

## Counseling and Its Importance: A Buddhist Perspective

Ankaching Marma<sup>1</sup>  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

*“It is not our psychological theory that cures the patient,  
it is the numinous that is the real therapy.”  
- Carl Jung*

### Introduction:

Modern counseling psychology developed after the World War II when soldiers were highly affected with psychological injuries. The provision of counseling was recorded as critically needed at that time.<sup>2</sup> Counseling has become important to the modern world when number of people suffer from anguishes at the increasing rate. People are facing more political, economic, environmental, and social problems due to the fast development of industrialization and globalization. These problems not only have tremendous impact on the physical and mental well-being of the people but also challenge the community of Buddhist monks as they also play a greater role to serving and healing people. As a social figure and a spiritual leader, the monks are expected to take responsibility in delivering counseling service for the welfare of the society besides their spiritual practices.

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of counseling to the people. It is the role of monks in the society as a spiritual instructor. ‘Counseling psychology’ integrated with Buddhist counseling would enhance the power of counseling and can be of another way to fulfill the social needs. *“It’s also a mistake to think that psychotherapy is only used to solve problems or end a crisis. Even a person is doing already well, therapy can be a way to promote personal growth.”*<sup>3</sup> Therefore, counseling is not only for people who have problems in life but it can be also applied to common people in order to improve their life with well-informed choices and problem-solving.

This paper examines the contemporary mental health issues to raise awareness, among the Buddhist monks and educators, on the importance of counseling and learning ‘counseling psychology’. The paper also summarizes the available Buddhist theories and methods of counseling and how they can be put into practice. Besides the canonical methods of counseling, some effective techniques like mindfulness-based therapy applied by modern psychotherapist, psychologist, and counselor are explored

### What is Counseling?

Firstly, let’s begin our discussion with a brief history of psychotherapy before explanation on the different definitions of counseling; because counseling develops on the basis of psychotherapy. This little glance on the history of psychotherapy will give some insights on the models and theories of therapy. Sigmund Freud is known to be the father of psychology. That’s why the credit goes to him for the development of psychotherapy with his introduction to psychoanalysis. He found out the etiology of mental disorder is

---

<sup>1</sup> Ankaching Marma studies in the International BA Program at MCU, from Bangladesh. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my teacher Dr. Dion Peoples for editing my paper with patience and also Venerable Aung Shing Marma and Dr. Montra Leoseng for their supports and comments. My especial thanks to Prof. Padmasiri de Silva for his helpful advice and generous gift of an insightful book on counseling, ‘An Introduction to Mindfulness-based Counseling’. The book is indeed a recommend for academic interest and also counseling guide in our daily life.

<sup>2</sup> McLeod, John, 2009, *An Introduction to Counselling*, Glasgow: Open University Press, p. 29-41.

<sup>3</sup> Bloch. S., 2006, *Introduction to the Psychotherapies*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., New York: Oxford University Press, p. 542.

the repressed thoughts and memories which he termed as unconscious. The conflicted thoughts and memories are accessible through psychoanalysis by analyzing on dreams, fantasies and free association.

Aaron T. Beck developed Cognitive Therapy leaving psychoanalytic theory with influence of Albert's Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy during 1960-1963. It examines cognitive content of client and introspect reaction when the client is in disturbing situation. This needs a team work of therapist and client to identify; and change the negative, dysfunctional thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Person Centered Therapy was brought out by American psychologist, Carl Rogers in 1940s and 1950s. Some of mostly emphasized techniques of him are genuine warmth, accurate, nonjudgmental acceptance, and trust. He believes also that the clients have the capacity to heal by themselves when they know their problems.<sup>4</sup>

The above paragraphs discuss on the brief history of development of psychotherapy as well the models and theories. Many diverse models and theories are being introduced in the field of counseling by the psychologists but converging to one goal of healing.

Secondly, a short discussion on the definitions of the term 'counseling' would be helpful for us in understanding, 'What is counseling.' Counseling is, "the job or process of listening to someone and giving them advice about their problems (The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008) while the Oxford Dictionary of English (2005) defines it as, "the provision of professional assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems."

There are many definitions of the term 'counseling' by different experts of the field including offering advice and encouragement, sharing wisdom and skills, setting goals and resolving conflict, etc. Colin Feltham describes, "*It may be considered quite obvious that counseling is a form of help for people who need it; that counseling usually involves two people discussing the problems or concerns that one of them has and the other is willing to listen.*"<sup>5</sup> Another definition of the term:

*Counseling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counselor and a client. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more two people. It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through the resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature.*<sup>6</sup>

Counseling is a process between a counselor and a client that focuses on enhancing the psychological well-being of a client. It takes place when the counselee seeks for counseling and the counselor, after a careful analysis, applies proper techniques in counseling process. Consequently, some positive outcomes can be achieved by any counselor though not all as Colin Feltham gives a list of fifteen benefits that a counselor can offer to.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, 2008, *An Introduction to Mindfulness-based Counseling*, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, p.160-167.

<sup>5</sup> Feltham, Colin, 1995, *What is Counselling?*, Trowbridge: Redwood Books, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Burks, H.M. and Steffire, B., 1979, *Theories of Counseling*, New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> McLeod, John, 2009, *An Introduction to Counselling*, Glasgow: Open University Press Open University Press, p. 16-17. He listed number of aims of counseling which is possible by any counselor to achieve and this is the list of fifteen aims; (1) insight,(2) relating with others, (3) self-awareness, (4) self-acceptance, (5) self-actualization, (6) enlightenment, (7) problem-solving, (8) psychological education, (9) acquisition of social skills, (10) cognitive change, (11) behavior change, (12) systematic change, (13) empowerment, (14) restitution, and (15) generativity and social action.

