth link is craving (*trishna*), or desire. Craving is followed by grasping.

The ninth link is grasping or attachment (*upadana*). It means we are caught in the thralls of the object.

The tenth link is "coming to be" (*bhava*), being or becoming. Because we desire something, it comes to be. We have to look deeply to know what we really want.

The eleventh link is birth (*jati*).

The twelfth link is old age (or decay) and death (*jaramarana*).

Ignorance      conditions      volitional      actions.

Volitional actions condition consciousness. Consciousness conditions mind/ body. And so on. As soon as ignorance is present, all the other links — volitional actions, consciousness, mind/body, and so on — are *already* there. Each link contains all the other links. Because there is ignorance, there are volitional actions. Because there are volitional actions, there is consciousness. Because there is consciousness, there is mind/ body. And so on.

In the Five Aggregates, there is nothing that we can call a self. Ignorance is the inability to see this truth. Consciousness, mind/body, the six senses and their objects, contact, and feeling are the effect of ignorance and volitional actions. Because of craving, grasping, and coming to be, there will be birth and death, which means the continuation of this wheel, or chain, again and again.

When artists illustrate the Twelve [Links of Interdependent Co-Arising](#), they often draw a blind woman to represent ignorance; a man gathering fruit in the jungle or a potter at work to illustrate volitional actions; a restless monkey grasping this and that for consciousness; a boat to represent mind/body; a house with many windows for the six senses and their objects; a man and a

woman close to each other to represent contact; a man pierced by an arrow for feeling; a man drinking wine for craving or thirst; a man and a woman in sexual union or a man picking fruit from a tree to represent attachment or grasping; a pregnant woman for coming to be; a woman giving birth for birth; and an old woman leaning on a stick or a man carrying a corpse on his back or his shoulder for old age and death.

Another way that artists sometimes depict the Twelve Links is to draw an embryo in the womb for consciousness; the child just before birth for mind/body; the child from one to two years old, when his or her life is dominated by touching, for the six senses and their objects; the same child from three to five years old for contact; and an adult for desire or attachment.

There do not have to be exactly twelve links. In the *Abhidharma* texts<sup>6</sup> of the Sarvastivada School, it says that you can teach one, two, three, four, or five, up to twelve links. The one link belongs to the unconditioned realm (asam-skrita). The two links are cause and effect. The three links are past, present, and future. The four links are ignorance, volitional actions, birth, and old age and death. The

five links are craving, grasping, coming to be, birth, and old age and death. The six links are past cause, present cause, future cause, past result, present result, and future result. Because ignorance and volitional actions exist in consciousness, and the six ayatanas exist in name and form, in the *Mahanidana Sutta* the Buddha lists only nine links. At other times Buddha taught ten links, omitting ignorance and volitional actions.

6 There is a collection ("basket") of Buddhist teachings called *Abhidharma* ("super Dharma"). These are extended explanations of the teachings the Buddha gave. At first, in order to lend credence to their work, the authors of the *Abhidharma* tried to make these writings look like discourses of the Buddha. In the second stage, these writings were accepted as independent and given the name *Abhidharma*. During the third stage, as *Abhidharma* developed, it became more and more analytical. This fine and detailed analysis is often dry and difficult to understand. Sometimes it is analysis just for the sake of analysis, rather than guidance for the practice to help us transform our suffering. The fourth and final stage of *Abhidharma* was to shorten and simplify the long, detailed analyses so that they became easier to

understand.

Sometimes when the Buddha taught Interdependent Co-Arising, he began with old age and death and the suffering that accompanies them. In the sutras that do not include ignorance and volitional actions as links, the Buddha ends by saying that mind/body is conditioned by consciousness, and consciousness is conditioned by mind/body. The Buddha never wanted us to understand the Twelve Links in a linear way — that there is a line going from ignorance to old age and death or that there are exactly and only twelve links. Not only does ignorance give rise to volitional actions, but volitional actions also give rise to ignorance. Each link in the chain of Interdependent Co-Arising is both a cause and an effect of all the other links in the chain. The Twelve Links inter-are.

In the tendency to see the teachings of the Buddha as an explanation of how things are rather than as a support and guide to the practice, the Twelve Links have been misunderstood in many ways. One way has been to see them as a way to explain why there is birth and death. The Buddha usually began the Twelve Links with old age and

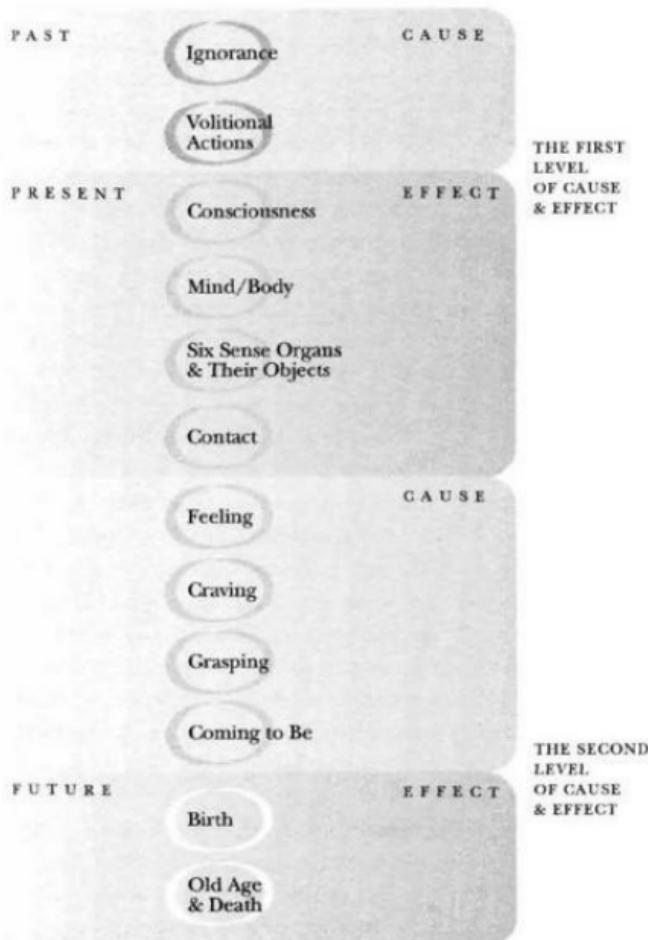
death to help us get in touch with suffering and find its roots. This is closely linked to the teachings and practice of the Four Noble Truths. It was after the lifetime of the Buddha that teachers more often than not began with ignorance, to help prove why there is birth and death. Ignorance became a kind of first cause, even though the Buddha always taught that no first cause can be found. If ignorance exists, it is because there are causes that give rise to and deepen ignorance. The Buddha was not a philosopher trying to explain the universe. He was a spiritual guide who wanted to help us put an end to our suffering.

Two other theories based on the Twelve Links evolved after the lifetime of the Buddha. One was called the Three Times and the other the Two Levels of Cause and Effect. According to these theories, ignorance and volitional actions belong to the past; birth and old age and death belong to the future; and all the other links from consciousness to coming to be belong to the present. It is true that ignorance and volitional actions existed before we were born, but they also exist in the present. They are contained within all the other links, which include the so-called links of the present and future.

Regarding the Two Levels of Cause and Effect, at the first level, ignorance and volitional actions are said to be causes, and consciousness, mind/body, the six ayatanas, and contact are said to be effects. At the second level, feelings, craving, grasping, and coming to be in this life lead to birth and old age and death in a future life. Theories like these are not entirely inaccurate, but we have to be able to go beyond them. All commentaries and theories contain some misunderstanding, but we can still feel gratitude to these commentators and theorists for taking the teachings in a new direction to help people transform, while basically conforming to teachings of the Buddha.

When we hear from commentators that some links are causes (namely ignorance and volitional actions), and others are effects (namely birth and old age and death), we know

*The Three Times and Two Levels of Cause and Effect*



*Figure seven*

that this is not consistent with the Buddha's teaching that everything is both a cause and an effect. To think that ignorance gives rise to volitional actions, which later give rise to consciousness, which then gives rise to mind/body would be a dangerous oversimplification. When the Buddha said, "Ignorance conditions volitional actions," he meant that there is a relationship of cause and effect between ignorance and volitional actions. Ignorance nourishes volitional actions, but volitional actions also nourish ignorance. Ignorance activates consciousness by producing feelings of discomfort, craving, boredom, intention, and aspiration, so these feelings are called volitional actions. Once these feelings are active in consciousness, they make ignorance stronger. The tree gives rise to and nourishes its leaves, but the leaves also nourish the tree. Leaves are not just the children of the tree. They are also the mother of the tree. Because of the leaves, the tree is able to grow. Every leaf is a factory synthesizing sunshine to nourish the tree.

The interbeing of leaf and tree is parallel to the interbeing of the Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising. We say that ignorance conditions volitional actions, but ignorance also conditions

consciousness, both through volitional actions and directly. Ignorance conditions mind/body as well. If there were no ignorance in mind/body, mind/body would be different. Our six organs and the six objects of these organs also contain ignorance. My perception of the flower is based on my eyes and on the form of the flower. As soon as my perception becomes caught in the sign "flower," ignorance is there. Therefore, ignorance is present in contact, and it is also present in feelings, craving, grasping, coming to be, birth, and old age and death. Ignorance is not just in the past. It is present now, in each of our cells and each of our mental formations. If there were no ignorance, we would not become attached to things. If there were no ignorance, we would not grasp the objects of our attachment. If there were

### *The Interbeing of the Twelve Links*



Ignorance conditions and is conditioned by the other eleven links.

This web would be too difficult to discern if arrows were drawn from each link to all of the other links,  
but those lines should be envisioned here.

### *Figure Eight*

no ignorance, the suffering that is manifesting right now would not be there. Our practice is to

identify ignorance when it is present. Grasping is in volitional actions, feelings, coming to be, birth, and old age and death. Our infatuations, our running away from this or toward that, and our intentions can be seen in all the other links. Every link conditions every other link and is conditioned by them.

With this understanding, we can abandon the idea of a sequential chain of causation and enter deeply the practice of the Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising. Although it says in the sutra that consciousness brings about mind/body, that mind/body brings about the six ayatanas, and so on, we must understand this as a way of speaking and nothing more. We have to see the Twelve Links in a broad, open way.

Consider, for example, craving as the fruit of feeling. Sometimes a feeling does not lead to craving, but to aversion. Sometimes the feeling is not accompanied by ignorance, but by understanding, lucidity, or loving kindness, and the outcome will not be craving or aversion. To say that feeling brings about craving is not precise enough. Feeling with attachment and ignorance brings about craving. We must link each of the

Twelve Links with all the other links. This is what the *Heart Sutra* means when it tells us, "No Interdependent Co-Arising." The Twelve Links are "empty," because each of them would not exist without all the others. Feeling cannot be without craving, grasping, coming to be, birth, old age and death, ignorance, volitional actions, and so on. In each of the Twelve Links, we see the presence of the other eleven. Feeling can lead to craving, non-craving, or equanimity.

Ignorance is avidya, the lack of light. Vidyā is understanding or wisdom. The presence of light means the absence of darkness. The presence of day means the absence of night. The presence of ignorance means the absence of understanding. The Buddha said, "When ignorance comes to an end, understanding arises."<sup>7</sup> Ignorance leads to volitional actions, the will to live. When you are angry, you want to do something. But does understanding lead to the will to die? No, it leads to the will to live, also. In understanding there is loving kindness and compassion, and when you are compassionate, loving and understanding, you want to do something to help alleviate the suffering. Anger, hatred, and ignorance are forms of

energy. Understanding and compassion are also forms of energy.

*7 Samyutta Nikaya IV, 49 and 50.*

On one side, there are actions for grasping things or satisfying our desires. On the other side is the volition to be present in order to help alleviate suffering. That is the intention of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and all people of goodwill. They have love, understanding, and therefore the willingness to be present amidst the suffering in order to bring relief, comfort, and joy. The expression "volitional action," or "will to live" has to be understood in these two ways: (1) to live in order to experience pleasure for oneself alone or to oppress others, or (2) to be present in order to help. Social workers do not go into slum areas because they want power or riches. They go because they want to serve, to fulfill their need of loving. That is also a volitional action.

When the Buddha looks at a flower, he knows that the flower is his own consciousness. There is nothing wrong in having consciousness. It is only when we water unwholesome seeds — ignorance, hatred, jealousy, anxiety — that consciousness

causes suffering to ourselves and others. Consciousness is the base for distinguishing, planning, helping, and doing good work. That kind of consciousness is present in the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. The Buddha said, "How lovely is the city of Vaishali." He said, "Ananda, don't you think that the rice fields are lovely? Shall we go into town and share the Dharma?" These statements are based on lucid consciousness, consciousness full of understanding, care, and love.

We have to water the seeds of our own lucid consciousness. There is ignorance in us, but there is also wisdom. The seed of awakening is also present in each link. In compost there are flowers; and in flowers there is compost. If we know how to make compost, it will quickly become flowers. If we know how to look after flowers, they will last longer. Don't think there is only ignorance in the Twelve Links. There is also the seed of awakened wisdom. If you throw away the Twelve Links, you will not have the means to arrive at peace and joy. Don't throw away your ignorance, volitional actions, or consciousness. Transform them into understanding and other wonderful attributes.

As you can see, there is also a positive side to the Twelve Links, although Buddhist teachers since the time of the Buddha seem to have overlooked this. We need to find words to describe the Interdependent Co-Arising of positive states of mind and body, and not just of negative states. The Buddha taught that when ignorance ends, there is clear understanding. He didn't say that when ignorance ends, there is nothing. What does clear understanding condition? Clarity, the absence of ignorance, gives rise to the desire to act with love and compassion. This is called the Great Aspiration (mahapranidhana) or mind of awakening (bodhichitta) in Mahayana Buddhism. When you practice the Four Noble Truths, you see that you can liberate yourself and other beings, and you stop running away from and destroying yourself. The positive side of volitional actions is the motivating energy called the Great Aspiration that propels us toward the beautiful and the wholesome, rather than toward the hell realms.

Just as volitional actions condition consciousness, the Great Aspiration conditions wisdom. When our ignorance has been transformed, what we have been calling consciousness becomes wisdom. Consciousness is

described in the Vijñanavada schema in terms of eight consciousnesses, and these are transformed into Four Wisdoms. When the seeds of awakening, love, and compassion in our store consciousness have been developed and matured, our store consciousness (alayavijñana) is transformed and becomes the Great Mirror Wisdom that reflects the reality of the cosmos. All the seeds that can become the Great Mirror Wisdom are already present in our store consciousness. We only have to water them. Great Mirror Wisdom is the outcome of the vow to save beings as our volitional action.

When we invoke the name of Avalokiteshvara, this is the willingness and capacity of being there, listening, responding to suffering, and helping beings. When we invoke the name of Samantabhadra, that is the willingness and capacity of acting mindfully and joyfully to serve others. When we invoke the name of Manjushri, that is the willingness and capacity of looking deeply, understanding, and being the eyes of the world. With this kind of will, guided by clear understanding, our consciousness becomes an instrument of engagement in the world. The presence of a Buddha is an example of this kind of

volitional action, an offering of consciousness of what is going on, the willingness to help, and knowing what to do and how to do it in order to alleviate the suffering in the world. That consciousness manifests in mind/body, just as it does for everyone else. But the quality of the Buddha's mind/body is different from ours, and we can see and feel that.

We have to learn the ways to use our consciousness as a tool of transformation. Our six sense organs — eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind — can contribute toward the arising of Great Mirror Wisdom. We see that the Buddha also has six senses that enter into contact with six sense objects, but he knows how to guard his senses so that more internal knots will not be tied. The Buddha uses his six senses skillfully and realizes wonderful things. The first five consciousnesses become the Wisdom of Wonderful Realization. We can use these five consciousnesses to serve others. Mind consciousness, upon emancipation, becomes the Wonderful Observation Wisdom, wisdom that can see things as they are.

When the six senses and their objects make contact, this contact gives rise to a pleasant,

unpleasant, or neutral feeling. When a bodhisattva sees a child suffering, she knows how it feels to suffer, and she also has an unpleasant feeling. But because of that suffering, concern and compassion arise in her and she is determined to act. Bodhisattvas suffer like the rest of us, but in a bodhisattva, feelings do not give rise to craving or aversion. They give rise to concern, the desire and the willingness to stay in the midst of suffering and confusion, and to act.

When a bodhisattva sees a beautiful flower, she recognizes that the flower is beautiful. But she also sees the nature of impermanence in the flower. That is why there is no attachment. She has a pleasant feeling, but it does not create an internal formation. Emancipation does not mean that she suppresses all feelings. When she comes into contact with hot water, she knows it is hot. Feelings are normal. In fact, these feelings help her dwell in happiness, not the kind of happiness that is subject to sorrow and anxiety, but the kind of happiness that nourishes. When you practice breathing, smiling, being touched by the air and the water, that kind of happiness does not create suffering in you. It helps you be strong and sane, able to go further on your way toward realization.

Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and many others have the capacity of enjoying a pleasant feeling, the kind of feeling that is healing and rejuvenating without becoming attached. The feeling that we have when we see people oppressed or starving can give rise in us to concern, compassion, and the willingness to act with equanimity, not with attachment.

The Wisdom of Equality comes from the seventh consciousness, manas. Manas is the number one discriminator. It says, "This is me. This is mine. This is not mine." That is manas's specialty. We have to keep this consciousness, so that it can become the Wisdom of Equality. Our consciousness has to be transformed and not thrown away. It is the same with the Five Aggregates. We don't say, "The Five Aggregates are suffering," and throw them away. If we do, there will be nothing left — no nirvana, no peace, and no joy. We need an intelligent policy for taking care of our garbage.

Wonderful Observation Wisdom transforms manas into the Wisdom of Equality. We are one. We are equal. I may think that you are my enemy, but while touching the ultimate dimension, I see that you and I are one. Sometimes we only need to

touch the Earth once, and the Wisdom of Equality appears right in the heart of our manas consciousness. Wonderful Observation Wisdom takes the place of the sixth consciousness, mind consciousness. Before the disappearance of ignorance, the sixth consciousness gives rise to many wrong perceptions, like seeing a rope as a snake, and a lot of suffering. Thanks to "transformation at the base" — the store-consciousness becoming Great Mirror Wisdom — the sixth consciousness can be transformed into Wonderful Observation Wisdom.

The fourth wisdom, Great Mirror Wisdom, brings about miracles. In the past, our eye consciousness made us infatuated or put us in the dark. Now, with our eyes open, we can see the Dharmakaya, the teaching body of the Buddha. When our mind is clear like a calm river, the sixth consciousness is Wonderful Observation Wisdom and our store consciousness is Great Mirror Wisdom.

Clear understanding conditions the Great Aspiration and wisdom. If consciousness conditions mind/body, what does wisdom condition? We have body and mind, bodhisattvas

have body and mind, and the Buddha has a body and a mind. We should not throw away our body and mind in order to experience liberation. We use the term Nirmanakaya (transformation body) to describe the bright side of mind/ body. In this body and mind, there is no longer ignorance, volitional actions, or wrong consciousness. The function of this body and mind is to awaken and liberate living beings. Love and compassion can manifest in hundreds of thousands of different forms. Avalokiteshvara can appear as a child, a politician, or as a beautiful woman with a voice as clear as the song of the *kalavinka* bird, the Indian cuckoo. A bodhisattva can be beautiful or ugly, poor or rich, healthy or sick. Any mind/body that has the function to bring about love, understanding, and happiness is the transformation body of the Buddha.

If mind/body conditions consciousness on one side and the six ayatanas on the other, and the transformation body conditions wisdom on one side, what does it condition on the other? We can say that it conditions the result body (*Sambhogakaya*), which is the fruit of deep practice that is said to be marked by thirty-two signs. Every body is a collection of the Five

Aggregates and has mental and physiological components (name and form). In the case of the Sambhogakaya, the physiology and the psychology contain clarity, bodhichitta, and the Four Wisdoms as means for teaching the path, and do not contain ignorance.

Even within a Buddha's mind/body, there is contact. The Buddha drinks water and wears warm clothes. If he is not protected from the cold, he will become ill. When the six sense organs of the Buddha are in contact with the six sense objects, the Buddha has feeling, but that feeling does not lead to grasping and attachment. Contact in a Buddha (Sambhogakaya) is purified and mindful, and feelings are the same. The Sambhogakaya is wholly protected, because he practices guarding his six sense organs and their objects. We can also practice shining the light of mindfulness on the contacts that take place between our sense organs and sense objects. If we do not guard these contacts, even if we sit in a meditation hall for twelve hours a day, we are not practicing. When we walk, talk, eat, or whatever we do, if we guard our senses, the contacts that take place between our sense organs and sense objects will be clear and calm.

As far as the positive side of the Twelve Links is concerned, contact becomes mindfulness of contact, and feeling becomes mindfulness of feeling. Every contact of the senses and every feeling has clarity and calmness. When feelings and contact are protected, they lead not to craving but to love, compassion, joy, and equanimity — the Four Immeasurable Minds.<sup>8</sup> With mindfulness, we see feelings as painful, pleasant, or neutral. When we see people suffering or in pain or when we see them enjoying themselves in a foolish way, a feeling in us gives rise to the energy of loving kindness — the desire and the capacity to offer real joy, and this leads to the energy of compassion — the desire and the capacity to help living beings put an end to their suffering. This energy gives rise to joy in us, and we are able to share our joy with others. It also gives rise to equanimity — not taking sides or getting carried away by the images and sounds brought to us through contact and feelings. Equanimity does not mean indifference. We see the ones we love and the ones we hate equally, and try our best to make both of them happy. We accept the flowers and the garbage with neither attachment nor aversion. We treat both

with respect. Equanimity means to let go, not to abandon. Abandoning causes suffering. When we are not attached, we are able to let go.

8 See chap. 22.

The Four Immeasurable Minds are the basis for freedom. When we are in touch with things by means of the mind of love, we do not run away or seek, and that is the basis of freedom. Aimlessness takes the place of grasping. When we have freedom, what seemed to be suffering becomes Wondrous Being. It can also be called the Kingdom of God or the Pure Land. Someone who is free has the ability to establish a Pure Land, a place where people do not need to run. Wondrous Being is beyond being and nonbeing. If a bodhisattva needs to manifest being, if he needs to be born in this world, he will be born in this world. There is still life, but he is not caught in ideas of being, nonbeing, birth, or death.

Wondrous Being is the equivalent to the "coming to be" of the conventional Twelve Links. Wondrous Being is the basis for being born without getting caught in wrong ideas about birth and death. The leaf has the appearance of being

born and dying, but it is not caught in either. The leaf falls to the earth without any idea of dying, and is born again by decomposing at the foot of the tree and nourishing the tree. The cloud has the appearance of dying in becoming rain, but it feels no sorrow or pain. There are people who suffer when they see a leaf die. In the age of Romanticism, there were young people who picked up fallen flower petals, buried them, wept, and wrote epitaphs. When a leaf is born, we can sing Happy Continuation. When a leaf falls, we can sing Happy Continuation. When we have awakened understanding, birth is a continuation and death is a continuation, birth is an appearance and death is an appearance. People also appear to be born, grow old, and die.

We study the Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising in order to diminish the element of ignorance in us and to increase the element of clarity. When our ignorance is diminished, craving, hatred, pride, doubt, and views are also diminished; and love compassion, joy, and equanimity are increased. This happens in all twelve nidanas. After clarity, there is bodhichitta, the Great Aspiration. The key is the guarding of the six senses and mindfulness of feelings and contact.

This is the place we can enter into the cycle and begin to transform it.

In his first Dharma talk, the Buddha cautioned his disciples not to be attached to either bhava or abhava, being or nonbeing because bhava and abhava are just constructs of the mind. Reality is somewhere in between. When we present the Twelve Links in the usual way, if we say there is no attachment, it means there will be no being, that we are aspiring to abhava. But this is exactly what the Buddha did not want. If you say that the purpose of the practice is to destroy being in order to arrive at nonbeing, this is entirely incorrect. With nonattachment, we see both being and nonbeing as creations of our mind, and we ride the wave of birth and death. We don't mind birth. We don't mind death. If we have to be born again to continue the work of helping, that is okay. We know that nothing is born and nothing can die. We have the wisdom of no-birth and no-death. We know that there is birth, old age, and death, but we also know that these are only waves on which bodhisattvas ride. Birth is okay and death is okay, if we know that they are only concepts in our mind. Reality transcends both birth and death.

In the eleventh century in Vietnam, a monk asked his meditation master, "Where is the place beyond birth and death?" The master replied, "In the midst of birth and death." If you abandon birth and death in order to find nirvana, you will not find nirvana. Nirvana is in birth and death. Nirvana is birth and death. It depends on how you look at it. From one point of view, it is birth and death. From another, it is nirvana.

Let us not present the teaching of the Buddha as an attempt to escape from life and go to nothingness or nonbeing. Bodhisattvas vow to come back again and again to serve, not because of craving but because of their concern and willingness to help. The practice of mindful living develops the same kind of wisdom, concern, and loving kindness in us, so we can serve. It is time for us to present the teaching of Interdependent Co-Arising in a way that is easy and approachable.

*Twelve Links: The Two Aspects of  
Interdependent Co-Arising*

**WHEN CONDITIONED  
BY DELUDED MIND**

**WHEN  
CONDITIONED BY  
TRUE MIND**

(1) Ignorance ( <i>avidya</i> )	Clear Understanding ( <i>vidya</i> )
(2) Volitional Actions ( <i>samskara</i> )	Great Aspiration ( <i>mahapranidhana</i> )
(3) Consciousness ( <i>vijñana</i> ): <i>First Five Consciousnesses</i> <i>Manovijñana</i> <i>Manas</i> <i>Alayavijñana</i>	Four Wisdoms: <i>Wisdom of Wonderful Realization</i> <i>Wonderful Observation Wisdom</i> <i>Wisdom of Equality</i> <i>Great Mirror Wisdom</i>
(4) Mind/Body ( <i>nama rupa</i> )( <i>Nirmanakaya</i> )	Transformation Body
(5) Six Sense Organs & Their Objects ( <i>ayatanas</i> )	Result Body ( <i>Sambhogakaya</i> )
(6) Contact ( <i>sparsha</i> )	Mindfulness of Contact
(7) Feeling ( <i>vedana</i> )	Mindfulness of Feeling
(8) Craving ( <i>trishna</i> )	Four Immeasurable Minds ( <i>Brahmaviharas</i> )
(9) Grasping ( <i>upadana</i> )	Freedom ( <i>apranihita</i> )

(10) Coming to Be ( <i>bhava</i> )	Wondrous Being
(11) Birth ( <i>jati</i> )	Wisdom of No-Birth
12) Old Age and Death ( <i>jaramarana</i> )	Wisdom of No-Death

*Figure Nine*

***Twelve Links: The two Aspects of  
Interdependent Co-Arising***

WHEN CONDITIONED BY:



*Figure Ten*

for the people of our time. Those who teach the Twelve Links need to understand their positive side, also. When we are motivated by our mind of love, all Twelve Links become brighter.

There is co-arising conditioned by deluded mind

and co-arising conditioned by true mind. The world, society, and the individual have been formed by a cycle of conditions based on deluded mind. Naturally, in a world based on deluded mind, there is suffering and affliction. But when conditions are based on true mind, they reflect the wondrous nature of reality. Everything depends on our mind. Imagine one thousand people whose minds are full of misperceptions, wrong views, envy, jealousy, and anger. If they come together, they will create a hell on Earth. The surroundings they live in, their daily lives, and their relationships will all be hellish. If two people full of misunderstanding live together, they create a hell realm for each other. How much greater the hell of one thousand people!

To make hell into paradise, we only need to change the mind on which it is based. To change the minds of one thousand people, it may be necessary to bring in some element from the outside, like a Dharma teacher or a group of people practicing the Dharma. Imagine one thousand people who do not have wrong perceptions, anger, or jealousy, but who have love, understanding, and happiness. If these people come together and form a community, it will be paradise. The mind of the

people is the basis of paradise. With your deluded mind, you make hell for yourself. With your true mind, you make paradise. If two people come together with true mind, they make a small paradise for themselves. If a third person wants to join them, they should be careful. "Should we let him join us or not?" If their paradise is solid, they can allow him to join. With two true minds, there is hope that one deluded mind can be gradually transformed. Later, there will be three true minds, and this small paradise will continue to grow.

Many volumes have been written about the Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising based on deluded mind. We have to open a new door and teach the practice of the Twelve Links based on true mind in order to bring about a world of peace and joy.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT**

### ***Touching the Buddha Within***

In 1968, I was in India with Samdech Maha Ghosananda, a leader of Cambodian Buddhism, and Sister Chân Không, my dear student, friend, and colleague. For several days we sat together on Vulture Peak until sunset, and I realized that in former times the Buddha had looked at the same setting sun with the same eyes. Afterwards, we walked down the mountain slowly and mindfully, not saying a word, and since that day, I have continued to walk in the same way.

Vulture Peak is beautiful, and Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South America are also beautiful. When there is mist on the mountains, it is beautiful, and when there is no mist, it is also beautiful. All four seasons are beautiful. You are beautiful, and your friends are beautiful. There is nothing to stop you from being in touch with life in the present moment. The question is, Do you have eyes that can see the sunset, feet that can touch the earth? If the Buddha were to transmit his eyes to you, would you know how to use them? Don't think that happiness will

be possible only when conditions around you become perfect. Happiness lies in your own heart. You only need to practice mindful breathing for a few seconds and you'll be happy right away. Confucius said, "What greater joy can there be than putting into practice what you have learned?"

Sometimes we feel as though we are drowning in the ocean of suffering, carrying the burden of all social injustice of all times. The Buddha said, "When a wise person suffers, she asks herself, 'What can I do to be free from this suffering? Who can help me? What have I done to free myself from this suffering?' But when a foolish person suffers, she asks herself, 'Who has wronged me? How can I show others that I am the victim of wrongdoing? How can I punish those who have caused my suffering?'" Why is it that others who have been exposed to the same conditions do not seem to suffer as much as we do? You might like to write down the first set of questions and read them every time you are caught in your suffering.

Of course, you have the right to suffer, but as a practitioner, you do not have the right not to practice. We all need to be understood and loved, but the practice is not merely to expect

understanding and love. It is to practice understanding and love. Please don't complain when no one seems to love or understand you. Make the effort to understand and love them better. If someone has betrayed you, ask why. If you feel that the responsibility lies entirely with them, look more deeply. Perhaps you have watered the seed of betrayal in her. Perhaps you have lived in a way that has encouraged her to withdraw. We are all co-responsible, and if you hold onto the attitude of blame, the situation will only get worse. If you can learn how to water the seed of loyalty in her, that seed may flower again. Look deeply into the nature of your suffering so you will know what to do and what not to do to restore the relationship. Apply your mindfulness, concentration, and insight, and you will know what nourishes you and what nourishes her. Practice the First Noble Truth, identifying your suffering; the Second Noble Truth, seeing its sources; and the Third and Fourth Noble Truths, finding ways to transform your suffering and realize peace. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are not theories. They are ways of action.

We begin the practice by seeking meaning for our life. We know that we don't want to run after

fame, money, or sensual pleasure, and so we learn the art of mindful living. In time, we develop some understanding and compassion, and we find that these are the energies we can use to alleviate our suffering and the suffering of others. This already gives some meaning to our life.

We continue the practice, looking deeply into the Five Aggregates that comprise the self,<sup>1</sup> and we touch the reality of no-birth and no-death that is in us and in everything. This touching brings us the greatest relief. It removes all of our fears, offers us true freedom, and gives real meaning to our life.

1 See chap. 23.

We need places where we can go to sit, breathe quietly, and look and listen deeply. When we have difficulties at home, we need a room like that where we can take refuge. We also need parks and other peaceful places where we can practice walking meditation alone and with others. Educators, architects, artists, legislators, businessmen — all of us have to come together to create spaces where we can practice peace, harmony, joy, and deep looking.

There is so much violence in our schools. Parents, teachers, and students need to work together to transform the violence. Schools are not just places for transmitting technical know-how. They must also be places where children can learn to be happy, loving, and understanding, where teachers nourish their students with their own insights and happiness. We also need places in hospitals where family members, health care workers, patients, and others can sit, breathe, and calm themselves. We need City Halls where responsible people can look deeply into local problems. We need Congress to be a place where our real problems are truly addressed. If you are an educator, a parent, a teacher, an architect, a health care worker, a politician, or a writer, please help us create the kinds of institutions we need for our collective awakening.

Our legislators need to know how to calm themselves and communicate well. They need to know how to listen and look deeply and to use loving speech. If we elect unhappy people who don't have the capacity to make their own families happy, how can we expect them to make our city or our nation happy? Don't vote for someone just

because he or she is handsome or has a lovely voice. We are entrusting the fate of our city, our nation, and our lives to such people. We have to act responsibly. We need to create communities of deep looking, deep sharing, and real harmony. We need to be able to make the best kinds of decisions together. We need peace, within and without.

The heart of the Buddha is in each of us. When we are mindful, the Buddha is there. I know a four-year-old boy who, whenever he is upset, stops what he is doing, breathes mindfully, and tells his mommy and daddy, "I am touching the Buddha within." We need to take care of the healthy seeds that are in us by watering them every day through the practice of mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindfully doing everything. We need to touch the Buddha within us. We need to enter our own heart, which means to enter the heart of the Buddha. To enter the heart of the Buddha means to be present for ourselves, our suffering, our joys, and for many others. To enter the heart of the Buddha means to touch the world of no-birth and no-death, the world where water and wave are one.

When we begin the practice, we bring our suffering and our habit energies with us, not just

those of twenty or thirty years, but the habit energies of all our ancestors. Through the practice of mindful living, we learn new habits. Walking, we know that we are walking. Standing, we know that we are standing. Sitting, we know that we are sitting. Practicing this way, we slowly undo our old habits and develop the new habit of dwelling deeply and happily in the present moment. With mindfulness in us, we can smile a smile that proves our transformation.

The heart of the Buddha has been touched by our being wonderfully together. Please practice as an individual, a family, a city, a nation, and a worldwide community. Please take good care of the happiness of everyone around you. Enjoy your breathing, your smiling, your shining the light of mindfulness on each thing you do. Please practice transformation at the base through deep looking and deep touching. The teachings of the Buddha on transformation and healing are very deep. They are not theoretical. They can be practiced every day. Please practice them and realize them. I am confident that you can do it.

# PART FOUR

## *Discourses*

*Discourse on*  
*Turning the Wheel of the Dharma*  
**Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta**

This is what I have heard. At one time the World-Honored One was staying near Varanasi at Isipatana in the Deer Park. At that time the World-Honored One addressed the group of five monks, saying, "Bhikkhus, there are two extremes that a monk should avoid. What are the two?

"The first is the devotion to sensual desire and the pleasure resulting from sensual desire. Such devotion is base, pedestrian, worldly, ignoble, and unbeneficial. The second is devotion to harsh austerity. Such devotion is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial. By not following either of these extremes, the Tathagata has realized the Middle Way that gives rise to seeing and understanding. This seeing and understanding are at the bases of peace, knowledge, full awakening, and nirvana.

"What is the Middle Way, bhikkhus, that the Tathagata has realized that gives rise to seeing and understanding, when that seeing and understanding are at the bases of peace, knowledge, full

awakening and nirvana?

"It is the Noble Eightfold Path, consisting of Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. This is the Middle Way, bhikkhus, that the Tathagata has realized that gives rise to seeing and understanding when that seeing and understanding are at the bases of peace, knowledge, full awakening, and nirvana.

"Here, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of suffering. Birth is suffering. Old age is suffering. Sickness is suffering. Death is suffering. Sorrow, grief, mental anguish, and disturbance are suffering. To be with those you dislike is suffering. To be separated from those you love is suffering. Not having what you long for is suffering. In other words, to grasp the Five Aggregates as though they constitute a self is suffering.

"Here, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cause of suffering. It is the desire to be born again, delight in being born again, attached to the pleasures found in this and that. There is the craving for sense pleasures, for becoming, and for not becoming any more.

"Here, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of ending suffering. It is the fading away and ending of craving without any trace. It is giving up, letting go of, being free from, and doing away with craving.

"Here, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the end of suffering. It is the Noble Eightfold Path of Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

"Monks, when I realized the Noble Truth of suffering, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the Noble Truth of suffering needs to be understood, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the Noble Truth of suffering has been understood, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized the Noble Truth of the causes of suffering, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the causes of suffering need to be given up, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the causes of suffering have been given up, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized the Noble Truth of ending suffering, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the ending of suffering needs to be experienced, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the ending of suffering has been experienced, seeing, understanding, insight,

wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the end of suffering, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the Path that leads to the end of suffering needs to be practiced, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"When I realized that the Path that leads to the end of suffering has been practiced, seeing, understanding, insight, wisdom, and light arose in me with regard to things I had not heard before.

"As long as insight and understanding of the Four Noble Truths in their three stages and twelve aspects, just as they are, had not been realized, I could not say that in the world with its gods, maras, brahmas, recluses, brahmans, and humans, someone had realized the highest awakening.

"Monks, as soon as insight and understanding of the Four Noble Truths in their three stages and

twelve aspects, just as they are, had been realized, I could say that in this world with its gods, maras, brahmas, recluses, brahmans, and humans, someone had realized the highest awakening, that understanding and seeing have arisen, that the liberation of my mind is unshakable, that this is my last birth, that there is no more becoming."

When the World-Honored One had spoken, the five monks rejoiced in their hearts. Upon hearing the Four Noble Truths, the pure eye that sees the meaning of the teachings without attachment arose in the monk Kondañña. He realized that everything that is of the nature to arise is of the nature to cease.

When the Dharma Wheel had thus been turned by the World-Honored One, the Earth gods proclaimed, "Near Varanasi at Isipatana in the Deer Park, the highest Wheel of the Dharma has been set in motion. It cannot be turned back by recluses, brahmans, gods, maras, brahmas, or anyone in any world."

When the four kings heard the Earth gods' proclamation, they proclaimed, "Near Varanasi at Isipatana in the Deer Park, the highest Wheel of

the Dharma has been set in motion. It cannot be turned back by recluses, brahmans, gods, maras, brahmas, or anyone in any world."

When the gods of the Thirty-Third Heaven, the gods of the Realm of the Dead, the Tushita gods, the gods who rejoice in creation, the gods who have power through control of others, and the gods in the company of Brahma heard the four kings' proclamation, they proclaimed, "Near Varanasi at Isipatana in the Deer Park, the highest Wheel of the Dharma has been set in motion. It cannot be turned back by recluses, brahmans, gods, maras, brahmas, or anyone in any world."

At that hour, at that moment, in an instant of time, the proclamation reached the world of Brahma, and the Ten-Thousand World Systems shook and shook again. An immeasurable splendor was seen throughout the world, surpassing the splendor of all the gods.

Inspired, the World-Honored One spoke: "Indeed, Kondañña has understood. Indeed, Kondañña has understood." Thus, Kondañña received the name Kondañña Who Understands.

*Samyutta Nikaya V, 420*

## *Discourse on the Great Forty*

### **Mahacattarisaka Sutta**

This is what I have heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. At that time the World-Honored One addressed the bhikkhus, saying, "O bhikkhus."

"O Teacher," the bhikkhus respectfully replied.

The World-Honored One said, "Bhikkhus, I am going to teach you about the Noble Right Concentration, what are its causes and what are its accompanying factors. Please listen carefully and give all your attention as I speak."

"Yes, Lord," the bhikkhus respectfully replied.

The World-Honored One spoke, "What, bhikkhus, are the causes and accompanying factors that adorn Right Concentration? They are Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, and Right Mindfulness. When one-pointedness of mind is accompanied by these seven factors, it is called the Noble Right Concentration adorned with its causes

and accompanying factors.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? When there is wrong view and one knows it is wrong view, it is already Right View. When there is Right View and one knows it is Right View, that is also Right View. What is wrong view? It is the view that there is no point in giving alms, offering alms, or ceremonial offerings. That there is no ripening of the fruit of wholesome or unwholesome actions. That this world does not exist and neither does the other world. That there is no birth from parents, and no beings are born spontaneously. That no monks or brahmans have perfected the Path, are going in the right direction, have experienced for themselves the special understandings, or are able to illuminate our understanding of this world or the other world.

"What, bhikkhus, is Right View? Bhikkhus, there are two kinds of Right View. There is Right View in which not all the leaks have been stopped. It gives rise to merit but still results in attachment. Then there is Right View that is noble in which the leaks have been stopped. It is supramundane and an element of the Path. What is Right View in

which not all the leaks have been stopped? It is the view that there is a point in giving alms, offering alms, and ceremonial offerings. That there is ripening of the fruit of wholesome and unwholesome actions. That this world exists and so does the other world. That there is birth from parents, and there are beings who are born spontaneously. That monks and brahmans have perfected the Path, are going in the right direction, have experienced for themselves the special understandings, and are able to illuminate our understanding of this world or the other world.

"What is Right View in which the leaks have been stopped? It is understanding, understanding as one of the Five Faculties, understanding as one of the Five Powers, understanding as the enlightenment factor called investigation of phenomena in someone whose mind is noble, whose mind has no leaks, who has been provided with the Noble Path, and who is practicing the Noble Path. That, bhikkhus, is Right View that is noble, without leaks, supramundane, and a limb of the Path.

"He who makes an effort to give up wrong view and take upon himself Right View has Right

Diligence. He who by means of mindfulness gives up wrong view and dwells taking Right View upon himself has Right Mindfulness. These three phenomena revolve around Right View. They are Right View, Right Diligence, and Right Mindfulness.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? When there is wrong thinking and one knows it is wrong thinking, it is already Right View. When there is Right Thinking and one knows it is Right Thinking, it is also Right View. What is wrong thinking? It is thinking that leads to desire, hatred, and harming.

"What is Right Thinking? Bhikkhus, there are two kinds of Right Thinking. There is Right Thinking in which not all the leaks have been stopped. It gives rise to merit but still results in attachment. Then there is Right Thinking that is noble in which the leaks have been stopped. It is supramundane and an element of the Path. What is Right Thinking in which not all the leaks have been stopped? It is the thinking that leads to giving up desire, hatred, and harming. That is Right Thinking in which not all the leaks have been stopped, that gives rise to merit but still results in attachment.

"What is Right Thinking that is noble, in which the leaks have been stopped, that is supramundane and an element of the Path? It is logical reasoning, initial reflection, thinking, application of mind, implanting in mind, and formation of speech in someone whose mind is noble, whose mind has no leaks, who has been provided with the Noble Path and is practicing the Noble Path. That, bhikkhus, is Right Thinking that is noble, without leaks, supramundane, and an element of the Path.

"He who makes an effort to give up wrong thinking and take upon himself Right Thinking has Right Diligence. He who by means of mindfulness gives up wrong thinking and dwells taking Right Thinking upon himself has Right Mindfulness. These three phenomena revolve around Right Thinking. They are Right View, Right Diligence, and Right Mindfulness.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? When there is wrong speech and one knows it is wrong speech, it is already Right View. When there is Right Speech and one knows it is Right Speech, that is also Right View. What is wrong speech? It is lying,

slanderous, harsh words, and frivolous conversation.

"What is Right Speech? Bhikkhus, there are two kinds of Right Speech. There is Right Speech in which not all the leaks have been stopped. Then there is Right Speech that is noble in which the leaks have been stopped. What is Right Speech in which not all the leaks have been stopped? It is abstention from lying, slandering, harsh words, and frivolous conversation.

"What is Right Speech in which the leaks have been stopped? It is holding back from, desisting, resisting, and abstaining from the four kinds of wrong speech in someone whose mind is noble, whose mind has no leaks, who has been provided with the Noble Path, and who is practicing the Noble Path.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? When there is wrong action and one knows it is wrong action, it is already Right View. When there is Right Action and one knows it is Right Action, it is also Right View. What is wrong action? It is the destruction of life, taking what is not given, and

sexual misconduct.

"What is Right Action? Bhikkhus, there are two kinds of Right Action. There is Right Action in which not all the leaks have been stopped. Then there is Right Action that is noble in which the leaks have been stopped. What is Right Action in which not all the leaks have been stopped? It is abstention from destroying life, from taking what is not given, and from sexual misconduct.

"What is Right Action in which the leaks have been stopped? It is holding back from, desisting, resisting, and abstaining from the three wrong bodily actions in someone whose mind is noble, whose mind has no leaks, who has been provided with the Noble Path, and who is practicing the Noble Path.

"He who makes an effort to give up wrong action and take upon himself Right Action has Right Diligence. He who by means of mindfulness gives up wrong action and dwells taking Right Action upon himself has Right Mindfulness. These three phenomena revolve around Right Action. They are Right View, Right Diligence, and Right Mindfulness.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? When there is wrong livelihood and one knows it is wrong livelihood, it is already Right View. When there is Right Livelihood and one knows it is Right Livelihood, that is also Right View. What is wrong livelihood? It is hypocritical and indistinct speaking, fortune telling, trickery and covetousness, and wanting to make profit out of profit.

"What is Right Livelihood? Bhikkhus, there are two kinds of Right Livelihood. There is Right Livelihood in which not all the leaks have been stopped. Then there is Right Livelihood that is noble in which the leaks have been stopped. What is the Right Livelihood in which not all the leaks have been stopped? It is when the noble disciple gives up wrong livelihood and makes his living by Right Livelihood.

"What is the Right Livelihood in which the leaks have been stopped? It is holding back from, desisting, resisting, and abstaining from wrong livelihood in someone whose mind is noble, whose mind has no leaks, who has been provided with the

Noble Path, and who is practicing the Noble Path.

"He who makes an effort to give up wrong livelihood and take upon himself Right Livelihood has Right Diligence. He who by means of mindfulness gives up wrong livelihood and dwells taking Right Livelihood upon himself has Right Mindfulness. These three phenomena revolve around Right Livelihood. They are Right View, Right Diligence, and Right Mindfulness.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? Right Thinking arises in someone who has Right View. Right Speech arises in someone who has Right Thinking. Right Action arises in someone who has Right Speech. Right Livelihood arises in someone who has Right Action. Right Diligence arises in someone who has Right Livelihood. Right Mindfulness arises in someone who has Right Diligence. Right Concentration arises in someone who has Right Mindfulness. Right Understanding arises in someone who has Right Concentration. And Right Liberation arises in someone who has Right Understanding. Therefore, bhikkhus, the Path of the practitioner in training has eight factors, and the Path of the practitioner who is an

arhat has ten factors.

"In the following example, Right View comes first. Why does Right View come first? Wrong view is overcome in someone who has Right View. All the other unwholesome, wrong states that arise dependent upon wrong view are also overcome. All the other wholesome states that arise dependent upon Right View are practiced to fulfillment.

"Wrong thinking is overcome in someone who has Right Thinking, etc.

"Wrong speech is overcome in someone who has Right Speech, etc.

"Wrong action is overcome in someone who has Right Action, etc.

"Wrong livelihood is overcome in someone who has Right Livelihood, etc.

"Wrong diligence is overcome in someone who has Right Diligence, etc.

"Wrong mindfulness is overcome in someone who has Right Mindfulness, etc.

"Wrong concentration is overcome in someone who has Right Concentration, etc.

"Wrong understanding is overcome in someone who has Right Understanding, etc.

"Wrong liberation is overcome in someone who has Right Liberation, etc.

"Thus, bhikkhus, there are twenty factors supporting the wholesome and twenty factors supporting the unwholesome. This Dharma teaching on the Great Forty has been set in motion and cannot be turned back by any monk, brahman, god, Mara, Brahma, or anyone in the world."

## *Discourse on Right View*

### **Sammaditthi Sutta**

This is what I have heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Jeta Grove in Anathapindika's Park. At that time the Venerable Sariputta addressed the bhikkhus.

"Friend," the bhikkhus respectfully replied.

The Venerable Sariputta said, "How does a noble disciple practice Right View, a view that is upright? How does he or she obtain unshakable confidence in the Dharma? How can he or she arrive at the true Dharma?"

"Friend Sariputta, we have traveled a long way to be in your presence and we are happy to learn the meaning of these words. Please explain your statements, and after we have heard your teachings, we will bear them in mind."

"Please listen, friends, and give your full attention to what I say. Friends, when a noble disciple understands the unwholesome and the roots of the unwholesome as well as the wholesome and the roots of the wholesome, then

that disciple has Right View, a view that is upright. He or she is endowed with unshakable confidence in the Dharma and has arrived at the true Dharma. Friends, destroying life, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct are unwholesome. Lying, slandering, harsh words, and frivolous conversation are unwholesome. Covetousness, ill-will, and wrong views are unwholesome. The roots of the unwholesome are greed, hatred, and delusion.

"Abstaining from destroying life, from taking what is not given, and from sexual misconduct; abstaining from lying, slandering, harsh words, and frivolous conversation; not coveting, not harboring ill-will, and practicing Right View are wholesome. The roots of the wholesome are the absence of greed, hatred, and delusion.

"When a disciple understands the unwholesome and its roots and the wholesome and its roots, he or she entirely transforms the tendency to greed, removes the tendency toward hatred, and discontinues the tendency toward the 'I am' view. He or she transforms delusion, gives rise to understanding, and right now in this very life puts an end to suffering."

"Well said, friend," the delighted bhikkhus spoke, and asked, "Is there yet another teaching on how a disciple practices Right View? . . ."

"Friends, when a noble disciple understands nourishment, the making of nourishment, the cessation of nourishment, and the Path that leads to the cessation of nourishment, that disciple practices Right View. Friends, there are four kinds of nourishment that support beings who have already come to be and those who are seeking a new existence. They are edible food, coarse or fine; the food of sense impressions; the food of intention; and the food of consciousness. Nourishment originates where greed originates, and nourishment ceases when greed ceases. The Path that leads to the cessation of nourishment is the Noble Eightfold Path. When a disciple understands this, he or she entirely transforms these tendencies.

"Yet another teaching on Right View is that when the noble disciple understands suffering, the making of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the Path leading to the cessation of suffering, he or she has Right View. Birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, pain, discontent, and agitation are suffering. Not to have what you want is

suffering. In short, grasping the five skandhas is suffering. The creation of suffering is the thirst to be born again, which is associated with a delight in and attachment to the various pleasures found here and there. It is the thirst for the desire realm, the realm of being, and the realm of nonbeing. The stopping of suffering is disappearance of desire, the ending of ideas, the giving up of, letting go of, liberation from, and refusal to dwell in the object of desire. The Path leading to the cessation of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path.

"Another teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands old age and death, the making of old age and death, the cessation of old age and death, and the Path leading to the cessation of old age and death, he or she has Right View. Old age is the decrepitude of being in the various worlds of living beings. It includes broken teeth, gray hair, wrinkled skin, the dwindling of the life force, and the weakening of the sense organs. Death is the passing away of living beings from the various worlds of living beings, their shifting to other existences, their decomposition, disappearance, and death, the completion of their time, the disunion of the skandhas, and the laying down of the body. Old age and death originate

where birth originates. The cessation of birth is the cessation of old age and death. The Path leading to the cessation of old age and death is the Noble Eightfold Path.

"Another teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands birth, the making of birth, . . . he or she has Right View. Birth is the arising of beings in the various worlds of beings, their appearance, rebirth, manifestation of the skandhas, and acquisition of sense organs and sense objects. Birth originates where becoming originates. The cessation of becoming is the cessation of birth. The Path leading to the cessation of birth is the Noble Eightfold Path.

"Another teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands becoming. . . he or she has Right View. There are three becomings: becoming in the world of desire, becoming in the world of fine matter, and becoming in the nonmaterial world. Becoming originates where grasping originates and ceases where grasping ceases. . .

"Another is that when a noble disciple understands grasping. . . he or she has Right View.

There are four kinds of grasping: the grasping of sensual desire, views, rules and rituals, and a belief in a separate self. Grasping originates where thirst originates. Grasping ceases where thirst ceases, and the Noble Eightfold Path. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands thirst,. . . he or she has Right View. There are six classes of thirst: thirst for forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and objects of mind. Thirst originates where feelings originate and thirst ceases where feelings cease. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands feelings,. . . he or she has Right View. There are six classes of feelings: feelings that arise from eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact, and mind contact. Feelings originate where contact originates and cease where contact ceases. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands contact,. . . he or she has Right View. There are six classes of contact: eye contact, ear contact,. . . Contact originates where the six sense organs and objects originate. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands the six sense doors, . . . he or she has Right View. The six sense doors are the eye door, ear door, . . . The six sense doors originate where the mind/body originates. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands the mind/body, . . . he or she has Right View. The mind element consists of feelings, perceptions, volitions, contact, and mental attention. The body element consists of the Four Great Elements and the form that results from the Four Great Elements. The mind/body originates where consciousness originates. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands consciousness, . . . he or she has Right View. There are six classes of consciousness: eye consciousness, ear consciousness, . . . Consciousness originates where the impulses originate. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands impulses, . . . he or she has Right View. There are three kinds of impulses: body impulses, speech impulses, and mind impulses. Impulses originate where ignorance

originates. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands ignorance,. . . he or she has Right View. Ignorance is the failure to recognize suffering, the making of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the Path leading to the cessation of suffering. Ignorance originates where the leaks originate. . .

"A further teaching on Right View is that when a noble disciple understands the leaks,. . . he or she has Right View. There are three leaks: the leak of sensual desire, the leak of being, and the leak of ignorance. The three leaks originate where ignorance originates. . ."

*Majjhima Nikaya 9*

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Thich Nhat Hanh has a retreat community in southwestern France (Plum Village), where monks, nuns, laymen and lay-women practise the art of mindful living. Visitors are invited to join the practice for at least one week. For information, please write to:

Plum Village  
13 Martineau  
33580 Dieulivol  
France

[NH-office@plumvillage.org](mailto:NH-office@plumvillage.org) (for women)

[LH-office@plumvillage.org](mailto:LH-office@plumvillage.org) (for women)

[UH-office@plumvillage.org](mailto:UH-office@plumvillage.org) (for men)

[www.plumvillage.org](http://www.plumvillage.org)

Please contact the Community of Interbeing, the charity practising in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh in the UK, for information on retreats, events, and local and national sanghas:

Tel: 0870-041-1242  
[www.interbeing.org.uk](http://www.interbeing.org.uk)

*Also available from Rider. . .*

## **PEACE IS EVERY STEP**

***The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life***  
**Thich Nhat Hanh**

'This a very worthwhile book. It can change individual lives and the life of our society'

– From the Foreword by H. H. the Dalai Lama

In the rush of modern life, we tend to lose touch with the peace that is available in each moment. World-renowned Zen master, peace activist and author Thich Nhat Hanh shows us how to make positive use of the very situations that usually pressure and antagonize us. For him, a ringing telephone can be a signal to call us back to our true selves. Dirty dishes, red lights and traffic jams are spiritual friends on the path to 'mindfulness' – the process of keeping our consciousness alive to our present experience and reality. The most profound satisfactions, the deepest feelings of joy and completeness lie as close at hand as our next aware breath and the smile we can form right now.

In this lucid and beautifully written book, Thich Nhat Hanh offers commentaries and meditations, personal anecdotes and stories to show how deep meditative presence is available now. He provides exercises to increase our awareness of our own body and mind through conscious breathing – and he also shows us how to be aware of our relationships with others and of the world around us, its beauty as well as its pollution and injustices. The deceptively simple practices of *Peace Is Every Step* encourage us to strive for peace in the world at the same time as we work on sustaining inner peace, by turning the 'mindless' into the 'mindful'.

# LIVING BUDDHA, LIVING CHRIST

*A revered meditation master explores two of  
the world's great contemplative traditions*

**Thich Nhat Hanh**

Buddha and Christ, perhaps the two most pivotal figures in the history of humankind, each left behind a legacy of teachings and practices that have shaped the lives of billions of people over the course of two millennia. If they were to meet on the road today, what would each think of the other's spiritual views and practices?

Thich Nhat Hanh has been part of a decades-long dialogue between the two greatest living contemplative traditions -and brings to Christianity an appreciation of its beauty that could be conveyed only by an outsider. In lucid, meditative prose, he explores the crossroads of compassion and holiness at which the two traditions meet, and reawakens our understanding of both.



The International Association of  
Buddhist Universities  
(IABU)

# Buddhist Psychotherapy



Academic Papers presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Conference  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Main Campus  
Wang Noi, Ayutthaya, Thailand

**The International Association of  
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Wang Noi, Ayutthaya, Thailand**



## The International Association of Buddhist Universities

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## Preface

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) has been privileged to witness and play an instrumental role in developing and hosting successful UNDV and IABU celebrations, annually. As always, we are all very grateful to the Royal Thai Government for its constant support, and thank the Thai Supreme Sangha Council for its blessings, guidance and support. We are indebted, also, to the United Nations for recognizing the thrice-sacred Buddhist holy day.

We had to delay the 2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Conference, due to the extreme flooding that shut down MCU for nearly two months. It has been 2600 years since the Enlightenment of our Great Teacher, and we have gathered here from across the globe, from many nations, to again pay tribute to his birth, enlightenment, and death – occurring on the same day in different years. The 2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Conference is running this year, due to the postponement, with the 9<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day of Vesak Conference. The IABU Secretariat now plays a major role in our celebrations, particularly in the academic program of the conference.

This publication could not have been possible without the persistence, hard work, and dedication of MCU's scholars and staff. I wish to thank all members of the International Council for The Day of Vesak and the Executive Council of the International Association of Buddhist Universities, and the other members of the Editorial Committee for their devotion. I am also grateful to our many donors, sponsors, and dedicated volunteers who return year after year to support the IABU and United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations.

We all truly celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment, and hope these words reach the hearts and minds of the readers.



The Most Ven. Prof. Dr. PhraDharmakosajarn  
Rector, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University  
President, ICDV & IABU

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Conference: Introduction to the Buddhist Psychotherapy Volume**

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Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Association of Buddhist Universities Academic Conference on Buddhist Philosophy and Praxis. This conference seems like it has been a long time in the making, due to the extensive flooding that ravished Thailand, and certainly left Mahachulalongkorn rajavidyalaya University, our gracious and great host, inundated with almost 2 meters of water. The university, where the IABU Secretariat is currently headquartered, has overcome this difficult situation, and we are now ready to hold this conference. The conference was originally scheduled for 16-18 December 2011, but to make this happen seemed like an impossibility. We are now here for the rescheduled date: 31 May – 02 June 2012. We have noticed that our 2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Conference coincides with the 9<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations – but our aims are different for this occasion. It's quite fascinating that a single university can host two large international conferences at the same time. We further give our humble respects to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and to the Thai Sangha Supreme Council for enabling this conference to proceed.

When this conference was in its planning stages, we had initial discussions on the main theme: Buddhist Philosophy – but we did not want papers that just gave idealistic proposals. Instead we aspired to gain papers that demonstrated philosophy in action, or the conversion of an idea into an actuality – and thus we wanted to implement or emphasize the aspect of praxis, into the conference. We had scheduled a practical meditation session, where elected Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana masters would hold a meditation session along with a question and answer period; but due to the merging of the two conferences: the 2<sup>nd</sup>IABU Conference and the 9<sup>th</sup> UNDV Conference – there was no longer enough allotted time for the meditation sessions, so it was regretfully eliminated. We hope that the gathering of academics took advantage of this expertise that availed themselves for this august gathering.

As all the scholars can surmise, there are several formats or applications of Buddhism, some are living-systems, and some have become either extinct or have merged with existing systems. Buddhist Philosophy is a vast topic that fills many bookshelves. Most of us have read texts on early-Indian or Vedic-philosophy and have seen the emergence into what we are discussing: Buddhism – but by no means are we holding a singular view of a Buddhism. The overwhelming amount of scholars present here surmise that dependent-origination is probably the supreme-teaching of the Buddha, or the one doctrine that gathers the most attention. The term: ‘praxis’ has caused some confusion amongst our scholars. If the term was defined: we could determine that praxis is the application or process through which the philosophical or doctrinal point becomes actualized or put into place (practiced) – it’s about the endeavor. We might have taken the term from international-socialistic literature, which emphasizes that besides just having philosophy – the point of all of us studying the Buddha’s preserved words is for the sake of improving our world – to eliminate suffering from the social experience. How have we actually done this?

Approximately 160 articles were received the 2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Conference from around the world. We have selected about 110 of them for presentation at the conference. There are articles from

different levels of scholars, ranging from the most senior of professors and on downward to undergraduates. Each of the articles have merits of interest within them. We decided on four programs (sub-themes). This is the volume for the session on Buddhist Psychotherapy.

## **PANEL SUMMARY - BUDDHIST PSYCHOTHERAPY:**

Papers were to focus on any of the following thematic sections: (1) Buddhism & therapeutic traditions: e.g. Cognitive and Behavior therapy, Psychodynamic therapy, existential therapy, emotion-focused therapy; (2) application of Buddhist therapeutic resources to issues in mental health: e.g. suicide, addictions, depression, grief counseling, death & dying, traumas and counseling for environmental disasters; (3) application & development of Buddhist positive Psychology for developing positive qualities: e.g. working with families, couple relations, Buddhist social work, emotional intelligence in professions; and (4) Buddhist world view & philosophy & its implications for therapy; studies collecting resources in the suttas for issues in counseling. Buddhist Psychotherapy has become a hot topic during this contemporary time. Several conferences have sprouted since we announced our themes for this conference this year, most recently by the American Academy of Religion; moreover, with the postponement of our conference and the subsequent news announcement of the date-change, news of Buddhist Psychotherapy became more widespread, and it is likely that others have heard of our possible trailblazing activities, since the announcement was first spread on the web list-server, H-Buddhism. With many of our scholars discussing themes on Facebook and other social media platforms, someone was bound to stand upon our ideas, and generate their own. We increasingly witness that we cannot adequately cope with the changing social-environment, and from our failures at adaptation, we begin to have mental problems, stemming from our mismanagement of circumstances. We hope that these papers dearly address the dilemmas.

AnkachinMarma's paper on "Counseling and its Importance: A Buddhist Perspective" is a useful introduction to our panel, specially dealing with counseling learning and practice in the context of monastic education with reference to the techniques used by the Buddha.

SarathChandrasekera on "Buddhist Pre-marital Counseling" done with the help of case studies and also Buddhist traditional perspectives of the family is important, as today parents of children growing up in traditional Buddhist families also wish to supplement the advice of a monk with current resources in marriage counseling. The paper examines several theories about family structure and dynamics. The positive counseling model is based on the SigalovadaSutta.

PetcharatLovichakorntikul's paper jointly researched with John Walsh falls into the area of Human Resource Development focused on health care professionals. With the aim of developing the minds, attitudes and perceptions of healthcare professionals and invigorate Dhamma teachings and the resources in Buddhist ethics and meditation practice, it is a qualitative research study featuring face to face interviews at the Samrong Hospital. A very good model for Buddhist Social Work.

A.P. Goonathilake and AnushaEdirisinghe offer a useful study on the rehabilitation of offenders in the Bogamapara Prison in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Cases studies indicate that practice of meditation and the conduct of Buddhist religious activities do bring a change with a positive impact on their lives, though some of them are more focused on the reduction of the imprisonment period.

Sumanapala Galmangoda presents "An Analytical and Creative Study of the Buddhist Theory and Practice of Psychotherapy". He contends that concepts and practice of mental well-being, are necessarily connected to physical well-being, environmental and cultural factors. He presents a holistic concept of well-being drawing from his research from Buddhist canonical works. There is a focus on the conceptual framework of the mind, the interaction between mind and matter and the five aggregates and a kind of 'conceptual clearing' is an important stage in Buddhist psychotherapy.

R.M. Rathnasiri's paper on, "Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects as Reflected in Insight Meditation & Methods of Insight" offers an interesting perspective for those who contend that Buddhist psychotherapy goes much deeper than modern psychotherapy and for them, this study offers the sevenfold purity expounded in insight meditation. The paper is well documented with Buddhist sources. The question remains in the light of this paper, to what extend can we construct "A liberation-Oriented psychotherapy"?

Wasantha Priyadarshana has been researching the "Psychotherapeutic Value of the Visudhimagga" and he explores significant therapeutic resources in terms of character types, the client and therapist relationship, the techniques of temporary suspension, overcoming by the opposite, by tranquilization, by escape and by destruction of defilements. He also examines impediments to the therapeutic relationship.

Khan Sareth's paper on "Buddhism and Psychotherapy": He has worked with a group of therapists to create a curriculum for monks on Buddhism and Counseling as well as transfer a course on Buddhism and Counseling to Cambodian psychologists. As a result of the research project a M.A course on Buddhism and Psychology and a four day training program for monks were the tangible results of the project.

Judith Strasser and Southeara Chhim: "Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)—Cultural Sensitive Trauma Treatment for Khmer Rouge Survivors" appears to be a landmark study of the counseling context for people who suffered the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime. The moving counseling tenet in this study that the integration of religious and cultural practices are not merely shock absorbers but offer positive meaning making and coping strategies for the Cambodia's spirit-based culture.

*K. Dhammasiri*: Buddhist Psychotherapy Techniques and Its Utility for Liberation. This analysis is a textual study of canonical resources with special reference to the following suttas: *Sallekha, Madupindika, Vatthupama, Vitakkasanthana and Sabbasava*. As these techniques are mainly used to prevent the mind from unwholesome emotions, these sermons of the Buddha are relevant for both psychotherapy and liberation. Ethical purity, mental clarity and insight and wisdom are the Buddhist goals of liberation.

Ashin Sumanacara: A Psychological Analysis of Physical and Mental Pain. ABSTRACT not available

Michael Franklin: "Karuna and Ahimsa and Relational Aesthetics: The Use of Empathetic Art Interventions in Suffering" is the theme that Franklin develops, a theme that emerges out of a systematic awareness of human suffering and attuned communication of this empathetic awareness. The paper depicts how art is used to cultivate *prajna* and *karuna* within the therapist and therapist alliance. Franklin demonstrates how empathetic art interventions in the therapeutic context

“Lay the tracks for practicing the spiritual dimensions of contemplative psychotherapy”. He provides new vistas for Buddhist contemplative psychotherapy.

BhikkhuNandisena presents a paper on, “Mental Illness According to the Theravada Tradition”. He makes a distinction between physical and mental illness and uses these distinctions for the diagnosis of mental disorders and treatment. He relates the existence of mental illness to what are described as the defilements of the mind and through Buddhist practice direct awareness of the state of the mind is possible. He illustrates his study with Buddhist canonical resources.

Heather Marriott presents the value of “Wisdom and Compassion in Relationships and their Implications for Couple Therapy”. She observes that according to current research it is seen that the practice of mindfulness and loving-kindness increases relationship skills. Couples who are mindful are more intimate, have more developed relationship skills and more satisfied with their relationships. Self-compassion is also a valuable ingredient in a mature relationship. Heather cites valuable references from the current state of the art and presents her own case studies.

Dion Peoples: Images of Anger & Anger Management (with a focus on domestic violence).  
(1) First there is a wide-ranging, thought provoking phenomenology of the anger temperament (*dosacarita*): anger in the soldier, anger and disorder in the streets, inside private homes, avenues of inhibited anger in children drowned and yet refined by music, in social networks, kids playing war games, in heated conversation, the body in anger—all the idiosyncrasies of a anger-torn culture: each context is important and not to be drowned by the blanket term, ‘anger’. (2) The meditative culture symbolized by the phrase: “Holding anger, like a mother holding the baby...because loving kindness is us, but anger is also us-- So one part of us is taking good care of another”. The paper gives a detailed breakdown of mindfulness of anger techniques. Through meditation we develop the energy of understanding rather than accumulate reactivity.

Maurits G.T. Kwee: His paper on “Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation” explores the therapeutic potential of the Buddhist concept of karma. Karma Transformation begins with a focus on an unwanted emotional state or defilement and works at changing unwholesome (*akusala*) perception, cognition and behavior. Greatly influenced by cognitive behavior therapy, he blends CBT with karma transformation which is used for therapeutic changes, as well as preparing the mind by a shift towards the liberation ideal of emptiness and Buddhahood. The focus on intentional action and its karmic roots and results is an important contribution to Buddhist psychotherapy, as there is an understanding of the ‘immediate present’ movement as a focus for transformation, as important as the baggage that comes from the past.

Padmasiri de Silva’s paper on the “Lost Art of Sadness” is *first* a critique of the ‘medicalizing’ of human misery—locating states of intense sadness under the category of the clinical disorder of ‘depression’ and as Freud said in his “Mourning and Melancholia”, sadness is not a morbid condition for medical treatment. The paper focuses on the reflective, positive, healing and dedicatory qualities of grief/mourning. *Second* point is the exploring of Wolpert’s contention that ‘depression is a disorder of emotions’ and he uses the techniques of “Mindfulness-Based Emotion Focused Therapy” (EFT) to deal with negative emotions. *Third*, the paper briefly explores the subject of ‘collective sadness’ in panic cultures, using the novel “Guns and Roses”.

Caroline Brazier will speak on “Other-Centered Approaches: Psychotherapy & A Buddhist Paradigm”. This presentation will explore a other-centered paradigm in offering an alternative to the prevailing value systems found in Western psychotherapies, which often takes an individualistic turn. This approach views the self as dependently originated and constructed on the basis of object-related perception. This approach is similar to the approaches in Naikan and Morita therapy in Japan. Brazier has developed this therapy at the Amida Center in the U.K. It is an approach that would enrich our panel on Buddhist psychotherapy.

Barbara Wright’s “The Triangulation of Vectors Where Time Stops: The Source of All Suffering”, develops what she calls the ‘Metta Map’ as a therapeutic device to treat victims of trauma. Two definitions of trauma are given: the sudden and abrupt assault on individuals or organization; the neglected, prolonged assault with a cumulative and deleterious impact on individual, family, or organization. The goal of therapy is to maintain awareness and presence to life challenging situations and falling into the abyss of a fixed negative orientation, which is often identified with the sense of one’s ‘self’. The Metta map is used as multi-dimensional tool drawing elements from the Dharma.

### **Concluding the Conference Collection of Articles:**

In this large conference, we have discussed many facets of Buddhism. From teaching Dhamma in places where Buddhism isn’t strongly established; to unifying the diverse Buddhist philosophical views; for Buddhist psychotherapy; and even Buddhist meditation and philosophy – many difficult ideas manifested. It seems the conference was a success. However, to be self-critical: did we miss the mark? There are many dimensions to discuss in a session about psychotherapy, so it’s a fair question to ask. Did we succeed in discussing Buddhist Philosophy & Praxis? Please take the time to read over all of these articles at your leisure and make these debate-pieces back at your institutions, make these pieces for conversations and for growth. Build upon these ideas for future situations. Are these pieces successful examples of real transformations? Do they transfer well from mere theory to applicable situations? We hope we have taken measures to improve your comprehension of Buddhism, through these multi-variety contributions. We hope we have improved upon Buddhist scholarship. Please enjoy the 2<sup>nd</sup> IABU Academic Conference and various papers on Buddhist Philosophy & Praxis.



# Buddhist Psychotherapy





# Counseling and Its Importance: A Buddhist Perspective



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*"It is not our psychological theory that cures the patient,*

*it is the numinous that is the real therapy."*

- Carl Jung

## Introduction:

Modern counseling psychology developed after the World War II when soldiers were highly affected with psychological injuries. The provision of counseling was recorded as critically needed at that time.<sup>2</sup> Counseling has become important to the modern world when number of people suffer from anguishes at the increasing rate. People are facing more political, economic, environmental, and social problems due to the fast development of industrialization and globalization. These problems not only have tremendous impact on the physical and mental well-being of the people but also challenge the community of Buddhist monks as they also play a greater role to serving and healing people. As a social figure and a spiritual leader, the monks are expected to take responsibility in delivering counseling service for the welfare of the society besides their spiritual practices.

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of counseling to the people. It is the role of monks in the society as a spiritual instructor. ‘Counseling psychology’ integrated with Buddhist counseling would enhance the power of counseling and can be of another way to fulfill the social needs. “*It's also a mistake to think that psychotherapy is only used to solve problems or end a crisis. Even a person is doing already well, therapy can be a way to promote personal growth.*”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, counseling is not only for people who have problems in life but it can be also applied to common people in order to improve their life with well-informed choices and problem-solving.

This paper examines the contemporary mental health issues to raise awareness, among the Buddhist monks and educators, on the importance of counseling and learning ‘counseling psychology’. The paper also summarizes the available Buddhist theories and methods of counseling and how they can be put into practice. Besides the canonical methods of counseling, some effective techniques like mindfulness-based therapy applied by modern psychotherapist, psychologist, and counselor are explored

<sup>1</sup> Ankaching Marma studies in the International BA Program at MCU, from Bangladesh. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my teacher Dr. Dion Peoples for editing my paper with patience and also Venerable Aung Shing Marma and Dr. Montra Leoseng for their supports and comments. My especial thanks to Prof. Padmasiri de Silva for his helpful advice and generous gift of an insightful book on counseling, ‘An Introduction to Mindfulness-based Counseling’. The book is indeed a recommend for academic interest and also counseling guide in our daily life.

<sup>2</sup> McLeod, John, 2009, *An Introduction to Counselling*, Glasgow: Open University Press, p. 29-41.

<sup>3</sup> Bloch. S., 2006, *Introduction to the Psychotherapies*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., New York: Oxford University Press, p. 542.

## What is Counseling?

Firstly, let's begin our discussion with a brief history of psychotherapy before explanation on the different definitions of counseling; because counseling develops on the basis of psychotherapy. This little glance on the history of psychotherapy will give some insights on the models and theories of therapy. Sigmund Freud is known to be the father of psychology. That's why the credit goes to him for the development of psychotherapy with his introduction to psychoanalysis. He found out the etiology of mental disorder is the repressed thoughts and memories which he termed as unconscious. The conflicted thoughts and memories are accessible through psychoanalysis by analyzing on dreams, fantasies and free association.

Aaron T. Beck developed Cognitive Therapy leaving psychoanalytic theory with influence of Albert's Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy during 1960-1963. It examines cognitive content of client and introspect reaction when the client is in disturbing situation. This needs a team work of therapist and client to identify; and change the negative, dysfunctional thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Person Centered Therapy was brought out by American psychologist, Carl Rogers in 1940s and 1950s. Some of mostly emphasized techniques of him are genuine warmth, accurate, nonjudgmental acceptance, and trust. He believes also that the clients have the capacity to heal by themselves when they know their problems.<sup>4</sup>

The above paragraphs discuss on the brief history of development of psychotherapy as well the models and theories. Many diverse models and theories are being introduced in the field of counseling by the psychologists but converging to one goal of healing.

Secondly, a short discussion on the definitions of the term 'counseling' would be helpful for us in understanding, 'What is counseling.' Counseling is, "the job or process of listening to someone and giving them advice about their problems (The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008) while the Oxford Dictionary of English (2005) defines it as, "the provision of professional assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems."

There are many definitions of the term 'counseling' by different experts of the field including offering advice and encouragement, sharing wisdom and skills, setting goals and resolving conflict, etc. Colin Feltham describes, "*It may be considered quite obvious that counseling is a form of help for people who need it; that counseling usually involves two people discussing the problems or concerns that one of them has and the other is willing to listen.*"<sup>5</sup> Another definition of the term:

*Counseling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counselor and a client. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more two people. It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through the resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, 2008, *An Introduction to Mindfulness-based Counseling*, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, p.160-167.

<sup>5</sup> Feltham, Colin, 1995, *What is Counselling?*, Trowbridge: Redwood Books, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Burks, H.M. and Stefflre, B., 1979, *Theories of Counseling*, New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 14.

Counseling is a process between a counselor and a client that focuses on enhancing the psychological well-being of a client. It takes place when the counselee seeks for counseling and the counselor, after a careful analysis, applies proper techniques in counseling process. Consequently, some positive outcomes can be achieved by any counselor though not all as Colin Feltham gives a list of fifteen benefits that a counselor can offer to.<sup>7</sup>

The Pali equivalent terms for counseling can be '*upadesa, anusāsana, mantanā, ovāda*'.<sup>8</sup> These terms give almost same meaning as 'giving instruction or counseling.' Although there are many explanations of the term 'counseling', but the aim of both - the secular and Buddhist counseling are to help people to overcome their problems.

## Counseling during Mental Crisis

The world has rapid with social, political, economic, and environmental crises. Therefore, mental illnesses; stress, depression, schizophrenia etc. are commonly observed and have a greater impact on livelihood of the people. Moreover, psychological factor is one of the causes for suicide besides social, biological, cultural, and environmental factors.

Depression and alcoholic disorders are major risks for suicide in North America and Europe.<sup>9</sup> The Member Countries of the WHO (World Health Organization) South East Asian Region faces the worse situation from depression.<sup>10</sup> According to the WHO, it is estimated the loss of 850000 lives every year due to depression. Only 30% cases worldwide, appropriate treatment is received despite the seriousness of depression. Depression was the 4<sup>th</sup> leading contributor to the global burden of disease in 2000 and by 2020 it will be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ranking of DALYs (Disability Adjusted Life Years) calculated for all ages, both sexes.<sup>11</sup> The world humanitarian day celebrated on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 by the WHO in Geneva, WHO Assistant Director-General for Polio, Emergencies and Country Collaboration, Dr. Bruce Aylward says, "*In the last five years the psychological damage left in the wake of tsunamis, earthquakes, droughts and conflicts has proven as devastating as the physical damage.*" From the above statement, it is clear fact that the physical damage can cause psychological damage and psychological damage also can cause physical damage as we are composed of interdependent psycho-physical components.

The more human civilization develops with materiality, the lesser interest of spirituality will increase. The prediction that mental sickness: depression will reach to 2<sup>nd</sup> place of DALYs in 2020 would be correct because the human civilization will be more developed in materiality rather than in spirituality. If the rate of depressed people accelerates then there is possibility of losing of many valuable human lives in suicide increasingly. Emile Durkheim argued that religion could do

<sup>7</sup> McLeod, John, 2009, *An Introduction to Counselling*, Glasgow: Open University Press Open University Press, p. 16-17. He listed number of aims of counseling which is possible by any counselor to achieve and this is the list of fifteen aims; (1) insight,(2) relating with others, (3) self-awareness, (4) self-acceptance, (5) self-actualization, (6) enlightenment, (7) problem-solving, (8) psychological education, (9) acquisition of social skills, (10) cognitive change, (11) behavior change, (12) systematic change, (13) empowerment, (14) restitution, and (15) generativity and social action.

<sup>8</sup> Rhys Davids, T.W., & William Stede, 2004, *The Pali-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Asia Educational Service.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/) - accessed on 20 Aug 2011.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567\\_6741.htm](http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567_6741.htm) - accessed on 19 Aug 2011.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html) - accessed on 19 Aug 2011.

preventive actions on suicide by the strong social and moral ties to a religious community.<sup>12</sup> That can be one solution yet there is another effective alternative; bond to spirituality.

Emile Durkheim's argument on the bond of religion for suicide prevention brings questions to non-religious people or atheists: where and to whom they would go? How can they be prevented from suicide? In response to these questions, people can be spiritual rather than religious. To be spiritual, it is not necessary to be religious. In fact, spirituality is the basic foundation and element of all religions. It is born in the mind since we are born. It is within us always. The famous English phrase "I'm spiritual but not religious." means not belonging to any particular religious institution or belief. A beach will do.<sup>13</sup> It can be developed through mindfulness meditation to connect oneself to the spirit; spirit of being non-self. Spirituality is without discrimination so as mindfulness meditation. To support this argument, I would like to quote what David Tacey says in his paper 'Spirituality and the Prevention of Suicide', "*We reach for the spirit, the not-self, only to find that it lies at the very core of the self. Buddhism grasps this paradox well, which is why it is so popular.*"<sup>14</sup>

There is then a hope for a healthy society if people are encouraged to be bond to religions or spirituality. Also, they have to be aware of being slave to materiality and educated on the danger of growing rate of depression in the world.

## Buddha & Counselor's Qualities

There are many interesting stories in the biography of the Buddha from which some methods of counseling can be learned. He, having the noble qualities of a counselor, also prescribed some qualities that should be possessed by a good counselor.

### 1. Buddha as a Counselor

We should not forget to mention about the founder; the lord Buddha, discussing on the Buddhist counseling. He was not only a religious teacher, but also a great psychotherapist and counselor. He had consoled many individuals from every walk of life - normal and abnormal persons. He was therefore known as the *Anuttara Purisadammasārathi*<sup>15</sup> (the incomparable charioteer of taming beings) which is one of the nine qualities of the Buddha. Furthermore, his unique characteristic of taming human and non-human is read in the *Jayamangala attagatha* and some other discourses.

The healing of the Buddha to Kisagotami<sup>16</sup> is one of the qualities that show his greatness as a counselor. The scenario of her shows vividly that she was totally mad. The cause of her neurosis

<sup>12</sup> Durkheim, Émile, 2005, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, p. 342-343, accessed on 10 Sept 2011, (See PDF <http://swaup.yolasite.com/resources/Durkheim%20-%20suicide.pdf>)

<sup>13</sup> Blake, John, 03 June 2010, *Are there dangers being 'spiritual but not religious'?*, CNN Living, accessed on 22 Sept 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-03/living/spiritual.but.not.religious\\_1\\_spiritual-community-religious-god?\\_s=PM:LIVING](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-03/living/spiritual.but.not.religious_1_spiritual-community-religious-god?_s=PM:LIVING)

<sup>14</sup> Tacy, David, June, 2003, *Spirituality and the Prevention of Suicide*, ABC News, accessed on 20 Aug 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/stories/s972766.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Rhys Davids, T.W., & William Stede, 2004, *The Pali-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Asia Educational Service. It translates the term '*Purisadammasārathi*' as 'guide of men who have to be restrained.'

<sup>16</sup> Burlingame, Eugene Watson, 2005, tr. *Buddhist Legends*, Part II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Dass Publishers Private Limited, p. 257-260.

is the death of her only dearest child. She ran from physician to physician, and spiritual teacher to spiritual teacher; just for waking up her child. None of them could console her despite surplus more pain and sorrow telling ‘your baby is dead’. She, eventually, came to the place where the Buddha was and asked for his help. He was unlike to them, gave an assignment to bring master-seed from a house in which nobody had died. He gave a word of promise that if she could bring, he would cure her child. But there was no house wherein no one had died. Every house where she asked response either grandmother, father, brother or son died a few days back. These responses illuminated her to understand about impermanence of life; death is inevitable.

This technique of the Buddha highlights the importance of analysis and understanding of a counselee’s condition. He did not directly respond her that her child was dead. If he did, she might not accept it. He knew that advising or teaching her right the way would not be an effective way. Instead, he tried to calm down her powerful defilement of grief and sorrow by giving an assignment.

Another salient example of his great quality of taming is the drunken and the furious elephant, Nalagiri.<sup>17</sup> The drunken elephant lost its sense and rushed towards the Buddha furiously to attack him. Everyone was shouting and crying, but the Buddha was silent and compassionately looking at it. Nonetheless, it came furiously rushing at him; he tamed it by the noble weapon of empathy and compassion upon it. HSS Nissanka, a Sri Lankan psychotherapist has researched and experimented on these virtues.

*On seeing the suffering that is there in the patient, ‘Karuna’ sympathy and concern will be generated in the heart of the therapist and the radiation of it will be noticed by the patient. Seeing the suffering of the patient thus will bring about a transformation in the hearts of the patient and the therapist and that will prevent even transference.<sup>18</sup>*

Furthermore, there are a number of western psychotherapists, like Rogers who has explored and experimented empathy in psychotherapy. He discovered a similar meaning to Buddhist empathy that “...the most effective approach was to listen for the feelings, the emotions whose patterns could be discerned through the client’s words...the best response was to “reflect” these feelings back to the client.”<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Counselor’s Qualities

Both Buddhist and Carl Rogers share striking similarities on the qualities and personalities of the counselor with some slight differences. The major similar qualities of genuineness, non-judgmental acceptance, and empathy are proposed by both schools. Some qualities of a good counselor are read in early Buddhist scriptures, like *Udayi-sutta* of the *Anguttara-nikaya*.<sup>20</sup> This Sutta demonstrates five effective qualities of a good counselor.

<sup>17</sup> Op. Cit. Part I, p. 236.

<sup>18</sup> Nissanka, HSS, 2009, *Buddhist Psychotherapy*, Dehiwala: Buddhist Cultural Centre, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> Rogers, C.R., 1975, *Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being*, California, accessed on 10 Sept 2011, (See also PDF [http://www.sageofashville.com/pub\\_downloads/EMPATHIC\\_AN\\_UNAPPRECIATED WAY\\_OF\\_BEING.pdf](http://www.sageofashville.com/pub_downloads/EMPATHIC_AN_UNAPPRECIATED WAY_OF_BEING.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Hare, E.M. tr., 1995, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, Vol. III, Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 135-136. The Pali terms are taken from <http://tutor.ksana.tw/cgi-bin/accelon3.cgi/ksana?db=tipitaka.adb>, with Pali commentary <http://tipitaka.org/romn/> - accessed on 11 Aug 2011.

**Gradual talk (*Anupubbikatham*):** A counselor possesses the quality of presenting the dharma in a gradual way according to the level of the defilement in the patient like from talk of giving to morality then to four noble truths.

1. Talk on sequence (*Pariyāyadassāvī katham*): A counselor should have the quality of giving the dharma in whatever is good and showing the cause.
2. Compassionate talk (*Anuddayatam paticca katham*): A counselor should cultivate compassion towards the counselee and treat him/her with the sense of helping.
3. Talk without material expectation (*Na āmisantaro katham*): A counselor should help the client with compassion without expectation of material gains.
4. Non-judgment (*Attānañcaparañca anupahacca katham*): A counselor should not compare himself/herself with others and praise himself/herself.

In contrast to the exposition of Carl Rogers on the personality of the counselor, he proposes six conditions that should be adopted by the counselor. He found that these conditions are necessary to be implemented and sufficient for the process. The below is list of conditions.<sup>21</sup>

1. Relationship of client and counselor: The most important condition has to establish, initially, psychological contact between the client and the counselor.
2. Client's incongruence: The state of incongruence of the client is vulnerable to anxiety which helps to develop relationship.
3. Genuineness of counselor: The counselor should be honest and genuine with his/her experience, deeply and freely involved himself/herself in order to promote relationship.
4. Unconditional positive regard: The counselor should adopt non-judgmental acceptance towards the client; without judging what the client says or does, is good or bad, etc.
5. Accurate empathy: It is understanding and awareness of the counselor whenever the client is experiencing any moods or feelings.
6. Client's perception: The client's perception on the unconditional positive regard and accurate empathy of the counselor.

The personalities of genuineness, non-judgmental acceptance, and empathy are very common to both Buddhist and Carl Rogers. Buddhist gradual talk and sequential talk can be compared to Carl Rogers's genuineness where the counselor expresses the genuine experience to the client. The talks on four noble truths and cause and effect of Buddhism are the genuine expressions on the real nature of the world. The experience of suffering is exposed and the way of overcoming from it by the pragmatic method of cause and effect action-based is taught by the counselor.

