

# Buddhist Psychology

— in the view of educated Westerners and instructed Buddhists

Āyukusala Thera's lecture at the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon, Myanmar, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2003.

Buddhist psychology has to be a science of mind which also studies the specific Buddhist approaches to mind. Therefore it has to hold good against all the criteria of science, such as empirical validity, methodological reliability of procedures, consistency of theoretical statements, etc. Moreover it has to be useful for practical life-management according to the Dhamma in order to be called Buddhist.

The themes deemed to belong to Buddhist psychology became very fashionable towards the end of the twentieth century. In popular books we find many opinions about Buddhist psychology and, in particular, a lot of nonsense about the supposedly Buddhist psychotherapy which will be dealt with later on. However, also available are reliable scientific treatments of Buddhist psychology, an overview of which is given by Beatrice Vogt Frýba and Mirko Frýba in their monograph *Sīlabhata – Virtuous Performance, the Empirical Basis for the Science of Buddhist Psychology* – also published in the *Sri Lanka Journal of Buddhist Studies*.

Here we shall begin by giving an overview of what notions of psychology are held by those people educated in the West, who might eventually understand Buddhist teaching as well. Next, based on this overview, we shall point out where Western psychology opens itself to Buddhist teachings. For this purpose, we shall show some achievements of the newest psychological streams — namely those of humanistic, transpersonal, and cultural psychology. Thirdly, we shall explain why the Buddha's teaching cannot be reduced merely to some kind of psychological system, even though it deals with mind in a manner that satisfies all the criteria of science. In the same way that the Buddha's teaching — though including philosophical ideas about the world, the theory of knowledge, and ethics — cannot be reduced to a system of philosophy, so it cannot be reduced to any of the other systems of knowledge categorized according to Western notions. Fourthly, Dhamma is characterised as the practical method of skilful life-mastery called *āyukusala* in Pali Buddhist technical terminology. Seeing the Dhamma elements thus as practical skills (*kusala*), much more than simply theoretical elements of knowledge (*ñāna*), becomes a starting point for conceiving Buddhist psychology in an inclusive way and so enables us to view the various specifically Buddhist practices of preaching, teaching and counselling from a psychotherapeutic standpoint. Finally, then, we formulate the basics of Buddhist psychology so as to provide a scientific basis for the various ways of working with people who come to us as our devotees, clients, patients, students, or simply as friends wanting to know more about the Buddha's teaching.

## 1. Psychology is a science of mind

Although colloquial use of the word psychology endows it with many meanings, everybody agrees that psychology is a science of mind — in the same way that chemistry is the science of materials, mechanics the science of engineering and informatics the science of computing. The job of science is to answer questions about how something works, how its parts fit together and, especially, what leads to what.

The primitive psychology of the early twentieth century sought to be scientific by imitating physics and chemistry while answering the question of how the mind works. There were psychologists who eschewed looking into the mind and wanted to study only behaviour as observed from outside; from this arose a school of thought called behaviourism. Behaviourists believe that a certain perceptual stimulus has to lead to a certain behavioural response, which

they think can be scientifically grasped by the lineal paradigm S–R. This simplistic approach is still quite powerful in various fields, such as the theory of learning or behavioural therapy. Because the paradigm S–R cannot grasp the reality of mind, behaviourists had to admit some organic link as intermediary, getting thus the paradigm S–O–R. Then, in the later school of cognitive behaviourism, this organism came to be furnished with putative pictures of outer objects called mental representations. But representations of the same stimuli are admitted to be different in various individuals. This cognitivist approach, which ignores experiencing and consciousness, prevailed in mainstream psychology till the end of the past century.

Throughout the twentieth century, another system of psychology was used to explain the changes in experiencing and consciousness, especially in connection with psychotherapy. It can certainly be argued that all the Western schools of psychotherapy are in some way derived from the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis answers especially the questions why people differ in their experiencing of the world and why some of the mind's operations do not become conscious. Because psychoanalysts tend to be preoccupied with pathological needs and mental problems, some psychotherapists preferred to break the mould by addressing the questions of healthy values and wellness; from this arose a school of thought called humanistic psychology.