The Pali equivalent terms for counseling can be 'upadesa, anusāsana, mantanā, ovāda.'<sup>8</sup> These terms give almost same meaning as 'giving instruction or counseling.' Although there are many explanations of the term 'counseling', but the aim of both - the secular and Buddhist counseling are to help people to overcome their problems.

### **Counseling during Mental Crisis**

The world has rapid with social, political, economic, and environmental crises. Therefore, mental illnesses; stress, depression, schizophrenia etc. are commonly observed and have a greater impact on livelihood of the people. Moreover, psychological factor is one of the causes for suicide besides social, biological, cultural, and environmental factors.

Depression and alcoholic disorders are major risks for suicide in North America and Europe.<sup>9</sup> The Member Countries of the WHO (World Health Organization) South East Asian Region faces the worse situation from depression.<sup>10</sup> According to the WHO, it is estimated the loss of 850000 lives every year due to depression. Only 30% cases worldwide, appropriate treatment is received despite the seriousness of depression. Depression was the 4<sup>th</sup> leading contributor to the global burden of disease in 2000 and by 2020 it will be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ranking of DALYs (Disability Adjusted Life Years) calculated for all ages, both sexes.<sup>11</sup> The world humanitarian day celebrated on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 by the WHO in Geneva, WHO Assistant Director-General for Polio, Emergencies and Country Collaboration, Dr. Bruce Aylward says, "*In the last five years the psychological damage left in the wake of tsunamis, earthquakes, droughts and conflicts has proven as devastating as the physical damage.*" From the above statement, it is clear fact that the physical damage can cause psychological damage and psychological damage also can cause physical damage as we are composed of interdependent psycho-physical components.

The more human civilization develops with materiality, the lesser interest of spirituality will increase. The prediction that mental sickness: depression will reach to 2<sup>nd</sup> place of DALYs in 2020 would be correct because the human civilization will be more developed in materiality rather than in spirituality. If the rate of depressed people accelerates then there is possibility of losing of many valuable human lives in suicide increasingly. Emile Durkheim argued that religion could do preventive actions on suicide by the strong social and moral ties to a religious community.<sup>12</sup> That can be one solution yet there is another effective alternative; bond to spirituality.

Emile Durkheim's argument on the bond of religion for suicide prevention brings questions to non-religious people or atheists: where and to whom they would go? How can they be prevented from suicide? In response to these questions, people can be spiritual rather than religious. To be spiritual, it is not necessary to be religious. In fact, spirituality is the basic foundation and element of all religions. It is born in the mind since we are born. It is within us always. The famous English phrase "I'm spiritual but not religious." means not belonging to any particular religious institution or belief. A beach will do.<sup>13</sup> It can be developed through mindfulness meditation to connect oneself to the

---

<sup>8</sup> Rhys Davids, T.W., & William Stede, 2004, *The Pali-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Asia Educational Service.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/) - accessed on 20 Aug 2011.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567\\_6741.htm](http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567_6741.htm) - accessed on 19 Aug 2011.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html) - accessed on 19 Aug 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Durkheim, Émile, 2005, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, p. 342-343, accessed on 10 Sept 2011, (See PDF <http://swauop.yolasite.com/resources/Durkheim%20-%20suicide.pdf>)

<sup>13</sup> Blake, John, 03 June 2010, *Are there dangers being 'spiritual but not religious'?*, CNN Living, accessed on 22 Sept 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-03/living/spiritual.but.not.religious\\_1\\_spiritual-community-religious-god?s=PM:LIVING](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-03/living/spiritual.but.not.religious_1_spiritual-community-religious-god?s=PM:LIVING)

spirit; spirit of being non-self. Spirituality is without discrimination so as mindfulness meditation. To support this argument, I would like to quote what David Tacey says in his paper 'Spirituality and the Prevention of Suicide', "*We reach for the spirit, the not-self, only to find that it lies at the very core of the self. Buddhism grasps this paradox well, which is why it is so popular.*"<sup>14</sup>

There is then a hope for a healthy society if people are encouraged to be bond to religions or spirituality. Also, they have to be aware of being slave to materiality and educated on the danger of growing rate of depression in the world.

### **Buddha & Counselor's Qualities**

There are many interesting stories in the biography of the Buddha from which some methods of counseling can be learned. He, having the noble qualities of a counselor, also prescribed some qualities that should be possessed by a good counselor.

#### **1. Buddha as a Counselor**

We should not forget to mention about the founder; the lord Buddha, discussing on the Buddhist counseling. He was not only a religious teacher, but also a great psychotherapist and counselor. He had consoled many individuals from every walk of life - normal and abnormal persons. He was therefore known as the *Anuttara Purisadammasārathi*<sup>15</sup> (the incomparable charioteer of taming beings) which is one of the nine qualities of the Buddha. Furthermore, his unique characteristic of taming human and non-human is read in the *Jayamangala atthagatha* and some other discourses.

The healing of the Buddha to Kisagotami<sup>16</sup> is one of the qualities that show his greatness as a counselor. The scenario of her shows vividly that she was totally mad. The cause of her neurosis is the death of her only dearest child. She ran from physician to physician, and spiritual teacher to spiritual teacher; just for waking up her child. None of them could console her despite surplus more pain and sorrow telling 'your baby is dead'. She, eventually, came to the place where the Buddha was and asked for his help. He was unlike to them, gave an assignment to bring master-seed from a house in which nobody had died. He gave a word of promise that if she could bring, he would cure her child. But there was no house wherein no one had died. Every house where she asked response either grandmother, father, brother or son died a few days back. These responses illuminated her to understand about impermanence of life; death is inevitable.

