

**EDUCATION FOR MINDFULNESS: FROM THE DIARY  
OF A MONK**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis turns to Buddhist philosophy as a source of enrichment in educational thought and practice. It argues that a certain secular adaptation of Buddhist meditation in school curriculum would help students identify causes of stress, frustration, helplessness and insecurity, and develop ways to cope with and transform their “afflicted minds”. The aim of this work is to help create a consciousness that cultivates compassion in students for a harmonious teaching-learning environment in schools as well as the desire of becoming compassionate social beings.

This study employs a narrative approach to argue that various physical and psychological life challenges bring mental impediments such as anger, jealousy, restlessness and helplessness through a strong “ego-self” in the mind. These challenges often lead to stress, depression and anxiety. By realizing the nature of mind and body relationships and changing internal factors through mental training, individuals can learn to resist anxiety, depression, intolerance and mental insecurity and face psycho-social problems with maturity and mindfulness.

The study explores two forms of meditation techniques, namely “mindfulness” (*sati*), and “Loving-Kindness” (*Metta*), which constitute the foundation of Buddhist mental training. These meditation techniques attempt to train the mind to understand the mental state of happiness, to identify and defuse

sources of negative emotions and to cultivate emotional states like compassion (*Karuna*) in order to improve personal and societal well-being in students.

The knowing pursuit of compassion in students is a central feature for realization of the creative potentials of our virtues such as love, sympathy, empathy, tolerance, patience and equanimity. There are many issues in modern schooling, such as diversity in students, multiculturalism, bullying and violence, which require a compassionate approach and understanding. This study examines the potential contribution of Buddhist thought and practices in education for mindfulness.

## Dedication

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*This dissertation is dedicated*

*To*

*My mother,*

*who brought me to this world and  
nurtured with love and compassion*

*and also to*

*my preceptors*

*who guided me toward the noble path.*

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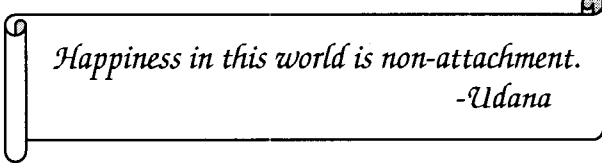
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## Chapter One: Introduction



*Happiness in this world is non-attachment.*  
-Udana

The intent of this thesis is to argue for that certain secular adaptation of Buddhist meditation into school curriculum for adolescents would help them to cope with stress, depression, anxiety and negative emotions of anger, jealousy and hatred. It is expected that this mind training technique will help students to become compassionate social beings making the teaching-learning environment more peaceful and harmonious one. As it is, our current educational system is heavily biased towards teaching academic subjects (Miller, 1999; Klima, 1999; Goel, 1987) neglecting the cultivation of the mind-heart of the virtuous and wise person. Wisdom and virtues are not intellectual knowledge; they are qualities of human consciousness (Erricker, 2001). Hence, besides teaching academic subjects to make students knowledgeable about the world, there should be room in our schooling for teaching students attention<sup>1</sup> and concentration, which are tools for cultivating mind/consciousness. It is this educational vision that I wish to explore in this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford Dictionary defines “attention” as: the act or faculty of applying one’s mind; consideration; care; erect attitude of readiness. A word that is linked to attention is concentration. The Dictionary defines: “to concentrate” to employ ones full thoughts or efforts; bring together at one point; mental faculty of exclusive attention.

The title of this thesis is, *Education for Mindfulness: From the diary of a monk*. The first part of the title, *Education for Mindfulness*, refers to the main argument of the thesis, in which I make a case for a view of education and schooling that includes the cultivation of mind-heart in students. The second part of the title, *From the diary of a monk*, announces the fact that, in this thesis, I am drawing on my own experiences, in a narrative style, as a monk and a teacher. I have been practicing monastic life for about thirty years, a life that consists to a large extent in meditation, which I practiced and implemented in my Sunday schools in Sri Lanka and Canada. Also, as a high school teacher in Sri Lanka, I employed the technique of “mindfulness” with meditation to resolve many and varied difficulties in students’ lives. I will draw upon these experiences as a “diary” to begin to illustrate my ideas about the cultivation of mind-heart in students. It should be clear at the outset that I use my stories to help paint my picture for the reader—to help describe what I am talking about as a view of education. I do not present the stories with the expectation that they substantiate the claims I am making, often times an expectation placed on empirical data.

The focus of my investigation in my Master’s thesis was stress reduction amongst high school students. As a former high school teacher from Sri Lanka, I was particularly concerned with what I observed to be increasing amounts of stress and frustration faced by the students. Our lives are becoming increasingly complicated, uncertain, and competitive, and these students’ lives were no

exception. Many suffered from acute to chronic anxieties, depression and feelings of insecurity. These factors negatively impacted school performance and their day-to-day lives.

After I moved to Canada, I observed the same phenomenon amongst youth that I counsel in the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in British Columbia. The Sunday school where I work as the Principal gave me an invaluable opportunity to continue my observations. Apart from work with our own community and my Sunday school, I am invited to high schools as a guest speaker to give speeches on meditation, particularly in relation to anger and stress management. In social studies, students are required to learn about world religions. I introduce meditation since it is a key feature in Buddhist philosophy. I realized through my discussions with students that some have similar problems of stress, frustration and mental insecurity, as those I had observed in the Sri Lankan community and Sunday school. This led me to further investigate the question of whether meditation would offer solutions for these conditions.

The educational “solution” I offered in my Master’s thesis for stress reduction in schools is a cultivation of mind-heart consciousness (*Bhavana*). This is based on an application of the Buddhist psychological theory and practice of mindfulness (*Sati*), popularly known in the West as meditation. It is natural that I came to this particular conclusion. I am a Buddhist monk, and have led a monastic

life since the age of nine. I am trained and qualified as a meditation master; it is the tool I know best and have used to help people from different backgrounds to overcome the many and varied difficulties in life. The insight that enabled me to consider applying this tool in my thesis was the realization that what we call stress nowadays is nothing other than what the Buddha referred to as “unsatisfactoriness,” dis-ease (*dukkha*), the notion foundational to His teachings. My Master’s thesis defined stress as human existential dis-ease in the Buddhist sense and then applied the Buddhist tool of mindfulness training. The Buddha insisted that He taught only one thing: the cause and cessation of *dukkha*. The path to end *dukkha*/dis-ease requires developing our awareness/mindfulness, since, as in psychotherapy, transformation occurs through insight (Loy, 1996; Narada, 1990; Rahula, 1996; Kalupahana, 1992).

A further insight that I have from my Master’s thesis work is that the Buddhist practice of mindfulness goes to the very heart of education in our times. The educational potential of mindfulness practice can be better realized through the objectives of moral education since, as I understand it, moral education is concerned with making virtuous and wise human beings (Crittenden, 1993; Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1993; Fisher, 2000). In this thesis, I will investigate the Buddhist philosophical psychology of mind/matter in the way of cultivating the mind, and will offer a discussion about the profound practice of

Mindfulness (*Sati*) and Loving-Kindness (*Metta*) in guiding compassion (*Karuna*) in students and its educational relevance in the field of moral education.

### **Grounding The Theme of Episode**

We cannot think about school outside the framework of society and its modern lifestyle. As a part of societal form, schooling is influenced by contemporary ideas of capitalism, nationalism and individualism (Miller, 2002). But, unfortunately, modern schooling does not pay adequate attention to cultivating students' minds and hearts. "It serves a society that is completely committed to meritocracy, where there's fierce competition between individuals to reach the top of a social hierarchy" (Miller, 1999, p.190). This may subject an individual to stress, anger, jealousy, hatred and frustration. It may further lead to violence and suicide among school children (McNamara, (2000); Mirisse, 2000). Kickbush, Winters & Luttrell of U.S. Department of Education (1997) define the feature of life in America's schools. "Nearly 3 million crimes take place in or near schools annually—one every 6 seconds of the school day" (p.2). This is only a facet of modern day living. The ultimate result can be frustration, helplessness and a significant emptiness in schools and the community at large. The feelings of stress, depression, anger, humiliation and disrespect for life are the repercussions of inadequate attention to the cultivation of humane feelings of love and compassion. The Colorado high school shooting is a tragic example of the



damaging consequences of inadequate attention to the cultivation of humane feelings (Columbine High School in Denver, Colorado, USA, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999).

Cultivation of mind does not affect only a particular religion, race or culture, but it serves all humans. It is a means of calming the mind and acquiring insight into the nature of experience and how the mind works (Levete, 2001). This type of cultivation of mind embodies compassion, gentleness, humility, empathy and awareness. The work that I am doing in the cultivation of mind embodies self-observation of latent human qualities such as love and compassion, and dissemination of its practices. The mind is the base for all human activities and the inner values such as love and compassion (Narada, 1993). Love and compassion are basic necessities of life. Since these values and qualities are eroding, we need to enhance and develop the mind-heart/consciousness to regain the above-mentioned inner values in both the individual and society.

In general, most people in modern society are very impressed with high standards of living and material resources. Individuals in this society seek perfection in many different aspects of intellectual development. Without knowing the meaning of life with regard to happiness through love and compassion, education cannot achieve success if we employ the vision of short-sightedness and selfishness (Dalai Lama, 1994). Glazer (1999) writes:

At its heart, education is a very personal thing. It begins simply with the perfect miracle of our existence, with our ability to perceive: our ability to have sensations and perceptions, our ability to formulate and express thoughts and ideas, our ability to experience and manifest change-continually modify what we feel, know, and believe. Education begins with our awareness: with the fact of this life, the fact of this breath (p.134).

This leads me to refresh my primary question: how do I contribute toward the education of students, through cultivating mind/consciousness and aiming at compassion? In the search for an answer to this question, I am inclined to take support from Buddhist psychology and philosophy as it provides detailed explanations about the mind/heart and consciousness and its nature of existence. First, I will offer a discussion distinguishing impersonal love from conditional love, which makes the primary ground for my entire discussion in the thesis.

### **Learning “impersonal love”**

Learning love is the solution to the pandemic problems of rising violence, exploitation, and degradation both in the human and more-than-human spheres (Bai and Mirisse, 2000). Love is a powerful, emotional mental state that provides the qualities of protection, nurturance, and cherishing. According to this definition of love, we are not able to harm or hurt someone or something unless it is by accident. If there is pure love in the human mind, there is no predisposition to creating enormous harm and suffering in the world. There are historical justifications from the beginning of recorded history to the present day that out of love for one, we, as humans inflicted harm upon another. The repercussions of

World War One and Two, and the present day upheavals and disharmony between countries are clear examples of love for one's own needs turning to hatred, envy and revenge upon another. Out of love for one's own children, one may wish others' children to fail in a competition. Bai and Mirisse (2000, p.1) note that "if one very zealous about his exclusive love for his child, he might even actively seek to arrange a failure for others' children." This way of love might cause the problems in every aspect of life. This is the love or love in extreme as the Buddha described *tanha*/craving (Rahula, 1997).

This is one definition of love, normally embraced, which is based on personal likes and dislikes and, therefore, it might become selfish and conditional. There is another way of love, which is unconditional and impersonal, and it transcends personal likes and dislikes (Bai and Mirisse, 2000). Impersonal love permeates beyond a selfish state of mind and is nurtured by the virtues of benevolence, sympathy, empathy, respect and forgiveness. Perfect imagery of impersonal love is to think of the sun and the moon; they treat everybody and everything equally, regardless of any qualifications or references. This is the way of specific impersonal love and that becomes the main objective of learning and practicing love for universal peace and harmony. With this clarification of learning love, I will continue my work to answer the challenging question of how we learn impersonal love. In this thesis, I will investigate an approach, taken from Buddhist philosophy, which aims at realization and detachment from likes-and-dislikes.

With the help of realization of two-fold embodiment of conditional and impersonal mental states of mind/consciousness, I will investigate the possibility of establishing an ethos of cultivation of mind/consciousness aiming at compassion among high school students. Compassion, in the Buddhist sense, means a feeling of sympathy and empathy toward others and ourselves as we experience dis-ease or suffering, which is, more pragmatically, interpreted as stress, depression and anxiety in modern terminology. There will be two aspects of approaching compassion in students: encouraging students toward virtues, and removing obstacles for students through compassion.

The next consideration regards the implementation of this program within the existing curriculum in the public school system in British Columbia. Since I have no direct latitude to address “cultivation of mind” as an academic subject in North American public schools, I will find a place in the sphere of “mental well-being/mental health” which is categorized in the currently available Career and Personal Planning Program, known as CAPP (BC Ministry of Education, Skills and Training Home Page, 1997). This program is for students in grades eight to twelve. The cultivation of mind/heart aiming at compassion through mindfulness and loving-kindness, which I present in this thesis, could be introduced into schools under “mental well-being/mental health” because this program’s goal is to make students aware and encourage them to develop an appropriate sense of personal worth, potential and autonomy, as well as become more cognizant of

their relationships with others. One of the key objectives of the CAPP program is to recognize emotions that might contribute to various positive and negative behaviours. In summary, the CAPP program aims at helping students to develop positive relationships with each other, respect for each other, increase their perception of negative and positive behaviour, and shows how emotions and feelings can cause psycho-physiological changes. As well, CAPP suggests stress and anger management techniques for students, which will be discussed in depth in this thesis.

My designed mind cultivation program is nothing but my life journey, which is my experience in monastic life, ordinary society and the school environment. I have been living and serving as a monk in a monastic atmosphere, as a teacher in a Sunday school and as a counsellor in a community exposed to the modern societal malaise of stress, depression, loneliness, frustration and lost tradition. My experiences in these domains will be my research data for enhancing my ideas regarding the cultivation of mind.

### **Journey of empiricism**

When I look into the past, from my ordination to the present, it was a life of challenges. At the outset, it is useful to make an impression in my readers' mind about what a monk's life is. Becoming a monk is not only a path toward enlightenment and self liberation, which is the ultimate goal of Buddhists, but of sharing one's own experience of the way to happiness with others. This path

should be followed with ten perfections, which are named '*Parami*' in Buddhist philosophy. These ten perfections are: generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, truth, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity. The image of the Buddhist monk should be embodied with these qualities. These qualities serve other fellow beings rather than one's selfish desires. When a person enters into the monks' order, he should be determined to practice these qualities and to assess himself in terms of these qualities everyday. I end each day by contemplating these qualities, how I reduce my shortcomings, and how to improve and continue the *paramis*. This contemplation sheds light on my life and helps me to shape and reshape my image of the monk. Though I am a monk in a particular philosophy/religion, I substantiate my thoughts to disseminate love and compassion toward fellow beings regardless of race, religion and gender. This mental state keeps me away from discrimination and prejudice toward others. I strongly believe that all of these mental capacities are the fruition of the practices of mindfulness and loving-kindness. I initiate my designed project of cultivation mind training with my own life experiences and correlative experiences with modern societies in the East and the West. My life is the story of a monk who lives in seclusion but who investigates different facets of ordinary society. My approach is similar to that of Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) idea of the research problem and one's life experience. They explain, "The research problem in the book is to try to think of the continuity and wholeness of an individual's life experience" (p.17). For this reason, I will use a narrative style to present this thesis

as it gives me more flexibility to articulate and share my lived experiences with readers.

