

Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects as Reflected in Insight Meditation and Methods of Insight

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Objective:

The exposition of the universally applicable potentiality of cognitive and behavioral psychotherapeutic aspects reflected in Insight Meditation in order to alleviate, attenuate, prevent and heal mental problems and abnormal behaviors in the modern society is the main objective of this article.

Background and Nature of Mind

The Abhidhamma Piṭaka contains a highly systematized psychological analysis of human behavior and mind. According to Roga Sutta¹ and Salleka Sutta², every individual except Arahant suffers from mental problems. According to commentaries, all worldlings are deranged (Sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā).³

Individual's mind is beleaguered by The Noxious Trio - greed-hatred-delusion (lobha-dosa-moha) (Mūla Sutta).⁴ According to Loka Sutta⁵, this triple root, when arising, causes harm, stress and discomfort. Mind is deluded with ignorance (avijjā), the primary root that causes vipallāsa (perversions - saññā-vipallāsa, citta-vipallāsa and ditṭhi-vipallāsa)⁶ leading to form four perversions which take what is impermanent (anicca) as permanent; what is painful (dukkha) as pleasant; what is without a self (anattā) as a self and what is impure (asubha) as pure.⁷ The three levels of perversions which are fundamental to the Buddhist notion of ignorance or delusion are cyclical, and so the perceptions are formed in the context of one's views, which are strengthened by his thoughts, and all the three work together to build the cognitive systems which make up his personality. Vipallāsa caused by ignorance due to the Noxious Trio veils individual's mental eyes and prevents the knowledge of the Four Truths, and this is conducive to diverse problematic mentality and behavior.

The rapid modernization and the accelerated pace of life enveloped in the 'modern' economy, polity, technology and education incur unwholesome impacts on the minds of people, causing: pressure, boredom, tension, anxiety, depression, frustration, unrest, obsession, disappointments, etc.; and unwholesome behaviors like alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual harassment, polygamous or polyandrous conduct, sadism, gambling etc. The culture of violence that has arisen as the outcome of commercially exploited sadism in numerous unethical entertainments, popular unscrupulous literature, and the sophisticated technology through which they are distributed on a global scale creating an international culture of unwholesome life patterns that produce psychological problems and abnormal behaviors. As a result of the unawareness of Buddhist concepts

¹ Aṅguttara Nikāya, PTS, IV.157.

² Majjhima Nikāya. 8, PTS: M i 40.

³ Vibhaṅga Atṭhakathā, PTS /Visuddhimagga Vol. II, Page. 208. Line 13, 6th Syn. Edition.

⁴ Aṅguttara Nikāya. 3.69, PTS: A i 201.

⁵ Saṃyutta Nikāya. 3.23, PTS: S i 98, CDB i 189.

⁶ Aṅguttara Nikāya. 4.49, PTS: A ii 52.

⁷ Manual of Insight by Ledi Sayadaw-WHEEL, 31/32, P. 5.

that can be adopted to prevent or heal them, these problems get aggravated causing severe detriments to individual, family, society and the world as a whole.

Buddhist Meditation

According to Suttas like: *Sabbāsava*, *Sāmaññaphala*, *Jāliya*, *Mahāli* of Dīgha Nikāya; *Kandaraka*, *Ariyapariyesana*, *Atthakanāgara* of Majjhima Nikāya; *Jhāna Saṃyuttaya* of Saṃyutta Nikāya; *Satipaṭṭhāna* of Dīghanikāya and Majjhimanikāya; also *Dhammasaṅganī* and *Vibhaṅga* of Abhidhamma Piṭaka; and commentaries like *Visuddhimagga* and the *Atthasālinī* - the basic meaning of bhāvanā, as a whole, can be rendered as the development of spiritual qualities or wholesome potentialities (*sattabodhyaṅga*) or development of wholesome doctrines “*Bhāveti kusaladhamme vaḍḍhetīti bhāvanā*.”⁸ The Right Mindfulness and the Right Effort in the Noble Eightfold Path are the two principles that embrace the entire field of meditation common to both systems - Samatha and Vipassanā.