This technique of the Buddha highlights the importance of analysis and understanding of a counselee's condition. He did not directly respond her that her child was dead. If he did, she might not accept it. He knew that advising or teaching her right the way would not be an effective way. Instead, he tried to calm down her powerful defilement of grief and sorrow by giving an assignment.

Another salient example of his great quality of taming is the drunken and the furious elephant, Nalagiri.<sup>17</sup> The drunken elephant lost its sense and rushed towards the Buddha furiously to attack him. Everyone was shouting and crying, but the Buddha was silent and compassionately looking at it. Nonetheless, it came furiously rushing at him; he tamed it by the noble weapon of empathy and compassion upon it. HSS Nissanka, a Sri Lankan psychotherapist has researched and experimented on these virtues.

---

<sup>14</sup> Tacy, David, June, 2003, *Spirituality and the Prevention of Suicide*, ABC News, accessed on 20 Aug 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/stories/s972766.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Rhys Davids, T.W., & William Stede, 2004, *The Pali-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Asia Educational Service. It translates the term '*Purisadammasārathi*' as 'guide of men who have to be restrained.'

<sup>16</sup> Burlingame, Eugene Watson, 2005, tr. *Buddhist Legends*, Part II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, p. 257-260.

<sup>17</sup> Op. Cit. Part I, p. 236.

*On seeing the suffering that is there in the patient, 'Karuna' sympathy and concern will be generated in the heart of the therapist and the radiation of it will be noticed by the patient. Seeing the suffering of the patient thus will bring about a transformation in the hearts of the patient and the therapist and that will prevent even transference.*<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, there are a number of western psychotherapists, like Rogers who has explored and experimented empathy in psychotherapy. He discovered a similar meaning to Buddhist empathy that “...the most effective approach was to listen for the feelings, the emotions whose patterns could be discerned through the client's words...the best response was to “reflect” these feelings back to the client.”<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2. Counselor's Qualities

Both Buddhist and Carl Rogers share striking similarities on the qualities and personalities of the counselor with some slight differences. The major similar qualities of genuineness, non-judgmental acceptance, and empathy are proposed by both schools. Some qualities of a good counselor are read in early Buddhist scriptures, like *Udayi-sutta* of the *Anguttara-nikaya*.<sup>20</sup> This Sutta demonstrates five effective qualities of a good counselor.

1. Gradual talk (*Anupubbikatham*): A counselor possesses the quality of presenting the dharma in a gradual way according to the level of the defilement in the patient like from talk of giving to morality then to four noble truths.
2. Talk on sequence (*Pariyāyadassāvī katham*): A counselor should have the quality of giving the dharma in whatever is good and showing the cause.
3. Compassionate talk (*Anuddayatam paṭicca katham*): A counselor should cultivate compassion towards the counselee and treat him/her with the sense of helping.
4. Talk without material expectation (*Na āmisantaro katham*): A counselor should help the client with compassion without expectation of material gains.
5. Non-judgment (*Attānañcaparañca anupahacca katham*): A counselor should not compare himself/herself with others and praise himself/herself.

In contrast to the exposition of Carl Rogers on the personality of the counselor, he proposes six conditions that should be adopted by the counselor. He found that these conditions are necessary to be implemented and sufficient for the process. The below is list of conditions.<sup>21</sup>

1. Relationship of client and counselor: The most important condition has to establish, initially, psychological contact between the client and the counselor.
2. Client's incongruence: The state of incongruence of the client is vulnerable to anxiety which helps to develop relationship.
3. Genuineness of counselor: The counselor should be honest and genuine with his/her experience, deeply and freely involved himself/herself in order to promote relationship.

<sup>18</sup> Nissanka, HSS, 2009, *Buddhist Psychotherapy*, Dehiwala: Buddhist Cultural Centre, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> Rogers, C.R., 1975, *Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being*, California, accessed on 10 Sept 2011, (See also PDF

[http://www.sageofasheville.com/pub\\_downloads/EMPATHIC\\_AN\\_UNAPPRECIATED\\_WAY\\_OF\\_BEING.pdf](http://www.sageofasheville.com/pub_downloads/EMPATHIC_AN_UNAPPRECIATED_WAY_OF_BEING.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Hare, E.M. tr., 1995, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, Vol. III, Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 135-136. The Pali terms are taken from <http://tutor.ksana.tw/cgi-bin/accelon3.cgi/ksana?db=tipitaka.adb>, with Pali commentary <http://tipitaka.org/romn/> - accessed on 11 Aug 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Rogers, C, *The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of the Therapeutic Personality Change*, American Psychological Association, 1992, Accessed on 25 Sept 2011, <http://person-centred.co.uk/pdf%20props/necessary%20and%20sufficient.pdf>

4. Unconditional positive regard: The counselor should adopt non-judgmental acceptance towards the client; without judging what the client says or does, is good or bad, etc.
5. Accurate empathy: It is understanding and awareness of the counselor whenever the client is experiencing any moods or feelings.
6. Client's perception: The client's perception on the unconditional positive regard and accurate empathy of the counselor.