The newest developments are summarized in the systems of so-called transpersonal psychology and the ethnopsychology (sometimes called cultural psychology). Transpersonal psychology studies the spiritual phenomena that seem to transcend the personal reality. Cultural psychology admits that different ethnic groups have developed various systems of knowledge about the mind's working within their own cultures. These newest developments in Western psychology enable gifted people to overcome their egotistic and ethnocentric limitations, which are inherent in their indigenous way of thinking. It is from this standpoint that we can say that Western psychology opens itself to Buddhist teachings.

## **2. Western psychology opens to Buddhist teachings**

Buddhist teachings are very attractive to those Western psychologists who are trying to understand various states of consciousness occurring outside the normal everyday experience. Some even consider the phenomenology of mind contained in the Buddhist *Abhidhamma* to be a system of transpersonal psychology par excellence. So much so that some of such newer textbooks on the psychology of personality as have no claim to be transpersonal contain a chapter on the Buddhist notion of a person. The Buddhist divisions of personality types and the stages of personal development are interesting for ethnopsychologists as well as for researchers in educational psychology. And no Western psychotherapist or counsellor could honestly claim today not to know that all commonly used techniques of relaxation are somehow connected with and derive from those of Buddhist meditation. These are just a few examples of present-day interaction between the two cultural approaches.

Western psychologists first became interested in what seemed to them rather unusual or exotic in the Buddhist knowledge of the mind. Only later did they attempt to learn more about the sober distinctive features of Buddhist psychological knowledge that — although bringing us beyond the limits of contemporary Western psychology — are most scientific in the proper sense of the word. The *Silabbata* monograph already mentioned above sums up these distinctive features of Buddhist psychological knowledge under the following headings:

- primacy of experiential reality provides the basis for all theory building, as well as for all practical procedures;
- the ethical orientation of all psychological knowledge prevents its abuse;
- the clear comprehension of goal is implied in all texts and procedures;
- gradual realisation of goals is always taken into account;

- control of performance (*adhi-sīla-sikkhā*) serves as a starting point for all procedures;
- purification of mind (*adhi-citta-sikkhā*) by means of meditation removes the defilements of greed and hate, which otherwise distort consciousness and invalidate knowledge;
- transcendence through wisdom (*adhi-paññā-sikkhā*) aims at an individually experienced realization of happiness and peace.

### **3. Dhamma cannot be reduced to psychology**

The Buddha's way is concerned with achieving insight, which in turn leads to purification of the mind and makes possible happiness through its pacification. Yet the Dhamma cannot be defined as a system of psychology. Though the Buddha's teaching includes psychology, it cannot be reduced to it. All the Buddha's psychology is interwoven with ethics. But similarly, though the Buddha's Dhamma includes ethics, it cannot be regarded as some philosophical system. For many Buddhists, the Dhamma is their religion. There is no doubt about the fulfilment of religious needs through the practice of Dhamma. Yet even the most religious Buddhist would allow that the Buddha's Dhamma is something more than just religion.

All that has been said so far can be accepted by any person well educated in Western culture. A person with a basic knowledge of psychology, such as that required for university entrance, for example, should easily understand our summary of recent developments and the resultant opening up to Buddhist teachings. What now follows should appeal to open-minded Buddhists who are well instructed in the practice of Dhamma.

### **4. Dhamma is a practical method of skilful life-mastery**

I hold the Dhamma to be skilful (*kusala*) living (*āyu*). This is my 'lion's roar'. There need be no implication in it of the idea of an I or a self; I speak from the certainty of personal experience. This is not an anonymous statement; it is my responsible personal testimony as a result of my studying the Dhamma, my continuous practice of the Dhamma, my personal growth in the Dhamma and my own tasting the fruits of the Dhamma. I want to make quite clear that what counts here is the knowing person's own experience (*paccatam veditabbo viññūhi*), as the Buddha put it in so many words.