The Two Kinds of Meditation Designated in Buddhism

Samādhi-bhāvanā (Tranquility or Calm meditation) that cultivates concentration (*citta-ekaggatā*) suppresses mental defilements. The development of Calm or Tranquility meditation creates concentration for making the mind peaceful, strong, and happy, as well as freeing it from all mental hindrances. Samatha, a pre-requisite for meditation lays the foundation for practicing Insight meditation which is the direct way to eradicate all the mental problems.

Vipassanā-bhāvanā that develops insight in the context of the Three Universal Characteristics helps one to eradicate the defilements by dispelling ignorance and uprooting causes of miseries. Insight meditation helps one to develop true wisdom and to see all things as they really are, until one can get rid of the defilements and attachments to everything.

In *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*⁹, the Threefold training with Sīla as the preliminary phase, the practice of Samādhi as the second and Paññā as the means of attaining ultimate release from Āsavās (mental taints). Paññā is developed by Insight. *Sabbāsava Sutta*¹⁰ deals with seven ways of eradicating defilements that cause mental and physical problems. Among them, the first method is *dassanā* –understanding and the last method is ‘bhāvanā’. The highest stage of understanding is wisdom which is the realization of all the mental and physical phenomena. Hence, meditation is the means of transmuting the ordinary consciousness to the higher state.

The Sevenfold Purity Expounded in Insight Meditation

*Rathavinīta Sutta*¹¹ expounds sevenfold purity—*satta visuddhi* (elaborated in the *Visuddhimagga* and in *Abhidhammaṭṭha-saṅgaha*) as the seven successive methods of purification in Insight meditation:

1. Purity of Morality: Sīla-visuddhi
2. Purity of Mind: Citta-visuddhi
3. Purity of Views: Diṭṭi-visuddhi
4. Purity of overcoming Doubts: Kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi

⁸ Buddhist Meditation Methods & Psychotherapy, Galamangoda Sumanapala, P. 17.

⁹ Dīghanikāya 2 PTS: D i 47

¹⁰ Majjhimanikāya, 2 PTS: M i 6

¹¹ Ibid 24, PTS: M i 145

5. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of what is Path and Not-Path: Maggāmagga-ñāḍassana-visuddhi
6. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of the Way or Progress: Paṭipadā-ñāḍassana-visuddhi
7. Purity of Knowledge and Insight: Ñāḍassana-visuddhi

Each of them purifies body, mind and thoughts in a gradual process. The Dasuttara Sutta¹² of Dīghanikāya explains the Sevenfold Purifications among nine factors of endeavor leading to purification (*pārisuddhi-padhāniyaṅga*), out of which the last two are purification of wisdom and purification of emancipation. In the context of the seven successive methods of purification, purity in a nutshell means the elimination of unwholesome factors repugnant to purification.

Methods of Insight Meditation in brief

Insight Meditation (Vipassanā Bhāvanā) comprises of many methods developed on the basis of the last five of the Sevenfold Purity through the contemplations of transience, unsatisfactoriness and non-self (*aniccānupassanā*, *dukkhānupassanā* and *anattānupassanā*). The practice of Vipassanā begins at the Fifth Step of Purity (Maggāmagga-ñāḍassana visuddhi) with the Contemplation of Groups (*kalāpa-sammasana*) that results in developing insight into Knowledge of Determination (Sammasana-ñāḍa). It is the knowledge that determines all that is in the present, past and future, internal or external, coarse or delicate, low or eminent, near or far is impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*). This is elaborated in the Visuddhimagga.¹³

Rathavinīta Sutta (The Discourse on the Relay of Chariots) shows the causal relations of each stage of purity - each stage of purity is to be accomplished for the sake of the other stage of purity.¹⁴ Thus, the sevenfold purity is the true knowledge of phenomenal existence, and it is linked with the Four Noble Paths that lead directly to ultimate realization.