**Narrative style, a form of presentation:**

If humanity were a building, each author would be a window. The view from that window would be the picture each author paints. It's a view that explains a little bit more about the confusing things we call "Life" and "Reality." A narrative is an individual's perspective of the surrounding landscape. It's one small view on the big picture. (Meadows, 2003, p. 2)

My work in this thesis is a small view of the big picture of mental cultivation. It is an articulation of perception as it is realized in this work. "This is why narrative exists: to convey perspective" (Meadows, 2003, p. 2). As I see things from different perspectives, a narrative expression can convey concepts to my reader.

Through ongoing experience of a day-to-day life with the surprisingly different Other, seeing-the-different-Other has been created and recreated in an effort for humanistic cultural transformation as a real possibility in the face of increasing dehumanization of the civic and personal sphere of our lives (Reitz, 2001, p.5, cited in Wever-Rabehl).

According to Reitz, things we experience in day-to-day life are multi-layered and multifaceted. We take things for granted. With my learning I will present these layers as if peeling an onion layer by layer. It is the practice that I go through of looking at an experience through different perspectives. Meadows

(2003) introduces a “perspectivist approach” in art. A perspectivist approach considers:

The painting’s multiple viewers from both an emotional and dimensional perspective. The painting was then composed with that person’s specific emotional and dimensional perspectives in mind. These perspectives are not separated but parts of the same unit (p.17).

I refer to my work in another sense as an art of living. As the perspectivist approach looks into a project, I observe multiple views of mind cultivation and its fruition of love and compassion from emotional and cognitive perspectives. According to Meadows (2003), the perspectivist approach is the fundamental mindset of any author using interactive narrative. This approach consists of two principles. First, it links foreground to background. It resets the special relationships between the focal elements and their surroundings. Second, it links context to decision. The perspectivist approach looks at the environment and its context in terms of bracing the actions of the occupants of that environment. While Meadows claims the perspectivist approach toward narrative, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contribute to a methodological understanding of narrative by stating, “if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively” (p. 17). Schultz (1964, 1970) further confirms that argument; it is important to look into the ways that people experience their world. If it is not the reality, he clarifies, the members of the world, in their “natural attitude,” take their worldly experience for granted and consider it is “out there” in



the present and it will become the future. The focus of narrative will allow people to avoid the position of the taken for granted views since experience is both interactional and a continuation (Dewey, 1938). This makes both the individual's experience and the external world united and dynamic, which Clandinin and Connelly describe as temporality. They emphasize that every situation has a past, a present and implied future, which we need to account for when we observe and apply it to practice.

The narrative style or form of this work is experimental. Scholfield calls this style "experimental writing," a relatively new genre of qualitative research (cited in Richardson, 1994). This type of experimental writing shows the mysterious power of words and helps us to define and redefine meaning in our lives (Harrison, 2002).

Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even questions about what we might do with our lives (Witherell & Noddings, cited in Harrison, 2002, p.8).

I use a narrative style to develop my work; my stories of life experiences and similarly, others' stories as I have observed them, are developed and represented in order to portray the ideas in this thesis. "Narrative is eminent in ethical philosophical inquiry by virtue of the fundamental connection between emotions and ethical knowledge" (Nussbaum, 2001, p.6, cited in Wever-Rabehl).

## **Reflection on the past**

*Let me begin with my first inspiration to become a monk and how I was reborn in a monastery. I had dreamed of becoming a monk since the early age of six or seven years old. There was a special reason that provoked my aspirations for monastic life. My Sri Lankan elementary school was near our village monastery. As children, we would go to the monastery to drink water everyday. I saw that monks practice their daily routine of chanting, walking meditation, cleaning the monastery and walking for alms. I was fascinated by their calm behaviour. I tried to imagine what it would be like to be a Buddhist monk. I thought they meditate and try to reach the calmness of their mind, that they may be able to accept life as it is—life, with its sorrow, pain, loss, joy, comfort and happiness. I had heard the word “Nirvana” (enlightenment) but had no idea what it meant. My early perceptions of what it meant to be a monk began to shape a way of thinking about my own life. It was becoming my dream to be a monk—to walk, chant, meditate and guide people to gain happiness.*

*One day, during “Vesak” (celebration of the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and passing away), a monk was invited to our school for a sermon. I was in the front row sitting on the floor. Before the conclusion of the sermon, the monk invited us to meditate with him*

*on breathing. He introduced us to a way of concentrating on normal breath by focusing on our own belly. There were about three hundred students, everyone silent and meditating. The whole school was calm and quiet for few minutes until a few students started to break the silence. That was my first experience of meditation and it became embedded in my mind. This experience propelled my dream to come true.*

### **Embodiment of perception**

*Though I was young, I had a sense of inner calmness, and as a result of these formative experiences I became the “peace mediator” in my class. When students had quarrels, I talked to teachers and reconciled the class. As I recollect, my class teacher called me a “monk” because of my demeanour. As I mentioned before, my initial thoughts of meditation led me toward the perception of becoming a monk. That was the beginning of my journey. I became a monk at the early age of nine. My initiation appeared as my second birth. I adapted to a monastic environment and got used to the practice of meditation.*

*As Sri Lanka still follows traditional and conservative cultural values, Sunday is a monastic day for Buddhist students. They gather in monasteries to learn Dhamma (Buddhist teachings)*

*in Sunday school. My debut as a teacher occurred at the age of sixteen when I was given a small group of children whom I taught about the Buddha, His teachings of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, equanimity, caring and respect for life. I reflect on what I taught to Sunday school children as a novice monk:*

*“Mano pubbangama dhamma mano settha mano maya...”*

The above *pali* phrase epitomises how the mind formulates the state of being; “our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves” (Dhammapada<sup>2</sup>). I offered discussions on this topic to children. I explained beautiful parables from Buddhist literature to articulate the theme of the subject, including the following.

*A boy of seven years entered the order. One day this novice monk was accompanying his teacher on his alms rounds, and he noticed irrigators, fletchers and carpenters at work. He asked many questions of his teacher. He thought to himself that irrigators lead the water; fletchers bend the shafts; carpenters bend the wood. If inanimate things could be so controlled, why could I not control my own mind? (Narada, 1984).*

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<sup>2</sup>The Dhammapada (The way of truth) consists of collected verses in Sutta discourse, which are taught by the Buddha. There are 423 verses in the Dhammapada. This is one of the manuals used in Buddhist teachings.

*These kinds of parables are appropriate for children who live in the villages of Sri Lanka. They see farmers, carpenters and fletchers everyday. Some children join their parents to work in rice paddies and carpentry shops. As they have their own experience with the elements of the parables, they are able to grasp the essence of the lesson. While engaged in mind training, I asked the children how the mind is reflected through our own actions and utterances. Their discussion became replete with curiosity, unleashing the opportunity to develop the idea of how the mind should be trained for our own happiness and for the benefit of others in our communities. I recalled stories of a novice monk, Rahula, who was reputed as the great obedient monk during the Buddha's time. Once, Rahula was admonished by the Buddha whose phenomenal teachings of four sublimines (Maharahulovada sutta, Majjhima Nikaya II<sup>3</sup>). Nhat Hanh (1991) illustrate:*

Rahula, learn from the earth. Whether people spread pure and fragrant flowers, perfume, or fresh milk on it, or discard filthy and foul-smelling feces, urine, blood, mucus, and spit on it, the earth receives it all equally without clinging or aversion. When pleasant or unpleasant thoughts arise, don't let them entangle or enslave you.

Learn from the water Rahula. When people wash dirty things in it, the water is not sad or disdainful. Learn from fire. Fire burns all things without discrimination. It is not ashamed to burn impure

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<sup>3</sup> Collections of Middle-length Discourses.

substances. Learn from the air. The air carries all fragrances whether sweet or foul.

Rahula, practice loving-kindness to overcome anger. Loving-kindness has the capacity to bring happiness to others without demanding anything in return. Practice compassion to overcome cruelty. Compassion has the capacity to remove the suffering of others without expecting anything in return. Practice sympathetic-joy to overcome hatred. Sympathetic-joy arises when one rejoices over the happiness of others and wishes others well-being and success. Practice non-attachment to overcome prejudice. Non-attachment is the way of looking at all things openly and equally. This is because that is. That is because this is. Myself and others are not separate. Do not reject one thing only to chase after another. (p. 321)

I thought my students might ask me that since they were not monks, why should they follow the monk's attitude? I noticed that question did not arise, as they were excited about stories. Indeed, these are stories of a young monk but stories that reflect the nature of mind and how mind can be cultivated. Not only did those students enjoy the stories, but they also took meaning from the stories that could influence their lives. Story-telling is a powerful means of conveying messages.

The story form is a cultural universal; everyone everywhere enjoys stories. The story, then, is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experience. Indeed, some people claim that the story form reflects a fundamental structure of our minds (Egan, 1986, p.2).

It was rare that I could not tell a story to my students on Sunday. I was aware of stories that related to the daily life of students, and story telling is a cultural knack of Sri Lankan people.

## **Episode of mind/body culture**

The Buddha asked Rahula to bring water to wash His legs<sup>4</sup>. Venerable Rahula brought a pot of water. The Buddha asked him to pour water over His legs until the pot became empty. The Buddha recollected to Rahula that if one speaks false, harsh and slanderous words, it is similar to the empty pot. How does one prevent such unhealthy complexity in the mind? One should contemplate on his/her own mind before expressing words and before putting thoughts into practice, ensuring the mind is free from anger, jealousy and hatred. If anger is harboured in the mind, it causes unhappiness. If one is free from anger, he/she is free to plant seeds of love and compassion in his/her own mind. The Buddha used the metaphor of a mirror to articulate the notion that one should use his/her awareness to observe his/her own mind. If unwholesome thoughts exist in the mind, one should replace them with wholesome thoughts. If the mirror is covered by dust, one is not able to see his/her face properly. If one's mind is full of anger, jealousy and hatred, then he/she has no opportunity to see the world clearly. By using one's awareness, he/she may be able to clean his/her own dusty mind and see the world more clearly. Neither mother nor father nor other relatives can do so much good; but a rightly directed mind can do far greater good than that (Narada, 1993). Each time I had discussions with children, they pointed out various experiences of their own lives at home and in schools. They might tell me how

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<sup>4</sup> The story of Rahula is in Maharahulovada Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya II. Rahula was the only child of Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha's lay name.

they became angry with friends, or how they had bad dreams and grew scared. These are honest and simple experiences in small children's day-to-day lives, but in their miniature form these became an enhancement of my teaching and the practice of my life as a monk.

*After I graduated from the University of Colombo, in 1986, I was appointed as a graduate teacher in D. S. Senanayake College in 1990. I taught Buddhism for grades six to eleven, as religion is a compulsory academic subject for all students in Sri Lanka. In addition to teaching Buddhism in classrooms, I became a school counsellor. With the experience of being a counsellor I perceived that hundreds of students suffered from chronic stress and depression. Some students had no close relationships with their parents and teachers, and they felt mental insecurity. This mental insecurity led to stress and depression, which manifests in behavioural problems such as anti-socialization, abstinence from school, self-blame and addiction to smoking and alcohol. These problems became major issues in the school due to students' withdrawal, failure and restlessness. I realized that the meditation technique of "mindfulness," which I substantiated in my Sunday school, might help students to create a strong sense of self and to develop mental abilities to cope with stress and depression. I was requested by the Principal to arrange special time for each class to discuss students' difficulties in school, while becoming a mediator for teachers and students.*



*My main goal was to reduce distractions due to mental insecurity, and to create a strong sense of self within students. I used the method of “Loving-kindness (Metta Sutta, Suttanipata, I. 8<sup>5</sup>)” (Salzberg, 1997) for this initial interaction with students. Loving-kindness teaches how to promote impersonal love and compassion based on mindfulness:*

This is what should be done<sup>6</sup>  
By those who are skilled in goodness,  
And who know the path of peace:  
Let them be able and upright,  
Straightforward and gentle in speech.  
Humble and not conceited,  
Contented and easily satisfied.  
Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways.  
Peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful,  
Not proud and demanding in nature.  
Let them not do the slightest things  
That the wise would later reprove.  
Wishing: in gladness and in safety,  
May all beings be at ease.  
Whatever living beings there may be;  
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,  
The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,  
The seen and the unseen,  
Those living near and far away,  
Those born and to-be-born  
May all living beings be at ease!  
Let none deceive another,  
Or despise any being in any state.  
Let none through anger or ill-will  
Wish harm upon another.

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<sup>5</sup> Collected Discourses.

<sup>6</sup> I have formatted this poem of loving-kindness to be centred on the page. In its original, untranslated form, it is presented with a left justified margin.

Even as a mother protects with her life  
Her child, her only child,  
So with a boundless heart  
Should one cherish all living beings;  
Radiating kindness over the entire world:  
Spreading upward to the skies,  
And downward to the depths;  
Outward and unbounded,  
Freed from hatred and ill-will.  
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down,  
Free from drowsiness,  
One should sustain this recollection.  
This is said to be the sublime abiding.  
By not holding to fixed views,  
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,  
Being freed from all sense desires,  
Is not born again into this world (pp. ii-viii)

*When I am with students, the above-mentioned characteristics of “loving-kindness” strengthen my mind and embellish my teaching and practices to make children calm and mindful in their own actions. When they are calm and mindful, they are able to see clearly into a problem and become receptive. At this stage, we are able to introduce our values and virtues as morals to students, which helps students and teachers to maintain a teaching-learning environment in schools. As a counsellor and a mediator in my school, I became more aware of our social, cultural and school values and the role of moral education in making virtuous and wise human beings. Dollarhide and Saginak (2003) elaborate:*

Everything we do is predicated on the satisfaction of needs, as filtered through our values. These values are interlocking systems of meaning and of significance, providing us with the foundation of our choices: We value one thing more than another, so we choose actions that provide us with what we value. These values are interwoven with our views of the world and provide the structure for defining good, bad, healthy, and unhealthy. (p.302)

*My embodiment of loving-kindness and mindfulness fortified our values and virtues as morals that were recognized in the school. Some students were not aware of values and virtues as morals, but they were willing to be guided. When I spoke with students about difficulties or mistakes they made, their response was often, "I don't know about that or I didn't think about that." These responses emphasized that increasing students' awareness of their own actions was a major issue for the school. I argued with my colleagues that school must be the first place to teach children how to know what is right and what is wrong.*

Though we have institutions such as temples and churches to teach morals, it is necessary to understand that those places are limited to specific groups and teach specified values that form their religion or culture. School is the only place all students can gather under one roof, regardless of differences, and interact with each other. When Buddhists practice "full moon day" (it is a special day for Buddhists to observe precepts) in my school in Sri Lanka, non-Buddhists such as Christians, Muslims and Hindus help by donating money, serving food and cleaning the classrooms. When Christians, Muslims and Hindus have Christmas,

Ramadan and Divali, all students respect and support the celebration of each other's events. In this way, students have more opportunity to get to know each other and learn more about fellow faiths and values. It is very helpful to rid ourselves of unnecessary doubts, suspicions and hate among youth. It must be perceived clearly that this reciprocal fairness among students does not happen automatically but is guided by our mind/heart; by birth everybody is equal and has the same feelings of hunger, thirst and love regardless of tradition, culture, race, religion and language.