The personality of non-judgment is also prescribed for the counselor in both schools. The counselor should not judge the client whether he/she is good or bad and compare himself/herself or other clients. Because the counselor's expression of judgment and comparison can be sensed by

<sup>21</sup> Rogers, C, *The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of the Therapeutic Personality Change*, American Psychological Association, 1992, Accessed on 25 Sept 2011,<http://person-centred.co.uk/pdf%20props/necessary%20and%20sufficient.pdf>

the client and the process of therapy possibly would fail. Instead the warm and non-judgmental acceptance of the counselor is encouraged regardless of the client's personality.

The quality of empathy can be compared to Buddhist compassion where the radiation of compassion is perceived by the client. It is the empathic understanding of the client's conditions and taking the clients' problems as his/her own problems but without attaching to it. It is just like the simile of a dustbin without bottom where the rubbish slip out from the bottom likewise the counselor should act like this; accepting the rubbish but without keeping them.<sup>22</sup>

There are also some differences in the adaptation of the necessary conditions in two schools. The client's incongruence and perception is not mentioned in the Buddhist personalities of the counselor. The Buddhist personalities of the counselor are more focused on the counselor side over the client. But it does not mean that Buddhist counselor is not aware and concerned for the client. Another difference is the material un-expectation in Buddhist counseling because the Buddhist monks are not supposed to be professional careers.

The personalities of genuineness, non-judgmental acceptance, and empathy are key roles of a counselor. Both schools strongly accept these conditions are necessary in the counseling theories because they are reflected by the counselee during the therapy process. The reflections of these by the counselee are important to build trust and confidence in the counselor.

## Counseling through Mindfulness

The practice and study of mindfulness meditation is expanded beyond that it has intervened as a treatment in the mainstream medicine. It is being studied in universities and colleges and used in hospitals and prisons. Modern scientists have discovered the power of mental culture and mindfulness in the art of living a worry-free life and healthy life. The mindfulness-based therapy has been used to treat patients and shown some positive results.

According to Roga-sutta, it is difficult to find one person who is healthy in physically and much more difficult to find one who is healthy in mentally for even one moment, “*Monks, there are to be seen being who can admit freedom from suffering for one year...hundred years. But, monks, those beings are hard to find in the world who can admit freedom from mental illness even for a moment.*”<sup>23</sup> Indeed it is true. How many of us in the world are freed from worries, tension, obsession, etc.? We worry, in every second, minute, and day, of past what has already gone, present what is happening and future what is still to come. Are we healthy in mentally? In the words of Padmasiri de Silva, “*In one sense everyone is subject to ‘mental disease’, except the arhants who have destroyed the āsavas.*”<sup>24</sup> The mind is a forerunner of thoughts and actions<sup>25</sup> which are basically motivated by craving (*tanha*) of wholesome, and unwholesome; sexual driven (*rāga*), angry driven (*dosa*), and deluded driven (*moha*).<sup>26</sup> It is often dominated by defilements (*āsava*) and hide individual

<sup>22</sup> Brahm, Ajahn, 2008, *Opening the Door of Your Heart*, Australia: Hachette, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Woodward, E.L., 1995, tr. *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, Vol. II, Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, 2005, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> Sri Dhammananda, K, tr., 1992, *The Dhammapada*, Kuala Lumpur: Sasana Abhivurdha Wardhana Society, p.41.

<sup>26</sup> de Silva, Padmal, 2010, ‘*Buddhist Psychology: Exploring Practical And Theoretical Aspects*’, New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology, Kwee, Maurits G.T. ed., Ohio: Taos Institute Publications, p. 96.

from knowing and seeing the real nature of the mind. Though everyone is subject to mental disease but the mental disease would become worse if it is not taken care. Therefore, *Mahasatipatthana-sutta* offers four foundations of mindfulness as a therapy for mental illness and also for complete psychological liberation, *Nibbana*.

*There is, monks, this one way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, for the realization of Nibbana- that is to say the four foundations of mindfulness.*<sup>27</sup>

Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling have been practicing in East and West. Many experiments have been already carried out, by the modern psychologists on the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation.<sup>28</sup> HSS Nissanka, in his book ‘Buddhist Psychotherapy’, proves ten successful case studies using Buddhist techniques of counseling and therapy. Some of the patients where they could not be cured by Western psychotherapy were cured by Buddhist psychotherapy under him. The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) was developed by Kabat Zin based on Buddhist philosophy of meditation in 1979. It offers healing to variety of disorders and diseases of participants by developing awareness of body and mind. He defines mindfulness in MBSR as a moment-moment non-judgmental awareness by paying attention<sup>29</sup>. Subsequently, the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)<sup>30</sup> program was founded by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale based on Kabat Zin’s MBSR<sup>31</sup> program which integrates with cognitive therapy and mindfulness. It aims clients accepting the problems without judgment and making friendship with them instead of rejecting and pushing them away. The client in this program is taught to do mindfulness meditation and to be in the present moment, watching what is happening and accepting the feelings and emotions rather than suppressing them. Recently mindfulness-based therapy is also being intervened to other types of diseases like HIV, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic lower back pain, and hot flash.

Depression is one of the most world burdens of disease. Worse thing can be happened to depressed person is suicide. There are various types of treatment introduced for the treatment of depression like antidepressant drugs and psychotherapy. One of the most often use treatment is antidepressant drug where the patients are given to take drugs. All though many patients are cured by those treatments but still many are vulnerable to depression after few weeks of recovery. Studies found out that 50% of patients will have depression episode, subsequently, after initial treatment of depression episode and 70-80% of patients is likely to have relapse in their lifetime. The interventions are not very effective in the sense that they are not effective to fully recovery. The risk of relapse is very high. In response to the relapse of depression, modern psychologists have intervened mindfulness-based therapy to do prevention from relapse. It is found in the research that it is an effective technique to reduce the risk of relapse in depression.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Walshe, Maurice, tr., 1995, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publication, p. 335.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.mindandlife.org/about/mission/> - accessed on 12 Sept 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Kabat Zin, *Mindfulness Stress Reduction and Healing*, 8 March 2007, Online video clip, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSU8ftmmhmw> – accessed on 14 Dec 2011.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mbct.com/> - accessed on 11 Aug 2011.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/whatMBSR.php> - accessed on 11 Aug 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Segal, Zindel V., J. Mark G. Williams, John D. Teasdale, 2002, *Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*, New York: The Guilford Press, p. Google Book Search, accessed on 29 Sept 2011

Stress is common to everyone in everyday life. It becomes big issue only when it is ignored. As Padmasiri de Silva said, “*It is rather the way we respond or react to them.*”<sup>33</sup> It depends on how one response to it. If one mismanages it carelessly then it can be damage to one’s mind and body. It is manageable when one pays attention and mindful of the stressful situation. Even sharing stress problems with friend, counselor, or monk is also a good technique. Padmasiri de Silva also has given some cases studies and concluded “*Cohesive and lively family relations and good friends are great resources for living in a society undergoing rapid changes. There is empirical and experiential evidence that the patient and less deliberately modes of mind like mindfulness practice are effective when dealing with stress, disorder, chaos and uncertainty.*”<sup>34</sup>

Mindfulness-based therapy is also intervened to cancer patients. Some studies have found that psychological disorder like depression can be caused of cancer. It is also proved that patients with high depression die sooner than less depression. Though cancer is physical illness but due to psychological factors it can worsen the conditions of the cancer. Therefore, mindfulness-based therapy is offered to cancer patients with mainstream treatment as productive union. The below quote is “How can mindfulness help you to cope with cancer?” and how it is beneficial for the client.

*We don't offer you mindfulness as a cure for yours disease. Rather, it holds the possibility of vastly enriching your life, helping you cope with symptoms and side effects, and improving the quality of your days. Mindfulness also enhances your immune system's performance and help harmful levels of stress hormone in your body, changes can be only beneficial.*<sup>35</sup>

A study on the HIV patients shows some effectiveness of intervention of mindfulness-based therapy. Besides, the attack of HIV to CD4 T cells of immune system, there is also another attack from psychological disorder like stress and depression that leads to loss of CD4 T cells. Creswell and his colleagues have examined a group of HIV positive patients for eight weeks by intervening MBSR (Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction) and found out that CD4 T cells are not attacked to declination by HIV. In contrast, the control group of patient lose their CD4 T cells.<sup>36</sup>

Above all, my own experience would be more accurate for my deeper understanding on the mindfulness meditation. I have been suffering from lumbago since fifteen and never went to see medical doctor except traditional doctors. A few days of treatment were given; massage on painful area of my lower back. It was painful to twist the body left and right, bending forward and backward etc. During the ten days course of meditation held by our university annually from 18<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, I have experienced an effective response from the meditation retreat; reduction of pain on my lower back. Mindfulness was placed on rising and falling of my abdomen. As my stomach pushed forward and backward, it massaged the painful area of my back diagonal to front abdomen. After several times of mindfulness practice, my body could be bended and twisted without pain.

The technique of mindfulness meditation would be the most effective though there might be other techniques. It is because mindfulness meditation or mental culture purely deals with

<sup>33</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, Op. Cit, p.18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.25

<sup>35</sup> Carlson, Linda, Speca, Michael, 2010, *Mindfulness-based Cancer Recovery*, Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, p. 3, Google Book Search, Accessed on 30 Oct 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Wheeler, Mark, Practice of Mindfulness Meditation Slows the Progression of HIV, Study Shows, 24 July 2008, <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/mindfulness-meditation-slows-progression-53819.aspx> – accessed on 29 Sept 2011.

the mind. And it is the mind which is the root of all the mental illnesses though causes can be influence by outside factors. So mental illness should be treated with mental treatment rather than psycho-surgery, chemotherapy, or electroconvulsive therapy. More importantly, counseling through mindfulness emphasizes on the self-healing by the individual counselee himself/herself. It is true according to the words of Jung who said that it is individual numinous that cure the patient. Ultimately, it is individual's effort and spirit who cures himself/herself through a kind of self-healing.

The ancient practice of mindfulness is coping with the modern world and importantly its blend to modern sciences. The expansion of mindfulness meditation to other field of sciences would enrich the studies and experiments of those sciences and also study of mindfulness meditation. Scientists and researchers should be encouraged to continue their experimentations with the mindfulness meditation so that it can be applied as a useful tool in human society.

## Counseling through Instruction

When talking about the techniques of Buddhist psychotherapy or counseling, people usually think of mindfulness techniques only. There are other techniques of counseling found in Buddhism like counseling through instruction which can be brought into play to modern psychotherapy and counseling like mindfulness meditation is being blended. The methods of counseling through instruction are instructions; guidelines, advice, suggestions, etc. that are counseled to the clients. The followings are the different methods of counseling through instruction that are found in various occasions of the Buddhist scriptures.

Progressive talk (*Anupubbikathā*): - This technique is given to the counselee who is with powerful defilements in order to calm down them. Level of intelligence and defilements determine type of a person. A person, with low intelligence and more defilement, needs to go in gradual process so that he/she could grasp the conversation. In the procedure of gradual talk, the counselor could talk about generosity, compassion, eight worldly conditions, morality, etc. According to David J. Kalupahana, by this method of instruction, the counselee can lead towards to psychological balance, "*This is often achieved by indicating the possibility of attaining freedom and happiness through gradual path of mental culture toward psychological balance that begins with the cultivation of simple virtues such as sympathy, generosity, charity, etc.*"<sup>37</sup>

The story of Suprabuddha<sup>38</sup>, the leper, is a good example of this technique of gradual instruction. The Buddha used this method to teach him because he was suitable with this progressive talk. He could catch what is giving and its good effects, moral conduct and its benefits, etc.

The talk special to the Buddhas (*Sāmukkajnsikā*): - Gradual talk is the preparedness of the mind of the counselee. After the gradual talk, the counselee is given this method of instruction. At this level, the counselor can talk on four noble truths. It can be instructed in a very practical way. Here, the counselor can counsel on the illness of the counselee, causes of mental disorder/illness, cure of illness, and way of curing illness. Thus, when the counselee knows about his/her illness and way to solve it, it gives hope of recovery in her/him.

<sup>37</sup> Kalupahana, David. J., 2010, 'Miracles: An Early Buddhist View', New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology, Kwee, Maurits G.T. ed., Ohio: Taos Institute Publications, p. 178.

<sup>38</sup> Ireland, Jonh D. tr., 1997, *The Udāna and Ittivuttaka*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, p. 66.

HSS Nissanka, in his counseling of cases, uses the technique on talking impermanence. He convinces the patient that his/her illness is also impermanence as everything is impermanence. It is not permanent which means his/her illness can be recovered.<sup>39</sup>

Through the dialogue of question and answer: - This is a friendly dialogue between these two: counselor and counselee. The counselor puts questions in order to diagnose the cause of counselee's problem and to distinguish the type of the individuals. Basically, there are three types of individuals: greedy type (*lobha*), violent type (*dosa*), and sexual driven type (*moha*). The counselor, after understanding the problems of the counselee, employs appropriate treatment and advice to deal with it. On the other hand, the counselee is also freed to ask concerning her/his problem. In this way, communication between counselor and counselee is developed.

Through audio and visual aids: - This method can be used as an alternative approach in counseling. At the age of IT (Information Technology), the counselor gives some audios or video tapes such as *paritta* chanting, lessons and instructions to be exercised at home. The recent study, on the effects of the body and mind by listening to *Paritta*<sup>40</sup> chanting, shows some positive results. As Chandana Jayaratne observes in his survey that listening to *Paritta* chanting benefits the listener with a calm mind, slow heartbeat, increase of the body's immune system and IQ level, learning ability and problem-solving capability, relief of insomnia, sustained positive thoughts, cultivation of compassion and production of happiness, etc.<sup>41</sup>

There are many stories of the Buddha's counseling by using the method of audio and visual aids like showing the deformed monkey and celestial nymphs to Nanda<sup>42</sup> and the monk Cullapanthaka,<sup>43</sup> who could not memorize even one verse in four months, a dull person. He was frustrated and decided to leave the monkhood life. Eventually, he was awakened from boredom while rubbing the piece of white cloth which was given by the Buddha. Boredom is an emotional state experienced when individual is lack of interest in and difficulty concentrating on the current activity.<sup>44</sup> Padmasiri de Silva proposed the way out of boredom "*Thus clarity of understanding, transparency, self-knowledge and wisdom present the way out of boredom and misery.*"<sup>45</sup>

The talks on talk on the four noble truths related with the concept of impermanence have to adopt by the counselor so that hope of recovery will arise in the mind of the counselee. And the gradual talk which talks on morality and generosity can further be guided the counselee for an ethical life even after recovery.

<sup>39</sup> Nissanka, HSS, Op.Cit. p. 55-56.

<sup>40</sup> Paritta suttas are set of discourse of protection delivered by Buddha for the monks and laypeople to be recited orally when they are in fear, danger, ill etc. as means of protection and build of confidence. The Gilana sutta proves that the Buddha himself have listened to Paritta by a monk to cure from an illness.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Jayaratne, Chandana, 2010, 'Buddhist Pirit Chants for Mental and physical Well Being-A Scientific Approach', Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective, Conference Volume, Dion Peoples, ed., Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, p. 550.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 217-225.

<sup>43</sup> Burlingame, Eugene Watson, tr., 2005, *Buddhist Legends* Part II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Dass Publishers Private Limited, p. 299-310.

<sup>44</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boredom#cite\\_note-3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boredom#cite_note-3) – accessed on 11 Sept 2011.

<sup>45</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, 2010, 'The Joyless Economy: The Pathology of a Culture which calls for an Awakening', Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective, Conference Volume, Peoples, Dion, ed., Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, p. 572-573.

## Role of Monk as Counselor

The monks play a very important role as counselor in the society. The lay society has greater expectation from the community of monks to serve the society as laity serves them. Their guidance and contribution on the path of spirituality would have a greater impact in the society. In this respect, their contribution will not be efficient unless they have a clear understanding of the secular world and the current world. Therefore they need to be educated in Buddhism integration with worldly subjects like counseling psychology.

It is also common understanding that in Buddhist society, monks are considered as spiritual teachers and instructor of the society. The laity when they are in trouble, they also approach to the monks. They seek console and advice thinking that they can help them. So the monks have to deal and cope with problems of the laity. Ajahn Brahm, shares his experience the role of a monk as a counselor, “*Monks and senior monks especially, have to sit in their monastery, listen to people’s problems and accept all their rubbish. Marital problems, difficulties with teenage children, rows with relations, financial problems- we hear the lot.*”<sup>46</sup> It is difficult for them dealing with secular problems such as marital problem, relationship problem, etc. Sometimes they fail to give appropriate instruction to laity’s satisfaction. It is may be due to lack of experience and knowledge.

The limited subjects taught to monks are not sufficient in such a globalized and competitive world today. Buddhist monks have to approach to modern issues. It would not possible to respond to modern issues without the knowledge of modern sciences. In order to help the society with such issues, monks also need to learn modern subjects as part of their education (*pariyatti*). The combination of both traditional and modern education would be very helpful for a proper understanding of the modern issues. Veerachart Nimanong, in his paper ‘Educational Inequality of Buddhist Monks and Novices in Thailand’, found out that according to the young monks and novices both traditional and university systems have to promote side by side. Their mutual integration supports for a better understanding of Buddhism and also secular problems.<sup>47</sup> In recent times, Buddhist has realized that the monastic curriculum needs to be expanded, “*the traditional monastery education...had failed to achieve these ends. The old system was too diffused, too fragmented, and too independent-minded to meet the needs of times.*”<sup>48</sup> And the modern Buddhist institution also tries to expand the curriculum with some new subjects. Counseling psychology could be added to monks’ education because it has become part of the monks’ life in the society.

The interdependent nature of the society is clearly demonstrated in *Sigalaka-sutta*<sup>49</sup>. There are five duties of the laity towards the monks and six duties of the monks towards the laity. The laity supplies the monks with physical and material supports including the daily offering of food and the donating of other requisites when needed. In return, the monks provide mental comforts to laity by means of counseling and teaching them the Dharma. These six duties of the monks towards the laity are concerned with ethical, spiritual and mental supports. Monks have to point out them what is wrong and encourage them living a good and ethical life. When they are in conflicts, they

<sup>46</sup> Brahm, Ajahn, 2008, *Opening the Door of Your Heart*, Australia: Hachette, p. 97.

<sup>47</sup> Nimanong, Veerachart, 2002, *Educational Inequality of Buddhist Monks and Novices in Thailand*, Graduate School of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Assumption University, accessed on Aug 28 2011, (See also PDF [http://assumptionuniv.academia.edu/veerachart/Papers/532404/The\\_Educational\\_Inequality\\_of\\_Buddhist\\_Monks\\_and\\_Novices\\_in\\_Thailand](http://assumptionuniv.academia.edu/veerachart/Papers/532404/The_Educational_Inequality_of_Buddhist_Monks_and_Novices_in_Thailand)

<sup>48</sup> McDaniel, Justin Thomas, 2009, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting words*, Bangkok: Silkworm Books, p. 109.

<sup>49</sup> Walse, Maurice, tr., 1995, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publication, p. 335.

have to show compassion and set out resolving conflicts. The Buddha advised monks to go and teach Dharma for the welfare and benefits of the society as found in *Mahavaggapali*:

*“Walk, monks, on tour for the blessing of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of devas and men.”*<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, the integration of both religious and secular subjects like psychology, counseling, sociology, etc. would help the monk students to understand the current problems of the world better and applicable of knowledge to solve the modern issues.

## Conclusion

The reflection of today society and its problems show that there are millions people suffer from depression and unbalance of psychological domain besides physical tortures. Importantly, Buddhism teaches to be the master of oneself nonetheless one's mind is bigger than himself. We often meet people who fail to maintain one's mental health and infected by psychological domain. They have enough wealth for physical needs, but never enough for psychological needs (lobha, dosa and moha). Buddhism as a religious institution of mental healing has been always offered canonical counseling techniques: the mindfulness meditation and through teachings. These help not only healing mental illness, but it improves a qualitative livelihood as well. In addition, the Buddhist teaching of dharma leads the people to right attitude and positive thoughts by handling badly accessing emotions. People would be benefited with moral standard by the bond to Buddhism as a spiritual path or religious institution. We can expect for healthy society balancing both spirituality and materiality by expanding mindfulness meditation to other field of treatments and peoples' art of living.

According to research findings, the importance of counseling is an indispensable service to the modern day and learning it by monks is crucial. The young generation of monks has understood that the wounded world needs to be healed. Therefore, at this gathering of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU), I would like to take the opportunity to suggest the Buddhist universities to integrate counseling psychology as a part of monastic education.

<sup>50</sup> Horner, I.B. tr., 1993, *The Book of Discipline*, Vol. XIV, Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 28.

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## Buddhist Pre Marriage Counseling



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Marriage is an important step in one's life. Marriage helps one to maintain happiness, though sharing life with another may become troublesome for various reasons. More than ever before, young people pay attention to Pre Marriage counseling because of those very problems which arise from sharing life. It is also noticed that some people attend counseling prior to their marriage because it provides support and guidance necessary to resolve both potential and actual problems. In all of this the family as an institution provides the basis for one's personal development. When families are disturbed in their development, people seek family counseling. If one family member becomes seriously ill, it impacts everyone in the family. Family counseling can be applied to families in various ways, either with individual family members or as a group with many family members who experience the same problem within the family or even with additional families who experience similar problems. The important points to examine when providing Buddhist Pre Marriage counseling are; what does the family mean to each of the members? How do they maintain the family as a group? What are their common goals? And what is the objective of the counseling? Generally, the main goal of Pre Marriage counseling is directed at establishing equilibrium within the family.

Family is a complex unit characterized by several orders and sub orders. Through counseling, family members become conscious of their roles, which is essential in maintaining the equilibrium. According to Mehler, the family can be viewed in two units namely parents and children, and husband and wife. The harmony between the family members is highly dependent on their ability to communicate effectively among themselves. It is often noted that in dysfunctional families, sound communication is lacking and it is due to the lack of ability to communicate that families are falling apart. Through counseling, the stress and mental pressures that arise through unhealthy family dynamics can be resolved, leading to a balance and harmony between the family members. Thus, an important task in succeeding as a family is effective communication.

Often, parents expect their off spring to achieve the dreams that they could not achieve for themselves. Therefore, the parents make decisions on behalf of their children in order to achieve their lost dreams. If children do not agree with the decisions made by parents, there will be conflicts between the two groups. When expectations remain unfulfilled, both parties become frustrated. Also in these matters the home, school, parents and teachers bear a huge responsibility in the individual development of a child. In such cases counseling must be done individually. Another aspect of family counseling is establishing mutual relationship between family members. A problem that the counselor may encounter is the difficulty in getting all the family members to a single meeting due to various reasons. However, difficult it may become, such meetings need to be arranged to help rebuild relationships between the parents and the children, which remains an important task in counseling.

The concept of family receives significant attention from both sociologists and psychologists. Their approach to resolve family issues are known as family therapies which constitute treatments in which the whole family is the focus, rather than an individual family member. Social scientists have shown that there are three basic human expectations namely safety, satisfaction of the basic needs

and undisturbed life. Also the dynamics arising from emotional states and interpersonal relationships among the family members contribute to the personal development and the welfare of each and every family member. For example, Murray Bowen explains that the family must be examined as a system with chronic anxiety as the basis of unhealthy family dynamics in which the place of siblings is given an important role. The structural theorist Salvador Minuchin explains that attentions must be paid to role relationships within the hierarchical family structure in family counseling. Jay Haley's strategic therapy looks at the family issues from a problem solving perspective. Virginia Satir, a feminist family theorist, examines family issues through interpersonal communications. These are indications that there are numerous ways to look at families in resolving unhealthy dynamics. A healthy family is the corner stone of a society and thus contributes not only to the progress of an individual and the society but also to a country at large. The two elements, the individual and the society are interdependent where one needs the other to survive. Social development evolves as a result of their interactions within this relationship. All these different methods provide an in depth understanding of family dynamics for the purpose of counseling and therapy.

Long before all these counseling methods were known, the Buddha, knowing that every human being wishes a peaceful and happy life, offered several discourses on healthy family dynamics and successful family Marriage life. Before we get marriage getting ready for the marriage is most important aspects and then we can learn many things in advance to the marriage. In achieving a peaceful and a happy life, the Buddha had shown a young Count Singāla a distinct path as discussed in the *Sigālovada Sutta*<sup>1</sup> of the *Dīgha Nikaya* (*D.N.*). Singala had the habit of waking up in the wee-small hours, taking a bath and in soaking wet clothes, worshiping six celestial directions namely the East, the South, the West, the North, the Bottom and the Top, seeking progress and happiness as a family tradition. After seeing this unrewarding activity, the Buddha strategically recommended to Singala to replace the six directions of worship with six groups worthy of respect, attention and support and to follow them in his search for peace and happiness. The recommended replacements were the Parents to the East, the Teachers to the South, the Family to the West, the Friends to the North, the Servants to the Bottom and the Noble Clergy to the Top. In this discourse, the Buddha spoke clearly of sixty one duties and responsibilities for the individual toward the above mentioned groups promoting harmony in the family and justice to the society. This list includes almost all the factors that are being discussed in the modern day family counseling and therapies.

In the Pali Suttas, the world family may be referred as *Kula*, *Vamsa* or *Gotta*.<sup>2</sup> Though *Sigālovada Sutta* takes a prominent place in Buddhist Family pre marriage Counseling, several other *Suttas* and *Jātaka* Stories on this subject can be found in the *Pāli Canon*. Some of them are as follows: *Mahaparinibbana sutta*, *Aggannu Sutta*, *Uggaha Sutta*, *Pattakamma Sutta*, *Migasāla Sutta*, *Sabbrahma Sutta*, *Vasala Sutta*, *Parabhava Sutta*, *Mahagovinda Sutta*, *Sattabhariya Sutta*, *Culavyuha Sutta*, *Mallikā Sutta*, *Cullavedella Sutta*, *Vatthu Sutta*, *Natthiputta Sutta*, *Dhitu Sutta*, *Vepulla Sutta*, *Vanijja Sutta*, *Vyaggapajja Sutta*, *Kinti Sutta*, *Parisa Sutta*, *Kosambi Sutta*, *Mahanama Sutta*, *Sakkanamassa Sutta*, *Itthibandhana Sutta*, *Purisa Bandhana Sutta*, *Sama Jataka* and *Māthuposatha Jātaka*

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<sup>1</sup> D.N.Sigālovada sutta

<sup>2</sup> Pali English Dictionary p.528

## Parent – Children Relationships

The Buddha used the analogy of the celestial direction east to depict the cardinal importance of parents in one's life. As the sun rises from the East depicting its cardinal importance as the first indicator of directions at dawn, there is none more valuable than one's parents in one's world. Parents give birth to their off-spring, bring them up and show them the right direction in this world, sacrificing for their growth and development. The Buddha mentioned that it is never possible for one to completely re-pay one's parents for these gifts and sacrifices. This becomes clear in the *Sabrahma Sutta*<sup>3</sup> of the *Anguttara Nikāya* in which the Buddha pays tribute to parents as “*Brahmāthi bikkhave māthupittunna metan adhivachanan pubbhadevathi, ahuneiyathi, bhikkave mathupinnametan adhivacanan*”. This means that the Buddha strategically endorsed parents in the place of Brahma ascribing them holiness. According to the Hindu philosophy the world is created by the Brahma. In this context, the parents who possess such Brahma qualities should be honored as such. His discourse on parents as “*matapitanukampitassa mahanama kulaputtassa vuddhiyeva paticancha na parihani*” stated also in the in the *Anguttara Nikaya Panch Vagga*. This means that the individual who receives the wholesome blessings of the parents can anticipate wholesome progress rather than unwholesome demise.

If we take note of the Buddha's biography, it becomes evident how the Buddha treated his parents. Subsequent to his mother *Queen Maha Maya*'s rebirth, He appeared in the *Tusita Divine Abode* to expound dhamma to her joy and comfort and to help her reach enlightenment. When *King Bimbisara*, His father, was sick, he expounded dhamma to help him heal his illness. The Buddha also helped his step-mother *Queen Maha Prajapathi Gotami* not only to enter but also to establish the Order of Bikkhuṇis. All of these depict examples of how He respected his parents.

In the *Mahā Mangala Sutta*, it is expounded that looking after the parents constitutes a major factor in happiness of an individual. Those who do not look after their parents cater to their down fall and suffering as discussed in the *Vasala Sutta*. According to *Pattakamma Sutta*, looking after the welfare of parents (*matapitharan sukheti pinethi*) constitutes a responsibility of the children. From children, the parents have only a few expectations. The children are supposed to support them (*bahathone karissati*); perform duties incumbent upon them (*kaccena thesan karissati*), keep up the lineage and good tradition (*kulavansam thapessati*), be worthy of their heritage (*dayajjan patijjati*), and transfer merits in due time (*petanan kalakantanān dhakkinan anupadassati*).

There are also expectations of the children from their parents. They are: restrain children from evil (*pāpā nivarenti*), exhort them in virtue (*kalyāna nivesanti*), give them skills for a wholesome profession (*sikkhan sikkhapenti*); encourage them to a suitable marriage (*patirupena dārena sanjojenti*) and the timely hand over of inheritance.

## Husband –Wife Relationships

In pre marriage counseling, pay more attention to learn the relationship between the partners. The trust between the husband and the wife is the basis for the welfare of the other family members. In the *Singāovada Sutta*, the Buddha discusses five factors for the husband to uphold and treat his

<sup>3</sup> A.II.Sabrahma Sutta p. 132

wife. They are namely showing respect (*sammāna*), being courteous (*avamānna*), being faithful (*anaticchariya*), handing over authority of the household management (*issariya vossaggaha*) and providing her with adornments (*alankāranappadanena*).

It is the duty of the husband to honor, love and care for his wife. In our society every one of us likes to be respected and honored. Similarly the same should not be denied to the wife when it's due. Also the husband shall not insult his wife nor shall he speak roughly or use foul language to hurt her feelings. A husband shall avoid involving in extramarital affairs. Now-a-days, such relationships could lead to sexually transmitted disease and many other illnesses such as Hepatitis B among others. These kind of unwholesome activities lead to disharmony and distrust between the partners and make the family unit dysfunctional. They may end up in divorce, irreversibly destroying the relationship. The wife also has five duties and responsibilities toward her husband. They are namely performing her duties (*susanvihita kammanta*), showing hospitality to relatives of both sides (*susangahita parijana*), watching over the goods brought home (*samhatan anurakkhanti*) and enthusiastic and skillful discharge of all her duties (*dakkhava hoti anlasa sabbanivesu*). These duties and responsibilities need to be taken seriously in order to create a harmonious environment for family members to grow. For example, the wife could take a lead role in the manner in which the family treat their friends and relatives; especially when treating relative on the husband's side. When neglected, this leads to a lot of dysfunction in all these areas, giving rise to stress and unpleasantness resulting in conflicts among family members. These things can adversely affect the individual development of the family members. It is the wife's responsibility to take care of the wealth earned and spend it in a manner to promote and achieve success of the family in terms of the family's future economic development and personal growth. The economic stability of families can be a strength for resolving family conflicts. It may also enable them to achieve unity and harmony among family members, when in conflict.

The Buddhist pre marriage Counseling is based on resolving issues before they turn into nasty conflicts. It's an approach based on problem prevention rather than conflict resolution. It addresses the root causes and effects and finds ways to prevent issues from becoming a conflict. If the husband and wife attend to their duties and responsibilities, their family experiences harmony and progress. This is the balance or the equilibrium conducive for the family to grow. This is the goal of the Buddhist pre marriage Counseling.

Though proclaimed 2600 years ago, the Buddha's teaching is aimed not only to achieve Nibbāna, but also to contain invaluable and significant socio-psychological guidelines toward a pragmatic approach which remains applicable to family life even in modern day society. The Buddha appreciated the advisory guidelines given to Visākha, the prominent lay female attendant at the time, by her father prior to her marriage. They are as follows:

- The issues or problems arising within the household should remain and resolve within the family democratically. (it is not about secrecy within a few family members)
- The issues or problems from outside the family should be left outside
- Give loans only to those who can afford to pay back.
- Do not give loans to those who cannot afford to pay back.
- Give to those who deserved to be given within the affordability without anticipating anything in return.

- Sit in a place that enables one to stand up when an elder arrives
- Eat healthy
- Sleep healthy
- Support your husband in all his right and appropriate efforts
- Care for and be hospitable to the parents of the husband

The Buddha also describes seven different types of wives in the *Sapthabharīyā Sutta*.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, they are as follows:

- *Vadhakasama Bahriyā* (Hostile wife): The wife who insults the husband and has unethical relationships with other men.
- *Chorasama Bahriyā* (Stealing wife): the wife is similar to a thief and spends and destroys the wealth earned by her husband.
- *Aiyasama Bahriyā* (Uncomfortable wife): the wife who speaks foul language and puts her husband in a very discomforting and an embarrassing position.
- *Matusama Bahriyā* (Motherly wife): the wife is similar to the mother of the husband who safeguards all earnings of the husband and taking care of him like a child.
- *Bhaginiṣama Bahriyā* (Sisterly wife): the wife who is like a sister and takes care of the husband similar to how a sister looks after a brother.
- *Sakisama Bahriyā* (Harmonious wife): the wife who becomes happy even at the sight of the husband and is happy all the time and maintains happiness of the husband.
- *Dasisama Bahriyā* (Servant wife): the wife serves like a servant attending to all duties and looks after the husband.

In the *Sanvāsa Sutta*<sup>5</sup>, the Buddha noted that the mutual relationship that exists between the man and wife may take the following characteristics.

A corpse like man (*chovo*) lives with a corpse like wife (*chāvā*)

A corpse like man (*chovo*) lives with a goddess like wife (*devi*)

A god like man (*devo*) lives with a corpse like wife (*chāvā*)

A god like man (*devo*) lives with a goddess like wife (*devi*)

The most harmonious couple is the god like man lives with a goddess like wife. This compatibility helps a family to develop family harmony, promoting individual growth while becoming a blessing to society. In promoting happiness in married life, the late Venerable Dr. K Sri Dhammananda<sup>6</sup> wrote the following to describe the mutual relationship that should exist between man and wife. A wife should provide the husband with love, attention, family expectations, trust, care of the children, household efficiency, food preparation, help to resolve problems, and the support he needs. In the same manner the husband has to fulfill toward his wife certain duties such as kindness, courtesy, socialization, safety, fairness, affection, honesty and civilized behavior and support.

<sup>4</sup> A.IV.SattabhariyāSutta pp 414

<sup>5</sup> A.II.Samvāsa Sutta p.110

<sup>6</sup> K.Dhammananada. A Happy Married Life, pp 25-26



The emotions such as love, affection and care are clearly explained in the *Purishabandana Sutta*<sup>7</sup> and *Itthibandana Sutta*<sup>8</sup> of the *Anguttara Nikaya*. The emotion of love between the man and women arises through the experiences involving the five senses: namely the figure, the smile, the talk, the tears, the clothes and the apparel, the voice and the touch. According to the Teachings of the Buddha, the powerful emotion of love evolves mutually in both individuals in the background of these experiences and progresses as a strong force incomparable to any other forces known to humans. The mutual love, care and trust are fundamental to the existence of a family. All of their problems can be resolved through effective and open communication as partners. This gives rise to happiness and balance. The Buddha has recommended ten points for the civic life of the average householder (*prutagjana*). They are as follow:

- Attend to the needs of your parents
- Devote yourself for the wellbeing of your children
- Provide safety and welfare to your wife
- Maintain mutual understanding and civic duties of the married life
- Look after the needs of your relatives
- Respect the elders
- Invite divine beings to rejoice in your wholesome deeds
- Bless the departed to be well, happy and peaceful
- Abide by the law of the land and
- Ground your family in a harmonious way of life free of unworthy efforts.

Once it was brought to the attention of the Buddha the question of an old man marrying a very young woman. In one of the *Suttas* in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, The Buddha points out that due to mental and physical tensions and the distractions in these circumstances, the family life cannot be maintained successfully. In the same *Nikāya*, it is mentioned that when a person is born to a harmonious family, this person becomes a blessing not only to the family but also to their environment of friends and others similar to the summer rains that make the crops thrive while generating a “good feeling” all around. In the *Migāsala Sutta*, the Buddha applies the term “*sadāra santushti*” to explain that with harmony, husband and wife gain the maximum benefits of their sexual life, the pinnacle of married life. The successful married life or a harmonious family is a blessing not only to the people around them but it is also a state to which even the divine beings pay respect, according to the *Sakkaanamassa Sutta*.<sup>9</sup>

Writing an analytical account of *Singālovada Sutta*, S. Daya Fernando<sup>10</sup> explains that the wife shall not be understood to be a slave of the husband while both of them enjoy equal rights in the partnership which becomes a close association of two trusting friends.

The book “The Chicken and the Duck”, of *Ajahn Chah* provides a good anecdote for pre marriage and family counseling. A newly married couple went for a walk together in a wood, one

<sup>7</sup> A.V.Purisa Bandhana Sutta p .80-81

<sup>8</sup> A.V.Itthibandana Sutta p.80-81

<sup>9</sup> S.I Sakkanamassa Sutta .p.416

<sup>10</sup> S.Day Fernando. *Budu Samaye Desapālana Cintanaya* (Sinhala Edition)p.175

fine summer's evening after dinner' They were having such a wonderful time being together until they heard a sound in the distance:

"Quack! Quack"

"Listen, said the wife, that must be a chicken"

"No no' that was a duck," said the husband.

"No, I'm sure that was a chicken," she said.

"Impossible, Chickens go 'Cock a doodle doo' ducks go 'Quack, Quack!' That's a duck, darling," he said, with the first signs of irritation.

"Quack! Quack" It went again.

"See! It's a duck" he said.

"No dear' that's a chicken. I'm positive" she asserted, digging in her heels.

"Listen wife! That is a duck. D-u-c-k, duck! Got it? He said strongly.

"But it's a chicken" she protested.

"It's a friggin' duck, you, you..."

And it went "Quack, Quack! Again before he said something he oughtn't.

The wife was almost in tears. "But it's a chicken"

The husband saw the tears welling up in his wife's eyes and, at least, remembered why he had married her. His face softened and he said gently, "Sorry, darling, I think you must be right. That is a chicken."

"Thank you darling," She said and she squeezed his hand.

"Quack! Quack!" came the sound through the woods, as they continued their walk together in love.

The insight that the husband finally awakened to was this: who cares whether it is a chicken or a duck? What was much more important was their harmony together and that they could enjoy their walk on such a fine summer evening. How many marriages are broken over unimportant matters? How many divorces cite "chicken or duck" stuff.

When we reflect on this story, we will remember one's priorities. The marriage is more important than being right about whether it is a chicken or a duck. And besides, how many times have we been absolutely, certainly, and positively convinced that we are right- only to find our later, we were in fact totally wrong? Who knows, that could have been a genetically modified chicken made to sound like a duck!

Throughout this paper I have attempted to point out the importance of the Buddhist principles in pre marriage counseling. Therefore, in concluding, it becomes obvious that maintaining the functionality of families impacts society because the family is the smallest unit of society. The family unit provides a conducive environment for the emergence of a united and just society. In the Buddha's Teachings, we recognize the concept that each person is responsible for his/her own actions and behavior and must accept the accompanying results whether good or bad. The teachings also recommend guidelines to lead a harmonious family life, as an average householder, with wholesome outcomes indicating that this Teaching is not only about human suffering and reaching

Nibbana. The importance lies in the fact that these principles of counseling are focused to alleviate root causes in an approach to prevent problems from arising, rather than problem solving. It's a way of family health promotion. Though the goal of this Teaching is achieving enlightenment, the same concepts can be applied to maintaining a harmonious life. From this discussion it becomes evident that most of the concepts of modern psychology and sociology are similar to the Buddha's Teachings. Only through analytical discussions can the Buddhist concepts be explained to the benefit of people who need help in healing and achieving inner peace and happiness.

# Buddhist Social Work: A Case Study of the Samrong General Hospital



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## Prelude:

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a crucial element in contemporary organizations and determines their future to a significant extent, especially in the healthcare business, which has been changing and developing according to emerging trends such as the problems of insufficiency and the inequitable distribution of healthcare professionals, as well as certain morality and ethical issues. While the public perception is that healthcare professionals who are working to heal patients and save lives must have kind and generous minds, this is not always the case and, in HRD, it remains necessary to develop the minds, attitudes and perceptions of healthcare professionals to be ready to serve others. Many Thai people are very familiar with Buddhism because most ceremonies and ways of life are related to Buddhist cultural practices. Buddhist teachings are implanted into their minds as well as the understanding that their ancestors followed the same methods and principles. Some believe that the nature of belief is changing along with changes in contemporary society, which privileges material goods above spiritual ones. In response, it is necessary to reinvigorate Dhamma teaching so that it speaks more clearly to present generations. This research is, therefore, based on certain Buddhist ethical principles, such as the five precepts (*Pañcasīla*), the basis of success (*Iddhipada 4*), the sublime states of mind (*Brahmavihāra 4*), and meditation. These have been implemented in a Samut Prakan province hospital since its inception. Hospital founders concentrated on creating ethical and potential human resources rather than creating task-specific activities. This is a qualitative research study featuring management level and operational level employees in in-depth face-to-face interviews together with a focus group with relevant participants exploring the Buddhist social work scheme in this hospital. Findings and recommendations from the research are presented.

## 1. Introduction

Once newly graduated students change the academic life for the working world, most of them look for satisfying jobs. Important factors include being well-known and secure companies offering reasonable salary. However, they are rarely able to obtain what they want because most companies wish to minimize their costs and maximize their profits. Some organizations, especially in Asian countries, require employees to be responsible for multi-tasking. For instance, one person could occupy more than two positions with diverse duties. Previously, especially in Japan, high levels of loyalty to firms were engineered. It was common for people to work for one company from graduation to retirement. Moreover, they might serve that company through three generations. However, many

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of these attitudes, values and lifestyle have changed. New generations do not care to work for a single large company for their whole career. Owing to economic and social development, they have better opportunities to vary their working lives, start their own businesses or create their own working environment. This has changed recruitment patterns. Some companies have responded by promoting the idea of lifelong employment to attract new graduates. The Samrong General Hospital, for example, brings Buddhist principles to the workplace and promotes socialization in Buddhist concepts for staff members. The founders and top executive management perform as if they were parents of their staff members and create a “paternalist” environment. They feel happy to work there under Buddhist doctrines that they practice in their real daily lives both for personal and working reasons.

## 2. Literature Review

There are many subdivisions within Buddhism, but most can be classified into three major branches: Theravāda (“Way of the Elders”), Mahayana (“Greater Vehicle”) and Vajrayana (“Diamond Vehicle”). Theravāda is the older version of Buddhism which believes in nibbāna, that everyone can attain it by purifying the mind and abandoning all worldly pleasures. This school follows the basic principles of the Pāli canon and, by this standard, may be identified with primitive Buddhism. Large numbers of people in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Cambodia are Theravāda Buddhists. Mahayana has been subdivided into several diverse schools, such as Zen, Pure Land and Nichiren, with the purpose of reinterpreting the Buddha’s esoteric doctrines to gain universal acceptance. The People’s Republic of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam are within the Mahayana sect and exhibit a more liberal interpretation of the Buddha’s teaching. Vajrayana Buddhism tradition is an esoteric sect that is predominant in Tibet, Mongolia and Nepal and promotes the idea of enlightenment being achievable as if being struck by a lightning bolt (Anonymous; Anonymous, Religion Facts, 2007).

Brummans and Hwang (2010) conducted an empirical research study into Mahayana Buddhism concerning the organization of everyday practices within the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, which is a Taiwanese Buddhist nonprofit voluntary organization. They found that the practice of Buddhist compassion and wisdom were implemented in an organizational context, showing significant interactions between Buddhist philosophy and organizational activities. In Thailand, the majority of the population is Buddhist and, thus, most ethical principles come from Theravāda Buddhism, its beliefs and faiths which are the basic foundations influencing Thai people’s thoughts, personalities and actions. The Buddhist philosophy is both simple and very practical. It has been applied to some organizational contexts (Lovichakorntikul & Walsh, 2011). Wongphaet (2010) described the “Five Precepts” as a foundation to develop peoples’ minds with a direct impact upon job performance. Further, the “*Iddhipāda 4*” inspires aspiration, effort, dedication and investigation and is a core part in the working life. The “*Brahmavihāra 4*” is composed of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and neutrality. It is at the heart of the issues involved in people living together. At the Samrong General Hospital, when there is a meeting, this is also an opportunity to provide *Dhamma* teaching and give their employees various insights and suggestions (Lovichakorntikul & Walsh, 2011).

### **Buddhist Principle: The Five Precepts (*Pañcasīla*)**

The Lord Buddha stressed to all people the importance of trying to develop the soul in the midst of the hardships of life on earth. People can develop themselves to win the bliss of enlightenment or the highest level possible in the next world, which is also known as eternal bliss or nibbāna (Cittasobhano, 1982). In addition, to protect lives, property, family, true information and the wisdom to which human beings can aspire, the Lord Buddha has laid down the five precepts or *Pañcasīla* as a human virtue that is part of the basic morality of the Buddhist philosophy. Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (2010) interpreted the meanings of each precept in different aspects as explained in the table below:

<b>Order of Precepts</b>	<b>Explanations</b>
1. To abstain from killing any living beings	To give life safety to oneself by not killing other people/animals
2. To abstain from stealing or taking what is not given	To give property safety to oneself by not stealing others' belongings
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct	To give spouse safety to oneself by not have sexual relationship with others' spouses
4. To abstain from telling a lie, false speech	To give faithfulness to oneself and others
5. To abstain from intoxicants causing carelessness	To give consciousness to oneself and others

**Source: Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (2010).**

This concept is similar that of Thanissaro Bhikkhu (2011), who explained that if we maintain the standards of the precepts, as the Buddha mentioned, we are providing unlimited safety for all lives, particularly the first precept. We also provide unlimited safety for other possessions and sexuality, and unlimited truthfulness and mindfulness in our communication with them. When we find that we can trust ourselves in matters like these, we gain an undeniably healthy sense of self-respect. In this interpretation, the concept of reciprocity is made very clear. The actions of an individual will rebound directly and proportionately in the future. The temporal delay is uncertain but causality is certain. While it may appear that unjust acts are not being punished, this may be an issue of temporality. The same, presumably, must be true for rewards to be received for virtuous acts performed. It may also be the case that the reward for the act will not arrive in the same form in which the original act manifested itself (Lovichakorntikul & Walsh, 2011). Keeping the five precepts in daily life means not only avoiding antagonism but also protecting other people's lives by giving them safety in these five aspects. Consequently, the society would be peaceful and orderly.

Normally, working in a healthcare organization, to maintain the first precept is not a problem. Wongphaet (2011) observed “We do not kill anyone, instead we help patients to be safe and save their lives also. But most interviewees agreed that taking the fourth precept is a really difficult one since they always talk nonsense, chatter or sometimes they have to comfort patients or soothe them. This is relevant to the business world as well. In this particular situation, the teaching from Phramongkolthepmuni (Mata, 2010) is a good example stating that the holy speech is worth doing because one will have a holy word from telling the truth and not be incoherent. People who observe the fourth precept will apparently have nice white teeth and a good smell. He or she will have holy and powerful speech which leads to success and truthfulness in the next life, if it can be sustained in this life.

### ***Buddhist Principle: The Basis of Success (Iddhipāda 4)***

It is the basis of success or path of accomplishment (Phradhammapiṭaka, 2003) which consists of 1) *Chanda*: will, zeal, aspiration; 2) *Viriya*: energy, effort, exertion, perseverance; 3) *Citta*: thoughtfulness, active thought, dedication; and 4) *Vīmaṇsā*: investigation, examination, reasoning, testing. Whereas Phra Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1957) identified that *Iddhipāda 4* is the chain of continuous righteousness and each form of goodness has its own particular duty starting from *Chanda*, which is the basic foundation supporting other virtues. *Viriya* is how to pursue until one reaches the target by acting bravely. *Citta* is the intention within one’s mind and not giving up from doing, including the sense of concentration. The last one, *Vīmaṇsā* is the way to investigate causes and effects and improve to the better and the best ultimately by having totally wisdom. With this virtue, it will take anyone to be successful in worldly life and in attaining the nibbāna at large (Phrarajabhanavavisudh, 2004).

### ***Buddhist Principle: The Sublime states of mind (Brahmavihāra 4)***

This virtue is composed of 1) *Mettā*: loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill; 2) *Karuṇā*: compassion; 3) *Muditā*: sympathetic joy, altruistic joy, no envy; and 4) *Upekkhā*: equanimity, poise, neutrality (Phradhammapiṭaka, 2003). *Brahmavihāra 4* means the Dhamma of *brahma* which is the Dhamma principle for human beings and it will help us to have purely lives. Whoever can keep his or her mind neutrally, he or she can maintain the precepts at all times and might subsequently attain the wisdom within (Anonymous, 2004).

## **3. Methodology**

This paper is an empirical case study, consisting of research using a qualitative method along with the secondary data in order to scrutinize facts from the real situation in the Samrong General Hospital. Interviews were conducted in person and on an in-depth basis, in addition to focus groups; which were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Some interviewees were contacted in advance for interviews, so as to obtain the right and relevant participants. Other respondents were contacted by chance to balance the data, not to receive only well-prepared information and to address overly

homogeneity of data. The Managing Director, the Human Resource Manager, chiefs of various departments, and operational staff members were interviewed by answering specific questions. Further, their body language was also observed and it was found that this was meaningful to these findings. Secondary data from articles, Dhamma books, online accesses and thesis papers have also been integrated into the research.

#### **4. Analysis - Overview of the Samrong General Hospital**

The hospital was established in 1981 by a couple of medical doctors who desired to have a place to save the lives of patients and injured people in Samut Prakan province. Before that, it was very difficult to access remote hospitals in Bangkok and many patients would die before being able to receive medical treatment. When they opened the private clinic, there were only two hospitals available but now there are 26 private hospitals nearby. Thus it is highly competitive for the healthcare business in that area but the 250-bed Samrong General Hospital remains one of the leading medical institutions in Samut Prakan province because of its policies, management principles and, it is claimed, Buddhist-based organizational practices.

Founders Dr. Sutep and Dr. Prapa Wongphaet graduated from German universities and had a clear vision that: "This hospital will save patients' lives and help them to get better, we do not want to make any business or aim for profits from patients' lives." Consequently, they have never ever asked any patients before helping them that "Do you have money?" or asked them to make a deposit in advance (Wongphaet, 2011; Wongsutal, 2011). The first thing for all employees to do for patients is to help and save their lives.

More than 600 staff members, including physicians, nurses, nursing assistants and back office staff members serve about 1,800–2,000 outpatients daily. Approximately 60% of them are patients with the social security fund program, of whom some 110,000 people are registered with Samrong General Hospital. More than 600,000 patients are treated annually. From an internal survey, it was determined that patients were impressed with staff members and services.

In 2000, the Samrong General hospital was the first in Samut Prakan province to receive ISO 9002 certification and was recertified in 2006; it was also accredited by the Healthcare Accreditation Institute, receiving Hospital Accreditation (HA), again the first hospital to do so in Samut Prakan. In 2009, it was the first hospital in the province to receive ISO 9001 certification and, in 2011, HA reaccreditation was received. Since 2006, the hospital has received best organization award in Labour Relations for five years consecutively, which brought them pride. With a good relationship between employers and employees, this corporation sees no need for a labour union in its workplace. Thai law is very repressive towards freedom of association, freedom of speech and collective bargaining in the workplace.

#### ***Organizational Policies***

The first crucial policy of the Samrong General Hospital is to refuse to perform procedures which they consider to be morally questionable, such as abortion and sexual reassignment surgery.

They claim they wish only to do ‘good’ and ethical actions, including “transparency” with respect to accounting and financial systems. In addition, they have just one accounting system for submission to the Revenue Department (RD) of Thailand ever since their establishment. As a result, Ms. Laiyangkurn (2011) indicated that this accounting and taxation system for the RD represents her most proud lifetime achievement. Being an honest person makes her feel comfortable and happy to work with and, consequently, the Government Saving Bank is in the process of providing Samrong General Hospital with a “Good Governance” award in the year 2011.

This policy also applies in the marketing department, in which they claim or launch any programs to customers, then they meant as they stated to them. As a Marketing Manager who has been with this organization since she was a trainee in the accounting section in 1982, Ms. Krigchak (2011) felt very proud of working in this hospital since she has never told a lie to her patients. Whatever she promises to her clients, she can do it without any change. She is happy with her life that she does not make any sins by breaking the fourth precept because of the hospital’s policy.

With the original intention, the founders wished to be a “safe shelter” for patients and employees in Samrong district. Moreover, they think that the hospital is a place that they could earn more merits because it is a place to save patients’ lives. Once the Social Security Office operated in 1991, the Samrong General Hospital accepted employees and people who have a medical care service in 1992. Since then, they have been serving this group more than 20 years with the same standards as other patients. Because of the large numbers of patients in this group and also other patients, the revenue could cover all expenses and make them pursue their objective.

To expand their business is not the main idea for them. They would prefer to have a small size that they can take a “closed-look” and prolong the family-like or paternalistic environment in their organization. Hence, they stress on “quality” more than “quantity.”

For the master plan, everyone in the hospital participates in order to share their ideas and suggestions. They have plans for building up new generations to replace the old staff who are going to retire in the future by connecting them with Buddhist principles particularly the “*Brahmavihāra* 4.” Especially the loving-kindness, Mr. Wongphaet (2011) stated that it would help his new staff members who work for the operational level dramatically. According to the new employees, most of them are still young. They need to learn and have more responsibilities. Regularly they make some mistakes by their carelessness or being late to work, fortunately he handles these problems by having the senior staff to be in charge of this section. With her mercy and warm-hearted, she could sit in their hearts by means of giving sweets and snacks to them; understanding them; and talking with them nicely.

### ***Organizational Cultures***

The dominant organizational culture of this firm is to train its employees to be “good, smart, and happy” persons respectively. To compare the healthcare business staff with other fields such as the manufacturing or factory staff, the conspicuous point is people who work for hospitals are likely to have tender minds and soft characters. It is much easier to train them. Therefore, it reflects to the organization’s cultures at some degrees.

The Managing Director has expressed that every policies and projects should get started from the top and senior executive management going down to the operational level. The role model persons play a vital part for their subordinates to follow, then they should pay respect to everyone including their followers, and not look down to them. Subsequently, it will be like a chain reaction that will get back to the senders. As a small piece of jigsaws, everyone goes to the same direction and ultimate goal, eventually they will reach their aim. And it will be a nice “whole picture” of the corporate.

To support doing good deeds is a positive thinking to create a nice working atmosphere in the Samrong General Hospital. They encourage their employees who come up with good ideas and give them a chance to do so. Not only for the organization’s projects but also for employees’ benefits, for instance, they have a “handicraft club” to teach participants having more skills, producing some products, and earning some money for a side-line job. Whereas some off-duty staff members could set up booths at the hospital to sell their goods.

### ***Management Styles***

The organization chart is a horizontal-oriented. They do not have several lines of commanders in order to have rapidness and flexibility in management and making decisions. Hierarchy is one of the obstacles in organizational management. According to Kettley (1995) explicates the components of human resource management strategy which typically accompany the move to a flatter structure are: 1) a greater emphasis upon team working; 2) cross functional working; and 3) employee involvement or empowerment. At the Samrong General Hospital, everyone can come and talk to the Managing Director directly.

One-minute meeting every morning is one of their strategies to implement in the hospital. Only the urgent issues or updated information will be reported to the Managing Director. Thirty-minute meeting will have every week for each department and One-hour monthly meeting is for the management team. Every six months, they will hold an executive meeting for a few days to examine, analyze, and plan ahead for hospital’s directions (Wongphaet, 2011).

Managing people is the first priority to do before managing tasks, therefore, they emphasize on souls and minds of their employees by applying the Buddhism into their working environment. SHA (Wongphaet, 2011) stands for Sustainable Health Care and Health Promotion by Appreciation and Accreditation that the management team has designed for its work. Furthermore, they encourage their employees to create the learning organization, and to understand life and working approach by applying consciousness, supporting concentration, and implementing their wisdom to solve problems acquiring benefits for all.

Once they face with problems or obstacles, they will communicate and search for causes. After that they will analyze, adjust, and correct them. Back to 2006, Ms. Nijjanpansri (2011), the Human Resource (HR) Manager expressed that the HR department had surveyed and found out that more than 90% of their staff indicated that they were happy in their lives and working with this organization. These happiness indexes showed for 5 years consecutively. With the effort of HR department, they were working on the survey again, but on the other hand they were looking for the hardship of their employees and finally they came up with the problem of their debts. Hence, they

set up “The Samrong General Hospital Saving Cooperative Limited” to solve financial situations of their employees. It was a good example that they managed and tried to please their staff.

### **Projects/Activities**

The organization has provided several projects/activities for their staff members to support them working happily. Most of them are base on the Buddhist principles as follows:

#### **1. Internal Projects/Activities**

- “Inexpensive Lunch Project” has been operating about 10 years ago. It costs only Baht 5 per meal. This program helps employees to save their money on living. In reality some staff quit from this hospital, then they came back again because of this program since they could save more money if they work here. For instance they have 3 meals/day, it will be only Baht 15.
- “Half-price Rental Apartment” provides for employees who have a salary less than Baht 10,000 which means employees pay for the rental charge only 50% and another 50% will be paid by the hospital. And another good advantage for this program is that they can only walk from their residency to the workplace, then they can save for the transportation charges as well.
- “Half-price Shoes” is another project that the firm would like to give more benefits to staff members, so they pay only a half price of their shoes and the hospital pay the rest for them.
- “Free 3 Uniforms” for one year and a half to their employees. Some companies give 2 uniforms to their staff every year but this idea is more reasonable. Since Thai people rarely use the dryer machine, once their uniforms get wet, then they will get troubles with the shortage of their uniforms.
- “Scholarship” for employees and their children which is no obligations and conditions. More than 20 years ago, the founders had a broad vision by sending their employees to study at a master’s level. All of them still have been working for the hospital until now.
- “Making Merits” on a monthly basis for ones who were born in each month operated by the HR department. The activities include making donation (*Danā*), praying, listening to Dhamma sermons, and meditation. This is to emphasize that their career is a merit making one which they will receive good things from their good deeds every day and to assure them to be proud of themselves. It is such a good activity and help participants feel happy and get a chance to do good deeds together on their special occasions.
- “Practice Dhamma and Meditation” on the first day of every month. According to they will have new employees start working on that day. This is kind of a Dhamma orientation for them as well, in the mean time other staff members can attend this program and will not count as absentees.
- “Dhamma Retreat” will provide for supervisors, leaders, and ones who are interested in Dhamma practices. This program will arrange for 7 days with the Young Buddhist Association Under Royal Patronage in Pathum Thani province, and will not count as absentees. The corporate will provide a ride and support all expenses for attendants.

- “Retirement Plan” for staff members who are going to retire, Mr. Wongphaet will give them suggestions and plan for their future. Some want to extend working, while someone want to further their study to be an instructor. They will get support from the organization.

## 2. External Projects/Activities

- “Health Education” is to promote how to take care of good health to the community in Samrong District.
- “Free Physical Check-up” to nearby community and policemen in that area.
- “Anti-Drugs” is a program that the Samrong General Hospital provides for schools and community and gives knowledge on drugs in order to prevent them from drugs and to help addicts stop taking drugs. The Samrong General Hospital is a “White Hospital” in Samut Prakan province as well.
- “Samrong Ruamjai Foundation” was established in 1983 and has been helping the needy since then.
- “Scholarship” to youths on the Children’s day and other occasions in community around Samut Prakan area and also donating book supplies and stationery to schools.
- “Mobile Blood Donation”
- “Vocation Education” is a teaching program to housewives to learn how to develop themselves and improve their skills to earn more money.

## ***Spiritual Environment and Development***

With their objectives to be “A giver” to their employees and community, it was explicit that the founders and top executive management have been performing this scheme since then. They would like to help miserable patients to be happy, and in case they could not help and they would be dead, they desire to help them to be rest in peace. And the patient’s relatives feel good that the hospital gives a good treatment. Moreover, the staff on Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Samrong General Hospital was trained to know-how of giving good suggestions and taking care of patients who are going to pass away, comforting them to be calm down, also inviting the Buddhist monks to preach them and pray for them.

On the back of employees’ identification card (ID), there are 6 declarations: 1) Be loyal to the organization; 2) Be nice to all patients; 3) Love and honor all co-workers like a “Samrong Family”; 4) Follow the rules and regulations of organization; 5) Be diligent, honest, and responsible; and 6) improve oneself to develop the corporate. Thus, this is a statement that will remind all of staff members to perform good deeds everyday when they put on their ID.

Besides, the HR department showed the movie “*Departures*” to staff members. It was a Japanese movie which won the academy award winner for best foreign language film in the U.S. and received 10 Japan academy prize awards in 2009. It was about an encoffineer who performed his duties with his heart and devoted all his effort to decorate corpses beautifully. The main idea

from this movie was that although they were dead, but he prepared the dead bodies be ready for the cremation. He did not behave in a bad manner or neglect to them; in the mean time the staff members are in charge of persons who are still alive. After watching this film, most of employees got in tears and made a resolution to take a good care of their patients. It was very touching and useful to cultivate senses of morality by this method (Nijjanpansri, 2011).

In addition, the HR department provides a basic course for their new employees training them to be good helpers with their pride such as one staff member working in a service aid department for 3 years, Mr. Wongsutal (2011) pointed out that “I’m very proud of my job to help patients and save their lives. I’m doing like “a giver” and I give help to everyone without any prejudice, unfairness, and discrimination. And I never expected to get anything back from them.” Before working here, he had experienced as a salesman, chef, and clerk in various places. Finally he decided to follow his father who has been working with this hospital for 18 years and he said that he is happy every day and he does not want to change to other jobs or even change to another department in this firm because at his point only 3 minutes he can save others’ lives. Thus, it is very important for him to do so. Once he helps these people, he feels happy within. During the interview, he always had a big smile on his face and his eyes.

The persons who give out with their pure intention will get good things in return. It was proved by Mr. Wongsutal (2011) that his patients always come back to visit him and buy some snacks for him treating like he is their child or relative. One kind of situations that happens quite often is that he has free meals because the food owners in that area do not charge it. They told him that he took a good care of them when they were in the hospital.

Not only the aspects from their patients, but also the warm feeling from their employees will be the happiness index that indicates how working environment of this firm would be. Ms. Suwannawin (2011) addressed her feeling that she is eager to work every day, with her 18 year-experiences. During her weekends, she is looking for Mondays to go to work. She feels like this is her family. Similarly, Mr. Wongsutal (2011) said that “We spend time working here more than we are at home, so I feel like this in my second home. We are brothers and sisters. Everybody gives hands to help each other. We are happy here.” Additionally, Ms. Kongpreecha (2011) added that “Working at this hospital for 30 years, it likes a love-bondage and makes me feel that this organization is more than my house.” Further, Ms. Roadduang (2011) impressed on organizational culture that everyone greets and bows to each other both in the morning and in the evening. She feels like being in a warm family. The corporate also gives a chance for employees to study and practice Dhamma. Hence, they could calm down their minds, and have more consciousness (Onanong, 2011; Roadduang, 2011).

Likewise, Ms. Onanong (2011) explained to her subordinates that “We are so lucky to have a good boss who is generous to us and to our patients so we have to do our best for our hospital.” In addition, she also shares Dhamma teachings with her patients and patients’ relatives by praying and meditating with them (Seangtharathip, 2011; Onanong, 2011). Correspondingly, Ms. Wongsirinopakun (2011) indicated that her department always sponsor for the Dhamma books providing for patients free of charge. This method helps her staff to read more Dhamma teaching as well. Once the staff members have Dhamma inside their minds and they practice in everyday life, then they can serve patients with fully service-minded which come out of their pure intentions as Swanson and Holton (2001) cited that the HR professionals use a tool for the benefits of the organization. With this method, however, it is beneficial to both employees and the corporate.

From the internal projects such as the “Inexpensive Lunch Project” and “Monthly Making Merits” providing for their employees, the HR department has extended these 2 programs to be successful in 2011 as following:

1. “Full of Merits” is the project that supports any staff members who practice 3-minute meditation in each department every day. They can do it 3 times a day: morning, noon, and afternoon. Once one does it, he or she will receive a “meal coupon” amounting Baht 5. Then they will get meal for free and if they practice meditation 3 times/day, totally they will have 3 coupons. It means they can save their money in each day. Ms. Nijjanpansri (2011) and the HR department emphasize this project by following up to each department and taking pictures of these activities and post on the board. It was a good encouragement.

At first, some departments could not make it, for example the ICU section, thus they take turn to do so (Seangtharathip, 2011); the security guard section has no place to meditate, then they just sit on the floor in front of the Chinese spirit house next to the hospital (Nijjanpansri, 2011); for the service aid section, they have to be ready to serve patients all the time, as a result they have a standing-meditation for 3 minutes after 1-minute morning meeting (Wongsutal, 2011). Whereas at the beginning some departments get against from young members, however the head of that department encourage them to try and later on they could meditate longer starting from 3 minutes to 5 minutes and up to 10 minutes which they themselves ask for it (Laiyangkurn, 2011; Seangtharathip, 2011).

For the back office staff members, they get together at 7:45 am at the conference room on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to do the morning chanting and meditation from Mondays to Fridays every week (Charoenchai, 2011; Laiyangkurn, 2011). From the record of HR department, it showed that the numbers of coupons is increasing originating from 3,440 coupons in April to 4,364 coupons in May and up to 4,752 coupons in June 2011 (Nijjanpansri, 2011).

This program is very successful that each department could gain more “free meal” coupons and they have a “coupon box” in each department, whenever anyone get a coupon, he or she will drop it in that box to share to others. And the one who needs to get a meal, he or she will draw one coupon from the box. Some departments use these coupons to buy some special foods to eat together occasionally. During the focus group interview, some departments realized that the service aid staff members really need to have more meal coupons, so they will share to them later on. (Kongpreecha, 2011; Laiyangkurn, 2011; Nijjanpansri, 2011).

2. “Monthly Making Merits” started from the HR Manager. She thought that in the previous year, employees learned how to receive from others on their birthdays such as getting a birthday gift from the HR department, receiving blessing and Dhamma sermon from the monks. Hence, in this year she would like them to be “a giver” instead (Nijjanpansri, 2011).

This project will be held on the forth Friday of every month for everyone who is interested in making merits not only for the birthday people. They will meditate and

listen to Dhamma sermons from Buddhist monks. Further, the alms offering will be prepared by the donors. This is the more advanced stage that they have cultivated to their employees' minds. Mr. Wongphaet (2011) stated that our lifetime is very short, we should have a clear objective in our life. To purify our minds is a good thing to do so and our minds today should be better and purer than yesterday. This is kind of a spiritual development in our everyday life (Phrarajabhavanavisudh, 2004).

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The Samrong General Hospital applies both approaches: the Buddhist principles, and the Innovative management approaches in managing their human resources as below:

1. The Buddhist principles: basically they base on Buddhist principles since the beginning as the statement of Phradharmakosajarn expressed in the 30 years of the Samrong General Hospital book (2011) that "The Wongphaet family has been supporting Wat Prayurawongsawas Waraviharn before 1957. This family is aware of the importance of Buddhism. It is noticed that they all support and take good care of Buddhist monks and laypeople. Besides, they bring Buddhist doctrines and implement them by inviting monks to give monthly Dhamma lecture to their employees. In addition, they also promote staff members to make donation, take five precepts, and meditate in order to develop their quality of life. It is such a good work to create a peaceful world." It would claim that this corporate has truly built a "Buddhist Social Work" in their workplace.

From observation, the researcher found out that the most conspicuous of Buddhist principles that is applies in this firm was *Mettā* or loving-kindness. The teaching of Phramongkolthepmuni (Mata, 2010) clarified about the powerful of *Mettā* that everyone can do it. We all have loving-kindness to others as if mothers love their children, in other word, we will get tremendous of loving-kindness in return. For the Samrong General Hospital, starting from the founders passed along to the second generation, the Managing Director. One of the interviewees showed her impression of the top management level by giving a case of one staff members who got pregnant and found out that her child had a thalassemia. Once Mr. Wongphaet had known about this issue, he told her not to get an abortion and he would support all treatment expenses. As a result, that child is still alive until now.

Particularly, *Mettā* from the Managing Director, there were two more witnesses, Ms. Charoenchai (2011) and Ms. Laiyangkurn (2011) who felt very impressed and appreciated in his mercy and support both verbally and performingly. Ms. Charoenchai got a breast cancer, brain tumor, and thyroid but she used Dhamma and medical treatment to heal her symptoms. Sometimes, she felt suffered but Mr. Wongphaet gave her warmed words, cheered her up, and concerned about her health. This was the same as Ms. Laiyangkurn who also got a brain tumor. At this present, both of them are normal. They can work regularly and also give Dhamma talks to the sufferers by showing their cases to them.

From the employees' impression, it presented that leadership is truly vital in each organization especially the leaders who have morality in their minds and apply

to management policy. Moreover, leaders handle and organizes thing with their ethical thinking, then come out through their speeches, and finally transit into their actions. Subordinates could perceive and touch by their hearts as well (Krigchak, 2011; Onanong, 2011; Suwannawin, 2011; Wongsirinopakun, 2011).

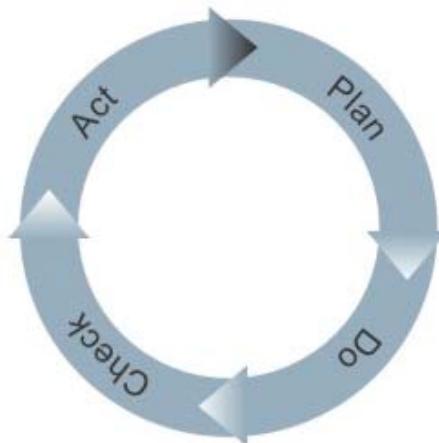
2. The HR management approaches: according to Stone (2009), he indicates how to manage human resources especially on-the-job experience which starts from:
  - 2.1 **Coaching** is planned one-to-one instruction. The coach sets a good example of what is to be done.
  - 2.2 **Mentoring** involves the creation of a learning relationship with the mentor acting as a coach and role model.
  - 2.3 **Behavior Modeling** or observational learning is how people learn from others' experience.

As the above method, the Samrong General Hospital always follows this step by step and also showed in its policy.

3. Another perspective from Mr. Wongphaet (2011) was a linkage between the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (PDCA) or the Deming Wheel which is used for the quality management approach (Anonymous, Mind Tools) and *Iddhipāda 4*. Additionally, the HR department implemented this approach in its practices, analyzing from several programs and activities. The four-step in the PDCA clarifies as follows:
  4. **Plan:** Identifying and analyzing the problem.
  5. **Do:** Developing and testing a potential solution.
  6. **Check:** Measuring how effective the test solution was, and analyzing whether it could be improved in any way.
  7. **Act:** Implementing the improved solution fully.

These are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle



8. Since the Samrong General Hospital is a service firm in the healthcare business, due to the five dimensions of service quality or “*Servqual*” which measures the service quality in various service organizations (Looy, Gemmel, & Dierdonck, 2003), the researcher analyzed from their practices from Buddhist doctrines such as *Iddhipada* 4 and *Brahmavihāra* 4 related to the five factors of *Servqual* as following:
  - 8.1 **Tangibles** – the appearance of physical facilities which provides for services and communication material. In this case, this year they just renovated the emergency room for this purpose because their location is in the industry zone and vocational schools, most of their patients get an accident or are injured. Moreover, they also decorated new rooms for inpatients feeling comfortably like in their home.
  - 8.2 **Reliability** – consistency of performance and dependability. This framework was approved by the Marketing, and Accounting and Finance department that assured on the “transparency” policy.
  - 8.3 **Responsiveness** – the willingness to help customers, prompt service. One example was staff members both the front-office and the back-office who keenly offered help to patients and the researcher. During the walk around the hospital, sometimes the employees asked for a permission to stop walking and greeted to their familiar clients.
  - 8.4 **Assurance** – knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. The researcher could affirm on their politeness from her observation.
  - 8.5 **Empathy** – caring, individualized attention to customers. This was implanted and cultivated to their employees since they first entered to this corporate and emphasize to them regularly by training courses and everyday working life.

However, as Looy et al (2003) stated about three different models of human resources management: the Michigan model, the Harvard model, and the Warwick model in terms of defining what needs to be done, and summarizing what is best for one company will not necessarily be best for another. That perhaps concludes into the criteria on Buddhist social work in each organization, yet it still depends on several factors which the top management team must integrate in terms of its context and practices base on human resources who play a crucial role in the healthcare business.

Nevertheless, one main factor that the Samrong General Hospital could create and maintain its Buddhist social work environment like this because the top executive level realize how its efficiency and potential to do so, with a certain number of employees. In the case of expanding business, they prefer not to do it at this present. The one who succeeds in one's life, he or she should know oneself thoroughly.

Notwithstanding, at this moment the Samrong General Hospital has reached its goal at some levels, but with the faith that "Today is better than yesterday, and tomorrow will be better than today." The researcher truly believes that they are on their way to still serve community and employees with their wholehearted basing on Buddhism principles. According to the research, Anson (2000) and Vestal et al (1997) identified that HR's role is critical in building an adaptive, learning culture with the capacity for rapid change by creating right values and behaviors in healthcare workers. In this research, the HR department of this firm was one of the good role models to demonstrate that they truly cultivate ethics and morality to their staff employees including increase the better way of their lives. The researcher also agreed that the Samrong General Hospital is on the right track to its target by creating a Buddhist social work and "warm" atmosphere in its workplace.

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# Role of Religion in the Rehabilitation of Offenders

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## Introduction

As crime prevention and control of the re-imprisonment of offenders is a serious problem in Sri Lanka. In analyzing the number of convicted and un-convicted prisoners through the statistics of the Prison Department, Sri Lanka those show that there are different tendency patterns. Majority come from urban areas and relationship between education and criminal behavior. The following table shows the number of prison inmates from 2002 to 2010.

**Table 1: The number of convicted and un-convicted Prisoners<sup>1</sup>**

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Convicted</b>	25023	27681	26898	33034	28732	31306	33566	37872	32128
<b>Unconvicted</b>	82187	88535	87456	96007	89190	99513	102245	108868	100491
<b>Total</b>	107210	116216	114354	129041	117922	130819	135811	146740	132619

There is an intolerable congestion in Sri Lankan Prisons due to the large number of convicted and un-convicted male and female prisoners are held together. This fact itself creates a lot of problems as they are to socialize back after the judgment is served. Some have to serve the sentence in short period whereas the rest have longer durations. Especially when selecting the convicted prisoners for rehabilitation the prison authorities have to face a lot of problems. Imprisonment has not been an effective way of controlling or preventing crimes.

To rehabilitate the offenders there are numerous programs. The researchers found out that the religious rehabilitation proved to be very effective than the vocational rehabilitation. Even though the rehabilitation programs are conducted, the prison authorities revealed that there is a tendency of fifty percent [50%] of inmates getting re-imprisoned.<sup>2</sup> It is an indication that the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programs is very low.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Prison Statistics, 2007, p.13- 45; [www.prisons.gov.lk](http://www.prisons.gov.lk),09.10.2011

<sup>2</sup> Kodippili P.W,12.09.2011

This study was organized and conducted to have a scientific understanding of religion based rehabilitation of prisoners in a selected prison in Sri Lanka. Bogambara prison located in Kandy , Sri Lanka was selected prison in and the annual meditation program conducted to sort term convicted prisoners and long term convicted prisoners. It has supported to rehabilitation of prison jailed or capital punishment and other serious crimes. Vipasshana Bahavana was annually practiced for ten days and over 100 inmates were participated it. This study mainly concerned ten days meditation programs and other religious activities inside and outside of the prison. These programs were really supported their behavioral changes of inmates.

## **Methodology of the Study**

The research area is a closed, main prison at Bogambara, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Convicted prisoners higher than the un-convicted prisoners in the Bogambara prison. There are more than 2000 convicted prisoners and 700 un-convicted prisoners in Bogambara prison. Purposive Sample 40 inmates were selected for data gathering in section of “G” ward. G ward was selected for the sample most of inmates representative ten days meditation program. The tools of in-depth interview and observation methods were applied to gather data for this study. Data gathered through those techniques were properly processed and analyzed to understanding the nature of the role the religion in rehabilitation of offenders.

## **Limitation of the Research**

Limitations of the research were that only the offenders were selected because only they are selected for the rehabilitation program. Those who are serving death penalty were also selected. The collection of data from all prisoners was difficult but it was understood that there is a tendency for the religious rehabilitation program by those prisoners who serve long-term sentences and death penalty. Since the others are selected for many other rehabilitation programs they were not considered.

## **Personal Information of the Respondents**

In this research there were both married and unmarried respondents. Out of the forty respondents thirty seven [37] were married and the rest were unmarried.

**Table 2: Marital Status of the Respondents**

No. of inmates	Married	%	Unmarried	%
	37	92.5	03	7.5

Those who are married are the head of the households in their families. As they get imprisoned there is certain negative effects work on their families. Therefore, it is of great importance that they should be rehabilitated soon before they get back to the society. The age group of the majority of the offenders was between 41-50 [52.50%]. There were 27.50% who are between the ages 30 to

40 years of age. Another 20% was those who are over 50 years of age. Within this group there are many who were convicted for grave crimes of rape and murder.

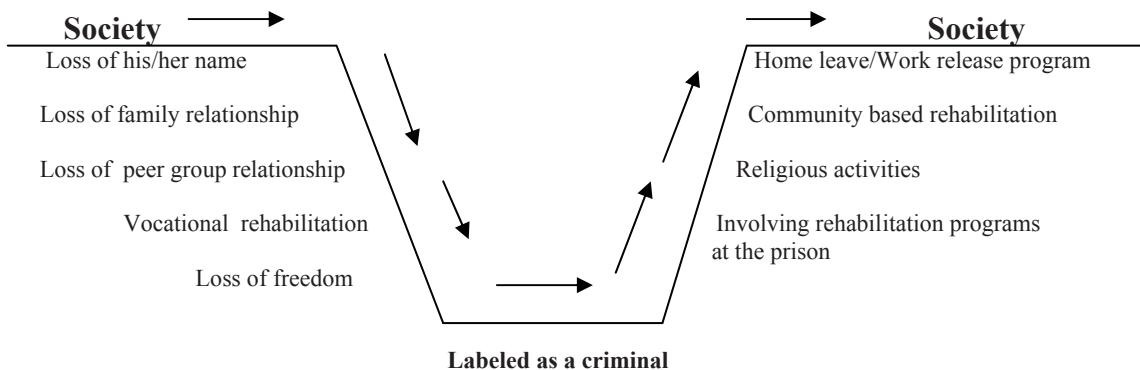
The level of education was also an important element in evaluating the anti-social behavior of the offenders and planning the rehabilitation programs. There were thirteen [32.50%] inmates who did not have the literacy capability at all. There are another twenty three [57.50%] who had studied up to GCE O/L and they had some literacy capabilities. Those who did not have literacy got the religious knowledge from those who have the literacy and there were certain attempts to get the younger inmates into these religious programs with the support of the leaders who represent the older generation. All the respondents were Sinhalese Buddhists and the observations and interviews aimed at the Buddhist religious rehabilitation programs.

## **The Need for Rehabilitation**

Since inception the Prison authorities have understood the value and the importance of a correction process for both minor and major offenders. Rehabilitation has been conducted in various ways within the prison system and the religious aspect of rehabilitation is given a priority. Vocational rehabilitation helps the inmate to have a better future economic security by learning a specific skill that he or she can utilize in the world of work as the inmate is released. The religious rehabilitation conditions the mind of the inmate by achieving self-control in many ways. The change of behavior in general inmates and the conditioning of the mindset of the inmates who have received a death sentence are the basic objectives of religious rehabilitation.

When an individual gets imprisoned he loses his identity, in many ways. First, he loses his name instead he is given a number in the prison. Second, he loses his intimate relationships with family members, kith and kin. Further to a great extent he loses most of his basic human rights like freedom. In a social setting he or she has to face labeling and social stigmatization which could have greater effects even after his release as a convict or innocent non-convict. During the time the inmate stays at prison the prison authorities try to counter all these negative effects that could affect the character of the prisoner.

**Figure 1: Model of Rehabilitation**



It is believed that in any rehabilitation process there should be a process that helps the individual to develop his self-confidence back and the increase of social recognition. Further it should be able to inculcate new set of values top the inmate and develop the ability to foster social relationships. The main objective behind the rehabilitation process in the prison is to integrate the individual back into the society as he or she was before. It should not make him feel that he is an unwanted or a different individual even after this rehabilitation process<sup>3</sup>.

The religious programs conducted in the prison aimed at convincing the inmate the wrong act he or she has committed and to rebuild his or her life by understanding the failure or failures in his decision making process that led to the imprisonment. In the research it was understood that the religious programs facilitated in developing the personality of the inmates. Through the initial interviews the researcher could find out that the inmates have developed anger against the society at the initial phase of conviction. All inmates in the sample revealed that they were suffering from a psychological trauma. To counter all these psychological conditions the religious programs were of immense help to the inmates. During the data collection process the researchers received a firsthand experience of the value of the religious program conducted at the Bogambara prison in inculcating self-control to improve self-discipline.

## **Religious Programs on Rehabilitation:**

### **Vipassana Meditation Program**

Meditation is a system of mind cultivation or mental training literally meanings mental development. It is mental activity and eradicating woe and sorrowful situation. Another benefit of meditation is not getting perturbed in the day today life, resulting overcome mental problems and reduce the risk of developing some physical illness such as heart attack, blood pressure. Direct approach to the path leading to the liberation and correct understanding mind and body. According to Buddhism there are three basic principles of Meditation namely Seclusion (Viveka):

- Kaya Viveka (Liberation of the body feeling)
- Citta Viveka (Liberation of the mind from negative situation)
- Upadhi Viveka (complete liberation of the mind from normal activities the mind experience)<sup>4</sup>

Vipassana means to see things as they really are, not only as they seem to be. The technique of Vipassana is based on the Sathipatthana Sutha. Sathipatthana means the establishing of mindfulness.<sup>5</sup> According to the psychologists the proper practice and application of meditation enables one to solve many problems. Vipassana mediation. It is treatment for physical and mental ailments it is similar to using a certain medicine for a particular disease.

Vipassana is an art of living. It is technique of self – observation, truth observation and self-exploration by oneself only. Vipassna frees the individual from all the negativities of Mind such as

<sup>3</sup> Karunathilake k, 1991,131

<sup>4</sup> .Gammanpila M, 2008,p.69

<sup>5</sup> Ahir D.C,1999,p.09

anger, greed, and ignorance. It leads happiness, liberation and full enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> Therefore a Vipassana meditation directs to change behavior of the prisoners.

Vipassana meditation program is an annual program conducted formally at the Bogambara prison in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The ten day Vipassana Bhavana [meditation] program is conducted by the Dhammaduta Meditation Center at Hindagala, Peradeniya and the first three days are reserved for the Anapanasati Bhavana.<sup>7</sup>

Anapanasati is a very important practice to all, in order to develop concentration. Anapanasati meditation supports cultivation of the mind in order to acquire peace and happiness during all times of the day.<sup>8</sup> It is very important to buildup peaceful environment in the prison. All those who have joined this program said that during these three days they found it very difficult and it was both physical and mental training. Further they told that the initial uncomfortable nature began to reduce regularly from the fourth day onwards. From fourth day onwards they have to practice Vipassana Bhavana and the last day is reserved for Maithree bhavana. That is the day of Metta. During the first nine days the participants cannot talk to each other and the last day they are allowed to do so. On the last day they are allowed to spend the day with their family members also. The environment for the entire program was arranged by the prison authorities themselves. There is a specific diet selected for the entire ten days. Twelve instructors from the Dhammaduta Meditation Center at Hindagala, Peradeniya,Sri Lanka arrived at the prison and the inmates can get the help from them. All the participant inmates are allowed to talk to them only. The meditation program commenced each day at 4.30 am and concludes at 9.30 pm. Every hour ten minutes break was given and during that time all the problems or inconveniences of the participants can be informed to the conductors of the meditation program. It was aimed at changing the behavior of the participants by following a regular pattern during the entire time period.

The inmates who participated in this program confessed that it gave them effective results in getting their behavior changed. Rather than being a part of any other rehabilitation program this specific Vipassana Bhavana program gives a better mental and moral training to the participants.

Out of the sample 31 inmates [77.50%] were directly engaged in this program. The rest [22.50%] did not have the opportunity to join the same due to the demand it has but they are following the same under the guidance of those who are privileged to participate in it. The Senior Welfare officer of the Bogambara prison in Kandy, Sri Lanka explained the researchers that a large number of inmates apply for the program but due to the limited space and the resources it has the authorities have to limit the intake to one hundred participants. During data collection it was found out that all the respondents too have applied for the program.

According to the responses of the inmates the researcher could formulate an idea of the nature of the program. Out of 31 respondents [26%] said that they have taken part in the same four times. Eight respondents 08 [26%] of inmates have participated in either two or three times. Only fifteen inmates [48%] have participated in it once. According to the responses the researchers could understand that there is a tendency to participate the program repeatedly. Further it was found out that there has been a behavioral change of those who have taken part in that. The respondent 'I' who had the opportunity to participate in the program mentioned that:

<sup>6</sup> Shah S,1999,p.101

<sup>7</sup> www.dhamma.org,06.10.2011

<sup>8</sup> Wijetillake D.G.,2004,p.60

*"I have done something evil knowingly or unknowingly. I corrected myself and got to know where I have gone wrong. Religion helped me a lot in that. At the initial days at prison I was totally helpless"<sup>9</sup>*

The response given by the inmate 'III' too is vital in understanding the changes taken place in behavior.

*'I was very angry as I was imprisoned. I did not do anything wrong. I envied the lawyers. But a good friend met at the prison changed everything. He introduced me into meditation and meditation has changed my life a lot now'<sup>10</sup>*

He has served as a police officer and convicted for death penalty charging the murders of a Professor of a higher educational institute and his wife. When he was on leave at home he had heard these two murders and has gone to report it. Allegations have been leveled against him for being in the place where the murders have committed. It was informed to the researchers by the prison authorities that he has changed his unruly behavior shown at the beginning to a highly disciplined form of life at prison now. The inmate 'III' too was in the opinion that the meditation process has a significant influence on his life in general and behavior in particular. The inmate 'IV' summarized in a few words the effect of the program.

*'I got maximum use out of what the prison gave me, that was the Vipassana bhávana, means meditation'.<sup>11</sup>*

Majority of respondents who have followed the Vipassana meditation program had been doing well and were extremely helping the day-to-day activities of the prison.

