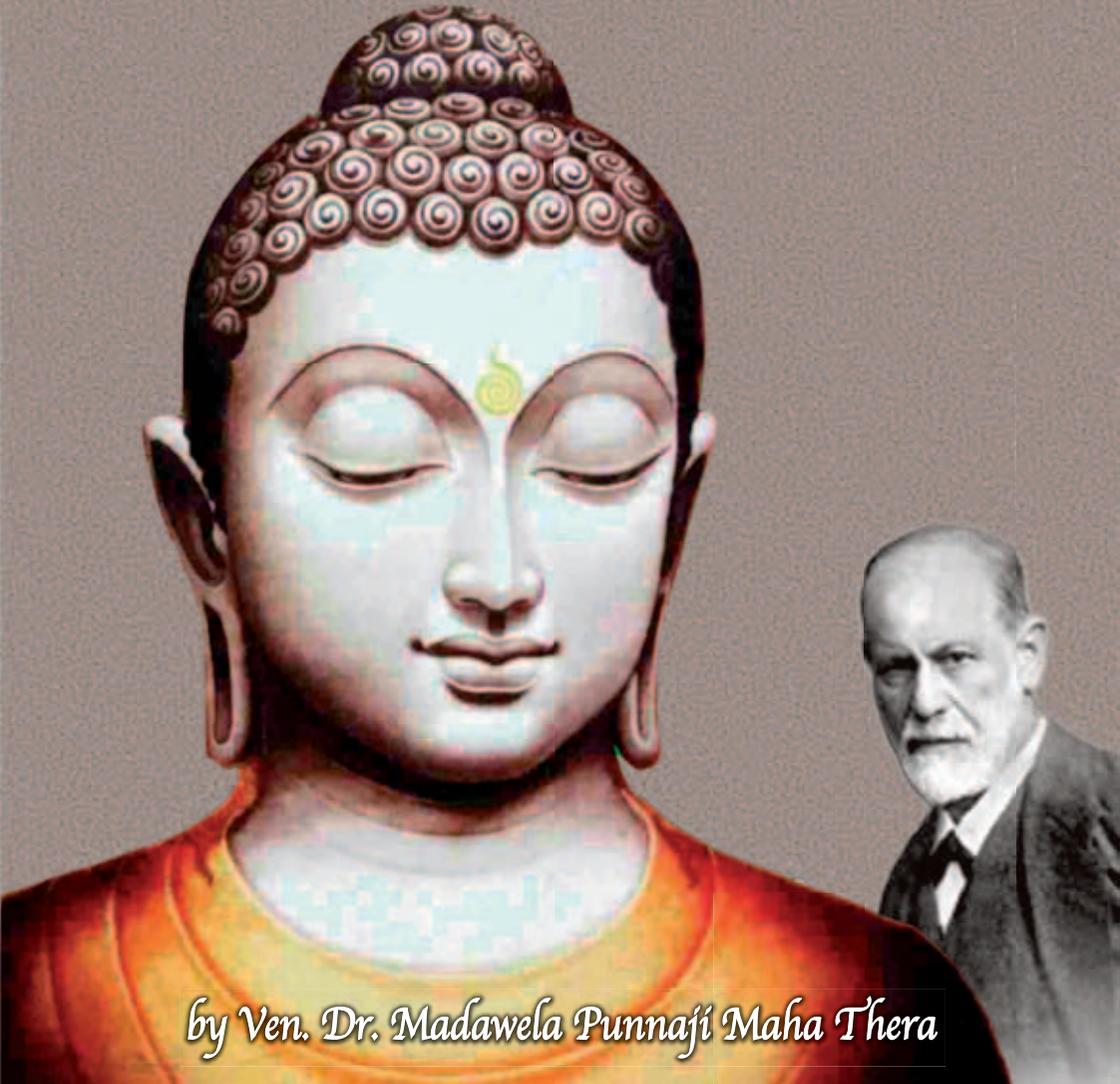


# BUDDHA

## THE RADICAL SHRINK

Buddhist Psychotherapy



*by Ven. Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera*

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Buddhist Maha Vihara,  
123, Jalan Berhala, Brickfields,  
50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Tel: 603-2274 1141 Fax: 603-2273 2570  
E-Mail: [info@buddhistmahavihara.org](mailto:info@buddhistmahavihara.org)  
Website: [www.buddhistmahavihara.org](http://www.buddhistmahavihara.org)  
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# **Buddha The Radical Shrink**

## **Buddhist Psychotherapy**

*by*

*Ven. Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera*

### **PROLOGUE**

Western interest in Buddhism has a history of a little more than three centuries. It is only quite recently, however, that the Western intellect has begun to dig deeper into the profound teachings of the Buddha. Modern psychologists who have experimented with Buddhist meditation have begun to notice a close parallelism as well as a few differences between modern psychological thinking and the teachings of the Buddha. This paper is the result of a long research to discover the relation between early Buddhism and modern psychotherapeutic theory and practice, with the hope that it might open vistas of knowledge that lay hidden under the ashes of bygone centuries. This study has also thrown some valuable insights into the mysteries of the human mind that has puzzled many a great scientist of the modern age. An important consequence of this research was the discovery of the intrinsic psychotherapeutic value of early Buddhism, as distinct from the many varieties of Buddhism available in the spiritual supermarket today.

## *Buddhism Then And Now*

It is often thought today that Buddhism is a religion containing numerous myths, traditions and mystical practices. On close examination of the original teachings of the Buddha, however, we begin to recognize the error in this prevalent view. Therefore, it is vitally important to avoid confusing modern Buddhism, as it is practiced in different cultures today, with what was taught and practiced by Gotama the Buddha and his disciples more than twenty-five centuries ago. What is practiced today in the three main cultural forms of Buddhism, whether Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana, are mainly rituals and ceremonies with symbols of worship, accompanied by emotionally held traditional dogmas. This type of Buddhism is not different from any other religion with different dogmas, rituals and symbols of worship, which serve mankind only as a placebo, in temporarily reducing the anxieties and worries of life, regarding the here and hereafter. A marked distinction succinctly presented would be that the early Buddhists sought refuge in the wisdom of the Buddha, while modern Buddhists seem to seek refuge in his supposed supernatural powers, just as theistic religions have always done.

The original teaching of the Buddha was a psychological solution to the troubles and tribulations of life. It is only through a thorough examination of the early teachings of the Buddha in comparison with the beliefs and practices of modern day Buddhists, that one may recognize the distinction between original Buddhism and the modern Buddhist traditions and practices. Without adequately understanding this important distinction between early Buddhism, and

the culturally oriented modern Buddhism, it would not be possible to comprehend the important **psychotherapeutic basis** of the teachings of the Buddha.

Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize at this point that whenever the term “Buddhism” is used henceforth in this book, it is the original teachings of the Buddha that is referred to, and not to any form of modern Buddhism that is prevalent among people of any Buddhist culture today. The original teachings we refer to are the Sutta Pitaka and the Vinaya Pitaka that have been preserved by the Theravada Buddhists, but the comprehension of which is inadequately maintained. All modern scholars are agreed that Sutta and Vinaya Pitaka represent the original teachings, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka is only a later incorporation of the dogmas of a particular school of cultural Buddhism.

### *How This Paper Is Written*

The research findings presented in this paper are in response to the **urgent need** to come up with a successful psychotherapy, based on the original teachings of the Buddha. It is important to know that the original teachings of the Buddha have been carried by rote and written down later in the form of the Pali *Tipitaka*. Fortunately, the Theravada<sup>1</sup> school of Buddhism seems to have preserved, at least to some extent, the original teachings even though this school may not have made adequate efforts to comprehend them. This school laid more emphasis on the texts called the *Abhidhamma*,

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<sup>1</sup> Theravada is the earliest school of Buddhism known to modern historians. It is the form of Buddhism found today in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia.

which was only an interpretation of the teachings according to a particular school, rather than the ideas expressed by the Buddha in his original teachings.

### *Comparative Study (Paper 2)*

In this paper,<sup>2</sup> we shall discuss at first **the basic psychological problem** experienced by all human beings, **as seen by Sigmund Freud**, the father of modern psychotherapy. We shall then compare this with the description of the **fundamental problem of human existence** pointed out **by the Buddha**. We shall also discuss **the problem of existence** as seen by **Charles Darwin**, when he formulated the **theory of evolution**. We shall see how these **three descriptions wonderfully complement** one another. Then we shall examine how **Freud attempted to solve** this problem, and **how he lamented** about the imperfections of his method. This will be followed by a description of the **method** used by the **Buddha to solve the same problem**, and the reason for its **success** in solving the problem by **transforming the human personality**. We shall also dwell in detail on the method adapted by the **Buddha**, which went **beyond the goal of Sigmund Freud**.

Sigmund **Freud's** main concern was to help his patients, who suffered from an **abnormal level** of mental

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<sup>2</sup> This research paper was developed during a period of residency, from December 2000 to August 2001, at the Hsi Lai University in Los Angeles. The author was provided a secluded environment in which to organize and present the findings of his research that had lasted more than fifty years. The author had prepared for this task by studying modern science, Eastern and Western philosophy and psychology, and even made a thorough theoretical and a practical study of the original teachings of the Buddha.

health, to reach a **normal level** of mental health. The **Buddha**, on the other hand, was interested in helping **normal people** to overcome their normal worries and anxieties, including the normal fear of death. In doing so, he discovered a **supernormal level of perfect mental health and happiness**, through a **process of evolution** of the human **consciousness**. While discussing this, we shall also discuss **Charles Darwin's** theory of **biological evolution**, and also refer to the **culmination** of this **biological** evolutionary process by entering a **psychological** process of evolution, where the **human consciousness transcends** the normal level and reaches the **ultimate evolutionary level** by **Awakening** from “**the Dream of Existence.**” This is the Buddhist “**Supernormal Enlightenment,**” which may be judged from modern standards as too farfetched. Yet an **impartial** thorough **examination** of the **Buddha's discoveries** may **result in a wonderful eye opening** to those who are puzzled by the **psychotherapeutic problems** of the modern day.

### *The Purpose Of This Paper*

Research and **information presented** in this study is an effort to meet the urgent **need for an effective psychotherapy**. Here we review several historical and contemporary psychotherapeutic theories, and also go through a thorough examination of the modern findings in neuroscience and methods of psychotherapy, as well as an adequate examination of Buddhist psychology and philosophy.

Buddhist principles relevant to psychotherapy can be considered mainly under what is today translated as the **Four Noble Truths**, and specifically the **Noble Eightfold Path**, on which all Buddhist psychotherapeutic techniques have to be based. The Noble Eightfold Path deals with the **cognitive, affective** and the **motor** phases of the **reaction of an organism** to sensory stimulation, and is therefore a broad-based approach to psychotherapy. A unique contribution of the present research is the proposal that when the **first step** in The **Noble Eightfold Path**, which is the **Harmonious Perspective**,<sup>3</sup> is **well established** in a client, then the **other seven steps**: **Harmonious-orientation**, **Harmonious speech**, **Harmonious action**, **Harmonious life-style**, **Harmonious exercise**, **Harmonious attention**, and **Harmonious equilibrium** **will automatically follow**. This will be accompanied by a **complete personal transformation** of an **unhealthy personality** to a **healthy, mature, and happy** personality. According to the Buddha, **all psychological disorders** stem from the **Disharmonious perspective**, which is the unhealthy way one **perceives one's experience, as a "self" in relationship** with others and circumstances, in a **world that exists**. The Harmonious Perspective is discussed in detail to provide potential therapists with the necessary knowledge to deal with the variety of psychological disorders that they will encounter in practice. The relationships between Freudian and other psychological concepts are also examined to show both similarities as well as differences.

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<sup>3</sup> This uncommon translation of the eight steps in the eightfold way is an effort to facilitate comprehension.

Application of a **proper knowledge base** with a view to **transform the personality** is the **primary goal of Buddhist psychotherapy**. This **holistic approach** contrasts with the common **symptomatic treatment** in conventional practice. However, Buddhist psychotherapy is similar to conventional psychotherapies in that **the client is assigned the major role** in the healing process, while the **therapist plays a facilitative role**. The methods proposed do **not**, however, **involve converting** clients to Buddhism. Our **sincere aim** is only to **help clients**, who probably are **mainly Buddhists** or **free thinkers**, to view their problem from a healthy perspective. **Specific case studies** provide examples for practitioners who may wish to apply the knowledge base presented.

Before one can arrive at an appropriate psychotherapeutic technique founded on the teachings of the Buddha, it is also essential, for psychotherapists who contemplate using Buddhist psychotherapy on their clients, to find out how this knowledge can be successfully utilized **on themselves** and in every day psychotherapeutic practice. There appears to be a **lack of such** systematic Buddhist psychotherapy at the present time. The **first section** of this book presents detailed information on the theoretical background that would be useful to psychotherapists. The **second section** presents application of this knowledge base in dealing with actual clients and on themselves. (**experience of author**).

## *Historical Survey*

**Psychotherapy**, as it is practiced in the modern world, **began with Sigmund Freud**, the Viennese neurologist who turned introspective psychologist and psychoanalyst, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Later followers as well as dissenters began to modify or reformulate his theories. Today, there is only a jumble of theories, each in disagreement with the others. Students are confused and practitioners generally take an eclectic position because they are undecided as to which approach to take. There are a few practitioners, however, who choose just one position and adhere to it. Of late, many books have mushroomed, condemning psychotherapy. These writers argue that modern psychotherapy as well as psychoanalysis is a failure.

Although psychotherapy has gone into disrepute today among several thinkers, people in Europe and even in North America often go to the psychotherapist, hoping to find a solution to their diverse emotional problems. Going to the psychotherapist today is like going to the family doctor. It is not only abnormal people who visit the therapist today; even normal people visit the therapist for counsel when overcome by worries and anxieties. Even the law courts have started consulting therapists to decide upon the sanity of criminals. The therapists have a great influence on the thinking of people.

Even politicians are concerned about this new trend. People, who formerly visited the priest or minister for advice, when they were in trouble, today visit the therapist instead. Probably due to this fact, Christian ministers and

Catholic priests have started studying modern psychology, and they practice psychological counselling as a part of their ministerial work. Buddhist monks and teachers, living in the West, are also called upon to help people with their emotional problems. They have therefore recognized the need for a form of Buddhist psychotherapy.

Some modern psychologists who have studied and practiced Buddhist meditation find that some of the Buddhist concepts appear to come in conflict with modern psychological theory and practice. Therefore, the Buddhists who are interested in helping are faced with the task of coming up with a Buddhist theory that explains these apparent contradictions and bring forward a persuasive theory of psychotherapy.

No researcher seems to have realized that Buddhism, in its original form, was already a form of psychotherapy, though not for abnormal people to become normal, but for normal people to become supernormal. The basis of this approach is the belief that all normal people are **insane** (*sabbē putujjanā ummattakā*). Unfortunately today, the Buddhist practice has descended to the level of a religion of faith, worship, and prayer. It has lost its psychotherapeutic significance. Therefore the task of the modern Buddhist is not so much to create a new form of therapy that is acceptable to a particular school of Buddhist or Western thinking, but to rediscover the original psychotherapy that is already in existence, though hidden, in the original teachings of the Buddha.

## *Buddhism As Psychotherapy*

In speaking of the psychotherapeutic aspect of Buddhism, it must be said that psychotherapy is not merely one aspect of the original Buddhism. It would be more accurate to say that it was entirely a form of psychotherapy. The Buddha emphatically states in the Buddhist scripture, *Anguttara Nikaya*, that it may be possible for a person to claim to have been free from physical disease even for a hundred years, but it is not possible for a person to claim to have been free from mental disease even for one day, other than a perfected disciple (*Arahat*), or the Buddha himself. A critic may have doubts about this apparently ostentatious claim. Yet it is recognized by all Buddhist scholars that the ultimate aim of the Buddha, according to the early Buddhist scriptures, was to produce *Arahats* who were perfect in mental health.

*Arahatship* was the culmination of the original Buddhist practice. If the *Arahat* is the only person with perfect mental health, the Buddha's ultimate aim or target was nothing below "perfect mental health" for all human beings who are ready for it. This means that Buddhism is not merely another form of psychotherapy, but rather the "ultimate psychotherapy," that brings about perfection in mental health. In fact, it has been said that while modern psychotherapy attempts to turn abnormal "suffering" to normal "unhappiness," the Buddha has been turning normal "unhappiness" into supernormal "happiness," by bringing people to "perfection in mental health," where even temporary mental disturbances, like common worries and anxieties, are brought to an end.

According to the *Pali Nikaya* teachings, which are considered to be the earliest sources of the teachings of the Buddha, the Buddha has been described as the “Unsurpassable-physician-and-surgeon” (*anuttarō bhisakkō sallakattō*), and even as the “Unsurpassable-trainer-of-personality” (*anuttarō purisa damma sārati*). Expressed in modern terminology, these terms may be rendered as “the super psychiatrist,” or “the super personality trainer, or even as **“the radical shrink.”**

### *The Human Predicament*

Having presented the above assertions, with humble apologies, let us now enter into a more thorough and systematic examination of Buddhist concepts in relation to modern psychotherapeutic theory and practice, which would indeed help us verify the validity of these claims. Before we come to a systematic examination of Buddhist concepts, however, it is necessary to explain the human predicament from a modern perspective.

Modern biology tells us that we are but **organisms in an environment**. An organism is a machine similar to a manmade machine that works under the common laws of nature. Yet the organism is naturally produced, while the manmade machine is man-made. We know that we are born with a body with five sense organs: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the body. Disturbances in the environment constantly stimulate our senses. There are several varieties of disturbances in the environment that stimulate the senses. Each sense organ is sensitive only to one kind of stimulus,

and each sense organ reacts to stimulation only in one specific way. For example, light affects only the eye, not the ear or the nose. Sound affects only the ear. Similarly, each sense organ is especially receptive only to one kind of stimulus. Light stimulating the eye results in seeing, and in the same manner, sounds stimulating the ear results in hearing; so the nose smells, the tongue tastes, and the body feels touch.