The personalities of genuineness, non-judgmental acceptance, and empathy are very common to both Buddhist and Carl Rogers. Buddhist gradual talk and sequential talk can be compared to Carl Rogers's genuineness where the counselor expresses the genuine experience to the client. The talks on four noble truths and cause and effect of Buddhism are the genuine expressions on the real nature of the world. The experience of suffering is exposed and the way of overcoming from it by the pragmatic method of cause and effect action-based is taught by the counselor.

The personality of non-judgment is also prescribed for the counselor in both schools. The counselor should not judge the client whether he/she is good or bad and compare himself/herself or other clients. Because the counselor's expression of judgment and comparison can be sensed by the client and the process of therapy possibly would fail. Instead the warm and non-judgmental acceptance of the counselor is encouraged regardless of the client's personality.

The quality of empathy can be compared to Buddhist compassion where the radiation of compassion is perceived by the client. It is the empathic understanding of the client's conditions and taking the clients' problems as his/her own problems but without attaching to it. It is just like the simile of a dustbin without bottom where the rubbish slip out from the bottom likewise the counselor should act like this; accepting the rubbish but without keeping them.<sup>22</sup>

There are also some differences in the adaptation of the necessary conditions in two schools. The client's incongruence and perception is not mentioned in the Buddhist personalities of the counselor. The Buddhist personalities of the counselor are more focused on the counselor side over the client. But it does not mean that Buddhist counselor is not aware and concerned for the client. Another difference is the material unexpectation in Buddhist counseling because the Buddhist monks are not supposed to be professional careers.

The personalities of genuineness, non-judgmental acceptance, and empathy are key roles of a counselor. Both schools strongly accept these conditions are necessary in the counseling theories because they are reflected by the counselee during the therapy process. The reflections of these by the counselee are important to build trust and confidence in the counselor.

### **Counseling through Mindfulness**

The practice and study of mindfulness meditation is expanded beyond that it has intervened as a treatment in the mainstream medicine. It is being studied in universities and colleges and used in hospitals and prisons. Modern scientists have discovered the power of mental culture and mindfulness in the art of living a worry-free life and healthy life. The mindfulness-based therapy has being used to treat patients and shown some positive results.

According to Roga-sutta, it is difficult to find one person who is healthy in physically and much more difficult to find one who is healthy in mentally for even one

---

<sup>22</sup> Brahm, Ajahn, 2008, *Opening the Door of Your Heart*, Australia: Hachette, p. 97.

moment, “Monks, there are to be seen being who can admit freedom from suffering for one year...hundred years. But, monks, those beings are hard to find in the world who can admit freedom from mental illness even for a moment.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed it is true. How many of us in the world are freed from worries, tension, obsession, etc.? We worry, in every second, minute, and day, of past what has already gone, present what is happening and future what is still to come. Are we healthy in mentally? In the words of Padmasiri de Silva, “In one sense everyone is subject to ‘mental disease’, except the arhants who have destroyed the *āsavas*.”<sup>24</sup> The mind is a forerunner of thoughts and actions<sup>25</sup> which are basically motivated by craving (*tanha*) of wholesome, and unwholesome; sexual driven (*rāga*), angry driven (*dosa*), and deluded driven (*moha*).<sup>26</sup> It is often dominated by defilements (*āsava*) and hide individual from knowing and seeing the real nature of the mind. Though everyone is subject to mental disease but the mental disease would become worse if it is not taken care. Therefore, *Mahasatipatthana-sutta* offers four foundations of mindfulness as a therapy for mental illness and also for complete psychological liberation, *Nibbana*.

*There is, monks, this one way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, for the realization of Nibbana—that is to say the four foundations of mindfulness.*<sup>27</sup>

Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling have been practicing in East and West. Many experiments have been already carried out, by the modern psychologists on the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation.<sup>28</sup> HSS Nissanka, in his book ‘Buddhist Psychotherapy’, proves ten successful case studies using Buddhist techniques of counseling and therapy. Some of the patients where they could not be cured by Western psychotherapy were cured by Buddhist psychotherapy under him. The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) was developed by Kabat Zin based on Buddhist philosophy of meditation in 1979. It offers healing to variety of disorders and diseases of participants by developing awareness of body and mind. He defines mindfulness in MBSR as a moment-moment non-judgmental awareness by paying attention<sup>29</sup>. Subsequently, the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)<sup>30</sup> program was founded by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale based on Kabat Zin’s MBSR<sup>31</sup> program which integrates with cognitive therapy and mindfulness. It aims clients accepting the problems without judgment and making friendship with them instead of rejecting and pushing them away. The client in this program is taught to do mindfulness meditation and to be in the present moment, watching what is happening and accepting the feelings and emotions rather than suppressing them. Recently mindfulness-based therapy is also being intervened to other types of diseases like HIV, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic lower back pain, and hot flash.

Depression is one of the most world burdens of disease. Worse thing can be happened to depressed person is suicide. There are various types of treatment introduced

---

<sup>23</sup>Woodward, E.L., 1995, tr. *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, Vol. II, Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, 2005, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> Sri Dhammananda, K, tr., 1992, *The Dhammapada*, Kuala Lumpur: Sasana Abhivurdha Wardhana Society, p.41.

<sup>26</sup> de Silva, Padmal, 2010, ‘*Buddhist Psychology: Exploring Practical And Theoretical Aspects*’, New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology, Kwee, Maurits G.T. ed., Ohio: Taos Institute Publications, p. 96.