Those who serve the death penalty have come to the conclusion that they have no opportunity to get back into the mainstream society again. Therefore, to reduce the psychological trauma generated out of that condition religion is the only alternative mean. Religion helps to rebuild his lost mentality and understand the reality of life. So it is proved that the religious rehabilitation programs would bring remarkably effective results on those who are convicted. Those who have got the opportunity to participate in this Vipassana Bhavana program had added that into their daily routine.

The number of inmates [29] who practice meditation within the cell is [72.50%]. The rest conduct many other religious activities even though they do not practice meditation. Other than the main shrine room there is a separate shrine room in each and every building.

## Reading Dhamma Texts

Out of the total number of inmates at Bogambara prison in Kandy, Sri Lanka the majority is Buddhists. How they are rehabilitated through religion or how religious programs cater to their rehabilitation process was the main objective behind this study. All the respondents [40] who participated in the in-depth interviews claimed that they have understood the real nature of religion

<sup>9</sup> Indepth Interviews, 2010

<sup>10</sup> Indepth Interviews, 2010

<sup>11</sup> Indepth Interview, 2010

after they enter the prison. Most of them were literate and they have cultivated the same during their stay at prison. Most of those who have received death sentence got used to utilize the library to a great extent because they are not made a part of any other rehabilitation process. So they have used their time to read books. During the time in the library they have read the books written on *Tipitaka*, *Abhidhamma* and meditation practices by Sri Lankan Buddhist monks and due to this their knowledge on religion has got improved remarkably. Since they have got the basic background knowledge needed for meditation practices the rehabilitation programs conducted were very much facilitated from the part of the inmates. All 40 [100%] respondents acknowledged that their self-control was mainly achieved through the knowledge they received from these Buddhist books.

## Chanting Pirit at the Cells

The number of inmates who chant *pirith* within their own cell is 15 [37.50%]. In Sri Lankan society there are lay groups who chant *pirith* other than Buddhist monks and those who chant *pirith* in the prison act as a lay *pirith* chanting group. They help the prison authorities in specific occasions when their services are needed. For example, during the times of the heightened ethno-national conflict this group has engaged in chanting *pirith* in honor of the soldiers who have been sacrificing their lives for the integrity of the motherland.

## Sila Program

Buddhists believe that observing *Sila* helps one to discipline one's behavior to a great extent. *Sila* controls the mind, body and the word. The researchers understood that the *Sila* program is another successful religious activity conducted at the Bogambara prison to correct the behavior of the inmates. Out of those who have received the death sentence there are thirty six [90%] who join the *Sila* program. Generally sort term convicted prisoners, the remanded prisoners to join the program. The prison authorities supply all the facilities needed to make this a success. All *poya* day programs commence at 6.30 am and a Buddhist priest from a neighboring temple is invited to deliver the sermon. All the inmates get together to participate in this program and they listen to and watch the religious programs broadcast on radio channels and telecast on television channels.

The main Buddhist religious festivals like Vesak and Poson are celebrated with a lot of glamour and *Sila* programs are successfully conducted during these days. Each Vesak *poya* day the President grants freedom to a large number of inmates who serve terms for minor offences. So the inmates consider this also as they stay within the prison. Some who have received short-term sentences earn for this forgiveness granted each year. The Welfare Unit of the prison informed that between two hundred to three hundred inmates take part in this.

## Dhamma School on Sundays

In analyzing the prison statistics of those who get imprisoned, it was learnt that there is a high tendency to get those who have not attended a school at all and those who have attended only up to grade six.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously it was revealed that these inmates have not attended the dhamma schools. Therefore, to change the behavior pattern of these inmates there are specific programs are conducted in Bogambara Prison in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

It was learnt that most of the inmates who constituted the sample had not attended the Dhamma School. A very few respondents like six [15%] had connections with the temple from childhood but the rest were not socialized through the temple. But there is a group of nine young inmates who are really interested in the Dhamma School and the percentage is [22.50%]. One of them sat the Final Examination of the Dhamma School. The Buddhist priests in the neighboring temples and the lay people reside in the area help the prison authorities to continue the Dhamma School.

## Bodhi Pooja Program

This is one of the programs that the inmates take part regularly. It helps to console the mind of the inmate. Out of the sample 28 [70%] participate in this activity. The morning session is attended by many inmates rather than the evening session. The cleaning of the area is also done by the inmates themselves before they commence the Bodhi pooja. After the Bodhi pooja the inmates engage in their regular day-to-day routines.

## Dhamma Sermon on Sundays

There are some inmates in the sample who have made it a habit to listen to the sermon broadcast on radio channels on each Sunday and this number is thirty four [85%]. They commented that it helps them immensely to formulate their behavior better. Few of them cited as examples the *Jataka* stories that helped them to understand how to behave in critical situations countering the mistakes they tend to commit. So it was revealed that the religious programs were of paramount importance in shaping personalities of the inmates by bringing in positive changes. Since they were not inculcated with the differences between good and evil and merit and sin during childhood, this kind of exposure had been extremely good to change the attitudes, norms, mores and values. As they learn these things and internalize the training and the knowledge they receive, those would help them as they get back into the mass society.

<sup>12</sup> Prison Statistics of Sri Lanka,2007

## Given up Bad Habits

A majority of the respondents [22] in the sample were vegetarians [55%]. Most of them have to abstain from smoking and liquor as they have to spend a life in relation to religiosity. But it was understood that some inmates use certain illegal means to have drugs within the premises for their own consumption. Even though some inmates were unable to move away from the deviant behaviors that they have got used to before they were convicted, the prison authorities take a great interest in curbing the reach of drugs to the prison premises. The prison authorities believe that at the initial stage the inmates too find it difficult to get adjusted to the new situation but as time goes on other than a very few most of the adhere to the rules and regulations pertaining to the prison life.

## Rituals conducted at the Temple of the Tooth

The Bogambara prison inmates have the opportunity to engage in the religious activities take place at the Temple of the Tooth. The Temple of the Tooth is in a close proximity to the prison. People from time immemorial consider that serving the Temple of the Tooth is a meritorious act. The prison authorities give an opportunity for the inmates to join the annual August procession of the Temple of the Tooth. From one hundred and fifty to two hundred inmates serve the initial preparation workload of the Kandy *Esala Perahara*. This is a good opportunity for the inmates because they are hoping to get back to the mass society. As the general prisoners encounter with the other people from time to time they are having an opportunity to mix and work with the others. The participation of the ritualistic activities at the four *devalas* allows the inmates to get their mental stress, anxiety and complications reduced.

## Other Religious Activities

The role religion plays in converting the individual to a better social status can be accepted without doubt. The inmates in the prison belong to different religions and the prison authorities have arranged various religious activities allowing all inmates to take part in the religious programs of each and every inmate's specific religion. For the eighty [80] Christian inmates in the prison there are specific religious programs on Saturdays and Sundays and they are allowed to celebrate Christmas with all the glory and the grandeur.

There are hundred and twenty [120] Hindu inmates and they take part in their respective religious activities every day. For them there is a specific Dhamma school also conducted at the prison and the arrangements are made by the Welfare Unit of the prison to have the services of external visiting teachers who are excelled in the knowledge of Hindu religion.

Around two hundred [200] Islam inmates too have the opportunity to take part in their particular religious activities mainly on Sundays and the other days too. The prison authorities have arranged the visit of a religious leader from the main Mosque in Kandy on Fridays to conduct special religious praying. Other than that the Islamic inmates are provided with the opportunities to celebrate their main religious festivals like Ramalan, Id-Ul-Fitr, and Milad-Un Nabi, The Holy Koran

has given to them for their religious praying. In this study the main focus is laid on the Buddhist inmates at Bogambara prison in Kandy, Sri Lanka

## Conclusion and Recommendation

It was found out that the religious rehabilitation programs conducted at the prison had a tremendous influence in changing the characters and the behaviors of the inmates. The Vipassana Bhavana, which is the main religious event in the religious rehabilitation program had greater effects on the personality formation of the inmates. Meditation has given them a sense of training for self-control and it has helped them to realize the nature or reality of life. Further these religious programs have minimized inter-personal conflicts that could arise at the prison life. All forms of sentences; short-term, long-term or even those who have received death penalty too get a kind of a consolation from these programs. The steps should be taken to have a formal and systematic evaluation of each and every inmate those who get back into the society to verify whether they continue the training or the discipline they have received during prison life.

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# An Analytical and Creative Study of the Buddhist Theory and Practice of Psycho-therapy



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The teachings of the Buddha<sup>1</sup> originally delivered to the people in India in the 6th Century B. C. have been further analyzed and interpreted over a long period of time in many countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, China, Korea and Japan. The purpose of this noble endeavour was to provide people with a right understanding which is beneficial for their well-being in this life, life here-after and final freedom.

The Buddhist traditions though vary in terms of interpretations commonly accept that the mental aspect of human personality plays the most important role in human behavior. According to the Buddhist analysis of five grasping groups (*pañca-upādānakhandha*)<sup>2</sup> mentality is explained under four groups and physical aspect represents only one group. The Abhidhammic analysis of the five groups ascribes 89 or 121 types of consciousness and 52 psychic functions to the mentality in relation to the feelings, perceptions, dispositions and consciousness. The physical or material aspect is analyzed into about 14 parts in early Buddhism and its Abhidhammic interpretation into 28 material elements. Mental and physical aspects though analyzed as two separate groups for the sake of easy understanding their mutual inter-dependent nature is emphasized.<sup>3</sup>

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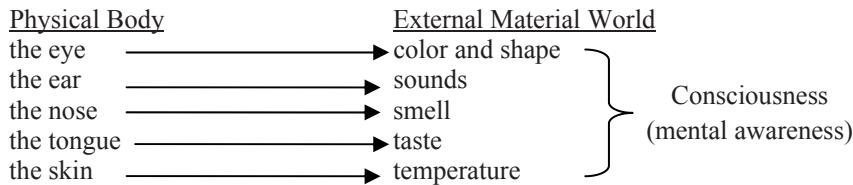
<sup>1</sup> Except otherwise indicated all references refer to the editions of the Pali Text Society, London

<sup>2</sup> S. 111., p. 101; D. 111., p. 233; M. 1., P. 190; A. V., p. 52

<sup>3</sup> Sumanapala, G. D., Abhidhammic Interpretations of Early Buddhist Teachings, Singapore, 2005, pp. 12-14

The interdependent process of psycho-physical function of human personality in relation to the external world is explained in the early Buddhist discourses as follows:

**Step I - Physical Body**

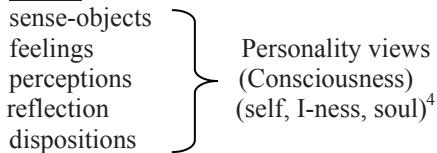


**Step II** - Senses → Sense-objects → Consciousness → feelings or sensations

**Step III** - Feelings → Perceptions or memory

**Step IV** - Perceptions (memories) → Reflection → dispositions  
(concepts, ideas, beliefs, views, opinions)

**Step V - Senses**



It should be stated here that the term “Consciousness” occurs two times in the above process. It stands for the Pali term “*viññāna*”, The usage of the term “*viññāna*” in the discourses does not refer to one and the same thing. In the Step I the term refers to the initial mental awareness as a response to the contact with external objects of the senses. The term in the Step V refers to the self-view or personality view that people construct in their day-to-day life. Without the confirmation of this personality view they cannot survive in the world because the world including human beings is subject to constant change. Momentary change of psycho-physical world motivates people to establish themselves permanently in the world by means of building up a personality view out of their experiences. This is the reason for their existence continuously in the worlds in terms of birth and death. The complete stop of this process is called final freedom or liberation in Buddhism.

The same psycho-physical process of human personality is given in a wider context in Theravada Abhidhamma as follows:

**Step I:** stream-consciousness, its vibration due to the contact between senses and sense-objects and the breaking of stream-consciousness

**Step II:** mental awareness arising of particular thoughts regarding the objects in relation to one of sense faculties due to the contact of the objects

**Step III:** Reflection on the sense-objects in terms of accepting, investigation and determining the nature of objects

<sup>4</sup> Sumanapala, G. D., Early Buddhist Philosophy and Social Concepts, Singapore, 2001, pp. 8-11

**Step IV:** Mental experience or enjoyment of the sense-objects in terms of rapid succession of seven thought-moments

**Step V:** Registering of the sense-experience in terms of two thought-moments<sup>5</sup>

The above mentioned Abhidhammic analysis of psycho-physical process includes seventeen thought-moments. The complete process does not occur in regard to all experiences of sense-faculties. The moments of thought-process may vary in accordance with the extent of experiences. And the mind also as a sense-faculty contacts with mental objects or ideas directly.

This mental process is different from the above to some extent. But this mind-door process is very important as far as the Buddhist psycho-therapeutic methods are concerned. Ven. Nyanatiloka gives in brief the process as follows:

“The process of the inner, or mind consciousness, i.e. , without participation of the five physical senses, is as follows: in case mind-object entering the Mind-door (*manodvārāvajjana*), the ‘Impulsive Stage’ and the ‘Registering Stage’, before finally sinking into the subconscious stream”.<sup>6</sup> A large number of mental problems in modern society is caused by thinking or reflecting over the concepts created through the sense data. The concepts created through the sense-perception process can be identified as mentality, mental concomitants or thoughts explained in Abhidhamma as fifty-two cetasikās. Out of the fifty-two cetasikās the karmically unwholesome cetasikās become the psychological basis for many mental problems. The 52 cetasikās are analyzed under the following categories:

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| i. Karmically wholesome or neutral: | 25  |
| ii. Karmically unwholesome:         | $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 14 \\ 13 \end{array} \right.$ |
| iii. Karmically neutral:            | $= 52^7$  |

The unwholesome thoughts are mainly related to greed, hatred and delusion. They become the basis for innumerable number of mental illnesses. The wholesome thoughts together with relevant behavior provide a good ground to get rid of all such problems.

According to early Buddhist teachings human beings possess two mental tendencies by birth. Simply they are likes and dislikes. These are mental reactions and they are extremely useful and essential for the survival of beings. Further they are not harmful defilements. But the problems arise out of them when they are developed without limits.

The unlimited growth of these two aspects can be given as follows:

Normal level	Middle level	Final level
likes	greed	covetousness (discontent)
dislikes <sup>1</sup>	hate	malevolence (desire to injure)

<sup>5</sup> Sumanapala, G. D., An Introduction to Theravāda Abhidhamma, Singapore, 1998, 135-137

<sup>6</sup> Ven. Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary, Singapore, 1946. See under *Viññānakicca*

<sup>7</sup> op. cit., See under *Cetasikā*

The middle level tendencies are considered as mental disorders or unwholesome mental roots and the final ones are treated as unwholesome mental functions.<sup>8</sup> As a result of unlimited development of greed and discontent one wishes to get everything that he or she likes. Due to the changing nature of the world no one is able to get everything that he or she wishes. Therefore as a result of the failure in this regard delusion arises in the mind. On the other hand due to the development of hate and malevolence though he or she wishes to keep away everything that he or she does not like, this attempt also becomes unsuccessful due to the impermanent nature of the world. So the result is same as in the first case. So delusion or mental disorder (confusion) becomes a common factor of all unenlightened beings. Hence the Buddhist saying that all ordinary beings are like mad people.<sup>9</sup> Together with this madness there arises another defilement called conceit<sup>10</sup> in the mind as a result of some achievements in those reactions. The delusion and conceit are the basic factors of mental disorders. All the mental problems whether they belong to psychosis or neurosis can be explained in relation to the above mentioned mental reactions. In brief this is the theory of psychotherapy in Buddhism.

Before we turn to the practice of psychotherapy in Buddhism it is not out of context to point out some specific characteristics that serve as the basis of the therapeutic methods.

- i. All psycho-therapeutic methods in Buddhism are directed towards nibbāna extinction of all defilements as the goal. The actual experience of the goal is to give up everything in order to make an end to the suffering caused by repeated existence or rebirth. The patient who holds this view is able to bear up any problem with patience and satisfaction because he or she is trying not to gain anything but to give up everything.
- ii. In Buddhism even a single mental illness is not named. Instead the basic or root elements of mentality are explained mainly with reference to the above mentioned unwholesome and wholesome roots. All other mental problems arise depending on these basic elements.

There are three main reasons for not naming the mental illnesses.

- 1. Physical illnesses are durable and they can be easily identified while the mental illnesses are momentary and cannot be identified with certainty.
- 2. It is the nature of human beings that they always depend on concepts indicated by specific terms of language in order to confirm their existence in the momentary world. Once they attach to a particular concept or word such as stress, depression or phobia referring to a mental illness the same word becomes a mental problem.<sup>11</sup> It cannot be easily removed from the mind. Further the mental illness though we identify with some characteristics they never exist permanently. Searching for characteristics to identify mental illness is a deliberate attempt to deceive oneself. But the problem is that without naming an illness one cannot prescribe medicine. The delusion is that they believe mind is related to brain. As to Buddhism mind is a specific faculty in human personality and it is not only related to brain but to all the five physical sense faculties.

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<sup>8</sup> Akusalamūla, Akusalakamma

<sup>9</sup> ummattako viya hi puthujjano, MA. 1., ed. Hevawitharana, Colombo, p. 23

<sup>10</sup> māna, D. 111., p. 234

<sup>11</sup> Adhivacanasamphassa, D. 11., p. 62; M. 1., p. 113 D. 111., p. 86

3. Buddhist psychotherapeutic methods are mainly directed to change the mentality of persons and they do not pay much attention to change the environment or other external or physical factors so as to bring the mentality into a calm status.

Practice of psycho-therapy is also based on a simple formula which can be expand and extend to meet with any mental problem of beings. The practice has three gradual stages:

- i. development of moral behavior - behavioral therapy
- ii. development of concentration - psychological therapy
- iii. development of understanding - cognitive therapy

The first type of therapy refers to the restraintment of the five senses which are mainly responsible for the physical and verbal behavior of man.<sup>12</sup> The second type refers to the restraintment of the above mentioned mental disorders namely greed, hatred and delusion-conceit.<sup>13</sup>

The third type of therapy concerns the development of understanding of people regarding the true nature of the world of experience.<sup>14</sup> These three stages are mutually interconnected and they support for the restraintment and development of each aspect gradually. Therefore, in Buddhist practice these three stages should be connected with every method of psycho-therapy.<sup>15</sup>

It is not out of context to mention the relationship of physical body with the above stated three aspects of mental defilements namely greed, hatred and delusion. The *Bhesajjamañjusā*, the one and only Āyurvedic Pāli work available at present, states at the beginning that mental health should be maintained in accordance with the *Tripiṭaka* and *Bhesajjamañjusā* instructs to establish physical health. According to the Āyurveda all physical illnesses are related to imbalance of the three humors - phlegm, bile and air. The *Visuddhimagga* mentions that these three humors are connected with mentality as follows:

greed - phlegm

hatred - bile

delusion - air<sup>16</sup>

Although there are many other causes and conditions that influence the physical health such as environment and food the mental condition plays a prominent role in balancing the physical condition.

It is a fact that any theory cannot be put into practice as it is. So the well educated Buddhist psychologists can devise and develop various methods to be used in Buddhist psychiatry. All of them should be in conformity with the above mentioned basic elements of Buddhist theory and practice of psycho-therapy. And also it should be emphasized that all such methods bring temporary effects and the complete recovery of all mental problems can be achieved only through the realization of nibbāna, the summum bonum of Buddhist path to freedom. Until the final realization we should use such methods and I have developed some such methods depending on the Buddhist

<sup>12</sup> sīla, D. 111., p. 235

<sup>13</sup> samādhi, A. 111., p. 12

<sup>14</sup> paññā, D. 1., p. 245

<sup>15</sup> S. 111., p. 83

<sup>16</sup> *Visuddhimagga*, ed. Ven. Saddhatissa, Colombo, 1914, p. 76

cultural accounts and they are given below as an example. It should be stated that these methods are taught in the postgraduate courses in our university and they have already been used in Sri Lanka in the counseling programmes for over three years.

- i. **Confession:** This method is derived from the practice of “āpattidesanā” followed by Buddhist monks and nuns. If they commit anything wrong they have to declare it in front of another member of the Sangha society before the dawn of the next day. Accumulating the experiences of wrong actions create mental problems. So it is better to purify one’s mind by declaring every such incidents as a daily practice.
- ii. **Imitation:** Ālavaka and Āngulimāla, well-known two characters in Buddhist canon were tamed by the Buddha first by agreeing with them. Ālavaka saw the Buddha sitting in his cave and ordered him to go out. Buddha followed three times his order finally he was converted to Buddhism. As to this method first of all we should agree with the behavior of the mental patient. Otherwise we cannot control the patient as we wish.
- iii. **Generalization:** Some people think that the mental problems affect them only. They become calm when they understand that such problems are common to many people in the society. Kisāgotam\$ who was mad with the death of her son, realized the common nature of death for all beings when she was asked by the Buddha to bring some mustard seeds from a house where no one is dead.
- iv. **Kamma:** The Buddhist theory of Kamma is a good therapeutic method that can be adopted successfully. There are some mental problems that cannot be analyzed properly revealing all causes and conditions. In such cases we can explain them that Kammas related to former lives may influence the present life. After experiencing the effects of such Kammas we will be released from such effects in the future. This way of thinking in accordance with the theory of Kamma has created a contented society for over two thousand years in Buddhist countries.
- v. **Dialogue:** In many discourses of the canon such as Kasbhāradvāja and Aggañña friendly dialogues of the Buddha with people occur and they are logical and philosophical. These dialogues have influenced much for eliminating the mental problems of various types of persons. So we can use this method especially for educated people to help them to get rid of their mental problems.
- vi. **Noble silence:** In some cases the best method of treatment is to maintain complete silence without responding to the complaints made by patients. This method has solved many social and individual problems in Buddhist society.
- vii. **Psycho-analysis:** With reference to Madhupiṇḍika, Mahānidāna sutta etc. we can introduce this method in which the counselor should analyze the psychological process of the patient in order to clarify the causes and conditions of the problem.
- viii. **Right motivation:** According to the famous event of Nanda, he was taken to heaven by the Buddha in order to detach him from Janapadakalyāṇi by showing damsels. The theory of this method is that one cannot be totally detach from one concept at once. So the person should be motivated to achieve a higher goal and from there he or she should be directed to desired object.

- ix. **Logical analysis:** Some educated people like to argue with others. So the method of argument can be adapted to eliminate their problems. This also applies to educated people. Vāsetṭhasutta and Aggañña sutta are good examples in this regard.
- x. **Innocent punishment:** Brahmadanḍa is a punishment in which all other members do not talk with the patient. This can be used mainly regarding persons with personality disorders such as anger and arrogance. The main feature of these punishments is that they never hurt the patient physically.
- xi. **Praising:** Some people are suffering due to the lack of appreciation for their service or work. Such people should be directed to suitable environment where they are appreciated. Before passing away Buddha did not forget to appreciate Ven. Ananda's service and the benefits of the last meal given by Cundakammāraputta.
- xii. **Friendly meeting:** Some people suffer mentally due to the lack of association with other people. They should be provided with such friendly meetings with suitable persons.
- xiii. **Creating religious emotions:** Pilgrimage is one of the most suitable way of creating religious emotions in order to get rid of mental problems such as worry, guilty-conscious, sorrow, etc.
- xiv. **Creating emotion and intellect:** this concept is called “vedalla” and the patient should be provided with occasions where they can experience happiness and knowledge together. Reading novels, watching drama, singing, dancing, etc. can be used in this regard.

The above mentioned methods are given as examples and they are not adequately explained.

# Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects as Reflected in Insight Meditation and Methods of Insight

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## Objective:

The exposition of the universally applicable potentiality of cognitive and behavioral psychotherapeutic aspects reflected in Insight Meditation in order to alleviate, attenuate, prevent and heal mental problems and abnormal behaviors in the modern society is the main objective of this article.

## Background and Nature of Mind

The Abhidhamma Piṭaka contains a highly systematized psychological analysis of human behavior and mind. According to Roga Sutta<sup>1</sup> and Salleka Sutta<sup>2</sup>, every individual except Arahant suffers from mental problems. According to commentaries, all worldlings are deranged (Sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā).<sup>3</sup>

Individual's mind is beleaguered by The Noxious Trio - greed-hatred-delusion (lobha-dosa-moha) (Mūla Sutta).<sup>4</sup> According to Loka Sutta<sup>5</sup>, this triple root, when arising, causes harm, stress and discomfort. Mind is deluded with ignorance (avijjā), the primary root that causes vipallāsa (perversions - saññā-vipallāsa, citta-vipallāsa and diṭṭhi-vipallāsa)<sup>6</sup> leading to form four perversions which take what is impermanent (anicca) as permanent; what is painful (dukkha) as pleasant; what is without a self (anattā) as a self and what is impure (asubha) as pure.<sup>7</sup> The three levels of perversions which are fundamental to the Buddhist notion of ignorance or delusion are cyclical, and so the perceptions are formed in the context of one's views, which are strengthened by his thoughts, and all the three work together to build the cognitive systems which make up his personality. Vipallāsa caused by ignorance due to the Noxious Trio veils individual's mental eyes and prevents the knowledge of the Four Truths, and this is conducive to diverse problematic mentality and behavior.

The rapid modernization and the accelerated pace of life enveloped in the 'modern' economy, polity, technology and education incur unwholesome impacts on the minds of people, causing: pressure, boredom, tension, anxiety, depression, frustration, unrest, obsession, disappointments, etc.; and unwholesome behaviors like alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual harassment, polygamous or polyandrous conduct, sadism, gambling etc. The culture of violence that has arisen as the outcome

<sup>1</sup> Aṅguttara Nikāya, PTS, IV.157.

<sup>2</sup> Majjhima Nikāya. 8, PTS: M i 40.

<sup>3</sup> Vibhaṅga Atṭhakathā, PTS /Visuddhimagga Vol. II, Page. 208. Line 13, 6<sup>th</sup> Syn. Edition.

<sup>4</sup> Aṅguttara Nikāya. 3.69, PTS: A i 201.

<sup>5</sup> Samyutta Nikāya. 3.23, PTS: S i 98, CDB i 189.

<sup>6</sup> Aṅguttara Nikāya. 4.49, PTS: A ii 52.

<sup>7</sup> Manual of Insight by Ledi Sayadaw-WHEEL, 31/32, P. 5.

of commercially exploited sadism in numerous unethical entertainments, popular unscrupulous literature, and the sophisticated technology through which they are distributed on a global scale creating an international culture of unwholesome life patterns that produce psychological problems and abnormal behaviors. As a result of the unawareness of Buddhist concepts that can be adopted to prevent or heal them, these problems get aggravated causing severe detriments to individual, family, society and the world as a whole.

## Buddhist Meditation

According to Suttas like: *Sabbāsava*, *Sāmaññaphala*, *Jāliya*, *Mahāli* of Dīgha Nikāya; *Kandaraka*, *Ariyapariyesana*, *Atthakanāgara* of Majjhima Nikāya; *Jhāna Saṃyuttaya* of Saṃyutta Nikāya; *Satipaṭṭhāna* of Dīghanikāya and Majjhimanikāya; also *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and *Vibhaṅga* of Abhidhamma Piṭaka; and commentaries like *Visuddhimagga* and the *Atthasaṅlinī* - the basic meaning of bhāvanā, as a whole, can be rendered as the development of spiritual qualities or wholesome potentialities (*sattabodhyāiga*) or development of wholesome doctrines “*Bhāveti kusaladhamme vadḍhetūti bhāvanā*.<sup>8</sup> The Right Mindfulness and the Right Effort in the Noble Eightfold Path are the two principles that embrace the entire field of meditation common to both systems - Samatha and Vipassanā.

## The Two Kinds of Meditation Designated in Buddhism

Samādhi-bhāvanā (Tranquility or Calm meditation) that cultivates concentration (*citta-ekaggatā*) suppresses mental defilements. The development of Calm or Tranquility meditation creates concentration for making the mind peaceful, strong, and happy, as well as freeing it from all mental hindrances. Samatha, a pre-requisite for meditation lays the foundation for practicing Insight meditation which is the direct way to eradicate all the mental problems.

Vipassanā-bhāvanā that develops insight in the context of the Three Universal Characteristics helps one to eradicate the defilements by dispelling ignorance and uprooting causes of miseries. Insight meditation helps one to develop true wisdom and to see all things as they really are, until one can get rid of the defilements and attachments to everything.

In Sāmaññaphala Sutta<sup>9</sup>, the Threecold training with Sīla as the preliminary phase, the practice of Samādhi as the second and Paññā as the means of attaining ultimate release from Āsavās (mental taints). Paññā is developed by Insight. Sabbāsava Sutta<sup>10</sup> deals with seven ways of eradicating defilements that cause mental and physical problems. Among them, the first method is dassanā –understanding and the last method is ‘bhāvanā’. The highest stage of understanding is wisdom which is the realization of all the mental and physical phenomena. Hence, meditation is the means of transmuting the ordinary consciousness to the higher state.

<sup>8</sup> Buddhist Meditation Methods & Psychotherapy, Galamangoda Sumanapala, P. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Dīghanikāya 2 PTS: D i 47

<sup>10</sup> Majjhimanikāya, 2 PTS: M i 6

## The Sevenfold Purity Expounded in Insight Meditation

Rathavinīta Sutta<sup>11</sup> expounds sevenfold purity—satta visuddhi (elaborated in the Visuddhimagga and in Abhidhammaṭha-saṅgaha) as the seven successive methods of purification in Insight meditation:

1. Purity of Morality: Sīla-visuddhi
2. Purity of Mind: Citta-visuddhi
3. Purity of Views: Diṭṭi-visuddhi
4. Purity of overcoming Doubts: Kaṇkhāvitaranā-visuddhi
5. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of what is Path and Not-Path: Maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi
6. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of the Way or Progress: Paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi
7. Purity of Knowledge and Insight: Ñāṇadassana-visuddhi

Each of them purifies body, mind and thoughts in a gradual process. The Dasuttara Sutta<sup>12</sup> of Dīghanikāya explains the Sevenfold Purifications among nine factors of endeavor leading to purification (*pārisuddhi-padhāniyāga*), out of which the last two are purification of wisdom and purification of emancipation. In the context of the seven successive methods of purification, purity in a nutshell means the elimination of unwholesome factors repugnant to purification.

## Methods of Insight Meditation in brief

Insight Meditation (Vipassanā Bhāvanā) comprises of many methods developed on the basis of the last five of the Sevenfold Purity through the contemplations of transience, unsatisfactoriness and non-self (*aniccānupassanā, dukkhanupassanā* and *anattānupassanā*). The practice of Vipassanā begins at the Fifth Step of Purity (Maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana visuddhi) with the Contemplation of Groups (kalāpa-sammasana) that results in developing insight into Knowledge of Determination (Sammasana-ñāṇa). It is the knowledge that determines all that is in the present, past and future, internal or external, coarse or delicate, low or eminent, near or far is impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*). This is elaborated in the Visuddhimagga.<sup>13</sup>

Rathavinīta Sutta (The Discourse on the Relay of Chariots) shows the causal relations of each stage of purity - each stage of purity is to be accomplished for the sake of the other stage of purity.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the sevenfold purity is the true knowledge of phenomenal existence, and it is linked with the Four Noble Paths that lead directly to ultimate realization.

The Buddha emphasized the importance of the contemplation of pañcaskhandha in the forty aspects of it explaining an advanced knowledge of insight known as anuloma-khanti which is adaptive knowledge of balance applied to absolute certainty (*sammattaniyāma*) of the First

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 24, PTS: M i 145

<sup>12</sup> The Long Discourses of the Buddha, Tr. by Maurice Walshe, 34, P. 511.

<sup>13</sup> The Path of Purification, Tr. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Chapter xx, 6, p.706.

<sup>14</sup> Majjhimanikāya 24. PTS: M i 145

Path (*sotāpatti-magga*). The Paṭisambhidāmagga gives this list of forty items of contemplation in the context of the Five Aggregates (*pañcaskhandha*) establishing absolute certainty. These Forty Subjects for meditation<sup>15</sup> known as kammaṭṭhāna in seven divisions<sup>16</sup> are explained in the Path of Purification.

The Visuddhimagga, the Great commentary elaborates two aspects of kammaṭṭhāna in Insight Meditation as Rūpa-kammaṭṭhāna and Arūpa-kammaṭṭhāna<sup>17</sup> which should be contemplated in terms of the Three Universal Characteristics of material aggregates and mental states respectively.

The Visuddhimagga exposes Eighteen Principal Insights (*Aṭṭharasa mahāvipassanā*)<sup>18</sup> which dispel mental states that impede higher progress. In the development process of these eighteen insights, a contemplation known as sammasana-ñāṇa as mentioned above (determining of all phenomena of existence as anicca, dukkha, anattā), the beginning of insight which is still mundane is reached. This is the first stage of the development of insight.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga explains that a contemplation known as udaya-vaya anupassanā-ñāṇa (the knowledge and insight into rise and fall of the Five Aggregates of present existence) is attained. This is the second stage which leads to the manifestation of insight. In this process, the rise of mind-and-matter (Nāma-rūpa) in twenty five aspects and the fall of mind-and-matter in twenty five aspects in relation to their causes and conditions are contemplated. It is at this stage that the Ten Defilements of Insight (Vipassanā-kilesa)<sup>19</sup> arise. With the overcoming of the Ten Defilements of Insight, the Purity of Knowledge and Vision of the Way or Progress (Patipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhai) is attained. The continuous practice in relation to the Four Supra mundane Paths leads to the attainment of Purity of Knowledge and Insight (Ñāṇadassana-visuddhi).

The mental development with insight in the process of suppressing, alleviating and eradicating all defilements or taints (sabbāsava) can also be attained through the following.

1. The Contemplation of the Body (Kāyānupassanā)
2. The Contemplation of feelings (Vedanānupassanā)
3. The Contemplation of the state of consciousness (Cittānupassanā)
4. The Contemplation of the mind-objects (Dhammānupassanā)

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<sup>15</sup> The Path of Purification, Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli, Chapter xx, 18, PP. 710-711: Impermanent, suffering, disease, boil, arrow, calamity, affliction, alien, disintegrating, plague, disaster, terror, menace, fickle, perishable, unenduring, no protection, no shelter, no refuge, empty, vain, void, not self, danger, subject to change, no core, root of calamity, murderous, due to be annihilated, subject to cankers, formed, Māra's bait, subject to birth, subject to ageing, subject to ailment, subject to death, subject to sorrow, subject to lamentation, subject to despair, subject to defilement.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Chapter III, 104, P. 112: Ten Kasiṇas (totalities), Asubhas (foulness), Ten Anussatis (recollections), Four Brahma-vihāras (the Four Sublime Abodes), Four Arūpas (four immaterial states), Āhāre-paṭikkūla-saññā (perception of loathsomeness of food), Catu-dhātu-vavatthāna (analysis of the four physical elements).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Chapter XIV, 11, P.482.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Chapter xx, 89, P. 732.

<sup>19</sup> The Path of Purification , Chapter xx, 105, P.739.

## The Sevenfold Purity and Its Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects

1. Purity of Morality (*Sīla-visuddhi*) is the purification attained through refraining from bodily and verbal misconduct as well as from unwholesome livelihood. It is the non-transgression through body or speech of the basic precepts regulating the moral life, developing into the habitual conformation to the principles of righteous conduct. It is not the mere outward behavioral control. The moral purity which is of deeper and more psychological significance is the inner purification of character. Thus, the two-dimensional quality of moral purity is the purification of conduct and the purification of character.

Morality (*Sīla*) which is the conscious and intentional restraint from unwholesome deeds is volition (*cetanā*) manifested in speech and bodily action, and it is the foundation of entire Buddhist practice. Moral purity is one of the three constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path (*sīla, samādhi* and *paññā*). They are Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. The development of moral purity - the basic morality of Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) for laity, the basic morality of Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) for laity, The Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*) for novice monks and nuns, and 227 moral rules for fully ordained monks (*bhikkhu pātimokkha*) and 311 moral rules for fully ordained nuns (*bhikkhuni-pātimokkha*) is the overall ethical behavior. The Virtue of the Fourfold Purification (Catupārisuddhi-sīla)<sup>20</sup> designated for monks is known as *Sīla Visuddhi*.

Moral intention is Cetanā *Sīla*, mental concomitants are Cetasika *Sīla*, moral restraint is Samvara *Sīla*, and not breaking any precepts is Avitik-kama *Sīla*. Moral intention (Cetanā) is one's intention not to commit evil conduct in act and in speech, but to follow the seven wholesome courses of action (abstention from killing, stealing, adultery and improper speech such as lying, backbiting, divisive speech and gossip).

Moral abstinence (Virati) is refraining from all unwholesome courses of action and speech along with other immoral behavior. Virati also includes mental actions or thoughts which are refraining from covetousness, ill will and wrong view. As the Buddha preached, "Monks, he who eliminates covetousness will have moral mentality." This is Cetasika *Sīla*.

2. Purity of Mind (Citta-visuddhi) signifies the purification attained through cleansing the mind from attachment, aversion, torpor, restlessness and conflict. It is of eight attainments: Four *rūpa Jhānās* and Four *arūpa Jhānas* (asta samāpati) with access-concentration (upacāra –samādhi) which has the capacity to suppress the Five Hindrances (*pañcanīvaraṇa*)<sup>21</sup>.

3. Purity of Views (Diṭṭi-visuddhi) implies the understanding the combination of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) or the Five Aggregates (*pañcaskandha*) dispelling erroneous conceptions or perversions (*vipallāsa*) of individuality and attainment of real vision of mind and body and their relation to phenomenal existence through the comprehension of mind-and-matter (*nāma-rūpa*) by the analysis of the Four Elements (*bhūta*) or by contemplation of the thirty two constituent parts of the body (*kuṭupā*) or by Eighteen Elements (*dhātu*), the six senses, the six sense-objects and

<sup>20</sup> Visuddhimagga, Chapter I, 42, PP. 16-17. Virtue of Restraint of monks' Disciplinary Code (*Pātimokkha samvara sīla*), Virtue of Restraint of the sense faculties (*Indriya samvara sīla*), Virtue of Purification of livelihood (*Ājīva pārisuddhi sīla*), Virtue of concerning Requisites (*Paccaya sannissita sīla*).

<sup>21</sup> Dīghanikāya Poṭṭhapāda Sutta 9 PTS: D i 178 / Āṅguttaranikāya 9.64 PTS: A iv 457: Sensual Desire (kāmacchanda), Ill-will (vyāpāda), Sloth and Torpor (thīna-middha), Restlessness and Worry (uddhacca-kukkucca) and Skeptical Doubt (vicikicchā).

the six kinds of consciousness corresponding to them or Twelve Sense-Bases (*āyatana*): the six sense-organs and the six sense-objects and the entire mental process attached to it with all their characteristic transience.

4. Purity of overcoming Doubts (Kāñkhāvitarana-visuddhi) is the conquest of all doubts regarding the phenomenal existence through the comprehension of the causal relation of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) understanding their causes and conditions in the context of samsāric existence. The knowledge of discerning conditionality sees only a conditioning body-and-mind process and a conditioned body-and-mind process. In other words, it is the knowledge that comprehends the law of kamma and its result in the context of mind and body and the comprehension established by dispelling doubts about the three phases of time - past, present and future by discerning the conditions of mentality-materiality.

5. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of what is Path and Not-Path (Maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi) denotes the attainment of knowledge or insight into the Right path and Wrong path. That means it is the understanding that distinguishes the difference between the direct path and the misleading path. The practical method is known as comprehension by groups (*kalāpa-sammasana*) which is the contemplation on body and mind in their Three Universal Characteristics (*anicca, dukkha and anattā*). Here, the knowledge of Arising and Passing away of mental and material phenomena (*udaya-vaya*) occurs in two phases: undeveloped phase and mature phase. In the undeveloped phase, the Ten Imperfections of Insight<sup>22</sup> (*dasa vipassanā-upakkilesa*) occur. These Ten Defilements of Insight, forming the Not-Path, which mislead insight, impede the progress in meditation. The realization of these imperfections is the purification by knowledge and vision of Right Path, and the avoidance of the imperfections leads to the attainment of true insight. Besides this, three kinds of mundane full-understanding<sup>23</sup> are attained and a part of the Eighteen Principal Insights<sup>24</sup> is attained by means of full-understanding as abandoning.

6. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of the Way or Progress (Paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi). At this stage, with the absence of the inimical influences of the Ten Imperfections of Insight, insight reaches its culmination through a gradual and steady progress (known as paṭipadā) which consists of the Eight Knowledges<sup>25</sup> with Knowledge in Conformity with Truth (*saccānulomika-ñāṇa*), as the ninth. This is the knowledge adapted to the Four Noble Truths. The knowledge of contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*), one of the Eight Knowledges is conducive to eight advantages:

1. Elimination of wrong views regarding becoming
2. Abandoning the craving for life

<sup>22</sup> Visuddhimagga.xx,105, P.739- illumination (*obhāsa*), knowledge (*ñāna*), zest (*pīti*), serenity (*passaddhi*), bliss (*sukha*), resolve (*adhimokha*), exaltation (*paggaha*), mindfulness (*upaṭṭhāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) and attachment (*nikanti*).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, xx 3, P.704 - Ñātapařiññā-full understanding as the known, Tiraṇa-pariññā- full understanding as scrutiny, and full understanding as abandoning.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, Chapter xx, 89. P.732.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, Chapter xx (I) 93, P. 734, Chapter XXI (II)3, P. 746 - Knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall (*udayavayānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of appearance as terror (*bhayatūpaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of danger (*ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of detachment (*nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcītukamyatā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of reflection (*paṭisañkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of equanimity about formations (*sañkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*).

3. Constant application in what is suitable
4. Purity of livelihood
5. Elimination of anxiety
6. Expulsion of fear
7. Possession of patience and self-control
8. Overcoming of dissatisfaction

7. Purity of Knowledge and Insight (*Nāṇadassana-visuddhi*): This is the complete purity gained through the knowledge of the Four Noble Paths – the path of Stream-entry, the path of Once-return, the path of Non-return and the path of Perfect Holiness.<sup>26</sup> The knowledge of these Four Supra mundane Paths that lead to the total eradication of all defilements is the purity of Knowledge and Insight.

## **Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects as reflected in Insight Meditation**

The first step of Satta Visuddhi, *Sīla* visuddhi (Purity of morality) illustrates the behavioral therapy which is the preparation for the foundation of Insight, and the other steps of Satta Visuddhi depict the cognitive and psychotherapeutic aspects in Insight meditation.

### **1. Purity of Morality**

#### **Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects of Morality**

Morality or *Sīla* is the foundation of all meritorious actions. *Sīla* helps create a state of the mind that is not overwhelmed by fear, anxiety, remorse and confusion. *Sīla* strengthens our courage and ability. It lays the foundation for meditation practice and provides psychological strength. It is this foundation that is absolutely necessary to gain concentration. In a way, morality prepares the ground for planting the seeds of mental cultivation which gives rise to the tree of wisdom.

Morality enables a person to feel the basic level of safety and security that is a requisite for the practice of mental cultivation and wisdom. *Sīla*-visuddhi (Purity of morality) leads to purity of mind. Purity of mind (Cittavisuddhi) which is the basic foundation for penetrating the Four Noble Truths as well as all conditioned phenomena and the unconditioned which is Nirvāna.

#### **The Therapeutic Rewards and Blessing of Morality**

Freedom from remorse, acquisition of Joy, Rapture, Tranquility, Happiness, Concentration, Vision and knowledge according to reality, Turning away and detachment, The vision and knowledge with regard to Deliverance,

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<sup>26</sup> Visuddhimagga. Chapter XXII, 1, 2, P.785. sotāpatti-magga, sakadāgāmi-magga, anāgāmi-magga and arihatta-magga

## Five Advantages through the Practice of Morality

The Buddha preached the following five benefits gained through the observance of the precepts. Great increase of wealth and prosperity through diligence, Noble reputation, Confident deportment without timidity in every society, Serene Death after a full life-span, Re-birth in a happy state or in a heavenly world.<sup>27</sup>

### The Wholesome Results gained by keeping the Five Precepts:

The First Precept – no physical disabilities, no dry and wilted look, no weakness and sluggishness, no fear of dangers, no fear of being killed by others and committing suicide, no lots of diseases, no loss of friends and no short life.

The Second Precept – no poverty, no loss of your belongings to the Five Enemies (water or flood, fire or conflagrations, thieves, tyrants or bad leaders and unloved heirs like bad sons and daughters).

The Third Precept – not hated by many , no lots of enemies , peace , happy family, no shame and embarrassment, no physical deformities, no much worries, no separation from your loved ones.

The Fourth Precept – no unclear speech, no crooked teeth, no foul mouth, no dull senses, no lack of honor, no roughness in speech, no lack of calm.

The Fifth Precept – no loss of judgment, not being lazy, not being forgetful, not being insane, sense of gratitude, moral shame and moral fear.

## Behavioral, Cognitive and Psychotherapeutic Process of Sīla

By abstaining from immoral speech, actions and livelihood, the quality of blamelessness with non-remorse as the benefit can be achieved. One who observes the precepts is dear and loved by his companions holding him in high esteem. Non-remorse leads to joy (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*), followed by tranquility (*passadhi*), the proximate cause of concentration (*saṃādhi*). With concentrated mind, one is able to penetrate into the true nature of things (*yathābhūta-ñāna*) through Insight (*vipassānā*) and attain the Path and Fruition Knowledge (*magga-phala-ñāṇa*). Thus, Sīla is of many therapeutic aspects beginning with non-remorse and ending with the realization of *Nibbāna*. The Moral Purity purges the mind of its inferior, mean and inimical propensities and paves the way for inward purification.

## 2. Purity of Mind

The following mental disorders suffered by the Deluded-natured (moha-carita) are brought into diminution by Purity of Mind.

- *thīna-middha* - sloth and torpor (3<sup>rd</sup> of the Five Hindrances),
- *uddhacca* - restlessness (one mental hindrance and also one of the Ten Fetters)<sup>28</sup>,

<sup>27</sup> Visuddhimagga Chapter I, (IV), 23, P.9.

<sup>28</sup> AN 10.13 PTS:Av 17 Samyojana Sutta,(sakkāya-diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, sīlabbata-parāmāsa, kāma-rāga, vyāpāda, rūpa-rāga, arūpa-rāga, māna, uddhacca and avijjā.

- *kukkucca* - wrongly-performed-ness like scruples, remorse, uneasiness of conscience, worry *vicikicchā* - skeptical doubts (one of the three fetters)

### 3. Purity of Views

Due to *Dīṭṭhi Visuddhi*, one attains the view of reality or seeing things as they are (*yathābhūta-dassana*) that avoids falling into extremes and forming perversions or distortions of views (*dīṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). The misconception that causes one to think as “I-ness” or “I am-conceit” (ego-conceit, *asmī-māna*) is eliminated. Seeing the transience of the Five Aggregates and their relation to phenomenal existence, he is not worried by the vicissitude of the world. A potentiality to face and overcome sorrow and lamentation is developed, and mindfulness to understand the truth that everything is impermanent including our own lives is developed. A wakefulness that everything is changing all of the time is created. By seeing this truth of impermanence of all worldly vicissitudes, our mind is trained to maintain equanimity leading to balance of our mind.

### The Overall Therapeutic Benefits of Insight Meditation

- Decreasing and ridding the mind of various kinds of mental defilements which cause suffering.
- Increase of happiness with the reduction of suffering.
- Becoming detached from all the matters to which one used to be attached and as a result, being free from disturbances by worldly currents.
- Firm establishment of mind and development of wisdom to see things as they really are. As a result, one is unruffled, not swinging either way by worldly conditions - gain or loss, honor or dishonor, praise or blame, happiness or suffering - the vicissitude of the world.
- Decrease of selfishness and increase of sacrifices for the benefit of others.
- Development of a much more refined mind endowed with virtue in proportion to the level of practice reached.
- True peace of mind endowed with happiness which is unperturbed by secular matters.

Ten Asubhas (objects of impurities) and Kāyagatā-sati (mindfulness of body) are a therapeutic methods for mental disorders suffered by the Lust-natured (*rāga-carita*) such as hallucinatory habits (*māyā*), fraudulent tactics (*sātheya*), pride in all actions (*māna*), delight in sinful actions (*pāpicchatā*), unlimited desires (*mahičchatā*), unsatisfactoriness (*asantutthitā*), deep rooted defilements in every action, vacillation in duties (*cāpalya*), no fearing of any sinful action (*anottappa*), lack of moral shame in any sinful action (*ahirika*), infatuated mood in any function (*mado*), unconscious mind (*pamāda*).

Four Kasinas: *nīla*, *pīta*, *lohitā* and *odāta* and the Brahma-vihāras are a therapy for mental disorders suffered by the Hate-natured (*dosa-carita*) such as provocation in day today life actions (*kodho*), hatred (*upanāha*), covering others' good qualities (*makkhī*), comparing one's good qualities with himself (*palāsa*), intolerance of others' wealth (*issā*), hiding his wealth from the others (*macchariya*).

Ānāpāna-sati: is a therapy for the mental disorders possessed by the Deluded-natured (Moha-carita) such as sloth and torpor (thīna-middha), restlessness (uddhacca), scruples, remorse, uneasiness of conscience (kukkucca), skeptical doubts (vicikicchā).

Six Anussatis: Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, sīla, cāga, devatā are a therapy for the mental disorders possessed by Saddhā-carita.

Maraṇa-sati: upasamānussati, āhārepaṭikūla-saññā, catudhātu-vavatthāna - Buddhi or Intelligence.

Six Kasiṇas: paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo, ākāsa, āloka, and Four Arūpas – Sabba-carita or mixed character.

The psychotherapeutic aspects as reflected in the Eighteen Principal Insights

1. The contemplation of Impermanence (aniccānupassanā) abandons the perception of permanence.
2. The contemplation of Suffering (dukkhānupassanā) abandons the perception of pleasure.
3. The contemplation of Not-self (anattānupassanā) abandons the perception of self.
4. The contemplation of Dispassion (nibbidānupassanā) abandons delighting.
5. The contemplation of Fading Away (virāgānupassanā) abandons greed.
6. The contemplation of Cessation (nirodhānupassanā) abandons originating.
7. The contemplation of Relinquishment (paṭinissaggānupassanā) abandons grasping.
8. The contemplation of Destruction (khāyānupassanā) abandons the conception of compactness.
9. The contemplation of Fall (of formations) (vayānupassanā) abandons the accumulation of kamma.
10. The contemplation of Change (vipariṇāmānupassanā) abandons the conception of lastingness.
11. The contemplation of the Signless or the unconditioned (animittānupassanā) abandons sign.
12. The contemplation of Desirelessness (apañihatānupassanā) abandons desire.
13. The contemplation of Voidness (suññatānupassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence).
14. The development of the Insight into phenomena (higher understanding or wisdom) (adhipaññā-dhamma-vipassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to grasping at once.
15. The development of Correct Knowledge and Vision (yathā-bhūta-ñāṇadassana) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to confusion.
16. The development of Danger or Misery (ādīnavānupassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to reliance.
17. The contemplation of Reflexion (paṭisankhānupassanā) abandons non-reflexion.

18. The contemplation of Turning Away (vivatthanānupassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to bondage.

### **The Overall Therapeutic Results of Insight Meditation**

The behavioral problems caused by the adverse actions and evil speeches (detrimental bodily activities and malevolent verbal expressions) which are inimical to individual and society can be overcome through the Moral Purity, and this can be taken as an aspect of Vikkhambhana-pahāna<sup>29</sup> - overcoming by suspension or repression (a temporary suppression of taints which lead to mental problems).

The adverse ideas and erroneous views are overcome through the Eighteen Insights, and this way of overcoming (the idea of permanence by impermanence, the idea of pleasure by suffering, self by Not-self, etc.) is known as The Overcoming by the Opposites – Tadāṅga-pahāna<sup>30</sup>

The mental problems caused due to attachment, aversion, torpor, restlessness and conflict are overcome by the Purity of Mind (Citta-visuddhi) through eight attainments -four rūpa Jhānās and four arūpa Jhānās (asta samāpati) with access-concentration (upacāra –samādhi) which has the potentiality to suppress the Five Hindrances (pañcanīvaraṇa). The overcoming by tranquilization is Paṭipassaddhi-pahāna.

All the behavioral and mental problems are completely overcome by the complete purity gained through the knowledge of the Noble Paths with the final attainment - *arihatta-magga* leading to the total eradication of all defilements through the Purity of Knowledge and Insight. This is known as the Samuccheda- pahāna –overcoming by destruction.

### **Conclusion**

Modern psychoanalysis works on the assumption that when the origin of a mental disorder is revealed, its influence on unconscious motivation will automatically disappear. Such psychoanalysis has so far not been successful in diagnosing the root causes that bring into being mental problems and unwholesome behaviors. Hence, modern psychiatry or psychotherapy is incapable of the total eradication of problematic mentality that causes problematic behavior.

Buddhism which analyses the root causes of problematic personality in the context of the Noxious Trio – greed, hatred and delusion exposes a highly systematized psychological analysis of human mind and behavior with the prominence to the mind (mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā – mano setṭhā manomaya”)<sup>31</sup>. The cognitive, behavioral and psychotherapeutic aspect reflected in Insight Meditation is that when the mind is gradually purified, body and speech are cleansed. The total purity of mind brings about the complete eradication of all taints or cankers putting an end to all types of mental disorders and problematic behaviors. Eventually, the cognitive, behavioral and psychotherapeutic methods reflected in Insight Meditation can profusely be adopted to cure mental problems and abnormal behaviors in the modern society.

<sup>29</sup> Buddhist Dictionary-Manual of Buddhist Terms & Doctrines by Nyanatiloka, P. 353.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, P.365.

<sup>31</sup> The Dhammapada, K. Sri Dhammananada, verse 1–Yamaka Vagga P. 41.

# **Psychotherapeutic Value of Visuddhimagga for the Enhancement of Modern Psychotherapy**



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## **Introduction**

The Visuddhimagga written by Ven. Buddhaghosa could be recognized as the Manual of Theravāda Buddhist Psychology due to its salient psychological theories discussed therein. It is mentioned in the Mahāvamsa, the Great Chronicle (the greatest historical record of Ceylon) that the Visuddhimagga came into being as a result of commenting upon two stanzas from Samyutta-nikāya in order to get the permission from Mahāvihāra authority for translating Sinhalese commentaries into Pāli language.<sup>1</sup> At the inception of the Visuddhimagga, the objective of composition is explained as to prescribe treatments for: the inner tangle (antojatā) and the outer tangle (bahijatā) faced by the ordinary man (putujjanā).<sup>2</sup>

And on the other hand, a special attention should be paid on why this compendium was named as the Visuddhimagga. In the early Buddhist context, the term “visuddhi” has been utilized to render the meaning of Nibbāna (*summum bonum*). As far as the entire meaning of the term “Nibbāna” is concerned, it provides the meaning as happiness, contentment and peace.<sup>3</sup> Nibbāna is so called because; it blows out the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion.<sup>4</sup> When these fires are blown out peace is attained, and one becomes completely cooled (sitibata). The individual who experienced “Nibbāna” in this very life is called as sitibhūta<sup>5</sup>, cooled person. The reason why this person is known as sitibhūta means, because he/she completely eradicated noxious trio (desire, hatred and delusion) which makes a person hot, restless and induce him/her into problematic behaviors (pāpakāri) and various types of mental disorders (cetasikorogo).<sup>6</sup> Taking this entire meaning of the term “Nibbāna” into consideration, Ven. Buddhaghosa names this compendium as Visuddhimagga. Psychotherapeutic strategies revealed by commentator Buddhaghosa are centered on three fold training<sup>7</sup> (morality, concentration, and wisdom). This Threefold training elaborated in Visuddhimagga, in terms of sattavisuddhi (sevenfold purification), tries to transform three aspects of the individual as a therapeutic means. And on the other hand, various psychotherapeutic strategies advocated by the commentary

<sup>1</sup> Extended Mahāvamsa, Malalasekara, P.T.S, 1988, Chapter, xxxvii verse, p. 215

<sup>2</sup> Samyuttanikāya, i, P.T.S, 1973, P,165: *anto jatā bahijatā jatāya jatita pajā tam tam go tama pucchāmi koimam vijataye jatā*. There are these two tangles, the inner tangle and the outer tangle. The people are enmeshed in these two tangles; and I ask thee Gotama, this question, who succeeds in disentangling these tangles”.

<sup>3</sup> Suttanipāta, ed, D, Andersen and H. Smith, P.T.S, 1931,p. 235

<sup>4</sup> Samyuttanikāya, iv, P.T.S, p.19

<sup>5</sup> Suttanipāta, ed D Andersen and H. Smith, P.T.S, pp. 542, 642

<sup>6</sup> Aṅguttaranikāya, ii, P.T.S, pp. 142, 143

<sup>7</sup> Samyuttanikaya, i, P.T.S, 1973, p. 165. “*sile patiṭṭhāya naro sappañño cittam paññaṇca bhāvayāñ atāpi nipako bhikkhū soimam vijaṭaye jatam.*” When a wise man establishes well in virtue, develops his mind and attains wisdom, such a Bhikkhu ardent and sagacious, succeeds in disentangling this tangle” –Visuddhimagga.

show us various significances that are so relevant to this modern world. Therefore, the objective of this research paper is to disclose how far these strategies could be adopted for the enhancement of the repertoire of modern psychotherapy.

## **Psychopathology and Visuddhimagga**

In the third and twenty second chapters of Visuddhimagga, the basic features of Theravāda Buddhist Psychopathology have been discussed. It is evident from these chapters that the entire scope of Psychopathology also has been well elaborated in terms of three categories. They are as follows.

- Psychological influence of noxious trio<sup>8</sup>
- Physical influences of four elements and three humors.<sup>9</sup>
- Kammic influence of previous causes.<sup>10</sup>

## **Psychological Influence of the Noxious Trio**

Commentator, Ven. Buddhaghosa discusses with a great exposition the entire psychological background of defilements (kilesa) and its provocations towards various problematic behaviors and Psychiatric disorders.<sup>11</sup> Desire (rāga), hatred (dosa) and delusion are the central intrinsic defilements in the field of Theravāda Buddhist philosophy. Further, various aspects of these three elements are discussed in Theravāda Buddhist philosophy in terms of various generic terms, namely, ten fetters (dasasamyojanāni), the ten corruptions (dasakilesā), ten wrongnesses (dasamichattā), four perversions (cattārapivallāsā), forties (cattāroganthā) four injustices (cattāssoagati), four cankers (cattāroāsavā), four floods (cattāroogha), five hindrances (pañca nīvaranāni), one adherence (parāmāso), four clinging (cattāriupādāna), seven inherent tendencies (sattānusayā), three stains (tinimalāni), ten unwholesome courses of action (dasa akusalakammapathā), and twelve unwholesome thought arisings (dvādasākusalacittuppādā). Although these defilements (kilesa) are discussed in terms of various generic terms, in the context of psychological analysis, all these elements come under three crucial ingredients as desire (lobha) hared (dosa) moha (delusion). The nature of desire (dosa) and its function has been graphically elaborated in the early Buddhism as impulse (kāmacchanda), excitement (rāga) enjoyment (nandi) love (sineha) thirst (pipāsa) consuming passion (parilāha) etc. According to the psychological analysis of Visuddhimagga, desire acts as a primordial essence which is conducive to provide happy and unhappy destinies.<sup>12</sup> It is very clear from the psychological analysis of Visuddhimagga that “desire” (lobha) has various functions leading human beings to acquire their primary and secondary needs. But in the actual world, individual is unable to acquire their wants and needs. The reason is the inevitable fact known as anicca or impermanence. In front of their failures due to impermanence (anicca), the next psychological reaction that originates in the mind is known as “dosa” or hatred. The individual who fails to acquire his/her wants and needs and provoked by dosa or hatred differs from a clam person. According to early Buddhist explanations,

<sup>8</sup> Visuddhimagga Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli , Taipei, Taiwan, R. O. C.1956, xxii pp, 798,806

<sup>9</sup> Ibid iii, pp,102,104

<sup>10</sup> Visuddhimagga Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli , Taipei,Taiwan, R. O. C, 1956, iii, pp,104,105

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, xxii,pp,798,806

<sup>12</sup> The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism, R.E.A Johansson, Oxford, 1978, P, 105

an individual influenced by hatred does not restate to get revenge from himself (attam̄tapa) and from the society (param̄tapa).<sup>13</sup> As a result of this revengeful situation,<sup>14</sup> the individual led by hatred cannot understand the natural circumstances as they are. This infatuated situation of individual has been graphically discussed in the Theravāda Buddhism as the condition of moha (delusion). This infatuated mentality leads persons into various problematic behaviors and many psychiatric disorders.

## Kammic Influences as a Crucial Ingredient of Psychopathology

Kammic influences belong to previous existences are concerned here as a central element that can affect present physical and mental performances. Kammic influence plays here an important role as the significant ingredient that represents cultural, spiritual, and ethical consciousness of the individual. The very significant teaching both in early and Theravāda Buddhism is the Rebirth consciousness. As it is mentioned in the Visuddhimagga, individuals possess desire, hatred, deluded, faithful, intelligent and speculative characters in this present life due to the Rebirth consciousness. This resultant consciousness brings various behavioral patterns and thinking patterns that belong to previous existences (puṇabbhava). The Visuddhimagga says “Apparently one of greedy temperaments has formerly had plenty of desirable tasks and gratifying works to do, or has reappeared here after dying in a heaven. And one of hating temperament has formerly had plenty of stabbing and torturing and brutal works to do or has reappeared after dying. And one of deluded temperament has formerly drunk a lot of intoxicants and neglected hearing and questioning, or has reappeared here after dying in the animal existence. It is in this way that they have their source in previous habit”. It is very evident that the author gives an ethical analysis of individual regarding their previous cultural, spiritual, sociological conditions. The analysis of mental dispositions preoccupied by previous habits and their relevance to present problematic behaviors and to mental disorder is a very unique teaching in the field of psychotherapy revealed by Theravāda Buddhism.<sup>15</sup>

## Influences of the Four Elements and the Three Humors as Physical causes to Various Problematic and Psychiatric Disorders

As it is discussed in the Visuddhimagga, the physical elements of individual are formed with the help of earth (pathavi) water (āpo), fire (tejo) and wind (vāyo).<sup>16</sup> And on the other hand it is very clearly explained here that the proper function of the physical body exists on the equilibrium of three humors known as phlegm, wind, and bile. The imbalance of these four elements and three humors

<sup>13</sup> The mind in Early Buddhism, Bh. Thích minh Thành, New Delhi, 201, PP,145,149.

<sup>14</sup> Anguttara Nikāya,i. Pali Text Society, p. 149: He who is overwhelmed by hatred plans to his own harm, to the heart of others to the harm of both. He performs immoral acts in deed, words and thought, He cannot understand, as it really is his own profit, that of others, or that of both hatred is the cause of blindness, of not seeing, of not knowing, of loss of understanding: it is associated with trouble and does not leave to Nibbāna.

<sup>15</sup> Visuddhimagga Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli , Taipei,Taiwan, R. O. C, 1956, pp. 104,105.

<sup>16</sup> Visuddhimagga Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli , Taipei,Taiwan, R. O. C, 1956, xi, pp. 380, 384

Whatever is “characterised by hardness” (thaddha lakkhāna) is the Earth or solid Element; by cohesion (ābandhana) or fluidity, the water – Element: heating (paripācanal) the fire or heat Element: by “strengthening” or “supporting” (vitthambhana) the wind or motion- Element. All four are present in every material object, though in varying degrees of strength. If, for instance. The Earth Element predominates, the material object is called ‘solid’ etc.

are conducive to problematic behaviors and psychiatric disorders.<sup>17</sup> It is said in the Visuddhimagga “then a person is of deluded temperament because two elements are prominent, that is to say the earth element and fire element. He is of heating temperament because the other two elements are prominent. But he is of greedy temperament recourse all four are equal. And as regards the humors, one of greedy temperament has phlegm in excess and one of deluded temperament has wind in excess or one of deluded temperament has phlegm in excess and one of greedy temperament has wind in excess. So they have their sources in the elements and the humors they say.”<sup>18</sup> According to the above mentioned expositions, it is very obvious that the psychiatric perspective of Visuddhimagga is very comprehensive. A part from that biological and the psychological causes have been highly concerned here in the context of psychopathology.

## Personality and Character Analysis

According to the psychology of Visuddhimagga, individual means a psychophysical causal process which is analytically explained as the five aggregates (khandha), the twelve bases (āyatana), the eighteen elements (dhātu) and is synthetically discussed in the formula of conditioned genesis (paṭiccasamuppāda) as an ever changing and mutually conditioned series of phenomena.<sup>19</sup> Concerning the early Buddhist expositions, Ven. Buddhaghosa explains that the combination of psychophysical causal existence comes as a whole, as an individual. But according to this analytical and synthetic explanations, it is emphasized that no any permanent or everlasting existence in this transitory world that could be known as soul. The axiom of Tilakkhaṇa is also utilized here to avoid the delusive permanency of individual and any kind of permanent soul (anatta). Commentator Buddhaghosa, following early Buddhist teachings of the five aggregates (khandha), the twelve bases (āyatana) and the eighteen elements (dhātu) illustrate that, in the process of personality development, the psychological existence represented by the term nāma must be developed significantly than physical concern. Quoting Āhāra Sutta, the commentator emphasizes here that when edible food is provided to physical existence, three types of food known as phassāhāra, manosamcetanikāhāra and viññāṇāhāra should be provided for the existence of the mentality. These three foods do not represent the edible foods but totally mental.<sup>20</sup> Though Early and Theravāda Buddhist teachings accept the interaction of these physical and mental elements, the predominant place is given to the existence of mentality and its development as a means of everlasting solution to every human predicament. This is a theory of paramount importance, both in early Buddhism and in Theravāda Buddhism because it is very impossible to eliminate every human problem in the absence of the proper mental development. Therefore, in the analysis of personality development, the mental development is much more highly emphasized than the physical nourishment. This mental transformation is discussed here as the one and only way that could be adopted to prevent every kind of human predicament.

In the Theravāda Buddhist exposition, the knowledge of physical age and the objectives related to relevant physical age are very helpful to understand the personality and its various disorders. The entire human lifespan is discussed in the kammathānāniddesa. The lifespan of every individual is of tenfold. They are as follows:

<sup>17</sup> Ibid iii, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid iii, pp. 79,81.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid xv, pp. 552, 558

<sup>20</sup> Visuddhimagga Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli , Taipei,Taiwan, R. O. C, 1956, xi, pp. 372, 374.

- Childhood (maṇḍa, 1 -10)
- Adolescence (kiddā, 10 - 20)
- Adulthood (vaṇṇa, 20 - 30)
- The period of the establishment of mundane life (bala, 30, 40)
- The period of wisdom (paññā, 40, 50)
- The period of physical decay (hāyana, 50, 60)
- The period of distortion of physical body (pabbāra, 60, 70)
- The period of having crooked body (vaṇka, 70, 80)
- The period of mental distortion (momuha, 80 - 90)
- The period of occurring death (sayana, 90, 100)<sup>21</sup>

According to above mentioned exposition, it is apparently proved that the Theravāda aim of providing counseling and psychotherapeutic knowledge to present world is not limited to certain period of life, but to the entire life span of the human being.

Six character types discussed in Visuddhimagga give a significant value in understanding their various behavioral and thinking patterns. Each six characters can be distinguished from others, in terms of five points. As mentioned in the Visuddhimagga: desire (rāga), hatred (dosa), deluded (moha), faithful (saddhā), intelligent (buddhi), and speculative (vitakka) characters can be known with reference to their different types of postures, actions, eating patterns, modes of seeing and with their various mental states.<sup>22</sup>

## **Problematic Behaviors and Psychiatric Disorders According to the Six Characters**

Out of six characters, faithful and intelligent characters are considered as healthy. But other four characters possess various problematic behaviors and psychiatric disorders. The very significant point that should be mentioned here is every problematic and mental disorder is again subdivided into very subtle categories. But it is very difficult to mention them all. Hence, abstract form of them is discussed here.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Wasantha Priyadarshana (edited by: Dr. Dion Peoples): “The Buddhist Concept of Conflict Resolution (An Approach To Global Recovery Through Mental Well-Being), inside: Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective, for the 7<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day of Vesak Conference, 2010, pp. 711, 712

<sup>22</sup> Guide through Visuddhimagga, V. Dhammaratana, Sri lanka, 1964, pp. 34-36: The temperaments may be ascertained with reference to five points. They have been stated in the following gathā: “iriyapathato kiccā bhojanādassanādito dhammappavattitoceva cariyāyo vibhāvaye” The temperaments may be known with relevance to posture, action, eating, seeing etc, and the mental states. For more details please see Visuddhimagga, III chapter, from pages 106-112.

<sup>23</sup> Dr. Wasantha Priyadarshana (edited by: Dr. Dion Peoples): “The Buddhist Concept of Conflict Resolution (An Approach To Global Recovery Through Mental Well-Being), inside: Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective, for the 7<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day of Vesak Conference, 2010, pp. 711, 712

## Unhealthy Characteristics Possessed by Desire Character (rāga)

- Hallucinatory habits (māyā)
- Fraudulent taxies (sāttheya)
- Pride in all actions
- Delight in sinful actions (pāpicchatā)
- Unlimited desires (mahicchatā)
- Unsatisfactoriness (asantutthitā)
- Deep rooted defilements in every action (singa)
- Vacillation in duties (cāpalya)
- Not tearing of any sinful actions (anottappa)
- Shamefulness in any sinful action (ahirika)
- Infatuated mood in any functions (mado)
- Unconscious mind (pamāta)

## Unhealthy Characteristics Possessed by Deluded Character (moha)

- Sloth and torpor in physical and mental performances (thīnmiddha)
- Restlessness (uddhacca)
- Scrupulousness
- Uneasiness of after doing actions
- Skeptical doubts (vicikicchā)
- Dogmatism

## Unhealthy Characteristics Possessed by Hatred Character (dosā)

- Provocativeness in day to day life patterns
- Imbalance of controlling hatred (upanāha)
- Covering others good qualities (makkha)
- Comparing one's good qualities with himself (palāsa)
- Intolerance of other wealth and progress (issa)
- Hiding his wealth from the others

## Unhealthy Characteristics Possessed by Speculative Character (vitakka)

- Excessive talkativeness
- Fondness for society
- Dislike for wholesome practices
- Unsettled in all his doings
- By height he broods over what to do next day
- By day he carries out last height's plans.
- Aimless rushing about.

## Treatment Theories

As discussed in the analysis of Psychopathology, individuals vary from each other due to their biological, Psychological, ethical, spiritual and cultural states. In the process of prescribing meditative subjects (kammaṭṭhānas) for six characters, these differences are highly concerned here. As an eminent Psychiatrist, commentator Buddhaghosa prescribes in the Visuddhimagga very significant treatments regarding the effects from biological, sociological, ethical, cultural and psychological status of each six characters.<sup>24</sup> Since, there was a highly propagated indigenous medical science; Ven. Buddhaghosa has merely mentioned few treatments regarding the biological conditions. And on the other hand his main aim was not to discuss biological background of individual but to discuss and provide the knowledge that could be adopted to behavioral and cognitive transformation as the definite solution for every human predicament. That is the understanding of the things as they are or which is known as paññā (wisdom)

But in this very limited biological analysis, the value of keeping in touch with the balance of three humors<sup>25</sup> has been well explained. And in the second step, the value of having suitable diet which helps to keep four elements in a healthful condition which can keep the body free from Physical problems is discussed. According to the early Buddhist expositions, this physical wellbeing of individual is conducive to achieve healthful mentality.<sup>26</sup> Taking these significant factors into consideration, Ven. Buddhaghosa mentions some biological treatments in order to attain mental wellbeing.<sup>27</sup> But in the entire content of Visuddhimagga, Ven. Buddhaghosa gives much more priority to ethical, spiritual, and psychological treatments more than biological treatments, providing more concerns to ethical background which is directly connected with causes of problematic behaviors and psychiatric disorders. Ritualistic performances full of psychotherapeutic values like pilgrimages, worshiping Buddha statues, and charity (dāna) are advocated as ethical treatments. In course of time, having understood the Psychotherapeutic significance of these ritualistic performances, Astrology

<sup>24</sup> Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga, A comparative Study, Bapat, P.V. Poona, 1937, pp. 35, 36

<sup>25</sup> Visuddhimagga Tr. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli , Taipei, Taiwan, R. O. C, 1956, pp. 104, 105

<sup>26</sup> The Dhammapada, Nārada, Sri lanka, 2000 p. 177: “*ārogyaparamālābhā san tuṭṭhi paramamdhānam vissāsapuramāñati nibbānam paramam sukham*” Health is the highest gain. (Contentment is the greatest wealth. The trust is the best kinsmen Nibbāna is the highest bliss. Therefore, it is very evident that without this psychical health the attainment of Nibbāna known as the highest mental purity is impossible.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid III, pp. 110, 111.

came into being as a salient feature of Sri Lankan Psychotherapy.<sup>28</sup> Previous causes (pubbācinnā – nidāna) are also given a significant place in Visuddhimagga as a central fact which is conducive to various mental problems.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, with an idea of minimizing this kammic effects or previous causes, moral discipline (sīla) is recommended here as a therapeutic means. It is said that, by practicing moral discipline one can change some undesirable behavior patterns connected with previous causes.<sup>30</sup> In order to change wrong thinking patterns and the cognitions which cause many psychiatric disorders and problematic behaviors, meditation<sup>31</sup> full of psychotherapeutic values is advocated in the Visuddhimagga as the sole solution for every human predicament. The above mentioned treatment process is further elaborated here in terms of sevenfold purification (sattavisuddhiyo): (i) purification of virtue (sīla – visuddhi), (ii) purification of mind (citta – visuddhi), (iii) purification of views (diṭṭhi – visuddhi), (iv) purification of conquest of doubts (kaṇkhā - vitaranā – visuddhi), (v) purification of knowledge and insight into the right and wrong path (maggāmagga - nāṇadassana – visuddhi), (vi) Purification of knowledge and insight into progress (patipadāñānadassana – visuddhi). (vii) Purification of knowledge and insight into the noble path (nāṇadassana – visuddhi). It has to be noted here that the first and the second purifications are represented by sīla and samādhi and the last five by paññā; and the transformation of thinking patterns is aimed at the first and the second purifications. But much emphasis is given to cognitive development with the last five purifications.<sup>32</sup> When a client is directed along with these seven purifications, he or she is able to prevent the above mentioned problems with different levels. These different kinds of therapeutic levels are elaborated in terms of five steps: (i) Overcoming by Repression (vikkhamphana – pahāna), (ii) Overcoming by the opposite (tadangapahāna), (iii) Overcoming by tranquillization (paṭipassaddhi – pahāna), (iv) Overcoming by Escape (nissarana – pahāna), (iv) Overcoming by Destruction (samuccheda – pahāna)<sup>33</sup>

## Relevance to Mental Health Prophylaxis

The above mentioned therapeutic theories have been well discussed with several practical strategies. They are as follows.

- Practice of sīla for behavioral modification.
- Practice of Ascetic Practices (dhutaṅgas) for minimizing unlimited desires
- Understanding impediments (palibodhas) and leaving them in order to achieve clam environment.
- Meeting a suitable spiritual preceptor as a psychotherapist or psychologist counselor.

<sup>28</sup> See for more details, A celebration of demons (Exorcism and the Aesthetics of healing in Sri Lanka) Kapferer, Bruce, Bloomington, 1983.

<sup>29</sup> Visuddhimagga, pp. 35,36

<sup>30</sup> Guide through Visuddhimagga, pp. 1, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Psychotherapeutic significances of Buddhist meditation, including the aspects of both samatha (tranquility) and vipassanā (insight) have been well discussed by several scholars. For more detailed discussion read, Carrington, P. (1984) Modern forms of meditation. In R.L wool folk and P.M. Lethers (Eds), Principles and Practice of Stress Management New York: Guilford press, Carrington, P. (1987) managing meditation in clinical practice. In M.A, west (Ed) The Psychology of Meditation, Oxford: Clarendon press.

<sup>32</sup> For detailed discussion of Satta Viuddhi please see, Guide through Visuddhimagga written by Dhammaratana ,v.

<sup>33</sup> Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka. Singapore, p. 121

- Keeping a good therapeutic relationship between the spiritual preceptor and the candidate.
- Following suitable meditative objects (kammaṭṭhānas) prescribed by the spiritual preceptor. There are 40 kammaṭṭhānas. The following kammaṭṭhānas have been suggested for the temperaments concerned:
- 

<b>Temperaments</b>	<b>Kammaṭṭhānas</b>
desire (rāga )	Ten unpleasant objects (asubhās) and mindfulness with regard to the Body.
hatred (dosa)	Four sublime abodes (brahmavihāras) and four vaṇṇakasinās.
deluded (moha)	Mindfulness on in and out breathing (ānāpānasati)
faithful (saddhā)	Six kinds of Recollection (anussati) (recollection of the Buddha, Doctrine, his noble disciples, of morality, liberality, Heavenly beings.
intelligent (buddhi)	Recollection of Death (marañānussati, Recollection of the peace of nibbāna (upasamānussati) Analysis of the four Elements (catudhātuvavatthāna)
speculative (vitakka)	Mindfulness on in and out breathing (ānāpānasati)

Nibbāna, the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to be attained with aid of a continuous practice focused on behavioral and cognitive transformation. One of strategies suggested by Buddhism in order to achieve behavior modification is moral discipline or moral culture. Providing high threshold under the category of sīla – visuddhi (moral purification), Buddhaghosa explains that sīla can minimize and calm down three types of internal fires known as the fire of attachment (rāgaggi), the fire of antipathy (dosaggi) and fire of ignorance (mohagge). These three fires cause internal burns. But various moral disciplines introduced to laity, monk, and novice can minimize those internal burns with their behavioral transformation. When a laity observes moral discipline introduced as five precepts, he or she has to safe guard his or her body, speech, and mind from unwholesome actions. As it is discussed in early Buddhism, killing, stealing and adultery are known as unwholesome bodily actions. The unwholesome verbal actions are: back-biting, speaking harsh words and gossiping. And on the other hand, avarice, ill-will and false-views are known as threefold unwholesome mental action. At the first step, the particular moral disciplines known as the beginning of life of purity (ādhibrāhmaçariyakasīla) and the virtue of good behavior (ābhisañācarikasīla) are constructed as a result of practicing the five precepts. In the code of discipline, there are certain rules which have a direct bearing on the social behavior of a man. And there are others which have their bearing on his moral conduct alone. Keeping in view these two sets of rules in the Buddhist tradition, a distinction has been made in the context virtue of good behavior (ādhibrāhmaçariyakasīla) and that of the beginning of life purity (ābhisañācrikasīla), one is related to the social behavior and

etiquette, while the other is related to the moral conduct. It is the observance of the latter that keeps the moral purity of a man. Therefore, sīla or moral conduct plays an important role as a strategy that could be used to change unwholesome conduct of an individual into a wholesome conduct. It is very evident that moral discipline that can be adopted as a self control or self development strategy in the field of mental health lies in the area of prophylaxis. There are various psychotherapeutic strategies scattered in the Visuddhimagga and so it is very hard to elaborate every strategy in this kinds of concise essay. Therefore, the relevance of Psychotherapeutic values has been briefly noted above. Every strategy constructed in the Visuddhimagga is expected to explain briefly at the presentation.

# **Exploring the Utilization of Buddhist Practices in Counseling for Two Different Groups of Service Providers (Monks and Psychologists) in Cambodia**



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*The suffering of Cambodia has been deep.  
From this suffering comes great Compassion.  
Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart.  
A peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person.  
A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Community.  
A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation.  
And a Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World.  
May all beings live in Happiness and Peace.*  
--Samdech Maha Ghosananda, Cambodia

The above quotation sets the objective we advocate and work for in Cambodia.<sup>3</sup>

## **Introductory analysis**

### ***Background and current situation:***

Cambodia's history of political unrest, socioeconomic struggle and traumatic genocide under the Khmer Rouges (KR) has disrupted and destroyed many grown structures of resources, such as the foundations of sufficient health care, education and deeper knowledge of Buddhist and Hindu, animistic traditional practices and cultural legacies. Normal patterns and habits of daily life have been torn apart and resulted in low indicators of development. Cambodia was ranked 137<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries according to the United Nations Human Development Index (2009) and struggles still with providing a minimum of health services and standards especially in the field of mental health.

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<sup>3</sup> This paper presents a joint project from the Department of Psychology (DP) at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) in Cambodia. To fathom Cambodian Buddhist resources for psychosocial work in the face of the immense need of help regarding the upcoming trials for case 002 at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal interviews with eight monks in and around Phnom Penh have been conducted. From this, an ample literature research and discussions with different stakeholders the development of a training curriculum for monks and materials for the master's program at RUPP emerged. They aim to integrate Buddhist practices and mindfulness skills and Western basic interviewing and counseling techniques and are presented in this paper as well.

Problems such as poverty, lack of gender parity, mistrust and suppressed anger, domestic violence, child and sex-trafficking, substance abuse, and other issues which continue to undermine movements for national reconciliation, are common (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Humeniuk, Ali, & Ling, 2004; UNIAP, 2008; van de Put & Eisenbruch, 2002). Preliminary results from a nationwide survey conducted by the Department of Psychology (DP) at the Royal University Phnom Penh (RUPP) in August 2011 show a high percentage of people worrying about their daily survival and how to pay back debts as well as a high incidence of aggressiveness. Additionally, the still widespread confusion about and inexplicability of how these atrocities could happen and who is to blame for them seems to frustrate many and lead to amplifying somatic symptoms (see also: Perry, Oum, & Gray, 2007).

In 2006 the special tribunal sponsored jointly by the United Nations and the Kingdom of Cambodia known formally as the “Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia” (ECCC) but commonly referred to as the “Khmer Rouge trials” was established to try the main responsible KR leaders. With the pending trials regarding case 002 at the ECCC, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) are confronted with a number of no less than 3866 recognized civil parties that urgently need psychological preparation to prevent re-traumatization during the hearings. Most of these applicants come from rural areas where there is hardly any psychological support available.

But help is not only urgently needed in this area, but also in the field of severe mental disorders such as psychotic disorders, which are subject to stigmatization and helpless actions of putting the ill into cages or on chains. Often families spend their whole savings and belongings on ineffective treatments without being referred to an appropriate service.

### ***Resources in mental health:***

During the Pol Pot era (1975-1979), it is estimated that approximately 2 million Cambodians died. Only 50 physicians out of 1,000 before 1975 survived this period, with no mental health professionals among them (Stewart, Yuying & Phan Chan, 2010). Furthermore another million of Cambodia’s population was killed during the period of civil war prior to and following the KR era (Berthold & Gray, 2011). The United Nations Development Program estimated in 1989 that no more than 300 qualified persons of all disciplines were left to serve the country (Bit, 1991). Cambodia had never developed concepts and a system of mental health care until 1993 and depression and trauma resulting from the long lasting civil war largely went untreated. The culture has not provided socially accepted ways of expressing and releasing anger and frustration supported by the belief that such emotions do not fit with Buddhist principles. At the same time Buddhist principles seemed to foster an acceptance of suffering as the expected order of life (Bit, 1991).

In 1994 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the University of Oslo in cooperation with the Ministry of Health in Cambodia initiated the first training of psychiatrists after the Khmer Rouge regime. Up to now 49 psychiatrists (11 females according to information from the University of Health Sciences that has set up a training program and 45 psychiatric nurses have been trained and work in mental health facilities and/or private practice in Cambodia (information from Ministry of Health). In addition mental health care has also been integrated into primary health care by the Ministry of Health since 2002 with 297 trained physicians and 270 trained nurses. Mental

health outpatients services are available at 45 out of 84 referral hospitals nationwide and at 18 out of 967 health centers (Stewart, Yuying & Phan Chan 2010). Psychiatric education doesn't however include extensive training in counseling and psychotherapeutic skills. Educational trainings comprising an undergraduate and master's program are well established at the Departments of Psychology and Social Work at RUPP. However psychologists are so far not often involved in governmental institutions such as hospital care although the Cambodia's Ministry of Health is currently planning this.

The DP at RUPP exists since 1994 and offers an undergraduate and masters program to meet the great need for well-trained psychologists and counselors in Cambodia's rural and city areas. The vision includes setting up a cooperation-network with a wider range of governmental and non-governmental institutions to bundle energies and enhance sustainability and efficiency. Over 660 students have graduated with a Bachelor's degree in psychology from the undergraduate program at RUPP. Since 2008, the Department offers a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology and Trauma Treatment which provides an educational environment in which graduate students can learn advanced concepts and principles of psychology, psychotherapy, counseling and the methods of scientific inquiry into the behavior of individuals, groups and society. The goal is to train psychologists with a special focus on trauma/therapeutic approaches with a strong integration of traditional Cambodian cultural ways and forms of support. From the first promotion 13 students have successfully graduated with a master's degree and many of them are working in private practice and as program coordinators and counselors in the field of trauma and mental health. Some have started setting up a mobile team serving other provinces. The second cohort of students started its studies in February of 2011. The department aspires to reach excellence in research and education.

In addition to the DP at RUPP, limited clinical services are provided by some other organizations. The largest number of individuals seen by NGOs is probably served by TPO. TPO is a well-respected local non-governmental organization founded in 1995 which provides culturally appropriate psychological services to Cambodian individuals, families and communities who are subject to long-term stress and trauma. The organization runs an outpatient clinic in Phnom Penh and implements several community mental health programs at community grassroots levels. Following a multi-disciplinary approach, TPO's outpatient clinic in Phnom Penh includes psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and clinical psychologists. The clinic offers the following services: counseling services, psychiatric consultations, one-time consultations and Testimonial Therapy for KR survivors. In 2010 TPO's outpatient clinic provided services to 601 new clients, 61 percent of which were female. The number of consultations has significantly increased from 591 in 2005 to 5070 in 2010. TPO further provided 545 phone-counseling sessions and around 100 face-to-face counseling sessions in 2010. TPO also provides ongoing psychological and psychiatric services to inmates in Phnom Penh's prisons and to victims of human trafficking.

Several other organizations such as Social Services of Cambodia (SSC), Maryknoll, Enfants et Development, Pour un sourire d'enfant and the Caritas Child and Adolescent Mental Health Clinic (CCAMH) are providing mental health care in smaller and bigger amounts.

As almost all fifteen Cambodian and expatriate mental health professionals from a qualitative study on mental health care in Cambodia noted that the entire population is underserved with mental health services with a particular lack in treatment of children, women, rural populations, persons with disabilities, sex workers, street children, prisoners, and persons struggling with substance abuse

one can see the importance of the work done by the above mentioned organizations in the field of mental health in Cambodia (Stewart, Yuying & Phan Chan, 2010).