All the different sensory data received through the different senses, such as, light, sound, smells, tastes, and touch, are carried through nerves to the brain, like telephone wires that carry messages. When the sensory data received in the brain combine with already existing memories and are synthesized, to construct mental images of objects with meanings, the world that we are aware of becomes a product of the reaction of the senses to stimulation, accompanied by the activity of the brain, which creates a mental image and gives meaning to it. The world that we are aware of is a creation of the process of sensory perception and mental conception, which is going on unconsciously all the time. This means the world that we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch is only a conglomeration of cinematographic moving pictures and feelings.

Our comprehension of the world is limited by our senses and our brain's ability to provide a meaning. The world that appears to be out there is not really something existing out there. The idea of "existence" and even "time" and "space" are creations of the processes of perception and conception. They are really pictures produced inside the brain, just as a camera does inside the camera. However, it is the brain that gives meaning to them. All this happens without our

knowledge. We are not doing it consciously. This is why there is no “ego” or “self” or “soul” controlling the mind or body. Modern psychologists, scientists, as well as modern philosophers are aware of this fact. This means, the creator of the world is our own mind, and each individual is living in a “self-created” autonomous world. Although we live in a world of our own making, we communicate with one another through the medium of language, and thereby we build up the idea of a really existing world outside. Through exchange of ideas within a culture, we build up a cultural or religious view of the world, which is common only within the culture. This is why each culture has a different view of life, a different religion, and a different way of doing things. When we meet a person from another culture we begin to see that person as somewhat strange, weird, or offbeat not only in appearance but also in thought, feelings, and behaviour.

It is very important to recognize this fact in the modern world, where there is so much international and intercultural communication. This is not merely a Buddhist dogma, but a fact recognized in modern biology, psychology, and philosophy. It is an observable fact, which was also recognized by the Buddha. Buddhism is not based on dogmas or beliefs but on the observation of experience (*ehipassiko*). Modern scientists and psychologists seem to be only rediscovering what the Buddha discovered centuries ago (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññuhi*). This is why Buddhism has been a science rather than a religion from its inception. It was not a physical science like the modern physical sciences that focus attention only on the external world that is considered to be

really existing in the form of visible and tangible objective matter and energy.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is a mental introspective (*opanayiko*) science, or psychology. This is why Buddhism shares similarities with Freudian introspective psychology. Modern quantum physics is only beginning to recognize the fact that objective matter and energy are really subjective concepts.

It is interesting to note at this point that the modern school of psychology known as Behaviourism holds that, to be scientific, one has to imitate the physical sciences. Behavioural psychologists have focused only on the external objective experience, and rejected introspection as unscientific. They define psychology as “the study of human behaviour,” and avoid the study of mental processes, which are subjective and therefore supposed to be unverifiable. The problem met by behaviourists is that the subjective mental processes could not be observed objectively, and are therefore considered to be unverifiable. They therefore study only other people’s minds, by observing their behaviour, but they do not study their own minds, because it has to be done through introspection. It is true that one cannot observe another person’s inner experience, but one can observe another person’s change of behaviour and make an inference by comparison with one’s own. Behaviourists study only human behaviour. They do not realize that the mind is a subjective experience and the body is an objective experience. Therefore, although the body can be studied only objectively, the mind cannot be studied objectively. Cognitive psychologists recognized this fact and broke up with the

behaviourists, and they began to study the mind subjectively, through introspection. They recognized the transformation of behaviour that results when the thoughts are changed.

The Buddhists on the other hand are not concerned about studying other people's minds but on understanding their own. Buddhism is not a search for knowledge for the sake of knowledge. It is an effort to solve a problem in one's own mind. As the structure and function of the body is the same in every human being, the structure and function of the mind is similar. If one understands one's own mind, one understands minds of others as well. This fact makes it possible for a doctor, who has studied their own mind and body, and understands how they work, to help a patient, whether the ailment is physical or mental.

It is possible to verify another's objective experience by testing it in the crucible of one's own experience. If you tell me that a fruit tastes good, I can verify it only by tasting the fruit myself. The fruit may be an objective experience but the taste is a subjective experience. I cannot observe another's sight, sound, smell, taste, feeling of touch, or thought, but I can observe mine. This is how a scientist verifies another's experience. If I see bacteria under the microscope, you can verify it by looking at it yourself. If I hear the tune of a song, you can verify it by listening to it yourself. If I smell a perfume, you can verify it by smelling it yourself. If I feel the warmth of a cup of tea, you can verify it by feeling it yourself. This is how the scientists perform experiments. If we cannot trust our subjective experience, we will not be able to perform any scientific experiment.

Cognitive psychologists realized that psychology has to be the study of the mind or mental processes, and that we cannot know about the mind by looking only at the body and its behaviour. Thus did the school of Cognitive Psychology come into being. Modern scientists dealing with quantum physics have begun to realize that the physical world that they attempt to discover is actually a mental construct. There are many books written on this subject by scientists as well as philosophers. Since modern physicists began to realize that the external world is only a product of perception and conception, objectivity has become a misnomer and a myth. In fact, there is no “object out there” to look at, other than what “seems to be out there.”

This is why the Buddha called the **object experienced**, *nāma-rūpa*, which means, **mental image** (*rūpa*) and its **identity** (*nāma*), and the **subjective experience** was called, *viññāna*, which means, the **process of perception**. The Buddha also saw that there is neither a “**person**” that perceives, nor “**an entity**” that is being perceived. There is only the “**process of perception.**” This means, the “**seer,**” which is the subjective experience, and the **object “seen,”** which is the objective experience, are both **mental constructs** and **not real entities** that really “**exist**” in **real time** and **real space**.

Even **space** and **time** are **mental constructs**. This is the meaning of “**emptiness**” (*suññatā*) of **experience**, which **Mahayana** Buddhists lay **stress** on. Without understanding this **basic premise** on which the teaching of the Buddha stands, we cannot understand the **problem** we are **about to discuss**. It is interesting to know that the Buddha is called

*Tathagata* (*tath* = that; *agatha* = arrived at), which means the **one who comprehended the objective “world”** (that) to be a **subjective experience**, and the subjective “**self**” to be a **delusion**. This is also expressed in Sanskrit as *tat tvam asi* (**you are that**). This means “**existence**,” both subjective and objective, are **delusions** or creations of the subjective mental process of perception and conception. They are not real entities but appearances.

The aim of the **Buddha** was to solve the **problem of human existence called suffering**, which has to be **achieved by each individual**, examining one’s own experience, and not by examining other’s experience. The **result** is the **disappearance of unhappiness**, which is observable by one-self as well as by others. The **systematic technique** of the Buddha for the observation of one’s own experience was called **systematic introspection** (*satipatthāna*). Sigmund Freud’s method of **psychoanalysis** through free association is also a **method of introspection**, where the patient is helped by the analyst to observe the patient’s own mind. This explains why some of the **findings of Freud** are almost what the **Buddha had pointed to** many centuries earlier.

### ***Modern Psychotherapy***

On an examination of the history of the evolution of modern psychotherapy, it can be seen that all **modern psychological theories** and practices are centred on **one fundamental problem**, which is understandable in terms of the “**structural hypothesis**,” presented by Sigmund Freud (in 1923).

The **structural hypothesis** is a provisional theory of Freud, which divides the personality into three parts, which are oriented towards three goals. The three parts are:

- (1) The ***id*** that seeks **pleasure**
- (2) The ***ego*** that seeks to be in tune with **reality**
- (3) The ***superego***, which seeks to be **moral**

These three parts of the personality, being differently oriented, must necessarily come into conflict. Freud saw that it is the **job of the *ego*** to put this conflict-ridden personality in order. **Failure** of the ego to do so would result in **neurosis**. **Mental health** is the successful performance of the “***ego duty***.”

1. ***id*** – dominated by the **pleasure principle**
2. ***ego*** – dominated by the **reality principle**
3. ***superego*** – dominated by the **morality principle**

Almost all **modern psychotherapeutic systems** could be described in terms of this structural hypothesis. All the different psychotherapeutic systems of today could be broadly classified into **two groups**, based on this structural hypothesis. They are:

- (a) The ***id* psychologies** or **affective therapies** that are mainly concerned with the ***id* and its expressions**
- (b) The ***ego* psychologies** or **cognitive therapies** that are mainly concerned with the ***ego* and its functions**.

It would not be necessary to discuss, at this point, the details of these different therapies, but it would be extremely

important to go into a discussion of the **fundamental psychological problem** revealed through the structural hypothesis of **Sigmund Freud**, and also by the profound teachings of the **Buddha**. I see no better way to introduce this **fundamental problem of human existence** than to discuss the contents of the introductory **sermon of the Buddha** called the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutra*, appearing in the *Samyutta Nikaya*, and translated by me as “**The Revolution of the Wheel of Experience.**”

### *Sermon Of The Buddha*

“There are **two extremes**, Oh Mendicants, to be avoided by those who progress beyond the secular life. They are:

- (1) **devotion to sensual pleasure**, which is inferior, secular, common, immature, and futile
- (2) **devotion to self-mortification**, which is painful, immature, and futile.
- (3) Avoiding these two extremes, Oh Mendicants, **a medial way** is seen by the **One-Awakened-to-Reality (Buddha)**, which opens the eyes, brings knowledge, inner peace, super knowledge, awakening, and the imperturbable serenity, Nirvana.

And what is that medial way? It is **the Supernormal Eightfold Way** that consists of:

- (1) Harmonious Perspective,
- (2) Harmonious Orientation,
- (3) Harmonious Speech,
- (4) Harmonious Action,
- (5) Harmonious Lifestyle,
- (6) Harmonious Exercise,
- (7) Harmonious Attention,
- (8) Harmonious Equilibrium.

This is the medial way seen by the One-Awakened-to-Reality, which opens the eyes, brings knowledge, inner peace, super knowledge, awakening, and the **imperturbable serenity, Nirvana.**

“This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Supernormal Truth of Anguish:** birth is painful, aging is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, meeting what is unpleasant is painful, parting from what is pleasant is painful, and the inability to obtain what one wants is painful. In short, the five personalized constituents of personality are painful.

“This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Supernormal Truth of the Origin of Anguish:** It is that emotional urge, which arises again and again, accompanied by delight and passion, and which takes delight now here, now there. It is the urge for sensual pleasures, the urge for existence, and the urge for non-existence.

“This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Supernormal Truth of the Cessation of Anguish:** It is the dispassionate cessation of the emotional urge without remainder, free from slavery to it, never turning back to it.

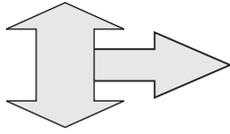
“This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Supernormal Truth of the Way to the Cessation of Anguish**: It is this Extraordinary Eightfold Way consisting of: Harmonious Perspective, Harmonious Orientation, Harmonious Speech, Harmonious Action, Harmonious Lifestyle, Harmonious Exercise, Harmonious Attention, and Harmonious Equilibrium.”

This Sutra begins with the assertion that there are **two extreme modes of living** to be avoided.

- (1) One is the **pursuit of sensual pleasure**, (*Kamasukhallikanuyoga*) – **(the pleasure principle) -- (id)**
- (2) The other extreme is **self-denial or asceticism** (*Attakilamatanuyoga*) – **(morality principle) -- (super ego)**
- (3) Avoiding these two extremes, the Buddha teaches a **medial mode of living** (*Majjima Patipada*) called the **Supernormal Eight-fold Way** (*Ariya Atthangika Magga*). This medial way begins with: A Harmonious perspective **(reality principle) – (ego)**

The structural hypothesis of Sigmund Freud **tallies** with this teaching of the Buddha and therefore could easily be examined in relation to it. **Freud** pointed to a **fundamental problem of human existence**, which the **Buddha** had drawn attention to more than twenty-five centuries earlier.

Devotion to sensual pleasure (*id*)



Supernormal Eightfold Way (*ego*)

Devotion to self-mortification (*superego*)

The **two extremes** pointed out by the Buddha, when seen from a Freudian standpoint, would clearly be the **work of the id and the *superego***; devotion to sensual pleasure is the work of the *id*, and self-mortification is the work of the *superego*. The **medial way**, which begins with the Harmonious Perspective, is clearly the **work of the *ego***.

One small difference, which will be discussed in detail later

- (1) The medial path of **Freud** was the **sublimation of energy**
- (2) The medial path of the **Buddha** was the **pursuit of tranquillity**.

The Buddha explains this further, in the sutra, in speaking of the Fourfold Supernormal Reality. According to Freud, the **sublimation of energy** has left civilized man with **discontent**, unfortunately. (*Civilization and its Discontent*, by Sigmund Freud). Modern concern about **stress** seems to be the obvious result. The Buddha seems to have come up with a better solution, by proposing the goal of **tranquillity**, which is confirmed by modern experts on stress management (**relaxation response**). It appears that if Freud saw that the sublimation of energy had to be achieved through the pursuit

of tranquillity, civilized man would not be discontented. This point will be discussed in detail below.

## *Sigmund Freud*

In order to make this method of the Buddha intelligible to the modern Western mind, it is necessary to start by drawing attention to a few more **discoveries of Sigmund Freud**, the father of modern psychotherapy, and the originator of modern thought on psychotherapy. Quite contrary to the common opinion that Sigmund Freud was against religion, it must be pointed out that he was only critical of the belief in a Creator God, as found in theistic religions. He was not against the humanistic religions like Buddhism. In fact, he was **reiterating** some of the **teachings of the Buddha**. This has been clearly explained by **Eric Fromm**, the Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst, in his book, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*.

Freud discovered several important facts concerning the human experience, which the Buddha had pointed to, nearly twenty-five centuries before him. Though **Freud** presented, in his own way, the basic problem of the human experience and suggested a **solution**, this solution could only **convert abnormal suffering into normal unhappiness**. The **Buddha** spoke of almost this same problem in greater detail and offered a more proficient solution, through the conscious expansion of the human consciousness. It was more proficient because it was able to **transform normal unhappiness into supernormal happiness**.

This claim could be seen from **modern standards** as rather **extravagant**, but on a closer examination of the methods adopted by the Buddha, one finds that its probability is **not easily challenged**. The approach taken in this paper will be to present this problem and its solution, first as Freud saw it, and then as the Buddha explained it. The purpose of comparing Buddhist psychology with Freudian psychoanalytical thinking is not to support either Freudian thinking or Buddhist thinking but to **facilitate the modern Western mind** to comprehend the importance of the profound teachings of the Buddha, in relation to the practice of psychotherapy, using ideas already familiar to the Western mind. This also points to an agreement between the two ways of thought, Western and Eastern. This even shows that **Buddhism is not a mere religion** of faith and worship, **but a psychotherapy** that can make a profitable contribution to modern psychotherapeutic thinking.

### *Psychic Determinism*

There are **three main types of hypothesis** that Freud presented at three different periods in his life, which seem to have an important significance, seen from a Buddhist standpoint. The **first** idea he presented was **psychic determinism**. What Freud meant by this term was that the subjective mental processes arise and continue, depending on the presence of necessary conditions, just as physical processes in the objective physical world do. It was after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Age of Enlightenment, that the Western world came to recognize the law of determinism in nature.

In ancient times, primitive men thought that thunder, lightning and other natural phenomena were due to the activity of invisible spirits who controlled the external world. When modern scientists discovered how thunder, lightning, and other such phenomena occurred, the belief in supernatural spirits was discarded. What they discovered was the law of determinism, which means that every natural occurrence in the world was determined by the presence of necessary conditions. This idea is generally accepted today even by school children. **Yet unfortunately even in modern times almost everyone believes** that the thinking, speaking, and physical behaviour of a person are activities done by a **spirit living inside every human body**, which is called the “self” or the “soul.”

It was **Freud** who pointed out, in the West, by using the term “**psychic determinism**,” that even mental processes follow the law of determinism. This means, there is **no “person” or “self”** inside our body doing the thinking, speaking, or acting; it is only the workings of a mental process, similar to the workings of a mechanically worked engine, radio, or television set, whose workings are determined by the necessary conditions. The **mind of the driver** that drives a car at high speed is **as mechanical as the engine** that pulls the car, even **though we like to think otherwise**.

It is interesting to note what Dr. Wilder Penfield Director and Neurosurgeon of the Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill University says in his book *The Mystery of the Mind*:

“Throughout my own scientific career, like other scientists, I have struggled to prove that the brain accounts for the mind. But now, perhaps, the time has come when we may profitably consider the evidence as it stands, and ask the question: *Do brain mechanisms account for the mind?* Can the mind be explained by what is now known about the brain? If not, which is the more reasonable of the two possible hypotheses: that man’s being is based on one element, or on two? On the basis of either hypothesis the nature of the mind remains, still, a mystery that science has not solved.”

Twenty-five centuries before **Freud**, and also the modern scientists, the Buddha brought this fact to the attention of the people of India. The Buddha called this principle of **psychic determinism** “**The Sequence of Antecedents**” (*paticca samuppada*),<sup>4</sup> and presented an in-depth exposition of this fact. This fact is **the basic principle** underlying the philosophy of the **Buddha**. He even identified his entire teaching with this Sequence of Antecedents: “He who sees the **Dhamma** sees the **Sequence of Antecedents**; he who sees the **Sequence of Antecedents** sees the **Dhamma**.”

**Freud**, being a neurologist, clearly saw that the mind was not an **entity** separate from the **body** but only an **activity** of the **nervous system**. He saw the **mind** as a **continuous process of activity** that started with sensory stimulation and ended with motor activity. It was the **reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation**. He compared this process to the **activity of a telescope**. It was a **chain reaction** starting with sensory **perception**, which was followed by

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<sup>4</sup> This translation is a more accurate and more meaningful one than the common “dependent origination.”

an **interpretation** in the brain of what is perceived using memory. This then resulted in an **emotional arousal**, followed by the release of tension in **action**. The emotional arousal produced tension in the muscles of the body. This tension was uncomfortable, and therefore it was removed by the release of tension in action.