<sup>27</sup> Walse, Maurice, tr., 1995, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publication, p. 335.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.mindandlife.org/about/mission/> - accessed on 12 Sept 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Kabat Zin, *Mindfulness Stress Reduction and Healing*, 8 March 2007, Online video clip, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSU8ftmmhmw> – accessed on 14 Dec 2011.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mbct.com/> - accessed on 11 Aug 2011.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/whatMBSR.php> - accessed on 11 Aug 2011.

for the treatment of depression like antidepressant drugs and psychotherapy. One of the most often used treatment is antidepressant drug where the patients are given to take drugs. All though many patients are cured by those treatments but still many are vulnerable to depression after few weeks of recovery. Studies found out that 50% of patients will have depression episode, subsequently, after initial treatment of depression episode and 70-80% of patients is likely to have relapse in their lifetime. The interventions are not very effective in the sense that they are not effective to fully recovery. The risk of relapse is very high. In response to the relapse of depression, modern psychologists have intervened mindfulness-based therapy to do prevention from relapse. It is found in the research that it is an effective technique to reduce the risk of relapse in depression.<sup>32</sup>

Stress is common to everyone in everyday life. It becomes big issue only when it is ignored. As Padmasiri de Silva said, *“It is rather the way we respond or react to them.”*<sup>33</sup> It depends on how one response to it. If one mismanages it carelessly then it can be damage to one’s mind and body. It is manageable when one pays attention and mindful of the stressful situation. Even sharing stress problems with friend, counselor, or monk is also a good technique. Padmasiri de Silva also has given some cases studies and concluded *“Cohesive and lively family relations and good friends are great resources for living in a society undergoing rapid changes. There is empirical and experiential evidence that the patient and less deliberately modes of mind like mindfulness practice are effective when dealing with stress, disorder, chaos and uncertainty.”*<sup>34</sup>

Mindfulness-based therapy is also intervened to cancer patients. Some studies have found that psychological disorder like depression can be caused of cancer. It is also proved that patients with high depression die sooner than less depression. Though cancer is physical illness but due to psychological factors it can worsen the conditions of the cancer. Therefore, mindfulness-based therapy is offered to cancer patients with mainstream treatment as productive union. The below quote is “How can mindfulness help you to cope with cancer?” and how it is beneficial for the client.

*We don’t offer you mindfulness as a cure for yours disease. Rather, it holds the possibility of vastly enriching your life, helping you cope with symptoms and side effects, and improving the quality of your days. Mindfulness also enhances your immune system’s performance and help harmful levels of stress hormone in your body, changes can be only beneficial.*<sup>35</sup>

A study on the HIV patients shows some effectiveness of intervention of mindfulness-based therapy. Besides, the attack of HIV to CD4 T cells of immune system, there is also another attack from psychological disorder like stress and depression that leads to loss of CD4 T cells. Creswell and his colleagues have examined a group of HIV positive patients for eight weeks by intervening MBSR (Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction) and found out that CD4 T cells are not attacked to declination by HIV. In contrast, the control group of patient lose their CD4 T cells.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Segal, Zindel V., J. Mark G. Williams, John D. Teasdale, 2002, *Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*, New York: The Guilford Press, p. Google Book Search, accessed on 29 Sept 2011

<sup>33</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, Op. Cit, p.18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.25

<sup>35</sup> Carlson, Linda, Speca, Michael, 2010, *Mindfulness-based Cancer Recovery*, Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, p. 3, Google Book Search, Accessed on 30 Oct 2011.

<sup>36</sup>Wheeler, Mark, Practice of Mindfulness Meditation Slows the Progression of HIV, Study Shows, 24 July 2008, <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/mindfulness-meditation-slows-progression-53819.aspx> – accessed on 29 Sept 2011.

Above all, my own experience would be more accurate for my deeper understanding on the mindfulness meditation. I have been suffering from lumbago since fifteen and never went to see medical doctor except traditional doctors. A few days of treatment were given; massage on painful area of my lower back. It was painful to twist the body left and right, bending forward and backward etc. During the ten days course of meditation held by our university annually from 18<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, I have experienced an effective response from the meditation retreat; reduction of pain on my lower back. Mindfulness was placed on rising and falling of my abdomen. As my stomach pushed forward and backward, it massaged the painful area of my back diagonal to front abdomen. After several times of mindfulness practice, my body could be bended and twisted without pain.

The technique of mindfulness meditation would be the most effective though there might be other techniques. It is because mindfulness meditation or mental culture purely deals with the mind. And it is the mind which is the root of all the mental illnesses though causes can be influence by outside factors. So mental illness should be treated with mental treatment rather than psycho-surgery, chemotherapy, or electroconvulsive therapy. More importantly, counseling through mindfulness emphasizes on the self-healing by the individual counselee himself/herself. It is true according to the words of Jung who said that it is individual numinous that cure the patient. Ultimately, it is individual's effort and spirit who cures himself/herself through a kind of self-healing.

The ancient practice of mindfulness is coping with the modern world and importantly its blend to modern sciences. The expansion of mindfulness meditation to other field of sciences would enrich the studies and experiments of those sciences and also study of mindfulness meditation. Scientists and researchers should be encouraged to continue their experimentations with the mindfulness meditation so that it can be applied as a useful tool in human society.

### **Counseling through Instruction**

When talking about the techniques of Buddhist psychotherapy or counseling, people usually think of mindfulness techniques only. There are other techniques of counseling found in Buddhism like counseling through instruction which can be brought into play to modern psychotherapy and counseling like mindfulness meditation is being blended. The methods of counseling through instruction are instructions; guidelines, advice, suggestions, etc. that are counseled to the clients. The followings are the different methods of counseling through instruction that are found in various occasions of the Buddhist scriptures.