The Buddha emphasized the importance of the contemplation of pañcaskhandha in the forty aspects of it explaining an advanced knowledge of insight known as anuloma-khanti which is adaptive knowledge of balance applied to absolute certainty (*sammattaniyāma*) of the First Path (*sotāpatti-magga*). The Paṭisambhidāmagga gives this list of forty items of contemplation in the context of the Five Aggregates (*pañcaskhandha*) establishing absolute certainty. These Forty Subjects for meditation¹⁵ known as kammatṭhāna in seven divisions¹⁶ are explained in the Path of Purification.

The Visuddhimagga, the Great commentary elaborates two aspects of kammatṭhāna in Insight Meditation as Rūpa-kammatṭhāna and Arūpa-kammatṭhāna¹⁷ which should be contemplated in terms of the Three Universal Characteristics of material aggregates and mental states respectively.

¹² The Long Discourses of the Buddha, Tr. by Maurice Walshe, 34, P. 511.

¹³ The Path of Purification, Tr. by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, Chapter xx, 6, p.706.

¹⁴ Majjhimanikāya 24. PTS: M i 145

¹⁵ The Path of Purification, Tr. by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, Chapter xx, 18, PP. 710-711: Impermanent, suffering, disease, boil, arrow, calamity, affliction, alien, disintegrating, plague, disaster, terror, menace, fickle, perishable, unenduring, no protection, no shelter, no refuge, empty, vain, void, not self, danger, subject to change, no core, root of calamity, murderous, due to be annihilated, subject to cankers, formed, Māra's bait, subject to birth, subject to ageing, subject to ailment, subject to death, subject to sorrow, subject to lamentation, subject to despair, subject to defilement.

¹⁶ Ibid, Chapter III, 104, P. 112: Ten Kasīṇas (totalities), Asubhas (foulness), Ten Anussatis (recollections), Four Brahma-vihāras (the Four Sublime Abodes), Four Arūpas (four immaterial states), Āhāre-paṭikkūla-saññā (perception of loathsomeness of food), Catu-dhātu-vavatṭhāna (analysis of the four physical elements).

¹⁷ Ibid, Chapter XIV, 11, P.482.

The Visuddhimagga exposes Eighteen Principal Insights (*Aṭṭharasa mahāvīpassanā*)¹⁸ which dispel mental states that impede higher progress. In the development process of these eighteen insights, a contemplation known as sammasana-ñāṇa as mentioned above (determining of all phenomena of existence as anicca, dukkha, anattā), the beginning of insight which is still mundane is reached. This is the first stage of the development of insight.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga explains that a contemplation known as udaya-vaya anupassanā-ñāṇa (the knowledge and insight into rise and fall of the Five Aggregates of present existence) is attained. This is the second stage which leads to the manifestation of insight. In this process, the rise of mind-and-matter (Nāma-rūpa) in twenty five aspects and the fall of mind-and-matter in twenty five aspects in relation to their causes and conditions are contemplated. It is at this stage that the Ten Defilements of Insight (Vipassanā-kilesa)¹⁹ arise. With the overcoming of the Ten Defilements of Insight, the Purity of Knowledge and Vision of the Way or Progress (Paṭipadā-ñānadassana-visuddhai) is attained. The continuous practice in relation to the Four Supra mundane Paths leads to the attainment of Purity of Knowledge and Insight (Ñānadassana-visuddhi).

The mental development with insight in the process of suppressing, alleviating and eradicating all defilements or taints (sabbāsava) can also be attained through the following.