Fullan (1993), Goodlad (1990b), Goodlad, Soder and Sirotnik (1990) find an opportunity to teach students "moral imperatives" in schools. They observe it within four areas: 1) facilitating critical enculturation; development of understanding of truth, beauty, and justice in own and common virtues; 2) providing access to knowledge; the world as a physical and biological system which includes belief, communication, the social, political and economic; 3) building an effective teacher-student connection, a combination of generalized principles of teaching subject-specific instruction and sensitivity to the human qualities; and 4) practicing good stewardship teachers and students must be purposefully engaged in the renewal process. I agree with their recommendations, but I would like to add another dimension toward their recommendations, which is cultivation of mind/consciousness. That becomes a primary layer in educational vision, and will prepare the groundwork to apply their theory of education.

Teaching the theory and bringing the theory into practice are different approaches. Preparing students to understand and to practice such theories of truth, justice and virtues, requires well-grounded minds in students. If this is not the reality, recommending and introducing morals/theories becomes planting seeds in a dry and unfertile field. The cultivation of mind/consciousness would become a program that prepares a fertile field to plant necessary seeds.

My intention is to create a moral ethos in schools that forms the very heart of education. It is no matter whether this type of understanding of moral responsibility should be created in the West or the East. It is very clear that every country, culture and tradition is exposed to the whole world through the modern technology of the Internet, satellite and fast media. In the East, in countries like my native Sri Lanka, teaching religion is compulsory in public schools, as the Ministry of Education has implemented moral education in the school curriculum. In the West, in countries like Canada, religion has no place in the public school curriculum. But, as I perceive it, that does not mean moral education has no place in Canadian schools because moral education means more than just teaching a specific religion. To support my argument I will reiterate Fullan, Goodlad, Soder and Sirotnik's ideas that schools play a key role in developing an educated person who has an understanding of truth, beauty, and justice against which to judge their own and society's virtues...which is morality and moral responsibility. Sirotnik (1990, pp.296-327) adds his list of moral requirements: commitment to inquiry,

knowledge, competence, caring, freedom, well-being, and social justice. Though we may be able to add more human qualities to this list of morals, I will refer to the above list since it covers most of my discussion sphere of the cultivation of students' minds.

I commenced my narrative journey with my own practice of Buddhist philosophy, and I substantiated my own experiences in a school where religious education is permitted. Now, here in Canada, I am inclined to apply my own experiences to a school system where secularism is constituted. As I stressed before, my designed and implemented program of mind cultivation is empirical. These experiences are connected to the ordinary human mind and exposed to worldly lifestyle; which is closer to moral requirements that Fullan, Goodlad and Sirotnik pointed out earlier.

## Chapter Two: Mind and Matter

*This mind is brightly shining, but it is defiled  
by defilements which arrive from outside  
(Anguttara Nikaya I.10).*

*It was Wednesday. Normally staff meetings were held on this day, every second week. I was surprised. The principal was explaining how a group of students was caught gambling for money in the classroom. Depending on the final decision of the disciplinary committee, it was possible these students would be suspended for two weeks. In the past that decision might entail expulsion. Everybody was whispering to each other about the decision of suspension, and most of the teachers predicted that this would cause a major issue among parents and students.*

*A few days after that decision, the parents of the suspended students came to me and pleaded that I ask the principal, the chair of the disciplinary committee, to change the decision of suspension. I strongly believe from my own experience that it is better to remove the root cause of the problem than to treat the symptoms; suspension or expulsion may be a short-term relief for the school, but from a long-term perspective, it would not be beneficial to the goals of education, which aim to make well-rounded people in the society. Though, the problem is suppressed by treating symptoms, it may*

*arise again when the environment or the situation changes, and may even become worse like a cancer.*

*I negotiated with the principal and took responsibility for lifting the suspension of the students and holding them to good conduct. These students were already nicknamed as 'trouble makers' in the school. I realized that these teenage students were neglected in their classes because of their restless behaviour including bullying, name-calling and lack of enthusiasm in their studies. I requested that they come to my office everyday, fifteen minutes before school started and before leaving in the afternoon. There were five students in this group and all with different backgrounds, and so I noted the students' diversity; a few parents of the students were educated and rich, other parents were uneducated and had no pre-conceptions to guide their children due to the lacking socio-economic environment where they live. I consciously selected a "therapy" into which everyone could fit. Christopher (2003, p.303, as cited in Dollarhide) emphasizes, "awareness of our personal and professional values and morals leads us to examine our assumptions. Because different moral visions and values exist, we must be able to see the greater common moral stands that bind us together, such as truth, honesty, and the Golden Rule ("Do unto*



*others as you would have done unto you”). At this very first stage, I offered a ten-minute mindfulness-training period everyday: how to be ‘mindful’ with their own thoughts and actions, how not to react toward thought but to observe its nature, how it arises, persists for a while and disbands. For example, when anger comes, just observe anger as anger without reacting, and this may allow an opportunity to let it go or disappear. As I introduced in Chapter One (and will discuss extensively in Chapter Three), mindfulness awakens one to live in the present moment. This method of mindfulness kept students aware in the school environment and in their daily life as well.*

*After two weeks they seemed to be more understanding about their own conduct and more determined in their studies. When they met with me every morning, I noticed there were some changes in their attitude. Roshan, one of the members of that group, once said, “Venerable, I would like to form a society to help needy students in rural villages.” I said, “Well, you should show that you are capable of doing that.” Roshan seemed desperate, so I said, “Can you become one of the top five students in your class first? I will support you to make your dream come true.” I was happy because they were reforming; mindful-minds made remarkable changes in students’ lives. I was recollecting the teachings of Buddhist philosophy with*

*my reforming students' lives. "Whatever harm a foe may do to a foe, or a hater to a hater, an ill-directed mind can do one still greater harm" (Dhammapada, v.42). Or the converse, "Neither mother nor father nor other relatives can do so much good; a rightly directed mind can do far greater good than that" (Narada, 1993).*

Throughout the school semester, I was monitoring and mentoring the group, making them aware of implementing the technique of mindfulness with virtues, values and stories of Buddhist philosophy in their daily actions. These students were a living example of "life always gives us back what we think. Our life is not a coincidence, but a mirror of our own mind." Harvey (1997) notes,

In seeking to calm and purify the mind-and in ordinary living-the meditator finds that there are many negative, limiting, ego-centred emotions; these all help to keep the ego 'small'. In their different ways, these negative traits are all expressions of the mind's constantly sifting, restless nature. It can be observed to constantly hum and roar, and is hardly ever silent, still. It is hungry, and is always on the lookout for 'food' to chew on, be this in the form of experiences, or things to do or think about (p. 344).

Like other faculties such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, one may be able to train his/her mind (Kalupahana, 1992). It is the beginning of training in 'mindfulness' that aims to work with one's fickle mind. In this process, I will examine the mind and its nature in regard to cultivation of mind/heart.

## **What is Mind?**

According to Buddhist teachings, mind is the forerunner for all mental and physical activities (Narada, 1997, Piyadassi, 1987). Our thoughts, words and actions are the results of mind activities, and every individual is responsible for his/her own mental and physical actions (Silva, 2000). The person or personality means nothing but his/her own reflection of the mind. For example, when a person becomes angry at an object, that object does not create the anger. Anger, then, is a mental state that arises due to an unpleasant sensation and the resulting perception of the event. Anger, jealousy and hatred or love, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance depend on how the individual perceives any sensation that arises when a sensory stimulus contacts sense receptors of our body (Rahula, 1997, Gunaratana, 2001).

Becoming aware of the mind is a current focus of the Western management field. Peter Senge's (1990) Fifth discipline discusses 'mental models'. "Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take actions" (p.8). Senge (1990) further clarifies how the mind (as he calls mental models) perceives the world and influences actions accordingly.

The discipline of working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry

on “learningful” conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others (p.9).

The outcomes of the mind and bodily behaviour are paralleled in Senge’s definition and the Buddhist definition. The Buddhist philosophical approach further defines how the mind interacts with other ‘aggregates’ such as feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness, resulting in certain human behaviour. Coming back to the primary argument of how a person’s perception plays a key role in this mind/heart and body relationship, I will discuss these relationships from a Buddhist philosophical psychology perspective preparing the groundwork for my designed program of cultivating mind/consciousness aimed at compassion in students.

In Buddhist philosophy, the "being" (human or any living being) is explained as *Nama* (mind) and *Rupa* (matter). The *nama* constitutes the mental sphere of the individual whereas *rupa* constitutes the body (Rahula, 1996; Narada, 1997; Boritharnwaneket, 1995). The being, a composite of five aggregates, is composed of the body, sensations, perceptions, mental formations (volitional actions) and consciousness or awareness. What does mind (*mano*) mean in Buddhist philosophy/psychology? The mind is only a faculty or organ (*indriya*) conceptually similar to any other sense organs, such as the ear or the eye, but it is not a spirit (Kalupahana, 1992). The mind can be controlled and cultivated like any other faculty. The difference between mind and other faculties is that the eye,

ear, nose, tongue and body can experience the physical world of colours and visible forms, while the mind is comprised of thoughts and ideas. We experience different sense realms of the world with different sensory receptors. Therefore, with our five physical sense organs such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, we experience only the world of visible forms, sounds, odours, tastes and tangible objects (Boriharnwanaket, 1995). It has to be understood that these organs represent only a part of the world, but not the whole world. What do we understand about thoughts and ideas? They are also a part of the world, but they cannot be sensed, cannot be absorbed by the faculty of the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body. They can be sensed and conceived by another faculty, which is the mind. This is the difference between the physical and meta-physical worlds. Rahula (1996) explains that:

The ideas and thoughts are not independent of the world experienced by these five physical sense faculties. In fact they depend on, and are conditioned by, physical experiences. Hence, a person born blind cannot have ideas of colour, except through the analogy of sounds or some other things experienced through his other faculties. Ideas and thoughts which form a part of the world are thus produced and conditioned by physical experiences and are conceived by the mind. Hence mind is considered a sense faculty or organ, like the eye or the ear (p.22).

The second component I mentioned above is Rupa (matter). According to Buddhist psychology (Anguttara Nikaya7, Nipata 111, Sutta 134)<sup>8</sup>, the aggregate

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<sup>8</sup> There are three major discourses in Buddhism, namely, Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma. Anguttara Nikaya (Collection of Gradual Sayings) is one of five sub-discourses in Sutta taught by the Buddha.

of matter includes the four great elements: solidity, fluidity, heat and motion. The second aggregate is sensation, the reason for all our feelings, pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, experienced through contact with physical and mental organs and the external world. The third aggregate is perception. It is the mental state that enables us to recognize the external world for what it is. The fourth aggregate is 'mental formation'. This is related to all volitional activities that are pleasant, neutral and unpleasant. Volition is mental construction or mental activity that is responsible for our intentions. The fifth aggregate is consciousness. It evolves as a reaction with the first contact between sense stimulus and the sense receptors. Consciousness or awareness is connected with other faculties though it cannot recognize any object. Rahula (1998e) states that:

[I]t is only a sort of awareness-awareness of the presence of an object. For example, when the eye comes in contact with a colour, for instance, blue, visual consciousness arises which simply is awareness of the presence of a colour; but it does not recognize that it is blue. There is no recognition at this stage. It is perception (the third aggregate discussed above) that recognizes that it is blue. The term 'visual consciousness' is a philosophical expression denoting the same idea as is conveyed by the ordinary word 'seeing'. Seeing does not mean recognizing. So are the other forms of consciousness (p. 23).

For these five aggregates, what we call a 'being', or 'I', is a conventional symbol given to the collective of the five aggregates. These five groups have impermanent existences and are constantly changing and evolving. This is the foundation to the claim "whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory"

(Nyanaponika, 1992; Pio, 1998; Piyadassi, 1987). Rahula (1997) clarifies, "in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are *dukkha*. They are not the same for two consecutive moments. This A is not equal to that A. They are in a flux of momentary arising and disappearing"(p.25). The whole world including all 'beings' is in a continuous flux. For example, a thought comes and disappears, conditioning the next thought in a chain of causes and effects. One change leads to another. Each state of existence is momentary and lasts only for a moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Therefore, there is nothing in the series of cause and effect that is permanent. If we apply the same logic to analyze being, we are able to view how the five aggregates that are interdependent, and are working together in combination as a bio-psychophysical machine, create the sensation of "I" or the self that is only a mental concept. Then the conventional idea of self is merely a concept. Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) put forward the following argument of self:

No tradition has ever claimed to discover an independent, fixed, or unitary self within the world of experience. Let us give the voice for this to David Hume's famous passage: For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.' Such an insight directly contradicts our ongoing sense of self" (p. 59-60).

Buddhist philosophy does not deny this conventional concept of "I" which is associated with the aggregates, but only the metaphysical presupposition behind

the statement 'such and such an aggregate belongs to such and such a self'. Also, it is equally important that the Buddha safeguarded the use of the term "self" without rejecting it altogether as absolute fiction (Kalupahana, 1987, 1992). There are two different meanings or uses of the terms "I" and "self": one metaphysical and the other empirical. The metaphysical meaning cannot be accounted for by any of the aggregates, and this is the thrust of Buddhist argument in the above context. There might be a question that, if a metaphysical self cannot be explained in terms of the aggregates, can a non-metaphysical or empirical self be accounted for by them? The general tendency among Buddhist scholars is to assume that the aggregates serve only the negative function of denying a metaphysical self (Silva, 2000; Rahula, 1996). However, as Kalupahana (1992) says, early discourses reveal that these five aggregates also perform the positive function of clarifying what an empirical self is.