The practice of the Buddha's Dhamma is most comprehensively defined through the paradigm of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha's Path provides for character cultivation and handling everyday situations (*sīla-sikkhā*), meditation training (*samādhi-sikkhā*) and developing wisdom (*paññā-sikkhā*) — thus covering all eventualities in the practice of life-mastery.

Such practice can be assisted by psychologically erudite persons working in the various helping professions. Psychotherapists and counsellors are examples of such professionals. Buddhist monks and nuns can also carry out this professional help and what follows is meant especially for them.

### **5. Buddhist psychology of preaching, teaching, counselling and psychotherapy**

During the past three decades, I have conducted Dhamma courses, meditation retreats, psychotherapy sessions, workshops in life-mastery (*āyu-kusala*), Āyukusala teacher training and other related projects. On top of that, I have given university lectures and led seminars on the Buddhist psychology used in all these projects. There is no need now to list them all. Here I want to elaborate to a certain extent upon three fields of applied Buddhist psychology concerned with the projects mentioned; we shall use for it three handouts that will serve as examples of starting points in practical training. [These are available on the Ayukusala Internet pages detailed in the Bibliography].

In the three following fields of applied Buddhist psychology, there are fundamental differences in the way of communicating with the target population as well as in the mediated form of Buddhist teaching.

- First, while preaching and teaching, we address all who are ready to hear or read. It is up to the listener or reader to select, accept and use whatever information is being offered. In preaching and teaching, there can be mediated only information about the elements of Dhamma and, to a certain extent, about the ways to use them.
- The second field is that of counselling, in which we personally address the client who has asked for our advice. While counselling, we mediate the know-how for dealing with the problems that are defined by the client. The training of skills to cope with the situations in question can support and enhance the counselling.
- The third field is that of healing, which may be psychosocial healing by means of rituals, holistic Ayurveda healing that includes psychological components, or healing in the form of fully-fledged psychotherapy. While healing, we work for the patient who has explicitly sought our professional help, providing of course that we are equipped for it and able to conform to his request.

A practicing Buddhist can engage in the role of teacher, counsellor, or healer. The fact that the person is a Buddhist does not yet make his work some form of Buddhist teaching or Buddhist counselling. With Buddhist healing the issue is even more difficult, as we shall see later. Nevertheless, there are professional fields in which Buddhist psychology can be applied with much benefit. Let us look at them one after the other.

## **6. Psychological aspects of preaching and teaching the Dhamma**

There are two psychological aspects of preaching and teaching the Dhamma. The one concerns the contents, the other the way of communicating them. While preaching, we cannot teach the Dhamma elements as practical skills (*kusala*) because that requires a systematic training that builds upon the trainee's dispositions. The contents of preaching are just theoretical elements of knowledge (*ñāna*), even when they may give the hearer some inspiration for practical life-mastery.

Psychological erudition helps the preacher to formulate the contents of his teaching so that the hearers pay close attention and profit from it. Traditionally, Buddhist monks are expected to see clearly what is their preaching's motivation (*sutta-nikkhepa*): it may be motivated by the situation (*atthupatti*), by the preacher's talent (*attajjhāsayā*), by the assessed inclination of the hearer (*parajjhāsayā*), or by the endeavour to answer a clearly posed question (*pucchāvasika*). Thereafter the preacher is expected to explain the possibilities of life-mastery according to the Dhamma progressively (*anupubbapatipadā*) up to what he estimates as still graspable by the hearer. These and similar themes are explored also by modern educational psychology — and there are no reasons why Buddhist preachers should ignore such alternative approaches. The same is true about the ways of communicating, answering questions (*pañhabyākaraṇa*) and so on. The point I want to make here is that the traditional monastic training should be complemented by studying the relevant psychological literature — once we know where to find it.