This **release of tension in action**, he called the **secondary process**. The emotional arousal always accompanies a **mental image** of what is **desired**, of what is **hated**, or of what is **feared**. That he called the **memory image**. The secondary process begins with this **mental image**, and it continues by **planning to get** what is desired, to **get rid** of what is hated, or to **run away** from what is feared. The **plan** is made using a **mental image** of the future, using the **cognitive process**, of intelligence, and reason. This secondary process, however, can also be **inhibited**, by feelings of **shame**, and moral considerations, due to the activity of the **conscience**. Inhibition can also occur due to the cognitive considerations of **consequences** and fear. This **inhibition** (*cētanā*) will be discussed in more detail later.

### *The Unconscious*

The second important idea presented by Freud was the idea of the **unconscious**. He compared the **mind** to an **iceberg**, because a **greater part** of our mental activity occurs **without our knowledge**. We are conscious of objects but **we do not know how we become conscious** of these objects. Just as we do not know how our body is made up and how it functions, **we do not know how our mind is made up**

**or how it works.** This is why we go to a doctor when we are sick, or psychotherapist when we are mentally disturbed; the doctor and the therapist are supposed to know more than we do, about our own body and mind. This is why Freud compared the mind to an **iceberg**, where its **greater part is submerged under the water**, and only the **small tip is visible** above the water. Our consciousness is limited, especially the consciousness of our subjective mental processes and our memories. A **greater part of our mind** is beyond our awareness and therefore **unconscious**. **The mind**, however, is **not a solid entity** like the iceberg, but an **activity like a flame**. Its continuity **depends on conditions**. The **activity** is mainly the **reaction of our body to environmental stimulation**.

It is because a **greater part of our mind is unconscious** that it is **so difficult to control** the mind. Often our effort to control the mind is like trying to turn off an electric light by breaking the bulb, because we do not know where the switch lies. This unconsciousness or unawareness of our mental processes is because **our attention is constantly focused on external circumstances and not on our mental processes**. We often blame our circumstances, quite unaware that **our worries are created within us, unconsciously**. This is why it is **important to be introspective**. Introspection, however, is only **“looking” within** (*sati*). It is only when introspection becomes observation (*sampajaṇṇa*), which is **“seeing” within**, that it is perfected through the development of **“insight.”** Our problem therefore is that we are not fully conscious of the mental processes that go on within us. It is **only through introspection** that we can **become conscious**

of these unconscious processes. The **ultimate aim** of Freud therefore was to “**make the unconscious conscious,**” as **Eric Fromm** constantly reminds us, and it has to be **done through introspection.**

**Freud** also divided the consciousness into **three parts:** the **conscious,** the **preconscious,** and the **unconscious.**

- (1) The **conscious** part is like the tip of the iceberg. It is the mental activity that is going on in the present.
- (2) The **preconscious** is that part of the memory that can easily be recalled. It is like the part of the iceberg that is just under the water and is visible.
- (3) The **unconscious** is like the greater part of the iceberg that is submerged in the water and is invisible. What is in the unconscious cannot be recalled unless by a special technique.

This analogy is only an aid to understanding the mental process. It is **not to be taken literally.** It is necessary to repeat that the **mind** should **not** be seen as a **solid entity like the iceberg,** but as a process of **activity** like a flame.

### *The Structural Hypothesis*

Having dealt with the basic principles of “psychic determinism,” and the “unconsciousness,” which Freud discovered, we shall go on to discuss **the very meaningful proposition of Freud,** which is called the **structural hypothesis.** This hypothesis is presented **not as a fact or truth,** but as a **provisional theory** to explain the workings

of the mind, in health and disease. It is the division of the personality into three parts:

*Id* = the affective process (dominated by the **Pleasure principle**)

*Ego* = the cognitive process (dominated by the **Reality principle**)

*Super ego* = the conscience (dominated by the **Morality principle**)

It is so very important to constantly remind ourselves that **we are biological organisms struggling to exist in a hostile environment by unconsciously reacting to oppositions in the environment.** Many are the kinds of oppositions in the environment.

- (1) The body we are born with have **only five senses, each reacting only to one kind of disturbance.** These reactions come in the form of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. **This reaction is called perception.**
- (2) In the human body **the reaction is first cognitive,** in that we perceive some object or occurrence in the environment, and then we interpret what we perceive as pleasant, unpleasant or dangerous.
- (3) **According to how we interpret** what we perceive, **an emotional arousal takes place,** such as a desire for the pleasant object, a hatred of the unpleasant object or a fear of the dangerous object.

- (4) **This leads to tension, which makes us uncomfortable. This discomfort forces us to release the tension in action, to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, or to run away from what is feared. Once the tension is released, we feel comfortable again. This way we return to the original equilibrium.**

**This tendency of the mind** to release tension and come to a comfortable state of equilibrium **Freud called the pleasure principle.** This was why **Freud defined pleasure as the release of tension.** Both the mind and the body tend to return to the original equilibrium, with the release of tension. **This tendency** to release tension is therefore **called homeostasis.** This original state of equilibrium that one returns to is what is **generally called mental health.**

**Just as the body fails to return to equilibrium** when there is an obstacle to it such as a bacterial or virus infection, a congenital defect, or an accidental injury; similarly, our mental process fails to return to equilibrium if there are obstacles such as, not being able to obtain what is desired, not being able to get rid of what is hated, and not being able to run away from what is feared. **This inability to release tension is what is generally called unhappiness - Freud called it “unpleasure”** and Buddha called it *dukkha*. (*yampiccan nalabati tampi dukkhan*). The **release of tension** is what is generally called **happiness.** Freud called it **“pleasure.”** Buddha called it *sukha*. **Usually, we are not conscious of this process in its entirety,** we are conscious only of our **compulsive urge,** the **discomfort** when it is not carried out, and the **comfort** when it is carried out. Freud pointed out

that we also tend to **defend** these urges at all costs, if we feel **guilty** about them. We tend to **hide** them by means of various **defensive mechanisms** such as **rationalization**.

Here, Freud is in agreement with the **Buddha**. These **defensive mechanisms** are called *vancana dhamma* in Buddhism. The **Buddha** pointed out that we also tend to **personalize** this emotional urge (*upādāna*) thinking: “**this urge is mine,**” (*ētaṃ mama*) “I desire,” “I hate,” or “I fear.” The **emotional urge**, with its tension, that compulsively seeks release in action is what the **Buddha** called *tanhā* (commonly translated as craving). He saw that this emotional urge was compulsive (*nandi rāga sahagatā*), repetitive (*pōnōbhavikā*), and variable in object choice and satisfaction (*tatra tatra abhinandani*).

**Freud** thought, however, that this urge was **instinctual**, which meant that it was **inborn** and therefore **unavoidable**, but he described it in the same words: **compulsive**, **repetitive** and **variable in object choice**. **Freud** called the **compulsive emotional urge** the *id*, which is the Latin for the word “it.” **Freud** placed the **emotional urge** in the **neuter gender** because it was a mechanical process. The **infant’s personality** is mainly the *id*; this is why the infant is referred to as “it.” The infant does not think rationally. It is unable to satisfy its desires without help from the mother or the baby sitter. **Freud** saw that the *id* was **seeking pleasure** and **avoiding pain**. He saw this tendency as the “**pleasure principle**.” In other words, the *id* was dominated by the **pleasure principle**.

As the **child** is brought up in society, and trained to behave, he is taught what is right and wrong, good and bad, and thus **a conscience is built up**, which **makes him feel guilty** when he makes a mistake in behaviour. This **conscience will often prohibit him from getting** what is wanted, **getting rid** of what is not wanted, and **running away** from what is feared. It is this **conscience** that Freud called the **superego**. Some Christians identify the conscience as the **“promptings of God.”** Freud rejected that concept, although he called it the *“super-ego.”* He saw it only as a **carry-over** from the **culture** in which the child is brought up. Therefore the *superego* was **dominated** by the **“morality principle.”**

**As the child grows up, and develops the brain, the rational faculty develops**, enabling him to find his way around, and even to get what is wanted, to get rid of what is not wanted, or to run away from what is feared. **Freud** called the **rational faculty** the *ego*, meaning **“self.”** By this word **he did not mean a real entity** such as a **“soul.”** For him the *ego* was **only a faculty**, which is the **mental process of thinking or reasoning**. It is probable that he used this word due to the influence of **Descartes** who said, **“I think, therefore I am.”** **This ego** that can think and reason out, and become aware of the world around, Freud thought, was **dominated by the “reality principle.”**

### *Instincts*

As mentioned above Freud saw the *id* as an **“instinctual drive,”** which came from within the organism, even **though** it was **excited by external stimuli**. Freud saw the **mind** as an

energy system or machine, and he saw the machine needed energy to run. The energy, he saw, was in the *id*. That energy he called the *libido*. He saw the *id* as the source of energy (*libido*), which is used up by the *ego* as well as the *super ego*. Thus, ultimately, both the *ego* and the *super ego* work for the benefit of the *id*. It is the *id* that needs pleasure and comfort as well as the need to survive. Freud observed this in the neurotic personalities he was examining. Freud saw the *id* as the main part of the personality, though it was blind and unable to do anything. The *ego* and the *superego* were seen as employees working for the benefit of the *id*, to carry out orders and to protect it. They also used the energy of the *id*, to do the work. Freud also saw, however, that even in the normal personality, both the *ego* and the *super ego* work for the wellbeing and preservation of the organism. Freud saw the instinctual impulse of the *id* as the instinct of self-preservation called *eros*. Later he also spoke of the “death wish,” which he called *thanatos*.

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha referred to this same compulsive emotional urge as “thirst” (*tanha*), which Freud referred to as the *id*. He called it thirst because it is not something wilfully done by a person or self; it is something that unconsciously occurs following the law of determinism. Why the Buddha used the term *tanha* to refer to this emotional urge seems to be the same reason as that of Freud, when he chose the term *id*. It was because emotion was almost a mechanical process. The Buddha also saw that the “thirst” (*tanha*) is in three forms:

- (1) *kama tanha* (the urge to enjoy pleasure)

- (2) *bhava tanha* (the urge to continue being)
- (3) *vibhava tanha* (the urge to stop the unpleasant being).

The first two comes under Freud's eros and the third comes under thanatos. It is necessary to understand at this point that the term *bhava* is commonly mistranslated as "becoming." The correct translation is "being" or "existence." It is also necessary to know the terms used by the Buddha to refer to the *id*, *ego* and *superego*.

- (1) *id* = the Affective (*citta*)
- (2) *ego* = the cognitive (*mano*)
- (3) *super ego* = the moralistic (*hiri ottappa*)

The Buddha also saw that normally people are carried away by these emotional impulses. In other words, the emotions, or the affective (*citta*) dominates the life of human beings. The Buddha expresses this idea in a verse in the Dhammapada:

“Emotions dominate the world  
*Cittēna nīyati lōkō*

Emotions create distress  
*Cittēna parikassati*

Emotion is that one thing  
*Cittassa ēka dhammassa*

To which all are spellbound”  
*Sabbēva vasamanvagu*

(*Dhammapada*).

Emotions are the animal part of mankind that controls mankind. The thinking cognitive faculty (*mano*) is really catering to the whims and fancies of the unintelligent childish, animalistic, and affective (*citta*). This fact was recognized by Freud but he took it for granted. This activity of the cognitive *ego* is like that of the unwise parent catering to the whims of the child, while the wise parent (*super ego*) keeps objecting to it.

The Buddha spoke of the *id* and the *ego* of Freud as two functions of the body, which we commonly refer to as mind: affective (*citta*), and cognitive (*mano*). The Buddha saw that even though the emotional urge was strong and compulsive, it is “blind to reality” (*moha*). He also saw that the mind should be dominated not by the emotional *citta* but by the rational *mano*. He also saw that it was also possible to make this happen because the *citta* becomes activated only according to the way the cognitive (*mano*) interprets circumstances. He saw that “cognition precedes all experience and even dominates and creates them”. This fact is referred to in the first verse in the Dhammapada.

Cognition precedes all experience

*Manō pubbangamā dhammā*

Cognition dominates and creates

*Manō setthā manō mayā*

With faulty cognition

*Manasā cē padutthēna*

If one speaks or acts

*Bhāsati vā karoti vā*

Pain does follow  
*Thathō nam dukkhamanvēti*

As the wheel the drawer  
*Cakkhanva vahatōpadan*

    *Dhammapada 1&2*

This is where the **Buddha** appears to **differ from Freud**. Buddha **does not think** that the *ego* has **to be the servant of the *id***, though initially it has been. To understand this fully, we need to refer to the latest discoveries of the neuroscientific researchers. It was the neuroscientist Paul MacLean MD, formerly of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), that developed a model of the brain's structure, which he called the "Triune Brain." He identified three parts of our brain:

- (1) Brain stem = Reptilian or old brain = (*viññāna*)
- (2) Limbic system = Mammalian or mid brain = (*citta*)
- (3) Neocortex = human or new brain = (*mano*)

MacLean found that our brain acts like three interconnected biological computers. These three parts have evolved in three stages during the long period of evolution. The wonderful thing is that the Buddha has referred to these three stages in a different way by using three words: *viññāna*, *citta*, and *mano*, which refers exactly to these three stages of evolution. What the Buddha pointed out was that:

- (1) The term *viññāna* referred to sensory perception, the work of the brain stem.

- (2) The term *citta* referred to the emotional, or affective work of the limbic system.
- (3) The term *mano* referred to the cognitive work of the neocortex.

The aim of the Buddha was to show mankind how to transcend the animalistic emotional part of mankind that craves for sensual pleasure (*kama tanha*), hates and fears pain (*vibhava tanha*), and struggles to maintain an existence of a “self” (*bhava tanha*) that does not really exist. The cognitive *mano* is able to comprehend the reality of life, which is the instability (*anicca*) of every perceived object, because they depend on necessary conditions, which are also unstable due to dependence. What is unstable is unpleasant (*dukkha*) because it frustrates the desire for stability. What is unpleasant is not as one wants, and therefore not under one’s power.

What is not under one’s power does not belong to one. Therefore, it is not one’s personal property. What is not one’s property is impersonal. Therefore, all perceived objects are impersonal (*sabbe dhamma anatta*).

This means although the emotional *citta* is dominating the mind of the normal human being, the *citta* can be brought under control by the cognitive *mano* by becoming aware of the realities of life. This is because the *citta* gets excited only according to the way the cognitive *mano* interprets circumstances (*mano pubbangama dhamma*).

Joseph LeDoux a neuroscientist at the Centre for Neural Science at the New York University says that his research

has shown that sensory signals from eye or ear travel first to the thalamus in the brain and then to the amygdala; while a second signal from the thalamus is routed to the neocortex, the thinking brain. This two-way branching allows the amygdala to begin to respond before the neocortex, which mulls information through several levels of brain circuits before it fully perceives and finally initiates its more finely tailored response. This is called an amygdala hijack (*Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman pg.20). What this means is that in the lower mammals where the thinking faculty is not fully developed they react emotionally to situations but in the human being the thinking faculty *mano* can respond rationally to situations instead.

During evolution the *id* (mammalian brain) came into being before the *ego* (neocortex). This explains the reason why the *id* dominates the *ego*. Freud did see this partly when he said: “the *ego* is in control when the *id* is weak.” Yet he did not realize that the *ego* activity can change the *id* activity in the **human being**, and therefore the **human being has the power** to put an end to the *id* activity. This fact has, however, been recognized by modern **cognitive psychologists**, though they have not fully made use of it to control the *id* radically. Yet the **Buddha comprehended this fully** and made use of it to **totally eradicate lust, hate and delusion** of “self” from his system (Ref: **seven steps to awakening** = *satta bojjanga*).

This **miscalculation** of Freud lies in the fact that Freud did not consider the difference between the **animal** and the **human** being. He saw the mind as a machine that needed energy to work, and he saw that the energy came from the *id*. Therefore the *id* is dominant, like the weak millionaire who

employs others to do his work. It is true that the *id* has all the energy, but in the human being, it is the **ego that is in control** of that energy, just as the **driver**, and not the engine, is **in control** of the motor vehicle. Though the **engine** contains all the **energy**.

**Freud** saw this *id* and its energy as an **inborn instinct** that has its origin within the organism, and therefore cannot be removed, but **only expressed, suppressed, repressed, or sublimated**. **Repression** is an unconscious process of forgetting the urge, out of fear or shame. **Suppression** is a conscious process of denial of gratification of the urge. Sublimation is to gratify the urge only within the bounds of social acceptability. The **Buddha**, on the other hand, saw the **impulse** as a **process** that has its **origin** outside, in the **environment**. It is the **environmental stimulation** that leads to the excitation of the impulse. Therefore, he called it an **influx** or “**influence**” (*asava*) that **flows in** from outside, rather than an **instinct** that **flows out** from inside.

The Buddha pointed out that the mood, **temperament**, or disposition of a person is **essentially pure and calm** in its normal state.<sup>5</sup> It is polluted or disturbed by **adventitious pollutants**; just as **water** is a pure substance, and it becomes impure only due to foreign matter falling into it. Therefore, just as water **can be purified** through filtration or distillation, the Buddha saw that the temperament too could be purified and calmed through a **systematic technique**, because it is essentially pure and is always trying to return to its original purity.

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<sup>5</sup> Pabassaraṇ idañ bhikkhave cittaṇ agantuka upakkilesena upakkilittaṇ (Anguttara Nikaya I, VI, 1.)