Apart from the discussion of the five aggregates focused on "no-self", I would like to shift this discussion towards sensation and perception, the most significant primary mental states responsible for the cultivation of mind/consciousness. The *Pali* term '*vedana*' rendered here by 'feeling' signifies, in Buddhist psychology, just pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent sensation of physical or mental origin. The 'feeling' is the first reaction to any sense impression, and, therefore, deserves the particular attention of those who aspire to mastery over the mind. In the formula of "Dependent Origination" (*Paticca Samuppada*- wheel of



life), the Buddha used to show the conditions ‘arising of suffering (such as sorrow, pain, lamentation, anxiety, depression and stress, etc)’. Sense impression is said to be the principal condition for feeling (*passa-paccaya vedana*) to arise, while feeling, on its part, is the potential condition of craving or desires (Piyadassi, 1987, 1991; Rahula, 1996; Kalupahana, 1987).

This, therefore, is a crucial point in the conditioned origin of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha/suffering*), because it is at this point that feeling may give rise to passionate emotion of various types which are wholesome or unwholesome. When receiving a sense impression, one is able to reduce its negative impact at the very first stage of feeling or sensation. For example, when angry feelings come into one's mind, the person who is mindful is able to recognize the negative consequences, and able to calm himself down. Furthermore, if one discerns the conditioned arising of feeling or sensation, its gradual fading away and giving room to another sensation, one will find from one's own experience that it is not necessity at all to get carried away by passionate reaction, which would give rise to further unsatisfactoriness. Therefore, one has to observe one's perception as perception leading to feelings. For example, when one feels anger, one should reflect on one's anger and try to be intimately acquainted with anger and its characteristics. What is anger? How does it feel in the body, and in the mind? With awareness and wisdom, one should perceive that it is anger that causes pain and disease within oneself (Salzberg,

1995; Weissman and Weissman, 1996). When one focuses the attention, one may see the most direct and immediate cause of one's anger. The external environment is merely the trigger that activates the seeds of anger in the mind. After some practice of mindfulness, one may learn gently to let go of hostility (Mirissee, 2000).

This example serves to illustrate other feelings as well. When one feels stress and depression and its related repercussions of mental insecurity, restlessness, frustration or drowsiness, one may use mindful observation with such negative thoughts, and use the process described above. This awareness will allow the person to discern the root cause of the problem and to find solutions.

As we realize the nature of the five aggregates in our above discussion, one may initially be misled by perception. For example, one may think that another person's attitude is a threat and so react aggressively. The mindful person is more aware of another person's attitude and his own mind as well. Even if the other person is a real threat to him, a mindful person is able to calm himself and able to handle the situation tactfully. In general, almost everyone experiences regret over mistakes, shortcomings or use of wrong words and having negative attitudes. Therefore, according to the above discussion, the person who is more aware of his mind and its behaviour, and does not take *Nama-Rupa* (five aggregates/self) as permanent, may be able to prevent or reduce his/her mistakes and shortcomings. He has a better opportunity to cultivate and enhance the quality of compassion and

its correlative factors of friendliness, tolerance, sympathy, empathy and cultivation of the mind as a whole. When a person takes the five aggregates/self as permanent, he creates strong selfish desire, hatred, ill-will, conceit and strong egoism which is destructive to human development. Rahula (1996) states, “It is the source of all the troubles in the world from personal conflicts to wars between nations”(p. 50). This realization is called positive 'perception' (*sanna*) in the Buddhist text of *Vissuddhimagga* (Nanaponika, 1998).

### **Selfless Mind**

I was attempting to build up my argument of no permanent self in any absolute sense but still we employ the usage of self in the conventional sense. After dealing with the concept ‘no self’, I will tackle the ‘selfless mind’ due to coherence factors of how we continue to think, feel, and act as though we had a self-endlessly seeking to enhance and defend that conceptualized self. How and why do the momentary arisings of the elements of experience, the five aggregates and mental factors, follow one another transiently to constitute recurrent patterns?

Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) note:

The Buddha was said to have discovered, on the eve of his enlightenment, not only the momentariness of the arising of the aggregates but also the entire edifice of causality—the circular structure of habitual patterns, the binding chain, each link of which conditions and is conditioned by each of the others—that constitutes the patterns of human life as a never-ending circular quest to anchor experience in a fixed and permanent self (p. 110).

This insight knowledge formulated as the Pali word *paticcasamuppada*, which literally means ‘dependence (*paticca*) upon conditions that are variously originated (*samuppada*)’. The pattern of the ‘dependence upon condition’ or ‘dependent arising’ (Kalupahana, 1992) can be formulated as follows: “Because of A arises B. Because of B arises C. When there is no A, there is no B. When there is no B, there is no C. In other words—‘this being so, that is; this not being so, that is not.’ (*imasmim sati, idam hoti; imasmim asati, idam na hoti.*)” (Narada, 1998, p.419). This pattern of ‘dependence upon conditions’ is used to define the wheel of life and the pattern of Karma. “The word karma has also found its way into contemporary English vocabulary where it is generally used as a synonym for fate or predestination” (Varela, Thompson, Rosch, 1993, p.110). But the Buddhist philosophical meaning of Karma is volitional action, which is a description of psychological causality: how memories of habits continue over time. The ‘wheel of life’ portrays how karmic causality works to continue this life, and it is the crucial doer in one’s lifespan. Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) point out:

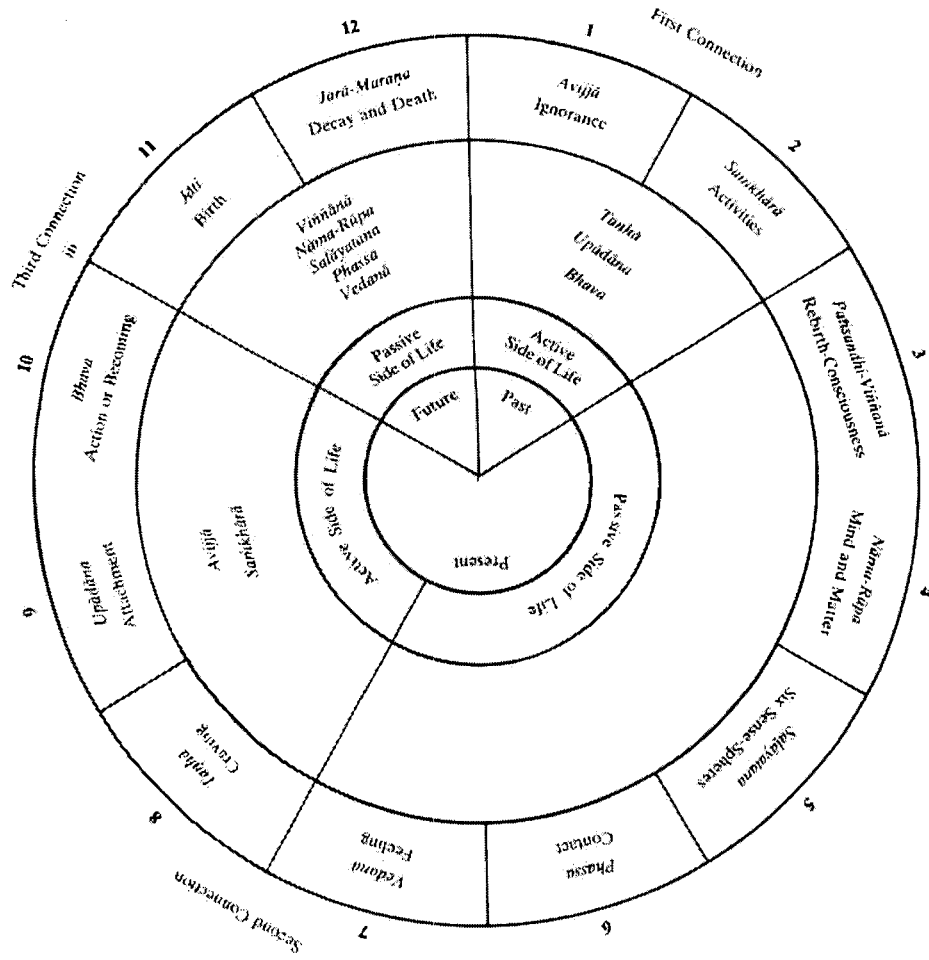
The emphasis on causality is central to the tradition of mindfulness/awareness and as such is quite compatible with our modern scientific sensibility; in the case of mindfulness/awareness, however, the concern is with a causal analysis of direct experience, not with causality as an external form of lawfulness (p. 111).

It should be clearly understood that the ‘dependence upon conditions’ is the process of lifespan between birth and death, but not a philosophical theory of the evolution of the world. It tackles the cause of birth and distress in life with a

view to guiding humans to get rid of the problems of unsatisfactoriness, anxiety, anguish and stress in everyday life.

This circular chain of lifespan is linked to twelve interdependent states; it is called causes of arising (*nidanas*) (the form of this situation is shown in the diagram). The diagram is an analytic form that can be applied to analyze matters of any duration from a single moment to a lifetime. It rationally explains the “simple happening of a state, dependent on its antecedent state” (Narada, 1988, p.20).

**THE WHEEL OF LIFE.**



**Diagram 1**

**Figure 1: The Wheel of Life**

## **Analysis of the Wheel of Life**

The above diagram is called the Wheel of Life, which is visualized as a perpetually spinning wheel of human existence driven by a latent causation and permeated by unsatisfactoriness. There are many vital traditional metaphors for this wheel of life: “a ship lost at sea in a raging storm, a deer trapped in a hunter’s net, animals racing before a blazing forest fire” (Verela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p. 115). This wheel of life is conditioned by its chain of links. As we notice in the diagram, human suffering could be mental or physical in the psychophysical organism, and is due to ignorance, which leads to the existence of other links. This is a crucial point in why Buddhist philosophy centers on being mindful in this circle of substantial existence. It is at this point:

[T]hat the Buddha formulated the technique of mindfulness. By precise, disciplined mindfulness to every moment, one can interrupt the chain of automatic conditioning—one can *not* automatically go from craving to grasping and all the rest. Interruption of habitual patterns results in further mindfulness, eventually allowing the practitioner to relax into more open possibilities in awareness and to develop insight into the arising and subsiding of experienced phenomena (Verela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p.115).

That is the foundational gesture of mindfulness in Buddhist philosophy. The cause for all the human problems, which relate to physical or mental factors, is attachment; as the wheel of life formulates craving for phenomenal mind/body experience based on ego-self. The person, who is not mindful, tends to hold ego-self and follows craving toward attachment to things through the five senses.

He/She has no will to release his/her desire for attachments. But the reality is, as ultimate truth, everything is subject to change and not under human control, though humans would claim it is under control. Kalupahana (1992) verifies the notion that “all are liable to change, transformation, and destruction—in brief, they are impermanent (*anicca*) As such, whatever satisfaction can turn into dissatisfaction” (p.69). When the person is mindful of this phenomenon, she is able to “see” things as they are; whatever things are grasped through the five senses are not owned in any absolute sense and are subject to deteriorate. The conventional sense of ‘belonging’ is centred in ego-self. The mindful practitioner can see the problem and its root cause, and then he is able to attack the root cause instead of the outcome of the problem itself. When we investigate the Wheel of Life we find that the problem finally links to the root of ignorance. For example, anger does not arise by itself, instead the ignorance of ego-self generates the feelings of threat to oneself; when a person contacts outside objects through the five senses, and does not like it, he/she might feel that it would be a threat or damage to his/her ‘personality or the image’, then anger arises. Ignorance here means the misconception of permanent ego-self of ‘my or mine’ as discussed earlier in this Chapter.

I will provide brief descriptions of the twelve interdependent links in the wheel of life that further clarify the theory.



## **Ignorance**

Ignorance is the root of all casual actions, moral or immoral. This means being ignorant of, not knowing, or not being aware of the nature of mind and its influence over the human action. This may be understood as being ignorant of ego-self personally and experientially, as I discussed in the first part of this chapter. “It also means the confusion—the mistaken views and emotions of believing in a self—that come from that ignorance. Hence it could also, be rendered as bewilderment” (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p.111).

## **Volitional Action**

Ignorance and volitional action are the foundation for self-oriented intentions that propel toward habitual and repetitive actions based on self. Volitional actions establish the ground for continuing the links, as figured in the diagram, and become the prior conditions for continuation of lifespan: wholesome or unwholesome activities depending on how volitions take place. For instance, volition may appear as killing or as saving a life.

## **Consciousness**

This may be understood as the beginning of the life of any beings. The birth consciousness is considered as pure as it is devoid of immoral roots of unwholesome feelings and unaccompanied by moral roots (Piyadassi, 1991). Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) define “Consciousness is not the only mode of knowing; one is born into a moment or a lifetime of consciousness, rather than

wisdom, because of volitional actions that were based on ignorance” (113). This a crucial point in Buddhist philosophy that defines that consciousness arises as the result of the previous link of volitional actions, called *sankhara* (Rahula, 1996). In another point, the moment of consciousness means awareness of sense feelings, which are based on the five faculties (eye, ear, tongue, nose and body). Whatever moment of consciousness, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, it arises as the coherence of matter, feelings, perception and volitional actions.

### **The Psychophysical Complex**

The psychophysical complex or Mind and matter are conditioned by consciousness. Mind and matter play a significant role in the wheel of life; all kinds of feelings, expressions and behaviour come to actions through mind and matter.

### **The Six Senses**

A person has six senses. When the person is involved, even for a brief moment, for instance, in eating a piece of chocolate—he/she engages moments of each of the six-sense consciousnesses: the person sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches and thinks.

## **Contact**

Each sense of the body contacts its appropriate object. Moments of consciousness are engaged between the sense and its object—it appears that without contact there is no sense experience.

## **Feeling/Sensation**

Feeling—pleasant, unpleasant or neutral—arises from contact. “All experience has a feeling tone (feeling is also an omnipresent factor). Feeling has, as its basis, one of the six senses. At the point of feeling, one is actually struck by the world—in phenomenological language, one could say that we find ourselves thrown into the world” (Verela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p. 113).

## **Craving**

Craving is the more palpable and immediate cause for all kinds of attachment: the ‘principle thing’ and the ‘all-pervading thing’ (Rahula, 1996). Craving arises because of feelings. As craving is a fundamental and emotional reaction in its basic form, it is desire for what is pleasant and aversion for what is unpleasant. It is safe to assume that craving includes not only desire for sensory pleasure, but also desire for ideas and ideals, views, opinions, theories, conceptions and beliefs (Rahula, 1996). In the chain of causality, craving has an extremely important position. Up to this point the links function automatically with the influences of past conditioning. At the point of craving, the mindful person has an opportunity to interrupt the chain or let it go to the next step, which

is grasping. “The handling of craving is what determines the possibilities for perpetuation or change” (Verela, Thompson and Rosch (1993), p.114).

### **Grasping**

Grasping and clinging are the immediate results of craving. Grasping refers to desire for what one does not have and clinging to aversion for what one has and wishes to get rid of.

### **Becoming**

This is the concept in the sense of “being” in the world, which arises from the personalization of the elements of subjective and objective experience. The word “being” forms the self-idea and becomes the “figure” in all aspect of the world. “This static concept of self (I exist) is composed of time (the past, present and future) and the dimensions of space. The conventional reality of time and space is a product of this concept of being in the world” (Punnaji, 2001, pp.7-21).