Buddhist teachers should first explore and exploit the wealth of knowledge and skills contained in the Dhamma tradition, matured and handed down to us over the centuries, before turning for advice to the young science of Western psychology of the last hundred years. Some of the paradigms traditionally used for efficient preaching and teaching have just been mentioned. The best systematic account of them is given in the *Nettipakaranam*, which the European Āyukusala teachers are using in the excellent English translation by Ñānamoli. One of the most useful instruments applied in the Āyukusala approach to any form of Dhamma work is the paradigm of five masteries (*pañca-vasiyo*) [see the handout *Āyukusala-Pañhā*]. This paradigm will help in

whatever project — whether you want to teach yourself meditation, to train yourself or others how to preach or counsel effectively, or anything else. The first of the five masteries consists in the choice and preparation of the session (*āvajjana–vasī*); the second is its methodical start (*samāpajjana–vasī*); the third is abiding by the decision as to its time and object (*adhitthāna–vasī*); the fourth is its methodical ending (*vyutthāna–vasī*); fifth comes the reviewing of all stages in the process (*paccavekkhanā–vasī*). We shall demonstrate soon how to use this paradigm of five masteries in group counselling.

## **7. Questions concerning Buddhist counselling**

Can we speak at all about Buddhist counselling? What do you imagine when you hear this combination of words? Does the counselling become Buddhist due to the fact that a Buddhist monk does it? What is the purpose of Buddhist counselling? If the counselling helps clients to cope better with their tasks and problems, then we can say that all counselling is Buddhist. Behind this assertion is the typically Buddhist open-minded attitude of *mettā* that wishes happiness to all living beings without exception. But besides that we may also conceive of a counselling meant particularly for Buddhist people, just as other faiths offer such help exclusively for their own people. Once we have decided to conceive of Buddhist counselling this way, it becomes desirable to promote special counselling for Buddhists which concentrates upon questions concerning how to use the particular strategies of Dhamma in everyday life.

What, then, is the difference between preaching and counselling? In preaching the Dhamma we offer the Buddha's way that leads to the goal defined by the Buddha, whereas in counselling we provide help towards the goal defined by the client. As already mentioned, when preaching we mediate information as knowledge (*ñāna*), but we cannot teach the Dhamma elements as practical skills (*kusala*). Teaching skills requires a systematic training fitted to the needs of the client. In counselling we also mediate knowledge, but only that knowledge which is relevant to the client's problem. The person who requires counselling comes to the counsellor of his or her own choice with the themes of his or her own choice. Thus the first and most important skill of the counsellor is to be able to listen. The counsellor has to practise empathy (*karuna*) in order to understand fully the client's situation and to help in finding personally relevant solutions. Competent counselling does not consist of giving advice that is universally valid. Most valuable are those ways of problem-solving which have been discovered and developed, with the counsellor's assistance, by the clients themselves. The personal approach relevant to individuals is equally valid when counselling couples, families or institutional teams.

The counsellor's acts of skilful assistance in finding personal solutions should become a model of facilitative acts, which are then used by those clients who themselves work with groups. Another example here is the handout titled *Family Conference*, used for the parents of children who attended the Sunday Dhamma School. The parents who used to sit in our temple garden while their children were in class asked me to teach them how to cope with various problems arising in their regular family life. Most of them had already learned Buddhist meditation from me and thus knew also the paradigm of five masteries (*pañca–vasiyo*). Drawing upon my experience of training educational counsellors in Switzerland, I have selected some group exercises to put under the headings of the five masteries and then subsume them under the following five steps to be practiced at every meeting:

- 1) Mention only what is necessary to achieve a successful action (*kamma*). You start by very briefly communicating the purpose (*attha*) of the meeting and initiate it by a symbolic action that through repetition will become a ritual [see point 4].
- 2) Create the working situation (*kammatthāna*) auspicious for your purpose. That is, you initiate the setting of place, time, programme of procedure and general rules — these are actions that should always be first agreed upon and explicitly confirmed by all the participants. This is in future the contract that is binding on all participants.