Progressive talk (*Anupubbikathā*): - This technique is given to the counselee who is with powerful defilements in order to calm down them. Level of intelligence and defilements determine type of a person. A person, with low intelligence and more defilement, needs to go in gradual process so that he/she could grasp the conversation. In the procedure of gradual talk, the counselor could talk about generosity, compassion, eight worldly conditions, morality, etc. According to David J. Kalupahana, by this method of instruction, the counselee can lead towards to psychological balance, "*This is often achieved by indicating the possibility of attaining freedom and happiness through gradual path of mental culture toward psychological balance that begins with the cultivation of simple virtues such as sympathy, generosity, charity, etc.*"<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Kalupahana, David. J., 2010, '*Miracles: An Early Buddhist View*', New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology, Kwee, Maurits G.T. ed., Ohio: Taos Institute Publications, p. 178.

The story of Suppabuddha<sup>38</sup>, the leper, is a good example of this technique of gradual instruction. The Buddha used this method to teach him because he was suitable with this progressive talk. He could catch what is giving and its good effects, moral conduct and its benefits, etc.

The talk special to the Buddhas (*Sāmuḅkaṅṅikā*): - Gradual talk is the preparedness of the mind of the counselee. After the gradual talk, the counselee is given this method of instruction. At this level, the counselor can talk on four noble truths. It can be instructed in a very practical way. Here, the counselor can counsel on the illness of the counselee, causes of mental disorder/illness, cure of illness, and way of curing illness. Thus, when the counselee knows about his/her illness and way to solve it, it gives hope of recovery in her/him.

HSS Nissanka, in his counseling of cases, uses the technique on talking impermanence. He convinces the patient that his/her illness is also impermanence as everything is impermanence. It is not permanent which means his/her illness can be recovered.<sup>39</sup>

Through the dialogue of question and answer: - This is a friendly dialogue between these two: counselor and counselee. The counselor puts questions in order to diagnose the cause of counselee's problem and to distinguish the type of the individuals. Basically, there are three types of individuals: greedy type (*lobha*), violent type (*dosa*), and sexual driven type (*moha*). The counselor, after understanding the problems of the counselee, employs appropriate treatment and advice to deal with it. On the other hand, the counselee is also freed to ask concerning her/his problem. In this way, communication between counselor and counselee is developed.

Through audio and visual aids: - This method can be used as an alternative approach in counseling. At the age of IT (Information Technology), the counselor gives some audios or video tapes such as *paritta* chanting, lessons and instructions to be exercised at home. The recent study, on the effects of the body and mind by listening to *Paritta*<sup>40</sup> chanting, shows some positive results. As Chandana Jayaratne observes in his survey that listening to *Paritta* chanting benefits the listener with a calm mind, slow heartbeat, increase of the body's immune system and IQ level, learning ability and problem-solving capability, relief of insomnia, sustained positive thoughts, cultivation of compassion and production of happiness, etc.<sup>41</sup>

There are many stories of the Buddha's counseling by using the method of audio and visual aids like showing the deformed monkey and celestial nymphs to Nanda<sup>42</sup> and the monk Cullapanthaka,<sup>43</sup> who could not memorize even one verse in four months, a dull person. He was frustrated and decided to leave the monkhood life. Eventually, he was awakened from boredom while rubbing the piece of white cloth which was given by the Buddha. Boredom is an emotional state experienced when individual is lack of interest in and difficulty concentrating on the current activity.<sup>44</sup> Padmasiri de Silva proposed the

---

<sup>38</sup> Ireland, Jonh D. tr., 1997, *The Udāna and Ittivuttaka*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Nissanka, HSS, Op.Cit. p. 55-56.

<sup>40</sup> Paritta suttas are set of discourse of protection delivered by Buddha for the monks and laypeople to be recited orally when they are in fear, danger, ill etc. as means of protection and build of confidence. The Gilana sutta proves that the Buddha himself have listened to Paritta by a monk to cure from an illness.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Jayaratne, Chandana, 2010, '*Buddhist Pirit Chants for Mental and physical Well Being- A Scientific Approach*', Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective, Conference Volume, Dion Peoples, ed., Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, p. 550.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 217-225.

<sup>43</sup> Burlingame, Eugene Watson, tr., 2005, *Buddhist Legends Part II*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, p. 299-310.

<sup>44</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boredom#cite\\_note-3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boredom#cite_note-3) – accessed on 11 Sept 2011.

way out of boredom “*Thus clarity of understanding, transparency, self-knowledge and wisdom present the way out of boredom and misery.*”<sup>45</sup>

The talks on talk on the four noble truths related with the concept of impermanence have to adopt by the counselor so that hope of recovery will arise in the mind of the counselee. And the gradual talk which talks on morality and generosity can further be guided the counselee for an ethical life even after recovery.

### **Role of Monk as Counselor**

The monks play a very important role as counselor in the society. The lay society has greater expectation from the community of monks to serve the society as laity serves them. Their guidance and contribution on the path of spirituality would have a greater impact in the society. In this respect, their contribution will not be efficient unless they have a clear understanding of the secular world and the current world. Therefore they need to be educated in Buddhism integration with worldly subjects like counseling psychology.