The temperament, oh disciples, is essentially pure  
(*pabassaramidaṇ bhikkave cittaṇ*)

Only foreign pollutants, pollute it  
(*tancakō āgantukēhi upakkilēsēhi upakkilitthaṇ*)

Unknown is this fact to common folk  
(*tan assutavā putujjanō yatābhūtaṇ nappajānāti*)

For them, no purity, I declare  
(*tasmā assutavatōputujjanassa cittabhāvanā nattīti  
vadāmīti*)

\_\_\_(*Ang.I.6*)

### ***Buddha On The Structural Hypothesis***

One might ask at this point whether the Buddha ever spoke about anything like the structural hypothesis of Freud. In fact, he did, but in different words. He used an analogy referring to three kinds of people in the world (Gradual Sayings I, p111, 29.).

- (1) One is blind in both eyes,
- (2) Second is blind only in one eye,
- (3) Third has vision in both eyes.

The first eye sees how to satisfy one's desires (*ego*).

The second eye sees what is good and bad (*super ego*)

On comparison with the structural hypothesis:

- (1) The person with both eyes blind is the id = (*citta*)
- (2) The person with the eye to see how to satisfy desires is the ego = (*mano*)
- (3) The person with the eye that sees what is good and bad is the super ego = (*hiri-ottappa*)

The *super ego*, or Conscience is called *hiri-ottappa*,

*Hiri* = **Reluctance** to do evil; and

*Ottappa* = **Repentance** after having done evil

### ***Problem Presented By Freud***

What Freud saw, as the problem, was that the id comes in conflict with the *ego* and the *super ego*. The *id* is unaware of the external reality and it demands immediate satisfaction. The *id* is aware only of what it wants; it is not concerned about how it is obtained. The *ego* on the other hand is aware of the external reality, and only the *ego* knows how to gratify the *id*. The *ego* wants to gratify the *id*, but it can be gratified only within the confines of reality. Immediate gratification is not always possible. Therefore, the *ego* might have to postpone gratification. This, the *id* does not like. The *id* is uncomfortable till it is gratified.

This conflict, between the *id* and the *ego*, sounds very much like the familiar conflict between the child and the mother. The child cries for food but only the mother knows how to get it. But then, the mother has to prepare it before the child can have it. This takes time. Therefore, the satisfaction

has to be postponed. But the child wants food immediately, and is unconcerned about how it can be got. The child remains hungry and cries till the food is given. The child, according to Freud, is mainly the *id*, and is dominated by the pleasure principle. The emotionally mature adult, on the other hand, whose *ego* is strong, is dominated by the reality principle. Even in the emotionally immature adult, the *ego* is in control, even though it is weak.

If the child makes demands that are detrimental to it as well as to others, and the mother is undecided, in such a case the father may intervene and demand that the mother must not cater to the child's irresponsible demands. If the mother follows the father's advice, the child will not be satisfied at all, and it will continue to cry. So the mother has to find a way of satisfying the child while at the same time following the father's advice. This is an analogy where the father represents the *super ego*, the mother represents the *ego*, and the child represents the *id*. The *super ego* does not deal with the *id* directly, but only through the *ego*. The *ego* is always in control even when it is weak. The *ego* has to find ways of satisfying the *id* as well as the *super ego*. The *ego* becomes the mediator between the *id*, the *super ego*, and also the external reality.

### ***Mental Sickness***

It is when the *ego* is weak that the conflict is not resolved, and the personality becomes sick. This means, the *ego* tries to push away the conflict and forgets about it. When this happens the *ego* is unable to pay full attention to

the external reality and deal with it, because the unresolved internal conflict starts pestering the *ego* for attention. When this happens, the society in which the individual lives becomes intolerant and begins to condemn the individual for the negligence of responsibilities. This makes the individual become withdrawn from society and feel and behave as an invalid. The individual regresses into a childhood mode of behaviour. This is a description of the neurotic personality. The neurotic, though withdrawn from the external social reality, is fully aware of it.

The psychotic, on the other hand, withdraws from the social reality totally. He does not pay attention to it. He lives in a world of his own making, though he is aware of the physical reality around. In doing so, he loses his social identity, and acquires a physical identity. If he identifies with the physical body, he may experience himself as a robot, or if he identifies himself with the totality of the physical reality, he may experience himself even as God. He experiences as himself whatever he identifies with.

### ***Ego Psychology***

It is important to understand that Freud spoke about mental and physical processes, and not about real persons. What is called his “personality theory” is only a mechanical theory of personality. He called it the “psychic apparatus.” In other words, he saw the personality to be an impersonal process of psychophysical activity. Therefore, his theory is also called the psychodynamic theory. Although Freud saw the personality as a mechanical process of activity comparable

to a machine, or an energy system, some of his followers were dissatisfied with the depersonalization and reification of the personality. Some later psychologists and psychoanalysts who were existentialist thinkers, like R.D.Lang, criticized this way of thinking, considering it to be a dehumanizing of the human being, through “depersonalization” and “reification” of the human personality. (*The divided self*, by R.D.Lang). This latter way of thinking among psychoanalysts came to be called “**Ego Psychology.**”

Freud saw the *ego* only as an impersonal faculty of reasoning, the main concern of which was to manage the *id* impulses, and to resolve the conflict between the *id* and the *superego*, as well as to deal with the external reality. Later followers saw the *ego* as the “real self” whose main concern was to deal with the external reality. They were mainly concerned with the development of the “sense of self” and the strengthening of the “ego” to deal with the external world.

Freud pointed out that the “sense of self” is formed through the infant’s relationship with the mother. This relationship with the mother was seen as an “object relationship,” where the mother was the object. As Freud saw it, the infant does not see the mother as a separate entity from itself, at the beginning. It is later that the infant notices that the mother appears at times, and disappears at other times, and that the mother is not under its control, as its own legs or arms are. This makes it feel that the mother is a person separate from itself, and so a “sense of self” is formed. Then a relationship of dependence on the mother develops. In this relationship, frustrations and disappointments are experienced. These remain as memories, which affect

relationships with other people in later life. These memories also affect the self-concept or self- image in later life, where the “self” can be felt to be weak or strong, resulting in feelings of inferiority or superiority, or what is today called lack of self-esteem.

Later followers of Freud became concerned with the development of the sense of self, which they identified as the *ego*. This psychology based on the concern with the *ego* and its relations with external reality was called “***ego psychology***,” or “object relations psychology.” The earlier concern with the *id*, and its conflict with the *ego* and *superego*, was called ***id psychology***, which was rejected by the later followers of Freud who became interested in *ego* psychology. This new turn took place when the psychoanalysts became concerned with psychosis, which, they thought, was rooted in the *ego*’s relationship with external reality, and the change in the “sense of self.” Formerly, Freud’s main concern was neurosis, though his concern always extended to psychosis as well.

### ***The Buddha’s Approach***

Having discussed some of Freud’s discoveries and how he and some of his later followers tried to conceptualize the problems of human beings both normal and abnormal, let us now examine some of the Buddha’s teachings in relation to these findings of Freud and the Freudians.

The essence of the problem encountered by Freud as well as the Buddha is that the human being is an evolved

**thinking animal** with a cognitive *mano* (*ego*) that has become aware of a reality that is not catering to the whims of the affective *citta* (*id*). This thinking animal is also possessed with a civilized conscience *hiri ottappa* (*super ego*) that demands a morality to be peaceful.

The solution offered by Freud was ‘**sublimation** of the *id* impulses’ while the followers preferred to change the method to ‘**gratification** of the cognitive *ego*’. The solution of the Buddha, however, was the tranquillization of the affective *citta* or *id*. This sums up the solution seen from different perspectives.

### ***The Buddhist Perspective***

Seen from the Buddhist perspective, we are all born as organisms struggling to exist in a hostile environment. We are born with a body with five senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. With the five senses we experience five sensations (*saññā*) and three kinds of feelings (*vēdanā*): pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. We react emotionally to the feelings in three ways:

- (1) Urge for enjoyment of pleasure (*kāma tanhā*)
- (2) Urge for continued existence (*bhava tanhā*)
- (3) Urge for non-existence of pain (*vibhava tanhā*)

These emotional urges are never gratified fully the way we want, or when we want, because every event depends on the necessary conditions. What is dependent on conditions is unstable, unpleasant, and impersonal. This unsatisfactory condition creates grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and

exhaustion. This is what is today known as **stress**, which is presented by Hans Selye as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). This was what the Buddha presented as **suffering**, or anguish (*dukkha*).

What is called life is a **mission impossible** that began quite unconsciously when the necessary conditions were present. Certain electromagnetic forces by accident produced a **self-replicating molecule**, which was able to produce molecules of its own kind, by absorbing atoms from the surroundings. Every molecule produced of course had to die but new molecules kept on being produced. So a bipolar process continued: one productive called **anabolism**, and another destructive called **catabolism**. Together they were called **metabolism**. What continued therefore was this struggle, which was not a **static existence** but a **dynamic evanescence** similar to a **flame**, which is a **continuity of birth and death**, which is called **mortality**.

Buddha also saw the mind as a psychophysical sequential process beginning with perception at the senses, leading to an interpretation of what is perceived by the thinking cognitive *mano*, followed by an emotional reaction (*cittāvēga*) that ends up in a notion of self that is born, grows old, and dies. Emotions aroused are physically expressed through motor activity (*kamma*) followed by consequences (*vipāka*). He saw it occurring in three main sequences: (1) the sensory Perception (*viññāna*), the cognitive conception (*mano*), (2) the **affective**, emotional agitation (*cittāvēga*), and (3) the **active**, expression of emotion through release of tension in action. This **emotional reaction** occurs, however, quite unconsciously. When we are conscious, on the other

hand, we are able to comprehend the possible consequences, and then **respond** quite **rationally** to avoid bad consequences.

**Unconscious action** = stimulus → emotion ----  
emotional action = (**reaction**)

**Conscious action** = stimulus → cognition ----  
rational action = (**response**)

The presence of mind through introspection (*sati*) and reflecting on the consequences (*sampajañña*), before the release of tension, can prevent the consequences detrimental to oneself and others. Reflection on the action and its consequences (*cetana*) can stop the action from being repeated in the future. Absent minded, and impulsive behaviour, which is unconsciously done, can be called a **reaction**, which the Buddha called an “unskillful action” (*akusala kamma*). A rational action done with presence of mind, which is consciously executed, can be called a **response**, which the Buddha called a “skillful action” (*kusala kamma*).

This rational decision called *cetana* before action was what the Buddha, equated to karma (*cētanā ahan bhikkavē kamman vadāmi*). This decision (*cetanā*) is commonly called willpower, which can stop emotional behaviour. It is important to understand that this decision (*cetanā*) is a power exhibited by the human being, which distinguishes him from the animal. This decision is not possible for the animals. The animals passively react to stimulation of the senses, while the human being can get sufficient time to decide (*cetana*) what action to take in a given situation. Yet it is also possible for the human being to react suddenly to a loud sound, and in a few seconds decide it is harmless and relax. Modern

researchers in neuroscience have pointed out the reason for this as an amygdala hijack, which was already discussed in detail (Ref: *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman).

### ***Personalization***

The teaching of the Buddha about personalization (*upadana*) is very significant, in relation to Freud's structural hypothesis. Buddha spoke of four kinds of personalization as follows:

1. Personalization of **likes and dislikes** for pleasure and pain (*kāma upādāna*) = (*id*)
2. Personalization of **rational thoughts** about reality (*ditthi upādāna*) = (*ego*)
3. Personalization of **moral principles** (*sīlabbata upādāna*) = (*superego*)
4. Personalization of the **notion of self** (*atta vāda upādāna*)

The structural hypothesis of Freud was similar to what the Buddha was aware of. The Buddha, however, also added a fourth factor to it - the **notion of “self” through personalization**. This means he pointed out that the **problem presented by Freud was created by personalization** of the factors and thus **creating the sense of “self.”** Modern research in neuroscience has begun to confirm the **mechanistic view** of Sigmund Freud and the Buddha.

## The structural hypothesis of Freud

*id* – the emotional urge dominated by the pleasure principle

*ego* – the rational faculty dominated by the reality principle

*superego* – the conscience dominated by the morality principle

It is clear that there is a parallelism between Freud's structural hypothesis and the Buddha's account of personalization. Freud considered the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego* as structural divisions of the personality. This means he **"personalized"** these three structural parts and transformed it into a **"personality"** or "self." Even the use of the terms *ego* and *superego* implies that a concept of "self" underlies the hypothesis. The *id*, which is the Latin for "it," implies that Freud **"depersonalized"** the *id* as a mechanical process. It seems that Freud called the rational part the *ego* following Descartes' idea, "I think therefore I am." (*cogito ergo sum*). The *superego* was also seen as a part of the *ego*. This is why it was named as such. This means, the **concept of "self" remains in hiding** in the structural hypothesis, even **though** Freud considered the **mind** or **personality** to be an **energy system** or **machine**. This helped his **followers** to lay stress on the **"ego,"** and want to make it even more real.

The Buddha's **fourfold personalization** points out that the **problem** was in the **personalization** of the structural hypothesis. Freud had personalized the *id*, *ego*, and the *superego*, in calling them parts of the **personality**. Although

Freud compared the mind to a machine or energy system, even calling it the “psychic apparatus,” and even speaking about psychic determinism, it appears that he **could not get the idea of “self” as “personality” out of his mind.** This is why this hypothesis is also called the **personality theory** of Freud. This means that Freud **did not** really make a **full depersonalization of the personality.**

The **later followers** of Freud carried the idea of personality even further. They **criticized Freud** for seeing the *ego* only as the rational faculty. **They wanted** the *ego* to represent a **real person** or “**self.**” The *ego* psychology, or object relations psychology that resulted was interested in the relationship between the “**self**” and the external **world.**

In psychoanalytic therapy, the **aim** of **Freud** was to **integrate** these three parts of the personality. **Neurosis** and **psychosis** was seen as a **disintegration of the personality.** In explaining **neurosis**, Freud thought that the *id*, being a part of the personality, is **denied expression**, and is **rejected by the *ego*** through **repression.**

### ***Buddha And The Freudians***

While the **later Freudians** complain that **Freud did not emphasize** the idea of “**self**” enough, or that Freud depersonalized the personality, **Buddhist thinking** seems to do the **opposite**, in complaining that **Freud did not depersonalize the personality enough.** **Modern psychologists** who have become interested in Buddhism and Buddhist meditation **find this to be problematic.** Some try

to bring about a **compromise** by saying that one has to **build the “self” before it can be removed. Let us** examine this problem to see if we can **find a better solution.**

The problem, according to Freud, is that the **three parts** of the personality are in **conflict**, because these three parts seek three different goals as follows:

- id* – seeks pleasure
- ego* – seeks to be realistic
- superego* – seeks to be moral or good

Freud did seek a **medial path** to solve the problem. This was not to seek pleasure, as the *id* wanted, nor was it repression, or suppression as the *superego* wanted. Freud’s medial path was **sublimation**. By the term sublimation Freud meant channelling the energy of the *id* along a socially acceptable path. If one is interested in sexual relations, instead of indulging in rape or adultery, one can get married, or channel the energy through a socially or religiously acceptable channel.

This solution seems to be quite in agreement with Buddhist thinking. It represents “good conduct” (*sila*), following the five precepts, which is the common practice of the good Buddhist householder (*gihī*) or laymen. From the Freudian perspective, it is sublimation or the practice of the normal healthy personality. From the general, common perspective, it is the civilized way of living.

Freud, however, thought that the civilized way of living resulted in **discontentment**, (*Civilization And Its Discontent*, by Sigmund Freud) because the satisfaction becomes limited

by confining oneself to the socially acceptable way of living. The *id* is not fully satisfied. A man may not be interested in one wife, or woman may not be interested in one husband. This means discontentment. Therefore, the apparent aim of psychoanalysis was only to change abnormal suffering into **normal unhappiness**.

### ***Buddha's Solution***

The Buddha went further than Freud in this matter. He also came up with a medial path, but this was different. He saw a way of integrating the personality by presenting a **new goal** to pursue. This goal was not sublimation but the goal of “**tranquillity**” of mind. Freud himself saw this possibility, when he said that the psychic apparatus was ultimately seeking a state of **equilibrium through release of tension**. But he did not see this as the solution to the conflict. The Buddha saw that **what the emotional impulse wanted was the state of relaxation and mental calm**, which is a state of happiness. When this goal of tranquillity is consciously pursued, not only is the *id* satisfied but also the *ego* as well as the *superego*. The *id* is satisfied because of the relaxation of tension (relaxation response). The *ego* is satisfied because relaxation does not come in conflict with reality. The *superego* is satisfied because relaxation does not come in conflict with moral principles or social norms. This **pursuit of tranquillity** of mind is the **pursuit of NIRVANA** (*nir*, non + *vana*, movement). Nirvana is the **imperturbable serenity of mind**, which even the Stoics and the Epicureans spoke of in the West.

Another important insight of the Buddha becomes applicable here. When Freud thought of the structural hypothesis, this hypothesis became useful to understand the mechanics of neurosis or even psychosis. Yet it had a **shortcoming**, which was that by seeing the mind as a structure made up of three parts that come in conflict, one tends to think of the mind as an entity similar to a material entity that occupies space and time. Even if the mind is considered to be immaterial, it could still be conceived as a spiritual entity. To compare the mind to a machine, or see it as a psychic apparatus, or any structure, is to see it as an entity that exists. This easily encourages the formation of the **concept of “self”** in relation to the mind. To personalize the emotions, or consider the emotions to be a part of oneself, is to lose control over emotions. Thus the infatuated girl may say: “It is my love. I love him. To remove my love is to kill me.”