### ***Buddhist particularities in Cambodia***

Bit (1991) noted that “The merging of classical Buddhist thought with animistic and Brahmanist traditions produces patterns which are quite atypical of Buddhism as practiced elsewhere” (p. 21). This has led to a diffusion of helpful powers and arbitrariness of spiritual protection, further promoting the widespread fear stemming from the experience of almost total paralysis by fear and terror during the nameless, faceless and ever-present danger of the KR regime (Bit, 1991). In addition, Cambodia has seen the merging of various different cultural influences from India, China, Thailand, Lao and France which has proceeded without an in depth adaptation (or rejection) of previous beliefs and thus has resulted in a co-existence of partly contradictory norms and values. A habit to submerge deep differences inside surface similarities has emerged and in turn, has led to a subsequent loss of the capacity to analytically connect theory with outcome, actively make choices and has increased the readiness to trust in and (in psychological terminology) “identify with the oppressor” in Cambodia (Bit, 1991). Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia has developed in a somewhat isolated vacuum with hardly any ties to developments in other Buddhist countries. In this process other influences have partly offset the ascetic requirements for laity and strict concepts and principles of traditional Buddhism. “Buddhism has been used by every ruler in the modern times, from Sihanouk, Lon Nol to Pol Pot and the present regime to legitimize their political control. In the process, the integrity of Buddhist principles as the spiritual foundation of Cambodian culture has been sacrificed.” (Bit, 1991, p. 35). In addition, the KR era has led to a great loss of educated monks and a certain discontinuity of practice.

### ***Cambodia’s Cultural Context in the Field of Mental Health***

Approximately 85% of Cambodians live in rural areas and whilst the urban population becomes increasingly open to western views and concepts of psychology, mental disorders in the countryside are often attributed to the involvement of ancestral spirits or the Buddhist concept of Karma: determining the state of one’s well-being based on acts in a previous lifetime. Until recently there were no professional counseling services available in Cambodia. Cambodians therefore often seek the assistance of monks, traditional healers, *kru khmer*, or mediums to alleviate their symptoms through prayer and blessing ceremonies, healing techniques such as “coining” or “cupping”, or communication with ancestral spirits (Bertrand, 2005; van de Put & van der Veer, 2005; van de Put & Eisenbruch, 2002). Many rural Cambodians only have access to traditional modalities of healing (Berthold & Gray, 2011). “Monks..., with their perceived high level of moral development, often serve as life-long mentors to their parishioners, advising them on all matters of life decisions and personal behavior” (Bit, 1991, p.74). Cambodian nationals inside and outside the country have been found to develop several culture bound syndromes. Some examples are the “weak heart” syndrome (*khsaoy beh doung*), which resembles a mix of PTSD and panic disorder and involves the belief that “excessive bodily wind” causes a breakdown in functioning of the heart, caused by psychic distress and bodily fatigue and the “wind attack” (*khyâl*), which is comparable to a panic attack (Hinton et al.

2002, Hinton & Otto, 2006, Hinton et al. 2010). Cambodia's long history includes an authoritarian submissive nature, uncritical acceptance of a strong leader who takes over decisions and therefore an over-responsiveness to external social pressure has evolved. Thus negotiation and communication skills, active listening skills and the search for consensus seem to be underdeveloped. Disputes that aren't satisfactorily resolved by power often lead to a deep sense of distrust and resentment that may block many future attempts at communication.

Qualities such as introspection, independent thinking, creative imagination and compassion are not traditionally valued and supported in the Cambodian culture, yet they inherently emerge out of Buddhist practice and have been discovered and utilized in many western approaches in cognitive behavioral therapy during the last decades.

### ***The DP's and TPO's cooperation project***

The idea of integrating pagodas and Buddhist monks into the mental health care systems emerged in the context of the psychosocial work with KR survivors in times of case 002 at the KR Tribunal (ECCC). TPO and its partners are not able to deal with such a high number of traumatized survivors. Community-based support structures are highly needed. Monks and nuns are central resource persons for rural, older Cambodians, but often do not have much knowledge in mental health and counseling. The analysis described above as well as many practical experiences at our institutions have brought up some important themes relevant to treating Cambodian clients. These include:

- a lack of collaboration between different stakeholders and professions (Stewart, Yuying & Phan Chan, 2010)
- an enormous lack of mental health services especially in rural areas and a missing system of appropriate referral for severely mentally ill
- a huge challenge to ensure psychological support for 3866 civil parties and the population in general during the upcoming trials in case 002 (Pham, Vinck, Balthazard & Hean, 2011; discussion at the workshop on "Reparation and Rehabilitation of Victims of Severe Human Rights Violations", on the 20th of September 2011 by Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims and TPO)
- a mentality of widespread mistrust and deep-rooted habits of keeping thoughts and feelings to oneself- stemming from the horrifying experiences of the past
- cultural factors impacting mental health treatments in Cambodia, including cultural norms against sharing private information with a stranger, avoiding "losing face"; maintaining social roles; cultural stigma; imbalanced hierarchy of therapeutic relationship (Stewart, Yuying & Phan Chan, 2010)
- Western concepts of mental health , which often employ a biomedical approach, not fully applicable within a culture that often does not distinguish between the mind and the body, and incorporates spiritual beliefs much more into the concept of well-being
- a need to develop culturally appropriate ideas for a community mental health approach and a mix of "Western" and "Eastern" mental health treatment theories and techniques that would fit the Cambodian context" (Stewart, Yuying & Phan Chan, 2010, Hinton, Hinton, Eng & Choung, 2011)

- monks with their perceived high morality being among the first to be addressed for help by the Cambodian population
- a wide variety and sources of helpful beliefs and practices inherent in Buddhist concepts of mindfulness and awareness for psychological stabilizing interventions discovered and utilized by many third wave cognitive behavioral psychotherapies

From these key points we derived the following hypotheses:

- There probably is an insufficient awareness of, and a missing connection to, the above mentioned Buddhist resources in the monks' communities and in professional counselors and psychiatrists in Cambodia at present.
- Informing, educating and practically training these groups of possible key players in mental health about these resources may connect with the traditional culture in Cambodia and be acceptable, applicable and fitting to the Cambodian context.
- Training monks in basic mental health issues and counseling skills may help to diminish the huge gap between demand for help and available resources at the moment and utilize a potential that yet is in limited use.
- It may strengthen identity, role and self-confidence of monks rendering them more competent and flexible in addressing their clients/ parish's needs.
- It may link the Buddhist movement and society back to the worldwide Buddhist movements and developments.
- Master students in psychology will also be linked to culturally fitting, but also modern and advanced useful therapeutic skills and interventions, connecting them to the special situation and traditions in Cambodia.

We believe in the healing power of sharing and communicating. Our programs and curricula therefore focus on training master students and monks in a more balanced type of therapeutical relationship allowing the client to feel accepted, respected, valued and supported, on psycho-education and encouragement to share stories and information many Cambodian clients experience already as very relieving and on the development of self awareness and awareness raising practices derived from Buddhist practices and the so called "third wave" of cognitive behavioral therapies.

In January 2011 the DP at the RUPP and TPO started a joint project exploring the links between Buddhism and Psychology/Counseling.

### ***Objectives:***

- to uncover overlapping interests and areas of intervention and explore needs via a series of interviews with Cambodian monks
- to explore the use of Buddhist practices and concepts in western psychotherapeutic approaches and transfer knowledge
- to find ways to reintroduce and strengthen communication and listening skills in the Cambodian society to enhance conflict resolution

- to create a training curriculum for monks on Buddhism and Counseling
- to support the empowerment of monks by a Buddhist network and encourage monks to engage in services such as group meditation for their parish
- to transfer knowledge about Buddhist resources for psychotherapy to Cambodian psychologists via a course in Buddhism and Psychology as part of the MA in Clinical Psychology and Trauma Treatment at RUPP (see: [www.masterpsych-rupp.webs.com](http://www.masterpsych-rupp.webs.com))

## Methodology

The chapters of Methodology and Results will be divided into 3 parts: part A refers to a pilot study, in which Buddhist monks were interviewed, part B refers to the development of the monks' training curriculum and part C refers to the development of the master's curriculum at the DP/RUPP.

### **Part A:**

A working group of TPO interns, the master's coordinator and the German advisors to the programs at the DP at RUPP and TPO created (based on the above mentioned hypotheses) a qualitative semi-structured interview to explore the practices, needs and interests of monks. The interviews included the following topics: knowledge about mental illnesses, previous experiences, Buddhist ceremonies and customs, interventions and overlap with psychology. They were either translated into English simultaneously by a translator, or recorded, translated and later transcribed. The interviews with 8 monks in and around Phnom Penh were completed between 4<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2011 at the following pagodas: Wat Botum, Wat Choeung Ek, Touol Sangke, Wat Samrong Andek by DP and TPO interns and staff. The researchers explained the purpose of the study and asked the monk's permission to interview him about his experience with clients, practices and interests. The interviews took between 45 minutes and 1.15 hours. The answers were coded and evaluated with a qualitative data-analysis, using Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

### **Part B:**

After a brainstorming meeting attended by a Buddhist member from Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia and coordinating member of the Buddhist Coalition for Social Development (BCSD), that works closely with three centers (Santi Sena in Svay Rieng, Prom Vihear in Kah Kong, Samakithor in Battambang) the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) and another major Buddhist network called Buddhists and Khmer Society Network (BKSN), the coordinator of the master's program, the GIZ (civil peace service of German international cooperation) advisors to the DP and TPO and a freelance Dutch psychologist it was agreed to create a training curriculum for monks which should be integrated into a wider training in peace building and conflict transformation already existing. This offers a good gateway for the DP and TPO to approach some people already aware of the broad possible areas for social engagement.

A working group of the DP master's coordinator and advisor and TPO staff met regularly to work on a curriculum for the training of monks as multipliers and distributors of basic psychological knowledge and practices such as listening and communication skills as well as Buddhist awareness and mindfulness skills with some external consultation of Buddhist players and foreign consultants. Further discussions of contents and structure took part via e-mail and Skype sessions.

### Part C:

The coordinator of the master's program and lecturer of the future course in Buddhism and Psychology and the German advisor to the master's program conducted a vast literature research on the topic and included their own work experience (e.g. with several years in DBT) as well as results of discussions with colleagues. From this they created materials in form of figurative illustrations to visualize the theoretical background, roots and concepts of Buddhism and some "third wave" cognitive behavioral therapies. Also a collection of interesting and useful practical exercises were compiled.

## Results

### Part A:

We will present the results question by question. The answers we have noted, are representative of the answers that the majority monks provided.

1. **What do you know about mental illness?** Four out of 8 monks stated that mental illness occurs because of suffering related to the Khmer Rouge, as well as anger and revenge. Two other monks replied that mental illness is due to past traumatic events. A variety of explanations for mental illness were mentioned: poverty, society, economy, politics and war, parents, rape and sexual violence. It is noteworthy to mention that some monks replied that mental illness/trauma affects people in their daily life and decreases their daily functioning.
2. **How does Buddhism view people with mental illness?** Here monks gave **contradictory answers**. On the one side, people with mental illness cannot influence their illness, their suffering is due to Kharma and their mistakes in their past life. On the other side, people can influence their lives and well-being through doing good. Then they will receive good things in return. It was also mentioned that there is no healing practice for mental illness in Buddhism. Three out of 8 monks replied that Buddhism sees mentally ill people as humans with a disturbed mind.
3. **Why do people come to you/What problems do they tell you about?** Most people come to the monks in order to seek causes for their problems, they want advice and emotional support and want to receive a solution for their problems. Four out of 8 monks said that people come to them because of relationship problems, and 3 out of 8 monks replied that people seek advice related to alcohol problems. Other issues noted were domestic violence, mistakes/sins, death, birth, job problems and depression.
4. **What is the role of Buddhist ceremonies in regard to mental health problems?** The majority, 5 of 8, said that Buddhist ceremonies have an educative effect on people. 5 out of 8 monks replied that the ceremonies, especially meditation, relieve stress and negative feelings, bring happiness and help to clear the mind. Ceremonies also help strengthen social networks and have a transformative effect.
5. **What are the most important beliefs and customs in Buddhism?** The majority of the monks replied that doing good (offerings, good deeds etc.) and receiving good is the most important belief in Buddhism. Following the 5 precepts (*Do not kill, Do not steal,*

*Do not betray your family, Do not lie, Do not drink alcohol or other drugs* as well as the eightfold path (*right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditation*) is also important in this religion. The water ceremony and Buddhist chanting are other important customs described. Further important beliefs are black magic and protective symbols, although these beliefs do not belong to traditional Buddhism. They are still important today, and most monks respect these beliefs.

6. **What kind of interventions do you offer for specific problems?** First of all, most monks gave the advice to follow Buddhist principles. People with problems should do good things in order to receive good. When it came to problems involving illness (e.g. cancer) and death (e.g. suicide, death) monks advised the people to remember fugaciousness (things in this world are not stable). People who are suffering should remain hopeful and balanced and try to work hard to achieve their goals (e.g. suicide attempt).
7. **Do you feel overwhelmed sometimes?** Four out of 8 monks replied that they feel overwhelmed when dealing with people and their problems.
8. **Do you have ideas how one could integrate Buddhist beliefs and customs and Psychology? Which ceremonies could be utilized in the field of mental health?**  
Field of mental health: The majority of monks replied that it is important to explore the causes of the problem before giving advice to the person. Also, it is important to develop mind and consciousness, one monk replied that self-exploration for therapists and monks is important. Buddhist beliefs and customs: The majority of the monks said that following the 5 precepts is the most important belief which should be integrated in Psychology.
9. **Would you like to receive training to help you deal with mental illnesses?** All monks said that they would like to receive some training.
10. **Are there specific topics and areas related to mental health that you would like to know more about?** The monks named the following topics of interest: loss/grief, counseling, psychological development, crisis management, special illnesses
11. **Do you share knowledge on this matter with other monks/with monks from other countries?** Five out of 8 monks communicate with other monks.

#### ***Summary and Conclusions for part A:***

From this small scale survey it was found that the monks' general knowledge concerning mental health is limited. Most monks did not know about specific disorders, although they now and then encounter clients with specific problems. All monks would be interested in receiving a training to gain knowledge in the field of mental health. Even though we only questioned 8 monks, the information we received was already redundant. This might lead to the conclusion, that further interviews may not be needed.

The results of the interviews also show that the advice the monks give to people is restricted to theoretical Buddhist beliefs and the monks hand out very general advice and problem solving solutions. Awareness and mindfulness exercises weren't mentioned (Hypothesis 1 was confirmed

regarding monks). Since the monks reported that they do have people coming to them with a large variety of problems (e.g. alcoholism, domestic violence , depression) and also want direct advice and a solution for their problems, we were supported by our impression that it would be important to expand the monks' knowledge regarding specific mental disorders (e.g. depression, anxiety, alcohol abuse, anger management) in order to ensure in time referral to psychiatrists or counselors and also regarding counseling and Buddhist practice skills e.g. on mindfulness. This way they can be trained to give people a more personalized form of advice and help to expand general knowledge in mental health and save people from wasting money on inappropriate interventions.

### **Part B**

As a result of part A the following curriculum was agreed upon by the research group for a training of monks:

Training Objectives	Topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To provide a concept of mental health</li> <li>➤ to equip with knowledge about how to identify some severe mental illnesses</li> <li>➤ to equip with knowledge about how and where to refer clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Signs and symptoms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schizophrenia/Psychosis</li> <li>● Addictive disorder (Alcohol, drug, gambling)</li> <li>● Trauma Disorder</li> <li>● Depression</li> <li>● Anxiety</li> <li>● psychosomatic disorders</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Possibility of referral</li> <li>➤ Resources and risk factors for mental health</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To teach the monks about basic psycho-education on some mental health diseases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Causes of and coping strategies for psychosis, depression, anxiety, addictive disorders and trauma disorders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To equip the monks with basic counseling skills to help people with minor problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Listening Skills</li> <li>➤ Questioning Skills</li> <li>➤ Empathy</li> <li>➤ Assessment of problems and factors that contribute to the presented problem</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To equip monks with skills in stabilizing overwhelmed and hyper-aroused clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stabilization techniques:</li> <li>➤ grounding techniques</li> <li>➤ safe place/ inner helper imagination</li> <li>➤ utilization of resources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To introduce participants to Buddhist concepts with regards to western psychology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ACT (Acceptance commitment therapy)</li> <li>➤ DBT (Dialectic Behavioral Therapy)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ to practically train monks how to apply Buddhist practices to help people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Practical exercises (Awareness, mindfulness, body scan, non-judgmental, breathing exercise (*introduction and practice in between other topic))</li> </ul>

In order to give further insights into our Monk's Training, Appendix A presents four of the images and exercises developed for the training.

## **Part B and C**

As a result of extensive literature review and own experiences we present some example of the information developed for the training of monks and master students:

### ***Using Mindfulness in mental health***

Mindfulness is a “hot topic” in Western psychology right now - increasingly recognized as a powerful therapeutic intervention for everything from work stress to depression - and also as an effective tool for increasing emotional intelligence.

### ***What is mindfulness?***

Mindfulness is a mental state of awareness, focus, openness and curiosity- which allows you to engage fully in what you are doing at any moment. In a state of mindfulness, difficult thoughts and feelings have much less impact and influence over you - so it is hugely useful for everything from full-blown psychiatric illness to enhancing athletic or business performance.

### ***The Benefits of Mindfulness***

- to become more connected to yourself, to others and to the world around you
- to become less judgmental
- to increase self-awareness
- to become less disturbed by and less reactive to unpleasant experiences
- to learn the distinction between you and your thoughts
- to learn that everything changes, thoughts and feelings come and go like weather
- to have more balance, less emotional volatility
- to develop self-acceptance and self-compassion

## Part C

The following presents an example from the curriculum for Master Students at the DP/RUPP:

### How Mindfulness can potentially help traumatized clients

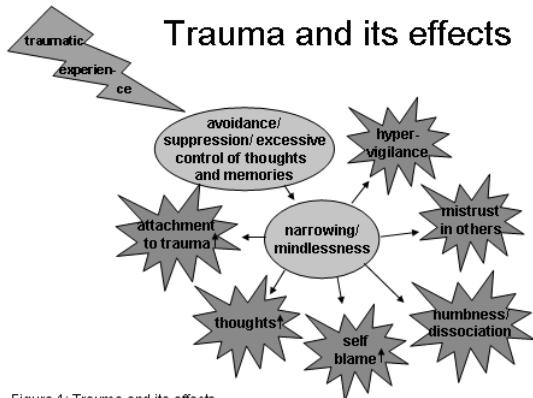


Figure 1: Trauma and its effects  
(Schunert 2011)

### Adding mindfulness an example of possible healing effects

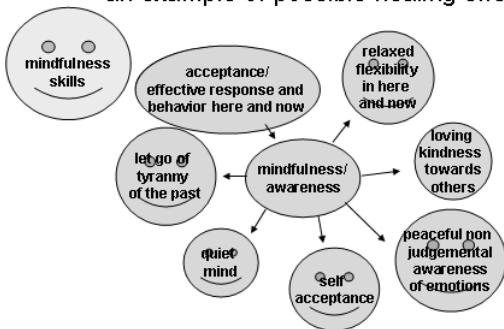


Figure 2: Adding mindfulness  
(Schunert, 2011)

## Discussion

The project described in this paper is an ongoing process. The start of the implementation of the developed curriculum for master students is taking place in November 2011. The implementation of the training for monks will start with a pilot phase conducted by TPO staff and following further implementation with help from master psychology students. The experiences we will gather then will lead to further adjustments and fine-tuning of the trainings to best meet the needs of the two target groups (monks and psychology master students). The DP at RUPP and TPO are planning further evaluation and continuous improvement of this project.

Many factors have been found to contribute to mental health problems in Cambodia. Among these are an historically grown willingness to blindly accept authority, leaving little space for self-development and feelings of self-efficiency, a massive burden of past atrocities during the KR regime that's known as one of the most destructive and harmful experiences in 20th century besides the Holocaust (Bertold & Gray, 2011, Boehlein & Kinzie, 2011), the following struggle to find justice and reconcile and the impact on social society and infrastructure with an enormous percentage of poor people. On top of the immense psychological needs and demands resources in mental health are very scarce again partly due to the extinction of intelligentsia during the KR period.

Facing this situation and the fact that Cambodian concepts and beliefs regarding mental health are greatly differing from the west, a search for useful alternatives was undertaken by the DP at RUPP and TPO. This led to the idea of resurrecting, spreading and utilizing Buddhist mindfulness and awareness concepts in addition to other simple counseling tools in order to advocate general mental well-being, self-awareness, compassion and self-esteem and thus prevent and alleviate mental

illness respectively. Simultaneously this offered the opportunity to train monks, a group already commonly approached by Cambodians for help in the field of mental health, as possible “multipliers” or distributors of knowledge and utilize this extensive cultural resource.

Another study interviewing Buddhist monks in a large Cambodian community in the United States about their perspectives on anger regulation similarly revealed the frequent approach of monks by community members regarding psychological problems and identified Buddhist practices as possible helpful contributions to mental health (Nickerson & Hinton, 2011) The monks in this study advise the use of Buddhist teachings, meditation/mindfulness, herbal medications and holy water to relieve clients from anger.

Our pilot study confirmed the need of training for monks which generally felt a lack of preparedness to offer adequate help and response to their clients. The knowledge and application of practical mindfulness and awareness skills amongst Cambodian monks especially in contact with clients seems nearly non-existent in spite of great potential benefit. For example the propagation and broader circulation of mindfulness skills by monks via meditation groups could help to stabilize the Cambodians mental health and foster psychological well-being. Further development of this project will show whether the planned training will be welcomed and reach the expected effects or not. Follow up trainings and supervision groups shall be established if the project shows positive results.

## Appendix A: Exercises and images developed for training of the monks.

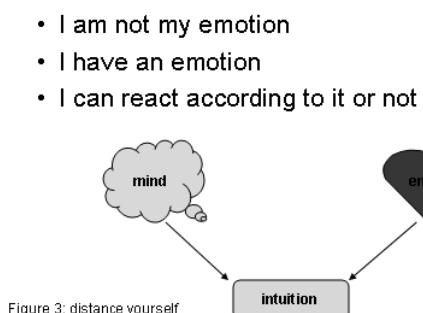
*An example deriving from DBT:*

### *Affective modulation to enhance emotional*

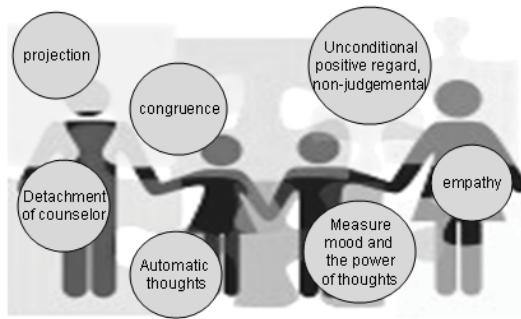
### *awareness and and the regulation feelings*

- train to communicate about feelings
- start with positive everyday feelings
- there are no wrong or right feelings
- feelings are ok, they are no actions and not harmful
- encourage verbalization of feelings

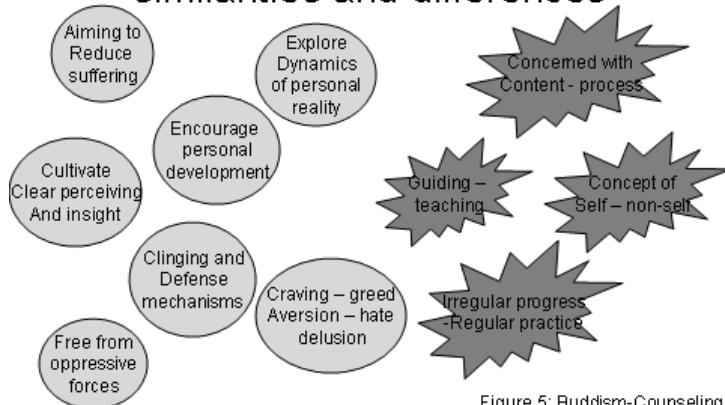
### distance yourself (DBT)



### Counseling basic concepts



### Buddhism – Counseling similarities and differences



## ***Exercises***

The exercises designed and/or selected for the training course come from various Buddhist sources as well as other materials developed for trainings in basic counseling and interviewing skills. In Table 1 we present some of the exercise titles:

**Table 1. Training exercises used in the training of monks and master's course.**

Source	Name of exercise(s)
Thich Nath Hanh	reincarnation candle image, the elements in our body, grounding touching the earth with ancestors, peace contract, compassion for self and others, delusion story
DBT	letting go of emotional suffering, radical acceptance
ACT	ACT explanation flipchart role-play, Just noticing exercise, Journaling continuous reactions
A. Berzin	self-reflection on sensitivity, quiet the mind, sensitive communication
Cordova	conscious breathing
Counseling and listening skills developed by our institutions	role-play: attending and listening skills characteristics of effective counseling, self-experience, self-reflection, trust building group exercises

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# **Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET): Culturally Sensitive Trauma Treatment for Khmer Rouge Survivors**

*Judith Strasser<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Sotheara Chhim<sup>2</sup>  
and Sopheap Taing<sup>3</sup>*

## **Introduction**

In Cambodia, pragmatic, community-based and culturally sensitive trauma treatment approaches are needed in order to assist survivors of mass atrocity and civil war. Narrative Exposure Therapy is a short-term trauma treatment approach deriving from Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Testimony Therapy. The Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Cambodia (henceforth ‘TPO’) has been developing a cultural adapted version of Narrative Exposure Therapy by integrating Buddhist and traditional practices. In 2010, a treatment study was conducted aiming at evaluating the efficacy of the original Narrative Exposure Therapy version and the newly developed culturally adapted approach in post conflict Cambodia. 75 Khmer Rouge survivors, who presented with posttraumatic stress symptoms, were offered and accepted participation in the treatment study. Both approaches demonstrate a significant reduction in posttraumatic stress symptoms and depression scores, but TPO’s cultural adapted approach proved to be more effective as evidenced in a steeper decline in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms relative to the original Narrative Exposure Therapy counterpart. The results indicate that the integration of religious and cultural practices and rituals is an important element in the process of meaning making and coping with loss and trauma in Cambodia’s spirit-based culture.

## **Background**

Modern Cambodian history has seen some of the worst horrors of the 20th century. After becoming embroiled in the international conflict in Indochina Cambodians experienced appalling atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime from 1975 to 1979. The Khmer Rouge communist leaders turned Cambodia into a killing field where nearly 2 millions Cambodians, fully one quarter of the population, were killed or died by execution, starvation, exhaustion from forced labor, malnutrition and torture.<sup>4</sup> Hundreds of thousands fled across the border into neighboring Thailand. The Khmer Rouge (henceforth ‘KR’) imposed radical social transformations to Cambodians traditional society and dismantled people from their spirit-based culture contributing to mental health disorders as people were not allowed to address monks as resource persons and as families,

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<sup>4</sup> Chandler, D. (1998). The Burden of Cambodia’s Past. In Frederick Z. Brown & David G. Timberman (Eds.), Cambodia and the International Community: The Quest for Peace, Development, and Democracy (pp. 33-47). New York: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

the main social units in Cambodia that offer emotional support, were viciously attacked and supplanted by collectives. Many Cambodians refer to the period of Democratic Kampuchea as “the regime of three years, eight months and twenty days”, as if every single moment of that period has been permanently seared into their memories.

Brutal and arbitrary executions carried out by KR cadres against perceived subversive elements or during purges of their own ranks between 1976 and 1978 are considered to have constituted genocide. The Khmer Rouge government arrested, tortured and eventually executed anyone suspected of belonging to several categories of supposed “enemies”, e.g. anyone with connections to the former or with foreign governments, intellectuals (in practice this included almost everyone who could read and write), ethnic Vietnamese, Chinese, minorities in the eastern highlands, Cambodian Christians, Muslims and Buddhist monks. Beside the well-known torture center S-21 in Phnom Penh, where app. 14.000 persons lost their lives, security centers were widespread across the rest of the country. The Documentation Center of Cambodia lists up at least 195 documented torture and death centers<sup>5</sup>.

In recent years, reconstruction efforts have progressed and some political stability has returned. However, despite significant assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors, the devastation wrought by the KR regime continues to haunt the country and paralyze its development efforts. The population of Cambodia is 14.8 million (UN, 2005) and gross national income per capita is US\$380 (World Bank, 2006). Measured by both income and broader human development indicators, Cambodia is among the poorest countries in the world, e.g. it ranks 121 of 162 countries in the world on the human development index, lower than Myanmar, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The high level of exposure to war trauma affected Cambodia’s population on multiple levels. A recent population-based study by Sonis demonstrates that 14% of Cambodians over 18 years suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)<sup>6</sup>, whereas de Jong estimates that two out of five Cambodians suffer from mild to severe mental and psychological problems<sup>7</sup>.

On 30 March 2009, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (henceforth ‘ECCC’) commenced its first trial in the case against Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch. The ECCC, also known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, is a hybrid international tribunal established in 2006 to try senior leaders of the KR and those who were most responsible for “the crimes and serious violations of Cambodian penal law, international humanitarian law and custom, and international conventions recognized by Cambodia, that were committed during the period from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979.”<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to other international tribunals, the ECCC offer a unique and unprecedented mechanism for victims to participate directly in the proceedings as Civil Parties. The Civil Party mechanism gives key beneficiaries of ECCC proceedings – the victims – direct access to justice

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dccam.org/Database/Geographic/Index.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Sonis, J. et al. (2009). Probable Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Disability in Cambodia. Associations with Perceived Justice, Desire for Revenge and Attitudes Toward the Khmer Rouge Trials. Journal of the American Medical Association. Vol. 302 No.5: 527-536.

<sup>7</sup> de Jong, J. (2002). Trauma, War and Violence. Springer

<sup>8</sup> Royal Government of Cambodia, ‘Law on the Establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea’, NS/RKM/1004/006, 27 October 2004, available online at <http://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/document/legal/law-on-eccc> (last visited 12 June 2011), at Art. 1.

and the opportunity to present their personal experiences, views and concerns. In Case 001 90 KR victims have been accepted as civil parties. Their example has given rise to an enormous interest by KR victims to apply as Civil Parties for the upcoming Case 002. More than 3.800 KR victims have been recognized as Civil Parties in Case 002.

But what effect will the trials have on survivors? Some have suggested that countrywide mechanisms for dealing with legacies of widespread violence, such as tribunals, may help reduce mental health symptoms and associated impairment.<sup>9</sup> However, others have suggested that trials may actually increase PTSD prevalence and severity by 're-traumatizing' survivors. As stated by Stover, "...one can hardly expect victims and witnesses to come to a state of 'psychological healing' after recounting a highly traumatic experience in a public setting that in and of itself might be threatening."<sup>10</sup> In his recent population-based study Sonis points out that although Cambodians have positive attitudes towards the trials, most were concerned that the trials would bring back painful memories.<sup>11</sup> Stammel found, that KR victims, who applied as Civil Parties, experienced more traumatic events than other KR victims and have higher rates of PTSD symptoms. Consequently, she points out that psychological assistance is urgently needed, especially for those, who are participating actively in the tribunal's proceedings.<sup>12</sup>

TPO is currently the only actor providing psychological services to Civil Parties at the ECCC. Searching for pragmatic, effective and culturally sensitive trauma treatment methods for KR survivors TPO developed a culturally sensitive trauma treatment approach. The paper will present the approach and discuss results of a treatment study with KR trauma survivors.

## Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) – Culturally Sensitive Trauma Treatment for Khmer Rouge Survivors

### i) Rationale for the treatment study:

In recent years research on therapy of PTSD has made a considerable progress. Cognitive behavioral exposure techniques have proven to be the most successful interventions in treating PTSD<sup>13</sup>. However, exposure techniques applied to clients suffering from traumatic stress in industrialized countries cannot be easily transferred to victims of mass atrocity and war. Current research emphasis is now more than ever being placed on developing appropriate interventions that address the needs of survivors experiencing a range of symptoms after trauma exposure. Given the pervasiveness of war and conflict-related trauma, especially in resource poor countries, interventions tailored to suit the circumstances of the overwhelming number of such survivors are especially in demand. However, treatment outcome studies in this field are still few.

<sup>9</sup> Sonis, J. et al. (2009)

<sup>10</sup> Stover, E. (2005). The Witnesses. War Crimes and the Promise of Justice in The Hague. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia: p. 82

<sup>11</sup> Sonis, J. et al. (2009)

<sup>12</sup> Stammel, N. et al. (2008). Readiness to reconcile and mental health in the context of the Khmer Rouge trials in Cambodia. In press.

<sup>13</sup> Foa, E. B., & Meadows, E. A. (1997). Psychosocial treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder. Annual Review of Psychology, 48: pp. 449-480.

In Cambodia only few KR victims are able to attend counseling sessions on a regular base, necessary for the application of conventional therapies. Most conventional psychological therapies require weekly or fortnightly attendance by the client, with a minimum length of 6 months for the therapy process. This is rarely possible in rural settings, where people only attend health care facilities that are in close proximity to their homes and do not have financial resources to travel to the capital. Given large numbers of people and limited monetary resources any psychotherapy that will take place must be brief and pragmatic. In addition, the method must be adaptable to the Cambodian cultural environment and easy for local personnel to learn. It is therefore important to identify short-term, community-based, culturally sensitive, psychosocial interventions, which can easily be implemented by mental health workers, community workers or human rights activists and do not require large staff numbers.

## *ii) Methodology*

TPO uses a trauma treatment approach that was specifically developed for the treatment of posttraumatic stress resulting from organized violence: Narrative Exposure Treatment (NET).<sup>14</sup> NET is a standardized and manualized version of the ‘Testimony Therapy’ approach first described by Lira and Weinstein (published under the pseudonyms Cienfuegos and Monelli, 1983) in Chile and since been tested in different socio-cultural settings.<sup>15</sup> NET is a short-term treatment approach to trauma that integrates therapeutic components deriving from Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Testimony Therapy. The focus of the therapy procedure is twofold: As with exposure therapy, one goal is to reduce the symptoms of PTSD by confronting the patient with the traumatic memories. However, recent theories of PTSD and emotional processing also suggest that the distortion of the explicit autobiographic memory about traumatic events leads to a fragmented narrative of traumatic memories, which results in the maintenance of PTSD symptoms.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the reconstruction of autobiographic memory and a consistent narrative should be used in conjunction with exposure therapy. NET places a focus on both methods, that is, the habituation of emotional responding to reminders of the traumatic event and the construction of a detailed narrative of the event and its consequences.

Based on its organizational mission - to combine western and local approaches to trauma healing - TPO has been adapting the testimonial method by integrating traditional and religious practices in cooperation with local pagodas and Buddhist monks. The integration of traditional and religious practices - chanting of monks, blessing and purification rituals, the use of protective strings - reflects the significance of traditional coping mechanisms in Cambodia’s spirit based culture. The worldview of individuals is shaped by the classical Theravada Buddhist doctrine and its understanding of Karma as much as the belief in the supra-natural world. These beliefs influence people’s responses to misfortune, poverty, psychosocial misery and mental disorder<sup>17</sup> and have implications for trauma theory and interventions.

<sup>14</sup> Neuner, F., Schauer, M., Elbert, T., & Roth, W. T. (2002). A narrative exposure treatment as intervention in a refugee camp: A case report. *Journal of Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, Vol. 30: 205-20.

<sup>15</sup> For further details on NET and publications see: <http://www.vivofoundation.net/>

<sup>16</sup> Ehlers, A. & Clark, D. M. (2000). A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behavioral Research and Therapy*, 38: 319–345.

<sup>17</sup> Van de Put, A. C. M. & Eisenbruch, M. (2002). The Cambodian Experience. In: de Jong, J. (2002). *Trauma, War and Violence*. Springer, New York.

In TPO's culturally adapted NET approach, KR victims are invited to talk about their traumatic experiences. In cooperation with a therapist they restore their painful memories and convert them into a written document: a testimony. The testimony is read aloud and delivered to the survivors by monks from a local pagoda in a Buddhist delivery ceremony in presence of other survivors, relatives and/or community members. The therapeutical effect of this practice is multi-layered: The public delivery of the testimonies in presence of Buddhist monks, other survivors and community members promotes acknowledging of suffering and the de-stigmatization of victims and thereby allows survivors to restore their dignity. It further allows survivors to ease the suffering of the spirits of ancestors and to pay honor to deceased relatives. According to Buddhist beliefs, the spirits of deceased persons have difficulties in transmigration from one lifetime to the next, if funeral rites cannot be accomplished. As most KR survivors do not know how and where their family members came to death, the subsequent conduction of ceremonies and offering of goods is a way to satisfy the demands of the spirits, so they can exert their positive influence on the left-behind survivors.

75 Khmer Rouge survivors, who presented with high scores of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms according to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL-C), were offered and accepted participation in the treatment study. Participants were randomly assigned to either the original NET approach or TPO's adapted NET version. Symptoms of PTSD (PCL-C) and depression (Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25; HSCL-25) were assessed prior to treatment and after a 3 and 6 month follow-up. Additional measures were applied to examine unresolved grief and continuing bonds to deceased relatives. A number of qualitative measures were used to explore victims' perception of the testimony as well as the elements of the Buddhist ceremonies.

## Results

Both approaches produced a significant reduction in the posttraumatic symptoms and depression scores. However, TPO's cultural adapted NET version proved to be more effective as evidenced in a steeper decline in PTSD symptoms relative to the original NET counterpart (final quantitative results will be presented). The findings also demonstrate that producing and receiving a testimony that documents traumatic experiences is an essential element in promoting rehabilitation for victims of severe human rights violations. The qualitative results further indicate that coping with political violence is centrally linked to cultural and societal constructions of meaning. The Western individualistic, bio-medical approach to trauma as represented by the concept of PTSD is ill suited to describe suffering in Cambodia's spirit-based culture. The continuing bonds to the ancestors help survivors to deal with and make sense of personal losses: "The importance of relations with the ancestors helps explain the suffering of people who were never able to organize for the necessary rituals at the death of family members. The notion of 'making merit' and the effect it may have on the next life, as well the certainty that no deeds will remain without consequences, are important notions in understanding psychological problems as well as potential solutions."<sup>18</sup> Offering goods to the monks is perceived as producing merits, which are sent along to the dead in order to ease their suffering and to make their future existence as good as possible. As the dead are still connected to the living, the quality of these relationships and dynamics is essential in understanding and influencing survivors' mental well-being. Combining trauma exposure techniques with the promotion of social acknowledgment and the integration of religious and traditional practices seems to be a promising approach to address the multiple aspects of traumatization caused by political violence in Cambodia.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: p. 116.

# **Countering Old Age Loneliness at the Electronic Temple Through Dhamma Counseling**



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## **Introduction**

One common social phenomenon regularly observed among the aged individuals in urban Sri Lanka has been that the interaction they increase with the media; newspapers, radio and television. To counter some of the aspects that are associated with modern, urban life style, the aged individuals seek the comfort of media. Many sociologists such as Abercrombie (1996), Carey (1989), Fiske (1987) and Lull (1995) have studied the effect or the relationship of media with culture to find out the effect of media on individual's life. In this study it was studied that how the Sri Lankan urban Buddhists counter loneliness that is associated with their old age by using the television [electronic temple] in receiving Dhamma counseling. In conducting this study fifty males and fifty females from urban areas [Kandy and Colombo] were selected. After a preliminary literature survey, in-depth interviews were conducted to find out their world view, the type of psychological conditions that they experience, their ideas of Buddhist philosophy and what type of spiritual solace that they seek from the religious programs that are telecast in different Sri Lankan television channels. From a sociological perspective both functionalism and symbolic interaction theory and from the perspective of media the social action theory were considered.

## **Discussion**

Ageing has been a critical issue in Sri Lanka like that of the global level. Jary and Jary (2005) define ageing as 'the chronological process of growing physically older' (p. 8). The population statistics released by the Department of Statistics, Sri Lanka has shown that the percentage of aged people increases each year.<sup>1</sup> World Bank and United Nations reports claim that Sri Lanka has continuously experiencing one of the fastest ageing populations in the developing world and in the South Asian region.<sup>2</sup> Siddhisena (2004, p.2) cites that 'the proportion of the population over 60 years has increased from 5.3 in 1953 to 10.8% in 2003 and it will further rise to one quarter of Sri Lanka's population by 2030'.

In demography a society is considered an ageing society when a decreasing birth rate and the increase of life expectancy proportionately contribute to the higher number of elderly people in that society. Along with this phenomenon there are novel social conditions that are on offer for the Sri Lankan social scientists to study. Jary and Jary mention that the older people tend to develop 'negative stereotyping and diminished social status' (2005, p. 9). In general usage the older people

<sup>1</sup> Depat. of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka. 2004a. 'Bulletin on Official Poverty Line for Sri Lanka', Colombo.

<sup>2</sup> Report No. 43396-LK, Sri Lanka Addressing the Needs of an Aging Population, May 28, 2008, Human Development Unit, South Asia Region and United Nations, 2001, *World Population Prospects-The 2000 Revision*, New York, United Nations. - retrieved on 15 August 2011 at 9.00 am

is considered a burden and dependents signifying that there are some negative economic, political, social and cultural benchmarks. Abercrombie et al (1988) cite that the mainstream sociology has neglected the general area of social ageing until the late 1960s. As the ageing population increases in modern industrial societies each year there emerged the disciplines such as ‘Sociology of ageing’ and ‘Social gerontology’ to study the consequences of the ageing scientifically. Social gerontology treats ageing in four different dimensions as follows<sup>3</sup>:

- a. a contingent process relating to the social and demographic structure of human groups
- b. as an aspect of personal status in the life cycle
- c. as the dynamic component of social stratification in terms of generational membership and
- d. as a contemporary social problem raising questions about exploitation, victimization and stigmatization.

In this specific study the second and fourth dimensions are of greater importance. It is understood that in sociological analysis the sociologists are not interested in age as a chronological category but the social and cultural values and expectations attached to it. The values changed in relation to the social changes have developed certain doubts whether the elders are more prone to be away from work, social commitments as in their youth and high degree of sociability.

The traditional Sri Lankan social structure has been in transition after it was subjected to westernization which led to both industrialization and urbanization. As the society has been in transition many elements that it comprises began changing. The family structure, gender roles, occupational patterns and the role of media were some of the elements that were under the influence of this initial social change. The nature of the family moving from an ‘extended’ to the ‘nuclear’ status was a crucial point. In social research the historical debate discusses that the changing social status of the elderly against the processes of modernization and industrialization. The loss of extended family established the elderly without the support of a large number of kin who are around them.

In the study it was found out that most of the households had three generations where the children of the older parents live with their children. Many second generation families had either one or two children. In only five instances there were three children in the family. There were two ‘empty-nest’ families in the sample. Even though there are three generations present, the family structures convince that the elderly people do not have inmates to foster mutual social relationships as in traditional societies. Further it was noted that all urban houses are covered with walls denying the freedom of nurturing inter-personal, informal relationships as they wish. It was noted that mostly there were formal relationships as some families have got settled in urban areas recently.

**Table 1: Sample of the study**

	Colombo	Kandy
Male	25	24
Female	25	26
Total	50	50

<sup>3</sup> (Abercrombie et al, p. 7)

**Table 2: Number of elderly parents in a family**

Gender	Colombo		Kandy	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Single parent</b>	10	10	06	08
<b>Both parents</b>	15	15	18	18
<b>Total</b>	25	25	24	26

Most of the urban parents who had been spending their old age after retirement find that their children and in-laws are on work and the grandchildren either schooling or perusing tertiary education in here or abroad. So till the grandchildren return after school or institution at two thirty pm or four or five pm and their own children return after work at four or five pm the parents are lonely. So the old age in an urban setting is a life of isolation. Loneliness has become the most intimate and the treasured friend of most of the retired elders in urban Sri Lanka. Tabor's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary (2002, p. 1255) defines loneliness as 'the anxious, depressed or dysphoric mood that occurs as a result of physical or psychic isolation'.

The deterioration of the physical appearance, physical ability and the mental status may affect the life of an elderly person to a great extent as he is aged. Different males and females in the sample revealed that they had numerous psychological, cultural, social, economic, generational and educational disagreements at the domestic sphere that affected their identity. This is not a sudden development in their personality and this is the continuation of the phenomenon 'midlife crisis'. Midlife crisis is defined as 'the doubt and anxiety experienced by many people in their fifth decade' (Jary and Jary, p. 389). As the youth is now a thing of past, the middle aged individual begins to feel differently about life. So it makes anyone to look back and reflect upon the successes and failures of oneself, education, career, social position and future. In this process he or she begins to develop a form of uncertainty about the future. Children leaving family to form neo-local residences and migration are some other instances that the elderly parents undergo a transition in their personalities.

A considerable number of parents [20, 20%] in the sample were lonely during the day time, and a few others [80, 80%] were fortunate to have the company of the servants. Some have been spending the old age in a calm and quiet way enjoying the effects of loneliness [66, 66%] whereas a few could not bear the loneliness they were experiencing and incidentally all of them were single parents, means either the husband or wife is dead [34, 34%]. Grief generated out of bereavement was their main cause. While living in a life of isolation the old parents have a few alternatives to resort to. According to their own voices those are 'to relive in the sacrifices made for the children in the past, helplessness at present and the uncertain future; mainly the life after death'. Many of them are anxious of their 'salvation' and this feeling itself drives them to seek the solace of a spiritual life.

Weber explored John Calvin's (1509-1564) concept 'Salvation anxiety' in explaining how individuals feel about their fate and it is relevant to the sample studied here. The Buddhists are also afraid of what would happen to them after death. The sins committed and the merits accumulated during one's life time decide where the one will be born; heaven or hell, after death. As one gets old he or she begins to think of the merits accumulated during the past. Most of the respondents in the sample had one common idea that their lives were extremely busy committed to the family and

the children so other than religious formalities they have not done anything significant. As now they are in retirement they have more time to devote for religious activities. Weber believed that religion became a driving force or a source of motivation in secularized capitalist societies. In relation to the Sri Lankan context a similar atmosphere is seen. In such a context the Buddhist religious programs telecast in the Sri Lankan television channels have been a blessing in disguise for the religious quest that these individuals need to satisfy.

Television has become the most prominent cultural artifact of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is important not only as a form of entertainment but also as an information provider to its viewers. It can introduce new value systems, modify the existing attitudes and challenge the belief systems, norms and mores of the viewers. Commercialism has changed the outlook and the rationale behind the television programs. Because of the success and the power the television began to enjoy, the television channels became the medium of transmitting and inculcating religious knowledge. Garrod and Lawson (2007) present televangelism, which was extremely popular in America, as ‘the use of television to reach a mass audience for the preaching of evangelical or fundamental Christianity’ (p. 277).

Television was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1979 and the state-owned Independent Television Network (ITN) launched its operations on 13<sup>th</sup> April. By now there are twenty three Analog Terrestrial Networks, seventeen Local television channels on Satellite or Cable Networks and Four Sri Lankan Owned, Pay Television Networks. This fact itself shows that the expansion of the electronic communication system in Sri Lanka and Hettige et al (2001) discuss the impact of television on Sri Lankan culture, its change and new identity formation. The Buddhist Channel also enjoys a prominent place among Buddhists in the country and abroad. The Sri Lankan television channels cater to the majority Buddhists as the target viewers. The more the number of viewers it has the advertisers are interested in those channels. The researcher compared the total television time against five main leading television channels in Sri Lanka against the time devoted for religious programs. It was noted that in poya days which the most important religious day is for Buddhists in each month the television channels allocate more time and it is a significant increase.

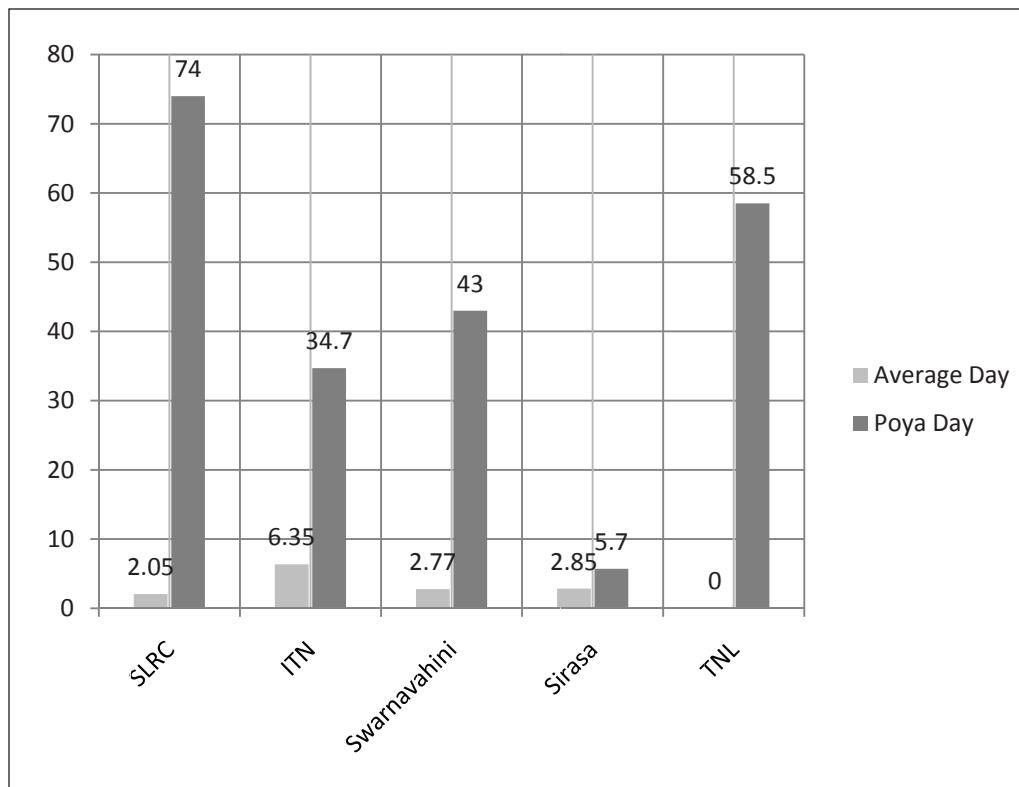
**Table 3: Total Television Time against the Religious Programs on Five Different Channels on an Average Day and a Poya Day**

Channel	Average or Poya Day	Total television time in minutes [a]	Total time on religious programs in minutes [b]	% of [b] against [a]
SLRC	Average Day	1215	25	2.05
	Poya Day		900	74
ITN	Average Day	1180	75	6.35
	Poya Day		410	34.7
Swarnavahini	Average Day	1080	30	2.77
	Poya Day		465	43.0
Sirasa	Average Day	1050	30	2.85
	Poya Day		60	5.70
TNL	Average Day	692	---	---
	Poya Day		405	58.5

The above Table shows the remarkable increase of time allocated for religious programs on poya days.<sup>4</sup> The specific Buddhist religious days like Vesak and Poson, the television channels allocate more time telecasting live programs such as delivering sermons by eminent priests, pirith chanting, documentaries on sacred places in Sri Lanka and abroad, Jataka story or any other drama that has a moral value and Dhamma discourses. Both Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) and ITN are state owned television channels whereas the other three are private channels. The Directors and the program producers of each channel have responded to the majority Sri Lankan Buddhists' religious sensitivity.

<sup>4</sup> Sunday Observer TV Guide, Sunday September 11, 2011, Vol. 94, No. 37., pp. 119-120.

**Figure 1: Total Television Time against the Religious Programs On Five Different Channels on an Average Day and a Poya Day**



During the preliminary survey the researcher understood that most of the aged parents who live in urban areas have got used to the television for religious activities. It does not mean that they never frequent to the temple for religious purposes but the life style at present in the families and their personal reasons have made their attendance to the temple limited at times. The reasons given by different parents are significant. A mother from Colombo said that:

*'My son works in a private firm, so even on Poya days he has to work. He does not like my going to the temple which is two kilometers away since I suffer from arthritis. When he comes home it is too late to go to the temple. So I am used to the television to watch a lot of things and I learn a lot'.*

A father from Colombo also expressed the same idea.

*'I am very old now and I have many ailments. So if I go to the temple it is a trouble for me and others. So I prefer to stay at home because there are many religious programs on different television channels'.*

Many old parents from Colombo and Kandy said that they are unable to attend the temple due to various reasons so they are restricted to residences. The sufferings from many diseases, their children being busy and the availability of numerous television programs have made them think that they are not going to lose a lot. After the preliminary survey the researcher found out that many aged parents are happy with the role played by television on their lives. The researcher was informed that most of these aged parents have made it a habit to watch and listen to the religious programs telecast or broadcast on television and radio early in each day. So it means that there is a positive social aspect of the television. A father from Kandy mentioned that:

*'I studied religion at school from grade three onwards, after O/Ls we did not pay much attention to religion even though we attended temple on poya days and participated in religious festivals and processions. During A/Ls religion was neglected totally. While employed there were very few times we engaged in religious activities and we were thinking of building our own house and the education of our children. But now we are old. As we get older we feel insecure. When we think of death and life after death we think of being religious. Television gives a good opportunity because I always watch Dhamma discourses. Many intellectuals representing lay and the clergy take part and we learn the complex aspects of religion in a simple way'.*

The above example summarizes the world view of the Buddhists. All Buddhists believe that being born a human is a rare opportunity. With the influence of Hinduism they firmly believe in rebirth also. What one does in this life will decide one's life in next birth. So they have to accumulate merits when they can, to have a better life after death. A mother from Colombo replied that:

*'I believe in rebirth, if I do good only I will have a better life in my next birth. So I want to do good to be born in a better place. I always remind myself the good things I have done in this life. I think I will be born in a good place'.*

In analyzing the answers received from the respondents the researcher could formulate how individuals use, perceive, interpret and respond to the media. The media dependency theory developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur (1976), the Cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner et al (1986) and the Social action theory developed by Anderson and Meyer (1988) have certain relevance to the social conditions experienced during the study.

The social action theory developed by Anderson and Meyer, suggested that media has hidden messages that influence their audience. Unlike the original research the media content has a positive influence on the viewer. According to them the meanings arise in relation to the 'intentions of the producer, the conventions of the content and the interpretations of the receiver' (p. 48). In all these religious programs the main aim was to win the people for the channel and they have used different methods to attract the audience. Since the individual is unable to visit some important places the television crew visits the specific place and bring it live to the sitting room of the viewer. So the viewer actively participates in the programs that are telecast. John Fiske (1990) was also in the opinion that the television viewers involve in creating meaning and interpreting the program's text. A comment made by a mother from Colombo was a real testimony to this.

*'I wanted to visit India before I die. But I don't have money. My children also cannot spend a lot of money on that pilgrimage. The television brought all those places I wanted to visit'*

*during the last poya day and now I am very happy. I feel like I have been to the place. I saw places like Bodhgaya, Kusinara, Lumbini and many other places I have learnt and read. If I can watch that program again I am happy'.*

So it was understood that most of the Sri Lankans during their old age wish to go to the birthplace of the Lord Buddha and many sacred places associated with the life of Gautama Buddha. But due to financial restrictions, they are incapable and they do not want to be a burden to their children reminding the media dependency theory. According to the media dependency theory developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur (1976) audiences depend on media information to meet needs and reach goals. In this context the need is the spiritual satisfaction of the aged individuals. The goal is to counter loneliness through Dhamma counseling. The elders have more knowledge through books and religious newspapers and the content of media messages and their effects on audiences are vital. The main idea of the Cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner is that the 'persistent long term exposure to television content has small but measurable effects on the perceptual worlds of audience members'. In doing this the social institutions and media systems interact with audiences to create needs, interests, and motives in the viewer. The most important fact to note was that most of these theories consider the effect of media as negative but the researcher identified the opposite.

The researcher got to know that almost all in the sample have similar views in analyzing the type of the psychological conditions the aged people undergo. All of them were suffering from different psychological conditions but in a wider range. They were suffering from loneliness, insecurity, depression, anxiety, stress and social isolation. A considerable number of respondents voiced their opinions about the existing conditions. A father from Colombo explained:

*'True we are old and suffer from many diseases. Those are natural. But I think while having medicine for the body we need a special therapy for the mind. The best mental therapy comes out of religion. The best treatment for the dejected mind is Buddhism'.*

A mother from Kandy replied that:

*'No use of taking medicine. As you become old the sufferings are natural. I know some of these things do not have medicine. Best thing is to accumulate merit for the next life'.*

So, many of them were in the opinion that the freely available religious programs in the television find them solace in their old age. Thompson (1995) mentions this type of interaction as mediated quasi-interaction. The aged people foster a monological relationship with the television. Some admitted that they have one-way communication while watching the program and later a discussion with oneself over the matters learnt. Normally counseling takes place as one is 'listening to someone and giving them advice about their problems'. In this context it is the aged individual listening to the television program and receives the advice given by the venerable Sangha or any other lay intellectual. The Dhamma counseling takes place in relation to technology. The electronic temple; television, has become the source of religion, guide and advice for the problems created by the old age.

It was noted that irrespective of the level of education and socio-economic background all the respondents in the sample were aware of the ideas of Buddhist philosophy. They knew that the solution to all these problems is to live an exemplary life, which means, a principled life.

The cycle of life – the journey of Samsara, should be stopped. Many of them have become vegetarians and are devoted to meritorious acts. They cherish Dhamma as the most important thing in their lives. Nearly fifty percent in the sample had cassettes, DVDs, CDs, books and newspapers to watch, listen and refer as they want. Rather than visiting the temple and getting the doubts clarified by the priest they have used to use the technology available. A very few (5%) have joined the internet websites that cater to Buddhist philosophy. A mother from Colombo mentioned that:

*'I need something to engage in when I do not have anything specific to do. That is why I ask my children to get me these books. They are highly valuable and I have a very good collection of Buddhist resources. I share those with my friends who are also like me. We talk about these things. Now we realize that only thing one can take with oneself is the good things one does'.*

Many aged individuals in the sample confirmed that they have nothing to achieve other than a peaceful death. Almost all were happy that they had produced worthy children and they perform well in the society. They are happy with the grandchildren and ready to leave this world for somewhere which is beyond their comprehension. The only hope is the hope for a better life after death. The only way to achieve that is to remain the rest of life in a responsible manner. In obtaining that they need to utilize everything that they can have and one way is to utilize the religious programs to improve their spirituality. The spiritual solace would eventually lead to their destination. A father from Kandy stated that:

*'Death is inevitable. We have to face that reality. If we have not done anything wrong we should not be afraid. But as lay people we all wish to be born in heaven. That is also craving in one way. Yet according to Buddhism it is the thought process at the decisive moment takes one to heaven or hell. That also we cannot control. I take it as it is'.*

## Conclusion

Old age is a critical phase in anyone's life. It is assumed that any lay person gets disturbed when he thinks of death. Since he cannot avoid he has to face it. Like in many other challenges in life the respondents have decided to take this challenge also. In meeting this uncomfortable experience they have to have a clear mindset. Loneliness associated with the old age aggravates the fear of death and uncertainty of life. The aged individuals convinced the researcher that they use religion to condition their minds on brevity of life, impermanence and transience. The most powerful medium for this is the religious programs telecast by television. The audio-visual effects internalize the religious teachings in their minds in a very powerful manner. At this moment they need an amicable counselor who can share their sentiments. Even though the television is inanimate the aged individuals consider television as the counselor that can pave way for them to their salvation.

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# The Utility of Buddhist Psychotherapeutic Techniques for Liberation



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## The Buddha and psychotherapy

It is surprising that already in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. a Great Teacher known by the name of *Gotama* the Buddha (523-443 B.C) has presented a remarkable system of psychotherapy unique in theory and practice. This theory and practice is well preserved in early Buddhism as presented in the *Pali Tipitaka*. The first joy of saying of Buddha in *Dhammapada* presents an extraordinary stanza to convey the psychotherapeutic treatment in Buddhism.

“Though many a birth I wandered in *Samsāra*, seeking, but not finding, the builder of the house. Sorrowful is it to be born again and again. O house-builder! Thou art seen. Thou shall build not house again. All thy rafters are broken. Thy ridge-pole is shattered. My mind has attained the unconditioned. Achieved is this end of craving.<sup>1</sup>“

As it is presented by Gay Watson, there is etymological link between therapy and Buddhism. Archetypal psychologist James Hillman notes ‘the Greek word *therapeia* refers also to care, the root is *dher*, which means ‘carry’ support, hold and is related to *dharma*, the Sanskrit meaning ‘habit and custom’ as carrier. The therapist is one who carries and takes care as does a servant (Greek= *theraps, therapon*). A Tibetan Lama also points to Dharma as the carrier of truth, which can be thought of as an antidote, a remedy or cure to promote change and transformation. The therapist is one who carries and takes care. This observation shows that Buddhism is one of the greatest psychotherapeutic enterprises.

The meaning of above stanza could be known as introductory words to psychotherapy in Buddhism as well it further “implies that the whole purpose of Buddhism is to apply mental therapy...the Buddha who recognized the fatal malady which is affecting all sentient beings, to which he gave the name *Dukkha* or suffering...<sup>2</sup>“ According to this teaching human beings are mentally sick. Therefore, it should be treated to cure them of their maladies. In contrast to the expedients of western psychiatry, Buddhist mental therapy aims at total integration of the personality in a higher level. Since craving (*Tanhā*) is the root cause of suffering and it is necessary to uproot and finally craving should be extinguished.

Although at first sight Buddhism as a religious tradition founded in the fifth century BCE might seem far removed from the world of psychotherapy in the twenty first century. In fact, I suppose that the Buddhist ideas have contributed to the development of Western thinking in the psychological fields since the times of William James and Carl G. Jung. In recent years, substantial body of theory and practice were integrated in a number of different therapeutic integrations. The teaching of Buddha

<sup>1</sup> The *Dhammapada* Edited By K. Sri Dhammananda, Jarā Vagga, 8 and 9 stanzas, page 326

<sup>2</sup> Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume of the University of Kelaniya, A Note on Psycho-therapy in Early Buddhism, Bandaranayake Abhayaratne, Editor in Chief, Weerasinghe, S.G.M, page 335

concerns about the human condition and response to the suffering. It is stated that early Buddhism introduces a point of reference, which western psychotherapy has been unable to fit into its theories, for an example field of moral values while engaging in treating with psychotherapy.

Let us now observe few *Suttas* of psychotherapeutic practices as depicted in the *Tipitaka*. Some of them are, *The Avijjā Sutta*, *The Tayodhamma Sutta*, *The Dutiya Yodhajāvūpama Sutta*, *the Vitakka Sathāna Sutta*, *the Alagaddūpama Sutta*, *the Cūlahaṭṭipadopama Sutta*, *the Maha Hatthipadopama Sutta* are some of them. Apart from these *Suttas* each and every discourses of Buddha mainly relates to our discussion.

## Role of Buddha as Psychotherapist

The qualification which needs to be a good psychotherapist is available in Buddhism. The writer of encyclopedia of religion and ethics; *Mercia Elida* says that “he (Buddha) experimented with the practices of renunciants- begging, wandering, celibacy, techniques of self-restraint and the like and he organized a community in which discipline played a central role. Judging from the movement he inspired, He was not only an innovator but also a charismatic personality. Through the course of his ministry he gathered around him a group of wandering mendicants and nuns, as well as men and women who continued to live the life of householders...”<sup>3</sup>

I suppose this interpretation clearly shows the qualification of Buddha as a psychotherapist. He has named different epithets; *Sabbaññu* (the Omniscient), *Akutobhaya* (the Fearless), *Anūpama* (the Incomparable) by himself or other peoples according to his charismatic personality. These epithets were coined in Buddha’s teaching and also frequent occurrence, e.g. *Dharmākara* (the Mine of the *Dhamma*) and *Advayavādin* (the Teacher of non-duality), *Tathāgata* (one who attained to the Truth), *Arahant* (worthy of offering or destroyer of enemies), *Sammāsambuddha* (perfectly awakened), *Vijācaranasampanno* (full of knowledge and practice), *Sugata* (well-gone), *Lokavidū* (who knows the world), *Purisadammasarathā* (trainer of amenable men), *Lokajeññha* (superior in the world) etc... These appellations have deep meaning, probably can understand the Buddha as is best therapist. According to the *Lakkhana Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya* proves the great personality of Buddha. The *Suttas* explains thirty-two marks; “he has feet with level treat, on the soles of his feet are wheels with a thousand spokes, complete with felloe and hub, he has soft and tender hands, he is proportioned like a banyan-tree; the height of his body is the same as the span of his outstretched arms, and conversely...”<sup>4</sup> The Buddha did his works as the spiritual therapist who is embodied with highly venerated ethical behavior and four types of sublime qualities; *mettā* (loving-kindness) *karunā* (boundless compassion) *muditā* (asymptotic-joy) and *upekhā* (equanimity). Anyone who trained as a counselor has to develop spiritual qualities towards his clients.

American psychologist, Carl Rogers observes that ‘empathy’ is best quality and it has to keep in mind in the process of counseling for clients. The Buddha instructed his disciples to convey his doctrine with the empathetic-feeling towards the listener. This is possible to find every sermons of Buddha. As it is said by *John Welwood* “Carl Rogers’s term ‘unconditional positive regard’ although it sounded appealing as an ideal therapeutic stance, it is hard to put into practice... the Buddhist counterpart of unconditional positive regard is loving-kindness. Loving kindness is unconditional

<sup>3</sup> Mercia Elida, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, page 321

<sup>4</sup> Dīgha Nikaya Translation, Maurice Walshe, page 441-442

friendliness a quality of allowing and welcoming human beings and their experience...”<sup>5</sup> The Buddha did his work throughout his life as psychotherapist for the wellbeing of people. It was his instruction for his disciples.

## Four noble truths as psychotherapy

Buddhism was formulated in India at 6century BC; many aspects of the doctrine have been misinterpreted and misunderstood throughout the centuries. However, most of the scholars have been interpreted Buddhism, according to their views and fancies without ignoring ‘what Buddhism really is, and what did the Buddha preach? And what is the purpose of Buddhism? Moreover to that, some savants those who nourished under the influence of philosophy and science have made an effort to put Buddhism under the category of Scientology. Therefore, I presume that they have not clearly understood the function of Buddhism and the core of Buddhism. When we read the teachings of Buddha can understand that there is nothing other than psychotherapy in Buddhism.

When we read the history of pre-Buddhist thinkers is possible to realize that they have interpreted many theories regarding epistemology, metaphysics and ethics but the core of those teachings do not conducive to the asseveration of truth. As it was observed by *D.J. Kalupahana* “the Buddha’s terminology relating to freedom, namely, *nibbāna* or *nirvna*, as well as what is achieved as a result of the attainment for such freedom, namely, the elimination of suffering, referred to by the term *dukkha* (*duhkha*), and the experience of happiness or *sukha*. These three terms are conspicuously absent in the available pre-Buddhist literature...”<sup>6</sup> I think these three are compulsory factors in psychotherapy.

The whole teaching of Buddha relates to experience happiness that was not sullied by impurities. Therefore, the first sermon of the Buddha, setting the motion of *Dhamma* wheel (*Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta*) illustrates that one has to abandon two extremes; self mortification and self indulgence in order to realize the *Nibbāna*. The Buddha said that these two extremes are the taproot causes which led people to experience endless suffering. The Buddha says that he (the *Tathāgata*), realizing the error of both these two extremes, followed a middle path. This new path was discovered by him and it was named in his word ‘*majjhimā patipada*’ the middle path. This path produces spiritual insight and intellectual wisdom to see things as they truly are. When the insight is cleared and the intellect is subtle everything is seen in its true way. The four noble truths in a sense are a summary of the Buddha’s teachings from the point of the view of practicing Buddhist psychotherapy. The core teaching of Buddhism, which derive from the Buddha’s profound insight, are primarily thought about the relationship between existential afflictions such as sickness, old age and death, and the creation of self.

According to materialistic point of view the self is most important in order to achieve self-centered goals in life but from the Buddhist point of view self is more harm in its spiritual avenue. So, here in the four noble truths which are the truth of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering and the truth that leads to the end of suffering; this teaching contains psychotherapeutic discussion. “From a different school of psychotherapy, Padmal de Silva has written widely comparing the behavior modification methods of early Buddhism to those of contemporary behavioral psycho-

<sup>5</sup> John, Welwood, Toward a psychology of Awakening, page 165

<sup>6</sup> Kalupahana, David, J. The Buddha and the Concept of Freedom, Buddhist cultural centre, Sri Lanka, 2008, page 1

therapy, arguing that Buddhist teachings contain many useful strategies for behavioral and cognitive modification and show that the Buddha was concerned with his follower's dally lives as well as their ultimate liberation.

Buddhism itself could also be possible to term as psychology which based as it is upon exploration of existing mind states, starting from contemplation of their unsatisfactoriness in order to facilitate an ever-increasing understanding of what may be more healthy...even within a psychotherapy confined to personal history, an awareness of interdependence and the ultimate emptiness of separated and permanent essence may be helpful and liberating...<sup>7</sup>"It shows that the teaching of Buddha parallel to modern western therapy. The teaching of four noble truths illustrates that each and everyone has to face the challenge of life. Birth and death are sound causes of life, therefore person dare to face the reality of life. And Buddhist psychotherapy parallels to cognitive behavioral models.

The function of Buddhist psychotherapy relates to the doctrine of the non-existence of the 'self'. It is important to understand the illusion of a permanent 'self' is the primary factor which keeps individual in the cycle of suffering. Craving for sensory gratification (*kāmatanhā*), craving for continued existence (*bhavatanhā*), and craving for annihilation (*vibhavatanhā*). These are the motivational forces for the unenlightened individual's behavior. All these three aspects, under the teaching of Buddhist psychology, are noted as perception which subject to distortion, by one's desires, by one's craving, by the illusion of ego. Buddhist psychology, suggests several interrelated concepts that explain human behavior:

1. The motivation for behavior is craving, which ultimately leads to suffering.
2. Perception and cognition are distorted, clouding one's experience of reality.
3. The sense of self is an illusion to which human beings desperately cling, allowing for the experience of desire and craving.
4. Consciousness is composed of false notions and concepts, physical and mental phenomena are seen by the unenlightened individual as existing intrinsically.

The Buddha points out the way man manipulates his patterns of behavior while responding to the outer world in *Madupindika sutta of Majjima Nikaya* as follows. "Dependent on the eye and form, eye consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives, what one perceives, what one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates, with what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye...<sup>8</sup>"

The process of identification takes the following form: This is mine (*etam mama*), this I am (*esō hamasmī*), and this is my self (*esō me attā*). Of these, the first is due to craving (*tanhā*), the second to conceit (*māna*), and the third to wrong view (*diññhi*). What is called self-conceit arises at a pre-rational level, whereas the idea of self, although conditioned by craving, arises at an elementary reflective level. It is also called (*sakkāya-diññhi*), the personality- view. It affirms

<sup>7</sup> Watson, Gay, The Resonance of Emptiness, A Buddhist Inspiration for a Contemporary Psychotherapy, Motilal Babarsidass, Delhi, 2001, page 173

<sup>8</sup> 8 The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha, Translation of Majjima Nikāya, Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Madupiñóika Sutta, page 203.

the presence of an abiding self in the psycho-physical organism in one of twenty ways. If consciousness (*viññāna*), for instance, is to be assumed as self, such an assumption could manifest itself in four ways: as it was said by Prof. Y. Karunadasa.

1. “consciousness is the same as self (*vinnanam attato samanupassati*), as in the case of a flame of a lamp which is identical with its visual appearance,
2. the self possesses consciousness, just as a tree has a shadow,
3. consciousness is within the self, just as the scent is in the flower, and
4. The self is in consciousness, just as a gem in a casket. This description is extended to the other four aggregates as well. Thus, there are in all twenty possible relations between the five aggregates and the hypothetical self. This is how Buddhism explains the origin of the erroneous belief in a self-entity.<sup>9c</sup>

Buddhism understands that this kind of distorted thought which based on the illusory creation in the mind. When the person attaches to the notion of self, then it starts to activate the function of mind and body. According to Buddhism mind is very important factor because it teaches in *Dhammapada* “mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they...And mind is the forerunner of (all good) states...”<sup>10</sup>, further Buddhism understands that mind is very radiant at the birth stage but by the passing of time mind becomes to change and it is sullied by numerous defilements.

The *Madupiṇḍika Sutta of Majjhima –Nikāya* states that how does man construct mental proliferation with inner world and outer world. The analysis goes much deeper to trace its psychological origins. The analysis offered in the *Sutta* begins with the sensory process and identifies *Papañca* the most noteworthy cause of inner conflict. “Depending on the eye and material objects arises visual consciousness. The coming together of these three is sense contact. Depending on sense contact arises sensation. What one senses one recognizes (or conceptualizes). What one recognizes one thinks about. One gets obsessed with (*papañceti*) what one thinks about. As a result of this, thoughts of conceptual obsession (*papañca saññāsaṅkhā*) assail the person with respect to material objects cognizable by the eye, belonging to the past, present and future...”<sup>11c</sup> The same process is repeated with reference to all senses. “

As long as the sensory process leads to psychological consequences outlined in the above passage certain latent tendencies of the mind remain deeply entrenched. They are the latent tendency to lust or attachment (*rāgānusaya*), hatred (*pañighānusaya*), dogmatic views (*diññhānusaya*), doubt...<sup>12c</sup> When these emotions come to contact with the mentality of person, then person creates psychological hindrance in his mind. And Buddhism enumerates many types of such psychological hindrances.

For an example *Sallekha Sutta of Majjhima –Nikāya* enumerates forty-four types of cankers. The *Vatthūpama Sutta of same Nikāya* points out the nature of mind by Buddha “*Bhikkhus*, suppose

<sup>9</sup> Patisambhidamagga, PTS. Vol. 1. Page 144-145

<sup>10</sup> The Dhammapada Edited By K. Sri Dhammananda, Yamaka Vagga, 1 and 2 stanzas, page 41-42

<sup>11</sup> Majjhima Nikāya, Translated by I.B. Horner, Middle Length Saying, Vol-I, London, PTS, 1954, page 114

<sup>12</sup> Buddhist Studies in Buddhist Philosophy and Religion, Editors; Pemarattana Soorakkulame and Padmasiri Raluwe, Collected Papers of P.D. Premasiri, Peace Within and Without: A Buddhist View; Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya, 2006, page 289

a cloth were defiled and stained, and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or carmine; it would look poorly dyed and impure in color. Why is that? because of the impurity of the cloth. So too, when the mind is defiled, an unhappy destination may be expected...<sup>13</sup>“This analysis indicates that mind is similar to piece of cloth that shines brightly. The mind is also similar to that piece of cloth at first of its birth. But when time passes, such bright mind turns to defile. Therefore, it is necessary to find out proper methods in order to keep mind brightly.

## Techniques of Psychotherapy and liberation

Here, the Buddha enumerates forty-four of illness (in *Sallekha Sutta*) that afflict the human mind, the following are those; cruel (*vihimsā*), killing (*pāṇātipātā*), take what is not given (*adinnādānā*), uncelibate (*abrahmacārā*), falsehood (*musāvāda*), malicious speech (*pisunāvācā*), harsh speech (*pharusāvācā*), gossip (*samphappalāpā*), covetous (*abhijjhālu*), ill-will (*byāpannacittā*), wrong view (*micchādiññhā*), wrong intention (*micchāsaikappa*), wrong speech (*micchāvāca*), wrong action (*micchākammanta*) etc. having taken into account these defilements, the Buddha pointed out the practical seven methods which support to keep mind straightly in Sutta literature. For examples; *Subbāsava Sutta* contains following techniques;

1. Eliminating defilement is by developing proper seeing (*Dassanā*). It can further elaborates that According to Buddhist psychotherapy all passion are possible to divide into two categories from the point of view of their eradication, namely, the intellectual passions and the emotional passions. The former is due to errors of judgment or want of discrimination; the latter is produced by the habits, the emotional nature of beings. The *Nettippakarana* gives a process of the arising of passions which is different only its approach. It traces their origin in perversions (*vipallāsa*) on account of which man clings (*upādāna*) to sensuality (*kāma*) to continued existence (*bhava*), to views (*diññhi*) and to belief in a soul (attavada)... The intellectual passions are removable through realization of the truth (*darśanāprahātavya*)
2. Eliminating defilement is by having restraining (*sañvara*)
3. Eliminating defilement is by means of attending wisely to one’s needs (*pañisevana*)
4. Eliminating defilement is by means of endurance (*adhibvāsanā*)
5. Eliminating defilement is by releasing them or dropping them (*parivajjanā*)
6. Eliminating defilement is by avoidance (*vinodanā*)
7. Eliminating defilement is by self-development or cultivation (*bhāvanā*)

When unenlightened man touched by those defilements, he would be really experience mental and bodily sickness. If a person makes hard effort to keep the balance of mind accordingly to these seven or any of these methods. He will experience spiritual happiness due to keeping mind strongly. For an example, “it is stated that the venerable *Ananda*, once visited a householder named *Sirivaddha* who was ill. On hearing from the patient that he was in much pain, and that his pains were getting worse, *Ananda* advised him to engage in the meditation of mindfulness. Similarly, it

<sup>13</sup> The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya, Translated By Bhikkhu Yāñamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Vatthūpama Sutta, page 118

is recorded that the Buddha himself visited two ailing monks, *Mogallana and Kassapa*, who were in pain, and advised each of them to engage in mindfulness meditation. The very important issue is further available in the story of venerable *Anurudha*.’ He was sick, and was grievously afflicted. Many monks who visited him, finding him calm and relaxed, asked him how his ‘painful sensations’ evidently made no impact on his mind. He replied; ‘it is because I have my mind well-grounded in mindfulness.’<sup>14</sup>

These three stories clearly show that meditation can reduce, or ‘block out’ the mental aspect of, the pain – for example, while the physical sensations may remain intact, one’s vulnerability to subjectively felt pain is reduced. The different passage of *Samyutta Nikāya* explains that unenlightened man, when touched by bodily feelings, grieves and laments...and is distraught... but the enlightened disciple who well-trained, when touched by painful bodily feelings, will not weep, will not worry. Here, the unenlightened man just experienced two kind of feelings; a bodily and a mentally. The above mention techniques could be used from the surface level to reduce mental and physical afflictions. But when those techniques cultivate in a deepest level can be used as (therapy) or therapeutic way even to put into end multifarious defilements. It is also possible to understand that these techniques could also be further used as behavioral modification strategiesAs it was illustrated by *Padmal de Silva* “These strategies are remarkably similar to several of the established techniques of modern behavioral therapy. Thus, if Buddhist psychology is akin to modern humanistic, transpersonal and existential psychologies in view of its emphasis on the individual...development thought personal effort. It also has... behavioral techniques...<sup>15</sup>“The other noteworthy point is that among the techniques in *Sabbasava Sutta*; Eliminating defilement is by self-development or cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is very important because mediation is very compulsory factor in Buddhism. Buddhism has two separate meditations, *samatha* and *vipassanā*. The word *samatha* means ‘tranquility’ and *vipassanā*; means insight. Both these fraternities are bundled each other. The meditation is very key factor in the practice of psychotherapy in Buddhism. On the other hand, the above techniques are served their function as meditative instructor. And those methods could be used as meditative techniques to overcome suffering in life. Somewhere of Buddhist literature explains many mundane benefits, when someone cultivates mindfulness day and night, it is said by the Buddha such person would not cause by accidental calamities in life.

The *Vitakkasanthāna Sutta* of *Majjhima –Nikāya* highlights other five techniques in order to keep the mind straightly. In this discourse the emphasis is on ways of dealing with thoughts that feed the unwholesome emotions. Like the *Sabbasava Sutta*, this discourse is most important for man who wishes to gain mastery over mechanical flow of thoughts that feed the unwholesome emotions. Such thoughts are associated with passion, (*chandūpasamhītā*), associated with hatred (*dosūpasamhītā*) and associated with delusion or confusion of mind (*mahūpasamhītā*). Unwholesome emotional thoughts produce suffering not only the person who has them, but also others with whom that person associates. Therefore, we need practical method to master certain techniques to prevent the flow of unwholesome thought. These techniques are functioned as methods of giving treatment or therapeutic way for the reduction of passion as well the ultimate level those techniques can be used to an extinguish each and every unwholesome emotions in our mind. The strategies as presented in *Sutta* can be seen in a hierarchical order, each to be tried if the preceding one fails.

<sup>14</sup> Kwee, M.G.T, & Holdstock, T.L, Western & Buddhist Psychology Clinical Perspective, Buddhist Psychology; Theory and therapy, De Silva Padmal, Eburon Publishers, University, Amsterdam, 1999, page 137

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Page 138

1. Switch to an opposite or incompatible thought (*bhikkhunā tamhā nimittā aññam nimittam manasikātabbam kusalūpasamhitam*). The first is to reflect on an object which is associated with thoughts which unwanted cognition is associated with passion or lust, one should think of something promoting lustlessness; if it is associated with malice, one should think of something promoting loving kindness. It is opposite to unwholesome thoughts.
2. Ponder on harmful consequence. (*bhikkunā tesam vitakkānam ādānavo upaparikkhitabbo*) if, however, the unwanted thought still keeps arising, one is advised to ponder on the perils and disadvantage of the thought; that is to consider its harmful consequences. This would help someone to escape from unwholesome thoughts.
3. Ignore and distract; (*bhikkunā tesam vitakkānam asati-amanasikāro āpajjitabbo*) if the earlier is failed, this is recommended by the Buddha. The technique of ignoring an unwanted thought is recommended. One is to strive not to pay attention.
4. Reflect on removal of causes; (*bhikkunā tesam vitakkānam vitakkasaṅkhārasanthānam manasikātabbam*) if the problem still exists, then a further strategy is recommended. This is to reflect on the removal or stopping of the causes of the target thought.
5. Control with forceful effort; (*bhikkunā tesam vitakkānam...tena bhikkhave bhikkunā dantehi danta ūmādhāya jivhāya tālum āhacca cetasā cittam abhiniggaṇhitabbam abhinippāletabbam abhi santāpetabbam...*) if the foregoing strategies fails, then a fifth method is advocated, which is forcefully to restrain and dominate the mind.

The Buddha recommended those techniques to restrain the mind from unwholesome emotions. These techniques may also be possible to use as strategies for the use of behavioral modification. If an unwholesome thought arises, one is advised to face it directly and continuously. I suppose that these strategies are very much helpful to build personality skills in mundane life. On the other hand, those techniques make their role under the condition of psychotherapy. Buddhism understands each every one of us has firm ability for the development of personality. It is reflected clearly in the Buddha's teaching "self-reliance, extolling what he called *attakāra* (personal effort), *purisakāra* (human endeavor), *purisathāma* (human strength), *purisaviriya* (human energy), *purisaparakkama* (human value), and *purisadhorayha* (human responsibility). These may, for instance, be noted from the *Sampsādanāya Sutta* of the *Digha –Nikāya*. These types of personal energies should be improved upon (*bhāvetabbam*) in one's progress towards perfection or *Nirvāṇa...*"<sup>16</sup> In this respect Buddhist psychotherapy is comparable to the humanistic psychotherapy because Buddhism admits the importance of human potential for spiritual growth and self-realization. "The life and experience of human beings are not determined by factors totally beyond their control. With right effort it is possible to transform the nature of one's inner life..."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Buddhism uses many strategies in order to change unwholesome behavior of man and the ultimate goal of those strategies conducive to the enhancement of spiritual life.

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights and Religions in Sri Lanka, A Commentary on the universal Declaration of Human Rights, Sri Lanka Foundation, 1988, page 3

<sup>17</sup> Symposium on Buddhist Studies, Editor, Rahula Kotapitiye, Premasiri P.D, Early Buddhist and the psychology of Emotion, Twentieth Anniversary Commemoration Volume, Thames Buddhist Vihara, 2003, page 71

## Conclusion

It is evident that Buddhism has focused greater attention on the elimination of emotions that are harmful to human existence. Therefore, Buddhism recommends a series of technique to remove harmful emotions that cause damage in one's life. Thus, these techniques are applicable irrespective of whether or not one has committed oneself to a life devoted to the aim of personal development. This personal development comes through the application of Buddha's doctrine. Such doctrine could be known as greatest psychotherapy because it promotes man to train calmness and tranquility. The attainment of Arahantship is totally depended on psychological the transformation of personality. This transformation comes through the experience of therapeutic prospective. Therefore, it is doubtless to say that liberation comes through psychotherapeutic avenue.

# A Psychological Analysis of Physical and Mental Pain in Buddhism

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Pain is a natural part of life and all of us. Ordinary people are inflicted with physical or mental pain. In this paper, firstly we will analyse the concept of physical and mental pain according to the Pali Nikāyas. Next we will discuss the causes of physical and mental pain, and investigate the unwholesome roots: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), and their negative roles in causing physical and mental pain. Then we will highlight the Buddhist path to overcoming physical and mental pain. Finally we will discuss mindfulness and the therapeutic relationship. Mindfulness, as it is understood and applied in Buddhism, is a richer theory than thus far understood and applied in Western psychotherapy. Within Buddhism the development of mindfulness must be understood to be interrelated with the maturity of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*saṃādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

## A Word about Buddhism

Buddhism, a spiritual movement, arose from the prevalent intellectual, political and cultural milieu of Indian society in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and has been an influential cultural force in Asia for more than 2550 years. In recent decades, it has gained acceptance in the West, largely due to its solution of mental pain of human beings through mindfulness meditation.

The core teachings of the Buddha are contained in the Four Noble Truths, which are as follows: (1) *Dukkha*: life is characterized by pain; (2) *Samudaya*: the cause of pain which is craving (*taṇhā*); (3) *Nirodha*: pain can be ended by the cessation of craving; and (4) *Magga*: there is a way to achieve the cessation of pain, which is the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-athangika-magga*). These Four Noble Truths corresponds to four aspects in the practice of medicine: (1) *Diagnosis*: determining if there is a disease. If there is no disease, then there is no need for treatment, but in this case, there is a disease, called pain. (2) *Aetiology*: the cause of the disease corresponds to the Second Noble Truth. (3) *Prognosis*: a judgement about how the disease is likely to progress and that it can be cured. Again, if there is no cure, there is no need for treatment. (4) *Treatment*: pain can be treated and cured by the prescription of the Fourth Noble Truth (i.e., the Noble Eightfold Path). The Four Noble Truths offer a theoretical method with practical implications for engaging with physical and mental pain and reorienting one's life in order to achieve freedom from them.

In Buddhist psychology, mind has an important place. Buddhist psychology is regarded as a science of mind as it deals with mind – “All phenomena are preceded by the mind, mind is their chief, they are produced by mind (*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā*)” (Dhp 1). With regard to mind, the commentary states: “All classes of arts in the world, specific or generic, are achieved by the mind. And, owing to its capacity to produce a variety and diversity of effects

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in action, the mind, which achieves all these arts, is itself artistic like the arts themselves” (Maung Tin, Trans. 1976, 86). Buddhist psychology classifies mind as being either wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*), and tries to analyse the contents of mind from an ethical perspective. Hence, Nyanaponika Thera (1965) considers Buddhist psychology is primarily a practical way to know the mind, shape the mind, and free the mind.