- 3) Determine the object (*ārammana*) of this session and get it accepted by all the participants. You win a relevant object during an introductory question–round (*pañhā–vatta*). You must then superintend staying with the object that was decided upon; in the case of a distraction, you comment upon this as such, very simply, by only noticing and naming it (*sallakkhanā*).
- 4) Help the group towards mindfully ending the session by developing a ritual of transition (*vatta–pativatta*) – literally of instating–and–cancelling the conditions. Such a ritual should contain a short formula of courtesy from you as the leader, a brief spell of meditation and wishing well (*mettā*).
- 5) Review its conduct (*paccavekkhanā*) briefly before the end of each meeting.

During the first meetings, the object (*ārammana*) was "How to Conduct a Family Conference". Then at each meeting a selection was made from the themes offered by the participants during an introductory question–round (*pañhā–vatta*). Some told me later that they have tried similar simple sessions of group counselling also with their employees — and it worked.

This example of amateur group counselling contains principles that should be well known to any Buddhist teacher. Yet we should keep in mind that counselling sessions for couples, families or institutional teams have to be performed by highly qualified professionals. To conduct the training of professional counsellors is a sophisticated procedure that takes time. The counsellors have to learn to listen to what the client says, to understand his attitude to the problem and to observe how congruent with it is the client's body language. All these cues are very important during the gradual offering of the possible ways of problem solving. The counsellor must not become preoccupied with the client's difficulties and drawbacks; it is very important to see first what are the client's capabilities. The competent counsellor is always able to find out the client's assets and use them ingeniously as the basis for progressive new exercise in skilful life–mastery. And, specifically for our Buddhist counselling, we have the Dhamma as repertory of skilful life strategies (*āyukusala*), for which I refer you to my book *The Art of Happiness*.

### **8. Can there be such a thing as Buddhist psychotherapy?**

We have accepted what we term Buddhist counselling as a meaningful undertaking; it is Buddhist in that it is for Buddhist clients and solves problems connected with Buddhist teachings. So might there also be a healing treatment that is for Buddhist patients and cures the sicknesses connected with Buddhist teachings? It is obvious nonsense to conceive of Buddhist psychotherapy in this way. And here I want to state very clearly, at the outset of discussing this theme, that it is altogether misleading and dangerous to label any healing treatment as Buddhist psychotherapy.

Yet there are — and there have always been — mentally ill people in every civilisation. Then how were these mental patients treated in Western countries before psychotherapy came to exist some hundred years ago? And how are mental patients treated in Buddhist countries nowadays? There was no special treatment for mentally ill people in the West; the quietly disturbed and depressed were ignored and those more active were either locked up or chained down. More attention was given to those who hallucinated; they were considered either holy or possessed by the devil. For the possessed, the Christian clergy sometimes used exorcism, sometimes their removal by drowning or burning alive. In Buddhist countries the treatment of mentally ill people was somewhat less brutal so far as we can gather from old texts. But there existed nothing that could be called psychotherapy.

It was only recently that some anthropologists and ethnopsychologists have started to explore the indigenous treatments for mentally ill people in traditionally Buddhist countries. The best book on such research was written by the Swiss ethnopsychologist Beatrice Vogt: *Skill and Trust – The Tovil Healing Ritual of Sri Lanka as Culture–Specific Psychotherapy*. Dr. Vogt was herself trained in Western psychotherapy and experienced in treating Westerners before she started her

research. She describes several types of treatment for mental patients; for example, those based on Ayurveda, connected with the worship of deities (*deva-puja*), contained in Buddhist rituals for protection (*paritta*), etc. The greatest part of her book is devoted to the rituals performed by the demon-tamers (*yaka-adura*) whose procedures come closest to Western psychotherapy by means of psychodrama. Dr. Vogt shows also how the Buddhist demon-tamers reconcile their procedures with the goals of the Buddha's teaching.

As mentioned before, in preaching the Dhamma we offer the Buddha's way that leads to the goal defined by the Buddha, whereas in counselling or psychotherapy we provide help to reach the goal defined by the client or the patient. Here we have the fundamental difference between the practice of the Dhamma and professional counselling or psychotherapy. Then why could we admit Buddhist counselling but state that Buddhist psychotherapy is nonsense? What is the difference between psychotherapy and counselling?