1. The Contemplation of the Body (Kāyānupassanā)
2. The Contemplation of feelings (Vedanānupassanā)
3. The Contemplation of the state of consciousness (Cittānupassanā)
4. The Contemplation of the mind-objects (Dhammānupassanā)

The Sevenfold Purity and Its Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects

1. Purity of Morality (Sīla-visuddhi) is the purification attained through refraining from bodily and verbal misconduct as well as from unwholesome livelihood. It is the non-transgression through body or speech of the basic precepts regulating the moral life, developing into the habitual conformation to the principles of righteous conduct. It is not the mere outward behavioral control. The moral purity which is of deeper and more psychological significance is the inner purification of character. Thus, the two-dimensional quality of moral purity is the purification of conduct and the purification of character.

Morality (Sīla) which is the conscious and intentional restraint from unwholesome deeds is volition (*cetanā*) manifested in speech and bodily action, and it is the foundation of entire Buddhist practice. Moral purity is one of the three constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path (*sīla, samādhi* and *paññā*). They are Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. The development of moral purity - the basic morality of Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) for laity, the basic morality of Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) for laity, The Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*) for novice monks and nuns, and 227 moral rules for fully ordained monks (*bhikkhu pātimokkha*) and 311 moral rules for fully ordained nuns (*bhikkhunī-pātimokkha*) is the overall ethical behavior. The Virtue of the Fourfold Purification (Catupārisuddhi-sīla)²⁰ designated for monks is known as Sīla Visuddhi.

¹⁸ Ibid, Chapter xx, 89, P. 732.

¹⁹ The Path of Purification, Chapter xx, 105, P.739.

²⁰ Visuddhimagga, Chapter I, 42, PP. 16-17. Virtue of Restraint of monks' Disciplinary Code (*Pātimokkha saṃvara sīla*), Virtue of Restraint of the sense faculties (*Indriya saṃvara sīla*), Virtue of Purification of livelihood (*Ājīva pārisuddhi sīla*), Virtue of concerning Requisites (*Paccaya sannissita sīla*).

Moral intention is Cetanā Sīla, mental concomitants are Cetasika Sīla, moral restraint is Saṃvara Sīla, and not breaking any precepts is Avitik-kama Sīla. Moral intention (Cetanā) is one's intention not to commit evil conduct in act and in speech, but to follow the seven wholesome courses of action (abstention from killing, stealing, adultery and improper speech such as lying, backbiting, divisive speech and gossip).

Moral abstinence (Virati) is refraining from all unwholesome courses of action and speech along with other immoral behavior. Virati also includes mental actions or thoughts which are refraining from covetousness, ill will and wrong view. As the Buddha preached, "Monks, he who eliminates covetousness will have moral mentality." This is Cetasika Sīla.

2. Purity of Mind (Citta-visuddhi) signifies the purification attained through cleansing the mind from attachment, aversion, torpor, restlessness and conflict. It is of eight attainments: Four rūpa Jhānās and Four arūpa Jhānās (asta samāpati) with access-concentration (upacāra –samādhi) which has the capacity to suppress the Five Hindrances (pañcanīvaraṇa)²¹.

3. Purity of Views (Diṭṭi-visuddhi) implies the understanding the combination of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) or the Five Aggregates (*pañcaskhandha*) dispelling erroneous conceptions or perversions (*vipallāsa*) of individuality and attainment of real vision of mind and body and their relation to phenomenal existence through the comprehension of mind-and-matter (*nāma-rūpa*) by the analysis of the Four Elements (*bhūta*) or by contemplation of the thirty two constituent parts of the body (*kuṇḍupa*) or by Eighteen Elements (*dhātu*), the six senses, the six sense-objects and the six kinds of consciousness corresponding to them or Twelve Sense-Bases (*āyatana*): the six sense-organs and the six sense-objects and the entire mental process attached to it with all their characteristic transience.

4. Purity of overcoming Doubts (Kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi) is the conquest of all doubts regarding the phenomenal existence through the comprehension of the causal relation of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) understanding their causes and conditions in the context of saṃsāric existence. The knowledge of discerning conditionality sees only a conditioning body-and-mind process and a conditioned body-and-mind process. In other words, it is the knowledge that comprehends the law of kamma and its result in the context of mind and body and the comprehension established by dispelling doubts about the three phases of time - past, present and future by discerning the conditions of mentality-materiality.

5. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of what is Path and Not-Path (Maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi) denotes the attainment of knowledge or insight into the Right path and Wrong path. That means it is the understanding that distinguishes the difference between the direct path and the misleading path. The practical method is known as comprehension by groups (*kalāpa-sammasana*) which is the contemplation on body and mind in their Three Universal Characteristics (*anicca, dukkha and anattā*). Here, the knowledge of Arising and Passing away of mental and material phenomena (*udaya-vaya*) occurs in two phases: undeveloped phase and mature phase. In the undeveloped phase, the Ten Imperfections of Insight²² (*dasa vipassanā-upakkilesa*) occur. These Ten Defilements of Insight, forming the Not-Path, which mislead insight, impede the progress in meditation. The realization of these imperfections is the purification by knowledge and

²¹ Dīghanikāya Potṭhapāda Sutta 9 PTS: D i 178 / Aṅguttaranikāya 9.64 PTS: A iv 457: Sensual Desire (kāmacchanda), Ill-will (vyāpāda), Sloth and Torpor (thīna-middha), Restlessness and Worry (uddhacca-kukkucca) and Skeptical Doubt (vicikicchā).

²² Visuddhimagga.xx,105, P.739- illumination (*obhāsa*), knowledge (*ñāṇa*), zest (*pīti*), serenity (*passaddhi*), bliss (*sukha*), resolve (*adhimokkha*), exaltation (*paggaha*), mindfulness (*upaṭṭhāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) and attachment (*nikanti*).

vision of Right Path, and the avoidance of the imperfections leads to the attainment of true insight. Besides this, three kinds of mundane full-understanding²³ are attained and a part of the Eighteen Principal Insights²⁴ is attained by means of full-understanding as abandoning.

6. Purity of Knowledge and Vision of the Way or Progress (Paṭipadā-ñānadassana-visuddhi). At this stage, with the absence of the inimical influences of the Ten Imperfections of Insight, insight reaches its culmination through a gradual and steady progress (known as paṭipadā) which consists of the Eight Knowledges²⁵ with Knowledge in Conformity with Truth (*saccānulomika-ñāṇa*), as the ninth. This is the knowledge adapted to the Four Noble Truths. The knowledge of contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*), one of the Eight Knowledges is conducive to eight advantages:

- 1) Elimination of wrong views regarding becoming
- 2) Abandoning the craving for life
- 3) Constant application in what is suitable
- 4) Purity of livelihood
- 5) Elimination of anxiety
- 6) Expulsion of fear
- 7) Possession of patience and self-control
- 8) Overcoming of dissatisfaction

7. Purity of Knowledge and Insight (Ñānadassana-visuddhi): This is the complete purity gained through the knowledge of the Four Noble Paths – the path of Stream-entry, the path of Once-return, the path of Non-return and the path of Perfect Holiness.²⁶ The knowledge of these Four Supra mundane Paths that lead to the total eradication of all defilements is the purity of Knowledge and Insight.

Cognitive, Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects as reflected in Insight Meditation

The first step of Satta Visuddhi, Sīla visuddhi (Purity of morality) illustrates the behavioral therapy which is the preparation for the foundation of Insight, and the other steps of Satta Visuddhi depict the cognitive and psychotherapeutic aspects in Insight meditation.

1. Purity of Morality

Behavioral and Psychotherapeutic Aspects of Morality

Morality or *Sīla* is the foundation of all meritorious actions. *Sīla* helps create a state of the mind that is not overwhelmed by fear, anxiety, remorse and confusion. *Sīla* strengthens our courage and ability. It lays the foundation for meditation practice and provides psychological strength. It is this foundation that is absolutely necessary to gain

²³ Ibid, xx 3, P.704 - Nātapariññā-full understanding as the known, Tiraṇa-pariññā- full understanding as scrutiny, and full understanding as abandoning.

²⁴ Ibid, Chapter xx, 89. P.732.