Buddhist psychology analyses the person into five constituent aggregates (*khandhas*): matter or physical body (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional activities (*saṅkhāras*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). The first aggregate represents the material component of a person (*rūpa*) and remaining four represent mental components of a person or what we call mind (*nāma*). Another key concept in Buddhist psychology is “dependent co-origination” (*paticcasammuppāda*), the concept of causality. It is regarded as one of the tools to analyse physical and mental pain. Consequently, Buddhist psychology explains that *dukkha* arises depending on the cause and condition.

Buddhist psychology states that because of evil conditions of mind, one commits evil deed and defiles one’s mind; and as a result, one becomes victim of his own deeds and loss health. Therefore, Buddhism emphasizes the importance of developing one’s own mind. In Buddhism, mental development is of greatest importance because without it, it is impossible to gain complete health.

Mindfulness is the essence of Buddhist psychology. Nyanaponika Thera calls this meditation as ‘the heart of Buddhist meditation’ or even ‘the heart of the entire doctrine’ (*dhamma-hadaya*) (1992, 7). Mindfulness is the core practice of Buddhist psychology, and the body of Buddhist psychology, including the Buddha’s original teachings and later writing of the Abhidharma, may be considered the theoretical basis for mindfulness (Nyanaponika Thera 1998). Due to the importance of mindfulness for healing physical and mental pain, this meditation has been successfully implemented in the area of all Buddhist schools of psychotherapy as well as western psychotherapy.

## The Analysis of Physical and Mental Pain

We generally translate the Pali term ‘*dukkha*’ as ‘pain’ or ‘suffering’, even though it has a wider philosophical meaning including un-satisfactoriness, unhappiness, distress, discomfort, dissatisfaction, sorrow, affliction, anxiety, anguish, and so on. Accordingly, *dukkha* can refer to various unpleasant experiences in varying degrees. Many Buddhist scholars have offered explanations on *dukkha*. For example, Gombrich (1995, 62) says, “The word we translate ‘suffering’, lacks a close English equivalent. The meaning of the First Noble Truth is that life is unsatisfactory”. On the other hand, Harvey notes:

The word *dukkha* refers to all those things which are unpleasant, imperfect, and which we would like to be otherwise, “Rich in meaning and nuance ... Literally ‘pain’ or ‘anguish,’ in its religious and philosophical contexts, *dukkha* is, however, suggestive of an underlying ‘unsatisfactoriness’ or ‘unease’ that must ultimately mar even our experience of happiness (Harvey 2009, 320).

Nevertheless, the common interpretation of the word *dukkha* to mean suffering, pain, or unsatisfactorieness does not convey its true meaning.

Now we will try to understand the true meaning of *dukkha* from the perspective of Four Noble Truths. In the first discourse of the Buddha mentions different forms of *dukkha*. The first sort of ‘*dukkha*’ conveys the meaning of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease (*byādhī*), and death (*maraṇa*). The next sort of ‘*dukkha*’ conveys the meaning of sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), physical-and-mental pain (*dukkha-domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsā*) – which extends the first sorts of ‘*dukkha*’. The next sort, that ‘*dukkha*’ is association with the disliked (*appiyehi sampayogo*), separation from the beloved (*piyehi vippayogo*), and not getting what one desire is *dukkha* (*yampicchain na labhati tampi dukkham*). The last row summarizes what *dukkha* is by referring to a group called “five aggregates of grasping” (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*): grasping or clinging to the five aggregates of (psycho-physical) existence is the whole mass of *dukkha*.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, physical and mental pain are generally covered by the Pali terms *dukkha* and *domanassa*. Among the different forms of pain, physical pain can be birth, aging, pain, disease and death. Mental pain can be grief, lamentation, distress. Also, people feel mental pain when they associate with an object or person they dislike or are separated from an object or person they like.

The Pali Nikāyas differentiate between *dukkha* born of physical contact and *domanassa* born of mental contact. For example, the *Saccavibhaṅgasutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya answers the question ‘what are *dukkha* and *domanassa*?’ with the following basic formula:

And what, friends, is *dukkha*?<sup>3</sup> Physical pain, physical discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of physical contact – this is called *dukkha*” (M III.251).<sup>4</sup> How is *dukkha* different from *domanassa*? Next, the Buddha describes *domanassa*, ‘mental pain’ in the following words: “And what, friends, is *domanassa*?<sup>5</sup> Mental pain, mental discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of mental contact – this is called *domanassa* (M III, 251).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in the case of the binomial words *dukkha-domanassa*, the term *dukkha* (‘*du*’ = bad or painful + ‘*kha*’ = empty, space) has to be understood as physical pain and the term *domanassa* (‘*du*’ = bad or painful + ‘*manas*’ = mind) has to be understood as mental pain (*cetasikam dukkham domanassam patisamvedeti*) (cf. Nyanatiloka 1970, 189; Bodhi Ed. 1993, 36, 115-116). Contrary to the term *dukkha* which denotes physical pain (*kāyika dukkha*) when defined as an *indriya*, *domanassa*, as seen above, refers to mental pain (*cetasika dukkha*) (See Bodhi Ed. 1993, 36). Thus, Buddhism distinguishes two forms of *dukkha*: physical (*kāyika dukkha*) and mental (*cetasika dukkha*). In other words, the Pali terms *dukkha* and *domanassa* signify the painful feeling of body (*kāyika dukkha vedanā*) and painful feeling of mind (*cetasika dukkha vedanā*).

<sup>2</sup> The detailed descriptions of every sort of *dukkha* are found in both the *Saccavibhaṅgasutta* (M III.248-252) and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* (D II.290-315).

<sup>3</sup> *Dukkha*, here used in a restricted sense, i.e. *dukkha-dukkha* (intrinsic pain), the first of the three types of *dukkha*; the other two kinds of *dukkha* are: *vipariṇāma-dukkha* (pain due to change), and *sankhāra-dukkha* (pain due to formations) or inherent pain (cf. D III.216-222; S IV.259).

<sup>4</sup> *Katamañca, bhikkhave, dukkham? Yañ kho, bhikkhave, kāyikam dukkham kāyikam asātam kāyasamphassajam dukkham asātam vedayitam, idam vuccati, bhikkhave, dukkham* (M III.251).

<sup>5</sup> *Domanassa*, here used in a more restricted sense, i.e., pain due to change (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*), the second type of *dukkha*.

<sup>6</sup> *Katamañca, bhikkhave, domanassam? Yañ kho, bhikkhave, cetasikam dukkham cetasikam asātam manosamphassajam dukkham asātam vedayitam, idam vuccati, bhikkhave, domanassam* (M III.251).

Now we will discuss the Pali term *domanassa* from the Abhidhamma point of view. Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha states that “*domanassa* is associated with aversion (*paṭigha*) and accompanied by unhappiness, and therefore unwholesome (*akusala*)” (Abhidh-s 1). The term *domanassa* is explained in the Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-ṭīkā:

‘Unhappy mind’ (*dummano*) means an irritated mind or someone who has that; that is, the consciousness [itself] or the person with that consciousness. The state of that [consciousness or person] is unhappiness (*domanassa*). It is a term for unpleasant mental feeling. Accompanied by this is being accompanied by unhappiness. Striking against the object is aversion or hate; because of its violent nature it occurs as if striking against an object (Abhidh-s-t 61; Wijeratna & Gethin, Trans. 2007, 16)

Now we will discuss the terms *kāyika dukkha* and *cetasika dukkha*. With regard to the physical pain (*kāyika dukkha*) and mental pain (*cetasika dukkha*), in the *Sammohavinodanī*, the commentator explains:

The meaning of the pain of bodily pain should be understood and the meaning of pain of mental pain should be understood; but here they are called pain because both of these are themselves pain and because they are the basis for bodily and mental pain (VibhA 105; Nāṇamoli, Trans. 1996, 125).<sup>7</sup>

The commentator further explains: This pain of body that afflicts produces further pain of mind as well, and that accordingly is why this specially is known as pain (VibhA 105; Nāṇamoli, Trans. 1996: 126).<sup>8</sup> This means all the conditioned states of life are pain.

Mental pain arises from various sources such as stress, interpersonal conflict, depression, confusion, anger, greed, behaviour problems, separation from the beloved one, etc. According to Buddhist psychology, mental pain or mental illness occurs in individuals when the mind is upset (*khitta-citta*) or a psychotic (*ummatta-citta*). The Pali-English Dictionary defines ‘*khitta-citta*’ as “one whose mind is thrown over, upset and unhinged” and ‘*ummatta-citta*’ is defined as “out of one’s mind, mad” (Rhys Davids & Stede, Eds. 1921, 373, 550). The Pali Nikāyas mention that when one is touched either by bodily painful feeling (*sārīrikām dukkham vedanām*) or by mental painful feeling (*cetasikām dukkham vedanām*), one would go mad, go out of one’s mind (*ummādam-pi pāpuṇissati cittakkhepām*) (M I.237).<sup>9</sup> A passage in the Pali Nikāyas mention *ummattikā khittacittā* with reference to a woman who went mad and lost her mind, owing to her mother’s death (M II.108-109). The Buddha compares *khitta-citta* with a fluttering fish that is drawn from its watery abode and thrown upon the land (*vārijo va thale khitto okamokata ubbhato, pariphadat’idam cittam māradhheyam pahātave*) (Dhp. v.34; Ud v.31.2). The Pali Nikāyas also mention two compounds ‘*vikkhitta-citta*’ and ‘*byāpanna-citta*’ with reference to mental disturbance. The Pali-English Dictionary defines ‘*vikkhitta-citta*’ as “upset, perplexed, mentally upset, and confused mind” and ‘*byāpanna-citta*’ is defined as “malevolent intention or corrupted mind” (Rhys Davids & Stede, Eds. 1118, 1375, 1469). The Pali Nikāyas mention distracted mind (*vikkhitta-citta*) mostly with regard to mindfulness

<sup>7</sup> *Dukkhassa dukkaṭho veditabbo, domanassassa dukkaṭho veditabbo ti ettha pana ubhayam p’etam sayañ ca dukkhattā kāyikacetasikadukkhānañ ca vatthu-bhāvena dukkhan ti vuttam* (VibhA 105).

<sup>8</sup> *Pileti kāyikam idam, dukkham dukkhañ ca mānassam bhiyyo janayati yasmā tasmā, dukkhan ti visesato vuttan ti* (VibhA 105).

<sup>9</sup> This is with reference to the individual who fails to balance their psycho-physical personality. They develop the body, but not the mind, or they develop the mind, but not the body.

meditation (See M I.59; D II.300) and ‘*byāpanna-citta*’ with reference to the monks who experience a state of unhealthy fear and terror, as an impact of a corrupted mind, bad thinking, and defiled intention (*byāpannacitta paduṭṭhamana saṅkappasandosahetu*) (M I.18).

Now we will look at abnormal behaviour that appears most in the Buddhist stories. An analysis of Buddhist stories shows a clear picture of different types of abnormally or mentally sick persons. The famous examples of psychopaths<sup>10</sup> of violent type are Devadatta, Ajātasattu and Āngulimāla; and Paṭācāra and Kisāgotamī are the example of psychoses<sup>11</sup>. In the Jātaka stories, we find different types of abnormal behaviour. Harischnadra notes “the Bodhisatta, is told that in this world there are eight categories of “*ummada*” meaning psychiatric disorders, namely: sexual dysfunction (*kama-ummadaya*), mania (*krodha-ummadaya*), hallucination (*darshana-ummadaya*), mental retardation (*moha-ummadaya*), possession disorder (*yaksha-ummadaya*), melancholia (*pitta-ummadaya*), alcohol dependence (*sura-ummadaya*), and depression (*vyasana-ummadaya*)” (Harischnadra 1998, 65-66). The Jātaka stories also mention of pretended madness. For example, Sujāta faked madness in order to relieve his father’s grief over the death of his grandfather (See Ja III.352).

In the Buddhist Jātakas stories, many cases of abnormal behaviour are said to be caused by sensual desires (*kāmatañhā*). For example, the Asātamanta Jātaka (Ja I.61) tells how a blind and aged woman fell in love with a pupil of her son and planned to kill her own son in order to have unhindered sex. Furthermore, Kaṇavera Jātaka (Ja I.318), Darīmukha Jātaka (Ja I.378), Kunāla Jātaka (Ja II.536) and some other Jātakas indicate various psychiatric disorders which are caused by sexual madness. In the Milindapañha, Bhikkhu Nāgasena illustrates a hermit’s madness at the sight of the princess Caṇḍāvati and gives a clear explanation of insanity.

Just, O king, as a madman, when out of his senses will step into a fiery furnace and take hold of an infuriated venomous snake, and go up to a rogue elephant, and plunge forward into great waters, the further shore of which he cannot see and trample through dirty pools and muddy places, and rush into thorny brakes and fall down precipices, and feed himself on filth, and go naked through the streets, and do many other improper things (Miln II.16ff.).

This passage shows some of the characteristics of a mad person. In the Milindapañha, Bhikkhu Nāgasena explains to the King Milinda that the cause of abnormal behaviour is due to circumstances – ‘at the very sight Caṇḍāvati, the princess, the hermit went out of his mind and lost command of himself through love’ (Miln II.16ff.).<sup>12</sup> Thus according to the Pali sources, some persons would suffer from a *mental illness* and physical illness due to the *unusual or excessive sexual desires*.

Buddhist psychology considers physical pain (*kāyika dukkha*) and mental pain (*cetasika dukkha*) as illness (or disease) (*roga*): disease of the body (*kāyika roga*) and disease of the mind (*cetasika roga*). With regard to disease, in the *Rogasutta* of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha says:

Monks, there are two kinds of disease. What are the two? Disease of the body and disease of the mind. Monks, there are to be seen beings who can claim to be physically healthy (free from bodily disease) for a year...two years...three years...four years...five years...

<sup>10</sup> Psychopath is a person who has a serious mental illness that may cause him/her to hurt or kill other people.

<sup>11</sup> Psychosis is a serious but treatable mental illness that affects one’s whole personality, generally including ‘loss of contact with reality,’ ‘false beliefs about what is taking place’ and ‘seeing or hearing things that aren’t real (hallucinations).’

<sup>12</sup> Here it is not an exact madness, but a deviant or an abnormal behaviour of the hermit and such mental disturbance was caused by the beauty of the princess.

ten years ... twenty years...thirty years ... forty years and fifty years ... who can claim to be healthy for a hundred years. But monks, hard to find are those beings who can claim to be mentally healthy for even a moment except for those [Arahats] whose mental cankers are destroyed (*A IV.157*).<sup>13</sup>

According to this passage, we can say that only the Buddha and the Arahant (the Enlightened One) has a perfectly healthy mind, as they have destroyed all fetters. Besides the Buddha and the Arahant, as worldlings<sup>14</sup> we are all afflicted with mental pain.

The *Girimāandasutta* of the Āṅguttara Nikāya (A V.108) gives a list of forty-eight types of diseases: eye-disease (*cakkhu-rogo*), ear-disease (*sota-rogo*), nose-disease (*ghāṇa-rogo*), tongue disease (*jivhā-rogo*), body-disease (*kāya-rogo*), head-disease or headache (*sīsa-rogo*), ear disease (or mumps) (*kaṇṇa-rogo*), mouth-disease (*mukha-rogo*), teeth-disease (or tooth-ache) (*danta-rogo*), coughs (*kāso*), asthma (*sāso*), colds (*pināso*), burning sensation (of body or heart) (*dāha*), fever (*jaro*), abdominal disease (or stomach-ache) (*kucchi-rogo*), fainting (*mucchā*), bloody-flux (or dysentery) (*pakkhandikā*), piercing pain (or gripes) (*sūlā*), cholera (*visūcikā*), leprosy (*kuṭṭham*), boils (*gaṇḍo*), dry pustules (or plague) (*kilāso*), Phthisis (*soso*), epilepsy (*apamāro*), herpes (*daddu*), itching (*kaṇḍū*), ringworm (*kacchu*), small-pox (*rakhasa*), scabies (*vitacchikā*), blood-bile (or pustule) (*lohitā-pittam*), diabetes (*madhumeho*), piles (*amṣā*), cancer (*piṭakā*), ulcer (or fistula) (*bhagandalā*); and afflictions due to bile (*pitta-samuṭṭhānā ābādhā*), due to phlegm (*semha-samuṭṭhānā ābādhā*), due to wind (*vāta-samuṭṭhānā ābādhā*), consisting in conflict of the humors (*sannipātikā ābādhā*), produced by change of climate (*utu-parināmajā ābādhā*), by unaccustomed activity (or careless behavior) (*visama-parihārajā ābādhā*), by violence or assault (*opakkamikā*), by ripeness of one's *kamma* (*kamma-vipākajā ābādhā*); and cold (*sūtam*), heat (*uṇham*), hunger (*jigacchā*), thirst (*pipāsā*), excrement (*uccāro*), and urine (*passāvo*). These forty-eight types of diseases are described in the *Girimāandasutta* according to location, type, cause and nature of diseases (See A V.108).

## The Causes of Diseases

In the Pali Nikāyas, diseases (*rogas*) are considered to be caused by bile, phlegm, wind, bodily humors, and changes of climate, careless behaviour, assault, and *kamma* (A V.108). Here, I will briefly discuss the last four causes of diseases.

1. A change of climate (*utu-parināmajā ābādhā*): It refers to the alteration in a previously supporting climate or environment. It may also refer to the unhealthy environmental that could aggravate disease i.e., unhealthy and dangerous working or living condition, socio-economic factors, etc.
2. Careless behaviour (*visama-parihārajā ābādhā*): It means when a person fails to care his own mind-and-body and ignores his mental-and-physical well-being. As a result,

<sup>13</sup> *Dve'me bhikkhave rogā. Katame dve. Kāyiko ca rogo cetasiko ca rogo. Dissanti bhikkhave sattā kāyikena rogena ekam pi vassam ārogyam patijānamānā, dve pi vassāni ārogyam patijānamānā, tīṇī pi ... cttāri pi ... pañca pi ... dasa pi ... vīsatim pi ... tiṁsam pi ... catūrīsam pi ... paññāsam pi vassāni ārogyam patijānamānā, vassasatam pi ārogyam patijānamānā. Te bhikkhave sattā dullabhā lokasmīm ye cetasikena rogena muhuttam pi ārogyam patijānanti aññatra khīṇāsavehi (A IV.157).*

<sup>14</sup> ‘Worldling’, ordinary man, is any layman or monk who is still possessed of all the ten fetters binding them to the round of rebirths and therefore has not yet reached any of the eight stages of holiness.

his health can get worse and he may become vulnerable to disease. Some of the careless behaviours are: lack of proper nutrition, lack of physical exercise, alcohol and drug abuse, grief, anger, etc.

3. Violence or assault (*opakkamikā*): Violence or assault includes punishment, animal bites, assault by the enemies or robbers, self inflicted injury, accident, etc.
4. Ripeness of one's karma (*kamma-vipākajā ābādhā*): The karmic effect of disease and health are spelled out in the *Culakammavibhaṅgasutta* (the shorter discourse of action) of the Majjhima Nikāya. According to this *sutta*, one who caused injuries or pain to beings in the present life, then wherever he is reborn he is sickly, subject to diseases – as a result of such bad karma (See M III.203). A solid example is Cunda, the pork butcher. In his whole life he slaughtered many animals. Due to this bad karma he became mad, crawled in his house for seven days, grunting and squealing like a pig and finally died (See Dhp v.15).

### **Three Root Causes: Greed, Hatred, and Delusion**

Buddhism explains that everything in this world, including pain of human beings, takes place in accordance with causal law. The origin of everything is dependent, conditional and relative. Buddhist psychology describes three “root causes” – greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) – that give rise to pain. For example, the Majjhima Nikāya states: “Greed (*lobha*) is a root of the unwholesome; hated (*dosa*) is the root of the unwholesome; delusion (*moha*) is the root of the unwholesome. This is called the root of the unwholesome” (M I.47).<sup>15</sup>

1. Greed (*lobha*): It is what is greedy (*lubbhatī ti lobho*). It has the characteristic of sticking to the object or wanting an object (Abhidh-s-t 83). According to the Buddhist psychology, the first unwholesome root, greed (*lobha*), covers all levels of desire or thirst (*tañhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*). It overlaps the inclination for sensual lust (*kāmarāga*) and attachment to existence (*bhavarāga*). The related wholesome basic tendency is non-greed (*alobha*).
2. Hatred (*dosa*): It is what does harm (*dussatī ti doso*). It has the characteristic of anger like a poisonous snake when struck (Abhidh-s-t 83). It covers aversion (*paṭigha*) and ill-will (*vyāpāda*); and always accompanied by mental painful feeling (*domanassa vedanā*). It also includes a variety of negative emotions namely, denying, grudging, disappointment, dejection, anxiety, despair, etc. The root of hatred is likening to latent tendency of aversion (*patighānusaya*) which is the basis for craving for non-existence (*vibhava-tañhā*). The related wholesome basic tendency is non-hatred (*adosa*).
3. Delusion (*moha*): It is that which is deluded about the objects; it is misunderstanding (*ārammaṇe tuyhatī ti moho, aññānam*). It has the characteristic of concealing the nature of the object, for although occurring by way of taking hold of the object (Abhidh-s-t 82). It covers the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*), blindness to certain facets of reality, such as the three characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*), pain (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*). At the cognitive level, it accesses our perceptions, thoughts, and views. The related wholesome basic tendency is non-delusion (*amoha*).

<sup>15</sup> *Katamañ c' āvuso akusalamūlam: Lobho akusalamūlam, doso akusalamūlam, moho akusalamūlam. Idam vuccat' āvuso akusalamūlam* (M I.47).

These three roots are said to be clouded our perception and lead to unhealthy mentalities. From these three roots arise states of pain, unhappiness, aversion, anger, doubt, upset, etc. It is our own reinforcement of those negative emotions that makes them so much worse.

## Buddhist Path to Overcoming Physical and Mental Pain

In Buddhism, freedom from physical and mental pain is described in eight elements known as the Noble Eightfold Path namely, Right Understanding, Right Purpose, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. This Path consists of the practice of morality (*sīla*), the practice of concentration (*samādhi*), and the development of wisdom (*paññā*). The moral aspects of the Eightfold Path, consists of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood represents the ethical foundation of the Buddhist path. Here, the word “right” concerns taking responsibility for one’s speech, actions, livelihood and mental attitudes so that one gains a sense of inner happiness.

As long as physical and mental pain is considered, we can use Buddhist ethical teaching as a primary approach to mental healing. Some of these ethical teaching include controlling of unwanted thoughts by distraction, training in social skill, observing precept, offering gifts, etc. Ethical guidelines, which have to do with the person’s interactions with other beings, help the person to avoid actions that lead to mental pain i.e., guilt, shame, remorse and other unpleasant mental states.

In the context of ethics, the Buddha counsels people to reflect on the consequences of their actions before proceeding and to abstain from unwholesome actions that are not conducive to happiness for one’s self and others (M I.55). In Buddhism, there are two terms related to ethical arguments: wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*). These two terms can be called action (*kamma*). *Kamma* as “action” is defined by the word *cetanā*: “Bhikkhus, volition (*cetanā*), I say, is *kamma*. Having willed, we create *kamma*, through body, speech, and mind” (A III.415).<sup>16</sup> Buddhism points out that one must be careful in carrying out one’s action. According to Buddhism, there are ten unwholesome actions (*dasa-kusala-kamma*) and ten wholesome actions (*dasa-akusala-kamma*). The ten unwholesome actions are: killing living beings (*pānātipātā*), taking what is not given (*adinnādānā*), sensual misconduct (*kamesumicchācārā*), lying speech (*musāvādā*), divisive speech (*pisunavācā*), harsh speech (*pharusavācā*), idle speech (*samphappalāpa*), covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), and holding wrong view (*micchādīthi*). Briefly put, the ten wholesome actions are the opposite of the ten unwholesome actions. Such actions are called unwholesome as they yielding pain, ripening in pain. Thus, freedom from physical and mental *pain* consists primarily of progressive stages of mental culture culminating in the attainment of emancipation of the mind from all unwholesome states that defile it and produce unending misery for the person.

Furthermore, it is believed that that various types of disease can be cured or minimised through the seven factors of awakening (*satta-bojjhaṅgas*): mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of the dharma (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), joy (*pūti*), calm or tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) (S V.63-64). For example, the Buddha states, “Kassapa, these seven awakening factors are well expounded by me, cultivated and much developed by me and when cultivated and much developed, they conduce to full realization, to wisdom, to *Nibbāna*” (S V.79).

<sup>16</sup> *Cetanaham bhikkhave kammam vadāmi; cetayitvā kammam karoti kāyena vācāya manasā* (A III.415).

Receiving and accepting the full teaching of the seven factors of enlightenment Kassapa there and then recovered from that sickness. He regained his physical and mental health. Therefore, these seven factors of enlightenment can also be used to heal physical and mental pain.

Apart from these seven awakening factors, loving-kindness (*mettā*) meditation is helpful in reducing pain i.e., negative emotions and feelings such as anger, jealousy and hatred and to strengthen positive relationships and self-esteem in people. It also gives security mentally and physically to a person to minimize his pain. In addition to loving-kindness (*mettā*), there are three other wholesome mental qualities namely, compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The Buddha describes these four wholesome mental qualities as the four sublime states (*brahma-vihāra*) and immeasurable minds (*appamāṇa*). They are fundamental functions in developing all the other types of wholesome qualities, such as generosity and honesty. Therefore, these four minds can be practiced by people inflicted with physical and mental pain.

## Mindfulness and the Therapeutic Relationship

The Pali term for ‘mindfulness’ is ‘*sati*’, which is related to the verb ‘*sarati*’, to remember. Etymologically ‘*sati*’ is derived from the Sanskrit ‘*smṛti*’, which means memory, recognition, mindfulness, alertness, remembrance, attentiveness etc. (See Sumanacara 2010, for discussion).

Mindfulness has been described for psychotherapy includes being aware, intentionally, being acceptance and compassion in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises is acknowledged and accepted as it is. It is a paying attention to the arising and disappearing of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions within all human beings. Thich Nhat Hanh, a meditation guru and peacemaker, describes the essence of mindfulness in a radio interview:

Mindfulness is a part of living. When you are mindful, you are fully alive, you are fully present. You can get in touch with the wonders of life that can nourish you and heal you. And you are stronger; you are more solid in order to handle the suffering inside you and around you. When you are mindful, you can recognize, embrace and handle the pain, the sorrow in you and around you to bring you relief. And if you continue with concentration and insight, you’ll be able to transfer the suffering inside and help transform the suffering around you.<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere Thich Nhat Hanh defines mindfulness as “remembering to come back to the present moment” (Hanh 1998, 59). Nyanaponika Thera describes mindfulness as “the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception” (Nyanaponika Thera 1972, 5). Jon Kabat-Zinn, a founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical school, emphasizes the present moment awareness and the nonjudgemental aspect of mindfulness: “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 145). It is present moment awareness because with mindfulness one reflects only what is presently happening and in exactly the way it is happening. Larry Rosenberg (1998, 15), a meditation trainer, compares mindfulness to a mirror simply reflecting what is there. Thus, Mindfulness is about cultivating, sustaining, and integrating a way of paying attention to

<sup>17</sup> Retrieved from <http://being.publicradio.org/programs/thichnhathanh/transcript.shtml>.

the ebb and flow of emotions, thoughts, and perceptions within all human beings. The qualities of Mindfulness are:

1. *Present-centered*: Mindfulness is always in the present moment. It engages continually observing the objects of meditation, moment-by-moment.
2. *Choice less awareness*: Mindfulness is a choice less conscious effort as meditation object at the present moment can be one any one of these four: body, feelings, thoughts, and mental objects.
3. *Nonjudgemental*: Mindfulness is paying attention nonjudgmentally to what goes on in the present moment – in our body and mind, and our surroundings. When one is mindful, the attention is focused on the present so judgment cannot be placed.
4. *Acceptance*: From the mindfulness perspective, acceptance refers to welcoming every feelings or experiences as they arise – without regarding the pleasant or unpleasant qualities of the object.
5. *Letting go*: Mindfulness is letting go – the natural consequence of a willingness to accept things as they are, as they appear to be.
6. *Clear comprehension*: Mindfulness is seeing the object of meditation thoroughly and all its aspects.
7. *Investigative*: Mindfulness awareness is always investigating subtler levels of feeling and perception.
8. *Liberating*: Mindfulness is liberating as every moment of mindful awareness provides insights and freedom from the causes of pain.

These qualities can be found in most discussion of mindfulness in both the psychotherapy and the Buddhist literature. They occur simultaneously in each moment of mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation includes mindfulness of body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), consciousness (*citta*), and mental objects (*dhamma*). However, traditionally it is often stated with concentration on the breath (*ānāpānasati*).

Mindfulness-based interventions suggest that the therapists who teach the meditation should practice mindfulness themselves. Mindfulness helps to a therapist's skill to accomplish a sense of the client's inner understanding; communicate awareness of that felt sense; and give words to their feelings and sensations. In a mindfulness condition, therapists are better able to observe thoughts, feelings, and sensations without emotion and attachment. This calm state of self-experience may enable therapists to react to situations more deliberately. In addition, therapist manners should be characterised by kindness, acceptance, support, and genuineness. Thomas Bien notes that "Mindful therapy is therapy in which the therapist produces true presence and deep listening. It is not technique drive" (2006, 217). This shows the role of mindfulness in cultivating presence and listening within the client-therapist relationship.

*For the most effective treatment*, cultivating an awareness of and a compassionate response to the suffering of others is central to the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. He notes: "When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, we can see and listen deeply, and the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy" (Hanh 1995, 14).

Active listening is another important tool for effective therapy as listening voice is the primary form of care. Thus, within the client-therapist relationship, mindfulness is a way of paying attention with compassion, attendance, and attentive listening that can be developed, maintained, and integrated into our work as therapists during the ongoing discipline of meditation practice.

## Conclusion

The aim of Buddhism is to end the pain of the human beings. Buddhism teaches that mind should be purified in order to get rid of pain. In this paper, we have analysed the concept of physical and mental pain according to the Pali Nikāyas. We have highlighted how three evil roots (greed, hatred, and delusion) cause disturbances on physical and mental life. We have suggested that Buddhist ethical teachings and mindfulness meditation can be helpful to overcome mental and physical pain.

Mindfulness lies at the heart of Buddhist psychology. We have highlighted that mindfulness is a comprehensive approach that promotes wholesome mental states in an individual's life, and helps one to overcome physical and mental pain. Though we have described mindfulness by using a number of terms, the experience of mindfulness cannot be captured in words. Hence it cannot be precisely described using words or language. Most of all, mindfulness actually must be experienced to be understood.

In conclusion, freedom from pain is the result of following the spiritual path, practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, living a virtuous and ethical life, developing the four immeasurable minds (*brahmavihāra*) and mindfulness. Each of these trainings and practices help us to know and let go of unwholesome roots from the mind. The pain ceases when one has eradicated all defilements (*kilesas*) by means of the three trainings: ethical behaviour (*sīla*), concentration (*saṃādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

## Abbreviations:

A	Ānguttara Nikāya
Abhidh-s	Abhidhammatthasangaha
Abhidh-s-ṭ	Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-ṭīkā
Dhp	Dhammapada
D	Dīgha Nikāya
Ja	Jātaka
M	Majjhimanikāya
Miln	Milindapañha
S	Samyutta Nikāya
VibhA	Vibhaṅga Aṭṭhakathā (Sammohavinodanī)

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# **Mental Illness according to Theravada Buddhism**

## **Towards a Theory of Mental Illness Based upon the Buddha's Teachings**



*Bhikkhu Nandisena<sup>1</sup>*

### **Introduction:**

An important contribution of Buddhism to the science of mental health and its treatment of mental illness would be to provide a “theory” that accurately describes reality. Considering that according to one recent report<sup>2</sup> by the World Health Organization (WHO), within the next 20 years more people will be suffering from depression than any other health problem, the matter of understanding what really is mental illness is of the utmost importance if we are to find a successful treatment.

### **Meaning of Illness**

In the Pali Canon there are various words<sup>3</sup> used to describe what in English is called “illness,” “disease,” “sickness.”

Among these, the most commonly used words are roga, byādhi and ābādha. Since there is a discourse where the Buddha utilizes the word roga to describe different kinds of illness, and considering that all these terms, according to the ancient Pali grammarians,<sup>4</sup> are synonyms, for the purpose of this paper I take this word as a representative of the Pali language to describe what in English is called “illness,” “disease,” “sickness.”

The word roga, which is derived from a root that has the meaning of breaking up and dissolution,<sup>5</sup> is explained as that which afflicts either the major or minor constituents of the body.<sup>6</sup> From what has been said it is clear that the meaning of illness in Theravada Buddhism is primarily related to what we call “physical illness.” To further strengthen this argument it is worth to note that the word roga seems to be closely related to rūpa, form, matter, since the characteristic of matter is the apparent change and oppression.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bhikkhu Nandisena is the Abbot of the Dhamma Vihara, Mexico, and Spiritual Director of Buddhismo Theravada México AR. More information about him can be found in this link: [https://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=ah7ht8cdqj64\\_135mm7cqc&hl=en](https://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=ah7ht8cdqj64_135mm7cqc&hl=en).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8230549.stm>.

<sup>3</sup> The following seven words are canonical: roga (D. i 10), ābādha (D. ii 84), ātañka (Sn. 427), byādhi (D. ii 245), gelaññā (D. ii 84), ruja (Ap. ii 138), akalla (T. ii 428). Also found in the Pali literature are amaya, gada; see (Sad. ii 11). A list of the abbreviations used for the references is provided at the end.

<sup>4</sup> See Sad. ii 11.

<sup>5</sup> The root is ruja which is glossed as bhañga. See Sad. ii 48.

<sup>6</sup> Rogo ti rujati bhañjati aṅgapaccaṅgānī ti rogo. Sad. ii 48.

<sup>7</sup> According to Sad. ii 234, the root rūpa has the meanings of “changing,” “striking,” and “oppressing.”

## Two Kinds of Illness

Although the meaning of illness is primarily associated with the physical body, there is evidence in the Pali Canon that the Buddha clearly distinguished two kinds of illness: physical illness (*kāyiko rogo*) and mental illness (*cetasiko rogo*).<sup>8</sup> While physical illness is classified and attributed to different causes,<sup>9</sup> the Buddha seems to attribute mental illness to just one cause:<sup>10</sup> the manifestation of mental defilements in the mind of beings.<sup>11</sup>

Here it should be mentioned that even though mental illness manifests itself through the mind, this does not exclude the existence of physiological conditions among mental illnesses. But the defining characteristic of a mental illness is, as the Buddha said, the manifestation of mental defilements. How these mental defilements arise in the mind of beings can be traced to different conditions as it will be shown later.

Why two kinds of illness? Because there are only two conditioned ultimate realities,<sup>12</sup> mind and matter.<sup>13</sup> Therefore it is clear that the twofold classification of physical illness and mental illness is directly related to the conditioned ultimate realities rather than to the conventional or consensual reality.<sup>14</sup>

## The Meaning of Mental Illness

In Buddhism the manifestation of mental defilements in the mind of an individual is the basic criterion to determine the existence of mental illness. In the Abhidhamma the mental defilements, which are states that afflict and defile the mind of beings,<sup>15</sup> are globally included in the category of unwholesome states (*akusalā dharmā*).<sup>16</sup> They are called unwholesome because they are (1) mentally unhealthy, (2) morally blameworthy, (3) unskillful, and (4) productive of painful results.<sup>17</sup> Since the unwholesome states always arise depending on other states, they are conditioned,

<sup>8</sup> A i 460, Roga Sutta.

<sup>9</sup> In Nd. i 10, 13-14, 281, there is a list of eight physical diseases according to their causes: (1) caused by bile (*pittasamutthāna*), (2) caused by phlegm (*semhasamutthāna*), (3) caused by wind (*vātasamutthāna*), (4) caused by an imbalance of the humors (*sannipātikā*), (5) caused by the change of weather, seasons (*utupariṇāmaja*), (6) caused by a lack of care of the body (*visamaparihāraja*), (7) external, sudden attack (*opakkamika*) and (8) caused by the result of kamma (*kammavipākaja*).

<sup>10</sup> N.B. In this paper the word “cause” is used to indicate only the relation between mental illness and the arising of mental defilements.

<sup>11</sup> “Bhikkhus, those beings who admit to be freed from mental illness even for a moment are difficult to find in the world, except those who have destroyed the contaminants.” A. i 460.

<sup>12</sup> Paramattha-sacca. See D.A. iii 166. Although in the Abhidhamma literature mind (*nāma*) is considered to be composed of consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*)—both ultimate realities—, since both have the nature of taking an object and are immaterial, for the purpose of this paper they are taken as only one ultimate reality.

<sup>13</sup> D. iii 178, Saṅgīti Sutta. D. iii 228–Dasuttara Sutta. Here it is said that mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) should be completely comprehended, which means that these two dhammas are included in the First Noble Truth, the Noble Truth of Suffering.

<sup>14</sup> There are two kinds of speech used by the Buddha: (1) conventional speech (*sammukitathā*) and ultimate reality speech (*paramatthakathā*). See D.A. i 315. Regarding the term sammuti-sacca see Pañcappakarana-āṭhakathā 187.

<sup>15</sup> The technical term *kilesa* has the meanings of afflicting, obstructing (*bādhana*), tormenting (*upatāpa*), hindering (*vibādhana*), and defiling (*kilissana*). For the first three meanings see Sad. ii 179, 238, 255. For the last meaning see Ps.A. i 292.

<sup>16</sup> Dhs. 1.

<sup>17</sup> See Dhs.A. 80-81. The unwholesome states are the opposite of the wholesome states which are mentally healthy (*ārogya*), morally blameless (*anavajja*), skillful (*cheka*), and productive of happy results (*sukhavipāka*).

and as such they are impermanent.<sup>18</sup> And because they hold their own intrinsic nature, they belong to the domain of ultimate realities.<sup>19</sup>

With the information that has been gathered we can summarize the meaning of mental illness in Buddhism as follows:

- Mental illness is determined by the manifestation of mental defilements
- Mental illness is impermanent
- Mental illness is conditioned
- Mental illness is an ultimate reality

## Differing Interpretations of Mental Illness between Buddhism and Western Science

When attempting to determine the meaning of mental illness or mental disorder<sup>20</sup> according to modern psychology and medical science, we will find a broad spectrum of opinion including, among others, psychological and behavioral patterns which differ from the norm; disruptions in an individual's thinking, feelings, moods; inability to relate to others. We will also find different criteria for classifying mental disorders,<sup>21</sup> and regarding their treatment, options ranging from psychotherapy to psychiatric medication to other methods.

Undoubtedly the merits of each system of treatment should be determined by its ability to cure or improve the mental condition of the patient. But when statistics show that mental disorders are among the most expensive medical conditions,<sup>22</sup> and that within the next 20 years more people will be suffering from depression than any other health problem,<sup>23</sup> the matter of understanding mental illness comes to the forefront if we are to find a successful treatment.

Depression, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV-TR), belongs to the group of "mood disorders" or "affective disorders" because it is characterized by a pervasive low mood. Common symptoms of depression are mental states of sadness, irritability, frustration, feelings of worthlessness, guilt, low self-esteem, hopelessness, despair, as well as insomnia, ruminating thoughts, fatigue, and so on.

From the perspective of Buddhism this approach, based on a group of the symptoms to pinpoint and name a particular mental disorder, while quite efficient at what it does, seems to miss

<sup>18</sup> See Saṅkhatalakkhana Sutta (A. i 150) and Commentary. This applies to all conditioned states, wholesome (kusala), unwholesome (akusala) and indeterminate (abyākata).

<sup>19</sup> In the Dasuttara Sutta (D. iii 229) a term used to describe mind and matter is bhūta, real. The Commentary glosses this term as sabhāvato vijjamāna, (things) existing according to their own intrinsic nature. The Sub-commentary adds that this refers to the ultimate realities. See D.A. iii 241 and D.T. iii 280.

<sup>20</sup> This is the term most commonly used nowadays.

<sup>21</sup> The two main systems of classification are (1) The ICD-10 Chapter V: Mental and behavioural disorders used by the World Health Organization (WHO) and (2) the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) used by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

<sup>22</sup> This is for the USA. The study name is "National Health Spending by Medical Condition, 1996-2005" by Dr. Charles Roehrig of Ann Arbor, Michigan-based Altarum Institute.

<sup>23</sup> According to a recent report by the World Health Organization. See note 2.

the fact that it is dealing with concepts, eternalizing for later treatment something that it is just persistently and recurrently impermanent.<sup>24</sup> That is so because conventional reality is built upon the ultimate reality or as an ancient Buddhist sage said, concepts only exist in the form of shadows of the ultimate realities.<sup>25</sup>

## Conditions, Ultimate Reality and Conventional Reality

While the common symptoms of depression could be identified with unwholesome mental states that are ultimate realities, packaging all of them with the label of depression represents an intellectual leap to grasp something that can be only grasped by taking its individual components. There is no depression apart from its components. And there are no components without conditions.

Now that we have these three realms, (1) the realm of conditions, (2) the realm of the components of a mental disorder, and (3) the realm of the mental disorder itself, it would be important to understand what each of these three realms represents. The last realm, the realm of the mental disorder, is a mere conventional reality, a packaging of concepts pointing to a global name concept such as depression or phobia. The middle realm consists of the components which are the real thing because name concepts such as anxiety or guilt or sadness, if correctly identified, point to the ultimate realities of the mind. The first realm consists of the various conditions that could make these components, the ultimate realities, arise in the mind of a being. These conditions can be material, when, for example, a certain mental disorder is related to a brain tumor or another physical disease, or mental, when views, perceptions and mental attitudes influence the way an individual relates to a certain experience; or both material and mental; or even concepts. Also ethics can be a powerful condition of the mental states that arise in the mind of a being.<sup>26</sup>

## Recognizing the Ultimate Realities

Perhaps one of the biggest stumbling blocks for understanding mental illness is the assumption that the mind is just a function of the brain. This assumption is not only contrary to the insight of the Buddha that mind and matter are two different ultimate realities, but also stands between us and a correct understanding of mental illness.

The assumption that mind and matter, although depending on each other, are equally real<sup>27</sup> on the ultimate sense, qualifies to what Buddhists call “Right View,”<sup>28</sup> the indispensable ingredient or prerequisite to arriving at a correct understanding of reality.

<sup>24</sup> It seems that during the period of dreamless sleep and during many moments of waking consciousness there are no symptoms and, therefore, no mental disorder. However, when the symptoms and the mental disorder are conceptualized, that fact seems to be missed and not taken into account.

<sup>25</sup> See Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha by Anuruddha page 57. The phrase paramatthato avijjamānā pi athacchāyākārena cittuppādānamārammaṇabhūtā, can be literally translated as “although (concepts) do not exist as ultimate realities, they are objects of consciousness as shadows of (ultimate) things.”

<sup>26</sup> There cannot be mental health without ethics. That is why it is said that virtue or ethics (*sīla*) is a precondition of concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). See S. i 13. Here concentration and wisdom should be considered as mental health.

<sup>27</sup> Bhūta. See note 19.

<sup>28</sup> Sammā-diṭṭhi. See D. iii 224.

Without this assumption which recognizes the two ultimate realities of mind and matter, we may err in identifying the components of a mental disorder by what they really are, that is, the cause<sup>29</sup> of the mental disorder, and there also might be confusion between what are conditions and causes of mental disorders. Furthermore, there is the risk of “freezing” a mental disorder as a category of a system of classification that then has alternative methods of treatment according to the school of thought professed by whoever happens to take that case.

## Understanding Mental Illness

Given the fact that depression is on the rise and more common than much-feared physical diseases such as cancer and HIV-AIDS, let us take this mental disorder and explore it using the paradigm that we have set forth so far.

Regarding the symptoms of depression, before we mentioned sadness, irritability, frustration, feelings of worthlessness, guilt, low self-esteem, hopelessness, despair, etc. There may be other symptoms, but from the perspective of Buddhism, the first observation we have to make is that all those symptoms are associated with a particular type of mental feeling (*vedanā*), that is, displeasure or unpleasant feeling.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Abhidhamma, any mental state associated with unpleasant mental feeling is included within the unwholesome root of aversion (dosa). Here it should be mentioned that the term dosa comprises states ranging from mild aversion to rage, including in-between states such as ill will, fear, anxiety, boredom, annoyance, etc. The rule here is to include any mental state associated with unpleasant feeling within this root. The unpleasant mental feeling, unlike the pleasant and neutral feelings, has the peculiarity that it is always unwholesome and it is invariably associated with the root of aversion.<sup>31</sup> Although we are including the different symptoms of depression within the root of aversion, it should be said that they may correspond to other particular unwholesome mental states. However, they all, because of being associated with unpleasant mental feeling, are grouped together with the root of aversion.

This first observation regarding the symptoms of depression can be summed up as follows:

- They are associated with unpleasant mental feeling
- They may be distinct, identifiable unwholesome mental states
- They are all grouped within the mental root of aversion
- They are always unwholesome mental states
- They are ultimate realities of the mind

Why do these symptoms arise? To answer this question we have to move from the middle realm of the components of the mental disorder, to the first realm, the realm of conditions.

<sup>29</sup> See note 10.

<sup>30</sup> Domanassasahagatacittuppādā. See Dhs. 266.

<sup>31</sup> All this is taken from the Canonical Abhidhamma and later literature. Recommended reading A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, Bhikkhu Bodhi-General Editor (BPS 1993, First Edition).

As it was said, there may be various and multiple conditions for these symptoms to arise. Using the categories of Buddhism, the conditions may be grouped as (1) material, (2) mental, (3) both mental and material, and (4) concepts.

Bearing in mind that in the absence of conditions, there are no symptoms, it is clear that a great deal of attention should be paid to identify these conditions. However, in many cases this may not be simple for various reasons. Even when conditions have been identified, the question remains of the degree of certainty of the connection between the conditions and the symptoms. As an assessment is made, it may be possible to catalog the different cases in the categories mentioned. And from there we should proceed to deal with the conditions in order to eliminate or reduce them. In this realm of conditions undoubtedly science has an important role to play because this is a realm of discovery and possibility. Finally, it should be said that even when some of these conditions may be inevitable, they are still just conditions, not fixed, determined causes. This last point will become clearer when we deal with the third observation.

This second observation regarding the conditions of depression can be summarized as follows:

- It may be possible to identify them
- They could be grouped in four categories
- Once identified and grouped they should be removed or reduced
- Science has an important role to play in the realm of conditions
- Even when they may be inevitable, they are never determined causes

The third observation has to do with the nature of the symptoms. In the first observation we mentioned that the symptoms of depression can be related to the ultimate reality of mind, or, to be more specific, to the contents of consciousness. Also we were able to identify that all those symptoms, as many or diverse as they may be, have only one mental feeling associated with them: unpleasant feeling. The unpleasant mental feeling is always associated with unwholesome states rooted in aversion. If this is true, we come to the astonishing discovery that depression, unlike physical illness in general, is an illness of choice.

Let us elaborate briefly on this. The nature of wholesome states is that they belong to our own domain.<sup>32</sup> And regarding the unwholesome states, which define depression, they arise because we choose to have them arise. Therefore, when it comes to wholesome and unwholesome states, there is free will. The exercise of free will is directly related to Right View. Independent of the conditions, it ultimately depends on the individual to have a wholesome or unwholesome state of consciousness. From the Abhidhamma standpoint, what we have called the realm of conditions belongs to the indeterminate states<sup>33</sup> which include the resultant, functional, and matter—they do not belong to the category of present wholesome or unwholesome states.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> It depends on us to have wholesome states.

<sup>33</sup> This is the last member (abyākata dhammā) of the first triplet of the Dhs. The realm of conditions, as it was said, may also include concepts. In theory also past wholesome and unwholesome states can be a condition of present wholesome and unwholesome states, however, it seems that the material and resultant states have greater influence as conditions of mental illness.

<sup>34</sup> These are the first two members of the first triplet of the Dhs.

Since the components of depression only belong to the category of unwholesome states, it could be said that depression is an auto-generated mental disorder. In brief the mechanism of depression could be described as an individual's unskillful reactions to certain adverse conditions in the present moment.

From what has been said, it follows that a treatment for depression would consist of teaching the individual to skillfully relate to the various adverse conditions experienced in the present moment. Of course this does not exclude different treatments to deal with the conditions, but by now it should be clear what is possible in each of the three realms and where the main focus should be.

## Final Considerations

In this paper I have set forth a theory of mental illness based on the material found in the Pali Canon and related literature. This theory takes into account the ultimate realities of mind and matter and also conditionality—concepts have been indispensable for conveying all the interactions.

According to this theory, consciousness is an ever-flowing stream since the moment of conception to the moment of death, and then it would continue in another life. This stream of consciousness is continuously changing according to the type of consciousness we experience through the six sense-doors,<sup>35</sup> and also depending on the mental states associated with these door-consciousness. As the Buddha said, we are mentally ill only when defilements associate with the stream of consciousness. Mental defilements are not an intrinsic part of the stream of consciousness but rather are considered “guests.”<sup>36</sup>

Under the heading “Understanding Mental Illness” we applied this theory to explore one mental disorder, namely, depression. The same method could be equally used to study other mental disorders belonging to the group of mood disorders. Regarding psychotic disorders and other severe delusional disorders, though the theory should still hold true, the weight of the equation seems to move so much to the realm of conditions, that the probability of a successful treatment should be radically diminished.

We mentioned that one of the biggest obstacles for understanding mental illness was the assumption that the mind is a function of the brain. Taking into account that equating the mind with the brain is a mainstream scientific position—a position rejected by the Buddha as a wrong view—it becomes clear that this view has a much larger and encompassing influence, touching even the field of ethics. Therefore, when discussing Buddhism and Science, the ontological assumptions of science should be contrasted with what Buddhists call Right View, not just for the purpose of comparing them, but also to try to open new windows to the understanding of reality.

<sup>35</sup> And doorless-consciousness (dvāra-vimutta-citta). See Sīlakkhandhavagga-abhinavaṭīkā ii 108.

<sup>36</sup> In Dh.A. i 15, the term used is āgantuka, guests, because they associate sporadically with different types of consciousness.

## Abbreviations of References

D. i	Dīgha Nikāya-Volume I-Sīlakkhandhavagga
D. iii	Dīgha Nikāya-Volume III-Pāthikavagga
S. i	Saṃyutta Nikāya I-Sagāthāvaggasāṃyutta-pāli
S. iii	Saṃyutta Nikāya III-Mahāvaggasāṃyutta-pāli
A. i	Anguttara Nikāya I-Ekaka-duka-tika-catukka-nipāta-pāli
Sn.	Suttanipāta-pāli
T. ii	Therīgāthā-pāli
Ap. ii	Apadāna-pāli II
Nd. i	Mahāniddesa-pāli
Dhs.	Dhammasaṅgaṇī-pāli
D.A. iii	Commentary of the Dīgha Nikāya-Pāthikavagga-aṭṭhakathā
Dh.A.	Commentary of the Dhammapada
Dhs.A.	Commentary of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī-Aṭṭhasālinī
Ps.A.	Commentary of the Paṭisambhidāmagga
D.T. iii 280	Subcommentary of the Dīgha Nikāya-Pāthikavagga-aṭṭhakathā
Sad. ii	Saddanīti Dhātumālā by Aggavamśa

All references provided refer to the Sixth Buddhist Council Edition.

# **Karuna-Ahimsa-and Relational Aesthetics: Empathic Art Interventions for Contemplative Approaches to Psychotherapy**



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## **Introduction**

Compassion or Karuna, emerges out of empathic awareness for human suffering. Attuned communication of this awareness is perhaps the most effective tool available to the psychotherapist treating psychological injuries. Additionally, humanistic wisdom or Prajna naturally results from our compassionate sensitivity to the anguish of others. Therefore empathic perception along with compassionate understanding and action are primary tools for repairing relational/emotional wounding. Empathy, a noun, is about feeling into the world of others and gathering information about their internal life. In the adjective form, well-timed empathic responses take this attuned awareness further by directly communicating our perceptive caring.

Behind all therapeutic interventions, including empathy, is the ethical value of ahimsa; to do no harm. Mistakes, which are to be expected in any relational process, happen. When they do, they are useful opportunities to create humanistic authenticity and further the therapeutic alliance by skillfully processing accompanying transference. A therapist can make an honest mistake without the intent to do harm, be perceived by the client as causing harm, and remain fully present with what emerges and process it through with the client. Simply stated, empathy is a tool for interpersonal access and action while ahimsa and compassion are the moral and ethical ground of universal interconnection.

Verbal consolidation of core emotional material is the usual method of communicating compassionate understanding within the therapeutic relationship. We receive the client's painful or disjointed narrative, synthesize and reconsolidate its dimensional content, and paraphrase back our perceptive grasp of their inner life. We try to direct these comments towards the "emotional center" of the clients presenting problems (Sobol & Williams, 2001). Additionally, there are non-verbal ways to accomplish the same intention and with significant results (Franklin, 2010). This paper addresses the exchange process of relational aesthetics and the use of empathic art interventions to awaken the humanistic wisdom of prajna and the compassion of karuna within the therapeutic relationship.

## **Becoming a Good Student of Oneself**

Concerning the cultivation of wisdom and compassion, first it is important to become a good student of oneself in order to self examine the layered complexities of our personal blind-spots stimulated by encounters with our clients (Franklin, 1999). Multifaceted clinical material can be

mindfully untangled through a *post-session* response art practice (Fish, 2008; Moon, 1999). In responsive art making, therapists intentionally create post-session paintings, sculptures, or videos to study their countertransference reactions. This art-based self-awareness practice, is less about analyzing and more about feeling into the ambiguity of actual clinical and autobiographical experience belonging to the client and the therapist. Using art this way exponentially accelerates the process of cultivating clinical insight. By surfacing and decoding unconscious material through art, we establish a methodology necessary for best practices in psychotherapy. We literally excavate hidden and obvious content, distill it in artworks, and explore the emerging narratives through the response art process. Once this imagery is fixed within the format of a painting, sculpture, or film, symbolically rich material becomes readily available for decoding interpersonally rich subject matter.

Additionally, the use of *in-session* art to directly communicate empathic understanding and ease suffering will be addressed (Franklin, 2010). Essentially, accurately crafted empathic visual paraphrases, in unison with verbal summaries of meta communications related to body-speech-mind material, soothe the emotional center of the clients presenting concerns. Wisdom and compassion resulting from response art and empathic art interventions lay important tracks for practicing the spiritual dimensions of contemplative art-psychotherapy.

Moreover, response art cultivates qualities of presence by raising awareness for the distracting triggers of countertransference. These triggers can be activated by various circumstances. For example the ambiguity of complicated case material, a lack of understanding for complex unfamiliar symptoms, or inadequate cultural awareness can leave the therapist feeling unsure about how to continue. And yet, we attempt to stay present with what emerges, check to see if we are practicing outside of our area of knowledge, and with supervision, proceed.

Ambiguity is inevitable; how we respond to uncertainty is key. Under these circumstances, presence, which is our goal, refers to subtle qualities of accessibility, availability, and attendance. These intrinsically present yet outwardly understated traits are informed by the four divine states, or abodes. They are: loving kindness/*metta*, compassion/*karuna*, joy/*mudita*, and equipoise/*upekkha*. Also known as the four immeasurables, contemplatively oriented psychotherapists cultivate and internalize these awakened qualities of heart and mind. We strive to bring the loving kindness of ahimsa to our work, cultivate upekkha through practices like response art, and develop karuna through unconditional presence and empathic art responses.

The four immeasurables are also held as hopeful outcomes for our clients. We want our clients to discover their own version of personal happiness, to be free of their suffering, to rejoice in the happiness of others, and to see themselves and others with equanimity. With an attentive ear and eye, we listen and look for hints of each abode in their body, speech, mind, and artwork presentations. Since art concretizes experience, there is a tangible record of the emerging divine abode (s). Seeing is the start of believing. An artwork that is about internalized feelings of aggressive self-deprecation can surface and make tangible the rejected pain behind the anger. The client can now see, touch, and hold their own self-aggression and begin to approach the work with gentleness for him/herself and the image. It is important to point out that tangible images have a life-like presence of their own. Each image, whether it comes from our dreams or our artwork, will beckon our attention. Such a moment of tenderly relating to a charged image can be the beginning of our clients discovering self-compassion, inner friendship, and the soft interior space of equipoise.

## Ahimsa, Empathy, and Relational Aesthetics

Ahimsa, a foundational tenet of spiritual practice (Feuerstein, 2003) and the core of relational aesthetics addressed in this paper, focuses on interconnection, non-violence in words and actions, and loving respect for all forms of life. It is an ethical value that is expressed daily in spiritual and aesthetic practices.

Ahimsa is more about the principles of relational continuities than a singular fixed point of view. Similarly, art too emerges out of the continuities of daily life. In this sense art is less about perfected representational imagery and more about relational attunement to the entire phenomenological field of life. To open-mindedly see and respond to the myriad forms of the world, from the picturesque to the unpleasant, is to awaken to all versions of the visual field as systemic truth (Sewell, 1995). Similarly, ahimsa is the ethical core of the therapeutic alliance between patient and therapist. We attempt to see the entire person before us through a receptive lens of attunement (Schore & Schore, 2008). That is, to do no harm is at the heart of any healthcare profession, especially psychotherapy.

Ahimsa, compassion, and empathy have long roots in the arts. Art, as a form of sublimation, supports the artistic forming of chaotic impulses and actions (Kramer, 1979, Knafos, 2002). It is better to create art about aggressive impulses than to act those impulses out and do tangible harm. Kramer suggests that society becomes more civilized when unchecked impulses are channeled into visual equivalents for base urges. Therefore, it would seem that artistic sublimation is one way to enhance the ethics of ahimsa and lessen damaging karmic exposure. Rather than perpetrate direct harm, the art communicates the transformation of these harmful impulses into symbolic counterparts for those energies (Kramer, 1979).

However, it is important to acknowledge that even though overt aggressive behavior has been temporarily avoided, influential negative thoughts can still exist. Nonetheless, “as the authors of our own destiny” we need help discovering judicious ways to handle our actions resulting from our personal freedoms (Shantideva, 1997, p.6). Towards this end, sublimation through art is a helpful tool. As a final point, society and the individual benefit from this form of rechanneled mollified aggression. Since the replication of the original behavior has been artistically contained, rehearsed and rehearsed in additional artworks, extinction of the initial behavior becomes an eventual possibility.

Concerning empathy and the arts, the goal of Greek theater was to present stories of suffering on stage so that the audience could awaken the faculty of inner empathy (Armstrong, 2010). Similarly, in rasa theory viewers practice accessing transcendent states through sympathetic receptivity to the gamut of human emotions (Schwartz, 2004). In the late 19th and early 20th century in Europe and the US, Robert Vischer, Theodore Lipps, Edward Tichener, and Vernon Lee were formulating ideas on art, sympathy, and empathy (Jahoda, 2005). According to Jahoda, each respectively researched how empathy is an instinctual, intersubjective, and imaginal practice of aesthetic *einfühlung*, which at a sensory level means to feel into the world of another. From this perspective, a relational view of aesthetics becomes possible.

## Sentience and Relational Aesthetics

Psychotherapy and aesthetic attunement is predicated on relational and sensory responsiveness. This form of receptivity, or vicarious introspection pioneered by Kohut's Self Psychology, is why empathy is curative (Elson, 1987). Accurately imagining and responding to the inner world of another while recognizing their brilliant sanity sets a powerful restorative process in motion (Wegela, 2010). Acknowledging basic goodness in unison with whatever our clients need to bring up affirms that they are accurately witnessed, heard, and validated. But how can we cultivate this form of awareness? How can art help to train empathic seeing and connection?

Attuned vicarious perception applied in psychotherapy is also related to aesthetic perception. In therapy, and in art, our practice is to see and respond to the interconnected world with compassionate awareness. Consequently, there is an aesthetic component to the therapeutic relationship in terms of our sensory awareness of human interconnection. Others have addressed the meaning of a relational aesthetic.

According to Nicolas Bourriaud (Ross, 2006), relational aesthetics views artwork through multiple lenses of concurrent interconnected relationships. Relational art removes the artist as expert and imbues creators and viewers with similar status. Likewise, a contemplative and humanistic view of psychotherapy attempts to remove the hierarchy between client and therapist. Art that emerges out of social interactions or therapy sessions, alive within the interstices of culture and communities, is at the heart this view of artistic work.

This approach to art is in opposition to over prizing objects as commodities destined for museums and galleries. Within this perspective, the production and consumption of art departs from the archetypal view of the privileged public as the primary consumers of art as well as isolated artists working in the cloistered environment of the studio. Bishop (2004) suggests that scrutiny is needed to examine the curatorial processes that organize art shows claiming relational intentions as a primary goal in the selection process of artworks. In the context of this paper, relational aesthetics is not only considered from the perspective of Bourriaud and Bishop, but also from a therapeutic and transpersonal perspective.

Art therapists have been interested in empathy and relational aesthetics since their work demands awareness of therapeutic and artistic processes with others (Franklin, 1990; Moon, 2001; Potash & Ho, 2011). For Moon the main criteria for art used in therapy is relational. She believes that art surfaces a web of connections that joins the artist, the art object, and the systemic environment including other people, together. More recently, Potash and Ho studied relational aesthetics as a framework for social change. Their study looked at the use of response art to facilitate changes in personal outlook concerning the stigma of mental illness. An art show comprised of work by people with mental illness was artistically responded to by a group of viewers. It was found that through the response art process, the group of viewers increased their empathy for this population accompanied by attitudinal changes concerning mental illness.

The practice of ahimsa is a humanizing and therefore aesthetic force. Aesthetic perception in this case is not privileged taste, the consumption of fad trends, or saccharine beauty. To aesthetically perceive sentience is to feel deeply into the phenomenology of the physical world, which in turn inspires us to not harm any living thing. This form of aesthetic discernment results in egalitarian

vision, especially for the voiceless flora and fauna unable to express self-advocacy. To truly see the full democracy of beauty is to follow with a vow of ahimsa.

## Empathic Exchange in Contemplative Psychotherapy and Art Therapy

People seek out psychotherapy for various reasons. Often is the case that some form of trauma, psychological and/or physical, was perpetrated against them. Assumed safe people, such as family members or community leaders, have harmed those who eventually become our clients in psychotherapy. Understanding the many forms of psychological trauma and how to successfully treat emotional pain through a skillful therapeutic relationship, grounded in the intention of ahimsa and the compassionate action of empathy, is foundational to contemplative psychotherapy work. Since psychological trauma is usually perpetrated in relationship, it needs to be healed within the context of a compassionately conceived therapeutic relationship.

Known as exchange in contemplative psychotherapy, we practice as best we can mindful contact with our clients and ourselves, moment to moment, in each session (Wegela, 2010). Our overall goal in the exchange process is unconditional receptivity to interconnection as events spontaneously emerge. One way to support this kind of contact is by recognizing what is sane and healthy in our clients. In many ways, what is labeled pathological behavior is really survival strategy behavior and expressions of brilliant sanity. That is underneath all of the diagnostic labels and inappropriate behaviors, is a version of health and sanity that expresses itself with attempts to survive in insane conditions. As an introspective aside, I too would likely behave in similar ways if I were exposed to comparable traumatic circumstances. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the therapist to understand the client by monitoring impulses towards judgment and acknowledging what is brilliantly sane in them (Wegela, 2010).

In the art studio, most all behavior is acceptable subject matter for creative exploration. Artistic sublimation, which is really an awareness practice, offers a concrete way to observe sanity and overall psychological impulses towards health. Through this view of art, we can observe people being productive with wide ranging impulses, thus demonstrating access to inner coping resources often thought to be nonexistent within a limiting, reductive diagnosis. We are all more than our symptoms.

This view of art supports the idea that suffering can be externalized and modified. Additionally, sublimated client imagery becomes a gateway for our empathy. Seeing anguish expressed visually informs us how to recognize and respond to anguish. One way to develop this kind of responsiveness is through the body-speech-mind practice (Wegela, 2010).

The body-speech-mind practice, which originates from classical Tibetan Buddhism (Wegela, 2010), helps to clarify the obstacles that can thwart empathic exchange (Rabin & Walker, 1987). In terms of the body, we attune to all physical qualities of the clients embodied presentation. Speech refers to styles of dialogue, cadence, and the overall content of communication. And mind implies qualities of emotional intelligence, learning styles, and cognitive features such as memory and cognition. These sectors of the personality are carefully observed and then conscientiously described. Such descriptions yield accurate phenomenological information, ultimately avoiding reckless

interpretations of another human being. From these observational descriptions, behavioral content becomes revealed phenomena thus furthering the exchange process.

The making of responsive art described earlier is similar to the body-speech-mind exercise used in contemplative psychotherapy. In fact, it is suggested that specific artworks be created to correspond with the client's body-speech-mind presentation. Since art is a form of autobiographical communication layered with symbolic subtlety, it is imperative that the observer of the client, the client's artwork, and the therapist's response art, be met with the following process. Rigorous observation of body-speech-mind phenomena leads to accurate descriptions of this data. During this stage, personal projections are carefully monitored and withheld from overt expression.

From mindful descriptions, insight and clarity associated with astute observation emerges (Coleman, 1981). In terms of art, judicious observations of the formal elements within the work expose insight into psychological content. Said another way, careful examination of the formal elements in a work of art leads to the unfolding of content or meaning. This responsible approach to the relational aesthetics of perceiving another person and their artwork minimizes interpretive license to mischaracterize our clients.

In addition to responsible strategies for looking at artwork and human behavior, there are necessary skills needed for empathically entering into the world of another. In the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva (1996) addresses the practice of "exchanging self and other" through a process of "sympathetic imagination" (p. 187). This inspiring discourse offers several pathways to attune to the point of view of others thereby eroding the separations between therapist and client. The key is a skillful use of imagination in measure with clear observation.

Imagination here implies a way to move beyond our own fixed point of view and perceive with a wide-open mind. Beyond our own cultural view is a world of diversity that we are called upon to tenderly access and imagination is our point of entry. I know of no better way to train the empathic imagination than through art. Art is inherently a process of exchange since we are taking some aspect of experience in and responding back, through the use of materials, with a tangible image. Like tonglen practice, in art we mindfully take in qualities of experience and send back out an aesthetic response. In the context of art therapy, sessions can be about our clients externalizing their suffering through art, receiving back this personal anguish through the finished product, and modifying the pain through further artworks.

Imagination and empathy have been closely studied in the arts (Jahoda, 2005; Mallgrave & Ikonomou, 1994). For example Rudolf Arnheim (1966) focused on "sympathetic empathy," which is defined as a form of resonance with isomorphic similarities between line, shape, and color and inner experience (p. 66). These corresponding similarities between form (line and shape) and content (emotion and narrative) are accessed and understood through imagination. Theodore Lipps considered how contemplated artworks penetrate the observer by literally transporting the viewer into an image (Jahoda, 2005). The transfer process of emotional projection, which is related to imaginal and aesthetic *einfühlung*, means to feel within or even into something outside ones' self.

Additionally, artistic practices can be used as a form of self-supervision aimed at the empathic exchange with self with other (Franklin, 1999). In these exercises, which specifically focus on challenging clients, a complex three-dimensional version of the therapeutic relationship

is created. With ample time, these recreations can reach life size proportions. The goal is to surface compassion for our relational blind spots through a process of aesthetic exchange. After 15 years of conducting these workshops, people consistently report heart opening results.

## Karuna, Prajna, and Empathic Art

Empathic art becomes a necessary tool for communicating compassionate attunement (Franklin, 1990, 2010). This form of art is defined as carefully feeling into and sensing the isomorphic gestalts in another person's overall presentation including their artwork. The process then turns to mindful filtration of this information through personal resonance with affective cues from the art and presenting body-speech-mind states. Finally, this data is used to craft visual narratives that attune to the clients emotional center.

Empathic art interventions offer a critical set of strategies for directly conveying altruistic awareness for the clients autobiographical past and unclear present. These paraphrased visual statements sort out and consolidate wide ranging emotional material. Confused misperceptions emerging from a chaotic inner self-structure can be clarified through this form of artistic exchange.

Eventually, clients improve their capacity for insight when presented with empathic art. They begin to see themselves differently by adopting a personal view of self-empathy. A natural shift occurs whereby the therapist's empathic communications are needed less as they are replaced by self-initiated attempts to do the same. Clients learn to empathize with their own suffering by surrendering the need to reject it, thus releasing forms of internalized oppression (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). Finally "insight", "mindfulness", "discretion", and "confidence" become cultivated inner resources to call upon and apply daily (Goleman, 1975, p. 178).

## A Case Example

Years ago I worked with a 12-year-old African-American boy, Peter, in a school setting for troubled youth (Franklin, 1990). Peter had a turbulent life, and by the time I saw him his father had abandoned his small family and his mother was deemed unfit. As well, countless professionals charged with his care, in various ways, had also neglected him. For example, at one point he was removed from his home and placed in a group home. This new placement was supposed to offer a safe therapeutic environment. It did not. Late at night the older boys would ban together and terrorize the younger children, including Peter. In order to protect himself, he would stay awake all night in case he was attacked. At first, I had no idea he was living under such oppressive circumstances. The school employees, including the psychologist, thought he was living in a secure setting.

When I saw him at 8am for private art therapy sessions he would rest his head between his arms, on the table, and go to sleep. Although at first I did not understand his need for sleep, and since this was our contracted time, I allowed him to nap. While sleeping, I drew him. When he awoke, he looked at my drawing and immediately said with a big smile, that's Me! This went on for a short while until we realized why he was so tired. These empathic art responses helped him to find the words needed to communicate to the school staff his unfortunate situation in the group home.

The pictures that I drew of Peter non-verbally conveyed several points. First, when in therapy, he would not be abandoned. This was important because he also had issues with me as white man. For months, during the initial stages of our work together, he made numerous uncensored angry comments about white men. I patiently received these transferences, listening to his point of view while we made art together. He was able to be angry with me while also enrolling me as an ally to help him with his many art projects.

Second, while sleeping, he was safe. No one was going to harm him while he was in my care. Third, I was remaining in contact with him, non-verbally, while he was in the vulnerable position of sleep in a public place with a person he had not trusted in the past. Fourth, someone was listening even if at first I did not fully grasp his situation. This form of artistic witnessing and artistic exchange provided me with a strategy for compassionate presence by directly communicating my understanding of the many layers of Peter's psychological abandonment. Each drawing acknowledged that he was safe, seen, and validated. Like a triple jump in checkers, this intervention exponentially progressed our therapy work together for the remainder of the school year.

These drawing also acknowledged and directly responded to his body-speech-mind communication. His body was tired, his speech was predominantly silent until he woke up, and his young mind was processing layers of abandonment. This all happened in session which was important for our ever-evolving complex relationship.

Psychotherapy offers a relationship unlike any other. In this case, Peter was seemingly benefiting from expressing strong transference while I patiently received it in our weekly sessions. Most important was that one drawing could directly communicate layers of his felt, but unseen body-speech-mind presentation as well as my reliability to no abandon him.

## Conclusion

Compassion in psychotherapy is predicated on participating with the clients suffering without over identifying with their circumstances. Mindfulness training is helpful to comb through these feeling states and manage personal triggers. Meditation also helps to clear the intersubjective field of distracting debris that can influence our objectivity. This is accomplished through the cultivation of non-reactivity, perceptual and sensory attention, acting with awareness, observational witnessing, and not judging personal experiences (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006).

Lastly, the interventions discussed in this article address compassionate ways to remain present during the exchange process. The skill-sets necessary for being of service to others in the midst of their distress are exponentially aided by non-verbal empathic art interventions. In essence, the preventative and prescriptive measures of artistic empathy are like a psychotherapeutic dharma art practice (Trungpa, 1996). Trungpa felt that genuine art, which emerges from the clarity of practice, can awaken, even liberate the viewer and the artist. Empathic art is a form of dharma art. Both strive to directly respond with an attitude of ahimsa and to serve others with clarity of vision to connect and awaken.

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# Cultivating Wisdom and Compassion in Relationships: Implications for Couples Therapy

Heather Marriott

*Brad and Sally sat down on my couch. She was crying before I could even ask them why they were here. From his body language, I could see Brad was seething. This young couple had been seeing each other for a few years but she was very clingy and anxious in the relationship. Sally was sure he was seeing other women and couldn't understand how he could be attracted to her. She felt she was too overweight and not beautiful enough for him. Brad worked hard in his own business and when he arrived home at night he would be withdrawn towards Sally and hostile towards her attempts to get close to him. He had a low libido and would often reject her initiation of physical intimacy. Both of them were miserable, and, although they said they loved each other deeply, they didn't know how to improve things.*

How can this lovely couple be helped to develop their relationship into one that is mature and embraces the qualities of wisdom and compassion? What can we learn from Buddhism and the Western psychotherapy traditions that can support them to grow beyond the emotional issues that are holding them back?

## What Is Wisdom And Compassion?

In Mahayana Buddhism, wisdom manifests as a deep understanding of our inherent nature. It is a recognition of our own suffering and what it means to be truly human. Through that realization we can then learn to understand the suffering of others, and compassion will spontaneously arise. The practice of meditation allows us to know “which states of mind, emotions, thoughts and attitudes are beneficial and which are harmful to ourselves and others, and also how these states influence our interactions with other people and the way we live our lives.” (Traleg Kyabgon, 2001, p.23)

As we appreciate our true nature we gain a sense of common humanity; that we’re all in this existential mire together. Understanding that “you” suffer as “I” suffer increases compassion towards the other person, and in understanding that “I” suffer as “you” suffer there is increased compassion towards the self. In recognizing that we are interconnected we cultivate empathy and altruism; yet in a way that is not stifling of the other, or compromising of ourselves. It is a light recognition and nod to each other, along with a concern that enhances the autonomy of both. This concept of common humanity is an essential component of self-compassion that has been identified by Kristin Neff (2011) in her research.

Glaser (2005) defines compassion as “...the basis of connection, intimacy, openness, kindness, hospitality, and joy. It is an expression of human freedom, flowing from a sound intuition of the unity of life and all living things.” (p. 11). She differentiates between the compassion one has for the other which emerges from genuine love and regard, from the love associated with attachment.

Compassion in intimate relationships "...is more than simply caring for the partner; it is a love founded on an accurate understanding of the partner. Compassionate love is personally fulfilling, in that spouses can reap the rewards of their love; but it is also selfless, in that spouses accept their partners – the good and the bad, for who they are." (Neff and Karney, 2009). So the old scripts that are played out through either idealizing or denigrating the partner are revealed; and true acceptance for oneself and the other forms the foundation of this more mature love.

## ATTACHMENTS AND PROJECTIONS

*To help Brad and Sally we must enable them to begin to see the workings of their minds. We can help them to understand their thoughts and their emotions. In particular, we need them to be able to observe how they project underlying issues onto their partners.*

According to Buddhism, we can be blindsided by our perceptions in how we relate with the world generally, and in our relationships, specifically. Our perceptions about ourselves, our expectations and our assumptions are projected onto the external world, which we must then relate to. One of the reasons that we practice meditation is to be able to see through these projections, and to relate to the world with genuineness. To know our own minds clearly; rather than distorting the external world to fit into our own view of how things are.

In Buddhism, our projections towards others tend to take the form of attraction or aversion, which bring up the corresponding emotions of passion or aggression. We like certain things and dislike others, and we are constantly shifting in our preferences. It is possible that we can have the strong reactions of both aggression and aversion towards the same person at different times in the same day. These emotional reactions are a reflection of what is happening in our own minds.

We tend to create a story or a scenario around these shifts in our attraction or aversion which then influences how we feel about the other, about ourselves, and how we communicate and behave within the relationship. From a Buddhist perspective it is these attachments that we have towards the external world that are a cause of our suffering. It follows that any relationship will be fraught unless we are able to develop the appropriate view and ways of dealing with phenomena, both external and internal, as they appear.

Compassion can arise when we are able to see this play of the mind. We can see reality for what it is – to see that in effect, we create our own world and then relate to it. Trungpa points out that when we can loosen our solid and fixed view of ourselves, others, and the world, then we can begin to realize compassion. He says: "Compassion sees the nature of the samsaric game that is being played..." (Trungpa 2011, p 132).

### Attachment theory and attunement

From a Western view, psychological projections are discussed from the perspective of attachment theory. Our earliest childhood relationships set up emotional and behavioral habits that can affect the way we manage our intimate interactions for the rest of our lives. If we are insecurely

attached this might lead to anxious behaviors of becoming clingy, demanding and overly dependent. Alternatively, we may be avoidant and ambivalent which leads to aloofness and withdrawal (Bowlby, cited Snyder et al, 2011).

Our early attachments influence the development of neural pathways in the brain. When we have secure relationships with our primary caregiver, then we have a stronger connection between the emotional parts of the brain (the amygdala and the limbic system) and the prefrontal cortex, which is able to mediate emotions. If we have insecure attachments, then as adults, we will have more trouble regulating our emotions (Lapides, 2010).

The right hemisphere of the brain processes empathy and attachment. When the right hemispheres of mother and child mutually connect, this forms the basis of empathy. This capacity for attunement influences our adult relationships. Evidence shows that humans have a mirror neuron system that is implicated in the cultivation of attunement and empathy. When one individual views the actions of another their mirror neurons are activated. This allows the person to have an understanding of the behavior and emotional perspective of the other and ultimately to be able to develop empathy. (Gallese, 2001). According to Siegel (2009), neural integration and subsequent attunement can be propagated by mindfulness practice, a healthy adult relationship or a good psychotherapeutic alliance.

The human desire to attach to another forms the basis for our adult relationships. If we are attracted to someone, we may fall under the spell of romantic love. This is a state of physiological arousal known as limerence (Tennov, 1979; cited Diamond, 2004), and it is at this point we tend to project our idealized image onto the other person. It is a comforting experience whereby we have the notion that: “This person is a reflection of me, there is no difference between us. This feels safe, as if we have finally come home; the world makes sense and we can live happily ever after”.

Often this feeling towards the other is based on our old attachment issues. People seem to have what I call the “neurotic hook”, whereby they unconsciously come together and form a co-dependency with the other. This can lead to a heightened sense of arousal based on deluded notions of the other, rather than on genuine love.

When we are stuck in our projections, we tend to objectify the other person. They become an idealized or negative version of our own mind, and the relationship becomes a reflection of that. As the projections are resolved, one is able to see the other person for who they really are; then empathy and compassion can arise. Martin Buber says that “Only (persons) who are capable of truly saying *Thou* to one another can truly say *We* with one another.” (1965a pp 39-40 cited Fishbane, 1998). We see the other as a human being and then we can create a sense of real togetherness.

*We can see Brad and Sally both had attachment issues from their childhood. Brad's mother had a substance abuse problem and she did not offer Brad any affection or stability in his life. He recalls that his mother would lie on the couch a lot, stoned, and he would feel trapped in the home often taking care of her needs while his were neglected. She was emotionally very demanding of Brad and he felt rejected. His attachment style was one of withdrawal. He was terrified of intimacy and would ignore Sally, but at the same time he was highly anxious that Sally would stop loving him and would leave him. His fear of intimacy and loss was such that he even suppressed his sexual desires.*

*When Sally was eight, her mother and father separated under the same roof. Her mother would often stay out late at night and on the weekends. Sally recalls feeling very anxious about this and would wait long hours by the window until she returned. She also experienced a great tragedy in early adulthood when her boyfriend was accidentally killed at work. This contributed to her anxieties and manifested in being overly demanding and immature in her relationship with Brad.*

*The attachment styles of each partner hooked into each other and continually reinforced the problems in their relationship. The more demanding Sally became because of her own insecurities, the more angry and withdrawn Brad would become. And the more he withdrew from Sally, the more anxious she would become.*

## MINDFULNESS TRAINING

So in Brad and Sally's case we could begin by instructing them in mindfulness and loving-kindness techniques. This they could do on their own and some practices could be useful for them to undertake together.

We can approach mindfulness training from the perspective of what I call the Four "Is" of Mindfulness.

### 1. Intentionality

It is important in our mindfulness practice to have a clear intention of what we are trying to achieve. One of the limitations of the mindfulness movement is that it has been taken out of the overall context and view of Buddhist theory. Mindfulness is part of the Noble Eightfold Path and therefore forms part of our overall lifestyle, ethics and values. Right mindfulness is prefaced by right view and right intention. Unless we have an unambiguous intention, our mindfulness practice will not lead to personal transformation. According to Ajahn Brahm (2006): "Only when one has ... a clear goal will there be the possibility of spiritual progress" (p 258).

Research has shown that when we set our intention at the beginning of our practice, this will produce outcomes consistent with our goals (Shapiro and Carlson, 1992, cited Shapiro and Carlson, 2009). In our mindfulness practice we can establish the aspiration to learn to work directly with our emotions in order to be able to relate to others in a mature, empathic and compassionate way.

### 2. Intrapersonal

Mindfulness practice can help us to learn to regulate our emotions. We can become more aware of the physical manifestation of different feelings and able to recognise the emotions associated with those sensations. We then become more willing and effective in accepting and tolerating our feelings and emotions (Hayes and Feldman, 2004, Brown et al, 2007). This means that when we have a reaction to our partner, or to a relationship issue, we will be able to take responsibility for our emotions rather than looking to blame the other. We are able to take care of ourselves in a mature way.

Through mindfulness one is able to observe how the causes and conditions arise that influence how we think, feel and act. When we can see that our thoughts and emotions are, in essence, without substantiality, we can learn to befriend them and not be compelled to act out of those transient states. When we can recognise the origins of the assumptions that we hold about ourselves and about the other person, we don't have to act on those assumptions in the same way. For example, if we have a belief about ourselves as unlovable and our partner looks at us in a way that seems dismissive, we might either get angry at that person or be overly critical of ourselves, or both. But when we realize we might be reading too much into that look, we don't have to react in the same way.

From a Western perspective, difficult emotions have been seen as something unwanted; to be controlled or eliminated. However, by rejecting emotions we actually make them stronger and more resistant. When we have the view that an emotion is bad and unwanted, we are in effect rejecting a part of ourselves. It is true that when we can accept and embrace our negative emotions, they will spontaneously self-liberate.

We can set the intention at the intrapersonal level of being aware of the rising and dissipating of negative and positive thoughts and emotions. It seems to be a function of the Western mind that we focus on unhelpful thoughts and emotions, and we can cling onto them and create a whole story that can last for a week. Conversely, when it comes to positive thoughts and emotions, we have a tendency to dismiss them. It is possible that we can benefit from being able to look at the negative thoughts and emotions and let them go, and to actually focus on the positive ones – “to burn them into our brains.” (Traleg Rinpoche, personal communication).

The extent to which we focus on negative or positive aspects seems to be linked to the early messages we introjected during childhood. If we have internalised critical self-talk, we will be inclined to continue with that script into adulthood (Ryan and Brown 2003). Research shows that mindfulness practice can be an antidote to self-criticism and allow for the cultivation of self-compassion (Germer, 2009; Neff, 2011). Self-compassion is strongly associated with psychological well-being and individuals with high self-compassion show increased happiness, optimism, and personal initiative, and are more connected with others. They also show higher levels of emotional intelligence, less anxiety, depression, neurotic perfectionism and rumination (Neff 2009).

Mindfulness allows us to see through our projections. As we become more mindful we can become aware of how these projections arise. Chogyam Trungpa (1975) talks about the possibility of becoming aware of even small fluctuations in our attention between these states, these “flickerings” (page 57) of thoughts and emotions.

### 3. Interpersonal

So as we start to take responsibility for our own thoughts, emotions and behaviors we begin to truly have compassion for ourselves and others. We develop a sense of confidence and no longer need to take a defensive stance or to attribute blame. Because we are not as fearful, we can open up to a more direct communication with others.

As we become more self-compassionate, our relationships with others will markedly improve. Research has shown that people with higher levels of self-compassion are more satisfied and happy with their romantic relationships (Neff, 2011). They are more accepting and non-judgmental of themselves and their partner. They are also able to be more affectionate, intimate and caring and to allow their partner more autonomy in the relationship. People with lower levels of self-compassion are more critical of themselves, less affectionate and more controlling (Baker and McNulty 2011).

Consequently, as we are able to deepen our understanding of our own thoughts and emotions as they arise, this mindfulness allows us to tolerate, accept and become more empathic. We become empathic in the sense of being able to take the perspective of the other person as well as being able to have empathic concern for them (Block-Lerner et al, 2007). Mindful individuals also can become more vulnerable with each other, repair conflict easily and be more intimate (Mirghain and Cordova 2007). This can be a result of being able to regulate any difficult emotions that might arise for them in the relationship.

Overall, mindfulness practice can increase relationship skills and marital satisfaction. (Burpee and Langer, 2005). People with higher levels of mindfulness show less relationship stress, higher levels of satisfaction and generally more positive emotions about the relationship and their partner. (Barnes et al 2007, Gambrel and Keeling, 2010). Siegel (2007) introduces the acronym COAL – curiosity, openness, acceptance and love – for the attitude that develops with mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness can help us to know when there are ruptures in the relationship that need to be repaired (Siegel 2007). According to Gottman and Silver (1999), successful relationships are not without conflict, but when conflict arises the couple are quick at making reparation. The practice of mindfulness also contributes to healthy relationships because it allows the individual to slow their emotional reactions down and to respond to their partner in a more deliberate and useful way. Mindfulness allows for an increased space for the individual to decide how to respond (Snyder et al, 2011).

The mindfulness movement has been proven to be revolutionary in individual psychotherapy. Now this paradigm shift is embracing how we can work more effectively with couples. A program for couples has been developed (MBRE mindfulness-based relationship enhancement) comprising of an eight-week program which includes mindfulness and loving-kindness practices. In this course, loving-kindness meditations emphasized focusing on each partner as the main object for their compassion. Overall results showed that individual participants were more relaxed and optimistic. The couple dyads also exhibited less relationship stress, and this correlated with the amount of mindfulness practice done on any given day. (Carson, Carson, Gil and Baucom 2006, Carson et al 2004).

Later research demonstrated that mindfulness was effective in increasing self-compassion and empathy (Birnie, Speca and Carlson, 2010) and that loving-kindness meditation can lead to an increase in compassion towards self and compassionate love for others (Wiebel, 2007). Overall we find:

Unmindful couples:

- Engage in harmful patterns of behavior.
- Withdraw emotionally.
- Express anger, frustration, violence.
- Show a lack of intimacy.
- Cannot resolve conflict.
- Engage in behaviors as an unmindful attempt to gain power, or even to keep the relationship together.

Mindful couples are:

- More loving and thoughtful.
- Less likely to act out of entrenched and negative patterns of behaving – try a new way.
- Able to resolve conflict.
- Able to move from blame to empathy.
- Mutually empowered.

They also:

- Allow themselves to be vulnerable and therefore have increased intimacy.
- Embrace self-responsibility.