In counselling, the client poses a question, describes the problem and defines the goal of the procedure demanded. And in Buddhist counselling there is something distinctly Buddhist about the question, the problem and the goal. The client accepts the goal as defined by the Buddha. Buddhist counselling is thus subordinate and auxiliary to the practice of Dhamma. In psychotherapy, the patient asks for help and complains of a sickness or disease that he cannot grasp clearly yet wants to get rid of it. Thus the patient demands a healing procedure to be provided by the professional healer to reach the patient's goal. The psychotherapist is simply a specialist chartered to accompany the patient on the patient's way to his goal — there can be nothing subordinate or auxiliary to the practice of Dhamma in psychotherapy. Thus there can be no Buddhist psychotherapy.

And what about those Buddhists who became sick due to incompetent guidance by pseudo-teachers of Buddhism? Yes, there are such cases, both in traditionally Buddhist countries and in the West. To treat this problem would, however, lead far beyond the limits of the present occasion. We might approach the question another way by asking whether a Western patient seeking help from a behaviour-therapist or a psychoanalyst is undergoing a Christian or a Jewish psychotherapy, since both the founders and the patients of these psychotherapeutic methods are Jews and Christians. The concept is as ridiculous as talking of a Buddhist psychotherapy.

### **9. Satitherapy developed on the basis of Abhidhamma**

To have psychological problems is a part of normal life in every civilization and, especially in more advanced societies, it is a matter of course to seek the services of a psychotherapist. A psychotherapist, unlike a counsellor, helps to identify the unclear discontents and points also to the patient's blind spots in order to open up the ways to healing. Some eschew psychotherapists due to their insufficiently distinguishing everyday psychological problems and discontents (which are, so to say, normal) from the grave pathologies of neurotic or psychotic patients. The most serious amongst the other drawbacks of traditional Western psychotherapists is their tendency to concentrate exclusively on problems and pathologies, which is the heritage of the obsolete psychiatric belief in having a specific medicine for any of the diagnosed sicknesses. These shortcomings of older Western psychotherapy became more visible still against the background of my belief that psychotherapeutic help should protect and promote health by activating the healing life-force in the patient. Hence, during the 1970s, I started to develop new techniques for use in traditional Western psychotherapy. This was the beginning of what is now known as Satitherapy.

The psychological training that I personally underwent took more than ten years. I was lucky to enjoy personal guidance by Carl R. Rogers and Zerka T. Moreno. My psychoanalysis was done by Ernst Blum, a direct pupil of Sigmund Freud. All that I learned from these great masters of Western psychotherapy, with the addition of my Buddhist meditation experience and

*Abhidhamma* studies, contributed to the pioneering of this therapeutic system — which, for all that it owes so much to the Dhamma, we have agreed not to call Buddhist psychotherapy.

Satitherapy is a system of integrative mental healing which uses mindfulness (*sati*) as the key principle within a person-centred approach, as developed by Carl R. Rogers. It integrates the techniques of psychodrama developed by Jacob L. Moreno for therapeutic acting-out with the procedures of Buddhist insight meditation (*satipatthāna-vipassanā*) for therapeutic acting-in. In the training of satitherapists, the conceptual frame of Western mainstream psychology is used (cf. the article on *Mindfulness* in R.J Corsini's *Encyclopaedia of Psychology*), yet the theoretical basis for Satitherapy is provided by the system of psychology and ethics elaborated within the ancient Asian teachings of *Abhidhamma*, as described in my book *The Art of Happiness*.

Satitherapy is a method, which is as easy to learn as, say, piloting an aircraft or dental surgery. Any intelligent person, who has already studied the *Abhidhamma* and Western clinical psychology, can be trained as a satitherapist in a course of eight semesters. Satitherapists have usually graduated from university and obtained an M.D. with specialization in psychiatry or a Ph.D. in psychology. But there are also some practitioners without these degrees, for one reason or another. [For more details, see the Satitherapy Internet pages mentioned below]

Hardly more can be expected now than this brief survey of Satitherapy and its place within the context of Buddhist psychology. There is one more thing, though, which I want to share in this context. Satitherapists working with Buddhist clients and patients can be usefully assisted by Buddhist monks and nuns trained in the practice (and not simply the ritual chanting!) of the fourteen skills of *Buddha-nāna*. An example illustrating the format and the procedure of such an assisted psychotherapy session is given in the handout titled *A Satitherapy Session* — which is available on the Āyukusala Internet pages detailed below.