### **Birth**

Birth/life as a new mode of being exists in the world. With the causal factors of the chain, birth starts its own destiny. “It is usually at this point only that one senses the causal chain and wants to do something about it. It is regarding this point, perhaps, that western philosophers talk about *akrasia* (weakness of the will) (Verela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p. 114).” Birth starts the process of life which grows with mind/matter, feelings, perception, volitional actions and

consciousness, and functions in a situation of uncertainty. Traditional metaphors in Buddhist literature for this are, life is uncertain like lightning in the sky, a water bubble, a dewdrop, a line drawn on water.

### **Decay and Death**

If there is birth, there must be death; in any process of arising, dissolution is unavoidable. In this circular chain of causality, one may face sickness, pain, sorrow, lamentation, mental and physical suffering (stress, anxiety, depression, anguish) and finally death. In Buddhist teachings, moments die, situations die in each and every moment of life (Narada, 1983); this is understood as constant change or fluctuation in the lifespan between birth and death.

Having rejected the substantial existence of permanent self, Buddhist philosophy did not remain silent by giving an impression that the absolute person is beyond description. The dependence upon conditions and its twelve-fold formula presents an explanation of a person in bondage while giving opportunity for the mindful person to focus on his/her own destiny. Therefore, it is right to begin explaining the life of a person in bondage as that of someone who is engulfed in ignorance (*avijja*) (Kalupahana, 1992). However, that is only the theory and explanation, and the person is responsible to be mindful to tackle the wheel of life. As I discussed above, each link is important in this cycle for its inter-dependence, though, volitional actions (*sankhara*) and craving (*tanha*) play a major role in the process. Volitional actions form causality, which is pivotal in the

human personality. At this point, Kalupahana (1992) says, volitional actions or mental formation individuate the personality, which is an inalienable part of the personality. This can function in the most extreme way, for example, in creating an excessively egoistic tendency culminating in a permanent self. This spawns influences on the rest of the links and they function accordingly. Thus the volitional actions, “while craving an individuality out of the ‘original sensible muchness’” (Kalupahana, 1992, p. 75), also play an important part in the continuity of the wheel of life.

Craving (*tanha*) is the juncture in this wheel of life so the person who is mindful is able to reduce the power of craving or completely eliminate its influence. In a pragmatic sense, when the person is aware of craving and its power and endless continuation, he can tackle his sensory desires without harming himself or others. Then, he can gain right satisfaction from having a spouse, children, comfortable lodging, sufficient food, medication and clothing. Although, even these satisfactions are neither permanent nor eternal, and eventually can lead to dissatisfaction; as it is impermanent, one enjoys it under great constraint (Majjima Nikaya I, 1995, pp.85-87). Kalupahana (1992) clarifies the final results of cause and effect in all of these:

The *final* result of all this is impermanence, decay, and death, grief, suffering, and lamentation. Constant yearning for this and that, thirst for sense pleasures, and dogmatic grasping of ideas—these are the cause and conditions of bondage and suffering. It is a life that will

eventually lead to one's own suffering as well as to the suffering of others, the prevention of which represents the highest goal of Buddhism (pp.76-77).

Through the experience and realization of this process, one has an opportunity to direct volitional actions and develop personality (*namarupa*) in a way of 'dependence upon conditions', freed from distress or unhappiness, and can follow a life that not only prevents or reduces distress and unhappiness but also contributes to the welfare of others. Getting rid of craving or reducing craving and developing a non-attachment attitude in life, the freed person is able to cultivate *compassion* for himself as well as others.

### **Getting Started to Free the Mind through Mindfulness**

Through the concept of mind and open-ended analysis of experience, I have been presenting how the mind-heart functions according to Buddhist philosophical psychology. It is an attempt to form a notion of mindfulness that leads to freeing the mind of unnecessary disturbances of stress, anxiety and depression, and to cultivate wholesome thoughts of compassion. Through mindfulness, the practitioner is able to begin, with some interruption, to observe the automatic patterns of conditioned behaviour (especially if he can let go of automatic grasping when craving or aversion arise). This way of practice intensifies the ability to be mindful, increases concentration into mindfulness and begins to apprehend the cause of ignorance. This exercise of mindfulness/awareness prompts further insight into the nature of experience that stimulates further ability to break or

reduce habitual patterns of egocentric intentional actions. The important facet of mindfulness is to be aware of hidden causes of worries, pains and anxiety in the human mind and to use mindfulness as a tool for preventing unnecessary roots to grow in the mind.

People often worry that were they to loosen their hold on craving and grasping, their desire would go away, and they would become numb and catatonic. In fact, exactly the reverse is the case. It is the mindless, the unaware state of mind that is numb—swathed in a thick cocoon of wandering thoughts, prejudgments, and solipsistic ruminations. As mindfulness grows, appreciation for the components of experience grows (Verela, Thompson, Rosch, 1993, p.122).

At this point, mindfulness/awareness comes in and leads the mind to function in the phenomenal world; it enables the mind to be fully present in the situation. The way of approach is not to avoid actions but to be fully aware in the present moment, so that one's attitude becomes progressively more receptive and therefore positive.

In contemporary society, freedom, in general, is idealized as the competency to follow whatever a person likes. The theme of interdependent origination is radically different. Rahula, (1996); Kalupahana (1992) and Verla, Thompson and Rosch (1993) note that doing whatever a person likes, out of a sense of ego-self, is the trapping of mind, words and actions. It is attached to the past by the cycle of conditioning (as illustrated in inter-dependent origination), and it causes ongoing attachment to habitual patterns. The habitual thought pattern is



looking for new things to cling to, whatever the mind's grip. The ordinary mind cannot be satisfied for a lifetime by feeding on worldly things; after someone obtains a 'thing' that he/she admires, they slowly lose the taste for the 'thing', and the mind seeks something new. This habitual pattern continues by creating more problems of frustration, disappointment, boredom, worries and distress. Indeed, mindfulness has its own power to reduce and avoid negative mentality in the human mind (Gunaratana, 2002).

This is the mental state that one has to strive for in the cultivation of mind/consciousness. Through this, students may subdue their negative feelings and sensations such as anger, jealousy, hatred and aversion. This allows them to dwell on the positive sensation of compassion and its reciprocal qualities of empathy, tolerance, contentment and benevolence, etc, that are the most urgently needed 'remedies' for students in the modern schools. By sharing with our students the quality of a cultivating mind, we are able to play an extremely important role in combating the malaise of contemporary culture as discussed by Glazer (1999) and Taylor (1991), among others. Arguably, this mental state might not be reached in a day, but with adequate guidance and honest, self-comprehensive practice based on mindfulness, will gain appreciable results. I will explore this in depth in "mindfulness practice".

## Chapter Three: Mindfulness

*Like a fish drawn from its watery abode and  
thrown upon land, even so does the mind flutter..  
(Dhammapada, V.42).*

### Introduction

*Bhavana* flourishes in mindfulness. Traditionally it is associated with a formal period of silent sitting, but that is just one facet of its structural formation. Cultivating the daily routine of mindfulness on mental and physical behaviour is in itself a form of *Bhavana*. As we investigated the mind from a Buddhist perspective in Chapter Two, in theory, such practice of mindfulness can be difficult because of the complexity of an easily distracted mind. “It is suggested that mindfulness could be introduced to students as a subject in its own right, rather than pegged on as an afterthought to a particular situation that may have led a young person into trouble” (Levete, 2001, p.18).

In this Chapter, I will discuss mindfulness using a philosophical approach into mind cultivation in the field of Western education. My reason for this is due to a growing interest in Eastern philosophy in the West. Mackinnon (1996) states, “There has been some interest in recent years among teacher education researchers in looking toward Eastern philosophy for ideas related to teacher education for reflective practice” (p.659). My main focus in this thesis is the introduction of the cultivation of students’ minds. Along with this primary centre of attention, I instate a partial discussion in this Chapter on how practicing mindfulness benefits

teachers in maintaining mental well-being in themselves for enhancing a positive teaching-learning environment in schools. In addition to teacher education, Mackinnon (1996) suggests further practice “to extend the notion to include mindfulness in the activity of teaching children” (p.660). While embracing his view I am inclined to expand on it by introducing important applications from eastern philosophy for learning at the “elbows”<sup>9</sup>. With this assumption, I develop my philosophical application of mindfulness as an art of living in students. The teachings of the Buddha are indeed, entirely composed of wisdom and the art of living. Rahula (1996) explains these two qualities:

According to Buddhism for a [one] man to be perfect there are two qualities that he should develop equally: compassion (*Karuna*) on one side, and wisdom (*panna*) on the other. Here compassion represents love, charity, kindness, tolerance and such noble qualities on the emotional side, or qualities of the heart, while wisdom would stand for the intellectual side or the qualities of the mind (p. 46).

The Buddha was concerned with how the world was interpreted by the mind. A wrong interpretation meant a wrong view of reality, which would result in our suffering. Thus the Buddha was concerned with aligning our interpretation correctly with reality. The mindfulness training and cultivation that I will introduce in this thesis aims at disciplining, guiding, and using the mind in such a way that it will be in alignment with the reality, which the Buddha described as

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<sup>9</sup> Mackinnon (1996) notes that, in Britain, the student is said to be “at the feet” of the teacher. He prefers the “at the elbows” metaphor, which implies a higher degree of uniformity among all participants in a teaching studio.

having three fundamental characteristics: impermanence, suffering and no-self. When the mind entertains a wrong interpretation of reality, and thus is not in alignment with reality, suffering, stress or distress in modern terminology, *dukkha* is the result. In this thesis (see Chapter Two), I used the modern terminologies of unsatisfactoriness, stress, depression and anxiety in place of the traditional translation, suffering, in order to convey the meaning of conflict and tension, disharmony and imbalance between the organism and the environment. I also offered the Buddhist interpretation of the ultimate causes of stress or depression: greed, hatred, ignorance, anger and jealousy. The mind, when afflicted with these unwholesome states, is incapable of seeing reality correctly, and the result is suffering or stress. Then, from the Buddhist point of view, the way to deal with stress, depression and anxiety is to remove these “impurities” of the mind, and make room for compassion. I will present mindfulness (*sati*) as the most expedient means of dealing with these impurities through my Sunday school experience.

### **Sunday School**

*The second part of my narrative begins in Canada with my Sunday school, where I have affiliated my life, searching and experimental journey. This experience, this new anecdote, became a most impressive chapter in my life. Indeed, not only the Sunday school but also the new society, quite opposite in tradition, culture and the way of looking at life, became a challenge to me. I enjoyed the adventure and simply adapted to the new*

*environment; this was one avenue of benefit from my cognitive training as a monk.*

*There are seventy-six children in my Sunday school. Most of the children are born here in Canada, and are adapted to western culture. They range in age from three to eighteen, and their grades from pre-school to grade twelve. Before starting classes, we have a mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation session for thirty minutes, which includes a discussion of virtues such as love, compassion, tolerance, respect for lives and meaning in life. In our discussion, children open their “hearts”, and ask honest questions. Most of the questions are related to their school life and to contemporary predicaments of aggressiveness, disrespect, killing, stealing and discrimination. In leading them to practice mindfulness, I am opening up an opportunity for them to understand and investigate issues for themselves and with help from their families, teachers and community. There are opportunities for students to cultivate humane feelings such as love and compassion and to follow them voluntarily. During our mindfulness sitting, I instruct students to close their eyes and concentrate on their normal breath while breathing in and out. They realized that the mind is not able to hold one thought even for a few seconds, and it flits quickly from thought to thought. When students get used to this type of mindful-observation, they may realize the nature of thought; thought arises,*

*persists and disbands. I ask them to apply this observation to negative feelings such as anger, jealousy and hatred. Like all other components in our body, our thoughts are transient, and so there is understanding that they are not permanent and can be let go or left to fade away. Most of the mature students have realized that they may be able to cope with their angry thoughts, and that they have a better chance of calming down without expressing their anger verbally and physically. The results I have witnessed do not come in a day, but take time and need dedicated practice.*

*I will highlight one of my numerous experiences with the students. Sarah, a grade ten student, said that before learning 'how to let negative thoughts go', she had trouble reading books and concentrating because of constant anger even with her teachers. With the experience of mindfulness, she is in a better position to concentrate on schoolwork, and she is happy because of good relationships with teachers. Mindfulness was helpful to Sarah on two fronts. First, she was able to recognize and tolerate the disturbing cascade of restlessness, indignation, frustration, mental insecurity and hopelessness, which had previously prompted intrusive feelings; she was easily scared, sad, mad or upset and kept holding onto upsetting thoughts. She was bothered by small things that did not seem to bother other people. Second, she was able to release herself from the grip of this deprivation, not by making it go away, but by recognizing herself as*

*something other than just this set of feelings. Mindful analysis of this reformation suggests that she viewed herself as 'nothing but' those feelings. When she was able to experience their 'transience' rather than holding onto those disturbing thoughts and or feelings, she noticed that she became less of a slave to them. I realized that these children are normal like other ordinary children but the distinction is that they are more critical of their own conduct. One may argue that this is a religious school so children automatically turn to such discipline. By answering to this potential argument, according to their parents' view, they have fewer difficulties in handling their children with issues of school, family and society. Mindfulness has helped considerably to improve student-teacher relationships in the class. There are fewer distractions from students even in the earlier grades. When students are mindful, they do not distract the teacher. If the class is distracted, the teacher becomes restless and may maintain a teacher-oriented or a teacher-controlled classroom. When the students and teacher are mindful, that classroom becomes student-oriented and an inter-supportive classroom. This behaviour creates a caring teaching-learning environment between the teacher and the student. It is clear that teachers should be stress-free to provide constructive and progressive lessons, as opposed to bringing confused, aggressive and restless minds to the classroom. "Mindfulness" sheds light on teachers as well as students to gain "mental wellness". This develops efficiency to*

*cope with inside or outside distractions and a wish to be in the classroom. If teachers are coming to the class with afflicted minds due to external factors of family and social problems, and negative feelings of depression, anxiety and distress, they may contribute less productivity to their teaching method, which transfers negativity to their students. As a result, these teachers may become teacher-oriented, restless and aggressive as I explained above. But the teachers who practice mindfulness, are able to tackle the external or internal factors positively and to maintain their 'mental wellness.' This mental wellness opens the door for empathy, warmth and genuineness as certain aspects of a teacher's personality (Martin, Sugarman & Mcnamara, 2000). When students are restless, uninterested and disruptive in the classroom, a teacher's empathy, warmth and genuineness can help those students observe and realize better their emotions and motivations mindfully, and to channel them to recover. That is a key factor for teachers to be successful in their teachings. Olson notes (2003, p.12, as cited in Dollarhide) that "progressive professionals believe that the schools should fit the natural development and interest of children, and should encourage self-expression through the art—that children are "creative beings" who should be nurtured, rather than disciplined, shaped, and controlled". There are two pre-school teachers, one high school teacher and two administrative service workers in our Sunday school staff.*



*Through their own experiences of practicing mindfulness, they observe that their teaching period in Sunday school is their best time in the week.*

With the experience of my Sunday school, I will investigate how mindfulness meditation can be integrated into the public school system. Before 'mindfulness', let us look into what meditation is.