Fruzetti and Iverson (2005) also talk about how this mindfulness can be applied to relationships in four steps:

1. Individual mindfulness: Both individuals are mindful that current attempts to solve the problem are not working.
2. Behavioral tolerance: The couples then attempt to tolerate the other's behavior rather than trying to change it.
3. Radical awareness: They are aware of the current dynamic and able to communicate about it.
4. True (radical) acceptance: occurs by transforming the conflict into intimacy through acceptance of the patterns and motivations of the other, and enhanced understanding and closeness.

When working with couples I suggest they take on certain practices that will help us with our work together. These include:

- Practicing individual mindfulness meditation and loving-kindness practices on a regular basis.
- Practicing mindfulness meditation at the same time as their partner: “the couple that are still together, are still together.”

- Doing loving-kindness practices as a couple, doing sending and receiving practice.
- Reflective listening practices

#### 4. Insight

The practice of mindfulness helps to develop insight into the nature of our own minds and how we experience the world. We can begin to truly understand how our thoughts and emotions arise and dissipate and to be able to regulate our internal experiences. Siegel (2010) refers to this as “mindsight”.

In addition, through clearly seeing how we relate to the phenomenal world we develop a deeper wisdom and a clarity of those around us. And through the practice of loving-kindness we can become increasingly mindful and compassionate to the suffering of others, which in turn increases our wisdom.

*So Brad and Sally could enhance their relationship and develop empathy between them by practicing loving kindness. This could become a part of their ongoing commitment to each other. They can set time aside on a regular basis to sit opposite each other and send kind thoughts, love and light to the other.*

### COUPLES IN THERAPY

#### Creating a mindful and accepting therapeutic alliance

The basic frame of all therapy is to be able to create an atmosphere of awareness, acceptance and change and it is the mindful presence of the therapist that facilitates that process. We now know that techniques are important but account for only 15 per cent of change and that an optimal therapeutic relationship is one of the main factors contributing to change in therapy. (Hubble et al, 1999). This is true for individual and couples therapy.

#### To be present and mindful

The most important aspect of working with couples is to be as present and accepting as possible to both members of the dyad. This leads to a heightened awareness of how the couple are relating in the room in the here and now. We are noticing the content of what the couple reveals and the process of their interrelationship. The *content* is what happens between them –their beliefs, values, how they communicate, how they feel, how they act. The *process* is about the dynamic; what is underneath that which is being displayed.

It is crucial for effective therapy that the therapist has her own mindfulness practice. Studies have shown that therapists who are regular meditators display higher levels of empathy than non-meditating therapists (Wang, 2006; Block-Lerner et al, 2007). In fact, clients of therapists with a mindfulness practice report being more satisfied with the therapy than the clients of therapists who do not practice mindfulness. (Grepmaier et al, 2007; Baer, 2003).

Being as present as possible, the therapist can observe the dynamic as it is unfolding and to notice even small signs of emotions that each individual may be experiencing. When working with couples, being mindful allows us to notice any subtle shifts in mood, tension and non-verbal communication that the couple might exhibit. The therapist, through mindfulness, has developed the capacity for acute attunement (Bruce et al, 2010).

It is also important when working with couples not to be afraid of the emotions as they arise. The effective therapist is able to sit with the ambiguity of what might develop in the session and to try not to solve things immediately. I find my own meditation practice helps me to sit with uncertainty. In addition, being mindful helps me to be aware of my own emotions and to not let them influence what is happening between the couple. For example, if there is anger or aggression in the room, this can feel quite threatening and bring up my own fear, and it's important to be aware of that and not let fear overwhelm me.

As a therapist, it's useful to be aware of my own emotions because it can facilitate an understanding of how each partner might feel in relation to each other. In this way I am using the countertransference; any reaction that I am having is useful information to reflect back to the partners. There might also be more traditional countertransference going on. For example, is there anything in this dynamic that reminds me of my parents' relationship or my own past intimate relationships? It's important to control for this so that I am not contaminating the process between the couple.

Chogyam Trungpa (2005) talks about the necessity of the therapist being able to have a mindfulness practice. He says that one must "...study and experience one's own mind. Then one can study and experience accurately the mind in the interpersonal situation." Gehart and McCollum (2007) reiterate how mindful presence allows the therapist to be less reactive to the emotional ups and downs in therapy and "the therapist welcomes whatever is brought into the process with compassion and openness." (p 220)

According to Cooper (2008) the therapist's mindfulness is important in therapy in a few ways:

1. Being able to embrace one's own suffering (face own anxiety) so that we can be compassionate and skillful with our clients. Suffering and resistance to suffering impacts on the attentiveness of the therapist.
2. Capacity of attention is related to how aware we can be in a given moment. Being able to distinguish between our own and the other's issues.
3. Our ability to attend in the present moment requires an attitudinal shift related to acceptance. Not trying to change what is happening in the present.

So this is also true of couples therapy in the formation of an effective therapeutic alliance. The couple therapist must form an alliance with each individual partner as well as the "in between" (Rait, 2000) of the relationship. As I empathize with one partner, I must skillfully ensure I am not alienating the other. This can, of course, be tricky at times. Also, I must ensure that I am working for the benefit of the relationship. This can mean that I can call each partner to task, a bit of tough love, if it is for the benefit of the health of the relationship. Therapist acceptance of the individual can foster non-defensiveness and change by:

- Bringing awareness of the couple dynamic into the therapy as it occurs in the here-and-now. Bring them back to the room, to their breath.
- Notice when they are drifting off or disengaging with the process.
- Therapist reports what is evoked, their own experience of sitting with the couple.
- Talk more about what is happening ‘right here’ rather than ‘out there’.
- Therapist must be aware of own responses to the couple – e.g. biases, likes, dislikes etc.

## THE THERAPEUTIC SPACE

A skillful therapeutic relationship allows for the establishment of a workable, creative and expansive space in which to work. This effective therapeutic realm has been labeled as “sacred space” by Siegelman (1990), by Winnicott as “potential space” (cited Siegelman, 1990). What happens in therapy is a microcosm of what happens in the world and vice versa. It is the “lived space” of the individual or couple reflected in the therapeutic relationship that enables the therapist to participate in the client’s world (Fuchs, 2007).

Ogden (1986) and Gabbard (1996) (both cited in Safran and Muran 2000) assert that the therapist can be absorbed into the client’s world while maintaining the capacity to observe the self and the other. The therapist is as aware of himself as he is of the client. He is also aware of what is happening between them. There is an awareness of proximity to and distance from the client. The therapist moves between her own subjective experiences and the objective tuning in with the client. (Siegelman, 1990) As the therapist is able to be fully present this capacity for “...mindfulness dissolves the artificial boundaries that define our separateness.” (Fulton, 2005).

The therapist must be mindful of their own internal process, their own thoughts, projections and emotions. The therapist is, effectively, able to get out of his/her own way. This increases the “internal space” of the therapist by decreasing the attachment to one’s own thoughts and emotions (Safran and Reading, 2008) and creates the space for other things to emerge such as feelings and deeper aspects of the client.

I allow this space to develop by not stepping in too soon, by breathing, and actually imagining that my mind is expanding. Because I am not motivated by my own anxiety and by being comfortable in silence I take up less space so the clients can find their own place in the room.

When working with couples, this therapeutic space expands to incorporate the three people in the room. As the therapist works to keep the couple in the moment, by focusing on feelings, thoughts and behaviors as they occur in the immediate time and space, there can be a sense of time standing still. It is an emotional space, one that I can only describe as being full of wisdom and compassion. It is in this space that the couple can transform the existing habitual dynamic to access a sense of love, acceptance and positive regard for one another. It is an extraordinary experience and one I feel very privileged to be a part of. At this time all three of us have our hearts open and are able to attune to one another. Potentially, this positive experience can undo negativities from the past and facilitate the re-wiring of the neural pathways.

Surrey (2005) calls this process an opening up into the spiritual dimension. It is “...the practice of opening wholeheartedly to the present reality - of themselves, of each other, and of their connection - an expanded receptivity that goes beyond the particularity of this relationship, or this setting.” (p. 97)

I think it is in this moment that wisdom and compassion come together - when the individuals involved have a deeper understanding of the interdependence of each other and the “flow” (Surrey 2005) of their relating to one another. They can realize how their dynamic comes into existence, how their thoughts affect their feelings and emotions, and how they behave with one another. In this moment, they can realize they don’t have to hold onto such a solid perspective of how they relate, that in this moment it can be different. This loosening of their reality can create hope for them; they don’t have to be so afraid of their emotions or suspicious of their partner and this in itself is transforming.

I tend to work with couples in a way that is reflective of Buddhist perspectives of interconnectedness and of how we relate to the world and with our own thoughts, emotions and behaviors. The basic premise of working with couples is one of developing awareness. I work with the dynamic of the couple in the present moment. I listen to their story and get to understand how they interrelate, what their values are, what emotions arise, their patterns of thinking and their habits of attachment. As well as talking about what happens, I look for the opportunity of this being demonstrated in the room. As an emotion arises we go into it – what is this feeling, how do you label it, what are the causes and conditions that lead to this emotion, and how do you relate to the other once this emotion arises? In general I draw from systems theory, dialogical perspectives and Emotion Focused Therapy.

## THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES

So we have talked about how the therapeutic alliance sets the scene and provides an embracing atmosphere for change. In couples therapy the aim is to encourage attunement between the couple. It is a function of the therapist’s capacity for empathy that allows the emotions of the couple to arise. The habitual dynamic between them can appear, be explored and understood, and allow for the creation of a new experience. As this new experience is assimilated, it can create a sense of attunement between the couple. Other authors believe that therapy is less about the content of what is happening in the dyad, and more about creating an experience of connection that may eventually change the neural patterning of each partner. (Roberts, 2007, Solomon and Tatkin, 2011). This represents a new way of doing therapy, which historically has been about discussing the problems and working on communication and behavior. Of course behavioral approaches are important, but research is showing that acceptance therapy has more enduring long-term benefits (Jacobson et al, 2000).

In working with couples, we must identify the deeper intentions of the couple. What brought them together in the first place? What has kept them together? What are their strengths? What do they want for themselves and the other person in this relationship? What are the values that they have and how do these values match in their coming together?

Values are particularly important in a relationship as they form part of the contract between the couple. It may be that creating a family is a strong value and that is what has been part of the glue between them. It may be that they want to grow together spiritually. What are the personal values of integrity, honesty, mutual caring that they want to develop? These form a point of focus that we keep coming back to. It is in a sense the “view” of both partners as individuals in relationship to each other and the world in general. As in mindfulness practice, we must base our practice on our view. So it is with couples therapy. We must clarify the view if the relationship is to deepen and become sustainable.

Another very potent and interesting aspect of couples therapy is to notice the playing out of attraction and aversion in the relationship. As mentioned previously, from a Buddhist perspective we are often relating to others and having strong emotional content depending on whether we are operating out of attraction and aversion. When couples come to see me they will wax lyrical about all the things they don’t like about the other. At some point I will ask them what they liked about each other when they met. Almost without fail, they will use exactly the same words they had used previously. So we are seeing that what attracted them now is creating aversion. This is very useful because the couple can begin to see how their projections work and how unreliable their perceptions and emotions can be.

I will now talk about the psychotherapeutic approaches I believe align with Buddhist thought which I have used successfully with couples.

### **Dialogical approach**

As I have mentioned, it is the aspiration in couples therapy for each partner to be able to see through their projections and to be able to see the humanness of the other. Fishbane (1998) and Lysack (2008) discuss the importance of individuals being able to loosen up their own self-talk and to be able to focus on what is happening in the here and now. Rather than engaging in one’s own projections, one can deeply listen to the other person and, consequently, be able to put what is happening between them into context. She says it is important to be able to view the partner as “thou” -as an individual with their own thoughts, feelings and relationship with the world, rather than “it”. This enables the development of a dialogue between the couple whereby they can genuinely relate to the other as a whole person. This will lead to the development of empathy and compassion.

### **Systems theory**

We are also working with couples from a systems theory perspective, where each partner is observed as well as the “relational space” between them (Zinker, 1994). The basic premise of systems theory is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Each part will impact on every other part of the system. Systems theory is similar to Buddhist theory because it looks at how things are interconnected; how causes and conditions come together to produce a behavioral and situational outcome.

From a systems theory perspective, we are working not just with the content the couple presents but also the process of the dynamic between the couple. Understanding that the couple relationship operates as a system that is self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing, with the assumption that first, the system will operate in a way that will attempt to maintain the status quo and second, any change to one part of the system will evoke a change in the whole system.

It's true that for the couple relationship that when one shifts, the other will shift. This might not necessarily always be for the benefit of the couple. For example, if one partner grows, developing insight and responsibility for their own thoughts, emotions and behavior, this will impact on the system. The other partner may try to grow and change as well. But more often operating from fear, s/he will try to encourage the partner with newfound insight or maturity to shift back. The one who is growing will not be able to do this, because once insight is born one cannot go back to being ignorant. If that partner tries to compromise their emerging insight and fakes it, it may preserve the relationship but will lead to a deep resentment on their part and unhappiness in the relationship.

In therapy we explore when and how they system works well for the couple and when it becomes destructive. We also look at how the couple polarizes around certain issues. (Zinker, 1994). How does one individual in the couple under-function and the other over-function? This can be related to emotional intimacy and sexual issues, for example, or to more task-related issues. One partner may be the "emotional one" in the relationship, while the other may be more closed down. In terms of relational space, both partners must contribute to the space between them, but sometimes one will over-function and do the emotional work for both of them. So when working with a couple it is important to bring awareness to the process and for both to see how they need to shift within that system. This relates very well with Buddhism, where everything is interdependent and nothing stays the same.

One important issue that comes up in relationship therapy is the polarization around intimacy. I often see couples who have different expectations about the amount of intimacy that is acceptable within the relationship. This is often the core issue we deal with. When one partner desires less intimacy than the other, or in a different form than the other, it sets up patterns of pursuing and distancing between them. These different levels of intimacy are often a reflection of the history of attachment of each partner. So one of the things I do is look at how the couple manages different intimacy requirements – the amount of solitude each partner needs, and the time they need together in order for both to be comfortable. This often leads to an exploration of the ways in which they process their emotions in relation to their need for or fear of intimacy.

In the therapy room I am bringing to awareness the causes and conditions that are impacting on their thoughts, emotions and behaviors with each other. What are they bringing to the relationship in terms of habitual ways of relating? What are their values? What are the intentions towards the other person? How have they developed a system of relating that, over time, has become dysfunctional.

*In my work with Brad and Sally I was able to watch and comment on how their relational system works, bringing to light the causes and conditions of their functioning in relationships. I was able to identify their individual anxieties and how they are mutually reinforcing. As one partner began to feel anxious it then increased the anxiety of the other and then they both started to act in unhelpful and harmful ways towards each other. Their communication would falter and then they would begin to argue Sally would get more and more emotional (sometimes hysterical) and Brad would*

*shout and walk out. Both would then feel more vulnerable and hurt. In being able to point out this dynamic it began to disempower that dynamic, to take some of the heat out of it. This initiated the process of acceptance.*

## Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT)

*For Brad and Sally we know that their emotional responses to each other come from their early childhood patterns of attachment. So we can look at how to help them to identify their feelings, label them, and learn to accept and work more directly with them.*

The ways in which each partner experiences their emotions form part of the important causes and conditions of how well the relationship functions. EFT is based on the premise that individuals are motivated by their emotions and that individuals will seek to move towards emotions that are less painful. In that way, the system can operate as it always has. With EFT, therapy can allow the individuals to access and work directly with painful emotions. Those emotions can then be transformed and the dysfunctional system can progress towards maturity and empathy.

EFT in couples therapy involves allowing emotions to arise in the room, and exploring the causes and conditions that lead to these emotions and the ways in which the dynamic between the couple perpetuates these emotions (Johnson, 2007). Focusing on emotions that are very immediate brings the process into the here and now, and it is a potent way of working. In effect, the emotions form the focus of mindfulness as a way of bringing the individual back to the present. Research has shown EFT to be effective in managing relationship stress (Baucom, et al, 1998, cited Makinene and Johnson, 2006) and cultivating forgiveness (Byrne et al, 2004).

According to Greenberg and Johnson (1988), emotions are an effective way of providing information about what is happening in the present moment. So when we work with couples, and we get an experience of the emotions of each partner at that time, then we can look at the causes and conditions that have led to those emotions in the room at that immediate point. EFT focuses on the emotional process in the couple. It observes how emotions arise in the present moment, facilitating an understanding of how each partner feels and the attachment issues that may underlie those emotions, with the intention of increasing empathy between the couple. (Johnson, 2007). The therapist focuses on the process of the emotions that arise rather than the content.

EFT involves bringing emotions into awareness and exploring the causes and conditions that lead to these emotions. An important part is identifying the primary and secondary emotions. This therapy links into the early childhood patterns of relating. Often people will present with one emotion as the problem (secondary emotion), but that emotion is often masking a more uncomfortable feeling (primary emotion).

*The secondary emotion Brad presented with was anger. When we looked underneath that anger we could hear the hurt and neglect from his past relationship with his mother and his fear of getting close with Sally. When this was brought up in the room it produced a shift in Brad; he was able to safely express his fears, and to cry. This allowed Sally to empathize with him, become less defensive, and feel more connected and less insecure in herself, because she felt that he did love her.*

*Brad reported some months later that he was able to feel his emotions more quickly when they arose, and to label them and let them go much more easily than ever before.*

*Sally, too, became more confident and self-accepting when she realized where her fears and anxieties had started. She was able to draw a direct comparison between when she felt abandoned by her mother and when Brad went away with his mates. Even though she still felt upset, she was not as crippled by anxiety as she used to be.*

Research is now showing that mindfulness practice can be a useful adjunct to EFT. When individuals practice mindfulness it enhances their capacity to observe their emotions as they arise, to label them and to have a greater capacity to be able to sit with their emotions and learn from them. (Beckerman and Sarracco, 2011).

Being able to sit with and accept our emotions is one of the basic aspects of mindfulness meditation. We don't judge or try to change the feelings that arise but try to be open to experience the entire range of our emotional lives without hope and fear. As in Buddhist mindfulness meditation, as we learn to accept our emotions they can become self-liberated. This acceptance forms the basis for compassion towards ourselves and the other person. EFT is another way we can help clients to open up to their authentic selves, and in so doing develop real compassion for each other within the relationship.

## Positive psychology

Positive psychology in couples therapy involves the therapist looking for and promoting the positive in the relationship between the couple. The focus is not so much on the problems and dysfunction but on acceptance and allowing the positives to emerge. With more attention on the positive, the couple's frustration with any negativity between them may dissipate. According to Fredrickson's broad and build theory (2001), positive emotions have the capacity to increase the emotional resilience of the individual and their social responsibility (Styron, 2005). We can then assume that as we increase the positive emotions for the couple, this will cultivate resilience in the relationship.

Seligman (2002) asserts that positive emotions are able to undo negative emotions. Positive psychology is about taking a positive approach to the past, the present and the future. So the future can be hopeful and optimistic, and the past is viewed with a sense of satisfaction and contentment. The present can then be a happier, calm and pleasurable experience in the moment.

Kauffman and Silberman (2009) discuss PPI (positive psychology interventions) with couples in therapy. This approach involves three main steps. First, it cultivates a balanced acknowledgement of the negative/problematic and positive aspects of the relationship. What are the strengths, what works? Second, it develops the positive between the couple; and third, it explores how each partner can help develop the positive in each other.

Good relationships have been shown to have a higher positive to negative ratio of 5:1 (Kauffman and Silberman 2009). At an early point in the therapy I will ask the couple "what brought you together?" This question usually softens the couple's attitudes towards each other even if they're

having a lot of conflict. They remember the good times, the positive feelings for each other. This is what I try to build on as a starting point for change. Mindfulness is important here – being aware of how much energy is being put into the negative rather than the positive aspects of the relationship.

*As for Brad and Sally, I was able to help them move to a happier place in their relationship. They both felt a strong alliance with me and with each other during our therapy. I held them safely in the sessions while we explored their fears and the obstacles to their expression of love for each other. Both reported feeling more accepted by me and by each other and over time their emotions became more contained and their destructive behaviors dissipated. Although they still have times when they get anxious or angry, overall they are much happier in their relationship. Our therapy finished two years ago when they decided they were ready to get married. I have since discovered that Sally gave birth to a baby girl nine months ago.*

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The future of therapy with couples may be to offer mindfulness and loving-kindness training for individuals and couples as a basis for enhancing relationships. Our larger counseling agencies could offer regular programs as part of a holistic approach to working on relationship issues. In this scenario, therapist training programs in mindfulness would be crucial in future development of the practice of couple therapy.

As the mindfulness movement moves from a focus on the alleviation of individual suffering to embracing compassion for others, scientific research is validating what the Buddha knew centuries ago. Western psychology is increasingly turning towards Buddhist theories and techniques as a complement to their approaches to psychotherapy with individuals and now, more recently, with couples.

We are seeing a paradigm shift that may form the basis for the explosion of Buddhism in the West. As a culture there may be a natural shift to taking refuge in the Triple Gem, rather than in the false refuge of romantic love. Intimate relationships may then be based on a love that is accepting, expansive and fully compassionate. Couples can then rely on meditation practices and the guidance of the six paramitas (virtues) to form the basis of their relationships.

As Buddhist psychotherapists we have a wonderful opportunity to form part of this changing paradigm. May our work be of benefit to all beings.

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# **Images of Anger & the Ramifications of Anger Management (with a focus on Domestic Violence)**

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*"Here you stand, after conquering mighty nations and subduing the world. I therefore think it foolish for me to [provoke] you with words, as though you were men who had not been proved in action. ...what is sweeter for a brave man than to seek revenge with his own hand? It is a right of nature to glut the soul with vengeance. Let us then attack the foe eagerly; ...I will not say by the first wound, ...Seek swift victory in that spot where the battle rages. ...Let the wounded exact in return the death of his foe; let the unwounded revel in slaughter of the enemy. No spear shall harm those who are sure to live; and those who are sure to die... Fate overtakes even in peace..."<sup>1</sup>*

--Attila the Hun.

*"Holding anger, like a mother holding the baby... because, loving kindness is us, but anger is also us. So one part of us is taking good care of another part. Anger is a kind of energy that comes from our self, and loving-kindness or mindfulness is also another kind of energy. That is why we should know that every time the energy of anger is there, we should invite the energy of mindfulness to be there - in order to take care of anger."<sup>2</sup>*

--Thich Nhat Hanh

## **Introduction:**

There are a lot of people discussing the ordeals that military veterans face – the phrase: post-traumatic stress syndrome has been used often. I have listened to the proceedings from the *Sakyadhita Conference on Buddhist Women: Leading to Liberation*<sup>3</sup> - and as a male military veteran who served for a decade, there are many issues that veterans must face that remain incomprehensible to the civilian world. Dr. Barbara Wright was speaking at that conference, and I was amazed at her presentation which spoke directly to my heart; further, her book: *Metta: The Map, The Formula, The Equations* – is a really useful tool for anyone working to overcome problematic episodes in their life, through examples of conversation. Her book teaches us to comprehend other perspectives and

<sup>1</sup> The Origin and Deeds of the Goths, by Jordanes, Translated by Charles C. Mierow (as part of his PhD Dissertation) (Princeton: Princeton University, 1908), Section XXXIX: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/14809/pg14809.html> - accessed on 30 April 2011 – and remain mindful of the Yodhajiva Sutta that suggests that anyone dying for the sake of the military – that the soldier is dying with wrong views, and as such will venture into lower realms after death.

<sup>2</sup> My transcription, slightly edited, from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZKrl5n79hY> – accessed on 29 June 2011

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.12thsakyadhithatai.org/12thlive/index.php> - live broadcast on 15 June 2011

to become more intelligent<sup>4</sup>. She is here at this conference, so I should let her speak for herself, through her conference paper in this volume.

But let us suppose we have some problems in our life; and if we are to reintegrate back into society as productive members, we need some training to stabilize ourselves. Buddhism holds the key. The Buddha, before his enlightenment, was a member of this very similar military class – therefore understanding the ways of killing, should have been part of his upbringing. There are a few people attending this conference this year with military-backgrounds, and our experiences with various forms of violence may assist in our penetrations into the Buddhadhamma. We may know: not to be violent, because we were in some form violent-people ourselves. Evidence though of the Buddha's training is shown during the skills he had to demonstrate prior to his wedding, when he had to exhibit his prowess above and beyond those of his peers and rivals. Later, he spends six years of war endeavoring as a striving-ascetic, and soldiered on as the Fully Enlightened Buddha for forty-five years.

Antagonistic rivals are created in interesting ways. In Western discourses, one powerful figure looms over our culture, or for those who have confronted the Christianization of our militarized societies brought on by the expansion of the Roman Empire – certainly for those with a European upbringing: Attila the Hun, was able to organize the anger of his people, and direct that anger towards a certain aim – in a sense, manipulating his soldiers to managing their anger, albeit in a manner that meets with disapproval within Buddhism. However, at the personal level, Attila was known to be: “mild and gentle”<sup>5</sup> – something that Buddhists would applaud. Western discourses pitched the Capitalistic-Western World against the Communistic-Eastern World – in a decades long Cold-War, of which I was raised within, because my own parents were enlisted-service members. I, too, enlisted likewise, into the Air Force, becoming an intelligence-analyst. I did a lot of ‘intelligence’ work for the wars in Kosovo, and elsewhere on the European continent, from 1992-2002.

It should be known that Thailand’s Theravada Buddhism has a treatise which legitimizes conflict, this can be found inside: A Special Auspicious Allocation, by His Holiness Prince Vajirāñāṇa, the 10th Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand. Through taking upon the aspiration of life-longevity, and being righteous in order to avoid negligence – wise advantaged will accrue.<sup>6</sup> Through the three qualities of a desire for righteousness, welfare and a policy of governance: though the desire for righteousness we can surmise the rationalization for violence, through his utterance: “one [must] disburse one’s wealth in order to cure such wound; should a limb become useless, and it becomes necessary to amputate the limb in order to preserve life, then one should consent to the amputation of that limb, since it is better to preserve one’s life.”<sup>7</sup> It is known that in traditional Thai society, wealth was determined by how many men could be controlled – and used in times of war or as slave-labor. This system was known as the sakdina-system [power-system over the land], where: “The king allocated amount the nai-packages of duties and privileges which combined administrative responsibilities, military service, resplendent titles, and shares in the control of people

<sup>4</sup> See: B.R. Wright, PhD.: Metta: The Map, The Formula, The Equations (USA: Metta Press, 2009), pp. 2-3: She demonstrates three forms of intelligence: mind-intelligence (cognitive manipulation of ideas... expressed through understanding), heart-intelligence (emotional-knowledge... expressed through our compassion), and energy-intelligence (instinctive/primal knowledge... expressed through our commitments)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www29.homepage.villanova.edu/christopher.haas/embassy.htm> Embassy to Attila: Priscus of Panium - accessed on 15 June 2011

<sup>6</sup> His Holiness Prince Vajirāñāṇa: A Special Auspicious Allocation (Bangkok: Mahamakut University Press, 1995), pp. 46-47

<sup>7</sup> His Holiness Prince Vajirāñāṇa: A Special Auspicious Allocation (Bangkok: Mahamakut University Press, 1995), p. 50

(phrai: indentured peasants, forced to become tattooed to show their status as a servant).<sup>8</sup> While the slave-system was terminated by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), the terminology of being a phrai was resurrected during the recent social-conflict that infected Thailand during the Yellow & Red Shirts conflict, which has angered many people across Thailand, fighting for greater social-justice and the elimination of economic-disparity. People across the world have demanded basic human-rights: jobs & justice.<sup>9</sup> War and servitude is entrenched into our societies. Such externalized-violence has a tendency to affect our personal behavior: many studies on post-traumatic stress syndrome and other diagnoses have been produced following the aftermath of wars.

This article though should deal with personal demons, rather than external demons that may have shaped the character of any youth with a variety of influences. Buddhism suggests someone should prevent the arising of, and make amends for anger, which brings on more virtue.<sup>10</sup> The Visuddhimagga further claims that the Majjhima-Nikaya states: "...he who entertained hate in his heart, on that account he would not be one who carried out my teachings; and that the Samyutta-Nikaya states: To repay angry mean in kind is worse than to be angry first; repay not angry men in kind and win a battle hard to win. The weal of both he does promote: his own and then the other's too – who shall another's anger know and mindfully maintain his peace.<sup>11</sup> Is anyone tired and weary of being like our friend, Attila the Hun? Does anyone want to lay down their arms, in peace? Are you tired of fighting with your lover and beating your children? Can we surrender... give up... quit our violent ways? The cycle of violence must terminate with us, so we don't repeat it. I try to raise my sons under this vision.

## Domestic Violence and Anger Management:

Before Buddhism enters the sphere or realm of one's consciousness, a person may not look at the world in such a manner as one would see the world - as if one was a fully-ordained monk. After being a fully-ordained forest-monk, and being the recipient of or witnessing all of the social-courtesies being bestowed upon oneself for being a bhikkhu, re-entering the realm of normal-society is very challenging, particularly on the streets of Bangkok. Sounds assault the auditory-system, pedestrians rudely push one another and eventually yourself, stenches fill the nose unwantedly – it's enough to make one shutter for days, to give someone tinnitus for about four days. Culture shock may not be the word. The world outside the monastery is really aggressive, and can easily make someone angry. Where else, perhaps, than in Thailand, can you go to the market and get harassed because you might be a foreigner; be confronted by drugged-individuals who slap your arms with their contagious herpes-infested hands; nearly ran-down by bicyclists or motorcyclists riding on the sidewalks, nearly having to fight to exit the skytrain, and deal with an assortment of other verbal-abuses and questionable activities. One wonders that if the Buddhist people in this nation are indeed Buddhists, then the public behavior of many in the markets and streets would be differ-

<sup>8</sup> Pasuk Phongpaichit & Chris Baker: Thailand: Economy and Politics (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 11-12

<sup>9</sup> See the speech (circa: 1985) by the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, on People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QMTMxNq25s> – last accessed on 20 October 2011

<sup>10</sup> Bhadrahtacariya Buddhaghosa (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans.): Visuddhimagga – The Path of Purification (Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society, Pariyatti Editions, 1999), I 151

<sup>11</sup> Bhadrahtacariya Buddhaghosa (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans.): Visuddhimagga – The Path of Purification (Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society, Pariyatti Editions, 1999), IX 15

ent. But the truth is, these people are no more Buddhist than the Muslim is Islamic, or the Christian is a true follower – every society has hypocrites. There are bad-negligent people in every neighborhood – but more are concentrated in some areas than others. Some people live in places where there is a higher concentration of people who make it easy for peaceful people to become angered. This occurs in the public sphere, and we often deal with these situations alone.

As we get older in our lives, we take on private, domestic-partnerships. Inside our private homes, things happen away from the watchful eyes of the public. Perhaps our righteous behavior begins to wane behind closed doors. It may be time to not have two lives, but to make one's public life, into his private life – just to clear out all the skeletons in one's closet. We should live with nothing to hide – and live so that we have nothing to hide. We often need to become the person or the change that we want, in order to gain what we wish. In other words: the peaceful-public man (or woman) should be that very same person, in his household (or her home). The allegedly angry or reactionist must learn to become more internally angry (but of course implying being more at peace) or at peace publically (only having internal anger – but even that must be reduced). We have our private life and our public life – often these two worlds never meet. Many parents proclaim stances against engaging into violent-abusive spankings of children or beating up the spouse – but sometimes something happens inside the home, unexpectedly, and someone gets hurt. Our culture teaches this and reinforces this. Such, seemingly, well-adjusted males may become victims of verbal-abuse from women, and from such an abusive situation, a reaction occurs – a reaction in which no one expected or could have predicted. Men have, on occasion, “hit” their domestic-partner (girlfriend or wife) - this activity may happen in same-sex relationships, but this territory is excluded from the researcher’s realm of interests. Domestic violence is something that is not needed in households – certainly when there are young, developing children in the homes who absorb what they see, and would later react likewise. Parents don’t need to beat their children and spouses don’t need to beat each other, and siblings can also become civil.

For the generation of people that grew up around music-television, and modern popular music, various forms of violence are a part of the culture. Minds are entrenched around these circumstances. Anger is not one’s personalized friend, it is a form of unprofitable consciousness – someone can use it towards productive ends (for example: writing a good song), but sooner or later it becomes corrosive or anger overwhelms the bearer, and what remains is but a remnant of one’s former self. Anger or hatred (dosa): “...has the characteristic of savagery, like a provoked snake. Its function is to spread, like a drop of poison, or its function is to burn up its own support, like a forest fire. It’s manifested as persecuting (dūsana), like an enemy who has got his chance. Its proximate cause is the grounds for annoyance. It should be regarded as like stale urine mixed with poison.”<sup>12</sup> The most peaceful person can blow-up with rage, as a volcano erupts ash and lava – a person just gets hot, when set off. A person is like a bottle of soda on the shelf, peaceful when at rest, undisturbed; but once shaken or dealt with in a wrong manner, the bottle erupts and everyone around gets sprayed. Why then, do people try to make other people angry? This sort of behavior also occurs on social-network sites, where many young-monastic students have their pages, often under fake names, and use very un-Buddhist speech – perhaps as an outlet for their hormonal-confusion. There are people all over such sites like ‘Facebook’ – that cannot control their anger; these people definitely need to learn some sort of anger-management.

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<sup>12</sup> Bhadrahtacariya Buddhaghosa (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans.): Visuddhimagga – The Path of Purification (Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society, Pariyatti Editions, 1999), XIV, 171, p. 474

Someplace, a joke-statement was read from an internet-site, and to paraphrase: “Hell-yeah I spank my kids; and if he has a problem with that later in his life, he can go to therapy!” Many people are unlikely to subscribe to this type of message. Many people have encountered a lot of various types of anger in their lives and over the course of several years of social-consciousness, and stumbling upon a lot of information on the topic – many people never attend therapy-session. Instead, many therapy sessions are cloaked in our media: news-reports offering negative imagery, movies and music putting the themes in their mediums, preachers teaching about the messages in their mosques, temples or churches, and classroom teachers incorporating the theme into their lectures. Many people have engaged into self-therapy. There is a huge market for books related to self-therapy, and there are television programs that cater to this theme. Many of these therapeutic-remedies or rather instructions, are somehow faith-based or cloaked in religious rhetoric. There are also many self-help gurus who contribute philosophical or psychological studies into their works, aimed at helping troubled people.

Likewise, Buddhism instructs those who wish to come and see, how mental defilements can become purified, or eliminated from one’s consciousness. For instance - rather than killing the abuser or the other, potential-victim: the only type of killing that that Buddha approves of is the killing of one’s anger.<sup>13</sup> When this anger is assassinated, one can sleep soundly and shall not be sorrowful. A wise and skillful person is someone living righteously, without anger, “**tamed**”, and has the welfare of others as his concern - because when he can possess the cure of maintaining peace in the face of an angered rival, he cures frustrations. Anyone taking revenge makes things worse for himself<sup>14</sup> – like a difficult, unending jihad.

In the United States, for instance, many of the recent converts to Buddhism are of generations quite different from traditional Asian cultures and as such: instead of being inherently good people fostered in the socio-philosophical guidance system of what Buddhism can be, converts instead try to be good people and often there are elements of overcompensation and sometimes stressful-failure. Many Buddhists, globally, have grown up in military households (akin to being a member of the warrior-class), and when parents are away serving in the armed forces, children become latch-key kids. Older siblings are watching over younger siblings for hours alone, without adult supervision. Kids are also are fascinated by militaristic behavior – a type of primitive mode of rationale: “you have done bad to me, I will punish you through force” – this is reinforced through the cartoons and other programming that the youth view. Parents come home, and the younger sibling tells on the older sibling, and it is the older sibling that gets punished through a spanking, for trying to control the younger sibling. What is good for adults is not good for children – and this becomes a very confusing situation. Children are taught to get along, yet the generations in power can behave dictatorial and abusive. We see this hypocrisy globally, when dominant imperialistic nations exert their will upon lesser-developed nations. Through a sense of protectionism modes of isolationism develop, fostered by this sense of a need to prevent outside-antagonists from exploitation or threats; nations or people decide to develop themselves when the outside world is failing to properly encourage the well-being of the entity.

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<sup>13</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi: The Connected Discourses of the Buddha –A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya, Vol. I (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), - to the Devata: p. 133; to Vatrabhū: p. 140; to a Brahmin: p. 255; to Sakka: p. 337

<sup>14</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi: The Connected Discourses of the Buddha –A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya, Vol. I (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), pp. 256-257

Some youngsters isolate themselves into the confines of their bedrooms; and when a scenario or things went wrong in the household – ending in something like a form of child-abuse: some of these children often sit alone listening to genres or songs that fuel the emotions of the abused – helping to get them out, emotionally, from difficult times. Music is often therapeutic, and makes people feel better.<sup>15</sup> A few years ago, Hatebreed, a hardcore-metal band, put out a music video that seriously addressed the theme of domestic violence.<sup>16</sup> In this video, viewers can see that there are people who care – if only others knew of the violence or it's potentiality to exist - there is support and protection. A hip-hop artist (a notable rapper and producer), RZA put out a short movie<sup>17</sup> and a video<sup>18</sup>, actually entitled: Domestic Violence – that had a huge impact within urban culture. The short movie and video illustrates that both males and females are responsible; but in the music video we can listen to a verbally-abusive woman serving as the catalyst for the protagonist played by RZA, to tell her, in simplified terms: to leave and never come back. RZA though, in his song, addresses the problems in their relationship, to justify the termination of the relationship. Both of these videos should be seen by maturing-students. We learn that children should not be raised in homes like this, and as we may be still youthful adults, we should endeavor to never raise our own children in similar circumstances.

Further, and it is the hope that this paragraph illuminates a very controversial issue: people suffering from herpes must also learn to manage stress in order to reduce their outbreaks. Episodes of stress often resurrect the virus.<sup>19</sup> When the Buddha has mentioned that the Angry-person becomes ugly – we may surmise that he was also treating or addressing the symptoms that anger induces. Further, upon researching a lot of psychological/medical articles related to the subject of domestic violence and anger – few discuss the resurrection of herpes, the virus leading to infectious cold-sores. Further, there are people who suffer from some diseases, like herpes, which if stress or anger occurs in their life, an outbreak begins anew in the body of the sick person. In more ways than one, a person susceptible to anger needs to manage his or her life, to avoid being the ugly-demon. Being a victim to unwanted contact resurrects hostilities in people – it's like non-sexualized rape. Why must other people assault other people, why can't people just leave other people alone when contact is not wanted?

Buddhism does not provide adequate advice for such encounters, and it may be best to toss out Buddhist principles for some situations. This may not be the proper Buddhist reaction – but what is proper in that situation: giving thanks and appreciation for a new disease? The father cannot give proper physical-love to his children and wife because of this unfortunate circumstance; and must instead think about how to give more mental love to his two sons and wife – he must keep

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<sup>15</sup> There was even a recent video uploaded from The Deen Show, a popular program on Islamic themes, see for instance: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKzAmkB44ik&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKzAmkB44ik&feature=player_embedded) – people get very involved in music, and these messages begin to have effects upon people and their states. Plato was even skeptical about the power of music.

<sup>16</sup> Hatebreed: To the Threshold (official video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKZZHHyNz6I> – accessed on 26 April 2011. From their album: ‘Satisfaction is the Death of Desire’, they released a song called: ‘Conceived Through An Act of Violence’ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBWq1OtN7Cc> accessed on 20 October 2011 – which may be the foundation for many youth’s lives, thrown into a living-hell: unwanted pregnancies derived from date-rapes or even being raised in single-parent homes – today’s young children are truly alienated from humane expressions of love.

<sup>17</sup> RZA: Domestic Violence (film): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KISU66F\\_IIM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KISU66F_IIM) – accessed on 26 April 2011

<sup>18</sup> RZA: Domestic Violence (music video): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4bu\\_6yUg4Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4bu_6yUg4Y) – accessed on 26 April 2011; or at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw3tjdCM3LU&feature=related> – if the above cannot be viewed – accessed on 10 June 2011

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance: <http://www.herpes.org/herpesinfo/smartliving.shtml> - accessed on 7 June 2011

the disease away from them, and must not spread the illness. Children do not need to be around their ugly-infectious father, who from his love for them cannot hug them, and cannot have them touch his sores – because they in their innocence do not need to suffer from dwelling with their imperfect father. He must remain ever-vigilant and protective, in a sense - controlling: suppressing his stress or potentials for stress to arise in order to prevent outbreaks and the potential to infect his family. In studies of Buddhist discourses, the one presented below, seems to better address the universals behind the issues for controlling anger, from the social and medical perspectives.

## **Knowing What the Buddha Said in a Discourse about Anger<sup>20</sup>:**

In the Jataka Stories, or past-life stories of the Buddha: is the Bodhisatta supposed to be the Buddha? People get the image that the Buddha was never a man of some emotion, or that he is this extreme pacifist. The Gahapati-Jataka has an interesting story, of the Bodhisatta as being a householder's son, who was recently married. Sometime after settling down, his wife began to take an interest in the village headman. The Bodhisatta discovered the two together and after capturing them, the Bodhisatta: "seized the headman by the lock of hair on the top of his head, dragged him out into the courtyard, threw him down... [and] thrashed him till the man was faint. Then he took him by the neck and cast him out of the house. The wicked woman [his wife], he seized her by the hair of her head, pulled her away... knocked her down, and threatened her: 'If you ever do this kind of thing again, I'll make you remember it!'" He must have learned something from that episode, because in his final life, he behaved differently.

In the sense of the man infected with herpes by the sick-man, the man struck the sick man hoping that the lesson will be learned to never touch and infect another person again. We can interact in non-neutral manners with someone in two ways, either they create us to be a rival or we create them into being a rival.<sup>21</sup> It is within our animal nature to view others as some sort of challenge. We may not like that another person is visually more appealing than us. We may wish that they never sleep well. We may wish that a rival shall never prosper. We may wish that a rival never become wealthy. We may wish that a rival may never become famous. We may wish that a rival never have any friends. We may even wish that our rivals join the abyss of a fiery hell. As like when a sufferer of herpes faces an episode of induced stress: indeed the angry man turns to be ugly, and after this arising of heat, the fever-blister appears to disfigure the angered person. It's hard to sleep when angered, and people always remind young couples that they should never go to sleep angry.

In the heat of the argument, a person loses one's senses and actually finds pleasure in unwholesome activities. One would not care if the rival is put to death during anger – blind darkness indeed reigns. Yet, when this episode of wrath has diminished, suffering may overwhelm one with adequate senses. It is also said that being angry is suicidal: one kills one's self image – others will not see the angry person in the same manner. Even Mara can snare someone during the period of one's loathsome form. Therefore, the only way away from such obscurations is becoming freed from anger, trouble, greed, and coveting. When our minds are thus controlled, we can be cool in otherwise stressful situations. We have to comprehend anger. The next section

<sup>20</sup> E. M. Hare: The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikāya), Vol. IV (London: Pāli Text Society, 1965), pp. 58-62.

<sup>21</sup> Satt' ime bhikkhave dhammā sattakantā sapattakarāṇā kodhanam āgacchanti itthim vā purisam vā Katame satta? - E. Hardy (ed.): The Anguttara-Nikāya, Part IV (London: Pali Text Society, 1979), LX, p. 94

covers the non-verbal or bodily actions of someone dominated by the unwholesome root of hatred in the consciousness, or mental-behavior.

## Anger from the Vimuttimagga & Visuddhimagga:

The following is an adaptation from the Vimuttimagga<sup>22</sup> and Visuddhimagga<sup>23</sup> – their merged words related towards hatred. There are fourteen different kinds of people mentioned corresponding to fourteen kinds of behavior, of which only those related to this article's theme of anger or hatred is shown, for the sake of brevity:

- The person walking in hate
- The person walking in passion-hate
- The person walking in hate-infatuation
- The person walking in passion-hate-infatuation

Of the fourteen types of behavior, these four above are the types under the realm of walking-in-hatred. These people always behave or exhibit some sort of hatred or anger; and often their hatred increases or becomes very developed. This ‘hating-behavior’ exudes several possibilities or variations of anger – and because not every occurrence of anger is identical, again there is the potentiality of the characteristics merging:

- The walker in hate and the walker in intelligence may be similar
- The walker in passion-hate and the walker in faith-intelligence may be similar
- The walker in hate-infatuation and the walker in intelligence-excogitation may be similar
- The walker in passion-hate-infatuation and the walker in faith-intelligence-excogitation may be similar

So, depending on the various combinations of idiosyncrasies, these can all find their roots in the hating-temperament. How is this understood? As the Vimuttimagga asks questions for the reader: How can a person walking in hate become one with walker in intelligence? In a sense: How are they the same or similar? Consider the answer: In a hating person, when he does good: intelligence is strong - because this quality approaches hate. How so, because most people may not see the linkages? One is able to discriminate minute-details – a form of critique that brings out frustrations. One of intelligent temperament is parallel to one of hating temperament because understanding is strong when profitable kamma occurs in one of hating temperament, owing to its special qualities being near those of hate. This is not saying that hatred and intelligence are the same, but it is saying that both types of behavior look at the smallest increments of something; and thereby can distinguish volitions (preferences) more carefully to pursue proper courses of action. For, in a negative or unprofitable way, hate is also a form of alienation or disaffection and would not hold to its object; and so, in a profitable way the behavior of understanding is likewise interpreted.

<sup>22</sup> Upatissa (Rev. N.R.M Ehara, and Kheminda Thera, trans.): The Path of Freedom – the Vimuttimagga (Colombo, 1961)

<sup>23</sup> Bhadahtacariya Buddhaghosa (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans.): Visuddhimagga – The Path of Purification (Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society, Pariyatti Editions, 1999)

Further, the text suggests: Hate seeks out only unreal faults, while understanding seeks out only real faults; and hate occurs in the mode of condemning living beings, while understanding occurs in the mode of condemning formations. There are three traits that make hate and intelligence appear to be similar, through three concepts:

- **Non-Clinging:** a person of hate would not cleave (to what is good); likewise, intelligent people do not cleave (to what is bad).
- **Searching For Faults:** As a hating person is given to faultfinding, so an intelligent person is given to the search for the faults of wrongful conduct.
- **Repulsion:** As a hating person repulses others, so an intelligent person repulses the conformations.

Through these characteristics or aspects of personality, a person walking in hate can be seen as similar to someone walking in intelligence. They are alike in this respect. In else can be said about the hateful person, in terms of their mode of practice? The walker in hate is of quick practice, because he is easily led, is strong in intelligence and because of the rarity of infatuation and excogitation in him. The walker in passion-hate is of quick practice, because he is easily led, strong in faith and intelligence and because of the rarity of infatuation and excogitation in him. The walker in hate-infatuation is of slow practice, because he is led with difficulty, lacks intelligence and because infatuation and excogitation are strong in him. The walker in qualities of equal measure (passion-hate-infatuation or faith-intelligence-excogitation) is of slow practice, because he is led with difficulty, does not dwell in intelligence and because infatuation and excogitation are strong in him. Basically, human defilements can be reduced to just three: a person walks in passion (greed), a person walks in hate (hatred), and a person walks in infatuation (delusion). How though, can someone determine that someone is of a certain personality-characteristic or behavior? How can we look at someone and determine that they are either a walker in passion, hate, or infatuation? Their external non-verbal actions are examined – the body language is accessed: someone is observed through their methods of dressing (robes), the way food is eaten, the type of bedding resided in, work-resort and postures. These and other social interactions determine the characteristics.

**Deeds done in the past are causes of behavior:** One who (in past existences) had engaged in such hostile acts as: killing, maiming and capturing, becomes a walker in hate, and also one who passes away from a hell or a serpent-state, is reborn here. Thus deeds done in the past become causes of behavior.

- Elements as causes of behavior: because of the heightening of two elements, one becomes a walker in hate. They are the element of mobility and the element of heat.
- Cardinal humors as causes of behavior: one who has an excess of choler becomes a walker in hate, and one who has an excess of wind becomes a walker in infatuation.

## Judging the Criteria:

Simply put: to be angry is to not be Buddhist - the person has already been infected too deeply by the kilesa (defilement); but, we must study more about the phenomena of being angry and exuding hatred. We can actually witness hate or anger being displayed in some people.

How do past deeds become the causes of behavior? How can we determine if someone is a walker in hate? Check the non-verbal actions of the person of contention. There are seven aspects of behavior that are observed that contribute in knowing: through (the manner of seeing) objects, through the defilements, through (the manner of) walking, through (the manner of) robing, through (the manner of) eating, through work and through (the manner of) sleeping; and one's resort or how one dwells. A person desiring a meditation subject should express three ideals: be able to dedicate oneself to a respected teacher; be able to sincerely ask for the meditation subject; and possess the firm resolution to endure the techniques. Someone should never undergo an improper search because this leads to one's failures in meditation. If someone remains undedicated and wanderous to a teacher and techniques, whimsically, consequently the teacher cannot help the seeker with even material things or the Dhamma, and will not engage in training the seeker in the [*abhidhammic*] cryptic books – those dealing with meditation subjects, the four noble truths, dependent origination, etc., -those being profound and associated with voidness. Failing to get this assistance, someone will be unable to get a good grasp of the Buddha's dispensation – and may fall into misdeeds or revert back into the lay-life. The following are where unfortunate things may occur or are observed through non-verbal communications:

- **Through the manner of seeing objects:** When one of hating temperament sees even a slightly unpleasing visible object, one avoids looking long as if tired, he picks out trivial faults, discounts genuine virtues, and when departing, he does so without regard as if anxious to leave. When facing humor, often quarrels with the others. The walker-in-hate is not pleased with very good things; and rejects just about anything. One's way of life is quite determined by the humors; and with the other sense-objects similar behavior emerges. The cultivation of the forest-dweller's practice and the tree-root-dweller's practice here are suitable for one of hating temperament: for hate too subsides in one who dwells there without coming into conflict.<sup>24</sup> Thus it may be known that one is a walker in hate – seen through observing or known 'through (the manner of seeing) objects'.
- **Through the defilements:** There are five types of defilements for one walking in hate: anger, vindictiveness, hypocrisy, stinginess, hatred. One of hating temperament has formerly had plenty of stabbing and torturing and brutal work to do or has reappeared here after dying in one of the hells or the naga-serpent existences - there is no definitive definition. For when in one man, at the moment of his accumulating rebirth producing kamma, if hate is strong within him, and the other characteristics (greed, delusion) are weak, then this will be the reason why, on being reborn through rebirth-linking given by that kamma, he is angry. When at the moment of his accumulating kamma [for instance]: non-greed, hate and delusion are strong and the others are weak, then in the way already stated he has little defilement and is unshakable even on seeing a heavenly object, but he has hate and is slow in understanding. Likewise, when at the moment of his accumulating kamma, non-greed, hate and non-delusion are strong and the rest weak, then in the way already stated he both has no greed and possesses understanding, but has hate and is irascible. So it is the kamma productive of rebirth-linking and accompanied by some temperament that should be understood as the source of the temperament – and this hatred can be either keen (if unprompted) or sluggish (if prompted). A person is known by this temperament through one's posture, actions, method of eating, seeing things, and so on, and by the states occurring – thereby the teacher can recognize the pupil's temperament. In one of

<sup>24</sup> Bhadahtacariya Buddhaghosa (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans.): Visuddhimagga – The Path of Purification (Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society, Pariyatti Editions, 1999), II 86

hating temperament there is frequent occurrences of such states as: anger, enmity, disparaging, domineering, envy, and avarice. Thus it may be known, ‘through the defilements’.

- **Through the manner of walking:** The natural gait of one walking in hate is thus: one lifts up the feet jerkily or digs with the points of the feet; and jerkily puts them down or puts the feet down quickly, lifts one up quickly, and drags the steps along. The feet rub against each other when they are placed down half-way, as if digging the ground. This is how the one who walks in hate is known – through this sort of walking.
- **Through the manner of robing:** The natural manner of robing of him who walks in hate is thus: He robes hurriedly. The robes are too tight and sit too high, are not level or well-rounded, are inelegantly worn and, in many ways, are not pleasing to see – although it is said that the right kind of inner and outer garments for him are of any superior stuff such as China cloth, Somara cloth, silk, fine cotton, fine linen, of either single or double thickness, quite light, and well-dyed, quite pure in color to befit an ascetic. Therefore, a walker in hate should robe himself with minute care, cleanly and with robes of bright color. His robes should sit low and be elegant.
- **Through the manner of eating:** A walker in hate is displeased with food of little taste. The right kind of gruel, rice and hard-food has color, smell and taste, possesses nutritive essence, and is inviting, superior in every way, and enough for his wants. One of hating temperament also relishes eating rough, sour or acidic food, and takes in big mouthfuls of immoderate lumps of food, not well-rounded. When eating he makes a lump that fills his mouth and he eats hurriedly without savoring the tastes. He is aggrieved when he gets something not good. A walker in hate may look for succulent, pure and tasty food, and for as much as he likes. Thus it may be known, ‘through (the manner of) eating’.
- **Through work:** A walker in hate hurriedly takes the broom, grasps it tightly and sweeps, quickly, one end to the other, scattering or throwing up sand uncleanly and unevenly on both sides - making harsh noise. He sweeps clean, but not evenly. A walker in hate does all things unevenly, but does not let his mind go astray. Thus it may be known ‘through work’.
- **Through the manner of sleeping:** A walker in hate hurries and lies down or spreads his bed hastily in any place he gets. When ready, one then flings the body down and sleeps with a scowl – frowning in sleep. On being awakened at night, he gets up immediately and answers angrily or as if annoyed. A walker in hate should sleep and sit under shade of trees, by the water’s edge, in a level place, in a completed shrine, or in a place provided with beds and sheets. Thus it may be known ‘through (the manner of) sleeping’.
- **Through one’s resort or dwelling:** The resort of a walker in hate is the place where rice, water, meat and drink are complete: a suitable resting place for one of hating temperament is not too high or low, provided with shade and water, with well-proportioned walls, posts and steps, with well-prepared frieze work and lattice work, brightened with various kinds of paintings, with an even, smooth, soft floor, adorned with festoons of flowers and a canopy of many-colored cloth like a Brahma-god’s divine palace, with bed and chair covered with well-spread clean pretty covers, smelling sweetly of flowers, and perfumes and scents set about for homely comfort, which makes one happy and glad at the mere sight of it. A hating man gains faith through being bound up with unlovely things. The right kind of road to his lodging is free from any sort of

danger, traverses clean, even ground, and has been properly prepared. It is best that the lodging's furnishings are not too many in order to avoid hiding places for insects, bugs, snakes, and rats; even a single bed and chair only. When he enters the village for alms, he should not face the sun, and should go where there are many men of faith. To such a place he should go. The right kind of bowl for him is made of iron and is well-shaped like a water-bubble, as polished as a gem, spotless and of quite pure color to befit an ascetic. The right kind of road on which to wander for alms is free from dangers, level, agreeable, with the village neither too far nor too near. The right kind of village in which to wander for alms is where people, thinking: 'Now, our lord is coming', prepare a seat in a sprinkled, swept place, and going out to meet him, take his bowl and lead him to the house, seat him on a prepared seat, and serve him carefully with their own hands. Suitable people serving him are handsome, pleasing, well-bathed, well-anointed, scented with the perfume or incense and the smell of flowers, adorned with apparel made of variously-dyed clean pretty cloth, who do their work carefully. The walker in hate should adopt the posture of sitting or lying down. A hating man is much affected by the humors, and does not allow himself to be stained by the defilements. A man walking in hate is quarrelsome. A hating man is like a master.

### Preferred Meditation:

It is no surprise that there are few actual directions for recognizing the temperaments that have been handed down in their entirety in either the texts or the commentaries; they are only expressed according to the opinion of the teachers and cannot therefore be treated as authentic. Most of these concepts are just based from observations – and many of these observations can be reassessed. As we know people can hide their emotions... someone could indeed be angry, but act otherwise – thus, much of the above can be dismissed. It's quite possible for those of a hating temperament, when they diligently aspire to alter their emotions, to have other characteristics ascribed upon them. Only such directions for recognizing temperament as are given in the commentaries should be treated as authentic, for it was said: 'A teacher who has acquired penetration of minds will know the temperament and will explain a meditation subject accordingly; one who has not should question the pupil'. So it is by penetration of the minds or by questioning the person, that it can be known whether he is one of any sort of temperament.

However, the meditation subject that is suitable to the temperament has not been cleared up in all its aspects yet. This will become clear automatically when those in the following lists are treated in detail. Now it was said above: 'and he should apprehend from among the forty meditation subjects one that suits his own temperament'. Despite illustrating self-prognosis, there is no teacher prescribing a meditation topic if this is taken as given. How 'by way of person'? A walker in hate should not practice the ten perceptions of putrescence, because of the arising of resentment-perception. A walker in hate is not good at appreciating it and is comparable to a man with a bilious ailment partaking of hot drinks and food which are harmful to him. The four divine abidings and four color kasinas are eight suitable meditations for one of hating temperament. A walker in hate could practice the four immeasurables (suitable for any temperament), because these help overcome hatred; or again, the undertaking of practicing color kasinas, because his mind attends to such. And again, there is another teaching: "When I investigate the subjects of meditation, I see their distinctive qualities. If that be so, will there be difficulties at the beginning? A walker in hate

who has dull faculties should practice the four immeasurables. By this he will be able to overcome hatred. The walker in hate who has keen faculties, being one endowed with wisdom, should practice the (meditation of the) special sphere. Thus should one practice and dispel hatred. Therefore, there should be no difficulty. According to this teaching, the kasinas and mindfulness of respiration are developed (further) through space. It is said, according to the Visuddhimagga (p. 114) that in the Anguttara-Nikaya's Meghiya Sutta (AN, IV, 358): "One should in addition develop these four things: foulness should be developed for the purpose of abandoning greed (lust); loving-kindness should be developed for the purpose of abandoning ill-will; mindfulness of breathing should be developed for the purpose of cutting off applied thought; perception of impermanence should be cultivated for the purpose of eliminating the conceit: 'I am.'" The Visuddhimagga also suggests that in the Majjhima-Nikaya's Rahula Sutta, there is advice stating that seven meditation subjects are suitable for any single temperament. So, instead of insisting on the mere letter, the intention should be sought in each instance – by way of asking some basic questions:

- What is your temperament?
- What do you like bringing to mind?
- What meditation subject does your mind favor?

The student can be tested through the following questions:

- Ask them to recite the learned meditation in one or two sessions
- Ask them to expound on it to one who lives in the same place each time he comes
- Suggest to one who wants to learn it to then go elsewhere to expound on it in such a manner as to be not too brief nor too long

If someone is demonstrating the kasinas, there are nine aspects that cannot be forgotten:

1. Four faults of the kasina
2. The making of the kasina
3. The method of development for one who has made it
4. The two kinds of signs
5. The two kinds of concentration
6. The seven kinds of suitable and unsuitable,
7. The ten kinds of absorption
8. Evenness of energy
9. Directions for absorption

For any of the other meditation subjects, each one should be expounded appropriately according to what the method would dictate. When the meditation subject is being expounded by the teacher, the student-meditator must apprehend the sign as he listens to the instructions. To apprehend the sign – this means that he must connect each aspect, systematically, which means also that instruction should include notions of these:

- This is the preceding clause
- This is the subsequent clause
- This is its meaning
- This is its intention
- This is the simile

If the student can listen attentively, apprehending the sign in this way, then the meditation-topic is well-apprehended; then, because of that, one can gain or recognize the distinctions - but not until these have been refined. All of these items should annotated and recognized with ease – or repeated until known. If the meditator is endowed with any merit, one should have no difficulty in fulfilling these subjects of meditation.

## Non-Violent Communication and Domestic Respect:

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan gave a speech recently<sup>25</sup>, and discussed: words have the power to kill or destroy the spirit of love, and lessen the self-respect of an individual through these intimate levels of violence. Have you ever told your children that they are stupid, and will never amount to anything, and that they are just like their good-for-nothing father? The conditioned-mind begins to absorb this negativity and adapts to or internalizes these issues, until the person actually becomes what was created. The person issuing the words is responsible for creating the young person to be raised negatively. Men and women need to learn their purposes to act and bring about peace and joy in the house – but, if the man and woman do not know their domestic role, problems ensue. When men are under-performing in terms of economics, the wife may begin to seek outside the home for her satisfaction – and this is the catalyst for domestic violence – not the woman becoming adulterous, but the man failing to properly support the family. The issues related to domestic strife are not about sex, or the performance of sexual endeavors; the issue is deeply: the role of the man in a relationship. Men are supposed to be producers, not only bringing material items into the home - but also provide emotional and mental security for the family. How someone uses their mouth is very important in a relationship and simple forms of mental violence, like calling people by certain curse-words, can have a devastating effect inside the home.

We often get angry at some instigation. “The proclivities towards lust, anger and conceit are more like ‘sleeping passions’ that may wake up due to certain triggers and invade us in a quick impulsive manner.”<sup>26</sup> While most discussions on anger seem to pertain only to when it arises in meditation, Thich Nhat Hahn has suggested: hold your anger like holding a baby; because loving-kindness and anger are both parts of us. Anger is a form of energy, and mindfulness is another form of energy. So when the anger-energy is there, we should also invite loving-kindness to be present. His solution is mindful-breathing. Anger cannot be ignored, but when one is mindful of anger, then one is taking care of the anger – the practice and embracing of anger through

<sup>25</sup> Louis Farrakhan: The State of the Black Family – speech delivered at Thornton High School, on 20 June 2009. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or0lxAiCRBg&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or0lxAiCRBg&feature=player_embedded) - Accessed on 14 June 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Padmasiri de Silva: Buddhist and Freudian Psychology (Victoria: Shogam Publications, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2010), p. xxxiii (Prelude)

mindfulness, and after time there will be a transformation of the person.<sup>27</sup> The energy of anger can be transformed into the energy of understanding, if we learn to comprehend this process. But again, most of this activity seems to take place in meditation.

Professor De Silva states: “In dhammanupassanā, the meditator makes the anger an object of meditation; in cittanupassanā, like in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy the meditator becomes aware of the thought components and the auto-pilot process that feeds anger; in vedanānupassanā, one ‘puts on the brakes’ at the initial emergence of disagreeable feelings (dukkha-vedanā) and does not let it develop into anger. In tranquility meditation, the development of a state of bodily and mental calm may temporarily push the anger aside, but it may not radically deal with its roots. In kāyanupassanā, which is focused on the body and is the preliminary meditation in the Buddhist fourfold scheme (satipaṭṭhana), we develop attention towards a very central ingredient of negative emotions and body-reactivity. In this context, tranquility meditation too can be effective. In the last analysis, it is necessary to have in mind that Buddhism has no generic term for emotion, and it is an initial feeling (vedana) that becomes an emotion. And as such, an emotion is a construction composed of an initial bodily/mental feeling which is pleasurable/painful/neutral and which, by the addition of thoughts, appraisals, desires/craving, grasping, and physiological arousal gets converted to an emotion.”

Professor Deborah Bowman has written: “The ability of the non-violent communication practitioner to clearly observe a situation is essential. Often in the practice it is necessary to translate this observation into a verbal description that is without judgment or personal prejudice. ...A key to being received and understood by another person in a potentially conflictual situation is to provide information that is without personal bias, interpretation or evaluation. ...We might say: ‘I noticed you just now raised your voice louder than usual and I am wondering if you are feeling angry?’ – instead of: ‘you are so angry.’ ...our purpose is not to change people in order to get our way.”<sup>28</sup>

## A Difficult Solution:

It is very difficult to maintain composure when someone is in your face yelling at you for something you allegedly conducted or neglected to perform. Some people are quite persistent in their rants. Through Attila the Hun, one of Western History’s most relentless individuals is recollected, along with a discussion pertaining to many modern social situations which serve as the catalyst for the arising of anger. Contemporary music, such as RZA’s song on Domestic Violence can actually serve as a public-service announcement for the prevention of such horrible activities. Not only are people conscious about refraining from spousal and child-abuse, they are also conscious to not generate stress-levels that would induce a herpes-outbreak – a transformation that the Buddha had indeed labeled as the anger person becoming ugly, literally. Several pages were also dedicated to the types of body-actions or the analysis of someone’s non-verbal communications – demonstrations of their behavior which can be observed from a distance. The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan has urged families to adopt a language of respect and nourishment which comes to fruition when the roles of each family-member is well-played out, and Dr. Deborah Bowman has suggested that

<sup>27</sup> Ram Dass interviews Thich Nhat Hanh - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZKrl5n79hY> – accessed on 14 June 2011

<sup>28</sup> Deborah Bowman: Buddhism and Nonviolent Communication: An Effective Practice for Peace, inside Buddhist Approach to Political Conflict and Peace Development (Dr. Dion Peoples, ed.) – delivered for the 6<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day of Vesak Conference, 4-6 May 2009, pp. 132-144

non-violent communication is a key factor in better relationships, which was also a theme issued forth in the Farrakhan video. The material taken from the Buddhist texts deal with anger primarily through meditation, while the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh has tried to show that while being mindful, one can control oneself in awakened-active moments, through mindfulness. What then is the closing words by the author, in his own voice?

## **My Conclusion for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Anger Management:**

I cannot say that I will never again become angry; it is likely that anger will occur within myself in the future. I do take measures to control my anger. I have taken the proactive measure of avoidance as a great method. Yet, I can only take upon the circumstances as they occur, because each encounter seems to be different than any previous situations. There are perhaps millions of Americans living with post-traumatic stress-syndrome, where they are forced to live paranoid or hyper-reactive lives, fearing something, to disassociate themselves from the catalyst of some anger or hatred. Buddhism offers many coping mechanisms for those suffering with aggressive-behavior. Mindfulness, not only in meditation, but mindful living is also a great protector of the individual – performing as the security force for the susceptible. People can learn to recognize that they are prone to this defiling characteristic; they should endure peacefully within a troublesome situation; and by controlling one's anger one can become the victor in the circumstance.<sup>29</sup> In this way, mindfulness becomes a continuous practice rather than just a mere device utilized temporarily in meditations.

Rather than making anger an object of reflection, in the sense that meditators use, anger should be perhaps brought out into the social-sphere – and in doing such, perhaps a greater process of civility begins to cover society. We should know that anger pervades everywhere. Sometimes, I think it is better so see things negatively, because when something bad happens you are not surprised by it; but if you wander around thinking everything is fine – someone might be in for a rude awakening. In this way, someone can learn to appreciate the fine and simple things, and learn to value things at a deeper level. This includes our relationships. If we know that the world is full of bad people, hostility and anger, we can associate this with suffering pervading in the world. Since we are in the world, we must operate in this realm where suffering exists, even if it is not our own or of ourselves, we might be the victim or witness of someone else's hostility. The more we are ready for it, the better we can arm ourselves or have at our disposal: the proper tools to assist in the elimination of anger, which we have already recognized, and are thereby taking measures to eliminate it, because we know goodness or betterment will come.

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<sup>29</sup> D. Eckstein & D. Mitchell: Incorporating Buddhist Psychology into a brief group therapy for Anger and Aggression (International Journal of Academic Research, Vol. I, No. 2, November 2009) - [http://www.ijar.lit.az/pdf/2/2009\(2-30\).pdf](http://www.ijar.lit.az/pdf/2/2009(2-30).pdf) – accessed on 16 June 2011

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# **Psychotherapy By Karma Transformation**



*Maurits G.T. Kwee<sup>1</sup>*

## **Prelude**

There are plenty misunderstandings about *karma* whose conceptualization in non-Buddhist quarters carries the flavor of fate or destiny due to the working mechanism of cause-and-effect. This usually boils down to: “good deeds lead to heaven, an after-life paradise, and bad deeds lead to hell in the beyond”. The Buddha allocated from his awakening point-of-view a specific this-worldly/here-now meaning of *karma*, a term borrowed from Brahmanism, as intentional action that is subject to choice. Furthermore, from a Buddhist psychological perspective heaven and hell are metaphors for joy and anger, while good and evil only exist as non-foundational qualities which are basically empty. This essay draws on the tenet that the Buddha was an “analyst”/*vibhajjavadin* (*Subha Sutta*)<sup>2</sup> and that his transforming dialogues were meant to change intention/*kamma*, motivation/*hetu*, and performance/*kiriyā*. In order to contribute to the daily psychological “rebirths” of wholesome emotional episodes, the Buddha’s tactics of transforming *kamma* can be summarized in a centerpiece called *Karma Sequence*, which is a combination of the modalities/*khandhas* and the 3-Poisons: (1) awareness of sensory perception (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and viewing through the mind’s eye) which are felt relatively positive, negative, or neutral, (2) awareness of dys/functional cognitions due to ignorance on how the mind works which usually fabricates projections of illusory selves and delusional gods, (3) awareness of un/wholesome cognitions of intentional planning also called volition or conation which inhere in the motivational factors of action, (4) awareness of self-sabotaging thoughts which reflect the proclivity of irrational craving (“musts/shoulds”), greedy grasping (fear-of-loss and grief-of-loss), and hateful clinging (aggression/other-hate and depression/self-hate), and (5) awareness by mindfulness unveiling the interactive Dependent Origination of body/speech/mind which incorporate karmic antecedents and consequents leading to balanced interactivity. In effect, *Karma Transformation* starts with an unwanted emotional state and works at changing unwholesome/*akusala* perception, cognition, and behavior with regard to an external or internal activating event by choosing for wholesome/*kusala* perception, cognition, and behavior to alter affect. Thus, the *karma* of drama, distress, and agony is transformed into the *karma* of contentment. This is illustrated by a case example detailing the construction of wholesome *karma* as rational cognitions and functional behaviors. Insiders have observed that karmic sequences run parallel to the centerpiece used in Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT), a school of psychotherapy, which implies that the two methodologies of change overlap considerably. Indeed, one of the founding fathers of CBT, the legendary Albert Ellis, noted that these disciplines bear more commonalities than differences, particularly by abolishing “most of the human ego” (Kwee & Ellis, 1998). Psychotherapy, also if Buddhist, operates in the realm of the “provisional self”; hence therapy logically precedes meditation towards “ultimate no-self”. At bottom: only when calmed down, free from emotional quagmires and *horror vacuum*, is one ready to shift toward emptiness and Buddhahood.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks are due to Dr. Dion Peoples who proficiently brought the correct *sutta* to my attention.

## Introduction

There is a growing interest worldwide amongst scientists-practitioners for the Buddhist Teachings (Buddha-Dhamma/Dharma) as an applied science of psychology to guide people's ways of living toward emotional balance (e.g. De Silva, 2010; Kwee, 2010 and 2011, Kwee, Gergen, & Koshikawa, 2006). This is in spite of the fact that the Dharma is considered by many, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, to be a *religion* and a *philosophy* rather than a *psychology*. However, because these three words/concepts do not exist in the pristine Dharma and in the languages of Buddhist Asia, it is neither of these three. Because Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha – who lived around 563-483 Before Common Era – never claimed to be some intermediary between humanity and the beyond, a messiah or a prophet, or anything else but a human being, who claimed to be just “awakened”, i.e. not asleep (*Dona Sutta*), the Dharma is definitely not a religion in the Abrahamic sense.

Moreover, as in the discourses (*nikayas*), one might infer that the Buddha promulgated a this-worldly teaching of wisdom that is non-theistic implying that the *Dharma* is “neither theistic, nor a-theistic” (*Sabba Sutta*, *Vacchagotta Sutta*, and *Malunkyaputta Sutta*). In the *Tevijja Sutta* the Buddha pointed out that it is foolish to assimilate with an imaginary or visualized god. In effect this boils down to the reading that “god is non-of-our-business”. Nonetheless, the Dharma was and is usually categorized as a “religion”. Even if termed a “secular religion” this classification is a consequence of Eurocentric/neo-colonial thinking. However, from a pragmatic point of view, there are advantages to treat the Dharma as a religion, because then it is: (1) recognizable, (2) organizable, (3) subsidizable, and (4) viable in multicultural societies.<sup>3</sup> Hence, on the bottom line, radically resisting the erroneous view of the Dharma as a religion becomes questionable. But Buddhists know better: our teaching is about disseminating loving-kindness against the backdrop of an emptiness of the wise. God-heads merged with the Dharma are cultural atavisms meant to attract the illiterate and not to scare off the meek by an “empty teaching”. In certain psychological quarters it is not at all praiseworthy to consider the Dharma as a religion. To the renowned Sigmund Freud (1927) religion is a collective obsessive-compulsive disorder due to an infantile wish for a parent which is much akin to a psychotic disturbance; and the legendary Albert Ellis (1980) straightforwardly called religion mental illness. As both giants are of Jewish descent they alluded to the Abrahamic faiths when talking about religion.

While the interpretation of the Dharma as a religion was in the tradition of Louis de Vallée Poussin (1869-1939), a Belgian who explored Indian Mahayana that includes god-like interpretations through its representations of cosmic Buddhas meant as “skilful means” (*upayakaushalya*, S), there was another tradition that views the Dharma as a philosophy. This current was spearheaded by the Russian scholar Fyodor Stcherbatsky (1866-1942) who explored Tibetan Buddhism as a philosophy. The term Buddhism is exemplary to denote the philosophical take. Notwithstanding, the Dharma is a *magga*, a way or practice (comparable to the Tao in China), not an “ism”; hence it is not a philosophy, nor a theory, but a guide for practice. Hence, rather than “opium for the intellectuals”, the Dharma is a *modus vivendi* for seekers of liberation from experiential malaise by tailored experimentation called meditation. If the Dharma is not a philosophy, should this Western word, enforcing misguided semantics, be banned from the Buddhist vocabulary?

<sup>3</sup> E.g., if not as a religion, the Dharma would be unclassifiable and unviable in Indonesia. By declaring the Adhi-Buddha as a god-head, Buddhism enjoys the status of a formal religion in the framework of religious freedom.

As long as the user knows better, using Buddhism as a container term that includes religion and philosophy is surely convenient. This implies that Buddhism could also be a psychology (De Silva, 2005; Kalupahana, 1987). However, because psychology is a typical Western discipline, it is for clarity reasons advisable to explicitly talk about Buddhist Psychology to acknowledge the confluence of the Dharma and psychology. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) psychology is “the study of the mind and behavior. The discipline embraces all aspects of the human experience, from the functions of the brain to the actions of nations, from child development to care for the aged. In every conceivable setting from scientific research centers to mental health care services, ‘the understanding of behavior’ is the enterprise of psychologists” ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)).

Psychologists/psychotherapists are scientists-practitioners who attempt to understand mind, experience, and concomitant behaviors; these are themes overlapping the Buddhist venture. The Buddhist project is to responsibly watch over *kamma/P* or *karma/S* which can be defined in psychological terms as: intentional/cognitive activity/behavior in relational context. How does *karma* come about? Which factors are functional in contributing to its multi-causal (body/speech/mind) and multimodal (doing/talking/thinking) arising, peaking, subsiding, and ceasing? What remedy is prescribed to alleviate people from the *dukkha* of psychological suffering? Which interventions need to be implemented for what ailments, to whom, by whom, when, and under which circumstances?<sup>4</sup> William James, father of American psychology, already noted: “I am ignorant of Buddhism... [but] as I apprehend the Buddhist... *karma*, I agree in principle with that.” (1902, p.512). In this essay, I follow his lead.

## Karma and Its Metaphors

A Buddhist approach considers meaning as derived from the compassion and care for interpersonal relationship in harmony with oneself. This stretches out to Buddhist Psychotherapy that could be pinpointed as an evidence-based system of assessment and intervention. To date, the school of psychotherapy that is researched best is Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT) which is an amalgam of Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Therapy; both began in the 1950s.

Behavior Therapy is based on a model derived from the psychology of learning by conditioning: (1) Pavlovian classical conditioning (food associated to a ringing bell will eventually result in salivation when only hearing the sound), (2) Skinnerian operant conditioning (rewarding a target behavior will result in its frequency increase), and (3) Bandura’s vicarious conditioning which is cognitive learning through modeling and imitation. Cognitive Therapy targets the analysis of dysfunctional or irrational thoughts, cognitions-concepts/images-visualizations which are highly correlated to

<sup>4</sup> Research (Lyubomirsky, 2008) suggests that un/happiness is determined by a genetic set-point (50%), circumstantial factors (10%), and intentional activity (40%), called *karma* in Buddhism. The latter opens a window of opportunity. Human beings are equipped by a personal genetic set-point for un/happiness comparable with a set-point for weight or length which is hardly modifiable. People with high set-points will find it easier to be happy, while people with low set-points will have to work harder to achieve and maintain happiness under similar conditions. Long term overall circumstances include correlational demographics happening to us like age, health, education, money, country, religion, or marital status. While these factors matter, they only determine a small percentage to un/happiness. Due to human hedonic adaptation, it is a misguided hope that they will impact long-lasting happiness. Rapidly accustomed to sensory or physiologic changes, they deliver short-lived boosts of happiness. Happy people do not just sit around being happy. They make things happen and this activity spins off a by-product which is happiness over and above the genetic set range and life circumstances.

affect-emotion and individual/interpersonal manifest behavior. Affect<sup>5</sup> is the psychologist term for emotions which form the prime target of CBT that is mainly focused on alleviating suffering from anxiety/fear, anger/aggression, sadness/grief, and clinical depression. There are two schools of CBT, Beck's Cognitive Therapy and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) founded by the legendary Albert Ellis (1913-2007). According to a survey of 800 counseling and clinical psychologists, members of the APA (Smith, 1982), a more recent one is not available, Beck and Ellis were the seventh and second in the ranking of most influential psychotherapist. This author has worked closely with Ellis on ferreting out commonalities and differences between REBT and Zen (Kwee & Ellis, 1998) and was one of the first to connect CBT with Buddhism, along with P. de Silva (1984) and W. Mikulas (1978) (Kwee, 1990).

This was the formative beginning of a development that has lead to a confluence of CBT and Buddhist practice for which I have coined the phrase: *Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation* (Kwee & Kwee-Taams, 2010a and 2010b). *Karma Transformation* targets *karma* plainly defined as (motivated) action. This definition is blurred by supernatural notions, an unfortunate development that will be avoided here; Buddhist Psychotherapy is interested in this-worldly karmic sequences. These sequences function according to “Dependent Origination” (*paticcasamuppada*), the *summum bonum* of the Buddha’s awakening. Understanding *karma*, a proposition that intentions implicate activity and its fruits (*karmaphala*) is quintessential in the Buddhist practice to end suffering. In effect, intention is a mental state of heart/thought (*Cetana Sutta*) which leads to karmic action of body/speech/mind through volition and intention. “Intention... [I say] is *kamma*.” (*Nibbedhika Sutta*). The importance of *karma* can be inferred by the Buddha’s further statements that *karma* is imbibed: we own, are born of, relate to, and live by *karma*, and whatever *karma* we create, unwholesome or wholesome, that will be “inherited” (*Upajjhathhana Sutta*). Moreover, the Middle Way<sup>6</sup> is also known by its essential dealings with “capricious” *karma*: (1) *kammavada* (the application of wholesome *karma*), (2) *hetuvada* (the analysis of *karma*’s motivation, causation, and function, and (3) *kiriyavada* (the effect or “seed to fruit” performance result of *karma*). Hence, the Buddha was also known as a *kammavadin*, *hetuvadin*, and *kiriyavadin*. Even though it can be read about in various discourses (e.g. *Mahanidana Sutta*, *Kammavada Bhumija Sutta*, *Maha-* and *Culla-kammavibhanga Suttas*), as yet, a crystal-clear, systematic, and unequivocal interpretation of *karma* is scarce. It is however a pan-Buddhist given that “absolute predestination” is anathema in a Buddhism without godheads (Kalupahana, 2010).

The following is an attempt to offer an unambiguous psychological interpretation of Dependent Origination and the vicissitudes of *karma*, which is secular and this-worldly. Analyzing the Buddha’s wondrous instances of teaching, the observation stands out that he frequently made proficiently use

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<sup>5</sup> Affect can be any inner short and long term feeling, from weak moods to strong emotions with a positive, negative, or neutral quality.

<sup>6</sup> The Middle Way avoids the extremes of asceticism and hedonism and the 8-Fold Practice conveys how to balance and comprehend it. It is definitely not creatorism (*issaranimmanavada*), nor nihilism (*ucchedavada*) or fatalism (*pubbekata-hetuvada*). As Dhamapalla stated (*Maha Bodhi Journal*, vol. 34, 1926), there is a host of names denoting the Dhamma: *Sambodhiyana*, *Dhammayana*, *Jhanayoga*, *Ditthijala*, *Attajala*, *Brahmajala*, *Brahmayana*, *Vibhajjavada Samukkansad hamma*, *Vimuttinanadassana*, *Ariyamagga*, *Ariyadhamma*, and *Bodhipakkhiyadhamma*, which are not translated due to space constraints. Most importantly, the Dhamma is also known as *kammavada*, *hetuvada*, and *kiriyavada*, and the Buddha as an analyst (*vibhajjavadin*) of intentional action (*karma*), motivational factors (*hetu*), and performance efficacy (*kiriya*). In the framework of Dependent Origination the *kammavadin* is a collaborative practitioner who puts wholesome *karma* in place while extinguishing unwholesome *karma*. This requires *viriyavada*, the tenet that necessitates “human effort” in skillfully pursuing wholesomeness ([www.ucalgary.ca/numatachair/files/numatachair/Karunadasa\\_2001.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/numatachair/files/numatachair/Karunadasa_2001.pdf)).

of “psychological metaphors” and “double entendres”. A case in point is his dialogue with the “finger necklace serial killer”, who, surprised to see a fearless ascetic passing his notorious residence, stopped and yelled at the Buddha “to stop or otherwise...” whereupon the Buddha, while continuing his walk, replied that he had stopped already and retorted: “don’t you want to stop?” Hearing this, the bandit was puzzled, because he was asked to stop while he was not walking and because the ascetic said he has stopped while he is still walking (*Angulimala Sutta*). Obviously, the Buddha was juggling with semantics as his use of “stopping” carries the double meaning of stopping to walk and stopping to kill. The thesis submitted here is that the Buddha was a “semantic artist” or “poetic activist”. He showed that terms can be interpreted as psychological metaphors, particularly when terms are borrowed from Brahmanism. The task is to seize their “awakened” meanings. Based on this author’s explorations as a student in psycholinguistic and general semantics (Kwee, 1982), here is a list containing a selection of terms which could be acquainted with as “deep metaphors”. Their proposed psychological meanings discard literal exegesis, e.g. of Mara (*Padhana Sutta*).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Selected Buddhist Terms/Metaphors and Proposed Psychological Meanings**

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**Rebirth:** psychologically, this is limited to a this-worldly/daily recurrence of emotional episodes

**6-Realms of rebirth:** 1. heaven, 2. hell, 3. titans, 4. hungry ghosts, 5. humans and 6. animals

**Heaven:** feeling “godly” as if in heaven, a metaphor of bliss/pride which doesn’t make one a god

**Hell:** feeling the heat of “hellishness” if hateful, angry, furious, resenting, hostile, and aggressive

**Titans/demi-gods:** experiencing conflict, struggle, fight, envy/jealousy, distrust, and paranoia

**Hungry ghosts:** frustrated state due to insatiable craving/grasping/clinging to impermanence

**Humans:** most common/normal rebirth realm that offers the best opportunity for Buddhahood

**Animals:** most frequent depictions are a cock (greed), a snake (hatred), and a pig (ignorance)

**Nirvana:** experiencing extinction of the state or trait of unwholesome affect/emotional arousal

**Dukkha:** a damaged wheel axle preventing a cart from riding smoothly, a simile for suffering

**Mara:** mental projections of emotions re lust-confusion as a deadly “army” of demonic states

**Poisons:** intoxicants, metaphoric for the psychological afflictions of greed, hatred, and ignorance

**Brahmaviharas:** “divine dwellings”, metaphoric for kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity

**Arahant:** not a saint, but someone who has vanquished her/his inner enemies and is awakened

**Wheel of life:** cycle of life-death of this-worldly, daily karmic greed, hatred, and ignorance

**Karma:** not fate or destiny, nor a book-keeping of “good” and “bad” deeds, but intentional action

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<sup>7</sup> Obviously, I am not the first or only to point at the metaphoric nature of the Dhamma/Dharma. The late Ven. Buddhadassa discerned “everyday language” and “Dhamma language” in 1966, October 8, in a splendid lecture at Suan Mokkhabarama, Chaiya, Thailand ([www.buddhadasa.com/naturaltruth/twolanguage1.html](http://www.buddhadasa.com/naturaltruth/twolanguage1.html)). However, to date it seems that only few people consequently apply psychological interpretations. E.g., if *dukkha* is literally the axle of a chariot’s wheel that does not run smoothly, if the chariot is subject to wear away due to life’s imperfection and impermanence (*anicca*), and if the chariot when torn apart does not accommodate any self or soul (*anatta*), then this is a psychological simile about the 3-Empirical Marks of Existence of human beings.

That *karma* is not the bottom line of an accounting system of deeds but rather a “no-nonsense” teaching of calming, *nirvana*, insight, and emptiness/not-self is illustrated in the following anecdote on the Indian Bhikshu Bodhidharma, the alleged founder of Chan, who, in 521, visited the emperor Wu, a great patron of the Dharma. Having built many priories, the emperor asked what merit his generosity had earned. «No merit,» was the answer. Astonished, he asked what the Dharma’s supreme essence is. «Vast emptiness, nothing holy», was the reply. Finally, he asked, «Who are you?» «Don’t know» said Bodhidharma alluding to not-self. In a psychological approach, *karma* leads to rebirth in the space of body/speech/mind. This can take place in heaven or hell. That heaven and hell are to be sought here-now, was already acknowledged for centuries like in the following *koan* (Reps, 1957):<sup>8</sup>

A proud warrior - a samurai - visited a Zen master to learn about heaven and hell; do they really exist? Instead of answering immediately the teacher kept him waiting for a while, treating him like a beggar. The samurai gradually became impatient, angry, and at last demanded a proper answer. «You are too stupid to understand», the master replied. Furiously the samurai drew his sword to kill the teacher, who at this very moment raised his index finger and then said: «Experience the gate of hell!» All of a sudden the samurai understood that this was his lecture, bowed in deep grace and kneeled in merciful surrender. The monk smiled, raised his finger again and concluded: «Experience the gate of heaven!» (Hakuin, 1685-1768)

## Karma Sequence

As *karma* usually refers to the becoming/birth and the ageing/death of feelings like pain and pleasure in a recurrent cycle of rebirths, this gives rise to the idea that this birth and death are not physical, but an analogy to explain the beginning and end of daily pleasures and pains. Thus, metaphors for birth and death are a poetic description of the Dependent Origination, arising, peaking, subsiding, and ceasing of karmic sequences which take place during “emotional episodes”. The cycle of births and deaths of suffering (*samsara*) can be ceased by transforming the *karma* of drama, distress, and agony into the *karma* of contentment and *nirvana*. Hence, *Karma Transformation* aims at preparing the “nirvanic extinction” of karmic arousal by skillfully eradicating unwholesome *karma* moving forward, i.e. by working at unsatisfactory rebirths one by one. The therapeutic aim of *Karma Transformation* is to prepare and lay the basis for working at contentment and *nirvana*, but not at “emptiness” and Buddhahood. *Karma Transformation* is therefore only an initial phase in a long Buddhist quest. This first phase is meant to alleviate the suffering of anybody who feels distressed or in agony and needs therapy. Only when calm, tranquilized, and freed from the quagmire of emotional impasse, with or without therapy, is one able to pursue the next phase. This second phase targets Buddhist aims and is therefore almost exclusively suitable for Buddhists who want to take up the painstaking journey toward not-self and Buddhahood.