²⁵ Ibid, Chapter xx (I) 93, P. 734, Chapter XXI (II)3, P. 746 - Knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall (*udayavayānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of appearance as terror (*bhayatūpaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of danger (*ādināvānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of detachment (*nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of contemplation of reflection (*paṭisaṅkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*), Knowledge of equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*).

²⁶ Visuddhimagga. Chapter XXII, 1, 2, P.785. sotāpatti-magga, sakadāgāmi-magga, anāgāmi-magga and arihatta-magga

concentration. In a way, morality prepares the ground for planting the seeds of mental cultivation which gives rise to the tree of wisdom.

Morality enables a person to feel the basic level of safety and security that is a requisite for the practice of mental cultivation and wisdom. *Sīla-visuddhi* (Purity of morality) leads to purity of mind. Purity of mind (*Cittavisuddhi*) which is the basic foundation for penetrating the Four Noble Truths as well as all conditioned phenomena and the unconditioned which is *Nirvāna*.

The Therapeutic Rewards and Blessing of Morality

Freedom from remorse, acquisition of Joy, Rapture, Tranquility, Happiness, Concentration, Vision and knowledge according to reality, Turning away and detachment, The vision and knowledge with regard to Deliverance,

Five Advantages through the Practice of Morality

The Buddha preached the following five benefits gained through the observance of the precepts. Great increase of wealth and prosperity through diligence, Noble reputation, Confident deportment without timidity in every society, Serene Death after a full life-span, Re-birth in a happy state or in a heavenly world.²⁷

The Wholesome Results gained by keeping the Five Precepts:

The First Precept – no physical disabilities, no dry and wilted look, no weakness and sluggishness, no fear of dangers, no fear of being killed by others and committing suicide, no lots of diseases, no loss of friends and no short life.

The Second Precept – no poverty, no loss of your belongings to the Five Enemies (water or flood, fire or conflagrations, thieves, tyrants or bad leaders and unloved heirs like bad sons and daughters).

The Third Precept – not hated by many, no lots of enemies, peace, happy family, no shame and embarrassment, no physical deformities, no much worries, no separation from your loved ones.

The Fourth Precept – no unclear speech, no crooked teeth, no foul mouth, no dull senses, no lack of honor, no roughness in speech, no lack of calm.

The Fifth Precept – no loss of judgment, not being lazy, not being forgetful, not being insane, sense of gratitude, moral shame and moral fear.

Behavioral, Cognitive and Psychotherapeutic Process of *Sīla*

By abstaining from immoral speech, actions and livelihood, the quality of blamelessness with non-remorse as the benefit can be achieved. One who observes the precepts is dear and loved by his companions holding him in high esteem. Non-remorse leads to joy (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*), followed by tranquility (*passadhi*), the proximate cause of concentration (*samādhi*). With concentrated mind, one is able to penetrate into the true nature of things (*yathābhūta-ñāna*) through Insight (*vipassānā*) and attain the Path and Fruition Knowledge (*magga-phala ñāna*). Thus, *Sīla* is of many therapeutic aspects beginning with non-remorse and ending with the realization of *Nibbāna*. The Moral Purity purges the mind of its inferior, mean and inimical propensities and paves the way for inward purification.

2. Purity of Mind

²⁷ Visuddhimagga Chapter I, (IV), 23, P.9.

The following mental disorders suffered by the Deluded-natured (moha-carita) are brought into diminution by Purity of Mind.