### ***Buddha’s Functional Hypothesis***

In order to avoid this difficulty, the Buddha looked at the mind from a **“functional point of view,”** instead of from a “structural point of view.” This falls in line with Freudian thinking as well as Buddhist thinking. For the Buddha, **the mind is not an entity separate from the body.** What we call the **body is not an entity** but an **activity** observed objectively as a material entity that occupies space and time. What we call the **mind is the same activity** that is **observed subjectively** as a spiritual entity that occupies time but not space. Mind is simply the **subjective experience of the objective activity of the body,** called the activity of the **nervous system.**

The Buddha pointed out that there are **three phases** in this activity that we refer to as the mind. They are the **perceptual** activity (*viññana*), the **cognitive** activity (*mano*), and the **affective** activity (*citta*), which ultimately ends up in the physical **behavioural** activity (*kamma*). The first three are observable as subjective mental experiences, and not as objective material entities. Even the fourth is a physical activity, rather than a material entity.

If we take as an example a young man meeting a girl: when light falling on the girl is reflected, and falls on the eye of the young man, he begins to see the girl. That is perception (*viññana*). Having perceived, he begins to interpret what was seen using his cognitive faculty (*mano*). Let us say, the interpretation is, “I see a sexy girl.” This results in an emotional arousal (*citta*). A message goes from the brain to the sexual gland, and a sexual hormone is secreted into the blood, and changes take place in the young man’s body. The body gets ready for action. Of course the young man being a civilized person does not decide to rape the girl. He has a conscience that prevents him from doing so. This example explains how the three stages of the reaction work.

The young man, however, has a problem at this point. There is a conflict in his mind, as Freud pointed out. The conscience or *superego* is in conflict with his *id*, and the *ego* has to bring about a settlement. The ego decides to go and speak to the girl in a courteous way and propose a date. This would be a Freudian solution. Yet the young man may be disappointed if the girl rejects him or if he sees her boyfriend coming to take her away. This is civilization and its discontentment.

The **Buddha** goes further in suggesting a **different solution**. That is, to understand that happiness comes from tranquillity of mind and not from gratification of sense desires. Therefore, the young man should only take a deep breath and consciously relax the body, calm the mind, and stop thinking about the girl. This is not easy because the emotional arousal is not a mere thought. The emotion is a change in the blood chemistry, and change in the function of various organs in the body. This means, the emotion is a physical change rather than a mere thought. Yet it is the thought that created the physical change. Just as the manipulation of a switch turned the light on, and no amount of blowing on the light can turn it off; in the same way, no amount of fighting with the emotion can turn the emotion off. The emotion is only a disturbance in the body, and it is created by a thought. It is only by changing the thought, which got the emotion started, that the emotional activity can be stopped. This is a fact recognized even by the cognitive psychologists today.

What this means, in Freudian terminology, is that the *id* is the result of the activity of the *ego*. Therefore, the **ego does not have to repress, suppress or sublimate the *id***; the *ego* has only to realize that the **trigger** that activates the *id* is **in the hands of the *ego***, and by thinking in a different way, the *ego* can make the *id* stop the annoying behaviour. It is true that the *id* contains energy, but this **energy is aroused by the *ego***, (like the driver pressing the accelerator) because the trigger is in the hands of the *ego*. Just as the dog's tail is not shaking by itself, it is the dog's emotion that is shaking it. The dog may be unconscious of it, but by becoming conscious it can be stopped. If the *ego* changes the interpretation, of

the circumstance, the id will stop demanding. The cognitive psychologists have begun to realize this only recently. Long before this the Buddha said:

Pleasant images are not pleasures in the world  
*Na tē kāmā yāni cittrāni lōkē*

Lust for images is the pleasure of men  
*Sankappa rāgō purisassa kāmō*

While images remain in the world as they are  
*Tittanti cittrāni tatēva lōkē*

The wise do only rid their lust  
*Yatetta dhīrā vinēti candaṇ*

*—Dhammapada*

### ***Freud's Mistakes***

The mistake that Freud appears to have made is his **emphasis on instinct**. He thought the emotion is inborn, and therefore it starts within and seeks an outlet. Because the emotion is inborn, Freud thought, it cannot be eliminated; he thought it has to be gratified in some way or another. The Buddha did not see the emotion as instinctual. He saw it as something started by an external stimulus. He saw the emotion as a part of a chain reaction, where the intellectual activity of interpretation preceded the emotional activity. Stating the Buddha's position in Freudian terminology, the *ego* activity precedes the *id* activity. Freud, however, saw it the other way. He thought that the *id* activity preceded the *ego* activity, and that the purpose of the *ego* was mainly to

cater to the *id*. This is a serious mistake that Freud made, from the Buddhist standpoint.

The other mistake of Freud was his breaking up the mind into parts that come in conflict. The *ego* and the *id* should have been seen as **parts of a continuous process of activity**, one leading to the other, instead of being independent activities opposed to one another. He did attempt this at the beginning, when he took up the functional approach comparing the mind to a telescope. It was the structural hypothesis that created the confusion although it did help understand the conflict in the mind of the neurotic. The conflict displayed by the structural hypothesis comes about due to the ignorance of the neurotic patient about how the emotional arousal gets started. The problem created by the **neurotic** is like **pressing the accelerator and the brake at the same time**, while driving a motor vehicle. It is the *ego* that arouses the emotion; for example, the boy appreciating the beauty of the girl is the work of the *ego*. This arouses the passionate desire for the girl, which is the *id*. Now the conscience, which is the *superego*, comes to block this arousal and tells the *ego* to stop it, and the *ego* holds the brake, while continuing to appreciate the girl. That is like holding the brake and pressing the accelerator at the same time. This creates the conflict between the *id* and the *ego*.

The solution of the Buddha was to look at the mind from a functional standpoint. That is, to see the **mind as a reaction of an organism to sensory stimulation** - the reaction being in four stages: **perception** (*viññana*), **conception** (*mano*), **emotion** (*citta*), and **action** (*kamma*). This reaction is what creates all the trouble, as the *Dhamma cakka pavattana Sutra*

quoted above indicates. The Buddha called **this reaction a compulsive thirst** (*tanha*). A thirst is **not something that we do**. It is **something that happens** to us. It is almost a mechanical process. Freud recognized this when he called it the *id*, the Latin form of “it,” the neuter gender. The trouble created by this thirst, the Buddha called pain (*dukkha*). The solution that the Buddha suggested was not **sublimation** but **eradication**, which was to take it off by the root. The way to uproot it is to **stop the incorrect thinking**, which arouses the emotion, and that in Freudian terms is to correct the ego activity. This is also the method of modern Cognitive Therapy today. The simple solution therefore is to observe what is going on by systematic introspection (*satipatthāna*).

### *Buddha’s Method*

If the **problem** is created by the **emotions**, the **cause** of the emotion must be removed. To do so, one has to understand the problem and its solution (*samma ditthi*). When the underlying origin is comprehended, a **reorientation** of the mind takes place, which is beginning the **pursuit of tranquillity** (*samma sankappa*). This reorientation results in a different way of seeing life and interpreting circumstances. For example, the young man who met the girl and appreciated her beauty will now think in a different way. Instead of looking at the **pleasant image** of the body, he will begin to **see the body for what it is** from an **anatomical** point of view. He begins to think of the skin, the flesh, the blood, the bones, the intestines, the faeces and all the **repulsive elements** contained in the body. He can also think of the **mental condition** of the girl, which

could be very unpleasant, even though she may have good looks. This is a **broader outlook** than the narrow superficial perspective that leads to the emotional reaction. Often people begin to acquire the **broader outlook only after marriage**. This seems to be the reason for most divorces after marriage. This broader outlook is accompanied by the philosophy that **true happiness** comes through **tranquillity of mind** and not through the **gratification of sense desires**; and this means, changing the goal of life to **calmness or tranquillity**.

Here we may be reminded of **Alfred Adler**, who spoke about the importance of the **philosophy of life** and **goal orientation**. Yet the Buddha taught this fact twenty-five centuries before Adler. The **Supernormal Eightfold Way** of the Buddha is based on this principle. It begins with the **Harmonious Perspective** and the **Harmonious Goal-orientation**. The extent to which the Buddha influenced Adler is a mystery, as it is in the case of Sigmund Freud. It appears that Freud was influenced by the first and second truths of the Buddha, while Adler was influenced by the fourth.

This method of the Buddha for eradicating the emotional reaction needs to be fully understood by modern psychologists, and it can be of great help in their practice, as well as their research. Modern research in neuroscience has resulted in the discovery of what is called the **Triune Brain**, which is a division of the human brain into three parts that point to three stages in the evolution of the human brain. These stages are called the **reptilian brain**, the **mammalian brain**, and the **human brain**. The reptilian brain is the primitive part of the human brain called the **brain stem**, which is

mainly concerned with seeking food and reproduction. The mammalian brain is mainly concerned with emotions and it is called the **limbic system**. The human brain is the advanced part of the human brain, which deals with rational thinking. It is the **prefrontal cerebral cortex**. The wonderful thing is that the Buddha had referred to these three parts with different names and in different ways.

- (1) **Reptilian brain** – brain stem – *vinnana*
- (2) **Mammalian brain** – limbic system – *citta* – (*id*)
- (3) **Human brain** – prefrontal cortex – *mano* – (*ego*)

It is the emotional part, the limbic system, called *citta* (*id*) that is unable to think, and unable to become aware of reality, that is going against reality and is in conflict with reality as well as with reason *mano* (*ego*), and even the conscience (*super ego*).

In other words, although this emotional part (*citta*) of the human being is **unable to live according to reality**, the thinking part of the human brain (*mano*) is **able to be aware of reality** and attempts to live realistically. This thinking part is not only able to become aware of the need to live realistically but it is also **able to control the emotional *citta* (*id*)** and live realistically. This **thinking part**, however, is **unaware of its ability** to control the emotional part. This is why the **thinking *mano* needs to be educated** to do so. This is where the **Buddha** or the **therapist becomes helpful to the patient**.

It is important to understand that the **aim of the Buddha** was to make the human being **transcend** the emotional **animal nature** and become **fully human**. The way to do

so is to get the **thinking *mano*** to **dominate the life** of the individual. This is conveyed in the Sanskrit verse below:

*Āhāra niddhrā bhaya maithunanca*

Feeding, sleeping, fear, and sex

*Sāmānya mēthad pasubih narānām*

Common are these to man and beast

*Dharmōhi tēsāmadhiko visēsō*

Especial to man is thought complex

*Dharmēna hīnāh pasubih samānāh*

Low in thought man is a beast

How the human being could develop the thinking faculty and conquer the animal nature is explained in the following verse in the Dhammapada:

*Manō pubbangamā dhammā*

Cognition precedes all experience

*Manō setthā manōmayā*

Cognition dominates and even creates

*Manasāce pasannēna*

With proper cognition

*bhāsatī vā carōti vā*

if one speaks or acts

*Tatō nam sukhamanvēti*

happiness follows

*cāyāva ana pāyini*

As the shadow that never fails

*—Dhammapada*

## *The Supernormal Eightfold Way That Solves The Problem*

1. The Harmonious Perspective
2. The Harmonious Orientation
3. The Harmonious speech
4. The Harmonious Action
5. The Harmonious Life
6. The Harmonious Exercise
7. The Harmonious Attention
8. The Harmonious Equilibrium

This Supernormal Eightfold Way helps the self-centred suffering individual into a selfless healthy one. It is done through a gradual process of psychological growth and evolution. It has to be carried out step by step by each individual by himself or herself. First of all, **the problem must be fully comprehended intellectually: its cause, its solution, and the way it is solved by removing the cause** (*samma ditthi*).

The **problem** is a **conflict** between the **emotional *id*** (*citta*) and the **reality** recognized by the **thinking *ego*** (*mano*). The **solution** is to **resolve this conflict**, not by **changing reality** but by **changing the unrealistic emotional *id*** (*citta*). This has to be done by each individual by themselves and for themselves.

- (1) First step is to **understand the problem, its cause, its solution, and the way it can be solved**. Confidence to do so successfully is gained by reflecting on the Buddha, who reached that state, the Dhamma, his teaching, and the Sangha, his

followers, who are practicing the teaching. (*sammā ditthi*)

- (2) Next comes the reorientation of mind, towards the **new goal** of freedom from emotions and the **tranquillity of mind**. (*sammā sankappa*)
- (3) This leads to the **practice of controlling** one's **emotional behaviour** (*sila*) by stopping emotional **speech, action and lifestyle** - not because others want one to do so, but because **one understands the necessity** to do so. This covers the **three disciplinary steps** (*sammā vācā, sammā kammanta, and sammā ājīva,*)
- (4) Next is the sixth step, which is called the **harmonious exercise** (*sammā vāyāma*), which is to learn to **stop the emotional arousal**. This is to learn to **relax the body** and to **calm the mind**, by focusing attention on the body and mind. This sixth step comprises four steps:
  - (a) Guarding the senses (*saṅvara*)
  - (b) Avoidance of memory thoughts and imaginary thoughts (*pahāna*)
  - (c) Focusing attention on the body and mind introspectively (*bhāvanā*)
  - (d) Maintaining the introspection throughout the day; 24 hrs (*anurakkhana*)

(5) Next is the seventh step, which is Harmonious Attention (*samma sati*) where **the mind is focused constantly inwards**: on the body (*kayanu passana*), on how the body feels (*vedananu passana*), on the emotional state of the mind (*cittanu passana*), and on the cognitive thoughts that arise in the mind (*dhammanu passana*). This is what is called the *Satipatthana Bhavana*. With this one begins the **seven steps to awakening**.

(6) The Seven Steps to Awakening

- (a) *Sati* – When the mind is focused within one begins to realize that the emotional disturbance is caused by the thoughts that arise in the cognitive *mano*.
- (b) *Dhamma vicaya* – then one begins to examine the thoughts and realizes that they are only thoughts and not necessarily truths. By changing the thoughts the emotions can be stopped.
- (c) *Viriya* – This brings confidence and strength of mind to stop the emotional agitation.
- (d) *Pīti* – With this comes a happiness of mind in the form of tranquillity.
- (e) *Passaddhi* – This happy tranquil mind relaxes the body, and the relaxed body is comfortable.

- (f) *Samādhi* – This silent, calm, happy, comfortable, stillness comprise the five components of the **first ecstasy** *pathamajjhāna* (*vitakkha, vicāra, pīti, sukha, ekaggatā*). From the first ecstasy one gets into the second, third, and fourth ecstasy.
- (g) *Upekkhā* – It is at the fourth ecstasy that one experiences *upekkhā*, which means apperception. This is to perceive one's own consciousness, or one's own process of perception. With this awareness of the process of perception one is able to analyse the process of perception into the five components (*pancakkhanda*): *rūpa, vēdanā, saṅṅā, sankhāra, viṅṅāna*.

From this realization one begins to further realize that from a state of complete unknowing (*avijjā*) one perceives objects through the process of perception (*avijjā paccayā sankhārā, sankhāra paccayā viṅṅānan, viṅṅāna paccayā nāma rūpan*). Objects are perceived (*viṅṅāna*) as named images (*nāma-rūpa*). Into these named images are added sounds, smells, tastes, and touches by the brain (*mano viṅṅāna*) and thus produce objects that exist in time and space (*nāma rūpa paccayā salāyatanan, salāyatana paccayā passō*). The term *passa* is commonly translated as **contact**, which is an error. *Passa* means creating *a posteriori* objects, which are supposed to exist in time and space.

Once the existing objects have been created, they begin to arouse feelings pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. This results in emotional reactions to pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings. This creates a dichotomy between a subjective reaction and an objective outer experience. The subjective experience is personalized as mine and the objective experience is alienated as foreign. Personalization creates the personality or “self.” It is the process of perception and the emotional reaction that becomes the “self.” The “self” when pointed to as a “self” that exists in time and space, happens to be the “body” (*sakkāya ditthi*). When the body becomes the “self,” it not only occupies space, it also occupies time. To occupy time is to have a past, present and future. Then the past of the body is its birth, the future is its death, and the present is its aging. This fact brings about grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and exhaustion. Thus arises the entire mass of suffering.

The recognition of this is the recognition of the origin of suffering. Reflecting on this is the way to end suffering. Constant reflecting on this sequence of events gradually leads to the ending of all suffering.

- (7) This can also be done by first broadening the normal narrow mind. This is to think: “I am not the only one that suffers in this world. There are many that suffer in the world, some suffer even more than me. Therefore, may all beings, wherever they may be, be well, comfortable, peaceful, and happy.” Then begin to consider that others are as important as ourselves, and begin to wish them all good, and practice patience, tolerance, kindness

and interest in the welfare of all beings without making a distinction between ourselves and others, just as a mother thinks of her own children (*Brahma vihara*).

Learning to calm the **affective citta** (*id*) is called **tranquillity meditation** (*samatha bhavana*). Learning to change the way of thinking of the **cognitive mano** (*ego*) is called **insight meditation** (*vipassana bhavana*). As we progress in our emotional control and purification of mind we begin to practice the **fourfold exercise** (*sammappadhana*):

- (1) Guarding the senses in the present (*samvara*)
- (2) Eliminating worries about the past and future (*pahana*)
- (3) Cultivating introspective awareness of the body and mind (*bhavana*)
- (4) Constant introspection throughout day and night (*anurakkhana*).

When this method is practiced properly and regularly the mind does enter a state of **special tranquillity**, which is called **Ecstasy** (*jhāna*). Ecstasy means standing out (*ec* = out; *stasy* = stand), which is to stand out of all the common emotional experiences available in the world that we normally live in. It is a perfect tranquillity of mind contrary to what we normally experience in the world. This special tranquillity is what is called **equilibrium** (*samādhi*). It is not concentration as commonly described, but a **tranquil stability of mind**.