### ***Bhavana: Meditation***

The practice of "*Bhavana*," popularly known as meditation in English, is a method to confront the causes of our attachment to the notion of permanence represented by the concept of ego-self. The word meditation in its general usage in modern America has a number of different folk meanings (Verela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993): 1) a state of concentration in which consciousness is focused on only one object; 2) a state of relaxation that is psychologically and medically beneficial; 3) a dissociated state in which trance phenomena can occur; and 4) a mystical state in which higher realities or religious objects are experienced. These are all different facets of mind and its process; the practitioner is working with his mind/consciousness to get rid of the usual mundane, hectic environment, restlessness and distress.

The word "meditation" is an insufficient substitute for the original *Pali* term *Bhavana*. Gunaratana (1991) explains that "*Bhavana*" comes from the root '*bhu*', which means to grow or become. Therefore, *Bhavana* means to cultivate, and the

word is always used in reference to the mind. *Bhavana* means mental cultivation"(p.37). There are two main forms of Buddhist *Bhavana*: calming or taming the mind and the development of mental tranquility (*Samatha*). The other is 'insight' known as '*Vipassana*', discovered by the Buddha (Nyanaponika, 1998). The term 'insight' refers to insight into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of mental suffering and the realization of enlightenment which is a state of mind free from harmful sensory desires or craving (Rahula, 1996; Kalupahana, 1992). With the liberation of mental suffering, there will no longer be any harmful desires such as anger, enmity and jealousy in the mind, but fully beneficial thoughts such as compassion and benevolence due to the absence of harmful desires. However, in mental cultivation, one has to develop mental tranquillity first, and then follow with 'insight' or *Vipassana* later (Mirisse, 2000). The purpose of tranquillizing the mind in *Bhavana* is not to become absorbed but to render the mind able to be present with itself for sufficient periods to gain insight into its own nature and performance. It is important to note that both 'tranquillity' and 'insight' are based on 'mindfulness'.

### **Introduction to mindfulness**

For the first stage of learning what mindfulness is, one must realize the extent to which people are normally not mindful.

Usually one notices the tendency of the mind to wander only when one is attempting to accomplish some mental task and the wandering interferes. Or perhaps one realizes that one has just finished an

anticipated pleasurable activity without noticing it. In fact, body and mind are seldom closely coordinated. In the Buddhist sense, we are not present (Verela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p. 24).

Mindfulness is the process of 'living in the present moment'; it is complete awareness of whatever one occupies (Santina, 1997), or in other words, to experience what one's mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one's mind. When the mind attains the full state of mindfulness (total alertness, vigilance and observation), it may lead to the tranquillity of the mind; it is free from subjective judgments. For example, when an ordinary person looks at another person (subjectivity), he will judge the person through pre-conceived beliefs such as race, colour, attractiveness, and social status. But when the mindful practitioner concentrates on the person objectively, he just observes what is.

How can one employ the mind as an instrument for knowing itself? How can one work with the absence of mind? Traditionally, mindfulness is taught by means of formal periods of sitting, of *Bhavana*. The reason for specific periods is to simplify the situation for complete awareness. The body is maintained in an upright posture and held still. For the development of bare attention, breathing is the simplest and traditionally recommended (Nanamoli, 1991) technique at this very first stage. Each time the practitioner notices that his/her mind is wandering heedlessly, he/she is to acknowledge non-judgmentally that wandering thought and return his/her attention back to its objective. Venela, Thompson and Rosch

(1993) express how, at the early stages, the practitioner can tackle his/her own mind to maintain mindfulness in the present moment:

Breathing is one of the most simple, basic, ever-present bodily activities. Yet beginning meditators are generally astonished at how difficult it is to be mindful of even so uncomplex an object. Meditators discover that mind and body are not coordinated. The body is sitting, but the mind is seized constantly by thoughts, feelings, inner conversations, daydreams, fantasies, sleepiness, opinions, theories, judgments about thoughts and feelings, judgments about judgments—a never-ending torrent of disconnected mental events that the meditators do not even realize are occurring except at those brief instants when they remember what they are doing. Even when they attempt to return to their object of mindfulness, the breath, they may discover that they are thinking about the breath rather than being mindful of the breath (p.25).

When the practitioner continues practicing mindfulness daily with effort and determination, eventually it begins to dawn on the practitioner that there is a genuine distinction between being present and not being present. In his daily life, the practitioner also initiates instants of waking up to the realization that he is not present and of flashing back for a moment to be present—not to the breath, in this situation, but to whatever is occupying the mind. This is the moment the practitioner finds great discovery of mindfulness that tends not to be some occupied thoughts into the nature of mind/consciousness but the apperception of just how disconnected people normally are from their very experience of life events. The practitioner notices how the most pleasurable and even simplest things pass by without being acknowledged in daily activities; eating, drinking, walking, gardening, chatting, driving, reading, writing, answering the phone, listening,

making love, visiting loved ones and friends, watching mother nature, mountains, rain, snow, a waterfall, trees and flowers, this list may go on—all these move rapidly in an obscure volitional sphere as the mind expedites to its next mental occupation.

From the point of view of mindfulness, people should not be enslaved or trapped their whole life in this distracted position. The habits and rooted thought patterns in their perception may disassociate the mind and body in everyday experience. Through constant practice of mindfulness, the practitioner is able to interrupt the flux of wandering thoughts with bare attention as it tends toward mindfulness. Bare attention, is impartial, open, non-judgemental, patient and fearless. On the path of mindfulness, beginning practice always involves unwanted, intrusive and disturbing aspects of our being. At this point, the practitioner is required to use the material of ‘*wisely seeing*’ to get rid of or to cope with *mind weeds* (Epstein, 1995).

We say, “Pulling out the weeds we give nourishment to the plant.” We pull the weeds and bury them near the plant to give it nourishment. So even though you have some difficulty in your practice, even though you have some waves while you are sitting, those waves themselves will help you. So you should not be bothered by your mind. You should rather be grateful for the weeds, because eventually they will enrich your practice. If you have some experience of how the weeds in your mind change into mental nourishment, your practice will make remarkable progress (p.127).

This is the promise of success in mindfulness, which is nurtured by awareness, concentration, openness, and bare attention. When one becomes familiar with this empowerment of mindfulness, he/she strengthens his/her ability to see the distractions in day-to-day interactions and to employ awareness to calm the mind with patience and perseverance, rather than becoming a victim of the restless mind. At this stage, the practitioner gradually becomes skilled at maintaining calmness even in a critical situation.

I have been presenting and developing my program of mindfulness aiming at compassion in the area of cultivation of mind. I will further expand on this with exclusive research on mindfulness through ancient Buddhist texts, which have expounded on profound methods. *Visuddhimagga* (Nanamoli, 1991) and *Vimuttimagga*<sup>10</sup> (Nanamoli, 1982) are ancient manuals that explain a variety of methods, some of which I have implemented in my mindfulness program.

According to the *Visuddhimagga* and *Vimuttimagga*, moving from the foundation through the extensive evolution of mindfulness, one has to be aware of his/her own mental objects when he/she associates with them through the five senses. The recommended procedure for observing mental objects (*mano arammana*) is as follows: When the practitioner perceives any mental object such

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<sup>10</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* is the original text on meditation of Theravada Buddhism written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by the great commentator Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa. The *Vimuttimagga* is a manual of meditation written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century by the Arahant Upatissa.

as anger, jealousy, hatred, love or compassion, the practitioner is not to dwell upon it in the ordinary egotistical way. For example,

People have the self-centred perception that whatever their beliefs and pre-conceived thoughts are, these beliefs and thoughts are considered permanent; when people apprehend things or other people, pre-settled beliefs or thoughts such as race, color, friends or enemies will be in the forefront of their mind, and they will act following those belief and thoughts (Mirissee, 2000, p.51).

By continuing mindfulness, the practitioner should observe the very process of perception itself: feelings such as hatred or love arise, persist, disband and are not permanent. The practitioner should observe what the mental object does to their senses and to their perceptions. For example, the ear "processes" sounds, but it is the mind that creates the reactions of attachment, aversion or neutrality to those sounds. Instead of holding these reactions as something objective and permanent, the practitioner should observe the feelings that arise, and the mental activities that follow. If one becomes attached to something or someone, love follows this attachment; if one becomes averse, anger may follow. One should note the changes in the way one perceives events that occur within the mind. In watching and observing all these mental phenomena, one must become aware of one's own perceptions; our senses contact objects and we feel attachment or aversion to these objects or we feel neutral about them (Thanissaro 1993; Seelanada 1990; Pio, 1988).

This initial perception will spark pleasant, unpleasant or neutral thoughts. For example, when I feel love, I am happy; and when I feel fear or pain, I don't like it. The understanding that this is common to all people promotes my empathy for others. This is very important for developing compassion among human beings. When people follow their feelings, various reactions may arise. They may feel greed, desire or jealousy. They may have love, compassion or sympathy. They may feel fear, worry, restlessness or boredom. The cultivation of compassion instead of hostility suggests the possibility of consciously directing or shaping our perception. We simply perceive our feelings, and realize that these arising feelings are normal human responses and can arise in anybody, and these feelings are subject to change, they disappear and nothing is permanent (Kabat-Zin, 1996; Sole-Leris, 1992). This cognitive knowledge helps people to prevent negative emotions in their mind. In other words, this practice helps to attack the root causes of stress, violence, aggressiveness and disrespect for life that are understood as feelings of anger, depression, anxiety or helplessness.

As the Buddha explains in His teachings (Gunaratana, 1998; Rahula, 1996; Santana, 1997), *Bhavana* is not a method of escaping or avoiding everyday life; it is instead a way to develop mindfulness and awareness of our normal life, our daily activities, our sorrows and joys, our words and thoughts, our moral and intellectual occupations. This way of complete mindfulness helps us to manage our daily lives: we become free of our own discriminations, our own violence,



abuse towards others and even reducing our mistakes, but we have more room to cultivate our humane feelings love and compassion in the mind.

*Satipatthana-sutta*<sup>11</sup> (Nyanaponika, 1996) teaches specific techniques on mindfulness, focusing directly on our mental and bodily conduct. *Sati* means mindfulness or awareness, *Upatthana* means setting-up, therefore combining the two words to create the term *satipatthana* means the "setting-up of mindfulness". How does one set up mindfulness in daily life? According to the *Satipatthana-sutta*, mindfulness has to follow in the four areas of: (1) the physical body, (2) feelings or sensations, (3) consciousness, and (4) various moral objects such as loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity (I will discuss these four areas in depth in the later part of the chapter). It should be clearly borne in mind that whatever form '*Bhavana*' may take, the essential focus is mindfulness, awareness, attention or observation (Ariyadhamma, 1994). This type of practice becomes helpful for students when they implement it into their daily lives. When students hold postures such as walking, sitting, standing and lying down, mindfulness should be in the position of their body. When one is mindful on one's present action, there is less chance of being distracted by outside factors such as the environment or society. When students are mindful of their thoughts, words and actions, it is more difficult for them to be tempted by outside factors such as

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<sup>11</sup> No 22 of the Digha –Nikaya (Collection of Long Discourses) or No 10 of the Majjhima-Nikaya (Collection of Middle-length Discourses).

environment, media or peer pressure. When students get used to this mode of calm mindfulness, they may reduce the chance of being disturbed while reading, writing and concentrating on schoolwork. When they talk to their teachers, parents or friends, their attitude and conduct may lead to mindfulness. Some students have minds so restless they cannot follow their school lessons. Those students who can concentrate and focus their minds fully on one thing have greater skill in absorbing the lessons they are taught in class.

### **Mindfulness of Breathing**

The next step of developing mindfulness, the *Satipatthana Sutta* introduces one of the best-known and beneficial techniques of *Bhavana* focused on breath. It is called "The mindfulness or awareness of in-and-out breathing" (*anapanasati*). The in-and-out breathing *Bhavana* for mindfulness has a definite posture according to the *Visuddhimagga*: one should sit down, having folded one's legs crosswise and keeping the body erect and mindful. However, sitting cross-legged is not easy for some students. Therefore, those who find it difficult to sit down or maintain the cross-legged posture may sit on a chair. What is important is to keep the body upright, but not stiff. Also, it is helpful to have the hands placed comfortably on the lap and to close the eyes lightly. The *Satipatthana Sutta* (Nyanaponika, 1992) explains the procedure of the breathing meditation technique:

Breathing in a long breath, he knows 'I breathe in a long breath'; breathing out a long breath, he knows 'I breathe out a long breath'; breathing in a short breath, he knows 'I breathe in a short breath'; breathing out a short breath, he knows 'I breathe out a short breath.' 'Conscious of the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe in', thus he trains himself. 'Conscious of the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe out', thus he trains himself. 'Calming the bodily function (of breathing), I shall breathe in', thus he trains himself; 'Calming the bodily function (of breathing), I shall breathe out', thus he trains himself (118).

This breathing *Bhavana* procedure can become part of daily life, but this does not mean that we can focus on the breath all the time. The training program of breathing *Bhavana* is for a set time each day. However, the student may eventually be able to practice mindfulness of the breath from time to time throughout the day, especially at those times when feeling restless. Here, it should also be noted that *Anapanasati* is not a breathing exercise. It is instead the practice of mindfulness using the breath as a focusing tool. There is no attempt to control the breathing in any particular way. We let the mind be aware of the breath, and observe the motion of the air while we concentrate on our breathing--in and out. When we breathe, we sometimes take long breaths, sometimes short. Instead the breaths should be normal, natural and calm. The practitioner should note that when taking long breaths he is aware of this long breath, and when taking a short breath, he is aware of the short breath. When the mind is focused and follows the breath persistently, one is able to focus the mind on the present moment. The practitioner can recognize the warm feelings that arise at the nostrils or any other part of the body from the heat generated by the breathing process.

Nevertheless, the mind does not stay all the time with the feelings of the breath. The mind generates images, memories, emotions and fantasies. The mind also comes into contact with external factors such as sounds, smells, heat or cold. When these distractions occur, the practitioner should pay attention to the state of mind created when consciousness comes into contact with these internal and external stimuli. In a little while, as these distractions fade away, the practitioner should allow his mind to return to the breath, and every time the mind returns to the breath, the practitioner can cultivate a deep cognition of feelings and thoughts: thoughts and feelings rise and fade away one after another. Thus the practitioner realizes the impermanent nature of all mental objects (Gunaratana, 1998).