- *thīna-middha* - sloth and torpor (3rd of the Five Hindrances),
- *uddhacca* - restlessness (one mental hindrance and also one of the Ten Fetters)²⁸,
- *kukkucca* - wrongly-performed-ness like scruples, remorse, uneasiness of conscience, worry *vicikicchā* - skeptical doubts (one of the three fetters)

3. Purity of Views

Due to *Diṭṭhi* Visuddhi, one attains the view of reality or seeing things as they are (*yathābhūta-dassana*) that avoids falling into extremes and forming perversions or distortions of views (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). The misconception that causes one to think as “I-ness” or “I am-conceit” (ego-conceit, *asmi-māna*) is eliminated. Seeing the transience of the Five Aggregates and their relation to phenomenal existence, he is not worried by the vicissitude of the world. A potentiality to face and overcome sorrow and lamentation is developed, and mindfulness to understand the truth that everything is impermanent including our own lives is developed. A wakefulness that everything is changing all of the time is created. By seeing this truth of impermanence of all worldly vicissitudes, our mind is trained to maintain equanimity leading to balance of our mind.

The Overall Therapeutic Benefits of Insight Meditation

- Decreasing and ridding the mind of various kinds of mental defilements which cause suffering.
- Increase of happiness with the reduction of suffering.
- Becoming detached from all the matters to which one used to be attached and as a result, being free from disturbances by worldly currents.
- Firm establishment of mind and development of wisdom to see things as they really are. As a result, one is unruffled, not swinging either way by worldly conditions - gain or loss, honor or dishonor, praise or blame, happiness or suffering - the vicissitude of the world.
- Decrease of selfishness and increase of sacrifices for the benefit of others.
- Development of a much more refined mind endowed with virtue in proportion to the level of practice reached.
- True peace of mind endowed with happiness which is unperturbed by secular matters.

Ten *Asubhas* (objects of impurities) and *Kāyagatā-sati* (mindfulness of body) are a therapeutic methods for mental disorders suffered by the Lust-natured (*rāga-carita*) such as hallucinatory habits (*māyā*), fraudulent tactics (*sāṭheya*), pride in all actions (*māna*), delight in sinful actions (*pāpicchatā*), unlimited desires (*mahicchatā*), unsatisfactoriness (*asantutthitā*), deep rooted defilements in every action, vacillation in duties (*cāpalya*), no fearing of any sinful action (*anottappa*), lack of moral shame in any sinful action (*ahirika*), infatuated mood in any function (*mado*), unconscious mind (*pamāda*).

Four *Kasiṇas*: *nīla*, *pīta*, *lohita* and *odāta* and the *Brahma-vihāras* are a therapy for mental disorders suffered by the Hate-natured (*dosa-carita*) such as provocation in day today life actions (*kodho*), hatred (*upanāha*), covering others’ good qualities (*makkhī*), comparing one’s good qualities with himself (*palāsa*), intolerance of others’ wealth (*issā*), hiding his wealth from the others (*macchariya*).

²⁸ AN 10.13 PTS: A v 17 *Samyojana Sutta* ,(sakkāya-diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, sīlabbata-parāmāsa, kāma-rāga, vyāpāda, rūpa-rāga, arūpa-rāga, māna, uddhacca and avijjā.

Ānāpāna-sati: is a therapy for the mental disorders possessed by the Deluded-natured (Moha-carita) such as sloth and torpor (thīna-middha), restlessness (uddhacca), scruples, remorse, uneasiness of conscience (kukkucca), skeptical doubts (vicikicchā).

Six Anussatis: Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, sīla, cāga, devatā are a therapy for the mental disorders possessed by Saddhā-carita.

Marāṇa-sati: upasamānussati, āhārepaṭikūla-saññā, catudhātu-vavatthāna - Buddhi or Intelligence.

Six Kasiṇas: paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo, ākāsa, āloka, and Four Arūpas – Sabba-carita or mixed character.