With the development of this **wonderful tranquillity** that one has **never experienced before**, the mind begins to go through a process of **mental revolution**, which is a **paradigm shift**, from the experience of subjective and objective existence to an experience of an impersonal experience where one **awakens** from the **dream of existence**. With this **Awakening** comes an awareness of a **Supernormal Metaphysical Reality** (*pariññā*),<sup>6</sup> which **transcends** the **normal existential experience** of a “**self**” that exists in a “**world**” that exists. This is an **emancipation of mind** that can never be disturbed called **the imperturbable serenity** (*akuppa ceto vimutti*), which is the well-known NIRVANA.

Normally, people stand on concepts taking them to be reality. People basically stand on the concept of existence, taking it to be real. When one has seen that the subject and object are only mental constructs, the reality of existence ceases. It is the cessation of both subject and object through insight. One begins to see that existence is only a mental construct, created through the process of perception and conception. In other words, **existence** is only an **experience**. **Experience** is the basis of **existence**. This means **experience precedes existence**, and **existence** is a **product of experience**. When one realizes this, **one stops standing on existence**, and begins to **stand on the experience**, which is **the basis of existence**. This is “**under-standing**” (*paññā*).

In other words, this is “**awakening**” from the “**dream of existence**” into an **extraordinary** or **transcendent** reality

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<sup>6</sup> This is a special translation of the word pariññā, which is extremely meaningful.

(*pariññā*), though not a transcendental or **Metaphysical Reality**.

As one's **awareness of the reaction** develops to a high level, and one begins to become aware of the **perceptual process**; when one begins to see that there is **no real person** thinking or doing anything here; when even the reality of the object perceived ceases to be real, then there is **only a process of activity** going on due to the presence of the necessary conditions. When the **conditions cease, the activity ceases**. With this realization, the **“sense of self” disappears**, and then the emotional reaction has no meaning. Therefore, this realization stops all emotional reactions and maintains the **perfect calmness and tranquillity** which is called NIRVANA, the **imperturbable serenity of mind**.

At this level a person has transcended the normal human level and has reached a **supernormal level**. This supernormal level is only a **tranquillity** of the citta and a **transformation of the cognitive *mano***, which is called **“awakening from the dream of existence,”** which may also be described as **“experiencing an impersonal experience.”** This means, one **does not personalize the experience** thinking, “this experience is mine,” or “I am experiencing,” nor does one identify the body as, “this is me” or “this is my self.” Of course, a normal person could mistake this to be an abnormality, or even insanity, but it is a **supernormal state** that is **free from all suffering, even death**.

## *Transcendence Through Evolution*

This awakening from the dream of existence is a **transcendence** of the normal consciousness to a **supernormal** level, which is **extremely rare** in the world. It is seen as an evolutionary level of the human consciousness. The human consciousness, obviously, must evolve to a higher level someday. The normal human being is not at the highest evolutionary level. This is why there is so much crime, war and mental sickness prevalent in the world today. The Buddhists believed that individuals do evolve beyond this level from time to time, and it had occurred in the past. Buddhists believe that the teaching of the Buddha is a description of the path of evolution of the human being. They also believe that the Buddha represents that fully evolved state, and his perfected disciples were also fully evolved individuals. They were those who had **transcended the normal consciousness**.

Buddhists also believe that it is this transcendence that all religions describe as **union with God**. Buddhists call it **awakening from the dream of existence**. The normal consciousness is aware of a “self that exists” in a “world that exists.” The **Supernormal Consciousness** is aware of the **mental process of perception and conception** that creates this “world” and the “self.” By becoming aware of the process of perception and conception, the **reality** of the “**world**” and the “**self**” is lost. This is the **awakening from the dream of existence**. Just as a **magician looking at a magic show** sees **no magic** in it, the **one who has awakened from the dream of existence** sees that **nothing really exists**, either **subjective or objective**. This is **not a fact unknown**

to modern psychologists and philosophers, but they **do not** normally **take it seriously** into their **everyday life**, because the **normal human being**, although quite rational, is **dominated by emotions**, which are **blind**.

This **transcendence** of the normal human consciousness can be viewed as the **culmination** of the **evolutionary process**, spoken of by **Charles Darwin**. He pointed out that **evolution** takes place because of a “**struggle for existence**.” He spoke of a “survival of the fittest,” but in reality, **no individual survived**, only the **species continued** through reproduction. **Every molecule** that was formed had to **break down**, because it was **dependent on necessary conditions**. What is dependent on conditions is **unstable**. It was the **energy** released by this breaking down that was used to **build new ones**. So, the **struggle continues** but **no individual survives**.

This means, only a **struggle to exist continues** but no individual continues to exist. In other words, **this struggle is a failure**. The **continuity** of this **futile struggle** is only a **continuity** of **suffering**. Every **atom**, every **molecule**, every **thought** and every **emotion** is in a **continuous process** of **coming and going**. **Existence** is a **static concept**, but **life** is a **dynamic process of change**, like the water in a river that is changing all the time. It is not the same river that one sees the next moment. This is why **Heraclitus** of Ephesus said: “**one cannot enter the same river twice**.” In a similar way, the **baby** that is born is not the **girl or boy** that gets **married**; similarly the **old** person that **dies** is not the **girl or boy** who got **married**.

A person or individual is **not a static entity** but a **dynamic process of change** like a wave in the ocean. **Does a wave really exist?** Does a changing process really exist? Is it only when the change is found to be slow that we tend to form **the static concept – existence?** If so, do we, **you and I, really exist?** “**Existence is an illusion,**” or more appropriately a “**delusion.**” If we can **accept this,** we will **be immortal,** because if we **do not exist,** how **can we grow old or die?** “**Immortality**” is “**not a being,**” but an “**absence.**” Therefore, **immortality is not eternal life.** It is **freedom** from the “**delusion of existence.**” This is the **immortality** shown by the Buddha, which can be **gained** through the **evolution of consciousness.** When the human consciousness has **evolved,** to the level where this truth has been **fully comprehended,** but in the **absence** of interfering **blind emotions,** the **struggle** for existence **stops.** This is why **Buddhist meditation** is of **two types:** first is **freeing the mind of emotions** (*samatha*), and then in **developing the thinking faculty** to realize **absence** (*suññathā*). This is **insight** (*vipassanā*).

This process called **life,** which **started as** an unusual **self-replicating molecule** that was able to absorb atoms from its surroundings and create molecules of its own kind, made a **terrible mistake** quite **unconsciously.** When, through the evolutionary process, the **human animal became conscious,** and able to think rationally, unhindered by emotions, he **became aware of the mistake** of struggling to exist. He realized that it was only a **struggle to become permanent** in an **impermanent world.** It was a **futile struggle** where **only disappointment and frustration** persisted. Becoming aware

of this fact, the **wise human animal stops the futile struggle**, and thereby stops not only the **process of evolution** itself, but also **all sufferings** connected with **illusory existence**.

### *The Humanistic Saviour*

This is why the Buddhist does not think, “the saviour of the world is the Creator of the world.” The **Creator cannot be a saviour** because he is the **Creator of suffering**. The true saviour can only be a **human being** who can **free themselves** from this suffering by **transcending the normal human consciousness**, of an **existing self**, which is dreaming of a “self” that **exists in a world that does not allow existence.**” This **saviour awakens** from this “dream of existence,” and **then teaches others to awaken** from this **terrible nightmare**, “the dream of life and death.” The **all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good “God”** is **not an unknown Creator**, but a **known human being** who **transcends all human weaknesses**. Such an individual is the **Buddha**, and he is therefore the **true God of the Buddhists**. He is therefore called “**God-become**” (*brahma bhuto*).

This description of the Buddha helps one understand that **Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic**. It is **humanistic** because this concept of God is a humanistic concept of God. It recognises the **potential divinity of the human being**. It is through the **process of evolution** that the **human being evolves to the level of God**. This is **not a deification** of a human being, but the **description of the gradual evolution** of the human being, and thus **transcending all human weaknesses**, to **reach a super-human divine**

**state of perfection.** This is the **humanistic** way of **union with God**, which all religions speak of in their own way. **God** is understood in Buddhist thinking, to be only the **human ideal of perfection.** **God** is the **ideal of perfection** that **human beings conceive**, and **struggle to realize** through the **practice of religion.** When a **human being does realize** this **ideal**, they are called an **Awake One**, a **Buddha.** When this occurs, the **process of evolution stops**, because the **futile struggle to exist stops**, and one has “**awakened**” from the “**dream of existence.**” The **essence** of this “**God**” is **not “existence,”** as in the case of the theistic God; the **essence** of this God is “**non-existence.**” This **God** has **ceased to exist**, even when others see him as a **living existing** person. Buddha is the **anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhist, or rather the **Theo-psychic Man.**

### *Tranquillity*

The Indian yogis even before the Buddha knew the method of entering a **very high level of tranquillity of the mind** through meditation. There were **eight deep levels** of tranquillity that the yogis had reached during the time of the Buddha. The **Buddha went only one step further** and temporarily **stopped all activities of the mind** by entering a state of **quiescence** which was similar to **hibernation.** This state was called *sañña vedayita nirodha*, which means, “**cessation of sensation and feeling.**” It was when the **Buddha rose from this state of quiescence by recovering consciousness** that he “**awakened from the dream of existence.**” He awoke from the **dream of existence** by

observing the **sequence of antecedents** (*paticca samuppada*) that create the **world** and the **self**.

These levels of deep tranquillity were practiced, in order to rest the mind temporarily, not to remain in them permanently. This temporary tranquillity was not Nirvana. It was only **a means to Nirvana**. Nirvana is a **state of mental quietus** that could **never be disturbed** under any circumstance, even in the face of death. It is a state of tranquillity that lasts throughout normal life. This **imperturbable serenity** of mind is **gained by awakening** from the **dream of existence and death**. It is **immortality** through **freedom from the “delusion of existence.”** It is a **lasting emancipation from all suffering**.

In order to achieve this, **supernormal** and **extremely high level of evolution** called Nirvana, which is **extremely rare** in the world both ancient and modern, one has to **give up the experience** of **existence** of a “**self**” in the **world**. We are **normally** attempting to preserve a “**self**” that **does not “exist.”** The “**self**” is a delusion. It is the “**self-consciousness**” that stands as an **obstacle** to imperturbability. This “**self-consciousness**” becomes a **problem** even when we try to control our impulses, because we **tend to identify with our emotions** and personalize them, and thereby become unable to let-go of **what we think is** a part of ourself. It is only when one is able to “**awaken** from the dream of existence” that the **self-consciousness disappears**.

This was the special attainment of the **Buddha**, by which he **went beyond the other yogis**. He did this by attaining to the **ending of all mental activity** and **returning again** to the

**normal state.** In doing so, he saw how the **mind created the “world” and the “self”** in it. He also saw how the **“self” gets involved with the “world”** in emotional relationships, and what all the **painful experiences result in**, including meeting the unpleasant, parting from the pleasant, frustration, aging, disease, death, and the grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion that follows. This attainment is rising above the normal to the **supernormal state**, which is freedom from all suffering.

This **Supernormal State**, however, is **not what we are aiming at in this paper**; it was **mentioned only** to indicate **what the teaching of the Buddha aims at, ultimately.**

## SECTION TWO

### *The Self*

Western philosophers, throughout the history of **Western philosophy**, have been **“self” oriented in their thinking**. It was Descartes who made the categorical statement **“I think, therefore I am”** (*cogito ergo sum*). The existentialist philosophers assumed the “existence” of the “self,” even when they seemed to deny it. Even Sigmund Freud, who saw the personality as an energy system, used the term *ego* to refer to the rational part of the mind. His later followers became more interested in the *ego* as a reality, and changed their focus from a concern with the conflict between the *id* and the *ego*, and began to focus on what they saw as the more realistic relation between the *ego* and its object. Therefore, Modern Western psychotherapy is often seen as a way of strengthening the “ego.” It was Alfred Adler, who was an early associate of Freud, who first pointed in that direction.

### *The Problem Of Self-Esteem*

**Mathew McKay and Patrick Fanning**, in their book *Self-Esteem*, wrote: **“One of the main factors differentiating humans from other animals is the awareness of self: the ability to form an identity and then attach a value to it.”** “In other words,” they continue, “you have the capacity to define who you are and then decide if you like that identity or not. The problem of self-esteem is this human capacity for judgement. It’s one thing to dislike certain colours, noises, shapes, or sensations. But when you reject parts of yourself,

you greatly damage the psychological structures that literally keep you alive.

“Judging and rejecting yourself causes enormous pain. And in the same way that you would favour and protect a physical wound, you find yourself avoiding anything that might aggravate the pain of self-rejection in any way. You take fewer social, academic, or career risks. You make it more difficult for yourself to meet people, interview for a job, or push hard for something where you might not succeed. You limit your ability to open yourself with others, express your sexuality, be the centre of attention, hear criticism, ask for help, or solve problems. To avoid more judgements and self-rejection, you erect barriers of defence. Perhaps you blame and get angry, or bury yourself in perfectionist work. Or you brag. Or you make excuses. Sometimes you turn to alcohol or drugs.”

McKay and Fanning also point out that hundreds of researchers have been working on this problem, trying to discover the causes of self-esteem and ways of developing it. From what these two authors say, it is quite clear that **modern psychologists have begun to see that the psychological problem is the lack of “self-esteem,”** and therefore they have made “self-esteem” their main focus of attention. They have begun to think that the solution to the problem is to find ways of developing self-esteem.

**Bernie Zilbergeld**, in his book, *The Shrinking of America*, points out that although psychotherapy in general has only limited effectiveness, his studies led him to believe that psychotherapy does positively affect self-esteem.

Improved self-esteem “may be counselling’s most important outcome.” In other words, **what modern psychotherapy has been able to positively achieve so far is only the improvement of self-esteem.** This might, in the future too, become the main goal of psychotherapy.

### *Inferiority Complex*

Alfred Adler, one of the pioneers of modern psychotherapy, pointed out that the inferiority feeling is at the root of all psychological problems. This inferiority feeling develops in early childhood because children are naturally weaker than adults. In addition, the growing child is bound to meet children who are better than them in certain ways. Therefore, no one escapes feelings of inferiority and envy. All children want to be in the limelight, be the centre of attention, and be accepted. Inferiority means that one is not accepted, one is not in the limelight. Inferiority feelings cause children to feel that they are not fit to be in the limelight, and that, if they were thrown into the limelight, people would discover their inferiority or unfitness and reject them. Of course, they are only rejecting themselves by judging themselves in this way. Yet, not realising this, they shy away from public attention. They begin to shiver when attention is focused on them. This inferiority feeling, when carried into adult life, prevents people from getting ahead in life. This could also lead to any or all of the many varieties of psychological problems mentioned above. Thus no one escapes from psychological problems; it is normal to have them - it is supernormal to be free of them.

People compensate for these inferiority feelings in various ways. One might compensate by trying to achieve greatness in some way or other, good or bad, social or antisocial. One might become a philanthropist, a criminal or a neurotic according to how one compensates. This is also how character is developed, whether good or bad. Withdrawal into neurosis or functional psychosis is an attempt to compensate in an unrealistic way. This unrealistic compensation can also lead to perversions, alcoholism, drug addiction, and even suicide. This is also what makes people turn to crime and war. Good as well as bad can come out of inferiority feelings, depending on how one chooses to deal with them. And no one can escape inferiority feelings.

### ***Buddha's Idea Of Personalization***

More than twenty-five centuries ago it was Siddhatta Gotama, the Buddha (the Awakened One), who discovered a different way of understanding and solving this same problem of low self-esteem or inferiority complex. He called this problem “*dukkha*,” which means, “**pain**,” or discomfort both physical and mental. He saw this as the “discomfort of being,” (*bhava dukkha*). The word “being” here refers to “being a self.” In other words, this “self-consciousness” or consciousness of being a “self” or having a “personality,” is the problem. We tend to personalize and identify ourselves not only with our body and mind, but also with things outside the body, such as our family, our culture, our nation, our job, our financial and social status, our educational qualifications, our achievements, and all such internal and external material and spiritual things that people normally identify with.

This identification is also called “personalization” (*upadana*) in Buddhism. It is through personalization that we acquire a “personal identity,” or “personality.” To “personalize” is to think and feel, “this is mine.” One tends to personalize the body by thinking, “this body is mine.” The body becomes a personal property. In the same way one personalizes sensations that arise and pass away in the body. One similarly personalizes perceptions, conceptions, emotions, actions, and consciousness itself, as “mine.” One personalizes, not only the body and the mental processes that continue inside the body; one even personalizes external objects, like one’s family members, one’s ancestry, one’s social status, one’s job, one’s income, one’s house, one’s car, one’s bank account, and many more such things. The sum total of all that has been personalized becomes one’s “self.” What has been personalized is what one identifies with, and is called “mine” or “myself.” Then one’s “identity” becomes what one identifies with or personalizes.

In other words, the Buddha saw that personality is only a concept, a perspective, which results from personalization of perceived objects such as the body and the mind. It is accompanied by a mental image of how one sees oneself, and is therefore called the “self-image.” Having “personalized” things and having thus created a “self-image,” or personality perspective (*sakkāyaditthi*), one then begins to compare these “personalized objects” (*upadhi*) with those of others. In other words, having identified one’s “self” this way, one begins to compare oneself with other selves (*māna*). Not only does one compare one’s body or mind with that of another, one even compares one’s social or economic status, one’s house, one’s

car or any other personalized property. By comparing this way, one begins to feel inferior (*hīna māna*), superior (*seyya māna*) or equal (*sadisi mana*). This is how the problem of self-esteem begins.

Personalization results in a personality which is seen as one's "self," and this self-consciousness leads to comparison with other such selves, resulting in the low "self-esteem," "inferiority complex," and the whole host of psychological problems described above. They are all the consequence of personalization and the formation of the notion of "self." The painful experiences recounted above are all the result of this personalization. It may be true that out of all the animals in the world, the human being is the only animal that is aware of a "self." This does not, however, mean that this "self-consciousness" has to be preserved despite its painful consequences.