It is also common understanding that in Buddhist society, monks are considered as spiritual teachers and instructor of the society. The laity when they are in trouble, they also approach to the monks. They seek console and advice thinking that they can help them. So the monks have to deal and cope with problems of the laity. Ajahn Brahm, shares his experience the role of a monk as a counselor, “*Monks and senior monks especially, have to sit in their monastery, listen to people’s problems and accept all their rubbish. Marital problems, difficulties with teenage children, rows with relations, financial problems- we hear the lot.*”<sup>46</sup> It is difficult for them dealing with secular problems such as marital problem, relationship problem, etc. Sometimes they fail to give appropriate instruction to laity’s satisfaction. It is may be due to lack of experience and knowledge.

The limited subjects taught to monks are not sufficient in such a globalized and competitive world today. Buddhist monks have to approach to modern issues. It would not possible to respond to modern issues without the knowledge of modern sciences. In order to help the society with such issues, monks also need to learn modern subjects as part of their education (*pariyatti*). The combination of both traditional and modern education would be very helpful for a proper understanding of the modern issues. Veerachart Nimanong, in his paper ‘Educational Inequality of Buddhist Monks and Novices in Thailand’, found out that according to the young monks and novices both traditional and university systems have to promote side by side. Their mutual integration supports for a better understanding of Buddhism and also secular problems.<sup>47</sup> In recent times, Buddhist has realized that the monastic curriculum needs to be expanded, “*the traditional monastery education...had failed to achieve these ends. The old system was too diffused, too fragmented, and too independent-minded to meet the needs of times.*”<sup>48</sup> And the modern Buddhist institution also tries to expand the curriculum with some new subjects. Counseling psychology could be added to monks’ education because it has become part of the monks’ life in the society.

---

<sup>45</sup> de Silva, Padmasiri, 2010, ‘*The Joyless Economy: The Pathology of a Culture which calls for an Awakening*’, Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective, Conference Volume, Peoples, Dion, ed., Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, p. 572-573.

<sup>46</sup> Brahm, Ajahn, 2008, *Opening the Door of Your Heart*, Australia: Hachette, p. 97.

<sup>47</sup> Nimanong, Veerachart, 2002, *Educational Inequality of Buddhist Monks and Novices in Thailand*, Graduate School of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Assumption University, accessed on Aug 28 2011, (See also PDF [http://assumptionuniv.academia.edu/veerachart/Papers/532404/The\\_Educational\\_Inequality\\_of\\_Buddhist\\_Monks\\_and\\_Novices\\_in\\_Thailand](http://assumptionuniv.academia.edu/veerachart/Papers/532404/The_Educational_Inequality_of_Buddhist_Monks_and_Novices_in_Thailand))

<sup>48</sup> McDaniel, Justin Thomas, 2009, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting words*, Bangkok: Silkworm Books, p. 109.

The interdependent nature of the society is clearly demonstrated in *Sigalaka-sutta*<sup>49</sup>. There are five duties of the laity towards the monks and six duties of the monks towards the laity. The laity supplies the monks with physical and material supports including the daily offering of food and the donating of other requisites when needed. In return, the monks provide mental comforts to laity by means of counseling and teaching them the Dharma. These six duties of the monks towards the laity are concerned with ethical, spiritual and mental supports. Monks have to point out them what is wrong and encourage them living a good and ethical life. When they are in conflicts, they have to show compassion and set out resolving conflicts. The Buddha advised monks to go and teach Dharma for the welfare and benefits of the society as found in *Mahavaggapali*:

*“Walk, monks, on tour for the blessing of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of devas and men.”*<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, the integration of both religious and secular subjects like psychology, counseling, sociology, etc. would help the monk students to understand the current problems of the world better and applicable of knowledge to solve the modern issues.

## **Conclusion**

The reflection of today society and its problems show that there are millions people suffer from depression and unbalance of psychological domain besides physical tortures. Importantly, Buddhism teaches to be the master of oneself nonetheless one's mind is bigger than himself. We often meet people who fail to maintain one's mental health and infected by psychological domain. They have enough wealth for physical needs, but never enough for psychological needs (lobha, dosa and moha). Buddhism as a religious institution of mental healing has being always offered canonical counseling techniques: the mindfulness meditation and through teachings. These help not only healing mental illness, but it improves a qualitative livelihood as well. In addition, the Buddhist teaching of dharma leads the people to right attitude and positive thoughts by handling badly accessing emotions. People would be benefited with moral standard by the bond to Buddhism as a spiritual path or religious institution. We can expect for healthy society balancing both spirituality and materiality by expanding mindfulness meditation to other field of treatments and peoples' art of living.

According to research findings, the importance of counseling is an indispensable service to the modern day and learning it by monks is crucial. The young generation of monks has understood that the wounded world needs to be healed. Therefore, at this gathering of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU), I would like to take the opportunity to suggest the Buddhist universities to integrate counseling psychology as a part of monastic education.

---

<sup>49</sup> Walse, Maurice, tr., 1995, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publication, p. 335.

<sup>50</sup> Horner, I.B. tr., 1993, *The Book of Discipline*, Vol. XIV, Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 28.

## **References**

### **Primary Sources**

- Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, trs., 2005, *The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Burlingame, Eugene Watson, tr., 2005, *Buddhist Legends Part I, II*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.
- Hare, E.M. tr., 1995, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, Vol. III, Oxford: Pali Text Society.
- Horner, I.B. tr., 1993, *The Book of Discipline*, Vol. XIV, Oxford: Pali Text Society.
- Ireland, Jonh D. tr., 1997, *The Udāna and Ittivuttaka*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Walse, Maurice, tr., 1995, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publication.
- Woodward, E.L. tr., 1995, *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, Vol. II, Oxford: Pali Text Society.