The psychotherapeutic aspects as reflected in the Eighteen Principal Insights

- 1) The contemplation of Impermanence (aniccānupassanā) abandons the perception of permanence.
- 2) The contemplation of Suffering (dukkhānupassanā) abandons the perception of pleasure.
- 3) The contemplation of Not-self (anattānupassanā) abandons the perception of self.
- 4) The contemplation of Dispassion (nibbidānupassanā) abandons delighting.
- 5) The contemplation of Fading Away (virāgānupassanā) abandons greed.
- 6) The contemplation of Cessation (nirodhānupassanā) abandons originating.
- 7) The contemplation of Relinquishment (paṭinissaggānupassanā) abandons grasping.
- 8) The contemplation of Destruction (khāyānupassanā) abandons the conception of compactness.
- 9) The contemplation of Fall (of formations) (vayānupassanā) abandons the accumulation of kamma.
- 10) The contemplation of Change (vipariṇāmānupassanā) abandons the conception of lastingness.
- 11) The contemplation of the Signless or the unconditioned (animittānupassanā) abandons sign.
- 12) The contemplation of Desirelessness (apañihatānupassanā) abandons desire.
- 13) The contemplation of Voidness (suññatānupassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence).
- 14) The development of the Insight into phenomena (higher understanding or wisdom) (adhipaññā-dhamma-vipassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to grasping at once.
- 15) The development of Correct Knowledge and Vision (yathā-bhūta-ñāḍassana) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to confusion.
- 16) The development of Danger or Misery (ādīnavānupassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to reliance.
- 17) The contemplation of Reflexion (paṭisankhānupassanā) abandons non-reflexion.
- 18) The contemplation of Turning Away (vivaṭṭanānupassanā) abandons misinterpreting (insistence) due to bondage.

The Overall Therapeutic Results of Insight Meditation

The behavioral problems caused by the adverse actions and evil speeches (detrimental bodily activities and malevolent verbal expressions) which are inimical to individual and society can be overcome through the Moral Purity, and this can be taken as an aspect of Vikkhambhana-pahāna²⁹ - overcoming by suspension or repression (a temporary suppression of taints which lead to mental problems).

²⁹ Buddhist Dictionary-Manual of Buddhist Terms & Doctrines by Nyanatiloka, P. 353.

The adverse ideas and erroneous views are overcome through the Eighteen Insights, and this way of overcoming (the idea of permanence by impermanence, the idea of pleasure by suffering, self by Not-self, *etc.*) is known as The Overcoming by the Opposites – Tadāṅga-pahāna³⁰

The mental problems caused due to attachment, aversion, torpor, restlessness and conflict are overcome by the Purity of Mind (Citta-visuddhi) through eight attainments - four rūpa Jhānās and four arūpa Jhānas (asta samāpati) with access-concentration (upacāra –samādhi) which has the potentiality to suppress the Five Hindrances (pañcanīvaraṇa). The overcoming by tranquilization is Paṭipassaddhi-pahāna.

All the behavioral and mental problems are completely overcome by the complete purity gained through the knowledge of the Noble Paths with the final attainment - *arihatta-magga* leading to the total eradication of all defilements through the Purity of Knowledge and Insight. This is known as the Samuccheda- pahāna –overcoming by destruction.

Conclusion

Modern psychoanalysis works on the assumption that when the origin of a mental disorder is revealed, its influence on unconscious motivation will automatically disappear. Such psychoanalysis has so far not been successful in diagnosing the root causes that bring into being mental problems and unwholesome behaviors. Hence, modern psychiatry or psychotherapy is incapable of the total eradication of problematic mentality that causes problematic behavior.

Buddhism which analyses the root causes of problematic personality in the context of the Noxious Trio – greed, hatred and delusion exposes a highly systematized psychological analysis of human mind and behavior with the prominence to the mind (mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā – mano setṭhā manomayā’).³¹ The cognitive, behavioral and psychotherapeutic aspect reflected in Insight Meditation is that when the mind is gradually purified, body and speech are cleansed. The total purity of mind brings about the complete eradication of all taints or cankers putting an end to all types of mental disorders and problematic behaviors. Eventually, the cognitive, behavioral and psychotherapeutic methods reflected in Insight Meditation can profusely be adopted to cure mental problems and abnormal behaviors in the modern society.

³⁰ Ibid, P.365.

³¹ The Dhammapada, K. Sri Dhammananda, verse 1–Yamaka Vagga P. 41.