### ***Personality Perspective***

As mentioned above, the Buddha saw this "personal identity" as a psychopathological burden that we carry throughout life. This "personality perspective" (*sakkāya ditthi*) was seen to be pathological and unhealthy because it is productive of pain and suffering to oneself as well as to others. It is this "personality perspective" that is responsible for the "identity crisis" described by Erik Erikson. This "identity crisis" is the inability to decide what one should identify with. "Uncertainties" like "Who am I now?" "Who was I in the past?" and "What will I be in the future" can arise only if one is conscious of a "self." This "uncertainty"

is also the inability to decide whether to take sides with our personalised emotional impulses (*āsava*) and become pleasure seekers (*kāmasukhallikānuyōga*), or to take sides with our personalised conscience (*hiri ottappa*) and become ascetics (*attakilamatānuyōga*). This is what Leon Festinger called cognitive dissonance, which the Buddha called *vicikiccā*. But asceticism is not better than pleasure seeking. The Buddha saw that asceticism is based on mere suppressive, self-denying vows (*sīlabbata*) that split the personality and create conflict within. The person who is free from the “personality perspective” is free from uncertainty and self-denying vows. Such individuals are able to successfully eliminate an emotional impulse, because they do not give it power by personalising it. They do not see the impulse as a part of themselves, and therefore can easily let it go. This brings about a cognitive consonance.

The solution to the problem of self-esteem, which the Buddha offers, is simple. It is to attack the problem at its root. It is to give up personalising and the measuring. In other words, we have to depersonalise what has been personalised. This is something that people generally hesitate to do. They hate to lose their “self” however unpleasant it may be. To lose the “self,” they feel, is to lose ‘their very “being” or “existence.”’ They do not realize that their notions of “self,” “being,” “existence,” and “identity” are only pathological concepts, which they have acquired through the personalization of perceived objects. Because we do not generally meet people who have consciously rooted out their “self-identity” we think it is abnormal to be without such a “self-identity.” The absence of a “self-identity,” does not reify a person or turn a

person into a “thing,” such as a robot. It only turns a selfish, frightened, defensive, and unhappy person into an unselfish, fearless, cooperative, kind, and happy one. It leads a self-centred person to become interested in the welfare of others, to see that another’s pain is as important as one’s own. Such a selfless individual does not make a distinction between themselves and others, because to do so is not only to be egoistic and self-centred, but also to be egotistic and selfish.

In Buddhism this conscious removal of the “self-identity” is regarded as a hallowed, extraordinary, “supernormal” (*ariya*) condition, which is a superior state of mental health. Because this is not the ordinary human state, it is also seen as a “superhuman” (*uttarīmanussa*), transcendent (*lōkuttara*), and divine (*brahma*) state. This absence of the notion of “self” is not merely a peculiar Buddhist concept; even Jesus seems to refer to it in the Christian gospels: “He who loses his self for my sake shall find it” (Mat. 10:39). This concept is also found in Hinduism where enlightenment is seen as the loss of the “individual self” when it merges with the “Universal Self” of God (*Brahma*). This is also the common mystical experience of “at-one-ment” in all theistic religions, where the soul unites with God. If the individual soul unites with the universal soul of God, the individual soul cannot remain separate, just as when a river enters the ocean, it cannot remain as a separate entity.

### ***Depersonalization Disorder***

Although, according to ancient religious thinking, depersonalisation is seen as a healthy activity that

transforms a person from a normal to a supernormal state, I am aware that this idea is seen in modern psychiatry as a pathological condition. According to the *Dictionary of Psychology* by Arthur S. Reber (Penguin Books), this term “depersonalisation” represents an emotional disorder in which there is loss of contact with one’s personal reality, a **de-realization** accompanied by feelings of strangeness and an unreality of experience. In severe cases, parts of one’s body feel alien or altered in size and one may have the experience of perceiving oneself from a distance. This condition is called **depersonalization disorder** or **depersonalization neurosis**. The conscious depersonalisation of personality by the Buddhist can easily be confused with the pathological condition mentioned above, although it is quite distinct from the pathological condition in several ways.

This confusion seems to arise due to a staunch belief of the neo-Freudians, in a **personal ego**. It was Paul Schilder (1886-1940) and Paul Federn (1872 - 1950), both Freudians who described the *ego* as the “**omnipresent component of consciousness.**” Paul Schilder identified the *ego* not only as the “**thinker**” as Descartes did, but also as the **feeler, perceiver** and **actor**. “The *ego* thinks, feels, perceives, has a past and present... every experience presupposes an *ego*.” (Schilder, *P. Medical Psychology*, pp 290-300, 1953). Paul Federn spoke of a “sense of *ego*” not as something that is perceived specifically but as something that one is generally aware of continuously. Edoardo Weis writing about Federn says, “The sense of *ego* which is omnipresent, is not ordinarily recognized. Yet, variations in intensity of *ego* feeling are a matter of common experience. When tired or drowsy, we

feel numb; upon waking from a refreshing sleep, or upon receiving exciting news, we feel an invigorated “sense of *ego*”. Federn spoke of an “*ego* cathexis.” This fluctuation of the “sense of *ego*” was explained by means of his theory of “libido cathexis,” or emotional investment. What it means is that if the *ego* becomes emotionally interested in an object, there is the experience of the “sense of *ego*.” When the *ego* withdraws its interest, the object appears strange. The feeling of depersonalisation, which is described as the “loss of the sense of reality of one’s self,” is understood to be a similar estrangement, similar to inadequate investment of libido either in the body or in the mind, and can be caused by different emotional reasons.”

We do concede that there can be pathological cases of depersonalisation resulting from what the Buddha called “the urge to get rid of existence” (*vibhava tanha*), which is based on a dislike for what exists. These pathological cases of depersonalisation are in fact “unconscious” processes. What we are referring to here is a “conscious” process of depersonalisation based on a full awareness of reality. This conscious depersonalisation is something practiced not only in Buddhism, but also in other religions like Hinduism and even in Christianity as mentioned before. There is, however, a difference in the degree of depersonalisation in the different religions. In Hinduism and Christianity, there is always a subtle “self” that remains, which is called “soul” or “atman.” But in Buddhism, there is a radical depersonalisation where nothing remains to identify as a “self.”

It is interesting to notice, however, that the pathological case of depersonalising as described by Federn involves

the withdrawal of libido cathexis from the object, though unconsciously done by the patient. The Buddhist practice of conscious depersonalisation is quite similar to the above in that it could be seen as a withdrawal of libido cathexis, but this is done consciously. Further, this pathological depersonalisation is not a complete depersonalisation. It is a partial depersonalisation where the ego remains as the subject while the object alone is depersonalised. Edoardo Weiss says on this subject, “The *ego* may react to an external situation presenting a conflict, by withdrawing itself from the sense organs, thus causing the outer world to be unreal; it may withdraw itself similarly from a body organ, which has become the source of unpleasant sensations, or from some objectionable wish or affect.” (Weir, E. *The Principles of Psychodynamics*. NY. Grune and Stratton, 1950).

### ***Complete Depersonalization***

It is clear that this unconscious partial depersonalization is the reason for the complaint and the suffering in the pathological condition, as Reber described in his *Dictionary of Psychology*, “feelings of strangeness and unreality of experience. In severe cases, parts of **one’s body** feel alien or altered in size and **one** may have the experience of perceiving **oneself** from a distance.” (*The **Bolds** are mine, in order to draw attention to the **personalized** subject, and the **depersonalized** object*). Complete depersonalization consciously executed results in freedom from worry and fear because such depersonalization frees one from the “notion of self,” which is responsible for all worries and fears. The self-centred mind is always unhappy while the

selfless mind is always happy. It is because people prefer to hold on to the “personality perspective” rather than let it go, that they continue to suffer from personality disorders. The few individuals who learn to consciously let go of the “self-consciousness” gain freedom from mental sickness and suffering.

Although letting go of the “self-identity” sounds like an impossible or at least a very difficult task, it can be achieved. The Buddha did it, and so did all his enlightened disciples. It is what all Buddhists attempt to do in their practice. It involves a sacrifice of what one cherishes most, the feeling of “being.” The people who feel their “self” crushed or rejected are the people who mostly hesitate to let go; they hang on to their “self” and are very defensive. Yet their freedom lies only in letting go of this false “self.” This “self” has to be seen as a burden that we are carrying all the time. Freedom is found by letting go of the burden. In Buddhism, this letting go of the “self” is called “laying down the burden.” Probably this was what Jesus meant when he said, “Come unto me those who are heavy laden, and I shall give you rest.”

The Buddha not only saw that this “self-identity” has to be eradicated from our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, but he also discovered the technique of doing so. This technique is what he taught as the Supernormal Eight-fold Way (*ariya atthangika magga*), the eight constituents (1. Harmonious perspective, 2. Harmonious orientation, 3. Harmonious speech, 4. Harmonious action, 5. Harmonious life style, 6. Harmonious practice, 7. Harmonious attention, 8. Harmonious equilibrium.)

This technique begins with the Harmonious Perspective, which is a perspective free of self-centred or selfish thinking, where self-consciousness disappears because it is not supported by self-centred emotions. Such a mind is calm and tranquil, free of conflict both internal and external. It is also a kind and compassionate, way of thinking of “all,” just as a mother thinks of her children, instead of thinking of a separate “I” and “you.” This is a paradigm shift from diversity to unity, within a person, which brings about peace and harmony within and without.

### *The Harmonious Perspective*

This Harmonious Perspective results from an understanding of the fundamental problem of existence, and its solution. Before we can find a solution, the cause of the problem should be understood. The solution then is the removal of the cause, but a method has to be adopted to remove the cause. The Buddha, as did Freud, was aware that the problem we are faced with is a **conflict** between our **self-centred blind emotions** (*id*) and **reality** perceived by the **rational** (*ego*). The **conflict** has **two parts**: the **inner** and the **outer**. The **outer conflict** is the familiar conflict between our **emotions** and the reality of **impermanence** around us; for example, the impermanence of life itself, ending in death, or the mere change in our pleasant relationships in parting from our loved ones, or meeting the unavoidable devastating effects of a tornado, an earthquake, or even of war. The **inner conflict** is the conflict between our blind **emotions** and our **reason**, which is aware of the impermanent reality around us.

It is a conflict between **two parts of our own mind**, emotion and reason.

When emotion and reason are in conflict, **emotion** always tends to **win**. Emotion is **powerful** but **blind**. Reason is **weak** though **intelligent**. Yet **intelligence** can be more **successful** than brute power. It is true that emotions have helped the lower animals to some extent, in defending themselves from danger, and in the continuation of their species, although it is not the best defence, for we see its failure when we see a lion chasing the deer. The **human beings**, however, have a **better tool** for this purpose. This tool is what distinguishes the human being from all other animals. It is the human **intelligence**, which has **helped** humankind **throughout history** to tide through the troubles and tribulations of life, despite its imperfections. The imperfection in the intelligence, when seriously considered, appears to be the result of **blind emotions interfering** with proper **thinking**.

**Emotions** have been for mankind a **nagging vestige** (like the **appendix**) carried forward from an earlier evolutionary stage, which has **to be removed** or kept under the control of the later developed but more effective intelligence. It is when **emotion** plays a **dominant** role that all psychopathic **problems** arise.

In seeking the way to gain control over emotions, it is important to understand that the **human mind** is not an entity separate from the body. It is the **subjective** experience of the **objective** activity of the body. It is the result of the activity of the **nervous system**. What we commonly call the

**mind** is mainly **two parts** of this activity: the **cognitive** and the **affective**, which is subjectively experienced as **reason** and **emotion**, which often come in conflict and create our problems.

The **immature child** or adult is dominated by **emotion** to a great extent, whereas the **mature adult** is mostly dominated by **reason**. **Psychotherapy** is an effort to make an immature person **become mature**. The **reality** of the **immature** person is influenced by **emotion**, and is quite different from that of the mature one. The **mature mind** can **think more clearly**, and therefore it is less hindered by emotions. The **harmonious perspective** is therefore a **mature** perspective. The modern **cognitive psychologists** are becoming aware of the importance of developing the cognitive process. They have understood that the **cognitive** process can **control** the **affective** process. It is the **cognitive** process that is **responsible** for the bad behaviour of the affective process.

This is why cognitive therapy deals with the cognitive process in order to correct the affective activity. In other words the **emotions** are **corrected** by correcting the **rational** faculty. This is why the **Buddha** started with the **Harmonious Perspective**. This was why even Sigmund **Freud** pointed out: “where the *id* is, there should be the *ego*.” This means: instead of the *id*, the *ego* should dominate one’s life.

Both the Buddha as well as Freud saw that emotions or the affective process comes in conflict with reality and also reason. Freud spoke of the *id* coming in conflict with the *ego*, while the Buddha spoke of the *citta* coming in conflict

with *mano* and reality. **Reason** is aware of the reality around, and therefore wants to **be in tune** with **reality**, while the **blind emotions** seek immediate **gratification**. This is why the **child** and the **neurotic**, who are dominated mainly by **emotions**, act emotionally rather than rationally.

The **Buddha** saw a **solution** to this conflict not through suppression, repression, or sublimation. His method was to understand that **emotion** is a physical disturbance in the body created by the **thinking** of **cognitive** *mano*. If we learn to **correct our thinking**, the body becomes free from emotional disturbances. Such a body is relaxed where the mood (*citta*) is calm and tranquil. This **tranquil mind** is the **healthy** and **happy** mind. Such a mind is neither normal nor abnormal. It is **supernormal** because such perfect tranquillity is not a normal phenomenon.

The aim of the Buddha was a **Perfect Imperturbability Of Mind** at all times. The tranquil mind is free of self-centred emotions. Therefore, it is not only dominated by reason, it is also **free of selfishness** or even the “**sense of self.**” Tranquillity **depersonalizes the personality**. It is only when this depersonalization has been perfected cognitively by *mano* that the tranquillity will remain. Otherwise, the mind can get disturbed again and the tranquillity is lost. Therefore, while in the tranquil state, the **depersonalization must be consciously perfected** by **changing the way we think**. It then becomes a cognitive transformation, which we call a **paradigm shift** from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. We may not be able to attain to that ideal state immediately, but every step taken in that direction through the Supernormal Eightfold Way brings one to a greater

level of happiness, the **problem being solved gradually** to a greater and greater degree. In other words, the solution grows in degrees.

### *Levels Of Presentation*

**Harmonious perspective**, in short, is **becoming aware of the problem** and its **solution**. It is in making this paradigm shift that the **therapist can help**. The **rest** is the **work of the patient**, which often **follows automatically**. The **therapist** acts as a **teacher** rather than a doctor, and the **patient** becomes a **student**. The Buddha presented the problem and its solution, in the form of the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality**.

1. **The problem** – Conflict between emotions and reality
2. **The cause** – The blind emotions
3. **The solution** – Elimination of blind emotions
4. **The method** – The Supernormal Eightfold Way

This reality is supernormal because it is not the reality of the normal or the abnormal person. It is a reality that rises above the normal to a supernormal level, though it is quite accessible. Yet one has to gain access to it in degrees. Therefore, it has to be described in relation to four main levels of development as follows:

## ***Levels Of Development***

1. **Knowledge** – Comprehending the Awake One and his teaching (*saddhā*)
2. **Discipline** – Discipling one’s behaviour (*sīla*)
3. **Tranquillity** – Tranquillizing the citta (*samādhi*)
4. **Comprehending Reality** – Awakening from the dream of “self” and “existence” (*paññā*)

## The Principle Of Determinism

The problem of determinism came to be known in the West only during the age of Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. This was when modern science began. Till then people believed that all occurrences of nature such as thunder, lightning, and earthquakes were caused by God the Creator of the world. Gradually the intelligentsia began to discover that these natural occurrences were dependent on conditions like electricity and magnetism. This was how the principle of determinism was discovered.

### *Solving the problem of low self esteem*

Having understood the Harmonious Perspective, it is possible to see how a problem such as “low self-esteem” can be solved through this technique.

#### *1. The First Level Of Development*

At this level we begin to gain confidence that it can be done by understanding how the Buddha did it. When we have comprehended the way by understanding the teaching we begin to know how to overcome **selfishness**. We then begin to change our sense of values. Our aim now is not to build a “self,” but to get rid of the “notion of self” and even to help others who suffer. We notice how others suffer by seeking to build a “self.” Judgment of superiority or inferiority depends on their desire to build a “self.” For example, if I think that financial prosperity is of great value, I will begin to feel inferior when I meet a person who is richer than me. If I do

not think so, I will not feel inferior. If I think that having a university degree is of great value, I will feel inferior when I meet someone who has a degree higher than mine. If I think that physical height is of great value, I will feel inferior when I meet a person taller than me. Our feeling of inferiority or low self-esteem depends on our sense of values and our desire to build a “self.” Therefore, the problem is solved at this level by changing our sense of values and the desire to build a “self.”

## ***2. The Second Level Of Development***

At this level we begin to discipline our behaviour and broaden our mind. We begin to consider others as important as ourselves. Then we stop worrying about our superiority or inferiority. We realize that these feelings of inferiority are present in everyone, even in great kings and emperors. What is important is to help others overcome their problems, and be concerned about the welfare of all humanity, and even animals and plants. Such thoughts dissolve the feelings of low self-esteem. Our hearts become broad. Only narrow minds seek prominence and feel inferior.

## ***3. The Third Level Of Development***

At this level we appreciate the value of calmness. We learn to relax the body and calm the mind. We learn to calm the emotions instead of fighting, suppressing or repressing them. We learn that emotions are controlled by mental images. We can learn to change our mental images and maintain calming images in the mind. We walk calmly, work calmly,

talk calmly, and think calming thoughts. We avoid emotional thoughts as far as we can. Even if we become emotional by accident, we know how to regain our composure and return to calmness quickly. This way, thoughts of inferiority never enter our minds. We are not concerned about inferiority or superiority at all.