Satitherapy is a healing treatment. It is the methodical cure of psychological, social, and spiritual problems where the goals of its procedure are defined by the patients rather than the therapists. It is not a religious performance. It is not Buddhist psychotherapy, although it may use the patient's religious sentiments, whether Buddhist or otherwise, without any coercive persuasion or missionary influencing. The religious issues are subject to the patient's own decision. The cured person may then want to know more about the Buddhist teaching of *Abhidhamma*, upon which Satitherapy is based, and there is no reason for not giving the information about the practice of Dhamma, which is meant for healthy persons. Again, participation in Satitherapy does not prevent a person's using the Dhamma as a method of skilful life-mastery (*Āyukusala*).

## **10. Reviewing**

The simplest way to review our session today would be to recount the nine themes used as headings. Those who participated mindfully will have no problem in recalling that we started with the definition of psychology and continued by examining how modern Western psychology may open itself to Buddhist teachings. We saw why the Dhamma cannot be reduced to psychology, philosophy or religion, and we remembered that the Buddha taught a practical method of skilful life-mastery. All this was formulated in relation to notions familiar to any educated Westerner.

In the second part of this session, we dealt with the psychological aspects of preaching, teaching, counselling and psychotherapy in a way that should appeal to open-minded Buddhists who are well instructed in the practice of Dhamma. Special attention was given to the question whether some psychotherapeutic approaches could be called Buddhist. Then the system of Satitherapy was described as an example of psychotherapy based on the Buddha's teaching. After showing what is common and what is different in the psychological procedures of the Buddha and the West, we have extracted some paradigms applicable in all of them. The most useful of these is the paradigm of five masteries, the fifth of which is the reviewing (*paccavekkhanā-vasī*) we are practising right now.



## Literature

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## Internet pages

Āyukusala: [www.webpark.cz/dhamma/](http://www.webpark.cz/dhamma/) or: [www.volny.cz/dhamma/](http://www.volny.cz/dhamma/)

Satithery: [www.volny.cz/satiterapie](http://www.volny.cz/satiterapie)

## Discussion session

Question: *What is the efficacy of Satithery in comparison to meditation?*

Satithery is a method of professionally healing the patient's illness, the goal of which is defined by the patient. Meditation is a part of the Dhamma training, the goal of which is defined by the Buddha. These are two very different procedures and their efficacy cannot be compared.

The efficacy of a procedure is measured by the extent to which the procedure's goal has been realized. In order to be able to speak about efficacy, one has to begin with clear comprehension of the goal (*sāthaka–sampajañña*). One has also to grasp the instrumentality (*sappāya–sampajañña*) in order to apply the means proper for attaining the goal. When the goal is healing of the patient's illness, meditation is not the proper means to realise it. Then there must be clear comprehension of the realm (*gocara–sampajañña*), which means whether we are in meditation training or in a psychotherapy session. There is much damage done to patients by those who say that meditation is a psychotherapy. Some time ago I saw in Sri Lanka a book with the title *Buddhist Psychotherapy*; it contained nonsensical claims such as healing through instructing the patient in the four *satipatthānas* one after the other. The author of that weird book and his business–minded friends, including an American monk with a Ph.D. in history, were selling group sessions of Buddhist psychotherapy, which have damaged several persons. May such Buddhists get some insight into their wrong–doing! Then those who realise that they did wrong due to delusion (*sammoha*) can correct it and thus reach the clear comprehension of overcoming delusion (*asammoha–sampajañña*). These four types of clear comprehension are explained for example in the commentary to the *Jhāna–Vibhanga* of the *Abhidhamma–Pitaka*.