Before going into the *Karma Sequence* as the operational centerpiece, let us dwell on the *raison d’être* of *Karma Transformation*. This is a transformative process of eliminating emotional quandaries and conceptual confusion by decreasing unwholesome *karma* and increasing wholesome *karma*. Skilful and wholesome *karma* is rooted in non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-ignorance (*amoha*), while unskillful/unwholesome *karma* is rooted in the 3-Poisons: greed

<sup>8</sup> A *koan* is an exemplary teaching anecdote comparable to jurisprudence in law making.

(*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and ignorance (*moha*). Ignorance refers to not-knowing how the mind functions. Pitfall is the difficulty to see and understand the projections of the mind which result in the illusion of “self” and the delusion of “god/s”. The antidote to ignorance is (1) wisdom on the mechanisms and workings of the mind and (2) knowledge and savvy about putting this wisdom in practice. The remedy to heal greed is heartfelt generosity. The cure for hatred is loving-kindness. Because body/speech/mind inhere in the causes and effects of *karma*, the 3-Poisons afflict body and bodily action, contaminate speech and vocal action, and defile mind and mental action.

From my clinical point-of-view greed and hatred mask negative “basic emotions”. Greed conceals the fear of future loss and the grief of past loss. Hatred is the result of anger which could proliferate (*papanca*) to other-hate/aggression and self-hate/depression. The socio-cultural expressions of *depression*, *anxiety*, *anger*, and *grief* are the prime targets to decrease. They are the emotional states to zero in during *Karma Transformation* which then works at focusing on feelings which are neither painful, nor pleasurable. Affect of neutrality and contentment clear the air for the alternative scenarios of *joy*, *love*, and *serenity*. In *Karma Transformation* client and therapist usually dig into the karmic feelings/thoughts/activity of a past event, when things went wrong, in order to ameliorate future emotional episodes. Hence, the focal point is here-now, even if the intentional activity was originally created in the past (*puranakamma*): one cannot but live in the present. If discussed here-now, emotional events that took place in the past are something of the present and usually one also gets the same feelings. Even though the subject stems from a very long time ago, the karmic implication of the past (*kammavipaka*) becomes actual and changeable now (*navakamma*).

*Karma Sequence* almost always takes place in a relational context and starts with a stimulus situation, here called an “emotional episode”. This can be summarized as: *It is not the perceived things without or within (point A-activating event) that upset me (point C-consequence) but my very own thoughts-images/conceptions and concurrent interpretations-evaluations/judgments (point B-beliefs) which make me feel bad, sad, and mad (C: emotion) and motivate me to intend/plan regrettable karmic acts (C: behavior)*.<sup>9</sup> This ABC terminology, derived from Ellis’ REBT (Kwee & Ellis, 1998), is an echo of the Buddha’s saying that “we are what we think...”,<sup>10</sup> which emphasizes responsibility (*Dhammapada*): “By oneself is unwholesomeness done and is one afflicted; by oneself is unwholesomeness not done and is one not afflicted. Affliction and non-affliction depend entirely on oneself; no one can non-afflict another.” A most educative presentation of the ABC is through the following Jataka-story inspired simile:

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<sup>9</sup> We have 100 billion nerve cells (neurons) i.e. 1 million billion connections flickering when we think: ca 1000 thoughts per hour which is about 16.000 up to ca. 64.000 per day of which 95% is the same as yesterday’s thoughts and 85% is negatively colored (C. Greer, National Science Foundation; [www.hvacprofitboosters.com](http://www.hvacprofitboosters.com) ).

<sup>10</sup> The *Dhammapada* (423 verses; transl. Byrom, 2001), a gem of world literature, clarifies (Byrom, 2001; p.3): “We are what we *think*. All that we are arises with our *thoughts*. With our *thoughts* we make the world. *Speak or act* with an impure mind, and trouble will follow you as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart. We are what we *think*. All that we are arises with our *thoughts*. With our *thoughts* we make the world. *Speak or act* with a pure mind, and happiness will follow you as your shadow, unshakable. ‘Look how he abused me and hurt me, how he threw me down and robbed me.’ Live with such *thoughts* and you live in *hate*. ‘Look how he abused me and hurt me, how he threw me down and robbed me.’ Abandon such *thoughts* and live in *love*. In this world *hate* never yet dispelled *hate*, only *love* dispels *hate*. This is the law, ancient and inexhaustible... However many holy words you read, however many you *speak*, what good will they do you, if you do not *act* upon them?” NB: As in the *Rohitassa Sutta*, by “the world” is not meant the world in the beyond or out there (in the iron age conceived as flat), but the mind’s world, with data entering through the sense doors and whose minutiae are observable in meditation: “In this very one-fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.”

Once in a forest, a sleeping hare heard a hullabaloo. Believing it's the end of the world, he began to run. Thinking the same, others joined him: the deer also thought so and joined the flight... and one species after the other started running until all animals were in a frantic sprint which would eventually have lead to their demise. When the Buddha saw them in panic, he asked them: "why?" "Because the world ends", they said. The Buddha: "That can't be true... let's find out why you think so." Questioning them in succession, he finally arrived at the hare that started the run: "where were you, and what were you doing when you thought 'it's the end of the world'?" The hare: "I was sleeping under a mango tree"... the Buddha hypothesized: "you probably heard a mango fall... startling you (A, the activating event), you thought it's the end of the world (B, the un/wholesome belief), you took fright (Ce, the emotional consequence) and ran (Cb, the behavioral consequence)... let's go back to that tree... to verify and falsify"... Thus, the Buddha saved the animal kingdom.

In a more scholarly fashion, the commonality comes to the fore in the firing order of the "street" (*vithi*) which refers to our *Karma Sequence* as described in the *Abhidhamma* (the deeper teachings, one of the three canonical works containing numerical abstractions of the Buddha's discourses written by adepts). The street follows 17 infinitesimal steps of mind moments (*cittas*) which strikingly correspond to the ABC-sequence:

There is an *Activating event* (e.g. a mango falling): 1. baseline awareness (e.g. deep sleep) ~ 2. vibrating input (a sound) ~ 3. interruption (waking up) ~ 4. advertting (5 sense doors) ~ 5. perception (e.g. eye consciousness) ~ 6. receiving awareness-attending ~ 7. investigating awareness by "the mind's eye" (incl. memories) ~ 8. determining/noting awareness by "the mind's eye" (incl. memories) ~ 9~10 ~ 11~12~13~14~15... impulse awareness: reflection by un/wholesome *Beliefs* with a karmic history and fresh intentional will to (not) act as a *Consequence* engendering an emotional and a behavioral output ~ 16~17 followed by subliminal storage and retention of an I-me-mine/self experience. (NB: 6~7~8 refer to apperception which is post-perceptual but pre-conceptual, observable in mindfulness; 9-17: include the therapeutic awareness that might transform unwholesome *karma* into neutral feelings.)

## Candle Karma and Domino Karma

Interestingly, neither the REBT centerpiece, nor the *Karma Sequence* endorses a "ghost in the machine". Because the *khandhas*, which we call psychological modalities, are empty, this basically implies that there is no self to identify with. The self's emptiness is obvious when the nature of reified abstractions is understood. Pirsig's *Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance* (1974) deals with this issue: where does inherent existence, soul, or self reside if the bike is torn apart? This is a variant of a comparison highlighted in the *Milindapanha* (2nd century BCE): the Bhikkhu Nagasena explained the Indo-Greek King Menandros that the modalities are like the chariot's parts. Mind deconstructed in its modalities disintegrates like a decomposed body like a chariot. Its constituent parts are but a temporary assemblage. The Buddha also used the analogy of a lute, whose elusive music is composed by the combination of strings, box, and bow that is full of momentary experience but empty of the "self-nature" of eternal sound (*Sigalovada Sutta*). Not only sound, but all perceptible phenomena are impermanent, non-abiding, and ever changing by

nature, thus they are essentially empty and lack “inherent existence” (*sabhava*). The self exists only as a mind construction that freezes the flux of the modalities’ processes and is therefore nothing but an illusion. Another way to arrive at self’s emptiness is Nagarjuna’s (2nd century) *sunyata/S*, the emptiness of everything that is impermanent. He discerned the “ultimate emptiness of not-self” and the “provisional self of the householder” who is aware of the futility of a name, but simultaneously appreciates the convenience of “being indexed”, e.g. by having an identity card. The crux is to keep *karma* un-afflicted by not attaching to greedy or hateful thoughts/feelings/deeds. The following two schemes are tools of analysis.

*The candle metaphor* (cf. *Gaddulabaddha Sutta*). Habitual behavioral patterns

are the bulk of regrettable intentional action. With the negative karmic impact of regret, reflection as well as *karma*’s assessment often begins. Habits come about by the interplay of the *khandhas*. The dynamic combination of modalities reflects the structure and process of what is called “personality”, i.e. a snapshot description of a psychological profile. These comprise body-*rupa-kaya*/speech-*vak-alapa*/mind-*nama-citta* out of which consciousness or *vinnana* emerges and functions through awareness. Mindfulness enables the full experience of the modalities: perceiving-sensing (A), conceiving-cognizing (B), emoting-feeling (Ce), and conating-acting (Cb). Experiencing may take place consciously, in full awareness, or non-consciously, in subliminal awareness, depending on the willful attention paid to what is perceived outside or inside the body. Our daily experiences are mostly governed by habit which happens “automatically” due to too ingrained conditioned and conditional learned responses. A habit may be an inappropriate reaction to an activating event requiring adequate consequences which is a process of figuring out and creating new beliefs. Whether the client’s responses are adequate, appropriate, and wholesome can be experienced on the affective level.

An inadequate response is likely connected to some emotionally distressed and unhappy feeling and is often the beginning of somebody’s voluntary paying attention and focusing awareness to the modalities. In line with the metaphor, *Karma Transformation* eventually results in flame extinction (*nirvana*) (see Table 2).

**Table 2: The Buddha's Karma Sequence and REBT's Centerpiece: Parallel Approaches to Karmic Emotional Episode<sup>©</sup>**

<b>Body/speech/mind (<i>kaya/vak/citta</i>):</b> <i>Basic mindfulness</i> <sup>11</sup> of the phenomena in these spaces	A momentary external or internal stimulus configuration impinges on the subject, i.e. something one is aware of in fleeting sense consciousness after detection and being in contact with on the radar screen of one of the six sense organs, to be perceived...
<b>Perceiving (<i>vedana</i>): Awareness of the 6 Senses (seeing, hearing, smelling tasting, touching, and the mind's eye), felt: + / 0 / -</b>	<i>Activating event:</i> sensing, while apperceiving, which is post-perceptual but pre-conceptual, there is willful attending and perception which is influenced by memory and recognition, and the perceiver gets some sense feeling (partly overlapping affect/emotion) which is relatively positive, negative, or neutral...
<b>Conceiving (<i>sanna</i>): Awareness of projections due to ignorance: illusion of self and delusion of god(s)</b>	<i>Beliefs:</i> imagery and conceptions, the cognitive representation by the subject becomes interpreted and evaluated – i.e. dualistically fabricated and proliferated as good/bad, right/wrong, etc. – and to be tapped as ir/rational and un/wholesome cognitions and ideas...
<b>Conating (<i>sankhara</i>): Awareness of ignorant craving and subsequent proclivities of action: greed-grasping or hatred-clinging</b>	<i>Consequences:</i> karmic affective/emotional and (interpersonal) behavioral responses – having appraised thoughts (“self-talk”) as unskillful-irrational/unwholesome, the subject skillfully transforms these into new rational/wholesome thoughts in order to plan/emit new karmic rational/wholesome motivated intentional activity...
<b>Consciousness (<i>vinnana</i>):</b>	<i>Advanced mindfulness</i> is the next post-therapy phase to <i>bodhi</i> ....

(2) *The domino metaphor* (cf. *Dutiya Gaddulabaddha-Sutta*). Unwholesome *karma*, noticeable by craving affect, grasping thought, and clinging behavior, does not breathe the quality of freedom, it feels like being shackled. Wholesome *karma* is free from attachments. It is a state attained when ignorance is over and knowledge is wisely applied. Like in a court of justice intentions and wishes count less than actual facts, observable conduct, manifest behavior, pre-meditated performance, or motivated action comprising *karma*.<sup>12</sup> However, planned intentions form the seed for future activity. To be mindfully aware of them prevents unwholesome *karma* and likely promotes wholesome *karma*. *Karma*'s working is elucidated by the Buddha through an analysis of its conditionality/functionality comprising 12 links, interconnected like domino pieces. This is a more detailed assessment than the candle view (Conze, 1980). The domino metaphor offers a this-worldly/here-now interpretation of these links and discerns three parts: a general part (steps 1-4), a specific part (steps 5-10), and a cyclical part (steps 11-12). They are translated into the ABC-sequence (see Table 3).

The metaphors of re/birth, ageing, and death have made many credulous followers believe that the 12-linked stepwise exposition is about the metaphysics of the soul, reincarnation, and “Transcendental Truth”, rather than a tool to closely examine Dependent Origination this-worldly/

<sup>11</sup> As in the Bahiya Sutta: O Bahiya, whenever you see a form, let there be just the seeing; whenever you hear a sound, let there be just the hearing; when you smell an odour, let there be just the smelling, when you taste a flavour, let there be just the tasting; when you experience a physical sensation, let it merely be sensation; and when a thought or feeling arises, let it be just a natural phenomenon arising in the mind. When it is like this, there will be no self, no I. When there is no self, there will be no moving about here and there and no stopping anywhere. That is the end of dukkha. That is nibbana. Whenever it is like that, then it is nibbana. If it is lasting, then it is lasting nibbana; if it is temporary, then it is temporary nibbana. In other words, it is just a principle.

<sup>12</sup> In a way *Karma Transformation* resembles “detectiving” because like a Private Investigator, confronted with a puzzling act through a killed body, will always look for the motive of the murderer, the Buddhist psychotherapist is keen about the whereabouts (ABC) of an act (*karma*) and the motive/s (*hetu*) leading to karmic suffering.

here-now. The metaphysical flirtations notwithstanding, the Buddha was not concerned with the cosmological order of the universe. He was involved with the impermanence of the human condition and the quest to know how to come to grips with the fringes of existential trouble due to impermanence/imperfection. That the Buddha's discourses unambiguously reject metaphysics, cosmology, and ontology, and breathe a this-worldly/here-now psychological spirit can be read in the following quote (*Sabba Sutta*):

The eyes and forms, the ears and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and tangible things, the mind and mental objects... If someone should set this “All” aside and proclaim another “All”, it would be just talk... because this would be beyond the limits of his abilities.

**Table 3: A Psychological Interpretation of Karma's Dependent Origination**

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Link 1 conveys that the links are a stepwise model about karmic greed, hatred, and ignorance which concurs with REBT's ABC-centerpiece and displays an emotional episode, as follows:

- Link 2 explains A: while ignorant, an Activating event arises *in sensorium*, e.g. a fight
  - Link 3 explains B: out of this, awareness arises, i.e. irrational Beliefs on the fight
  - Link 4 explains C: out of B, Consequential emotional action (Ce/Cb) arises, e.g. aggression
  - Link 5 specifies A: out of bodily sense organs as condition, perceiving arises
  - Link 6 specifies A: out of perceiving, contact arises, e.g. seeing John
  - Link 7 specifies B: out of contact, cognitive experiencing arises, e.g. feeling angry
  - Link 8 specifies B: out of inferences, craving evaluations arises, e.g. “I wish him dead”
  - Link 9 specifies Ce: out of craving unwholesome emotions arise, e.g. hatred (other-blame)
  - Link 10 specifies Cb: out of hatred as motivation, aggressive behavior will find expression
  - Link 11 A-B-C cycling: step 10 originates the conception and re/birth of steps 5-10
  - Link 12 A-B-C cycling: birth of an emotion undergoes ageing toward death, rebirth, etc.
- 

## Karma Transformation

Psychotherapy by *Karma Transformation* takes place after assessment by means of the *Karma Sequence* formulated as the ABC-centerpiece of an emotional episode. Typically, a client will not seek council for a “problem of greed or hatred”, s/he will likely come with complaints of depression, anxiety, anger, and/or grief. The therapist then pinpoints, in collaborative practice, the treatment target like for instance “overcoming the incapacity of crying while in a sad situation of divorce from a verbally violent husband”. Despite it is functional to be strong and to “stick to her guns”, it would be stronger and healthier to cry than not to cry. Crying is not *per se* weakening and could

even strengthen one's immune system; hence it is advisable to cry when alone or with family or friends to get rid of the waste products in tears. Hence, the target is not to cry in the middle of yelling and scolding, but to learn to cry if sad. In this case the client was in first instance encouraged to visualize sad situations of the past and to watch movies with the potency to strike a sensitive string. In second instance, *Karma Transformation* using the ABC-centerpiece weighs in. The Activating event is: "Sitting while visualizing him damaging my clothes and jewelry after my telling to leave him", The irrational Beliefs with unwholesome karmic impact are: 1. "He shouldn't yell at me and now he does, he's a son of a bitch..."; 2. "He mustn't scold at me; I wish him bad luck..."; 3. "He is a lazy man, how could I ever marry him?" And so on. The karmic Consequences of these thoughts on the emotional level are "Anger/hatred" and on the behavioral level of manifest action is "Having restless legs".<sup>13</sup>

After formulating the ABC, the transformational karmic Dispute and aimed karmic Effect come next in the process. The pursued goal (E) set by the client is: "To feel sad and cry if alone, but to stay firm with regard to my divorce decision, and feel relatively happy amidst life's adversity". In order to attain this aim each cognitive strand is "microscoped" by first disputing (D) its completeness by questioning the evaluation impacting the emotional experience. Evaluations lie below the tip of the iceberg of the surface cognition. The second step is to question the un/wholesomeness and ir/rationality of the complete cognition. A thought is wholesome and skillful if it is rational/logical/realistic/factual and likely leads to the pursued goal of intrapersonal and interpersonal harmony. In the vignette, the first sentence is completed through questioning its evaluative and motivational impact resulting in: "He shouldn't yell at me and now he does, he's a son of a bitch... *and I hate him.*" The second sentence: "He mustn't scold at me; I wish him bad luck... *because I hate him.*" And the third sentence: "He is a lazy man, how could I ever marry him? ...*I wish I never met him, now I've ruined my life, stupid me.*" Table 4 provides karmic wholesome/rational cognitions, alternatives accrued in collaborative practice.

**Table 4: Three Karma Transformation Scripts**

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The creation of an alternative for *the first sentence*: "He shouldn't yell at me and now he does, he's a son of a bitch... and I hate him" goes as follows: Is this thought rational/realistic and wholesome/skilful, and will it result in my karmic goal? "This thought is irrational and unrealistic, because he has reasons which are logical from his stance, hence the most rational and realistic thing to do for him is that he should yell at me which is not reasonable to me, but that does not make him a son of a bitch all of a sudden... besides his mother is my daughter's grandmother"..."To think this way is unwholesome because it leads me to hate him and his family and others who do like him... Hate creates hollowness in me and is not healthy for my system, it works like poison and could make me sick... I can't love him anymore, but perhaps ...yes sure, I can empathize with his feeling of being deserted by a woman, which happens to be me... and stay friendly with him despite what and how loud he is yelling at me, now... and stay friendly next time we meet again"..."My goal to feel sad and cry if alone, but to stay firm with regard to my divorce decision will be reached with my new karmic thoughts, because the fire of anger and the poison of hate will diminish, if I really believe in what I'm just thinking... my softness/sadness will return and in due time, if triggered, the chances that

<sup>13</sup> The thoughts in this case vignette, although realistic, are inspired but not based on reality; they are made up for illustrative purposes.

I'll cry if alone and feel happy again, even in pain of divorce, are now increased... crying cleanses my system, detoxifies, and pours waste out of me, let me therefore surrender in crying whenever and wherever suitable, so that I can rise in loving-kindness."

*The second sentence:* "He mustn't scold at me; I wish him bad luck... because I hate him." Is this thought rational/realistic and wholesome/skilful, and will it result in my karmic goal? "The fact that he's mad at me for leaving him is unwise of him but highly understandable to me... whatever he scolds at me, if I stick to my mantra that *sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me*, he may scold at me the nastiest things possible and I can remain in my serenity, if I decide and want to"... "So, he must scold at me and it would be illogical if he wasn't scolding at me if he is furious and not eating up his anger: can I then feel compassion for him and empathize...? ...since it's irrational not to expect him to scold at me and it's more realistic to expect that he will or even must scold at me, it's just good that he scolds at me"..."To wish him bad luck is to wish me and our daughter bad luck which is therefore an unwise wish... I'd better wish him good luck because his happiness will increase everyone's happiness... and if I do so, say so to him, *I wish you the best of luck and the happiest of happiness now we are separated*, this could create good-will and at least not create ill-will"..."Hatred is fermented anger which will result in a life which carries an aceticified taste... and since I do not wish a sour life but a sweet and happy life full of love and kindness... my energy is better used to be kind now to him, even if it's hard"... "My goal to feel sad and cry if alone, but to stay firm not to share life with him... will be reached with my new *karma* as hate diminishes... and if I deeply believe my wholesome thoughts and act to my new intentions... the chances that I'll feel happy again amidst adversity will increase."

*The third sentence:* "He is a lazy man, how could I ever marry him? ...I wish I never met him, now I've ruined my life, stupid me." Is this thought rational/realistic and wholesome/skilful, and will it result in my karmic goal? "A realistic view would be that he isn't lazy but a man who usually behaves lazy"... "With the wisdom of the present, it is an irrational wish to not having met him back then when I felt joy and was hopeful to share life with him, and even to bear and give birth to our child... all of which was meant to be happy as a family... however, as many marriages this one was also bound to end in separation"..."Calling me stupid will only motivate self-hatred and is not realistic by any standard... Is it stupid not to presage this end? As I am not a fortuneteller, I could not foretell this unfortunate chemistry occurring between laziness and my temperament, so it was not stupid at the time... but with today's painfully gained wisdom, it had been better to stay attracted at some distance and to find out character in/compatibilities first which is my karmic decision now when I meet a nice young man who doesn't behave lazy I would like to relate with... so, it was a mistake which does not make me a stupid person: at worst *I did a stupid thing*, which I can always correct like I did by separating"..."By thinking so, I'll stay in friendly relationship with myself... this self-talk/self-conversation is meant to have a fresh start and build up a new life which would not be possible if I am ruining myself by irrationalities... I would not say such to someone I love ...unless meant as teasing... Human beings are fallible, even Einstein made mistakes (would the Buddha have made a few mistakes?) ... To make a premature and false foregone conclusion that I've ruined my life because of this marriage is ruining *karma* and won't result in my aim to feel sad, cry alone, be firm on my divorce, and feel happy amidst the hardness of life... so, let me cry in unconditional self-acceptance asap and boost wholesomeness."

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Although opaque, there is an epistemological hierarchy in the above rational analyses which follow the ladder of abstraction. One needs to be aware of conceptual abstractions which boil down to the adage of general semantics that “the map is not the territory”. This implies that speech/language can be viewed as a map of the map of the map, and so on, which may lead to identifications and reifications of I-me-mine/self, unless there is awareness of the natural order of abstraction. Mindfulness counters our self-made maps and semantic reactions, and could secure the “pure” perception and description of the territory. Language moves from the concrete to the abstract and from the specific to the general. If we never get general, we don’t say anything and if we don’t get specific, “real” meaning might remain obscure. Irrationality arises when stuck on the abstraction ladder. Faulty abstractions include: dead level abstracting (e.g. fear of fear, angry at anger, sad about sadness), selective abstracting, arbitrary inferring, misattributing, inexact labeling, dichotomous reasoning, overgeneralizing, magnifying, minimizing, catastrophizing, and personifying. These errors are subject to correction. Abstracting accurately follows the logics of the ladder and starts with a factual description (e.g. “this is a heartbeat”). It continues by a personal inference (e.g. “this feels nasty”) and results in some emotional evaluation (e.g. “this is my death”) which finally motivates *karma* (e.g. “calling an ambulance”). A sane order of abstraction starts with the “silent” level of the impermanent “process world” of the territory, i.e. atoms, molecules, cells, and so on. What follows is “mapping” which is a descriptive report of the bare facts, i.e. a mindful neutral observation. Subsequently there is an inference containing a cognitive judgment (e.g. “I’ve made a mistake”), and finally, there is an evaluation, i.e. an emotional value judgment (e.g. “I’m a worthless human being”). Interpretations and evaluations usually happen unconsciously, automatically, or mindlessly. Mindfulness raises awareness.

## Further Similarities

My own work as a therapist in almost four decades was to demonstrate that the pan-Buddhist Dharma and REBT share a common paradigm and use comparable tactics. These are summarized in the following seven points (Kwee & Holdstock, 1996). (1) Although their aims are seemingly different, REBT and the Dharma both work toward optimizing mental health: curing psychological disorders vs. ceasing existential suffering, distress, and agony (*dukkha*). (2) Similar to *dukkha*, REBT expounds that life is a hassle from which there is no escape; both agree that there is no need to suffer needlessly. (3) While the Buddha’s message is to transform karmic activity toward wholesomeness by skillfulness, REBT aims at eradicating irrational cognitions and dysfunctional emotions by changing them via the ABCDE-format. (4) REBT uses homework as an integral part of advancing self-therapy; Buddhism’s reliance on self-healing is adamant as in the Buddha’s last words:

And whoever Ananda, now or after I am dead, shall be... a refuge to themselves, shall take to themselves no other refuge, but seeing... [the Dhamma as a refuge], shall not seek refuge in anyone but themselves, it is they, Ananda... who shall reach the further shore! But they must make the effort themselves (Humphreys, 1987, p.94).

(5) Surprisingly, REBT also propagates the abolishment of (most of) the human ego by defining ego or self as the sum total of c/overt behaviors, thus of *karma*. The rational stance is not to judge behaviors/actions simply because there is no accurate way to rate them. Whatever the outcome, rationally it cannot impact the person as a whole. This is in line with the Buddhist

practice not to blame the person while rejecting her/his cognitive defilement and emotional affliction. REBT's stance is comparable to Buddhism which abolishes all of the self on the ultimate level while acknowledging a "provisional self" for practical reasons.

In both cases the admonition is not to identify with anything in an impermanent world of flux and hence to ban the semantics of the "is of identity". By questioning the validity of the verb "to be", mindful attention enables clarity that there is no static self to identify with: "I" consists of many "iiiiiiiiii's" (as a husband, lover, dad, teacher, pie-eater, and so on). This resembles the Buddha's expression on the modalities of clinging: "this is not me/mine, this is not what I am, this is not my self" (*Anattalakkhana Sutta*). For instance, a client is depressed when thinking: "He must love me or else I am a worthless human being." Applying REBT's Unconditional Life-Acceptance, Unconditional Self-Acceptance, and Unconditional Other-Acceptance, the following alternative applies: "By thinking so I won't reach my goal of regaining equanimity regarding him or myself. There is no evidence that he must love me, nor is there any proof that my worth depends on being loved by him. The fact is that if he loves someone else exclusively, he must *not* love me which feels sad and regrettable, but it is no reason to detest myself as a human being. My worth of self cannot be judged because there is no accurate way to rate it. My mere existence warrants my value unconditionally. By avoiding disharmony with myself, with him, and with life, I will feel OK."

(6) Next to the most important procedure of the ABCDE-format, there are two dozen additional techniques to tackle emotional disorders. Due to space constraints, these will not be dealt with here. Suffice to say that they intervene in the domains of cognition-imagery, affect-emotion, and inter/personal behavior and show some overlap with Buddhist interventions (P. de Silva, 1984). The Buddha also proposed specific techniques and highlighted e.g. 12 interventions (Premasiri, 2003). The first seven are preventive (*Sabbasava Sutta*):

1. Wholesome affect is preceded by right/balanced/sustainable views: to see not-self and understand that beliefs about events, not the events per se, evoke emotionality.
2. Restraint: it is wholesome to practice self-control and not to cling to what one "must/should" have or not have with regards to what had entered the sense doors
3. Wise indulging in one's basic physiological needs like food, clothing, shelter, to safeguard against physical illness and promote mental well-being.
4. The discipline to endure most pressures from the psychological, physical and social environment to secure freedom from unnecessary and needless worries.
5. To drop unwholesome/unskillful thoughts: one is timely mindfully aware of them, i.e. right from the start before they are able to affect unwholesome *karma*.
6. To avoid places and situations one does not need to be and which might expectedly engender psychological cankers, unwholesome thoughts and emotions.
7. To prevent cankers, one cultivates awakening by being: aware, investigative, persistent, enthusiastic, serene, concentrated, and equanimous.

The next five, derived from the *Vitakkasanthana Sutta*, deal with a flow of unwholesome karmic habits. They are consecutively listed and translated into ABCDE terms as follows:

8. Whenever an unwholesome thought enters awareness, one replaces this with another wholesome thought (e.g. blaming and forgiving): Changing B into D.
9. If that fails, examine the harmful consequences of the unwholesome thought and its inevitable product: the creation of suffering all around: Formulating C and E.
10. If that fails, forget the thought and engage in attention diversion: look for wholesome distraction like reading a *sutta* or jogging: Changing A into another A.
11. If that fails, investigate and reconstruct the antecedents of the thought and remove its cause; e.g. ABC-sadness preceded next ABC with B of anger and fear of sadness.
12. If that fails, resist with force: be harsh and radical by for instance clenching teeth or pressing the tongue against the palate: Changing C-behavior into E-behavior.

Notably, the Buddha dealt with persisting habits and automatic thoughts. Beware if they become obsessive thoughts; they intrude into mind against our will and manifest themselves in a repetitive fashion as if they are not ours. Obsessions and compulsions, if generalized to behavioral acts, come about when mind tricks us by mechanically shifting attention away from a grave emotional knot totally beyond awareness. One advisably turns mindfulness onto the emotional problem, usually something relational and extreme like fury or bereavement, as to disentangle and unwind. Buddhist Psychotherapy could weigh in here from assessment to remedy. All means and methods are to be used like a raft. If the river is crossed, there is no need to carry the boat around (*Alagaddupama Sutta*).

(7) The Buddha also applied empirical wisdom, comparable to evidence-based methods. This is exemplified by a homework assignment of a performance-based intervention in this inspiring vignette on being obsessive against the backdrop of denial (*Dhammapada*):

Kisagotami, a mother, mourned and wept about the death of her two year old son. Her kid was bitten by a poisonous snake. As she could not accept his death, she was out of her senses with grief. Nobody could comfort her and at last she desperately went to the Buddha for advice. “How can my son be cured?” she asked the Buddha, who replied: “There is only one way to help you and your child. Look for a black mustard seed that must come from a house where no one has ever died and which should be given to you by someone who has no deceased relatives”. The woman left with her corpse and sought from house to house, but was unable to find such a seed. Finally she realized what the Buddha meant with his assignment, got healed, and buried her child.

In effect, *Karma Transformation* is a confluence of REBT and Buddhism through the psychological modalities/*khandhas* of clinging and the ABCDE format around the 3-Poisons and basic emotions. Capturing all of this requires the observational awareness of “basic mindfulness”: (1) awareness of sensory perception (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and viewing through the mind’s eye), (2) awareness of irrational cognitions due to ignorance on how the mind works resulting in projections: illusory selves (I/me/mine) and delusional god(s), (3) awareness of un/wholesome cognitions of intending (volition and conation) and the motivational factors of action, and (4) awareness of unwholesome thoughts which reflect the proclivity of irrational craving (“musts/shoulds”), greedy grasping (“should have”), and hateful clinging (“must not be”). Basic mindfulness opens the window for “advanced mindfulness” which unveils the Dependent Origination and interactivity of body/speech/mind and the psychological modalities; this includes their karmic

antecedents and consequents. Eventually the result is balanced interaction, emptiness, and Buddhahood.

## In Closing

A pointer indicating that the Buddha is a psychotherapist and that his Dharma can be inferred as an applied psychology is the illness metaphor of his “4-Ennobling Realities”.<sup>14</sup> These are: there is suffering, to be understood (*diagnosis*), this is due to ignorance, to be abandoned (*cause*), there is a way out, to be realized (*prognosis*), and this way comprises the “8-Fold Balancing Practice”, to be cultivated (*therapy*). Attention (8) and awareness (7) are the two components constituting mindfulness which require effort to develop wholesomeness (6) to apply in life (5) on karmic activity (4), speech (3), and intention (2), whose effect depends on a realistic view (1): mental suffering exists and can be ceased. To luxuriate on the metaphor, the illness to be cured is a “dis-ease” to be healed and as dis-ease refers to mind and speech rather than to body, the cure is not medication but meditation (Kwee & Holdstock, 1996). It is bold but not unrealistic to draw the analogy of the Buddha as a 21st century clinician. His acumen in dealing with greed, hatred, and ignorance based on a wholistic view of body/speech/mind resembles the World Health Organization’s paradigm of the human being as “biopsychosocial” system (Engel, 1977). If agreed that the Buddha dealt with the mind and its concomitants, he could be called the first psychologist and psychotherapist ever.

To be sure, Buddhist Psychotherapy by *Karma Transformation* takes place in the space of the “provisional self” and the client’s self-talk. Framework is the collaborative practice of dialogical speech between client and therapist. The quintessence of change is that un-skillfulness leads to unwholesome, irrational, and “unhealthy” *karma*, while skillfulness leads to wholesome, rational and “healthy” *karma*. All of these is rooted in non/greed, non/hatred, and non/ignorance (e.g. *Baahitika Sutta* and *Chakkaniipata Nidana Sutta*). Apparently fitting original meanings, psychological interpretations of *karma* do not have the monopoly on “truth”. Others who prefer interpretations in terms of “good/right/virtuous” vs. “evil/wrong/sinful” will consider theirs as true. However, such explanations squeeze Buddhism into religious and ethical pipelines (Keown, 1992) which were not included in the pristine Dhamma. Buddhist Psychotherapy discards Eurocentric, utilitarian, and un-aesthetical interpretations by appreciating the empty nature of the self and of Buddhism itself which includes the present views. Interestingly, even the last of the original Buddhist thinkers, Dharmakirti (7th century), who belonged to the Yogacara denomination, dealt with epistemology rather than with religion or ethics (Dunne, 2004). He discerned valid (*prama*) and invalid (*aprama*) thoughts as if he was a cognitive-behavior therapist. Dharmakirti secured cognitive validity by scrutinizing: (1) the direct object of observation, evident and public; e.g. a tree, (2) its private cognitive representation appearing as mental images and as (3) conceptualizations colored by inferences (e.g. “a hateful stinking tree” or “a lovely comfortable parasol”). The validity of cognitions is rooted in the 3-Empirical Marks of Existence which are congruent to the non-absoluteness and relativity of reason.

<sup>14</sup> From a psychological view of emptiness which discards Transcendental Truths, it would be erroneous to continue to use the Eurocentric expression “Four Noble Truths” for the Pali: *catvari aryasatyani*.

The practice of *Karma Transformation* is concerned with down-to-earth daily hassles like anger which, if accumulated, could explode in aggression. In the Buddhist lore anger is seen as garbage; but rather than something merely destructive to cut down and throw out, anger can be “composted”, a transforming process of creativity (Thich, 1998). If expressed as catharsis to feel good in the short-term, the opposite will probably occur in the long run. One likely becomes angrier and if reciprocated by the other a vicious *samsara* cycle might develop; somebody will get hurt and physical damage might occur. Pounding on a cushion is not a solution either; although relieved the seed of anger will continue to slumber. The Buddhist attitude to take care of anger does not mean to suppress or run away from it, but to allow its “suchness” and tolerate the “hellish” experience in silence. While breathing in and out, tenderly embracing the anger, one focuses on the anger in mindful and neutral observation, let it be. The garbage of anger hides flower seeds of kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. By the sun beams of attention garbage ferments into dung, empowering the lotus’ flourishing.

*Nirvana*, long-lasting trait or short-lived state, belongs to the normal range of human experience and is not something “out of orbit”. It is accurate to state that *nirvana* is attained if the flames of emotions are extinguished. Negative emotions, i.e. confusing depression, suffocating fear, burning anger, and drowning sadness, belong to the basic emotions from which the variations of affect are derived. Basic emotions can be depicted as layers of an onion, consecutively from the outer to the inner: depression, anxiety, anger, sadness, joy, love, serenity, and *nirvana*. The first group of four are quite unwholesome, thus to be abandoned, while the second group is quite wholesome, hence to be cultivated. In the Buddhist lore love (kindness/compassion), appreciative joy, and relational equanimity are to be acquired and “immeasurably” amplified to secure wholesome *karma*. Interestingly, the term emotion is derived from the Latin verb *e-movere*, which means “to be moved”. This being moved or in motion implies that there is a condition engraved as “unmoved”, not being in motion due to “nirvanic extinction”.

A practitioner of *Karma Transformation*, therapist, coach, or teacher, practices what s/he preaches. Practice implies meeting new challenges which accrue new learning experiences. After all, “nobody is perfect” and balancing toward contentment, happiness, and Buddhahood is usually a life-long cultivation. The Buddhist therapist not only shares wisdom and savvy, but also helps the client to become her/his own therapist. Since there are different strokes for different folks, *Karma Transformation* seems not particularly suitable for the faint-hearted who will be better off by “dos” and “don’ts”, religion, ethics, or the metaphysics of heaven and hell. For those who wish to choose and are capable to think and decide for themselves, a psychological roadmap built on ancient wisdom and evidence-based science may engender karmic bliss. Nonetheless, as M.W.P. de Silva (pers. comm., 2008), *nestor* of Buddhist Psychology, cogently admonished: “science may enhance the credibility and relevance of Buddhist concepts, but awakening may be achieved without science.”

## Scriptures

Most Indian references in the text refer to Pali (P) *suttas*; Sanskrit terms are indicated as such (S), except for the household terms like *karma* or *nirvana*. All *suttas* and *sutras* can be found online, e.g. [www.metta.lk](http://www.metta.lk) (for *suttas*) and [www.e-sangha.com](http://www.e-sangha.com) (for *sutras*).

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# The Lost Art of Sadness: & the Meaning of Love and Grief

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## PRELUDE

The basic message of the Buddha embodies a liberation path from the shackles of human suffering, as well as a righteous and harmonious life for the householder. How is this path related to the modern therapeutic quest? The answers may vary for different therapists. For me the relationship is integral both in theory and practice. A crisis of grief and sadness bordering on mild depression and a remarkable emergence of back to normal life, rich, invigorated and robust, made me take to the path of a trained professional therapist—to make it a mission in my life to work at the Springvale community centre for four years offering free treatment for clients, and it was for me a priceless service (de Silva, 2008). Along with this experience, a gradual period of training at the feet of a most cherished meditation guru in the Nissarana forest monastery in Meethirigala, Sri Lanka, helped me to chart new horizons for linking therapy and the spiritual life. Drawing from this nourishing wellspring, I have developed what may be described as a mindfulness-based emotion focused therapy (EFT).

This essay looks at the emotions constellation of grief, sadness, depression, boredom and two faces of melancholy—as depression and existential anguish. Most important, this essay has a focus on the reclamation of the lost art of sadness.

## INTRODUCTION

“Sadness is an inherent part of the human condition, not a mental disorder. Thus to confront psychiatry’s invalid definition of depressive disorder is also to consider a painful but an important part of our humanity that we have tended to shunt aside in the modern medicalization of human problems. As science allows us to gain more control over our emotional states, we will inevitably confront the question of whether normal intense sadness has any redeeming features or should be banished from our lives. Such a momentous scientific and moral issue should not be spuriously resolved by using a semantic confusion in the DSM that mistakenly places states of intense sadness under the medical category of disorder” (Horowitz and Wakefield, 2007, 225: for short H & W Study; term DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)). Thus if we follow the implications of this engaging and erudite study on the loss of sadness, we need to understand as Sigmund Freud observed: Though grief involves grave departures from normal life, “It never occurs to us as morbid and hand over the mourner to a medical treatment condition” (*Mourning and Melancholia*).

Even those who value the DSM criteria for depression as an accepted bench mark for health professionals, agree that the DSM ‘overpathologizes’, many people with quite legitimate sadness in the face of adversity, thus merging the normal experience of sadness with diagnosis of depressive disorder (Biegler, 2011,66).

While accepting the great value of focusing our attention on the importance of grief and sadness in this (H & W) study, it is somewhat thin on the alternative therapeutic orientations and more so the new mindfulness-based western therapies. By the embedded logic of mindfulness practice rooted in the Buddhist world view, these therapies have opened a new pathway to understand depression by focusing on the content of depressive thinking, relationship to negative feelings and changing perspectives by ‘decentering’ or depersonalizing - thus opening up channels of communication between mindfulness in daily life and in therapeutic settings (Williams, Teasdale, Segal, Kabat-Zinn, 2007).

To some extent, the need for emphasizing on the positive facets of grief and sadness has been rectified by fresh thinking in the therapies of mindfulness -based action commitment therapy (Harris, 2006).

Lewis Wolpert is a biologist who had gone through a severe depressive disorder, eventually recovering, and in a very insightful book, described depression as ‘malignant sadness’. “If we are to understand depression then we need to understand emotion. For depression I believe is sadness that has become pathological. Depression is a disorder of emotion” (Wolpert, 1999, 74). He recommends the study of the logic of different emotions, their constellations and interactions. In addition to looking at the lost art of sadness, the present paper is an attempt to develop Wolpert’s insight by exploring the theme of a mindfulness-based, emotion-focused therapy.

### **Collective Suffering and Sadness in ‘Panic Cultures’**

To strengthen my case for looking at the lost art of sadness, I also wish to show that grief and sadness are central human emotions which we may convert as a time for reflection, keeping the love of the lost one alive, a context for developing resilience and dedicating ourselves to engage in positive acts of generosity and gratitude in the name of those whom we have lost. In the present analysis, I also wish to focus your attention on the more recent dimension of ‘collective sorrow’, in the contexts war and conflict, natural disasters—the poignant loss of life and the emergence of what are described as ‘panic cultures’. A dimension of socially engaged therapies dealing with such panic cultures is becoming important for counseling and therapies. Padmal de Silva captures the basic thrust of this genre of studies in an article on the Tsunami experience of the Buddhists in the coastal towns of Sri Lanka (Padmal de Silva, 2006, 281-87).

As an integral part of this paper, I wish to present to you a context of war and conflict, and also to use as a case study, a work of literature. The use of art helps us to communicate the tensions and the ambiguities of collective suffering. Commenting on the war in Vietnam, it has been said that art, poetry, music and the novel have the power of immortalizing human values, even in the thick of war and violence. It has been observed that one of the crushing ironies of the Vietnam war is that we have been the recipient, time and again, of the gifts of the spirit, gifts of art—the bravery of an artist and poet that faces the cruelty and the horror, and brings to the blood, vengeance and cruelty—a remarkable sea change (Berrigan, 1993, 3, Foreword To, Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action*, 1993)).

Grief is of course, a period of silence, space for mourning - followed afterwards - a reassertion and acceptance of the tragic loss. And finally, if one is lucky, endowed, perceptive, brave with the bravery of an artist and poet, one creates something that faces the cruelty, the horror, and he

brings to the welter of blood, vengeance, cruelty and deceit, a “sea change” (Berrigan, 1993, 3). Thich Nhat Hanh also observes that authentic Buddhist art by a monk about his people displays real qualities of inwardness, almost austerity, a patience that escapes monitors and timepieces and a serenity misunderstood in the west as stoicism (1993, 7).

### **Guns and Roses: A Case Study**

The novel *Giniaviyai Rosemalai* (Guns and Roses) by a Sri Lankan novelist, Vineetha Wijeratne, captures the tensions and suffering of a ‘panic culture’. There are four linking threads around which the story is woven. First is the background of war, terrorism and the emergence of panic culture in the north eastern part of Sri Lanka during the violent ethnic conflicts. The second thread in the story is the remarkable life of a family displaced, injured, incapacitated struggling with remarkable courage-- to rise above depression, anger and hopelessness to generate a resurrection, and a rebirth of the spirit. The author comments—“for people who are drowned in poverty and have no way of spending the day, the rising of the sun marks the emergence of ‘just another day’”. It is this background that illuminates the third thread, the central theme, the meaning of love and grief. This section centers around the intimate love that emerged between Amaranath and Chulani, the girl from a poor family who was able to gain admission to a university for pursuing medical studies. But during the emergence of these strong links between Amaranath and Chulani, an unexpected decision on the part of Amaranath to join the army was a point from which the poignant logic of the story enters a new phase. It was a difficult decision to both of them. As time passed, a false rumor spread that Amaranath had suffered death at the hands of the enemy and the body that was brought to the village was considered as that of Amaranath without any doubt. During this turning point in the story, Chulani summoned lots of courage and pursued her medical studies with great determination to help injured soldiers. But the final turning point of the story was the most unexpected one. While treating an injured soldier—Chulani was bedazzled to discover that this injured soldier is Amaranath. But the tragic part of the story is that Amaranath had lost one of his legs in the battle scene. The remarkable climax to the story is that with all the disabilities of her one time lover, Chulani decides to marry Amaranath.

At this point in the story, I was reminded of a saying of Tolstoy: those whom we love make us suffer, but that same love can heal our suffering. Qualities that emerge at this point in the story is Chulani as a true heroine in the novel—remarkable qualities of resilience, compassion and equanimity. As I was reflecting on this remarkable display of compassion, I was reminded of a statement made by my meditation guru Ven. Dhammadjiva from the Nissarana forest monastery in Meethirigala, Sri Lanka: “Real *mettā* is finding a reason to be glad under any circumstance”, and according to him this point is embodied in the novel, *Pollyana*. Plollyana’s father was a Christian missionary and did not have enough money to buy toys for the child and Pollyana expected to find a toy when they received the missionary bag, which unfortunately did not have a toy for her. Pollyana was feeling miserable but her father said she should be able to find a reason to be glad under any conditions and that she should be happy that she had a fine body and her leg was not broken and Polyana realized that she had a healthy body and regained her pleasant composure. This idea became Pollyana’s philosophy of life. Chulani did not have that same consolation about Amaranath but she did reconcile her to the new challenges with radiating compassion without remorse and anger.

A fourth thread runs through the novel—offering the hand of help and assistance, of shade and space to those in the other ethnic group by this family. We find here remarkable sentiments of love and compassion across religious and ethnic differences—a small oases in a troubled land! Hosking says at a seminar on the power of compassion that a willingness to bear another's misery brings a degree of strength, surrender and sacrificial love to the word compassion (Hoskin, 2005, 4). Within the rich tapestry of village life depicted in the novel, the remarkable ethnic and religious harmony that pervaded this small village was amazing. Vineetha practically spent time in this area meeting and talking to people. This is a novel very close to what happened in real life.

Catherine Lutz the anthropologist who presented a ground breaking study of grief in the Pacific Island, Ifaluk, discovered that people used the same word, *fago*—to cover compassion, love and sadness and that compassion is a great shock absorber. She observes that this term ‘*fago*’ compresses a string of ideas - that life is fragile, that connections to others are both precious and yet liable to severance through death—and that love may equal loss (Lutz, 1995, 235). The Buddhist concepts of *dukkha*, *mettā* and *karunā* also have a similar configuration in Buddhist cultures.

### The Pervasiveness of Human Suffering

No doubt fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness. But you will be able to convince yourself that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. (Freud 1953, vol. ii, *Studies in Hysteria*, p.305).

“Freud Showed real profundity when he stated that the aim of psychoanalysis was to replace neurotic unhappiness by normal unhappiness. A psychiatry based on a purely hedonistic ethics, a psychiatry that does not recognize that periods of anxiety and periods of melancholy are a necessary part of human life, such a psychiatry will be no more than a superficial affair. Our task is not merely to relieve but to interpret.” (M.O’c.Drury, 1973, 22).

Buddhism starts with the normality of human suffering and Freud said he was merely trying to convert neurotic unhappiness to normal unhappiness, and Hays et al express a similar sentiment:

Some mental health problems are pathological in the traditional sense. But short of giving nearly every citizen one or more syndromal labels, no amount of progress in the area of psychological disease will remove our need to explain and address the pervasiveness of human suffering. Most humans are hurting - just some more than others. It is in effect normal to be abnormal (Hayes et al, 2003, 6).

### Psychological disorders which are not ‘clinical disorders’ & the Call for Counseling Close to Ordinary Life

It has been observed that there are many instances of psychological problems of varying intensity which are not considered as clinical disorders—loneliness, alienation, boredom, meaninglessness, low self-esteem, existential angst, pain associated with sexual concerns, domestic violence (Harris, 2006). Also, it is seen that some people who go through these problems, add an extra burden of pseudo-suffering by repression, denial and deception that can be handled by

self-knowledge, transparency and honesty about one self. Also such normal people, close to ordinary life would gain by counseling geared for ordinary life, and not clinical disorders. Mild depression is also a quality that runs through routine lives as a temporary phase, which has to be handled with wisdom and opening out your problems for friendly conversation with wife, husband, friend or religious adviser. My own counseling practice was focused on what I called ‘the magic of the ordinary’, simple things to do in routine life. For instance, an addict who looks for the bottle, after coming home in the evening, after work, may get use to enjoying a nice samosa or a chicken role with a hot cup of coffee, and then see a teledrama, do some cooking or gardening; also plan some camping and enjoying outdoor life for holidays. As I succeeded in my counseling, if a client cannot be transformed into complete abstention, following Alan Marlatt, we could convert him to a controlled drinker, without suffering from suppressed temptation (de Silva, 2008). It is not the best solution but a pragmatic and realistic solution resting on compassion for a suffering client, who in this case brought back happiness and love to his family. Stress management and anger management are good examples of issues in routine lives. I found that the advice given by the celebrated Vietnamese monk, Thick, Nhat Hanh, in his essay on, “How to eat a mandarine” sums up our loss of simple enjoyment by complicating routine lives—what I call the “Magic of the Ordinary and the Elegance of Small Things” ; de Silva, 2008).

### **Lawful Nature of Things (Dhamma Niyama)**

During the time of the Buddha, there was no clinical concept of abnormality but he rather found whole cultures driven by craving, addictions, self-indulgence and reactive behavior. In fact, in *The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint* (MI, 186-1910, the Buddha has virtually predicted the earthquakes, tsunami, bushfires and the tornados. In the way that the disturbance of the ‘internal’ four elements may create disturbances within a person, there will come a time, he says when there will be a disturbance, a kind of revolt of the earth, water, fire and the air elements, which may destroy whole villages. During contemporary times, the pervasiveness of human suffering, as well as the wellspring of human generosity, compassion and kindness has all been seen in these settings of unbelievable disturbance of the normal order of things. The laws of psychology (*citta niyāma*) and morality (*kamma niyāma*) which are two dimensions of the nature of things, explain the consequences of lives dominated by excessive craving and envy (*abijjhā*), reactive anger (*vyāpāda*) and wrong views, as well as a life focused on truthfulness, compassion and goodness of heart.

## **Part II**

### **Mindfulness-Based Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT)**

One of the successful therapeutic methods that I used in dealing with the problems presented by my clients is the mindfulness-based EFT. EFT in the west is associated with the pioneering and celebrated therapist Leslie Greenberg. Long before I came in contact with Greensberg’s work, as a philosopher I had been working with what I call the logic of emotion concepts like anger, sadness, fear, greed, boredom, jealousy and pride (see. de Silva, 2005 4th edition). While following Paul Ekman’s work on the Darwinian scheme of basic emotions (Ekman, 2003), I also looked at more

emotions in relation to the material in the Buddhist *suttas* like what Gabriele Taylor calls the emotions of self-assessment, pride, conceit, humility, shame, guilt, remorse, and also jealousy (Taylor, 1985; de Silva, 1994). I was equally interested in the positive emotion profiles of loving kindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity. The paper on equanimity presented at UNDV 2010 (de Silva) brings out a new concept in positive emotions, that of emotional balance, very effective in managing intense grief and sadness. It is encouraging to find that Alan Wallace and Paul Ekman have developed the concept of “Cultivating Emotional Balance” (CEB) emerging as an exercise in education but having a great therapeutic potential. Wallace has made a useful contribution to the conceptual clarification of the notion of well-being in Buddhism (Wallace and Shapiro, 2006).

As I moved into professional therapy, I attempted to isolate the emotions that dominated within a client’s profile. For instance, reactivity (*anger, repugnance, ill-will*), attachments to things, symbols (grasping) along with submerged states of conceit. I found different forms of sadness, ranging from those colored by immense love and grief (as found in the novel ‘Guns and Roses’), to those consequent on loss, frustration, remorse and guilt. But any blend of anger and sadness with some ambivalence was a complex and difficult situation. These constellations also move into depression:

If sadness dominates depression, we speak of retarded depression; if agony is more prominent, it is an agitated depression. People who are depressed not only feel helpless to change their lives, they feel hopeless. They do not believe it will ever get better. In addition to sadness and agony, guilt and shame are strongly felt, for depressed people feel they are worthless... anger directed inward or out, and fear are often manifest (Ekman, 2003, 93).

## Part III

### The Emotion Profile of Sadness & Working with Emotions

“Thus promoting emotional processing in cognitive approaches, arousal of fear by imaginative stimulation in behavioral approaches, emotional insight in psychodynamic approaches, increased depth of experience in experiential approaches and communication of feeling in interactional approaches are all aspects of working with emotion that are seen as important within each perspective”. (Greenberg, 2003, 1). All these approaches are important in looking at the management of sadness. But my focus is basically on the management of emotions—emotion focused therapy (EFT). The best exponent and the pioneer of EFT is Lesli Greenberg. I have shown in a separate paper presented at a recent Mahidol University conference on Buddhism and science, basic resemblances and differences between the EFT of Greenberg and my own version of Mindfulness-Based EFT ((de Silva, 2011, In the Press). But the new revolution in emotion studies has integrated the *affective, cognitive, motivational* and the *attentional* dimensions of emotions. A full blown emotion has all these facets including the physiological aspect of emotion. The Buddhist guide to mindfulness practice known as the *Satipaṭṭhāna* integrates all these facets: the body, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, thought patterns and the nature of phenomena (both physical and psychological) and the underlying technique is the use of mindfulness/attention (*sati*) (Nyanaponika, 1999). In dealing with sadness, we start with the calming of the body; then looking at the emergence of feelings of pleasure, pain and neutral—if we ‘put our breaks’ here, painful feelings would not develop into sadness or anger; the focus on thoughts and thought patterns deals with what cognitive therapist call the ‘autopilot’,

breaking through automatic and conditioned thought processes. We also look at the meaning giving dimension of cognition, that help us to differentiate sadness from the close neighbors of sadness, as well as emotion clusters, like the entry of anger into sadness. It is an extremely fascinating bit of lab work looking at the chemistry of these basic emotions.

In looking at the profile of sadness, in primary sadness there is the experience of parting and separation, loss, feeling of being left out of attachments, and difficulties in communication. Communication is a very important facet of ‘sadness’ and inhibition of genuine communication can be damaging. Apart from the loss of a loved one, shattered hopes, loss of job, and getting uprooted from patterns of comfortable living, as we witness in the context of recent natural disasters are the many contexts for sadness. *In secondary sadness, it is more complex with feelings of being hurt, grief—feelings of being damaged, wounded, ignored, unrecognized, rejected* (Greenberg, 2003, 163). Basically, the distress centers on an irrevocable loss, and there is an emotional need for sympathy and understanding. Collapsing into tears and feeling hopeless is natural but the most important therapeutic step is *acceptance*.

The goal in mindfulness in therapy is to help the patient relate his emotional life, and all of his experience, in a different way. It is not an attempt to eliminate sadness, worry, or anxiety, but to help the patient see things in a different light when they do arise. Thoughts and feelings are not in our control, but come and go on their own (Bien, 2006, 69)

(1) In Greenberg’s EFT awareness and acceptance is the starting point. The therapist “works with the client to help the client approach, tolerate and regulate, as well as accept their emotions” (Greenberg, 2010, 22)

(2) Emotional expression: The client must also be in live contact with their emotions, and thus develop effective exposure to previously avoided feelings. While arousal and tolerance of emotions is necessary, optimum emotional processing involves the integration of cognition and affect.

(3) Emotion Regulation. When emotions such as sadness, fear, shame and powerlessness, overwhelm people, there is a need to help people regulate their emotions by getting them some ‘distance’ from them. Any attempt to regulate emotions by preventing themselves from feeling the disturbing emotions, withdrawing, avoiding, use distraction strategies, transform emotions by psychosomatic complaints or even seek stimulus seeking enjoyment to drown them are all counter-productive. In Buddhist practice, loosening the personal identification and seeing sadness as an *impersonal* process that emerge, stay for a while and pass away is recommended.

In fact, at this point Greenberg integrates mindfulness practice into EFT. Important means of regulating emotion include regulating breathing and mindfulness - the non-judgmental observation and description of one’s emotional states. Basic emotion regulation skills includes naming the emotion, describing the emotion in one’s body, clarifying the event that evoked the emotion, and understanding one’s interpretation of the situation and the actions prompted by the emotion (Greenberg, 2008, 206). Naming and labeling are techniques used in mindfulness practice.

(4) Reflection on emotional experience at the level of deep experience is recommended. Buddhism recommends wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*) which can be extended to routine life.

(5) Transformation of one emotion by another is the final method, quoting Spinoza, “an emotion cannot be restrained nor removed by another emotion unless by an opposed and stronger emotion” (Ethics, iv, 195).

## Buddhist Pathways For Managing Negative Emotions

1. *The Method of Restraint* takes a preventive stand instead of damage control. The ability to ‘step back’ and make a choice is a mature achievement in emotion management. This is useful in the case of emotions like anger and lust where the motivational roots are important and one can be aware of emotional triggers without any reactivity. But in the case of sadness, especially grief at the loss of a loved one, there is no choice, it just comes like an avalanche. Restraint would be useful in trying to handle one’s sadness in a thoughtful manner.

2. *The Method of Remedy*. The reference to Spinoza reminds one of the method of antidotes in remedying a negative state. The four divine states of loving kindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity are crucial and presented as antidotes for sadness. Loving kindness first begins by directing it towards one self and then reaching others, from the lost one, and others in the family, and then towards a more universal feeling with other beings. The ability to embrace all parts of oneself without guilt and self-hurt and the ability to connect with others helps one to break through feelings of separateness and ego-centric concerns. While compassion and generosity may be practiced in our daily life, it is also a meditative state with positive therapeutic value. Equanimity balances love and compassion by bringing in balance and realism, as well as a sense of acceptance of the tragic as part and parcel of the nature of things.

3. *Transforming negative emotions* instead of demonizing them is a technique where grief may be converted into a patience, resilience, a sense of realism, forgiveness, courage and so on. This is what Carl Jung described as emotional alchemy, converting brass into gold. Venerable Nyanaponika observes that one should not throw away negative emotions, and quotes from *The Little Locksmith*, (Nyanaponika, 1986, 55): “If you throw away a thing it is gone. Where you had something you have nothing. Your hands are empty, they have nothing to work on. Whereas almost all those things that you throw away, are capable of being worked over by a little magic into just the opposite of what they were”.

4. *Liberation from an emotion by insight*. Here one can use what the philosophers describe as the ‘componential theory of emotions’, where emotions are seen as constructions out of bodily sensations, feelings and thought patterns, and if you have a hard look at them gradually you see them emerging and passing away, and with a hard look they appear empty and evaporate. Here the notion of impermanence is applied to these “seemingly rock-like phenomena”.

5. *Dedication Through Gratitude*. Solomon refers to the reflective and dedicatory qualities of grief, where we bring to our mind the good things by the person whom you have lost. What you do on behalf of those whom you have lost, especially in the case of parents are not considered as duties in the Kantian sense but emerges in the context of reciprocity, what parents do for children

and what children do for parents, especially in the context aging followed by death. Gratitude and generosity practiced in the name of the lost one and compassion work together and are woven into rituals in Buddhist practice in Thailand and Sri Lanka

6. Living a good life is considered as the best way of respecting those who have departed. A moral life with openness, candour and vibrancy brings trust and confidence in one's own life.

7. Sadness has to be viewed in terms in terms of mental and emotional balance. One's experience of sadness has to strike a balance between a 'deficit' and 'hyperactivity'. If a person displays the necessary energy by way of motivation, seeing things clearly and handles issues of meaning at the cognitive level, feels without any deadness or passivity on the affective level combined with a good attentional level, there is no deficit. If a person gets agitated by grief due to the addition of anger, shame and fury, there is hyperactivity. If the way that the person handles his grief leads to more suffering and confusion, his response to grief is dysfunctional. This is a very brief summary of grief in the context of cultivating emotional balance. In a separate study I have shown in detail how the Buddhist concept of equanimity (*upekkhā*) takes up the role of mental and physical balance (de Silva, 2011).

In fact, the tradition of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression developed by Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002), and Williams, Teasdale, Segal with Kabat-Zinn (2007), are not cited in the H & W study. Using the mindfulness approach to therapy emerging on Asian soils, transferred to the west- does it make any difference to managing depression? Their approach differed from the earlier approach to depression of Aaron Beck in not disputing and analyzing negative thoughts but rather "holding thoughts and feelings in awareness rather than trying to change them". It is an innovative eight session program directed towards managing depression relapses, using the objective scientific study format for validation.

## Boredom

Boredom has a profile of its own and if you understand boredom well, that is one dimension along which you may not merely manage sadness but find positive pathways to overcome it. Issues of values and meaning are important in understanding boredom, as value constraints play a crucial role in boredom. Boredom may also be described as an attentional crisis.

To realize that boredom does not come from the object of attention but rather from the quality of attention is truly a transforming insight. Frits Pearls, one of those who brought Gestalt therapy to America, said, "Boredom is lack of attention". Understanding this reality brings profound changes in our lives (Goldstein, 1993, 80).

You have an ability to be immensely interested in something that is exhilarating and beautiful in life, there is no room for the infiltration of boredom into your mind. Whatever the object, it is the subjective state of exhilaration which is within you that is important - it may be music, art, gardening, cooking or reading. *One dimension along which one may manage sadness is to have an increasing enlargement and intensification of interest in life.* There has to be values and goals that energize one's life and a dear one that one has lost, may be considered as a source of inspiration. In my personal journey through grief, I found these words of Tolstoy very inspiring: "Only people

who are capable of loving strongly can suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them". The boredom associated with sadness may be compared with another form of boredom, just to see its special nature. There is a kind of boredom which emerges out of the manic quality of life with all its "time-compression effect": increased stress at work, sleep deprivation, burn out and workaholism. In contrast, people who are genuinely immersed in whatever they do, and motivated by intrinsic rewards enjoy the experience. So, whatever the type of boredom, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who is an expert on the psychology of the 'flow' experience says that those who enjoy life and work have curiosity and interest in life, persistence and low-self-centredness and are attracted by intrinsic rewards. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Boredom is a window to the properties of time, and novel, creative and meaningful ways of spending time is the answer. To understand the boredom that comes with loss and grief, we need to see it in terms of an attentional crisis.

## SADNESS & SPIRITUALITY: THE CREATIVE FACE OF MELANCHOLY

There may be a gradation of differences between sadness in the secular and the therapeutic contexts and in a liberation oriented spiritual context. One point of linkage is that sadness and unhappiness is a basic ingredient of the human predicament. We have already described the sense of tragedy as well as the uplifting resilience and compassion described in 'Guns and Roses'. But yet the young Siddhartha's experience of the tragic (*samvega*) that made him renounce a princely thrown, describes best the most profound Buddhist perspective on the lost art of sadness. This spiritual perspective on '*samvega*' do have some close cousins in the therapeutic traditions, especially the existential psychotherapy of Irwin Yalom, and for him looking at the meaning of life and death is the 'creative face of melancholy' (Yalom, 1980, 435). Speaking of the writings of Dostovesky, Tolstoy, Kafka and Camus, Yalom says "...they suffered more keenly from a crisis of meaningless and with a ferocity born of desperation, plunged into creative efforts". As has been well presented by Jennifer Radden, in Freud himself there is an interesting tension between the notion that melancholic propensities being rare and pathological and on the other hand, even a part of the human condition. This tradition that may be traced to Burton's *Anatomy of Melanchololy* (Burton, 1621, 1927), where he sees it as a part of the human condition and also that in this condition, sometimes you see exalted energy, different from what is found in depression.

In the Buddha's sermons, *samvega* is considered as an authentic spiritual emotion caused by the miseries of the world. The concept translated as agitation, stirring, trembling can be an invigorating experience. With the help of a graphic metaphor of four types of horses, the Buddha clarifies the nature of authentic *samvega*: the steed that is agitated at the very sight of the stick; the steed that is agitated when its coat is pricked with a stick; the steed that is agitated when the flesh is pierced; the steed that is agitated when the bone is pierced. This is compared to four types of men: a person hears that in a particular town a person is afflicted; a person beholds with his own eyes a person afflicted and suffering; a person sees his kinsman afflicted; the person himself is stricken with pain and suffering. The person who has followed the authentic path of the Buddha would convert this stirring, at whatever stage it occurs, towards enhancing his spiritual journey but others will be bewildered (*paritassanā*) and bemoan that they will be annihilated (Gradual Saying II, 13). Harnessing of such spiritual emotions has to be tempered by equanimity (*upekkhā*) and emotional balance that helps a meditator to avoid on the one hand, the hindrance of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and on the other hand slothfulness (*thīna-middha*). Authentic and energetic

stirring with equanimity and balance is a bit of a walk on a tight rope! Equally important, a mind that is stirred by the suffering of fellow beings opens up to the way of compassion, and as the Buddha transformed the robber Angulimala, re-teaching the loveliness within him.

The bud stands for all things,  
Even for those things that don't flower,  
For everything flowers from within, of self-blessing,  
Though sometimes it is necessary; to re-teach a thing its loveliness.

--(Galway Kinnel)

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### Dedication.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Padmal de Silva, a distinguished psychologist, a pioneer in developing Mindfulness-based Behaviour Therapy, a versatile scholar and a friend with magnanimity and a compassionate heart. The last article that he sent me before his untimely death was on”Panic Cultures”, drawing from his research on the Tsunami experience in Sri Lanka.

# **Slang, Freud and Buddhist Psychology: Clarifying the Term “Ego” in Popular, Psychodynamic and Spiritual Contexts**

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The Latin term ego was first used in a translation of Freud’s work to refer to his idea of the “I” or the reality principle within the dynamic forces of the psyche. He suggests the functions of the “I” include reasoning, a sense of self-capacity and the mediator between the polarized demands of instinctual drives and societal expectations. While he considered the “I” a mechanism of the self, he did not use the term ego. Nevertheless the word ego entered the mainstream in professional conversations of the analytic understanding of the human being as it began with Freud’s thought.

As psychology became popularized the word ego entered the common vernacular to describe attitudes and behaviors considered selfish or inflated. The slang use of ego is generally a derogatory term for behaviors considered out of the range of social acceptance. Slang borrows from the inflated side of the psychodynamic description of the unhealthy manifestations of ego yet lacks a deeper understanding of its causes.

In the 1970’s Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama, began utilizing the term ego to describe a neurotic process based on the ignorance of our actual situation (Trungpa, 1978) resulting in a solidified sense of self that is separate and self-referential and as such is the cause of suffering. He saw the projections of the ego as an incorrect understanding of the interdependent nature of reality and the primary obstruction to clear seeing and compassion. He borrowed aspects of the term from both psychology and modern vernacular usage.

Buddhists around the world have embraced this usage of the term ego and use it regularly to describe the common illusion of a static separate self that emphasizes it’s self-importance in relation to the world. This Buddhist definition can now be understood as a unique understanding of the word ego as well. The field of transpersonal psychology has borrowed from the Buddhist usage of the term ego in the psychological and spiritual mapping of human development.

The confusion that has arisen from the different usages of the term ego is significant to those in the field of psychology as well as Buddhist practitioners who have an incomplete understanding of the word in its several contexts. The general public would also benefit from a further understanding of the factors relating to the formation of an aggrandized sense of self to which the slang usage of ego refers.

For a rudimentary understanding of the psychodynamic view of ego we must understand how it is one aspect of a trio of the major forces Freud delineated within the human psyche. Representing a self-part mostly but not entirely within conscious access, the egos job is to meet primary human needs by mediating between the forces of the id, or instinctual drives, and the superego, or the introjected societal injunctions coming from outside the person.

The ego is characterized by numerous functions including consciousness of self and the environment, knowledge of self-capacities and limitations, management of emotions, reasoning and logical thinking, continuity of self through space and time, social skills and character formation.

As the term ego came into popular usage a common word associated with its slang usage is narcissism, also borrowed from the psychological literature. A word made common in the literature by Freud, narcissism describes a spectrum of self-regard from healthy esteem to an overly aggrandized and entitled sense of self. The slang usage connotes only the unhealthy end of the spectrum of narcissism perceived as self-absorption and a “me” orientation that disregards or uses others. In clinical psychology the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) also refers to problems at the negative end of the spectrum of Freud’s original psychological definition.

Problems to healthy ego development include a distorted sense of one’s capacities that are either inflated or deflated. Not understood in the popular discourse is the deflated version of narcissism, a self-orientation characterized by an exaggerated perception of one’s smallness, victimization and incapacity to defend against the world. In this case individuals would consider themselves the “worst” rather than the “best” and use the qualifier as an attempt to garner negative or care-taking attention.

The Buddhist concept of ego acknowledges the problems of distortion at both ends of the spectrum of unhealthy development yet sees these misperceptions inherent in the mistaken view of a permanent and separate self. While acknowledging the importance of confidence in one’s Buddha Nature, or capacity for compassion and wisdom, the Buddhist view is particularly wary of any conceptualization of a definitive self. Freedom from suffering, or health in the Buddhist sense, is derived from the deconstruction of the illusions of the ego as an autonomous and singular self in the world.

This paper explores and compares the usage of the term ego in these three contexts across eight factors including identity, intra-psychic awareness, control, reality, relationship, empathy, needs and fear. Healthy and unhealthy aspects of ego in the psychological and developmental sense are explored in relation to the Buddhist view of non-self and the problems associated to ego. Contrast to the slang usage of the term ego is provided to clarify any vernacular misunderstandings. Refer to the chart at the end of the article for an overview of ego in context of its use in slang, psychodynamic psychology and Buddhism.

## Identity

“He’s so egotistical.” “She’s an egomaniac.” “He’s such a narcissist.” “She’s so inflated.” Psychological language has saturated the airwaves of our everyday conversation. We label and “diagnose” others and ourselves with the slang version of these terms. The diagnosis comes across as a judgment and hardens into an identity. It is how we identify someone else or a part of ourselves we don’t like. We believe the other thinks of him or herself as superlative and according to this slang system so does he or she. The attitude is self-aggrandizing and inflates self-regarded traits as positive while downplaying or denying negative traits.

The Buddhist use of the term ego describes an identity that is false yet deeply engrained and believed habitual tendencies. While the qualities of inflation are not excluded in its definition, Buddhism describes an overarching error in ego's understanding of reality. The error is an ignorance of our impermanence and interdependence. Inflation or deflation is a further spin on the misunderstanding of ego as an existent entity.

The belief in an existent self lends itself to the problems of self-importance and self-derision. If we believe in an objectified existence than we are at once vulnerable to an objectified evaluation of that existence. The fluid unbounded quality of interdependence is lost and our perceptual distortions are magnified when we falsely separate self and other. A separate identity creates comparison and ranking as well as estrangement and a utilitarian view of personhood.

The continuity of self critical to a psychologically healthy ego structure is understood from the Buddhist view as a relative function helpful in navigating a relative world. In the absolute sense the self is not permanent or real. In a relative sense self is a mistaken view that increases suffering by fixing the individual in a static state. The "I" of yesterday and tomorrow is a fiction. The "I" of today is a fleeting idea falsely extracted from a continuum of awareness.

The seeming development of character or fixed traits, considered healthy in ego development is considered an obstruction to liberation in Buddhism. If we conceive of our character as strong, an experience of weakness can be debilitating. If we conceive of ourselves as humble, we remain unaware of an arrogant pride behind the self-conception. Healthy self-regard in either system is based in a person's actuality. A relative understanding of one's strengths and limitations in the Buddhist view is held lightly and subject to continual investigation that sees through any permanent view.

## Intra-psychic Awareness

Psychologically healthy adults are able to utilize the ego function to moderate between physiological drives and introjected societal injunctions. Healthy individuals are aware of thoughts and can modulate the inner voices representing different aspects of themselves. Clinical interventions in psychotherapy enhance personal awareness of thoughts and emotions and often prescribe ways to modify the inner dialogue to increase well-being. Somatic oriented therapies bring awareness to body sensations to help individuals map the source of emotions and the effects of thought on bodily experience.

The ego of the psychologically unhealthy individual is likely to have poor or rigid impulse or superego control. Operating out of unconscious drives this person cannot find satisfaction in life without extreme manipulation. A person with this wound to their ego development may reactively rage with no clue regarding the source of their behavior. Another person with overly rigid boundaries might compulsively control all expression of emotion with no understanding of their flattened affect. Labeled "clueless" in the popular vernacular, blame for lack of control or overcontrol is often projected onto others.

Buddhists have no quarrel with the utility of a function increasing the capacities of the intra-psychic sphere. It is suspicious of relying on a function that defines itself as "I" and generally understands the "I" to have a vested interest in maintaining itself. The "I" conspires to maintain the delusions of its unexamined beliefs and projects these onto the world.

The practice of mindfulness is designed to increase awareness of mental activity and bodily actions without an “I”. Calm-abiding meditation creates a spacious platform within the psyche to better observe the mechanisms of the mind from a state of equanimity. Impartial seeing made available in a state of calm is void of the “I” and brings rest to frantic self-deceptive and defensive activities of the psyche.

The ego self-part of the psychological literature overlaps but is not necessarily similar to the Buddhist definition of ego as an “I” identified self-part. Psychological ego may operate out of a vested interest or not. When it operates as an “I” to maintain itself it is the ego that Buddhists seek to dissolve through impartial examination.

## Control

The slang terms referring to the “bully”, the “princess”, and the “control freak” are obvious examples of individuals exhibiting controlling behavior out of a need to protect their self-interest. These stereotypes are driven by an inflated sense of their capacity to manipulate events or others in their favor. They would be considered to have a “big ego” or be “ego driven” in the popular vernacular and limited in their range of development in the eyes of psychology.

The psychological perspective of the problems of control includes behaviors that are not so obvious. The response to life with a weak ego structure is made narrow by attempts to limit the impact of anything from outside the self. The controlling behavior appears less obvious and may include isolation, rigidity, conformity or codependence.

A dichotomized self also limits inner choice where the ego function is unable to effectively mediate between the exaggerated forces of the superego and id. Dictates or drives may dominate, oscillate in their domination or incapacitate the individual in a stalemate where he or she may feel stuck or tied up in knots.

A healthy ego in the psychological sense has the capacity to regulate a range of needs that are both social and driven by basic survival and physiological functions. Will power or control as a function of ego includes the capacity to forgo immediate pleasure for long-term goals. Will is the energy the ego needs to be able to effect change in the world. A healthy sense of will operates internally and self-regulation is optimized by a realistic sense of one’s strengths and limitations.

The problem of control in Buddhist thinking stems from the false security created by an ego or “I” that believes it is in power. Control is an attempt to abate the basic underlying fears of safety, aloneness and unworthiness (Gyatzen, 2009). Buddhist practice seeks to enhance capacity for intention, focus, concentration, reasoning and choice yet the training of the mind cultivates an approach to life based on letting go of control. On an outer level control implies clinging to a particular outcome and is an intrusive attempt to manipulate results. On the inner level control is marked by confusion and division within the heart. Compassionate mind training dissolves warring self-parts seeking command through the violence of self-control.

Confidence in the path to liberation is not attached to the look and feel of freedom. Often seekers are quite surprised by the ordinariness of living openly and without habituated patterns of control.

## Relationship

Understanding the needs of self and other the psychologically healthy person cultivates a sense of give and take in relationship. Social adaptation is an essential skill for meeting basic human needs. The infant needs consistent human warmth and contact to survive. Mirroring, the reflection back to the child by a caregiver of the child's emotional state, provides affirmation of the child's experience.

Children naturally reciprocate mirroring early in their development and in nurturing relationships experience a deepening of connection and mutual exchange with others. Later development includes learning to respect the boundaries and differing needs of self and other.

When there are traumatic interruptions or aberrations in bonding the self-other boundary is confused and relationship skills are blunted. A child cannot properly "hatch" (Mahler, 1973) and experiences insecurity in both autonomous and intimate functions. Closeness and aloneness are both experienced as threatening to the weak ego structure. Carrying over into adulthood others are experienced as an extension of the self, used to shore up a sense of inadequacy or seen as unavailable or rejecting.

The nomenclature of slang labels a category of behaviors indicative of this narcissistic wound as selfish or self-centered. The individual who has not been adequately mirrored (Miller, 1981) continues to seek the missing element of their childhood by constantly seeking attention and goods from others. Development is arrested at a stage where it was necessary that others served their needs before the child learned to reciprocate. Other manifestations of this wound to the ego are not described in the popularized use of the term narcissism. They include but are not limited to the mental health problems of social isolation, low self-esteem, addiction and depression.

The Buddhist concept of interdependence informs our understanding of relationship and the natural reciprocity inherent in all of life. While a psychodynamic perspective understands the autonomous development of the individual as a necessity, Buddhism points to the danger of the extremes of self-sufficiency creating a false sense of "I." This "I" or ego manipulates and misperceives self and other.

Suffering in relationships stem from the extremes of independence and dependence. One is marked by the painful experience of isolation and the other is an immature fusion where our demands on others do not reflect our chronological age. Learning to walk the interdependent path begins with the practice of attending to the present moment, seeing through the impermanence of past wounds and trusting the guidance of our teachers to mirror our yearning for compassion and liberation from suffering.

The Bodhisattva Vow, to liberate others before oneself counters the tendency of the individual to attend to oneself and not the other. From the Buddhist point of view we are all narcissistically wounded in clinging to the "I" and its delusional views and habits. This parallels the psychodynamic view of neurosis as a matter of degree (deSilva, 2010). Waking up requires the development of clear seeing and the reversal of painful self-centric patterns in relationship.

## Empathy

Empathy is a powerful relationship skill that develops out of the mirroring process. When a parent makes a sad face to mirror her child's unhappiness not only does the child receive understanding, the parent feels the sadness in his or her own face and has a direct somatic experience approximating the child's state. The capacity for empathy in the adult is enhanced and conveyed at a level the child can understand. The parent feels with the child and not just for the child. Putting oneself in another's shoes helps to develop emotional intelligence.

The psychologically wounded individual may be unable to enter the experience of another or may have difficulty differentiating himself or herself from the other person if they do. The experience of loneliness or emotional entanglement can be heightened to intolerable levels.

Lack of empathy commonly manifests in incorrect assumptions about others and the projection of disowned qualities onto the unknown other. Without a feeling sense of the other, the ensuing experience of distance often leads to overly negative assumptions or projections. The emotionally immature parent may believe his or her colicky infant is rejecting the parent. The parent in turn rejects the child for "crying too much." If projection is active in the parent who has denied his or her own tears due to trauma or introjected beliefs he or she may label the child "bad" for crying. The parents dissociated sadness or grief is projected onto the child and becomes the unconscious reason for pushing the child away.

The emotionally confluent individual who is fused with others suffers confusion between the emotions of self and other (Perls, 1973). The parent with this particular form of weak ego structure may assume the child's state is a mirror of his or her own emotion. If the child is angry, the parent is angry. If the child is impatient, the parent is impatient. Likewise the child may be expected to have the same feelings of the parent and when he or she does not, the child is rejected. Parents may also assume the child is just like them and fail to see the child's uniqueness.

Compassion is Buddhism is related to empathy as it is based in entering the experience of the other. The Latin root of the word refers to having deep feelings (passion) with (com) another. Compassion implies a further response of an action to bring relief to the passion (suffering) of the other. In this case passion is understood as the impossible desire to escape "what is."

A compassionate response can pierce the ego-encasement that an individual has built to protect him or herself from pain. Compassion acknowledges and accepts loss and other feelings imagined as too big to bear. Compassion understands the ultimate boundarylessness of experience and the natural exchange continuously occurring between all beings.

In the Buddhist view any wall created to protect the self from others is the creation of ego or a false sense of self. At the same time Buddhism does not deny the uniqueness or the different experiences of each human being. The task to hold both relative and absolute understanding of self and no-self is embraced on the path of liberation.

## Needs

Needs are understood as normative in the psychologically healthy individual. Marshall Rosenberg lists basic categories of needs including physiologic, interdependence, choice integrity, contribution, spirituality and celebration (Rosenberg, 2008). The psychologically healthy person can satisfactorily meet needs and with increasing maturation tolerates frustration and delayed gratification.

Disruptions to healthy ego development create exaggerated responses to needs. The narcissistic personality attempts to gratify needs in ways that distorts self-perception and will eventually hurt relationships. The gratified narcissist is successful in procuring an excess of emotional or physical “goods”. The ungratified narcissist is unsuccessful in meeting needs and remains focused on a dissatisfied state often at the cost of learning the skills to procure life’s necessities. Both the gratified and ungratified person is considered fixated in an unhealthy manner on the objects of their desire. Extreme states of fixation have obsessive or compulsive qualities.

Slang terms referring to the individual who appears to be overly gratified include “greedy”, “stingy”, “self-satisfied”, “gluttonous” or “entitled”. These individuals are considered to be oriented to their own needs at the expense of others. The ungratified person may be considered a “suck”, “desperate” or a “loser”.

Buddhists can understand the universality of needs by reflecting on those that are provided by the three jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Within Sangha we find our needs met for acceptance, contribution, support, warmth and honesty. The Dharma meets our need for truth and clarity. The jewel of the Buddha fulfills our need for guidance and inspiration (Bowman, 2009).

The Buddhist view also focuses on the problem of desire driving a constant craving for external objects and experience. The focus on personal needs reifies the “I” and reflects an ego driven state of continual discontent. The cessation of desire is primary to the path of liberation from suffering. Any clinging to self or other fosters dissatisfaction with life and an inability to accept the impermanent nature of all things. The acceptance of interdependence appreciates the play of exchange without clinging to needs, strategies to meet needs or an expected outcome.

## Fear

The healthy person learns to manage fear and difficult emotions in daily life situations. To varying degrees of success psychotherapy addresses individuals who have been exposed to traumatic events that cause dysregulation in the fear response. While the healthy person can tolerate ambiguity, repeated or high levels of traumatic experience can impair ego functioning that moderates external stimuli and internal thoughts and imagery. Individuals who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) are easily triggered by situations that may appear innocuous yet are associated to earlier harmful or violent events.

The child who is subject to isolation, enmeshed boundaries and less traumatic levels of abuse also experiences higher levels of anxiety than normal when performing developmental tasks requiring increasing social or autonomous skills. An overly defended ego stance can result in the formation of an adult persona that presents as fearless and brash. This personality will likely respond with aggression when threatened.

The person with an ego that is overly porous may present as engulfed in fear at the slightest threat. This person responds with a range of reactive behaviors including hostility, submission or retreat from life. The retreating individual may hide in compulsive activities or significantly limit contact with others or challenging events. Some individuals retreat into a superior attitude that in effect limits contact with others.

Slang addresses a narrow range of dysfunction related to fear. The fearless “as if” personality is labeled “cocky”, “brazen” and “swaggering.” The individual is referred to as “puffed up”, a Donald Trump type. At the other end of the spectrum the person presenting as intellectually or culturally superior is considered “aloof”, “condescending”, a “know-it-all” or “conceited.” Slang fails to acknowledge the wound behind these behaviors.

Buddhism sees the construction of an “I” as the basis of a fear driven response to the impermanent and unpredictable nature of life. The “I” or ego gives the illusion of stability and becomes something to protect and defend. While not always within the diagnostic range of clinical psychology this “I” limits the individual’s capacity to respond to the fullness of life or experience the freedom that is possible. Liberation from suffering is liberation from fear.

Existential anxiety is considered normative in the psychological view yet the path of healing described in Buddhism seeks to undercut the root of all anxiety. Ponlop describes existential fear as the subliminal panic that is all-pervasive in every living heart (Ponlop, 2007). The universal mistake of clinging to an “I” is addressed in learning to attend with relaxation to moment-to-moment experience and the investigation of the truth of that experience. Calm-abiding developed in meditation is the basis for the discovery of an unbounded reality free of the shackles of ego-clinging and the fear states ego induces.

Freedom from fear is also the freedom to work with fear as it arises and passes in awareness. True liberation embraces the paradox of our relative and absolute knowing of any experience. We understand fears inherent nonexistence when we are able to extinguish our attachment to its appearance. As we follow its arising and falling we learn to see through our mistaken beliefs in its solidity. We do not have power over fear nor does it have power over us. Paradoxically complete acceptance of fear creates the spaciousness in our lives that offers complete peace as well.

## Reality

Reasoning and conceptual thinking are considered cornerstones of the psychologically healthy ego structure. In order to function in society a person must understand and work with the consensual reality of their culture including an orientation to time and space.

Cognitive therapies emphasize working with thought processes to assist individuals in managing emotions and reducing distorted thinking that contributes to depression and other psychological problems. The healthy individual has developed an internalized conceptual structure that is able to prioritize and make value decisions grounded in reality.

A workable orientation to consensual reality includes the understanding and acceptance of basic social codes that make civil discourse and interpersonal relationships possible. The health of a society is affected by the degree of human considerations in those social standards and the role they play in the development of the superego in its individual members. Overly rigid family and societal standards make for a harsh inner critic with low tolerance for differentiation from a narrow range of acceptable behavior. A rebellious attitude is the converse side to the critical inner voice and may or may not be acted out. Confused or lax standards contribute to an ego structure that is unable to manage the conflicting demands of instinctual drives and internalized societal messages.

Slang refers to the individual with a grandiose perception of their place in the world as “arrogant” or “God’s gift to the world.” “She thinks she is the center of the universe” or “he acts like the world rotates around him” would be phrases used to refer to someone who misperceives their importance in relation to others and bends consensual reality in their favor.

The individual who acts as if they can defy physics or the basic rules of traffic is called “deluded” and “grandiose”. The “egomaniac” is considered out of control and others might say, “He believes he is immortal” or “she thinks she can defy death.” All of these slang terms refer to a lack of a reality orientation combined with an inflated ego. The individual with an extremely weak ego structure and severe delusions may be called “psycho” or “crazy.” Even the person who has difficulty organizing life’s details or thinking logically through problems is considered a “mess” or “haywire.”