#### ***4. The Fourth Level Of Development***

This is the level of impersonality. This is a very high level. It is at this level that we learn to depersonalize all that has been personalized as “mine.” By cultivating calmness of mind, we have seen how thoughts of “self” disappears when the mind is fully tranquil. We know that the self-consciousness is a result of tensions in the body and emotional excitement. We are fully convinced that there is no real “self” to talk about. We understand that the idea of “self” arises from personalization. Although we understand that there is no true “self,” yet feelings of “self” spring up by habit. So, we try to overcome the habit by constantly watching the mind for pop-ups and dwelling on depersonalizing thoughts, as follows:

- (1) There are only activities, no existing entities
- (2) Every activity is dependent on conditions
- (3) What is dependent is unstable
- (4) What is unstable is unpleasant
- (5) What is unpleasant is not as I want
- (6) What is not as I want is not under my power
- (7) What is not under my power cannot be “mine”
- (8) What is not mine cannot be “me” or my “self.”

We begin to think in the same way, regarding every part of the personality. When we have been able to depersonalize the total personality, the thought “I am” does not arise as a real fact. When the thought “I am” is absent, how can there be the thought “I am inferior?” This is how the harmonious perspective can put an end to all troubles described above. Yet this depersonalization has to be done in degrees, according to different levels of progress.

When this Buddhist meditation, as taught by the Buddha, is practiced, one begins to see oneself as an impersonal process, which is really the modern scientific perspective, although this perspective does not play a dominant role in any scientist’s mind, in normal life. This unfortunate condition has been called, “cognitive dissonance.” This dissonance is because we are governed by emotional habits, just as the software governs a computer. Yet it is possible to overcome wrong emotional habits by consciously cultivating selective thinking. It has to be done through constant repetition of right thoughts in the mind. This means, this harmonious perspective has to be reflected upon day and night by constant repetition. This is the meaning of **insight meditation** in Buddhism.

This is how one depersonalizes what has been personalized. This depersonalization in thought (*ditthi*) has to penetrate into one’s feelings (*sankappa*), and behaviour in the form of speech, (*vaca*) and action (*kammanta*) and one’s whole lifestyle (*ajiva*). This can happen only by constant practice (*vayama*), or repetition of this way of thinking. This means paying constant introverted attention (*satipatthana*) to one’s thoughts, feelings, speech, action, and life. When this is done, one regains one’s lost mental equilibrium

(*samadhi*). When this equilibrium is successfully attained, followed by proper insight into the reality of impersonality, one gets disinterested (*nibbindati*) in one's personality; being disinterested, one becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*); being dispassionate, one is freed from the "delusion of existence" as a "self" (*vimuchchati*).

### ***Regaining The Mental Equilibrium***

Our problem is that we have lost our mental equilibrium, because of our reaction to the environmental stimulation of our senses. We not only react, we also personalize the reaction, thinking: "I react." Then we begin to experience the instability of what has been personalized. Our mind is then shaken by the changing vicissitudes of life. If, on the other hand, we depersonalize what has been personalized, our mind is not shaken any more by whatever happens to the impersonal phenomena. Thus we regain our mental equilibrium.

This "self-identity" or "notion of self" is indeed a tragedy because it carries with it all the miseries of life. We can turn our life into a joyful one by gaining freedom from this "delusion of self." This makes Buddhism a very optimistic way of thought, though some writers have mistakenly called it pessimism. Freedom from "self" is **not death**; on the contrary, it is the **freedom from death**. When there is no "self" who is there to die? Obviously, this loss of "self" is the only way to perfect happiness, however fearful it may look. It is also the only true way to **immortality**, which all religions ultimately seek.

This is the Buddhist idea of awakening from the “dream of existence.” Of course, this process of depersonalization is not a sudden occurrence. It is a gradual process of growth and evolution. How long it takes depends on the individual’s level of maturity in terms of readiness to give up the pleasure principle and accept the reality of impersonality. According to the Buddha, an intelligent and serious meditator can reach perfection in a maximum of seven years. Some may take much longer. Yet some have done it in seven days, and very few overnight. The important point to realize, however, is that with every step one advances, there is a greater degree of happiness experienced.

This teaching of the Buddha is worthy of special study by modern psychologists. Such a study could end up in a major breakthrough in the field of psychotherapy. This means Buddhism is not a mere speculative philosophy, nor a dogmatic religion, nor even a materialistic science, but an evolutionary psychotherapy, where the human being transcends his animal weaknesses and reaches a supernormal superhuman transcendent state of perfection where all suffering comes to an end.

### ***The Buddha The Radical Shrink***

It is interesting to note that modern psychiatrists and psychotherapists have been nicknamed “shrinks” by Americans, because they are being compared to the Native American medicine men of old. It is believed that the ancient medicine men could, by some method, shrink the heads of their enemies, after killing them, and preserve them as

trophies. This “head shrinking,” however, can be given a more laudable interpretation in relation to Buddhist psychotherapy. A properly carried out psychotherapy, according to the Buddha, could be seen as a deflation of a person’s “ego,” which is “**head shrinking.**” The **removal of the delusion of “self”** can be seen as a deflation of the “ego” of a person.

This Buddhist approach to psychotherapy is a **deflation carried to its ultimate end.** This form of therapy does not merely make abnormal people normal; it **makes normal people “supernormal.”** This means that Buddhist psychotherapy is a **radical therapy,** where the Buddha becomes the “**Radical Shrink.**”

***THE END***



## THE 124 YEAR OLD BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA, BRICKFIELDS

The Buddhist Maha Vihara was founded in 1894 by the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society (SAWS), the oldest registered Buddhist Society in the Klang Valley.

From its very inception, the Vihara has been managed by the Sinhala Buddhist community but always financially supported by the Chinese and Indian communities. The first structure of the Vihara was the Main Shrine room, completed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The donors for the Shrine Room, as recorded in the Selangor Government Gazette 1896, pg. 408 are clearly Chinese and Indian communities and among the main donors were:

*Kapitan Yeap Quang Seng, Towkay Loke Yew, K. Tambusamy Pillay, R. Doraisamy Pillay, Loke Chow Kit, San Peng and Son, Lim Tua Taw, etc...*

The Vihara was always the focal point to mobilize the Buddhist community. The large gathering to protest and stop the screening of the then controversial film “Light of Asia” in 1927 in Malaysia was also held at the Vihara, and so was the mass gathering and signature campaign in the 1950s to lobby the government to declare Wesak as a national holiday.

During the Emergency period of 1948-1960, monks from the Vihara made a massive impact reaching out to calm and educate the psychologically disoriented Chinese New Villagers who were evicted from their traditional lands and placed in new settlements by the Government which was fighting a communist insurgency.

Since the 1940s, the Vihara commenced a free Dhamma publications program as a Dhammadutta outreach to the masses which by the year 2012 was made available in 28 languages, with millions of

copies of books and CDs produced. The Vihara's Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School (BISDS), founded in 1929, is the oldest Sunday School in the country with an enrolment of more than 1200 students and continues to produce systematic books on Buddhist studies for children.

The Wesak procession organized by the Vihara since the 1890s is the oldest and largest religious procession in the country. The 3-day Wesak celebrations at the Vihara attracts about 100,000 people.

Many students or devotees who have studied and benefited from the BISDS, the Vihara's Free Publications, Dhamma programs, classes, talks, etc have gone on to set up new Buddhist societies and centers which help to spread Buddhism in the country far and wide.

The SAWS is also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) formed in 1983, a Council which constructively engages the Government on matters affecting non-Muslims in the country. The MCCBCHST Administrative office is based at the Vihara.

In 2004, the Vihara was a major focal point in the country to collect relief aid to assist the South Asian Tsunami that killed almost 280,000 people. Several forty foot container equivalents of relief aid were dispatched by the Vihara to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Myanmar and Thailand by air, sea and land.

Buddhists remain the country's largest organ donors, thanks to Cornea and Organ Donation Campaign carried out by the Vihara.

The Vihara continues to operate to deliver its obligation to the Buddhist community till this day and is governed and directed by its Vision, 4 Missions, 6 Strategic Objectives and 4 Ennoblers in tribute and gratitude to all our past and current Sangha, volunteers,

donors, friends, etc. We would be failing in our duty if we fail to mention the name of the foremost amongst them, our late Venerable Chief, ie. Ven Dr Kirinde Sri Dhammananda.

### ***Vision***

To be a leading international center for the Learning, Practice and Dissemination of the Buddha Dhamma

### ***Mission***

To provide a conducive environment to:

- promote scholarship and study of the Buddha Dhamma
- propagate the Buddha Dhamma
- be the focus of Buddhist activities for the larger community
- foster Theravada Buddhist cultural and traditional practices

### ***Six Strategic Objectives***

To be the Buddhist center of choice for:

1. Learning, Practising and the Realization of the Dhamma
2. Spreading the Dhamma
3. Buddhist Civilization
4. Synergy groupings to sustain the Buddha Sasana
5. Compassion in Action
6. Financial Accountability while delivering Cultural Obligations

### ***Four Ennoblers:***

1. Loving Kindness
2. Compassion
3. Altruistic Joy
4. Equanimity

### ***Motto***

Go forth, for the good, happiness and welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world.

## **SERVICES AVAILABLE AT BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA**

- Dana for Monks (at Vihara or Home) and Bana (Sermons)
- Blessing Services / Funeral Services by Monks
- Booking of Facilities for religious functions / events
- Marriage Registration
- Full Moon / New Moon Day Puja & Free Vegetarian Lunch
- Sunday Dhamma Classes for Children & Adults
- Buddhist & Pali University Diploma, Degree & Masters Program
- K Sri Dhammananda Library
- Bookshop

### **DAILY ACTIVITIES**

Monday to Sunday	6.30am - 7.30am 11.30pm - 12.00 noon 7.30pm - 8.30pm	Morning Buddha Puja Noon Buddha Puja Evening Buddha Puja
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### **WEEKLY ACTIVITIES**

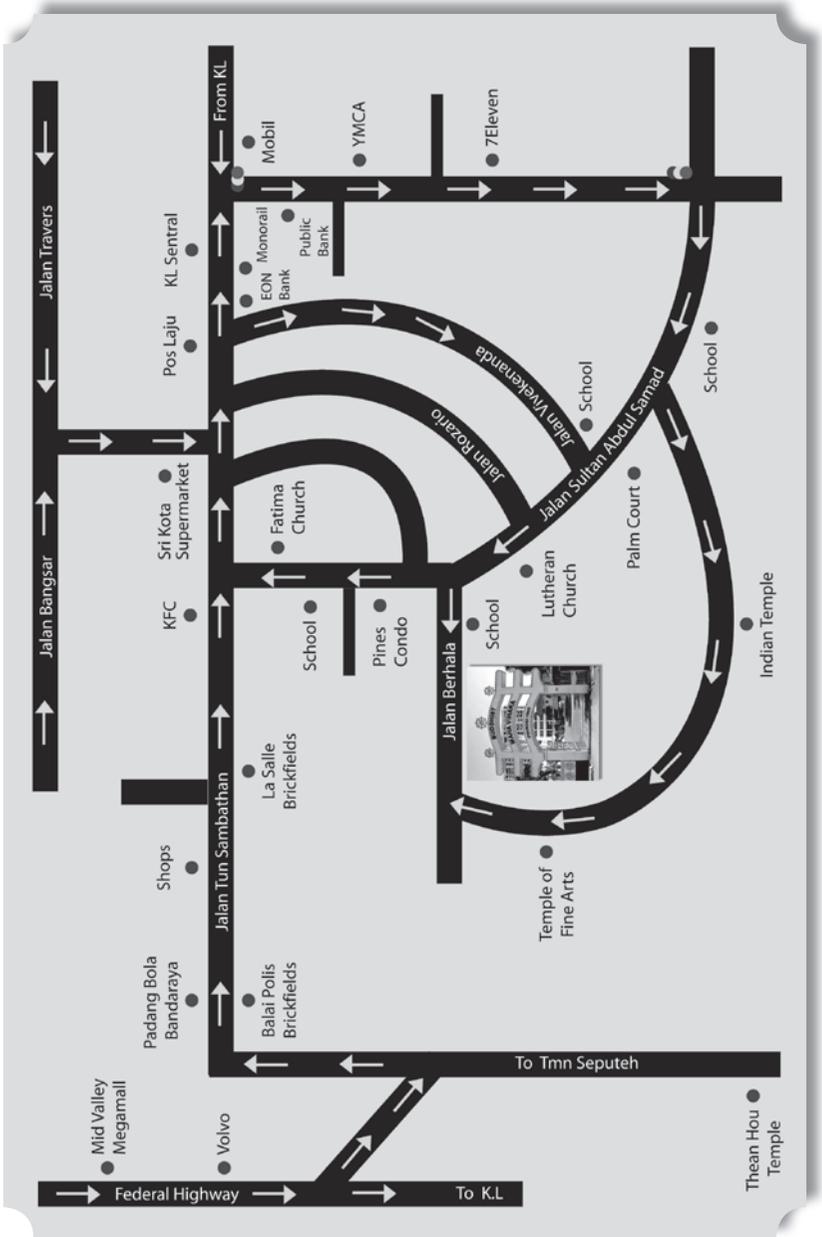
Mon, Wed, Thurs	8.00pm - 10.00pm	Meditation Class
Tuesday	8.30pm - 10.00pm	BMV Choir Practise
Thursday	7.30pm - 9.00pm	Senior Club Yoga Practise
Friday	1.00pm - 2.00pm	Afternoon Puja & Talk
	8.00pm - 9.30pm	Dhamma Talk
Saturday	7.30pm - 8.30pm	Bojjhanga Puja
	9.30am - 11.30am	Sanskrit Class
Sunday	8.30am - 9.30am	Morning Puja
	9.30am - 11.00am	Abhidhamma Class
	9.30am - 12.00 noon	Sunday School Session
	10.00am - 11.30am	Dhamma Talk
	10.00am - 2.00pm	Traditional Chinese Medicine <i>(1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun of the month. Please note there will be no clinic if a Public Holiday falls on the allocated Sunday)</i>
	11.00am - 12.30pm	Pali and Sutta Class
	1.30pm - 5.00pm	Sinhala Language Classes Sinhala Cultural Dance Classes Dhamma for the Deaf <i>(fortnightly)</i>
	2.00pm - 3.00pm	Diploma & Degree in Buddhism Classes
	2.00pm - 7.00pm	Feeding the Homeless
	5.00pm	

### **DONATION IN CASH OR KIND CAN BE MADE FOR:**

- BISDS Building Fund - Classrooms, Meditation Pavilion, Lifts, Meeting and Counseling rooms
- Free Publications (Malaysia and Overseas) - Annually about 300,000 books in 30 Languages
- Education Fund
- Full Moon and New Moon services sponsorship
- General Maintenance of the Buddhist Maha Vihara
- Utilities (Electricity, water, telephone, administration etc)
- Illumination (lighting) of the Main Shrine Hall
- Illumination (lighting) of the Awkana Buddha & Cakra
- Monks' Dana - Offering Monk Requisites of Food, Medicine, Lodging, Robes, etc
- Welfare Fund
- Special Religious Events - Wesak
  - Annual Blessing Service
  - Annual Merit Offering
  - Kathina Pinkama (ceremony)
  - Monks' Novitiate Programme

**MAY THE BLESSINGS OF THE NOBLE TRIPLE GEM  
BE WITH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

# LOCATION MAP TO BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA



# DONATION FORM

## **Buddhist Maha Vihara**

123, Jalan Berhala, Brickfields,  
50470 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan, Malaysia.  
Tel: 603-2274 1141 Fax: 603-2273 2570

I / We would like to make a donation to the Buddhist Maha Vihara.

Name : .....

Address : .....

.....

.....

Amount : RM .....

Towards : Free Publications

(English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Malay,  
Tamil, Burmese, Khmer, Nepalese, Thai, Vietnamese,  
Bengali, Chichewa, Hindi, Kannada, Kishwahili,  
Luganda, Oriya, Sinhala, Telegu, Brazilian, Dutch,  
French, Japanese, Portugese, Spanish, Swedish,  
Croatian, Marathi & German)

Others, please specify .....

.....

All cheques can be made payable to: BUDDHIST MAHA  
VIHARA or TT to "BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA"  
ACCOUNT NO: 292-00-01161-8, HONG LEONG BANK,  
BRICKFIELDS, KL. Kindly send us a copy of your BANK SLIP  
so that we can send you an OFFICIAL RECEIPT.

Donations can also be made by VISA and MasterCard at the  
Buddhist Maha Vihara Office.



# The Abbot and the Orphan

## 住持长老与小孤儿

The Abbot and the Orphan animation series is produced by the Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School. The DVD's are available in the BMV office. **Each DVD is available for a donation of RM15.00.** 住持长老与小孤儿卡通片集乃周日佛法学校的制作。众佛友可以从本寺的办事处获取此卡通片集的DVD。每片DVD只需捐款15令吉。

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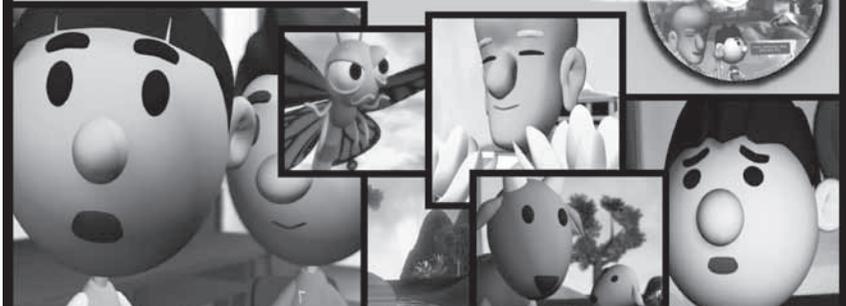
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