Here we should just remember that meditation is not psychotherapy. Buddhist meditation is a part of training for healthy persons. Psychotherapy is done to satisfy the requests of sick patients. And we should be very cautious when someone speaks about Buddhist psychotherapy.

Question: *Does the mind of a Buddhist work in a different way? Even before coming here to study and to become a nun, I was different from those other people back home. They could not understand me and I saw that the people think and behave very much unlike me. Already in Europe I was behaving like a nun. Is there a psychological explanation for that?*

The best explanation that Western psychology can give is by analysing the differences of personal value–orientation. There are possible also other explanations according to personality types of various psycho–diagnostic theories, which are of no use in this case. About fifty years ago, Charles Morris, a leading specialist in semantics and social psychology, wrote a book about

his research on personal value–orientations in various cultures. He has described there also a value–orientation, which he designates as Buddhist. However, even persons with the same value–orientation may act differently, depending upon how much they are aware of their values and how mindful they are.

There are also differences in thinking and acting according to the person’s identification with a social role. Unless you are an ordained nun or monk, it is better not to act as one. Better behave the same way as other people around you do in order not provoke misunderstandings. You could get exploited or harmed, because you are not socially protected by monastic identification. Wearing the monk’s or nun’s robe gives you protection even in non–Buddhist countries.

In terms of Buddhist psychology we can also explain the differences in thinking and acting in terms of progress on the path of Dhamma. An advanced person adopts uncommon ways of coping with life. Thus we can discover whether the person is an uninstructed worldlyling or a trainee well instructed in the Dhamma. We can see how the person is using the wise apprehension called *yoniso–manasikāra* or some other strategies of Dhamma, as I have described them in my book *The Art of Happiness*.

Question: *Can I, as a Buddhist monk, become a satitherapist?*

Yes. Why not? There are monks who train in various skills and use them for good purposes while staying fully in accordance with the monastic discipline of *Vinaya*. You may train in the skill of a typist and, even as a monk, use a typewriter or a computer (for example) in translating Pali into your native language. To become a satitherapist means to acquire skills in listening to a patient, how to have empathy (*karuna*) towards suffering persons, in order to understand fully their situation and help them find a way out of it. As a satitherapist you do not have to use astrology, fortune telling or other practices criticised by the Buddha as the beastly schemes of *tiracchāna–vijjā*. A monk skilled in satitherapeutic problem–solving and counselling can be, as a result, a much better meditation instructor and teacher of the Dhamma.

**Venerable Āyukusala Thera** is a Buddhist monk of the Theravāda school. As a Swiss citizen and also a Czech national, he speaks several European languages. He is presently living in the Āyukusala Mount Hermitage near Horana, Sri Lanka, from where he coordinates the training of Āyukusala monks.

After an intensive meditation training with Ācharya Anagārika Munindra in Bodh–Gaya, India, he became a teacher of *Satipaṭṭhāna–Vipassanā* Meditation in 1967. Then during the 1970s he worked in Switzerland as a psychotherapist and professor of psychology at Berne University, when he founded the Swiss Buddhist Union and the Dhamma Group. In 1983 he moved to Sri Lanka, where he lived at first as an *Anagārika* then as a family father since 1987. From 1990 he taught Dhamma in Czechoslovakia, while lecturing also at the Universities in Prague, Olomouc, and Brno, founding several Bodhi Groups in the main cities of this newly liberated country. In 1997 he returned to Sri Lanka and there received ordination as Ven. Bhikkhu Kusalānanda. He is also known as the Āyukusala Hamuduru in Sri Lanka and as the Āyukusala Sayadaw in Myanmar.

Venerable Āyukusala Thera mediates the Buddha’s Teaching as a practical method of life mastering, as explained in his book *The Art of Happiness – Teachings of Buddhist Psychology*, published in several languages under his lay name of Mirko Frýba. His latest English book is

*THE PRACTICE OF HAPPINESS – EXERCISES AND TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING MINDFULNESS, WISDOM, AND JOY* (Shambhala Publications, Boston & London, 1995).

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