### **Secondary Source**

- Brahm, Ajahn, 2008, *Opening the Door of Your Heart*, Australia: Hachette.
- Carlson, Linda, Speca, Michael, *Mindfulness-based Cancer Recovery*, Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2010, Google Book Search, Accessed on 30 Oct 2011.
- Bloch. S., 2006, *Introduction to the Psychotherapies*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burks, H.M. and Steffle, B., 1979, *Theories of Counseling*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Feltham, Colin, 1995, *What is Counseling?*, Trowbridge: Redwood Books.
- de Silva, Padmasiri, 2005, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- de Silva, Padmasiri, 2010, 'The Joyless Economy: The Pathology of a Culture which calls for an Awakening', *Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective*, Conference Volume, Peoples, Dion, ed., Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- de Silva, Padmal, 2010, 'Buddhist Psychology: Exploring Practical And Theoretical Aspects', *New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology*, Kwee, Maurits G.T. ed., Ohio: Taos Institute Publications.
- de Silva, Padmasiri, *An Introduction to Mindfulness-based Counseling*, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, 2008
- Jayarathne, Chandana, Dr., 2010, 'Buddhist Pirit Chants for Mental and physical Well Being- A Scientific Approach', *Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective*, Conference Volume, Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- Kalupahana, David. J., 2010, 'Miracles: An Early Buddhist View', *New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology*, Kwee, Maurits G.T. ed., Ohio: Taos Institute Publications.

McLeod, John, 2009, *An Introduction to Counseling*, Glasgow: Open University Press  
Open University Press.

McDaniel, Justin Thomas, 2009, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words*, Bangkok:  
Silkworm Books.

Nauriyal, D.K., Drummond, Machael S. & Lal, Y.B. eds., 2006, *Buddhist Thoughts and  
Applied Psychological Research*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis  
Group.

Nissanka, HSS, 2009, *Buddhist Psychotherapy*, Dehiwala: Buddhist Cultural Centre.

Rhys Davids, T.W., & William Stede, 2004, *The Pali-English Dictionary*, New Delhi:  
Asia Educational Service.

Segal, Zindel V., J. Mark G. Williams, John D. Teasdale, 2002, *Mindfulness-based  
Cognitive Therapy for Depression*, New York: The Guilford Press, Google Book Search,  
accessed on 29 Sept 2011.

2005, *The Oxford Dictionary English*, 2nd ed. Soanes, Catherine & Stevenson, Angus,  
eds. New York: Oxford University Press.

2008, *The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Singapore: Green Giant  
Press.

### **Electronic:**

Durkheim, Émile, 2005, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, London and New York:  
Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. (See also PDF:  
<http://swauop.yolasite.com/resources/Durkheim%20-%20suicide.pdf> )

Blake, John, 03 June 2010, *Are there dangers being 'spiritual but not religious'?*, CNN  
Living, accessed on 22 Sept 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-03/living/spiritual.but.not.religious\\_1\\_spiritual-community-religious-god?s=PM:LIVING](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-03/living/spiritual.but.not.religious_1_spiritual-community-religious-god?s=PM:LIVING)

Nimanong, Veerachart, Dr. 2002, *Educational Inequality of Buddhist Monks and Novices  
in Thailand*, Graduate School of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Assumption  
University, (See also  
[http://assumptionuniv.academia.edu/veerachart/Papers/532404/The\\_Educational\\_Inequality\\_of\\_Buddhist\\_Monks\\_and\\_Novices\\_in\\_Thailand](http://assumptionuniv.academia.edu/veerachart/Papers/532404/The_Educational_Inequality_of_Buddhist_Monks_and_Novices_in_Thailand) )

Kabat Zin, *Mindfulness Stress Reduction and Healing*, 8 March 2007, Online video clip,  
YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSU8ftmmhmw> – accessed on 14 Dec 2011.

Rogers, C.R., 1975, *Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being*, California, accessed on  
10 Sept 2011, (See PDF  
[http://www.sageofasheville.com/pub\\_downloads/EMPATHIC\\_AN\\_UNAPPRECIATED\\_WAY\\_OF\\_BEING.pdf](http://www.sageofasheville.com/pub_downloads/EMPATHIC_AN_UNAPPRECIATED_WAY_OF_BEING.pdf)

Tacy, David, June, 2003, *Spirituality and the Prevention of Suicide*, ABC News, accessed  
on 20 Aug 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/stories/s972766.htm>

Wheeler, Mark, *Practice of Mindfulness Meditation Slows the Progression of HIV*, Study  
Shows, 24 July 2008, <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/mindfulness-meditation-slows-progression-53819.aspx> – accessed on 29 Sept 2011.

Boredom, Wikipedia, Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., accessed on 11 Sept 2011: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boredom#cite\\_note-3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boredom#cite_note-3)

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, accessed on 11 Aug 2011: <http://www.mbct.com/>

Mind and Life Organization, accessed on 11 Aug 2011:  
<http://www.mindandlife.org/about/mission/>

The Independent News, accessed on 26 Aug 2011:  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/the-happiest-man-in-the-world-433063.html>

What is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction?, accessed on 11 Aug 2011:  
<http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/whatMBSR.php>

World Health Organization, accessed on accessed on 20 Aug 2011:  
[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/)

World Health Organization, accessed on 19 Aug 2011:  
[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html)

World Health Organization, accessed on 19 Aug 2011:  
[http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567\\_6741.htm](http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567_6741.htm)

World Health Organization, accessed on 19 Aug 2011:  
[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2011/humanitarian\\_relief\\_20110819/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2011/humanitarian_relief_20110819/en/index.html)