Gradually, as the practitioner becomes used to the perception of impermanence, she has less selfish-attachment to both positive and negative emotions. She is able to let go of disturbing emotions and thoughts. When we train our minds by concentrating on breathing and as we become familiar with this practice, we can begin to use it in our daily activities without any conscious effort. In other words, we can use the mindfulness that we cultivate by concentrating on the breath, to focus on listening, writing, talking, cleaning, cooking and even driving. Especially for students, when they struggle with their concentration, they can bring mindfulness practice on the breath to daily studies. For instance, when they read a book they should keep total awareness on the words. They have to take time and concentrate on their breath until they feel calmness, mentally and physically. This peace of mind helps them to maintain undisturbed bare attention on their studies. I

will now explore more clearly how this mindfulness can be implemented by students to cope with negative emotions and feelings such as anger and restlessness arising from their daily lives.

As a first step of *Bhavana*, when students are mindful of their breath, it helps them to calm the mind and the body. This calmness of the mind and the body helps them to be aware of emotions and feelings with a greater clarity. Whenever feelings arise, students can become aware of these feelings and how they change. For instance, if students are aware that their anger is rising up, and they can bring mindful-attention to that fact, then they will have the opportunity to control acting out the anger. Also, in mindfulness one becomes aware of how anger arises, stays awhile and disbands, and that it is not permanent. This may lead students to calm their minds. Many students get stressed or troubled or become violent due to uncontrolled anger or ill-will (Stilwell, Galvin, Kopta, 2000; Swick, 1987). It seems that they may not be "aware" of their anger before they express it in an outburst, and that they only realize it after they express it. Clearly, this type of self-observation cannot be practical for most small children, say around five-years-old, due to an undeveloped cognition at this stage (Crittenden, 1990) but it may help restless teenaged students get rid of uncontrolled negative feelings as I mentioned above.

Although an individual may control their negative feelings in a particular incident, those same feelings may arise again when the environment or situation changes. When that person is mindful of the impermanent nature of those negative feelings, and that these negative emotions can be harmful to oneself as well as to others, one may remain calm, regardless of the specific situation, environment or the people involved. Gunaratana (1991) notes: "breathing is a universal process. All vertebrates breathe in essentially the same manner. All living things exchange gases with their environment in some way or other" (p.48). Therefore, breathing *Bhavana* can be used by everyone to help them to observe their feelings mindfully. Teaching the 'mindfulness on the breath' technique as a first step of *Bhavana* may help students to practice self-discipline.

In the beginning, one will find that it is not easy to bring the mind to concentrate on breathing even for a few seconds. Students will be amazed to see how the mind becomes distracted, by external sounds and internal conditions such as racing thoughts. They may be frustrated and disappointed by these disturbances and distractions. Even so if they continue this practice at least once daily, morning or evening, for about five to ten minutes at a time, without giving up their effort, they will gradually begin to concentrate the mind on their breathing (Santina, 1997). After a certain period, depending on their own ability and determination, they will experience a fully concentrated and peaceful mind. Although they still have to go on practicing this regularly, and it is important to know that they must

have determination and persistence to achieve the goal. This practice of mindfulness of breathing is one of the simplest and easiest techniques for students or anybody at the beginning (Kabat-Zin, 1986; Gunaratana, 1997). At moments when they are nervous or excited, such as when taking exams or giving a speech, they can practice mindfulness for a few minutes, and they will see for themselves that they become calm and better able to deal with difficult situations (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002; Rahula, 1996).

For young children, we can make them aware of their presence by the practice of counting breaths. For example, when a student breathes in, he/she should count one, and breathing out, should count two. Thus, they can count up to ten, then count backward and forward for five to ten minutes. This type of practice on breathing helps to hold awareness in the present moment. In an awareness of the present, of how things are, it can be much easier to be one's own image without damaging his/her social and moral identity, and manage the present situation effectively in a positive manner. Leveté (2001) points out:

From an early age most of us have been conditioned to regard our negative emotions as unnatural states of mind to be covered over either through suppression or distraction. Contrastingly, positive feelings such as peace, happiness and goodwill should always be a natural, permanent state of being. In reality, the positive image of what we should or should not be thinking, doing or feeling does not work out that way; thought is often in a crisis of conflict: confused, guilty and deeply afraid. A negative experience is often regarded as unnatural, a personal affront, or personal failure (p.9).

A consequence of this perception is that habitual thought patterns are divorced from a deeper level of intuitive understanding; an understanding which recognizes and accepts its interdependent connection with the rest of nature. By realizing that, as a self-observant and understanding human, one may be able to see his/her experience differently; the physical body and the process of thoughts are subject to natural laws, positive and negative consequences, impermanence and change. This state of mind empowers one's awareness of the present moment, and that awareness may lead him/her to cultivate positive thoughts of love, compassion, tolerance, sharing and respect due to a mind that is undistracted, composed and natural.

### **Mindfulness of Walking**

Walking meditation can be explained as another process of mindfulness. This technique is inspired by many practitioners; it can be easily practiced and enjoyed, walking while doing relaxation. In time one can use this meditation anywhere, in any situation where one meets time and space—in the classroom, at the office, in a park and anywhere in the house. This technique helps develop a greater strength of awareness, as well as suppleness of mind. The object of awareness is the action of slow walking at the beginning. “Total attention is placed in the action of the feet as they move and connect with the ground, harmonizing the action of walking step by step with the breath” (Levete, 2001, p.22). The practitioner begins the walking practice by standing on the spot, and should



maintain an erect body with heels together. While standing, pay attention to standing; acknowledge the standing and move the walking foot. Acknowledge the lifting of the right foot and move the foot forward with full attention on the heel. Lower the foot and place it on the ground with total awareness of placing. The walking practice consists of three aspects: 'Lifting', 'moving' and 'placing'. Acknowledge each aspect of walking mindfully, focusing on the movements of the walking process until reaching the end of the allotted walking path.

The practitioner should stop with both feet together in the standing position with acknowledgement of 'standing'. When one turns around by rotating on the heel, acknowledge each aspect of the turning motion: the turning of the heel of one foot and the lifting and placing down on the ground of the other foot. Focus on the standing posture and begin to walk back. The walking practice is more beneficial if one follows as slowly and as mindfully as possible. When feelings, thoughts and sounds arise, acknowledge them and repeat mentally 'thinking, thinking, thinking...'. After a few moments, bring the attention to the walking practice. Dhammananda (1987) expresses that the practitioner should not resist the disturbances, because then one will be concentrating on the resistance and lose the mindfulness on walking.

### **Contemplation of the body**

According to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, in practicing mindfulness, another very important and useful preparation for the meditator is to be aware and mindful

of whatever they do, physically or verbally, during the daily routine of their lives. This involves the “four foundations of mindfulness” which are: 1) contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*), 2) contemplation of feelings/sensations (*Vedananupassana*), 3) contemplation of the state of mind (*Chittanupassana*), and 4) contemplation of mental objects (*Dhammanupassana*).

I will begin with the first foundation of “contemplation of the body” (*kayanupassana*). The *Satipatthana Sutta* (Nyanaponika, 1962) explains the procedure as follows:

He applies clear comprehension; in eating, drinking, chewing and savouring, he applies clear comprehension; in obeying the calls of nature, he applies clear comprehension; in walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking, speaking and being silent, he applies clear comprehension” (p.119).

Therefore, one should be in the present moment and in their present actions. This does not mean that they should not think of the past or not to plan for the future. But they should do so in relation to the present action. This is the “clear comprehension” of present action. Rahula (1996e) notes:

People do not generally live their actions in the present moment. They live in the past or in the future. Though they seem to be doing something now, here, they live somewhere else in their thoughts, in their imaginary problems and worries, usually in the memories of the past or in desires and speculations about the future. Therefore they do not live in, nor do they enjoy, what they do at the moment. So they are unhappy and discontented with the present moment, with the work at hand, and naturally they cannot give themselves fully to what they appear to be doing (p.71).

When one practices mindfulness, it doesn't mean that one should think or repeat "I am doing this" or "I am doing that"; it means that the establishment of mindfulness of the present action should be in our consciousness. The moment one thinks 'I am doing this', one becomes self-conscious, and then one does not live in the action but lives in the idea of 'I'. One should forget oneself completely, and lose oneself in what he/she does. The moment an actor becomes self-conscious and thinks 'I am acting in front of an audience', his acting is disturbed. However when he forgets himself in his acting, then he is at his best: he acts well and performs appropriately.

### **Contemplation of feelings**

In addition to the mindfulness of the body that I mentioned above, specifically mindfulness of breathing and contemplation of the body, according to the *Satipatthana sutta*, there is a second way of practicing mindfulness called "contemplation of feelings" (*vedananupassana*) with regard to emotions, whether happy, unhappy or neutral. When one has a pleasant feeling, one knows he is experiencing a pleasant feeling, when one has a painful feeling, one knows he is experiencing a painful feeling, when one has a neutral feeling, one knows he is experiencing a neutral feeling. The *Satipatthana Sutta* (Nyanaponika, 1962) explains:

Thus he dwells practicing feeling-contemplation on feelings internally, or externally, or both internally and externally. He dwells contemplating origination-factors in feelings, or he dwells

contemplating dissolution-factors in feelings, or he dwells contemplating both origination and dissolution factors in feelings (p.122).

The question arises: how does one identify those feelings and how should they act towards the feelings, according to the above citation. For instance, when a student experiences an unhappy, sorrowful sensation, his mind is cloudy and not clear; the student may be depressed. In some cases, he does not even see clearly why he has these unhappy feelings. In order to overcome this state of mind, he should try to see clearly why there are these sensations or feelings of unhappiness or worry or sorrow. He should examine how these feelings or sensations arise, their cause, and how they disappear. But one may ask: how is this to be done? According to Rahula (1996), he should try to examine these sensations or feelings *as if* he is observing them from the outside, without any subjective reaction, as a scientist observes some objects. In this mode he should not look at them as ‘my feelings’ or ‘my sensations’ subjectively, but only look at them each as ‘a feeling’ or ‘a sensation’ objectively. For example, when he has feelings of anger towards someone, he should not think that it is “my anger” towards that person, but notices that it is an angry feeling. When he sees its nature and how the particular sensation or feeling arises and disappears, his mind grows dispassionate towards that sensation and thus the student is able to cope with the troubling emotion.

## **Contemplation of the state of mind**

Let me discuss the third aspect of mindfulness with regard to our minds. It is called the contemplation of the state of mind (*chittanupassana*). Rahula (1996) notes that meditators should be fully aware of their minds whether they are passionate or detached, whether they are overpowered by hatred, ill-will, jealousy, or are full of love and compassion; whether their minds are deluded or have a clear and right understanding of their feelings. Generally, people are more accustomed to looking at other people's attitude and behaviour, rather than their own mind. In meditation, it helps to have a humble attitude: this helps one to observe one's own mind dispassionately. One should make the effort to correct one's false views, as if looking in a mirror.

When feelings come into awareness, the meditator should not cling to them because they are pleasant nor avoid them because they are unpleasant. There should be no attitude of criticizing or judging between right and wrong, or good and bad. One should simply observe, watch, examine and, most importantly, let go of them. In doing so, one is not a judge, but should be like a scientist. When people observe their own mind, they can start to see its true nature clearly; a thought and feeling arises, persists and disbands, and another thought comes and follows the same process. By observing this arising and passing away, one is no longer deluded into thinking that thoughts are permanent. When they see the true nature of the mind, they may become dispassionate with regard to their emotions

and thoughts. Thus they may become more detached and free, further able to regard feelings and sensations as impermanent.

Students who are under acute stress due to overpowering anger and hatred are, paradoxically, often not *self-reflexively* really aware that they are angry. The moment a student becomes aware and mindful of the state of anger in his mind, that is the moment he “sees” his anger. Then he faces the choice of whether to act out the anger or abandon it. For example, in general when people say ‘I am angry’ or I got angry’, that means they have identified themselves with the state of anger. They did not pause to check out their anger, its origin, its legitimacy and its consequence. What one should do is to become fully aware of one’s feelings such as anger or hatred just as they arise, and should examine their nature, how they arise, how they disappear, rather than enacting the feelings. Here again it should be remembered that he should not think ‘I am angry’, or of ‘my anger’. He should only be aware and mindful of the state of an angry mind. He is only observing and examining an angry mind objectively. This should be the attitude with regard to all emotions or states of mind. And when one gets used to this practice in daily life, one can feel a peaceful state of mind not occupied with unwholesome thoughts.

Mindfulness practice is the practice of being totally honest with ourselves. When students watch their own minds and bodies, they notice certain things that are unpleasant and certain things that are pleasant. If they don’t like them, they try

to reject them; and as they like them, they feel attracted to them. What are the things they don't like? They don't like to have lower grades or somebody else having higher grades than they do. They don't like teachers and friends who are not friendly and don't care about them. They don't like an environment that is unpleasant and irritating. These likes and dislikes apply not only to peers, places, and material things, but also to opinions, ideas, beliefs, and decisions as well. They don't like what naturally happens to them. They don't like, for instance, being sick and weak, or appearing unattractive: they have a great desire to preserve their appearance. These are but a few examples of their experience of an afflicted mind--jealousy, anxiety, egoism, dissatisfaction and discontentment.

When mental afflictions arise in their daily lives, students can use their mindfulness or awareness to track them down and comprehend their basis or origin. The basis of each of these mental states is within the self. If they don't, for instance, have the basis of hatred, nobody can make them angry, for it is the basis of their anger that reacts to somebody's actions or words. If they are mindful, they will diligently use their wisdom to look into their own mind. If they don't have hatred in them, they will not be concerned when someone points out their shortcomings or blames them for some reason. But this doesn't mean that they have to be victims of others who themselves are not mindful of their own anger and hatred. The accused should not "take on" the emotions of others, but should

respond intelligently and appropriately, without becoming angry. Kabat-Zinn (1990) explains that with a calm state of the mind:

We are able to see things more clearly and with a larger perspective, all because we are a little more awake, a little more aware. And with this awareness comes a feeling of having more room to move, of having more options, of being free to choose effective and appropriate responses in stressful situations rather than losing our equilibrium and sense of self as a result of feeling overwhelmed, thrown off balance by our own knee-jerk reactions (p.56).

Our mind greatly influences our body. Therefore, our mind, when settled down with calm feelings and thoughts, can effect calm behaviour. On the mind--body connection, Collinge (1996) explains that our thoughts and feelings influence the body in two kinds of ways: the nervous system and the circulatory system. They communicate between the brain and the rest of the body. Further he explains that

The brain reaches into the body via the nervous system. This allows it to send nerve impulses into all the body's tissues and influence their behaviour. The brain can thus affect the behaviour of the immune system with its nerve endings extending into the bone marrow (the birthplace of much of our immune system's white blood cells), the thymus, the spleen, and the lymph nodes (1996, p.3).