Buddhists understand the underlying tenants of consensual reality as deluded. Society fosters the mistaken belief in an existent self and other. This belief induces a sense of self-importance or that “the world is my oyster.” Reality in the Buddhist view is empty of anything considered singular, independent or permanent, concepts that contribute to the misperception of one’s immortality or fear and denial of death.

The non-dualist view of reality cuts through the delusion of a separate self reified by the social constructs inherent in language. Conceptual thinking obscures an accurate perception of reality by dividing it into pieces that can then be arranged to fit an agreed upon consensual reality or create an even more deluded one. While logic is not abandoned in Buddhist thinking and actually encouraged in the practice of investigating reality, it is used to point to an understanding that is free or empty of concepts. This nondual view is considered the basis of liberation from the suffering created by ego’s attachment to a false reality centered in “I.”

## Conclusion

Psychology's limited understanding of human development as culminating in healthy ego functioning reinforces the mistaken belief in the "I" as substantial and driven by psychosocial needs and desires. The view of psychology colludes with culture in reifying the permanence of what is impermanent, the ever-shifting self-image that solidifies when we generalize our experience into categories such as "good" and "bad" or "you" and "me". While psychology has much to offer individuals who suffer from serious problems related to interruptions in the developmental cycle, it does not address the suffering that ego-identity and ego-clinging creates for all of humankind.

It is helpful to address wounds to the healthy development of the psychologically defined ego before or while engaging in meditation practices to see through the illusions of the "I" in the Buddhist sense. The adage that "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody" (Engler, 1986) is relevant here. The relative sense of an identity and constancy in relationship are necessary starting points for the disciplines of concentration and investigation that are utilized to uncover the insubstantiality of self and the objects of the world.

The person with an ego that is not adequately differentiated from the other does not have the ability to witness its internalized other. Self-reflection is a danger zone for individuals with a stunted capacity to manage harsh introjected superego voices or impulses of the primitive drives of the id. The capacity to maintain a neutral awareness and not be caught or flooded by the contents of awareness is marginalized by varying degrees. In this respect the development of the inner witness is understood as an ego function that is a precondition to the collapse of the self-other divide representing a deeper state of knowing in Buddhism.

When the understanding of self in the world is too strong or not strong enough these distorted perceptions increase clinging to the objects of the world to either enhance inflation or shore up a deflated sense of self. This attachment decreases one's capacity to delay gratification and increases misperceptions that unchecked desire drives. When the ego function of self-constancy is low insecurity makes meditation difficult to impossible to practice. When the correlating ego function of other-constancy is wounded it is difficult to hold any object in awareness without unmanageable levels of fear interrupting the process.

The problem of ego bashing in popular discourse becomes a super-ego function void of compassion or deeper understanding of the wound beneath the self-centric pattern. While the use of derogatory labels may function as norm setting for a culture, they provide no assistance to the individual to correct the dysfunction. Labels given to others or to oneself typically create further division in relationships or increase self-hatred.

In Buddhist circles ego bashing may have a similar yet subtler superego function. On one level when we disregard the developmental necessity of certain psychodynamic ego functions we fail to acknowledge their importance on the path to liberation. This failure can impede progress when serious wounds to the development of a sense of self make it difficult to release that self. The insecure self, whether puffed up or dejected, adheres to anything in fear of annihilation. Without addressing the relative value of the self-functions, void of extraneous and distorted ideas about that self, one cannot progress along the path.

When Buddhists say ego is *the problem* it is important to notice that there may be a subtle quality of the superego talking down to the ego. When we name our ego as getting in the way of freedom we may be creating a label of distain that becomes solidified in our minds. My “I” becomes bad, not something to look at with impartiality. Any prior injury to a realistic view of our capacities and limitations is a precondition for further ego bashing even when it is dressed up in Buddhist terminology.

Modern psychology has much to gain from Buddhism in the investigation of the self, its utility and problems. Trungpa states that:

When we talk about egolessness, that does not mean simply the absence of ego itself. It means the absence of the projections of the ego. Egolessness comes more or less as a by-product of seeing the transitory, transparent nature of the world outside. Once we have dealt with the projections of ego and seen their transitory and transparent nature, then the ego has no reference point, nothing to relate to. So the notions of inside and outside are interdependent—ego began and its projections began. Ego managed to maintain its identity by means of its projections. When we are able to see projections as nonsubstantial, ego becomes transparent correspondingly (Trungpa, 1978).

Looking through the transparency of ego there is nothing to impede clear seeing and the compassion derived from this enlightened vision. The work of withdrawing our habitual tendencies and projections is the path to the cessation of suffering. While clinical psychology addresses many debilitating and erroneous patterns of projection, the methods of Buddhism address the root of projection itself.

Viewing ego in the context of no referential point we begin to comprehend its relative significance to the development of an ultimate understanding of reality. Eighth century Zen poet Sandokai says, “Ordinary life fits the Absolute as a box and its lid” (Suzuki, 2001). Our ordinary understanding of “I” and “other” is the ground of our freedom and our ignorance. Psychology helps us cut through the gross layers of our delusions; Buddhism offers us a clear path to extinguish suffering and experience the liberation that is our birthright.

THE TERM EGO IN CONTEXT	SLANG: COMMON USAGE	PSYCHO-DYNAMIC: UN-HEALTHY	PSYCHO-DYNAMIC: HEALTHY	BUDDHIST VIEW: PROBLEMS OF EGO	BUDDHIST VIEW: EGOLESSNESS
<b>IDENTITY</b>	Egomaniac, Egotistical, Narcissist inflated, aggrandizing, “God’s gift to the world”	Inflated or deflated, extreme (ex: hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine)	Continuity of self, formation of character structure, Healthy self-regard	A fixed & solid sense of self is illusion, character formation is neurotic, Mistaking the continuum for a self	No self, confidence in basic goodness, boundaryless, impermanence, continuity of experience
<b>INTRA-PSYCHIC AWARENESS</b>	“Clueless” about inner life, impoverished inner dialogue	Poor or rigid impulse and superego control, operates out of unconscious drives	Ego moderates id (drives) and Superego (introjected societal injunctions), self-aware	Self-perception is deceptive, Ego conspires to maintain delusional view of itself	Mindfulness and meditation cultivates awareness and inner spaciousness
<b>CONTROL</b>	“Bully”, “Princess”, “Control freak”, Inflated sense of capacity, exhibitionist	Controlling or out-of-control, narrow response to life, Denies vulnerability	Willpower to effect change, can regulate self, Realistic sense of capacity & limitations	Control is ego clinging, habituated response, false security in sense of self	Non-attachment, openness, confidence in path to liberation
<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	“Know-it-all”, “big-headed” Arrogant, Conceited, “The world is my oyster”, egocentric	Knowledge used for self protection, unaware of ignorance, projects self onto world	Maximizes learning, reasoning, conceptual thinking, Works with consensual reality, grounded in the world	Ignorance, logic based on false premise of existent self and existent other, Buys into consensual reality	Wisdom, Open and non-dual, nothing is singular independent or permanent, reality is “empty” of concepts
<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>	You revolve around “me”, You serve me”, self-centered, selfish	Uses others to shore up self, others are an extension of self, unhealthy merging	Aware of others, give and take, respects boundaries of self and other	Ego creates separate self, manipulates, misperceives others	Inter-dependent, vows to liberate others before self
<b>EMPATHY</b>	“Clueless” about others, Oblivious, Condescending, thoughtless, inconsiderate	Incapable, projects unwanted self onto others, confluent	Can put self in others shoes, has emotional intelligence,	Inability to respond in present, idiot compassion is based on misconception that we can fix others	Understanding of suffering gives rise to compassion, lovingkindness for others and self
<b>NEEDS</b>	Greedy, stingy, Selfish, Self-satisfied, gluttonous, entitled	Gratified or ungratified narcissism, oral fixation, neurotic	Can meet needs, tolerates frustration	Desire driven, constant craving is unquenchable	Cessation of desire, free of craving, sees life as an exchange
<b>FEAR</b>	Cocky, brazen, swaggering, brash, Sees self as immortal	Fearless “as if” persona or engulfed in fear, defensive, Denies death and/or extreme fear of death	Manages fear and difficult emotions, tolerates ambiguity, Existential anxiety is normative experience	Fear driven, aggressive to protect sense of self. Denies and fears death, belief in permanent self	Relaxation with moment-to-moment awareness, Death as opportunity for awakening

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# **Other-Centered Approaches: Psychotherapy and a Buddhist Paradigm**



*Caroline Brazier<sup>1</sup>*

Modern psychotherapy has, to a large extent, developed within the context of Western culture and values, and has itself supported and affected the development of Western culture over the last half century (Furedi 2004<sup>2</sup>). Buddhist psychology is grounded in an Eastern religious and ethical paradigm (Harvey 2000<sup>3</sup>) and, whilst incorporating a diversity of theory on specific issues, is broadly distinct from Western perspectives in a number of significant respects, particularly in relation to the view of the self, of the human condition and of the nature of therapeutic growth. As such it offers a vantage point from which to elaborate and sometimes critique some of the assumptions of Western therapeutic models.

Buddhist psychology (Brazier C 2003<sup>4</sup>) has spawned a number of therapeutic models, which differ from one another in various respects. Some draw more on Buddhist practice such as meditation or mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn J 1991<sup>5</sup>), whilst others draw to a greater extent on the Buddhist theoretical understanding of mental process (Brazier D 1995<sup>6</sup>). In either case the use of Buddhist ideas does not necessarily guarantee that the therapy will support a Buddhist paradigm. Buddhist ideas and methods may influence the, often unconscious, assumptions which underpin the therapeutic process or may be used to serve a more Western value system.

Among the models derived from Buddhist psychology are approaches which rely upon the Buddhist understanding of the individual identity as the product of a set of conditions, reliant upon, and existing in relation, to others. In particular such approaches view the self as dependently originated (Jones 2011<sup>7</sup>), constructed on the basis of object-related perception (Brazier D 1995<sup>8</sup>). These approaches can be termed other-centered<sup>9</sup> and include approaches such as Naikan and Morita (Krech 2001<sup>10</sup>), both developed through Japanese Buddhist traditions, and the Other-Centered model (Brazier C 2009<sup>11</sup>) developed at the Amida center in the UK.

This presentation will explore the importance of the Other-Centered paradigm in offering an alternative perspective to the prevailing value system found in psychotherapies in the West, which often tends towards individualistic viewpoints. It will include a summary of the basic principles of different Other-Centered Approaches and their relationship to Buddhist psychology.

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<sup>2</sup> Furedi, F, 2004 *Therapy Culture* Routledge

<sup>3</sup> Harvey P 2000 *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* Cambridge University Press

<sup>4</sup> Brazier C 2003 *Buddhist Psychology* Constable Robinson

<sup>5</sup> Kabat-Zinn, J, 1991 *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness Delta*

<sup>6</sup> Brazier D 1995 *Zen Therapy* Constable Robinson

<sup>7</sup> Jones D 2011 *This Being that Becomes; The Buddha's Teaching on Conditionality* Windhorse Publications

<sup>8</sup> Brazier D 1995 *Zen Therapy* Constable Robinson

<sup>9</sup> Brazier C 2003 *Buddhist Psychology* Constable Robinson pp236-253

<sup>10</sup> Krech G, 2001 *Naikan: gratitude, grace, and the Japanese art of self-reflection* Stonebridge Press

<sup>11</sup> Brazier C, 2009 *Other Centered Therapy: Buddhist Psychology in Action* O-Books

## Buddhism on a Postcard

The other-centered therapeutic approach, as taught on the Amida psychotherapy training program, is grounded in the core teachings of Buddhism. Since several of these teachings are open to differences of interpretation, I will set out here the model as we interpret it in this context. Whilst there is not space in this paper to argue all the points of controversy, I will indicate sources to which the reader may refer for further clarification.

The Buddha reputedly gave 84,000 teachings but, in fact, his presentation of the Dharma can be understood as a whole, that is as one integrated model. It is a system of thought which offers an analysis of human process and which explains how mental problems arise. The Buddha's teaching is summarized by the oft quoted assertion that he taught suffering and the end of suffering (*Sutta Nipata*<sup>12</sup>), or, more accurately, the (*nirodha*) containment of that which arises from suffering<sup>13</sup>. The Buddha's core message is also summarized as consisting of insight into Dependent Origination and the conditioned nature of existence (Jones D 2011<sup>14</sup>). These two teachings are in fact the two faces of the one central message of Buddhism.

In brief then, the Buddha taught that affliction was an unavoidable truth (Brazier D 1997<sup>15</sup>). He taught that in response to affliction, we cling to things. Our energies are aroused by grief or anger (ibid<sup>16</sup>) and we experience craving which we satisfy through our attachments, and it is on these that the sense of self and of the world depends. In other words, in our attempt to dissipate the discomfort of affliction, we are drawn into compulsive clinging and from it construct all that we think we know.

## Attachment and the process of self-creation

The teaching of the second Noble Truth, *samudaya*, describes this process. Clinging begins with sense attachment (*kama*) then progresses to 'becoming' (*bhava*), or the creation of the self. Finally, if the sense of self fails to offer sufficient comfort and security, the person falls into non-becoming (*vibhava*) or self-destructiveness (*Samyutta Nikaya*<sup>17</sup>). We can see this process in the example of the drinker, who starts by dissipating anxieties through the sense activity of enjoying a glass of wine. Gradually this person starts to identify with favorite drinks and progresses through identities of social drinker, wine buff to alcoholic, each with its associated 'objects' of particular alcoholic drinks, settings and companions. Eventually when life becomes overwhelming he starts to drink himself into oblivion. In most cases the progression is more complex and we all build our identities on idiosyncratic combinations of objects. Basically, however, Buddhist psychology can be seen as a psychology of addiction; addiction to the supports of identity.

This is the unenlightened process whereby humans become psychologically enmeshed in a self-world. Identity formation is a protection from the experiencing of affliction and impermanence. It is also a barrier to enlightened perception.

<sup>12</sup> Sutta nipata

<sup>13</sup> See Brazier D 1997 *The Feeling Buddha* Constable Robinson pp89-96

<sup>14</sup> Jones D 2011 *This Being that Becomes: The Buddha's Teaching on Conditionality* Windhorse Publications pp16-17

<sup>15</sup> Brazier D 1997 *The Feeling Buddha* Constable Robinson

<sup>16</sup> Ibid pp63-66

<sup>17</sup> Samyutta Nikaya 61.11.6

The self-world is mediated through our senses. The senses, known as the uncontrollables (*shadyatana*) because we do not really choose where they fix their attention, are each seen to possess a conditioned mentality (*vijnana*). They lock onto objects<sup>18</sup> according to their conditioned modes of perception, or habitual preferences. The person thus repeatedly uses the same patterns of clinging, dividing experience into ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’ through attractive or aversive responses, and from them builds an illusion of permanence. This is identified as the self. This understanding of the self-building process is elaborated in other core Buddhist teachings, namely those which describe the conditioned nature of the ordinary person, the Skandhas and the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (Brazier C 2003<sup>19</sup>).

## Dukkha as the Source of Growth

Whilst Buddhism is sometimes portrayed as a negative philosophy grounded in a view that life is afflictive and the only escape is through an ending of existence, this view is not borne out by the sutras. Far from offering a negative perspective, the Buddha appears to have seen affliction, *dukkha*, as a Noble Truth<sup>20</sup> and as the root of the spiritual life.

In the *Sutta on Fear and Dread*<sup>21</sup>, the Buddha describes how, immediately prior to his enlightenment, he deliberately went into the forest to experience those places which frightened him, the shrines of demons and harmful spirits. He practiced in these places by developing steadfastness, and not allowing himself to be diverted from the experience of discomfort arising in him, but rather holding himself still as the feelings arose and waiting for them to dissipate. In other words, he did not retreat into the psychological diversions of sense attachment and self-building, nor did he walk away from the situation. He faced the arising emotions directly. This process led to his enlightenment experience which is described in the sutta immediately after his description of facing out the fear.

As discussed in my recent book, *Acorns Among the Grass* (Brazier C 2011<sup>22</sup>), the Sutta on Fear and Dread can be understood to support the view that the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, which was among the first teachings which the Buddha gave, is basically a description of how the practitioner can employ the energy which arises from life’s difficulties as fuel for the spiritual path (Brazier D 1997<sup>23</sup>). This interpretation is rather more positive than the traditional interpretation which sees the teaching as concerning the elimination of *dukkha*, which in any case, the Buddha evidently did not do<sup>24</sup>. One can see the Buddha’s spiritual journey as centered on this discovery. It was initiated by an unwelcome encounter with affliction in his meeting with the four sights, and was resolved by his discovery that by facing fear and dread one can attain the ultimate spiritual breakthrough. This understanding was then formulated as the Four Noble Truths.

<sup>18</sup> This is a powerful ‘locking on’ as for example suggested by the image of the axe and block used in the *Ant Hill Sutta*; Majjhima Nikaya 23

<sup>19</sup> Brazier C 2003 *Buddhist Psychology* Constable Robinson

<sup>20</sup> Or a ‘truths for noble ones’ to take Peter Harvey’s suggestion in Harvey P, 2009 *The Four Ariya-saccas as ‘True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled’ - the Painful, its Origin, its Cessation, and the Way Going to This – Rather than ‘Noble Truths’ Concerning These*. in *Buddhist Studies Review*, Vol 26, No 2 (2009)

<sup>21</sup> *Sutta on Fear and Dread*: Majjhima Nikaya 4

<sup>22</sup> Brazier C 2011 *Acorns Among the Grass: Adventures in Ecotherapy* O-Books

<sup>23</sup> Brazier D 1997 *The Feeling Buddha* Constable Robinson

<sup>24</sup> As David Brazier points out, the Buddha got sick, was betrayed by those he loved and eventually died after his enlightenment.

Thus Buddhist psychology encourages fortitude in the face of difficulties and an attitude to life which seeks out the truth of situations rather than avoiding them. It emphasizes the importance of engaging with reality, however uncomfortable, rather than getting drawn into pleasantries or distractions.

## Object related Identity

The Buddhist model of human process defines the self as an illusory, defensive structure, which is itself a source of affliction<sup>25</sup>. Unless our psychological state deteriorates further into the nihilism of *vibhava*, the self gives us a semblance of order in a disordered world and acts like a protective bubble.

The senses distort our relationship with the world, creating a personal world-view through their conditioned attraction to particular perceptual objects and their rejection of others. They reinforce our prejudices and confirm us in our sense of self. In this way the identity mirrors the object world which we choose to inhabit. We seek out places and people who in turn support our self-view. Because they are driven by our latent fears and need for security, the senses are powerful as they seek out sense objects and the Buddhist texts are full of images which confirm the dangers which they pose<sup>26</sup>.

The self is thus object related. It depends upon the maintenance of a distorted perception (*rupa*<sup>27</sup>) of objects and seeks out confirmation of itself through its attraction to the familiar. The mind depends upon the object of attention and the self upon the object world which it inhabits. This relationship between the self and the world view is mutually conditioning.

## The Constructed Self

The teachings of the Skandhas and of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination explain the mechanism by which the self is created and maintained. They can be interpreted as descriptions of the same basic cyclical process (Brazier C 2003 p183<sup>28</sup>). Indeed these two key teachings share the four elements of *vedana*, *samskara*, *vijnana* and (*nama*) *rupa*. These four elements, if taken as a cycle, appear in the same relationship to one another.

These common elements in the two teachings, then, are key points in a cycle which describes how conditioned perception (*rupa*) leads to attractive or aversive responses (*vedana*). These bring about the creation of new action traces (*samskaras*). This in turn reinforces the mentality (*vijnana*) which continues to seek out confirmation in new perceptual objects (*rupas*). Other elements of the two teachings elaborate different aspects of the cycle. In the teaching of the Twelve Links, for example, we see that as we name the phenomenal object (*nama-rupa*) we make contact with it (*sparsha*) and

<sup>25</sup> The skandhas are listed among the elements giving rise to dukkha in Samyutta Nikaya 6.11.5

<sup>26</sup> The axe and block in the Ant Hill Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 23) and the Fire Sermon (Aditta-pariyaya-sutta) give images of the power and passion of the senses.

<sup>27</sup> Rupa, the first of the skandhas, describes the perceptual object. Although sometimes translated as form, the word has a primary meaning of coloration or phenomenal presence.

<sup>28</sup> Brazier C 2003 *Buddhist Psychology* Constable Robinson p 183

then the senses grasp the object, leading to the *vedana*. Both the Skandhas and the Twelve Links are, however, basically descriptions of the same self-building process.

In the Ant Hill Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 23) the skandhas are represented by the tortoise. This description suggests the self as a hard impenetrable shell with which we protect ourselves from those things in life which threaten us<sup>29</sup>. The image of the tortoise fits well with the idea of a cycle which perpetuates itself and defends us against uncertainty.

The processes of self-creation described in these core teachings offer an understanding of human process which can be applied at the collective as well as the individual level. Groups build identity based of shared objects of attention and world views in just the same ways as individuals. This process orientated interpretation gives additional support to our understanding of the ephemeral nature of the self. The self only exists in dependence upon the sense objects which give birth to it.

## Other-Centered Approaches

The Buddhist understanding of conditioned nature of the ordinary mind provides a model of human process which is complex and subtle. Because all the Buddhist teachings can basically be linked to this same model, details which are found in different teachings can be used to elaborate and clarify aspects of it. In fact the core teachings are themselves presented in slight variations in different sutras, which seems to confirm their relationship to one another.

This Buddhist understanding of mind can be used in practical ways to create interventions which will facilitate psychological change in therapeutic and other contexts. The teachings of the Skandhas and Dependent Origination suggest a number of different possibilities for intervention at different stages in the process (Brazier C 2003<sup>30</sup>). Other-centered approaches tend to focus on interventions at the *rupa/vedana* points. In developing a therapeutic model for the Amida Psychotherapy Training Program<sup>31</sup>, we have found that those parts of human process which relate to the world view are more amenable to intervention than those parts with which the person identifies (Brazier C 2001c<sup>32</sup>). People are more willing to question their perception of others than their sense of self.

Whilst people identify with their habitual behaviors and with the self-story which emerges from them, they are less identified with their world view, despite the fact that it is distorted by the escapist and self-building agenda. It continues to be regarded as an accurate understanding of ‘how things are’ and is not generally identified as part of the self. People may feel possessive of objects and can be defensive of them, but they are not generally aware of the extent to which their perception of them is clouded by self-interest.

<sup>29</sup> This interpretation seems to me more plausible than that offered in the commentaries which suggest that the tortoise represents the skandhas on the basis of having four limbs and a head. Were the commentaries right, one would have to ask if tortoises of the time were without a tail.

<sup>30</sup> Brazier C 2003 *Buddhist Psychology* Constable Robinson ; Chapters 9-16

<sup>31</sup> [www.buddhistpsychology.info](http://www.buddhistpsychology.info)

<sup>32</sup> The following therapeutic model is elaborated in Brazier C, 2009 *Other Centered Therapy: Buddhist Psychology in Action* O-Books

Other-centered models therefore rely upon examination of the conditioned nature of perception and on investigating our relatedness to others. This indirectly reveals the self-structures and invites the client to question and change them. Changing the perceptual conditions changes the self which rests upon them. By focusing on the objects which are significant to the self-process, and implicitly or explicitly questioning the perception thereof, the reactive and associative responses are modified and the hold of the self-structure is loosened.

In this process two aspects are assumed. Firstly, that the object is perceived in a conditioned way (*rupa*) and, secondly, that the object has a real existence (*dharma*), even if this cannot be directly perceived by the unenlightened mind. In addition to this understanding of perception, other-centered approaches also suggest that, since the object has a reality, it can be assumed that it will, of itself, exert some influence on the interaction, independently of the perceiver. The ‘other’ will itself become an enabling factor in the process of change.

Other-centered work thus becomes an enquiry into relatedness. The mode of operation is one in which the therapist listens to the client and notices the significant objects upon which the self-world is built (Brazier C 2009b<sup>33</sup>). Initially she invites the client to talk more fully about these objects, which are often, but not always, people, and to see them in a more sense-based way. Their *rupa* quality is amplified, intensifying the whole cycle so that it can be better understood. Thus the process of the Skandhas or Dependent Origination becomes more apparent in the therapy room, and the origins and dynamics of the conditioned view can be investigated and deconstructed.

With this investigation, the client becomes less identified with the self-process. Understanding and recognition are common roots to dis-identification in Buddhist practice. In many forms of meditation, the invitation to observe the arising and dispersion of mental factors is used to interrupt the self-creation process. Reflexive observation creates distance and renders the process itself a mind-object, and therefore an object of perception and a conditioning factor to self rather than an aspect of self. The observed self-element thus ceases to be part of the identity. The person comes to realize *this is not mine, I am not this, this is not myself*<sup>34</sup>.

More importantly, though, in other-centered work the client is then encouraged to enquire into the reality of the other. By bringing into question the immediate perceptual responses, the person develops curiosity and is invited to engage in a search for new perceptions. This other-centered enquiry is, of course, unlikely to release the person from conditioned existence within the therapy room, but it does create the possibility for a more fluid, multi-faceted world view to emerge, in which the habitual preconceptions are not taken as absolute. Space is created in which the other can be heard. As this happens, the identity is also naturally changed. Attachment to a fixed sense of self becomes less pressing.

## Pureland Buddhism and Buddhist therapies

All Buddhists schools are grounded in the same understanding of the nature of conditioned existence which was realized by Siddharta Gotama, the Buddha, founder of our shared traditions. Different schools of Buddhism differ in finer details of doctrine, but more significantly in the practices

<sup>33</sup> Brazier C 2009b *Listening to the Other* O-Books

<sup>34</sup> This phrase recurs in many of the sutras as the Buddha’s instruction to relinquish self-attachment.

which they have adopted in response to this human predicament. Practices and approaches have been categorized in various ways, but a significant division, which grew out of the Indian philosophy of Nagarjuna<sup>35</sup> and became particularly significant in Japanese Buddhism, is that between what are known as *self-power* and *other-power*<sup>36</sup>. All Buddhist schools have some elements from each approach but in most one or other predominates. Whilst *self-power* schools emphasize effort and the capacity of the individual to achieve enlightenment, *other-power* schools emphasize faith and the need for reliance upon what is beyond the self. *Other-power* schools might be seen as primarily concerned with refuge.

Pureland Buddhism<sup>37</sup> is an *other-power* approach. In this it places the locus of salvation outside the self, specifically in the beneficence of Amida Buddha, literally the immeasurable Buddha<sup>38</sup>. It is a tradition which places its emphasis on faith. The practice of Pureland is *nembutsu*, calling the Buddha's name. At its core is the recognition of our unenlightened nature, referred to as *bombu*<sup>39</sup> nature, and of our dependence on others for our existence.

Whilst its understanding of the conditioned nature of mind and the processes of self-building are in line with those already outlined in this paper, Pureland Buddhism offers two important additional qualities to the therapist. Firstly its emphasis on the locus of salvation being external to the self supports an other-centered approach in which healing is seen to come from the relationship with others. To accept this support requires faith. Secondly it emphasizes that salvation is not dependent upon our deeds<sup>40</sup> and that we are infinitely karmically compromised<sup>41</sup>. This position offers a radically non-judgmental value base.

## Faith in the therapy process

The path of faith can be understood in terms of the model already presented. The self is a constructed defense system, which is normally impervious to change due to its self-perpetuating cycle of conditioned perception and self-reinforcing reactions. An illusory phenomenon, the perceived world is separated from the reality which it masks by our clinging nature and the expectations which it generates. At the same time, there is acknowledged in the Buddhist texts, the unconditioned<sup>42</sup> which exists beyond the conditioned experience of the ordinary person. This is the real world which we only intuit beyond our conditioned view. Beyond the world of conditioned existence, the self that is created on the sand of delusion, there is an immeasurable reality. It is in this that we place trust.

<sup>35</sup> Pureland Buddhism recognizes Nagarjuna as its first patriarch based on his identification of two paths to enlightenment, the Igyodo, the Easy Way, and Nangyodo, the Difficult Path, (Japanese terminology) in book five chapter 9 of his work

<sup>36</sup> Tariki is the Japanese word for other-power. This term is contradistinguished from Jirki or self-power. The two terms are often applied to Pureland and Zen schools respectively.

<sup>37</sup> Pureland Buddhism is widely influential across Eastern Asia, but is particularly established as separate schools in Japan. These schools draw on the three Pure Land Sutras, The Greater and Smaller Pure Land Sutras and the Contemplation Sutra, for their doctrinal base.

<sup>38</sup> Amida is an amalgamation of Amitabha and Amitayus, and thus is Buddha of infinite light and life

<sup>39</sup> Bombu or bompu means literally 'foolish being' and is a term used widely in Pureland; see the Jodoshu web site: <http://www.jsri.jp/English/Main.html>

<sup>40</sup> Shinran was radical in his emphasis of our powerlessness to affect our own salvation. For example Tannisho 3 he is famously quoted say saying 'Even a good person can be born in the Pure Land, how much more so an evil person.'

<sup>41</sup> ibid

<sup>42</sup> The Udana specifically refers to the unconditioned

Faith (*shradha*) is significant in all Buddhism, and is generally understood to signify faith in the Dharma. Faith should be distinguished from belief. The term ‘faith’ here refers to something more akin to trust or confidence. Faith allows us to live with impermanence and uncertainty, so is in some respects opposite to belief. It is trust in the teachings, the Dharma, which promise to help us do this.

In Pureland, faith is expressed in our spiritual confidence in Amida Buddha’s unconditioned omnipresence. In the more general sense, faith is placed in an unconditioned reality beyond the clouding of *avidya* (ignorance; unenlightened view). Thus in Pureland the emphasis is not on deconstructing the self-world, but on looking to the unconditioned that lies beyond it (Brazier C 2007<sup>43</sup>).

Pureland accords particularly with the other-centered model in that it supports the premise that psychological health is a product of our openness to the presence of others rather than something which we construct. This can be seen as a manifestation of faith at the mundane level.

Mental health is a product of faith. Without faith the person experiences more fear and becomes more rigid. Self-building accelerates. Therapeutic process requires a foundation of faith, and it is the therapist’s confidence in the possibility of healing which often inspires the client to change. This observation is reflected in the theory proposed by Japanese psychologist and Pureland priest, Gisho Saiko, who saw the therapist’s awareness of this external Dharmic foundation of support, represented by Amida’s presence, as instrumental in the efficacy of the therapy process (Saiko G 2001<sup>44</sup>). Although the client arrived in a state of faithlessness, through the therapeutic encounter and through being held by the therapist’s faith, his own faith became restored.

## Gratitude and Dependence

Pureland Buddhism emphasizes our reliance upon others. Our existence is conditional upon many factors, all of which are ultimately beyond our control. Both Honen<sup>45</sup> and Shinran<sup>46</sup>, the twelfth century founders of the Pureland schools in Japan, agreed that if we simply relied upon our own efforts and received what was due to us on account of our Karma, we would be destined for the hell realms<sup>47</sup>.

Some therapies which have grown out of the Pureland tradition therefore place their emphasis on recognizing our dependent nature and on the cultivation of humility, contrition and gratitude. Naikan therapy involves reflection upon the balance between what has been received and what has been given to others (Reynolds 1983<sup>48</sup>; Krech 2001<sup>49</sup>). This approach is radically different from the Western paradigm in reducing the sense of personal entitlement and increasing feelings of

<sup>43</sup> Brazier C 2009 *The Other Buddhism* O-Books chapter 4

<sup>44</sup> Saiko, G 2001 *Dharma-based Person-Centered Approach in Japan* paper presented 8th International PCA Forum in Japan.

<sup>45</sup> Honen *Gyojo-ezu* chapter 32

<sup>46</sup> For example Tannisho chapter 2

<sup>47</sup> ibid

<sup>48</sup> Reynolds D 1983 *Naikan Psychotherapy: meditation for self-development* University of Chicago Press

<sup>49</sup> Krech G, 2001 *Naikan: gratitude, grace, and the Japanese art of self-reflection* Stonebridge Press

appreciation and understanding for others. Taking place traditionally in a retreat format, more recently it has developed a number of guises including regular weekly sessions<sup>50</sup> and on line programs<sup>51</sup>.

## Guilt and non-judgmentalism

Whilst western therapies often espouse non-judgmental philosophies<sup>52</sup>, in practice they are often embedded in a paradigm which values change, self-actualization<sup>53</sup>, and the meeting of personal needs<sup>54</sup>. Whilst the client may be reassured of his worth and potential, there is sometimes an implicit avoidance of those areas of the client's life and behavior which contradict this positive image. Without even realizing it the therapist steeped in the Western paradigm tends to reinforce values which are prevalent in Western culture<sup>55</sup>. Success is reinforced and difficulties or unpleasantness explained away.

Other-centered work is grounded on the premise that people are inevitably fallible. The understanding of *bombu* nature releases client and therapist from the myth of perfectibility (Brazier C 2007<sup>56</sup>) and guilt becomes an ordinary matter (Brazier C 2009b<sup>57</sup>) to be recognized and not hidden. The therapeutic relationship becomes one of equality, or *fellow feeling*, in which the therapist is implicitly aware of her own *bombu* nature.

Freed from the need to hide personal failings, the client loses one layer of defense. There is no longer a danger of punishment, so there is less need to protect the self. The client naturally begins to open to the therapist in ways that habitually would not have been possible, freed from layers of subtle dissimulation.

## Other-Centered Values and the Psychotherapy Profession

This paper has outlined the basic structure of ideas in Buddhist psychology. It has explored a number of ramifications of these principles for the therapist, and in particular has introduced the other-centered model as one example of a psychotherapy grounded in the Buddhist paradigm. In doing so it has introduced a number of concepts particular to Pureland Buddhism and shown how they relate to the broader context of Buddhist ideas.

Collectively, the other-centered approach offers a methodology and theoretical underpinning which is radically different from many other approaches available in the West. Whilst it would be naive to suggest that Western therapies all share the same value base, the other-centered model offers a critique of many ideas which are prevalent today and is sufficiently different to offer

<sup>50</sup> As offered at the Nara Naikan Centre, Japan <http://www4.ocn.ne.jp/~naikan/eng-05.html>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.todoinstitute.org/>

<sup>52</sup> For example Rogers C.R. 1951 *Client-Centered Therapy*. Constable, London

<sup>53</sup> Rogers C.R. 1961 *On Becoming a Person*. Constable, London

<sup>54</sup> Maslow, A 1954 *Motivation and Personality* Harper & Brothers New York

<sup>55</sup> For an example of this see the discussion of 'Brian's vacuum' in Brazier D 1995 *Zen Therapy* Constable Robinson pp 25-27

<sup>56</sup> Brazier C 2007 The Other Buddhism O-Books chapter 3

<sup>57</sup> Brazier C 2009a *Guilt: an Exploration* O-Books

a counterpoint to some of the accepted norms of the psychotherapy profession. In particular, we can see differences in the following areas:

Western therapies tend to emphasize strengthening the self, and the sense of self entitlement. Whilst extreme caution should be exercised in comparing systems which may have radically different notions of what the self is, on this matter, other-centered methods, which focus the enquiry on others in the client's life rather than on the client himself, are stylistically innovative. Other-centered understanding tends to be less centered on the individual. In the last fifty years, the West has seen society become increasingly individualized and divided by inequalities (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009<sup>58</sup>) with accompanying rises in consumerism, mental illness and addictions. As I have discussed at length in the first chapter of my book, *Other-Centered Therapy* (Brazier C 2009c<sup>59</sup>), therapy culture (Furedi F 2004<sup>60</sup>) has been highly influential in shaping society in this period so it is vital that we question the value base from which therapists are working. The Buddhist paradigm addresses many of these trends and in particular other-centered principles embrace the importance of the collective as much as individual progress, reversing the common trend. In broad such approaches can be seen to address issues of greed, one of the manifestations of self-building attachment at the social as well as personal level.

Buddhism is concerned with the question of suffering. As we have seen, however, it is possible to argue that far from being something to be avoided, *dukkha* is in fact a source of strength. This positive view of adversity does not lead to a loss of compassion, but it does bring an attitude of realism as, for example, we see in the Buddha's own response to Kissagotami and Patacara<sup>61</sup>, both of whom were experiencing extreme grief at the time when they arrived in his community<sup>62</sup>. In modern society there is an increasing trend towards establishing controls and safeguards in the attempt to legislate against afflictions of many kinds. The common out-cry that 'it must never happen again' leads to restrictions and regulations which themselves lead to difficulties, yet humans are not omnipotent and disasters continue to happen. As we have seen, it can be argued that Buddhist teaching views the transformation of our reaction to affliction as the basis for spiritual growth. This teaching offers not only comfort, but also encouragement to face and transform painful circumstances. It takes us to the core of our human position and encourages us to live authentically.

In modern times, however, the teachings which are of greatest import are probably those which counter our tendencies to discriminate and judge. The radical non-judgmentalism of Pureland is so different from the predominating culture that it can seem shocking at first. Our culture is founded on assumptions that rights, justice and punishment are the basis of a healthy society. Western therapies do not necessarily fit their caricature of blaming parents and partners for all that is uncomfortable in the client's world, but they do often promote, at least indirectly, attitudes of self-justification, seeking out culpable causes for current unhappiness in past experiences and the behavior of others. Clients are still encouraged to see themselves as damaged, survivors of traumas and victims of social and family pressures. In this context, an approach such as that of Naikan which puts its emphasis on looking at the positive benefits which we have received from others and on our own past failings can seem strikingly different. Accepting responsibility and recognizing our shortcomings is the foundation of

<sup>58</sup> Wilkinson R and Pickett, K 2009 *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* Allen Lane

<sup>59</sup> Brazier C 2009c *Other-Centered Therapy* O-Books, Chapter 1

<sup>60</sup> Furedi, F, 2004 *Therapy Culture* Routledge

<sup>61</sup> Both described in the Therigata; see Murcott, S 1991 *The First Buddhist Women*, Parallax Press

<sup>62</sup> . See Brazier C 2007 *The Other Buddhism* O-Books chapter 9

psychological maturity. They are also essential to a world in social strife and environmental crisis. The Pureland view of *bombu* nature, as well as other Buddhist teachings on the human condition, offers methods to work with hate and aversion, the self-building attachments which grow from our collective lack of faith as we face our endangered situation.

In the appendix of his book *Naikan: grace, gratitude and the Japanese art of self-reflection*, Gregg Krech offers his own comparison between the traditional Western approach to therapy and that of Naikan. When I read this list, I felt a strong affinity between this approach and that which we teach at Amida Trust. I would therefore like to finish this paper by quoting his section headings from this appendix for mental health professionals.

1. ***Traditional: Focus on Feelings***
2. ***Naikan: Focus on Facts***
3. ***Traditional: Revisit how you have been hurt and mistreated in the past***
4. ***Naikan: Revisit how you have been cared for and supported in the past***
5. ***Traditional: The therapist validates the Client's experiences***
6. ***Naikan: The therapist helps the client understand the experience of others***
7. ***Traditional: Blame others for your problems***
8. ***Naikan: Take responsibility for your own conduct and the problems you cause others***
9. ***Traditional: The therapist provides analysis and interpretation of the client's experience***
10. ***Naikan: The therapist provides a structured framework for the client's self-reflection***
11. ***Traditional: Therapy helps clients increase self-esteem***
12. ***Naikan: Therapy helps clients increase appreciation of life (Krech<sup>63</sup>2001, pp197-205)***

Namo Amida Bu

## Pali Suttas

- Aditta-pariyaya-sutta The Fire Sermon
- Majjhima Nikaya 23 *Ant Hill Sutta*;
- Majjhima Nikaya 4 *Sutta on Fear and Dread*:
- Sutta nipata
- Samyutta Nikaya
- The Udana

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<sup>63</sup> Summarized from Krech G, 2001 *Naikan: gratitude, grace, and the Japanese art of self-reflection* Stonebridge Press pp197-205

## Mahayana Sutras

- The Greater Pureland Sutra
- Smaller Pure Land Sutras
- The Contemplation Sutra

## Japanese Pureland texts

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- *Gyojo-ezu* (Honen Shonin)

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# A Buddhist Perspective on Trauma: Understanding, Forgiveness, and Atonement

Barbara Wright, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>  
(Bodhicari Mettavihari)

## Introduction

Over the centuries, a great deal of material has been written about the destruction, sorrow, suffering, and trauma that are experienced as the consequences of war, abuse, illness, crime, family strife, etc., and how it disenfranchises us from one another, drives us into emotional isolation, and makes us appear as less than human in the eyes of the other, be it the victim or the perpetrator. These roles of victim and perpetrator can be assumed by individuals, families, cultures, races, religions, political ideologies, and nations. They persist until there is a clear understanding and acceptance or Right View of what has transpired. Until this is achieved, they always leave those involved outside the oneness of humanity, and under the cloud of pervasive fear.

My first intention in writing this paper is to explore with the Metta Map how the Buddhist Principles of Right View and overcoming ignorance are critical in the treatment of trauma. My second intention in writing this paper is to explore how our heart, our humanity, must be opened to all parties in this process of recovery if it is to be successful. My third intention in writing this paper is to explore the integrated mental, emotional, and energetic transformations that occur when reconciliation moves into atonement through Right Action.

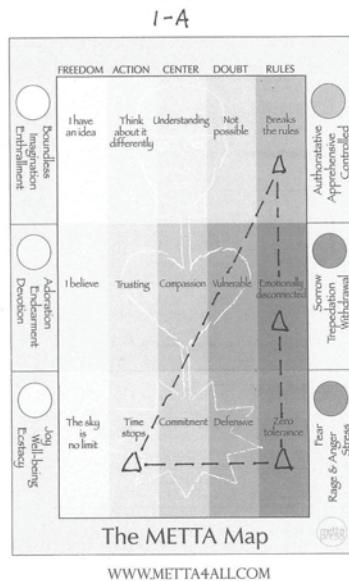
As we traverse the squares of the Metta Map we will explore the multi-dimensional phenomena of the neurology and physiology of the body, and the mental and emotional releases that are concurrent in the process of healing. This is a transformational progression, and is the key to releasing trauma and elevating the individual to a new state of being.

This paper will demonstrate how the Metta Map can be a monitoring device for seeing clearly where one is in regards to staying on the Noble Eightfold Path, and a useful vehicle for both victims and perpetrators who wish to be released from the Triangle of Trauma (see illustration).

Trauma, as we are using the term, is expressed on the Metta Map when a *triangle of events* is experienced as frozen, and is anchored in the square of “Time Stops.” Tragedy and trauma become fixed in time through a variety of triangular configurations and combinations of squares on the Metta Map. By “anchor” we mean that the common denominator of any “triangle of trauma” is “Time Stops.”

<sup>1</sup> Draft edited by Dr. Stephen Long (Bodhicari Dharmapala)

### Illustration: Triangle of Trauma



### Foundation of the Metta Map

The Metta Map was developed during my thirty-year career as a clinical psychologist and Buddhist practitioner. The intention of the Metta Map is to provide a multi-dimensional tool for exploring and experiencing various elements of the Dharma in a multitude of applications.

The Metta Map has been used in a variety of conflict resolution scenarios, including corporate, academic, judicial, family therapy, individual, youth gangs, populations with chemical dependencies, and others. The Metta Map has also been used effectively with these populations in relationship to their perceived traumas and tragedies – versus situational challenges, which are also created through perception.

In this paper, therefore, we will define “trauma” in two separate ways: firstly, as the sudden and abrupt assault on an individual, family, or organizational system such as an extended family, a business, a city, or a government. This can come in the form of an auto accident, a personal attack such as rape, a fatal illness, the loss of a business, home, or life savings, or a military invasion.

The second definition, and the one most often neglected, is the insidious, prolonged insult and assault with a cumulative and deleterious effect, to an individual, family, or system. For the individual, this can come in the form of chronic neglect, domestic violence and abuse, protracted poverty, or chronic illness. For the group it can be the result of corruption in a corporate or governmental system that erodes the spirit of its community, or the occupation of a foreign invading military force. Furthermore, in this second definition it is at the unique moment when the accumulation of this unwelcome intruder or collection of intruders reaches the nexus breaking point for the individual, family, or system that it actually becomes trauma or tragedy. In Buddhist language, the circumstance has mutated from the impermanent process of normal life to a fixed sensation induced by the delusion of permanent reality.

The body of my presentation will explore how the Metta Map provides victims of both of these kinds of trauma and their coaches with the methodology for using it as tool to diminish the consequences of trauma, and to provide a path out of – or at least toward reducing – suffering. In the tradition of Buddhist Psychology, the signature elements of intention, impermanence, and compassion have been effectively incorporated into the Metta Map for use as a platform for teaching and transmitting the Dharma, as well as for mitigating the effects of negative life events. The goal is to maintain the awareness and presence to life's challenging circumstances, and to prevent falling into the abyss of a fixed negative life orientation, which then becomes the focus of identification as "self." For example, if one asks the question, "Who are you?" the answer might be: "I am a rape victim"; "I am a tsunami victim"; "I am a cancer patient"; "I am a refugee." In these identifications the person has lost the multi-dimensional reality of their humanity, and has attached themselves to the toxic or negative situation in which they find themselves – even though it is only one aspect of the whole individual.

While using the Metta Map, we identify three forms of intelligence. Intelligence, as described in this system, is the way one takes in, processes, and expresses information.

First, there is the level of Mind Intelligence, which is characterized by the cognitive manipulation of ideas and constructs that are intellectually received and processed, and are attached to ego. The knowledge of the mind is the essence of our shared reality. (e.g. "We are all sitting in a large room.")

Second, there is the level of Heart Intelligence, which is characterized by emotional knowledge, the expression of which is energetically greater than intellectual knowledge. Heart Intelligence is the essence of our humanity. (e.g. "Some of us may feel lost in a large room, and others may take comfort feeling the sense of community.")

Third, there is the level of Energetic Consciousness Intelligence, which is primal imprinted knowledge, the experience prior to language, the foundation of our experience, imagination, intuition, and the engine that empowers action, both internal and external. Energetic Consciousness Intelligence is the essence of desire and creativity, and is the repository of karma. (e.g. "Being in this room is a physical expression of my conscious and pre-conscious commitments.")

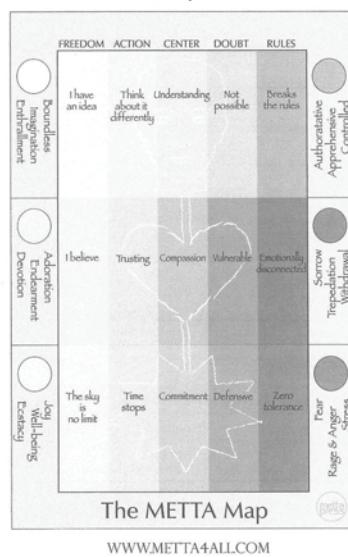
When using the Metta Map, the intention is to illustrate how the person sees him or herself in all Three Levels of Intelligence at that moment in time. The next step is to address the Map with a precise intention related to how or where they would ideally like to be on the Map. It is with this intention that the individual navigates the Metta Map, either on their own or with the assistance of a mentor or coach. The goal is to chart the path out of their current circumstance or identity and to move towards their preferred place or condition. In doing so, it is important to keep the Buddha's Precept of not doing harm to one's self or others, and to utilize Right Speech while expressing one's self on the Map. In this process we are cultivating Right View by getting more clarity and preparing for Right Action, which develops "Success by Approximation" while moving through the issues at hand. In doing so, one will be more skillful dealing with conflicts, both internal and external, thereby reducing stress levels, suffering, or traumatic conditions that inhibit the spaciousness of thought and emotion. This skillfulness increases the array of possibilities for a more desirable outcome.

The Metta Map is a sacred tool. When we use it, we need to approach it with purity of mind as well as a commitment to letting the process reveal the truth of the issue we seek to understand. Through this process we seek a reduction, resolution, or reconciliation to any identified conflict or trauma.

The structure of The Metta Map is framed in a vertical and horizontal matrix with the Three Levels of Intelligence displayed on the vertical grid. This matrix of activity exists in a continual horizontal, vertical, and spatial flow. It is like looking at a three-dimensional chess board or a cube.

### Illustration: The Metta Map

2-A



The horizontal components of the matrix are: Freedom, Action, Center, Doubt, and Rules. They represent a continuum that flows from left to right, and also from right to left. This flow expresses the movement of intelligence, with its five gradients, from a state of freedom and the absence of fear to one of constraint and rules driven by and sustained by fear. The flow of the levels on the Metta Map can move in all directions, with the degrees of attachment to each square profoundly affecting the relationship an individual has to the situation or problem at hand. This attachment gives a dimension of depth to the square, which we may refer to in either percentages or degrees. One's relationship to each square can be either positive or negative, depending on perception.

While looking at the Metta Map, the squares on the top, or Mind Level of Intelligence, are “I Have an Idea,” which represents Freedom of thought. “Thinking About It Differently” is the Action of expressing that freedom. The Center, “Understanding,” reflects the knowledge of the idea and of how to think about it differently, and then the caution or Doubt that exists as we move toward the right hand side into the square of “Not Possible.” When we get to the Rules column we reach “Rules,” which like every square can be either positive or negative; there are rules that are enduring and reliable, and there are rules that have become obsolete and restrictive.

When we come to the middle level of Heart Intelligence we start with the uninhibited state of the Freedom square of “I Believe.” From this we move to the Action square, which is “Trusting.” The Center of the Map is “Compassion,” which moves into “Vulnerable” through Doubt or caution. On the far right side we find the square of “Emotionally Disconnected,” which is that state when the heart moves into the Rules of fear. This may seem un-Metta-like; however, the wisdom of the heart is that there are times that in order to get Right View one must temporarily emotionally disconnect – not a place to stay too long, but sometimes necessary.

On the lowest row of the Metta Map, which is the Energetic Consciousness Level of Intelligence, the square on the far left in the Freedom column is when the energy is unbound and “The Sky is No Limit.” You know you’re there because in Action “Time Stops.” The Center square is “Commitment,” and the degree of commitment you have to anything is the engine, or the amount of energy you have that drives the whole process. When in Doubt, one enters the “Defensive” square, and when moving into the Rules of fear we reach the square of “Zero Tolerance.”

Please note that the degree of commitment is represented by a three-dimensional or “depth” phenomenon/element to the Metta Map. This is the level of attachment one has to any of the squares – from very little at 1%, to trauma at 70%, to total clinging at 100%. The more attachment one has, the greater the suffering; this can range from a mild annoyance or irritation to a major sense of loss or sorrow. This might be likened to the Buddha’s discussions about “extremes,” and avoiding them. We will demonstrate how this depth effect influences the severity of trauma that is experienced.

## The Four Noble Truths, the Metta Map, and Trauma

The Buddha’s First Noble Truth states that suffering (or stress) is an inevitable fact of life. The Second Noble Truth tells us that desire or attachment (or its opposite, aversion) is the cause for all suffering. The Third Noble Truth informs us that there is a way to free ourselves from suffering.

In terms of the Metta Map, we cognitively **understand** that some kind of stress is going to come into our lives no matter what, and with that there will be some degree of suffering. This is the First Noble Truth.

We use the term “Relative Continuum of Stress” to describe the spectrum of suffering we humans encounter that range from minimal to maximum, from one extreme to the other. It goes from “A fly just landed on my arm” or “I don’t have the right shade of shoes” – to “My son was just killed in Afghanistan” or “My twelve-year-old daughter was kidnapped and sold into sexual slavery.” This continuum is always subjective, and also applies to “I have a headache” all the way up to “I am paralyzed from the waist down,” which is traumatic. In actuality, there is always something more on both ends of the spectrum; the experience can always be either mild or severe because stress is relative.

In addition, what we consider to be traumatic at one time in our lives (“I didn’t get the job!”) can become completely irrelevant later on (as the eighty-year-old when she says, “Oh! I wish I could be sixty again!”). Stress is never permanent, whereas one can stay fixed in trauma for the duration of this lifetime. The Buddha said that suffering or stress is related to aging, sickness, and death (and the other clingings and aversions listed above in the First Noble Truth). Each of these stressors is

inevitable, and any of them can lead to trauma; how successfully we manage them determines our quality of life, and our movement on the path to enlightenment.

One is never able to truly evaluate where another stands on the Relative Continuum of Stress. Looking from the outside, the trust-fund child appears to have it made; he is set up financially for life, and never has to work for a living. These individuals are oftentimes the objects of envy by people who have less. What can't be seen from the outside, however, is that from the inside, any person without wholesome direction, purposefulness, and a meaningful life, entitled or not, can experience anguish and emotional isolation that can cripple or destroy him.

On the other hand, one may see an ordinary, mundane person and feel pity for him because he appears to have very little. But internally this person may experience meaning and purpose in his life, so that even with outward struggles there is joy and satisfaction. External circumstances often signify nothing; appearances can be deceiving. In my clinical practice I have had the opportunity to treat many young “trust-fund” adults who were in an existential crisis of meaninglessness, and who fell into drug addiction and suicidal ideation. I have also treated young “trust fund” adults who were struggling as to how to be generous and still maintain a skillful management of their family’s estate. With regards to material wealth, there is no predicting how it will turn out. It is the individual’s cultivation of the Dharma that reduces one’s position on the Relative Continuum of Stress (or trauma) as he or she systematically eliminates attachments by progressing on the path.

Using the Metta Map we see that stress, suffering, or trauma is a possibility that can exist in any of the fifteen squares. Just because “*I have an idea*,” “*I believe*,” and “*the sky is the limit*” are on the side of the Map representing *freedom*, don’t be tempted to think that standing on these squares guarantees a free pass from suffering. There can be just as much suffering from having too much freedom (anarchy) as there can be from having too many *rules* (oppression).

At some point in our lives – oftentimes on a daily or even an hourly basis – there are situations in which we find ourselves experiencing *doubt (not possible)*, *fear (rules)*, anxiety, *vulnerability*, *defensiveness*, *emotional disconnection*, or even *zero tolerance*. Each of these is a stressor and can be a source of trauma: whether it is going to work in traffic, having a boss who doesn’t understand, or an employee who doesn’t get the job done; spouses who don’t listen, taking care of sick children or parents, or not being able to afford a new car or food. Taking any scenario to the extreme, it could be: receiving orders in a combat zone that involve the inevitable result of “collateral damage,” which is the killing of innocent civilians; being driven from your home, as in Rwanda, and losing everything; or facing a child with a terminal illness. The list is endless. By acknowledging the existence of stress or suffering one then has the capacity to examine its source. Notice that these stressors occur on all *three levels of intelligence*: mind, heart, and energetic consciousness; either one at a time, in some combination, or perhaps all at the same time.

When we study the Metta Map we discover that a primary source of suffering comes from having *rules* about the way things should be – or shouldn’t be. This leads us to the Second Noble Truth, which names desire or attachment as the origin of suffering; this means not having what we want, or not wanting what we have. Any time we feel less-than or deprived or in-want-of we are trapped in desire. If you notice, at any given moment there will usually be a certain feeling of “unsatisfactoriness” about the way things are; there is always something missing, or too much of something that doesn’t match up to our expectations. All of these are impermanent conditions of suffering or stress, and can become the seeds of trauma.

Studying and using the Metta Map we discover that there is a way out of our suffering: the Third Noble Truth. This is not just a false hope; this is a promise. It is through introspective investigation that we come to an **understanding** about the nature of our expectations. Through this inquiry we seek to develop skillfulness, **compassion**, and equanimity while moving from square to square on the Metta Map. We discover that suffering can be, in fact, a gift which propels us to be courageous and imaginative in our inquiry, and keeps us seeking a way out until we find relief. It is with these qualities that we cultivate insight through our **three levels of intelligence** – always coming back to our intention. Having access to the Buddha’s Middle Path of **understanding**, **compassion**, and **commitment**, represented by the Center vertical column of squares, we can successfully traverse all of the squares as needed in the moment.

From the Buddhist Catechism by Col. H. S. Olcott, the Buddha divides Bodhisattas (spiritual aspirants on the path to liberation) into three categories that fit perfectly within the Metta Map system: “he who attains least quickly is guided by intelligence (*mind*); he who attains less quickly is guided by faith (*heart*); and he who attains quickly takes the course of energetic action (*energetic consciousness*)”. In regards to these three, Col. H. S. Olcott said, “The first is guided by intelligence and does not hasten; the second is full of faith, and does not care to take the guidance of wisdom; and the third never delays to do what is good. Regardless of the consequences to himself, he does it when he sees that it is best that it should be done.”(1)

The first aspirant develops least quickly because he is limited by only cognitive information, and does not access data coming in through the channels of heart and energetic consciousness. The second aspirant develops less quickly because he is limited by beliefs, and he ignores information coming in through the mind and his intuitive channels. The third aspirant demonstrates the power of *wholesome* intention, which is the pre-verbal, driving force of the entire path; he has successfully integrated all three levels of intelligence in order to act appropriately and effectively in the moment, and he is unattached to the delusionary spell of ego, whether it be driven by mind or faith.

Let’s pause for a moment, breathe, and explore some of these insights on the Metta Map.

Looking at the First Noble Truth, we see that **rules** often make us view things as **not possible**, which can perpetuate stress and lead to trauma. When one goes into **understanding** he or she might be able to **think about things differently**, which can raise the possibility of reducing the stress. Keep in mind that many **rules** are narrow and restrictive, therefore, they cause stress. It is only by broadening one’s limited thinking that new information can arrive and lead to a **new idea**, which may offer relief for the stressful situation.

We will find through **understanding** that there are **rules** that are skillful and helpful, while there are others that have out-lived their usefulness. For example, the **rule** that a four-year-old child can’t cross the street by himself may be limiting to the child, but it is there for the child’s safety. An adult, however, is perfectly capable of crossing the street alone, so this **rule** has become obsolete for the adult. In the case of the child, this **rule** might cause situational stress, but to the parent it is a comfort. In other words, **rules** are generally relative depending on setting, context, and wisdom.

An **understanding** that suffering or stress is inevitable can lead to **compassion** for yourself and others. Knowing that all sentient beings share in this phenomenon, the delusion that it is only you that is suffering disappears; this can be a great relief. In fact, how you relate to the universality

of suffering determines the degree of acceptance you can have of the suffering you encounter, as well as the suffering of others. Acceptance at that moment is an empowerment to creativity, and has nothing to do with tolerating or condoning unwholesome situations. Although some unskillful interpretations of the concept of acceptance are fatalistic, acceptance, the way we are describing it here, is not fatalistic because it takes into account the impermanent nature of all circumstances. There's an old saying in many parts of the world, "If you wait five minutes the weather will change." The fact is: change is ever present. It is the same with suffering. "This too shall pass."

The Fourth Noble Truth is the pathway out of suffering: the Noble Eightfold Path. It is the integration and inter-connectedness of the components of the Noble Eightfold Path and the fifteen squares of the Metta Map, along with the fluidity of the Metta process itself that allows for the continual movement of catching and releasing, and identifying and understanding, in our forward movement on the path of liberation.

Intention, or "free will expressed," is core to the entire Metta system, and permeates our exploration of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Mastery of each of the components of the Noble Eightfold Path will be experienced as an alignment in the Center Column of the Metta Map, which is our goal. Therefore, a thorough cultivation of **understanding**, **compassion**, and **commitment** is required in order for the eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path to be realized and become fully integrated in our lives. Please observe that all of these include the critical elements of Wisdom (*Panna* – Right View, Right Intention), Virtue or Ethical Conduct (*Sila* – Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood), and Energy Concentration (*Samadhi* – Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration) as represented by the Three Levels of Intelligence: Mind, Heart, and Energetic Consciousness, and are grouped this way by the Buddha.

The goal of the Noble Eightfold Path is to help one arrive at the Center Column and stay grounded there until enlightenment. Note that it is very easy for anyone to become dislodged from the Center Column, which happens when one is distracted by attachments and aversions that arise as a result of life's events.

The Center Column of the Metta Map represents the Buddha's Middle Way. One always wants to have ready access to the Center Column, as well as a fluid access to all of the other squares, which are resource tools for evaluating and clarifying the input of data and information that is continually bombarding the human condition. This is where the Buddha's skill of "discernment" enters the picture, which is the critical dynamic of the Metta system.

Any prolonged distraction, or attachment to any of the squares causes instability in the individual or the situation. One must always have ready access to the Center Column to stay on the Path, which is our goal as Buddhist practitioners.

Buddhist teacher and scholar, Ven. Walpola Rahula in What the Buddha Taught, said that the components of the Noble Eightfold Path "are to be developed more or less simultaneously, as far as possible, according to the capacity of each individual. They are all linked together and each helps the cultivation of the others."(2) In appreciation for Ven. Rahula, he clarifies for us the inter-connectedness and the concurrent, dynamic relationship of all components of the Noble Eightfold Path, and why it is important to maintain the intention of being mindful of all of them at the same time, attending to each one as we practice the Dharma.

## Perpetrators and Victims

In the moment of inflicting trauma, whether by a parent, a criminal, or a soldier, the perpetrator has lost his sense of humanity for the victim, which will be illustrated in the following scenarios. He has “thinged” or devalued the victim or victims, and has taken away their humanness. In that same moment, the perpetrator has also become a non-human in the eyes of the victim. They have both lost their connectivity to the universal core of humanity. What we have found through the literature and throughout history is that if the tear of detachment from this core is to be reaffixed, the same procedure for repair must occur for both victims and perpetrators. The moral fiber that was torn in the act of violence must first be identified, then be fully accepted as actually having occurred, be forgiven, and finally be atoned for, i.e. before the victim and perpetrator can return to “at-one-ment.”

This four step mending process is the starting point of reconciliation, and it establishes the framework for building a new relationship between victim and perpetrator. This mending process is transformational, and when it is complete and successful, both parties recognize that they are no longer the same persons they were before the act of violence was committed. In order for the amends to be successful for both victim and perpetrator, it must be both offered and received in both word and deed; a verbal apology is insufficient without an appropriate accompanying Right Action. Both parties have been wounded – not just the victim; for it is in the aftermath of the act of violence that the perpetrator’s wounds begin to grow. Hence the old Chinese proverb: “When acting in rage – dig two graves.”

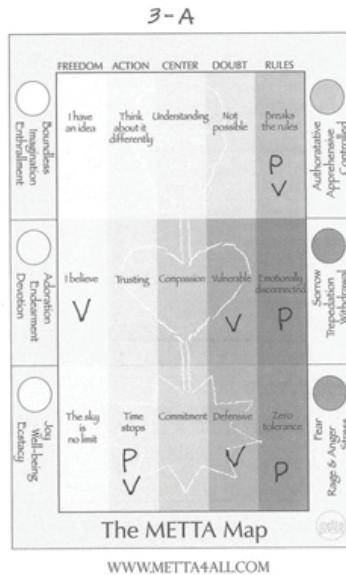
### Scenario: Trauma by Parent – The Act

The time is “Hell Hour.” Mom has come home from work, the house is a mess, the kids aren’t doing their homework, dinner isn’t started, friends have come over even though this was not allowed, she’s had a horrific day at work, traffic was jammed, there’s a bicycle in the driveway, her morning requests have been ignored, and the house is in chaos.

Mom comes through the door, sees the chaos, and goes into a rage. She screams at the children to get their friends out, and as she walks through the house her rage grows. She picks up a belt and starts randomly swinging it, hitting the children mercilessly as they scream and try to escape.

### Illustration: Trauma by Parent – The Act

**V = Children; P = Mom**



The Metta Map shows where all parties are at this moment of violence. The Mom is in **Zero Tolerance** for the situation. Her heart is closed and she is **Emotionally Disconnected** from her children because the **Rules** have been broken. In her rage, **Time Stops**. The children are **Defensive** and **Vulnerable**; they realize they have broken the **Rules**, and also feel that Mom has broken the **Rules** and betrayed them. They stand in **Time Stops** with their terror, and **Believe** that they are responsible for alienating their mother's love forever.

**Commentary:** In reality, both mother and children are victims of life's circumstances. Mom, in her fatigue, fears that her life is out of control, and she displaces this fear on her children. In this moment the children are terrified; in their childhood narcissism they take full responsibility for violating the household rules, and for provoking their mother's rage. If this behavior continues, the children will come to understand and believe that upset, conflict, and rage are an acceptable way of life and will perpetuate this behavior in their adult lives. Thus the Biblical expression: "The sins of the fathers."

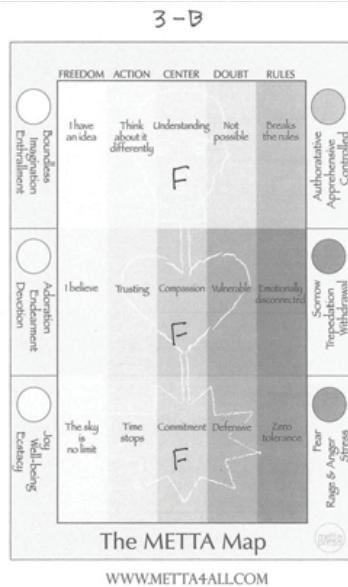
### Scenario: Trauma by Parent – The Resolution

The children are huddled in the corner, hugging each other and sobbing, saying "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Mom goes to the kitchen, catches her breath, and starts to weep over the grief of the violence she has just inflicted. Her heart begins to crack open, and all the love for her children as well as her remorse for the act comes spilling out. She collects herself and sees clearly what she has done. She immediately goes to the children and apologizes, embracing them, telling them that she loves them and how sorry she is. She promises that no matter how bad her day, no matter how

upset she might be, there is no excuse for what she did. This is her atonement. The children, weeping, apologize as well. They didn't mean to make her so mad; they didn't know. They promise to be more respectful of the household rules.

### Illustration: Trauma by Parent – The Resolution

**F = Family**



The Metta Map shows where all parties are at this moment of reconciliation and resolution. The mom and the children are both **Committed** to the unification of the family. They all have **Compassion** for one another, and they all **Understand** how dangerous and intrusive life's events can be.

**Commentary:** In an exhausted heap they hug and rock. They feel the energetic love they all have for one another. The tears begin to subside and their hearts unite. Together, Mom and the kids tidy up the house and prepare dinner. At dinner they say "Grace" and promise to be grateful for what they have, reaffirming that they are a family that loves each other.

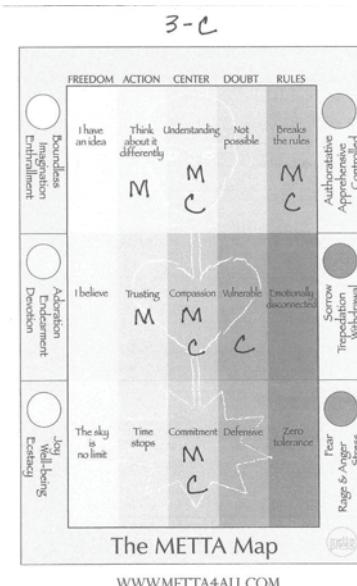
### Scenario: Same Scenario without Trauma

Exhausted Mom comes home from work and sees the chaos. She stands in the doorway shaking her head, laughing at the absurdity of the situation. The children freeze and look at her, knowing that they really messed up; they pause, quietly waiting for a reaction. Mom comments, "I think it's time for your guests to go home. We need to tidy up the house before dinner so that you guys can get to your homework." The children breathe a sigh of relief. The friends stay and help clean up the house and then quietly leave, saying "Goodbye – sorry we made a mess." Mom goes

to the kitchen, and the children come in to apologize. Mom says, “Thank you guys for cleaning up. It’s really hard when I come home tired, and you know it’s not safe having children in the house when there’s no adult. Please don’t do that again.” The children hug their mom and apologize; without being asked, they start helping to prepare dinner. Where do you want to live?

### Illustration: Same Scenario without Trauma

**M = Mom; C = Children**



The Metta Map shows where all parties are at this time. Mom walks in and **Understands** that the kids have broken the **Rules**. Standing in Right View she has **Compassion** for their foolishness, and **Thinks About** how to address this violation **Differently** in a skillful way. She **Trusted** in the strength of their relationship, and instructs the children to resume appropriate behavior. She is **Committed** to the well-being and harmony of her family in all circumstances. The children fully **Understand** that they broke the **Rules** and feel **Vulnerable** for their transgressions. They have **Compassion** for their mom and **Understand** that to keep peace in the house they must stay **Committed** to family unity.

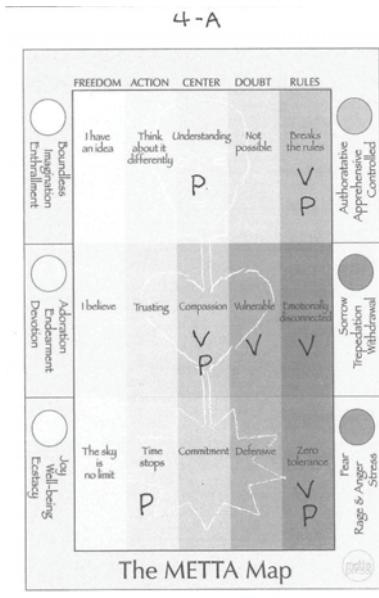
**Commentary:** How precious the pause of reason and compassion in the midst of complicated and upsetting circumstances. Each of us is gifted with this opportunity to pause and breathe, to see a situation as it is, and to be skillful in our responses. No one is harmed. This mom is a reminder to all of us that it is so easy to step one way or the other.

## Scenario: Trauma by Criminal – The Act

A 27-year-old man was given a full-on bachelor party at a private nightclub by his friends. All the “trimmings” were on hand for his last garrulous night of bachelorhood. Somehow in the preparation the friends overlooked providing a sober driver. At 2:00 a.m. the groom stumbled into his car, drove out of the parking lot, and in his intoxicated state he entered a freeway going the wrong way. He collided head-on with a family of five and killed them all. The police escorted the groom to jail, and he went into a suicidal depression. The victims’ extended family was simply shrouded in a cloud of grief, bewilderment, and rage.

### Illustration: Trauma by Criminal – The Act

V = Family; P = Drunk Driver



The Metta Map shows where all parties are at this moment of violence. The groom **Understands** that he has violated many **Rules**, and has **Zero Tolerance** for himself. In his shattered state **Time Stops**, and he feels deep **Compassion** for the victims and their family. The victims’ family is in **Zero Tolerance** because all **Rules** have been broken. Feeling **Vulnerable** because the world now seems unsafe, they are **Emotionally Disconnected** from the groom/drunken driver; they have deep **Compassion** for each other as they struggle through this unbearable time of sorrow.

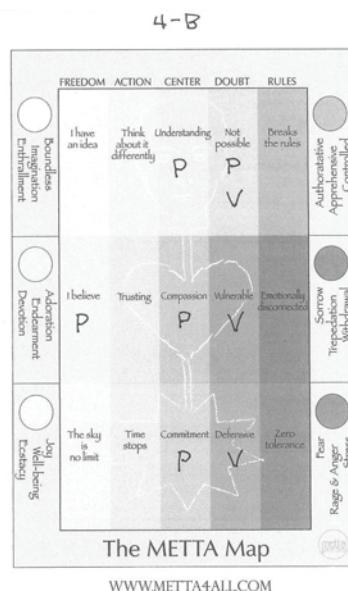
**Commentary:** This trauma is a breaking point for everyone involved. Their minds and hearts have been cracked open, and they are left in agony as to how to respond and recover. Each of us will have that moment. How we perceive and process traumatic events will determine the quality of the rest of our lives.

## Scenario: Trauma by Criminal – The Transition

The young groom is transferred from jail to a psychiatric hospital because of his suicide attempt. He comes to grips with the consequences of his reckless act and takes responsibility for it. He realizes that an action of atonement must be taken if he is to survive his depression, though he can't imagine how he can make amends. The victims' family feels that it is impossible to move forward. In a cauldron of emotions, they are in and out of anger, confusion, and sorrow.

### Illustration: Trauma by Criminal – The Transition

**V = Family; P = Drunk Driver**



The Metta Map shows where the drunk driver and the victims' family are during this transitional period. The drunk driver **Understands** what he has done, and has great **Compassion** for the victims' family. Even though he is **Committed** to atoning for his actions, he **Believes** that this is **Not Possible**. The victims' family feels that it is **Not Possible** to forgive the drunken driver, and they still feel **Vulnerable** and **Defensive**.

**Commentary:** In this vulnerable state, once again there is a fork in the road. The tenderness of the situation requires pausing and breathing to cultivate the beginning of Right View. It is in the opening of the heart that seeds of forgiveness and atonement are planted; they must be watered and nurtured for them to mature. If indignation and ego take hold, these seeds of redemption can die.

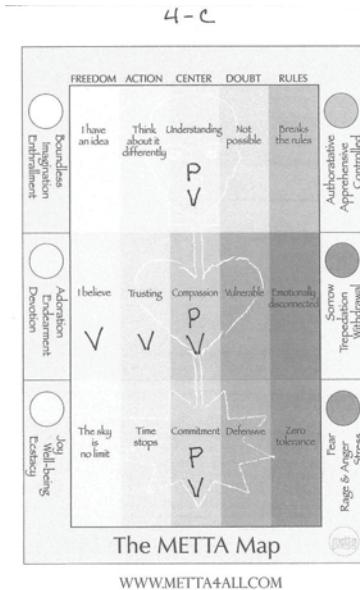
## Scenario: Trauma by Criminal – The Resolution (1)

The driver agonizes and wrestles with depression, trying to survive his guilt for the next two years. He spends time in jail and receives counseling. He eventually conjures up the courage to write the victims' family a letter. He expresses his deep sorrow, and offers a prayer that they have been able to recover from their losses. He lets them know that he hasn't yet forgiven himself for his deed. During this time of reflection and soul-searching he decides that since he had been a successful, high-profile person, when he is released from prison he would go to high schools, universities, and civic clubs to speak in memory of the family he killed. For his atonement he would tell his story, and the burden he has had to bear, with the intention of preventing future sorrows, grief, and trauma for others – be they victims or perpetrators.

After two years the victim's family receives the driver's letter from jail. The sincerity of the letter pierces their wall of rage, allowing for the realization that he is a human being who is also suffering. This shift eases their sorrow for themselves, and opens their hearts to all suffering beings.

### Illustration: Trauma by Criminal – The Resolution (1)

V = Family; P = Driver



The Metta Map shows us that the driver has come to Right View and clearly **Understands** what he must do for atonement. He has **Compassion** for all involved: the victims' family, his parents, his fiancée, his siblings, his friends and colleagues, the police who attended the accident scene, and himself. He is fully **Committed** to responsible behavior, keeping an open heart of loving-kindness for all beings, and practicing his method of atonement whenever possible. The victims' family **Understands** that they can never replace their lost loved ones, and that sorrow and suffering are inevitable occurrences in the life experience. They have **Compassion** for

themselves and the driver, they **Trust** in the healing process, and **Believe** that they can continue moving on. They also feel **Committed** to not cause harm to others, to not be quick to judge, and to stay present in their affections toward one another.

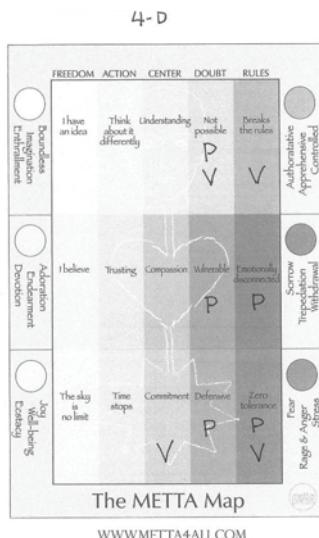
**Commentary:** The First Noble Truth is that there will be suffering. The Second Noble Truth is that there is a cause for suffering. The Third Noble Truth tells us that there is a remedy for our suffering. The Fourth Noble Truth, the Noble Eightfold Path, gives us the tools for liberating us from our suffering. It is in times of trauma that we are challenged to stay on the Path.

### Scenario: Trauma by Criminal – The Resolution (2)

The driver's depression deepens and permeates every aspect of his life, and drives him deeper and deeper into hopelessness and despair where suicidal ideation is ever-present. He copes with drugs and alcohol, which deepens his alienation. He feels chronically disconnected from others, and is exhausted in his attempt to defend the circumstances of his life. The victim's family remains in rage and sorrow, clinging to the violation from this experience. They make their martyred circumstance the family identity, and remain committed to defending their indignation for the rest of their lives.

### Illustration: Trauma by Criminal – The Resolution (2)

V = Family; P = Drunk Driver



The Metta Map shows us that the driver has never embraced his responsibility for his actions, and he thinks it's **Not Possible** to ever change his state of being. He remains **Emotionally Disconnected** from himself and everyone else, and is **Vulnerable** to continued despair. He has **Zero Tolerance** for his circumstances, and is **Defensive** when confronted. His lack of Commitment to anything makes him subject to the whims of his angst. The victims' family, giving vent to their rage and sorrow, have **Zero Tolerance** for the driver, and are 100% **Committed** to their martyred identity, which keeps them in chronic trauma. Their **Rules** are that they must continue their crusade of sorrow, and it's **Not Possible** to change. Their hearts are closed.

**Commentary:** Clinging, clinging, clinging – the source of all suffering. With trauma, the drama is so acute that the nerve-endings of the body want to cling on so tightly for fear that if they ever let loose another trauma would occur. It's a strange way to protect oneself; totally unskillful, but a far too-common event.

### Scenario: Trauma by War – The Act

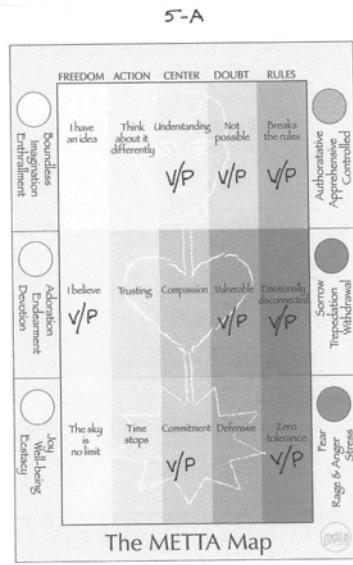
There are no words to adequately describe the horrors of war, and the trauma that radiates through generations can induce Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome Disorder (PTSD) in individuals, families, towns, cities, and countries. The consequences of war can linger for centuries. To say that we can create a scenario that is a complete representation would be naïve. We will try, however, to give a sample from one family that reflects three generations of suffering and the consequential destruction of familial ties.

My father was a pilot in World War II. He was twenty years old, a young Christian who had just finished chiropractic school. Early on it was to his credit, and later on to his shame, that he had bombed most of the major cities of Europe. During his last flight his plane was shot down. He was able to save most of his crew, but he was the last to parachute out. His co-pilot was unconscious, so he took him with him out of the plane. Due to the weight, the landing shattered both of my father's legs, and the co-pilot was dead.

War is a double-edged sword in which each individual member of the combat forces on both sides of the conflict experiences being both victim, and if not immediately then subsequently, and also a perpetrator. This Scenario will utilize the Metta Map to chart the trauma from its origin, through its transition period, and finally to its resolution of atonement – for one individual, my father.

### Illustration: Trauma by War – The Act

V/P = Dr. R. Shepard



Using the Metta Map, my father **Understood** that he was in an aerial combat zone. Being shot down from his plane, however, instantly obliterated the **Rules** of immortal youth, and shattered his belief that he would go home in one piece. He was **Vulnerable** to the enemy, **Emotionally** and physically **Disconnected** from any support system, and in **Zero Tolerance** for the fact that he was rendered helpless and could not defend himself. He **Believed** that death was a possibility; and if death didn't come, he **Believed** it would **Not** be **Possible** to escape. His **Commitment** to America was still at 100%.

**Commentary:** Armies are populated by the young and the idealistic, and by the hungry and the poor. Their training inflates their idealism and their sense of power and immortality. These are rapidly shattered by trauma in the combat zone, and the veil of denial is pierced.

### Scenario: Trauma by War – The Transition

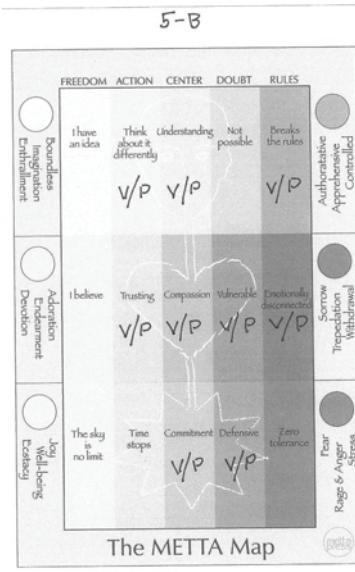
My father was captured and taken to hospital. His right leg was amputated, and he spent the next eight months as a POW. For the family, he was listed as MIA and presumed dead. My mother was eighteen with an infant child. Working two shifts she was now a widow.

While in hospital my father was blessed with kind nurses and doctors – despite the fact that they were war enemies. This blessing of kindness caused confusion, and initiated the questioning of the rightness of killing anyone.

Fast-forward many years. My father escaped from prison and returned to the United States. He resumed his chiropractic practice with my mother as his assistant. Unable to face his new identity as an amputee, he felt that he was less than a full man. He took to carousing and womanizing to prove himself in his altered state. He was full of nightmare and anger, unable to express or talk about what had happened in the war. A divorce followed, and estrangement, multiple marriages.

### Illustration: Trauma by War – The Transition

V/P = Dr. R. Shepard



Using the Metta Map, my father traversed to an intermediate stage in his progressive journey toward resolution and atonement. This is just a snapshot of where my father was at one point in time. He **Understood** that he was more complex than he ever imagined in his youth, and that he had broken **Rules** with reckless abandon. He started **Thinking** about life **Differently**, always feeling somewhat guarded and **Emotionally Disconnected**. He cultivated great **Compassion** for others, albeit at arms-length due to his **Vulnerability**. He **Defended** his history with an encasement of non-disclosure, **Trusted** in his abilities, and remained **Committed** to economic and social success, which was based on his perceived duty to do the right thing.

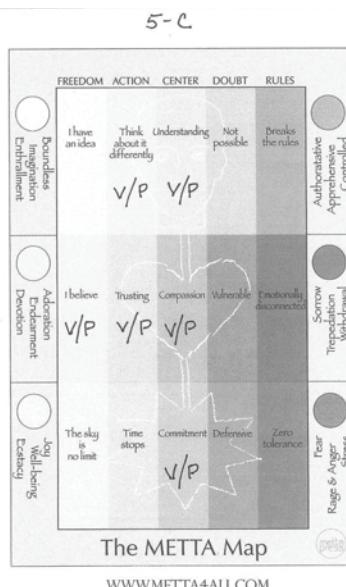
**Commentary:** Transitions are not simple or instantaneous, but complex, entangled, full of joy and sorrow, disappointment and success. Much like adolescence, it is unpredictable and uncertain as to outcome, often impulsive and full of woe. Transitions are full of turning points, full of times for pausing and reflecting to consider the consequences of one's decisions. It is critical to keep track of intention to avoid being diverted by delusions and fabrications, and seduced into clinging to what appears to be the easy way.

## Scenario: Trauma by War – The Resolution

During his third marriage he spent 25 years going back to Europe every year to see the reconstruction of the cities he had bombed. He belonged to service organizations that supported students and communities in Europe. That said, it wasn't until much later that we were able to be close as a father and daughter, and it wasn't until my son was in his twenties that my father could have a family relationship with his grandson. He was eighty before he could tell his war stories, which enabled him to feel a sense of atonement. This was perhaps the last purging of the PTSD that he had endured for over sixty years.

### Illustration: Trauma by War – The Resolution

V/P = Dr. R. Shepard



Using the Metta Map, we see that my father **Understood** that he was a part of a complex time in history. He had **Compassion** for himself as well as for all of the comrades in service on both sides of the conflict. He also came to have **Compassion** for the families on both sides that suffered the collateral damage, the insidious isolation that was imposed and endured as the result of dividing up Europe and destroying the fundamental fabric of the American family. He learned to **Trust** in Friendship, see things **Differently**, and **Believe** that there was goodness in humanity as well as evil. He no longer needed to defend his past, and he remained **Committed** to duty, to country, and to his family until his death.

**Commentary:** Resolution, reconciliation, and grace come at their own paces. The elements necessary for the trauma victim to repair are: to see clearly what occurred; to understand how it happened; and to learn how to survive this knowledge through relating their story to another so it is no longer buried in the heart. It is necessary to find an expression of restitution and amends with

Right Action. It is also necessary to execute and perform this action to give it meaning, so it can replace symbolically, if not actually, the damage that was done in the past. For my father, it took over forty-five years of effort for him to begin to feel that he could hope for atonement.

The scenarios above illustrate the four-step mending process, which can lead to reconciliation. Anywhere along the way there is the opportunity to clarify and move towards repair or redemption. There is even more opportunity for the hurt and anger to derail into unhappiness and lead back to the trauma. To be successful, this process needs to be cultivated with great skill.

## Summary

In conclusion, I hope it is now clear that for any trauma to be resolved – be it minor, medium, or huge – it is best served by acknowledging the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path; by not getting lost and believing that suffering is unique, that it does not have a source, and that it does not have a remedy. When trauma is not resolved, the individual, family, community, etc. can get tossed into the pit of despair. The illustrations given above are limited, and yet I hope communicate the extremes of the continuum of trauma. The specific techniques for personal and clinical application of the Metta Process have not been discussed in this paper. For those who are interested, please contact the author.

In our first example, we see that in our daily lives we have opportunities to pause and correct our path. When using the Metta Map as a guidepost you can quickly see if you have slipped into fear and anger on the right side of the Map, and have temporarily lost contact with the Middle Way.

In our second illustration we demonstrated how trauma can begin to radiate beyond two parties, and that no matter how skillful one may be, the healing process requires time and diligence. It also requires cooperation from a closed heart to embrace what seems unbearable, which is for the victim to forgive the perpetrator. Atonement and amends must be a conscious Right Action.

In our third illustration we see how processing through trauma evolved over a 60-year period. In the absence of having a tool such as the Metta Map, we saw how the process of healing from the horrors of war was prolonged. It is my desire that all of us who live with and/or treat all forms of suffering, from the minor to the major, have the benefit of using this Map as a guidepost and aid; that it serve as a companion reminder to those precious wounded that there is a visual queuing way they can use to re-direct themselves and get clarity on this healing path; that it help both victims and perpetrators have success by approximation; and that it keeps them from falling into oblivion in a *trauma bond* that will not release them to intimacy, love, and hope for the balance of their lives.

The last intention of this paper is to invite you, as Buddhist practitioners and educators, to take this tool, this Metta Map, and explore it for your own application in both intra and interpersonal conflict resolution. I know that you will bring an additional richness to the Metta System as it continues its process of evolution. If the reader is frustrated by any unanswered questions or limitations in this paper, it is solely the author's responsibility.

I am grateful to the clients and life teachers who have endured and generously shared their suffering and experiences of trauma with me. May their examples of healing radiate throughout the world.

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