Also he explains the circulatory system.

The brain is also a gland. It manufactures thousands of different kinds of chemicals and releases them into the bloodstream. These chemicals circulate throughout the body and influence the activity and behaviour of all the body's tissues. The brain could be described as the ultimate apothecary, producing many more drugs than science has ever invented (1996, p.3).



## Contemplation on mental objects

According to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the fourth and final method of mindfulness meditation is contemplation on mental objects (*Dhammanupassana*). In Buddhism, these mental objects include the five hindrances (*pancha nivarana*): (1) sensual desire (2) ill-will, hatred or anger (3) drowsiness (4) restlessness and worry (5) doubts. Rahula (1996e) states:

These five are considered as hindrances to any kind of clear understanding, as a matter of fact, to any kind of progress. When one is over-powered by them and when one does not know how to get rid of them, then one cannot understand right and wrong, or good and bad (p.74).

When students start to meditate, they may soon find that there are certain thoughts that keep coming up and giving them difficulties. They may notice that their mind cannot stay with one thought for more than a few seconds, and that it wanders and clings to various thoughts like a wild monkey jumping in a tree, clinging to the various branches of the tree. This is the “monkey mind” that I mentioned above. These difficulties are given the title “hindrances” which I mentioned above. According to the *Satipatthana Sutta* text, when a hindrance arises in the mind, the meditator should apply mindfulness and be aware that the hindrance has arisen. One should try to identify the nature of the hindrance and then let it go. If the meditator finds it impossible to let go of a hindrance, then the meditator should use mindfulness repeatedly until it disappears.

It is important that the meditator should not become upset over the hindrances, thinking that they should not be there. He or she should think it is normal for everyone to have these hindrances. The meditator should not try to control or suppress these obstacles, but instead should think about their conditions. Whatever thoughts arise in the present are the result of past actions and thoughts. On the importance of not suppressing mental hindrances experienced during the meditation, Weissman and Weissman (1996) note:

Suppressing the hindrances is one extreme; indulging them is the other. If we suppress these things, then we will not get to know them and have the opportunity to let them go. If we indulge them, we will be continually under their power, sowing seeds for their continual arising in the future. We will not be able to see deeper into their nature and will be unable to get beyond their power to dominate the mind (p.11).

I have referred to the “five hindrances” before but have not explained them in detail. Because successful meditation depends on working with them, we need to have a clear understanding of them. These hindrances appear as obscure and hinder the mind’s potential for developing sustained, well-focused application to any task, including education and career goals. “By recognizing them and learning to undermine them, meditation can allow the calm, stillness and brightness in the depths of the mind to ‘shine through’ (Harvey, 1997, p.344).

## **Desire for pleasurable sense-experience**

Sensory desire is certainly not abnormal, but if it is very strong, it may dominate one's whole life. A lot of dissatisfaction arises in people because what they have at the moment is not good enough for them and they seek the fulfilment and excitement of a "better" sight, a "better" sound, a "new" taste or some other novel stimuli. They are continually seeking and struggling to satisfy new desires. But consider this fact: some people grow up in a wealthy and privileged environment, and thus have many opportunities to fulfil their desire. Yet, they still do not feel fulfilled. They are continually trying to satisfy more and more desires, because they do not appreciate what they already have in the present moment. They are dissatisfied with life and their minds are restless. Thus what should become clear to us through a critical reflection like this is that dissatisfaction is the nature of sensory desires. But we continue to think: "if only I get and have that, I will be happier, I will be fulfilled." But this is a delusion: we lack a clear understanding of the functioning of our minds.

It is the job of the conceptual mind to project onto consciousness what is not here and now. When this conceptual mind is put to the service of egoistic desires, we suffer from the dissatisfaction of not having this or that. Weissman and Weissman (1996) note:

It also so conditions the mind toward seeing happiness dwelling in some future moment that it becomes impossible for them to be

awake and experience the present. Often dissatisfaction and emptiness cloud the moment, and the mind is continually longing for the illusory future” (p.13).

So, to the extent that we live in our thoughts for the future, to that extent we neglect to live in the present. We continually postpone realizing happiness in the present moment. Now, does this mean that we should not plan and think about the future? Certainly it does not. It is important to think about the future: we need to plan for the future, as the future is up to us. But what we need to give up is substituting living the present moment with the thoughts about the future. We may think about the future but we should live in the present moment. What this means is that, first of all, we will not experience so much unfulfillment as when we are not fully engaged with the present and make the most of its potential. We will be too “busy” appreciating the present to want something more or different. But even then, if we do see that we can do something to improve our situation for the better, for oneself and for others, then we will put our conceptual mind to work and think about different possibilities and how to achieve them. This way, thinking about the future is carefully limited within the “economy” of living in the present. This will prevent the endless proliferation of desires and perpetual dissatisfaction that comes with them. Harvey (1997) notes that “ this is compared to being in debt, for one feels to ‘owe’ the desired objects attention, and so is pulled towards them; they have a hold on one” (p.344). It is important to notice here, too, that students have to think about and plan their future, but should live in the present moment, and they may plan about their future relative to the present action.

## **Anger and ill-will**

In the beginning of this Chapter we discussed anger and how to use mindfulness to cope with angry feelings. Anger is often the result of having one's strong desires thwarted. As a result of these angry feelings, the student may start to blame others, such as parents, teachers, friends, or even society in general, for his/her unhappiness. "This is compared to having an illness which makes everything taste bitter: to an irritated mind, the world is an irritating place" (Harvey, 1997, p. 344). Therefore, in meditation, they should reflect on their anger and try to be intimately acquainted with anger and its characteristics. What is anger? How does it feel in the body, and in the mind? With awareness and wisdom, they should perceive anger as the root of an unpleasant state of mind. When the student focuses his awareness fully and honestly inward towards his mind, he may see that the most direct and immediate cause of his anger is in his mind. The external environment is merely the trigger that activates the seed of anger in the mind. After some period of meditation practice, they may learn to gently let go of their hostility. As Weissman and Weissman (1996) state, "Forgiving ourselves, letting go of the wish to manipulate others, is bending the strong energy of aversion and transforming it into the energy of compassionate understanding" (p.15).

Here I should point out that the meditator should build awareness gradually and maintain it at every moment. Impatience for a better result is

counterproductive. What is important to making progress is growth in understanding. Through understanding the unsatisfactory and painful nature of anger, hatred and aversion, people can cultivate the ability to see into themselves more clearly. They can make their minds healthier by channelling their mental energy into feelings of compassion and forgiveness towards themselves. By practicing meditation in this way, anger and its related feelings such as hatred will lose power over the meditator. I will discuss compassion towards self and others in more detail in Chapter 4 when I describe the *Metta Sutta*, or Loving-Kindness meditation.

### **Dullness and Drowsiness**

The third hindrance, dullness and drowsiness, or lack of attention or the inability to concentrate properly, indicates that our mind is not alert and focused enough. Of course, dullness and drowsiness can be a result of physical fatigue, but here we are concerned with drowsiness and low energy in the absence of physical fatigue. It is in a sense a “lazy” mind. When we see drowsiness appear, we should appreciate that this is a natural function of the mind, especially in the untrained or undisciplined mind. The untrained mind is unstable and shaky in that it cannot maintain concentration on a single object or subject for even a short period of time. For the undisciplined mind, one thought comes and is quickly overpowered by the next thought. A perfect analogy would be like bubbles in a stream: one bubble appearing and being quickly replaced by another, as they all flow along.

The untrained mind lacks energy and determination, and this results from the “unstableness” of the mind. Some students are drowsy most of the time, and it may lead to inertia, especially when doing their schoolwork. “This is compared to being in jail: one is incarcerated in one’s passive state: not engaging with any worthwhile activity, one gets nothing out of life” (Harvey, 1997, p. 345).

Whenever they feel drowsiness, they should try to become more awake by becoming more aware: they should practice mindfulness on their drowsiness.

### **Restlessness and Worry**

Restlessness and worry are the result as well as the cause of unsatisfactoriness. We are all familiar with these. As with the first hindrance, desire for pleasurable sense-experiences, restlessness and worry come from not being fully engaged with the present moment. The mind “jumps” all over and is unable to settle down. When in this state, the mind cannot concentrate on a single object. Then, what naturally follows is worry, followed sometimes by the development of feelings of hopelessness and anxiety. The individual may think that he cannot achieve his goals because he doesn’t have the right direction to go. “This is compared to being a slave: being very dependent on what frame of mind one happens to be in, wavering between emotional highs and lows” (Harvey, 1997, p. 345). Again in this situation, the person who experiences restlessness should practice mindfulness as a means of settling down and resting the mind, thereby getting hold of it, as a horseman gets hold of a jumping horse.

Mindfulness of breathing is most effective for the restless mind and will allow the person to gradually bring her awareness onto the present moment. When she sees clearly her restless feelings, she can let go of them: she will then feel her mind becoming clear and she will be ready to concentrate properly.

### **Vacillation or fear of commitment**

Gunaratana (1991) likens doubt to being lost in the desert: “It is the feeling of a man stumbling through a desert and arriving at an unmarked crossroad. Which road should he take? There is no way to tell. So he just stands there vacillating” (p.139). When one experiences doubt, the mind is “foggy and cloudy”. A student who has doubts about the value of going to school cannot focus his attention on his schoolwork. He will lack confidence and direction. Harvey (1997) notes that it is similar to turning back half-way through a journey, just when one starts to visit somewhere.

Frustration and anger or helplessness may arise when a person in doubt becomes impatient for not having a clear direction to go. But such agitation of the mind only compounds the difficulty. Externally imposed directions and actions do not treat the problems in its root. Only clarity of the mind brought about by insight and understanding resolves it. Therefore, the most helpful thing to do is the mindfulness practice that settles down the agitated mind so that it can look into the nature of one’s doubt and indecision more clearly. These five hindrances described above are the distractions of the mind, and pull the mind off balance and create



problems for people. The approach one should take to these hindrances is to be mindful of them. These hindrances arise because of the past conditioning of the mind, and by not being carefully and skilfully trained. The mind is unable to engage with the present moment; it jumps all over, keeps running off to fantasies and desires, and is easily distracted and frustrated. The first basic thing to do with such a state of mind is to just become aware of the mental objects without suppressing them or indulging in them. This non-attached awareness is the first step of mindfulness training. Mindfulness cultivates the capability of recognizing when the hindrances are present. Then the student can try to apprehend, to learn how these particular energies affect the mind and body. Investigating and opening the mind in this way, one becomes better at recognizing these energies earlier and more often, understanding them, and is able to allow them to pass away more easily.

Overall, mindfulness practice aims at a combination of two processes (Harvey, 1997): a) the cultivation and growth of wholesome, positive mental states; and b) the weakening, and final eradication, of mental, 'impediments'. These two parallel processes are enabled through the development of mindfulness. As I discussed above, five hindrances are debilitated by the technique of mindfulness on contemplation of mental objects. In order to proliferate the positive state of mind, one should concentrate on "five intensifying factors" (Rowlands, Nyanaponika, 1997, cited in Harvey). These lead the mind toward its

culmination of mental clarity and absorption: mindfulness in the fullest sense.

These five intensifying factors are (Harvey, 1997, pp.346-347):

- \* *Vitakka*, or 'Applied thought'; applying, and re-applying the mind to the meditation object
- \* *Vicara*, 'Examination' or 'sustained thought'; a sustained examination and exploration of the meditation object; keeping the mind on the object
- \* *Piti*: or 'Joy': physical and mental zest and energisation, felt, at first, as mild joyful tingles, later in a more sustained and intense way
- \* *Sukha* or 'Happiness': a harmonization of energy that expresses itself in a more tranquil and calm way than joy, as a deeply contented inner happiness and
- \* *Citta-ekaggata*, or 'one-pointedness of mind': unification of the mind and its energies, through being wholly focused on the meditation object.

The above five intensifying factors may develop and ennoble gradually, though; the result depends on the practitioner's effort, determination and perseverance. It is substantial and notable here that one may counteract, using these five intensifying factors, the five hindrances and overcome negative intensity in the mind. Harvey states (1997, p.347):

- \* Applied thought counteracts dullness and drowsiness: by engaging the mind in activity.
- \* Examination counteracts vacillation; by sustained application to the task at hand.
- \* Joy counteracts ill-will: by being a warm, uplifting energisation, rather than a fiery one.
- \* Happiness counteracts restlessness and worry: by being a calm contented feeling which avoids the extremes of elation and depression.
- \* One-pointedness of mind counteracts desire for more alluring and indulgent pleasurable sense experiences: by letting the mind remain, in stillness, on one object, without wanting to shuffle off in search of others.

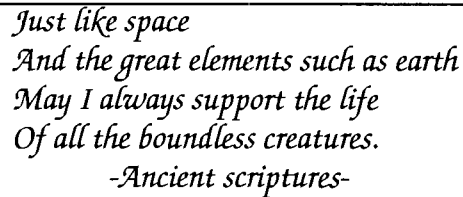
It is clear that at this stage, the practitioner should maintain his/her full strength of mindfulness, of contemplation, expression and re-expression to counteract the hindrances until he/she establishes the strong habit of natural flux of mindfulness. When these factors naturally arise in the mind, the practitioner is having clear, comprehensive mental clarity, which is more durable and sustainable. This may lead to the potential stage of mental culmination of attainment of the full state of mental clarity-*Jhana* (Visuddhimagga and Vimuttimagga).

Finally, I have compiled the following pieces of advice concerning meditation using the guidelines provided by Gunaratana (1991), Rahula (1996), Nyanaponika (1962), LeVete (2001) and Harvey (1997).

- (1) Just sit and observe what is going on with one's thoughts. Take the whole thing as an experiment. Don't get distracted by your expectations about the results and do not be anxious for any result.
- (2) One should not hurry through their meditation practice. When one gets used to meditation, his/her deep awareness seeks to see reality exactly as it is. For example, when sensual desire comes, deep awareness sees its nature: that it is not permanent and that it may disappear in a few moments. One should not store his/her images, opinions, and interpretations in the mind for the duration of the practice.

- (3) One should not make any judgments, but let thoughts come and go, let things be, accepting things as they are. We should just let our experience be what it is and practice observing it from moment to moment.
- (4) Patience is very important in meditation; there is no hurry, no shortcuts to help us gain instant results. So take your time. Settle yourself on a cushion or chair, and let your mind come to concentrate on your subject.
- (5) One should learn how not to get upset over his/her flaws and failings, but to see all the phenomena in the mind as being natural and understandable. For example, past mistakes and failures are in the past. The only thing one can do is to be as fully aware as possible of one's present thoughts, and let mindfulness guide you on the right way. Learn how to exercise equanimity, a disinterested acceptance with respect to everything.
- (6) Everything should be subject to mindful, investigative meditation. One should not accept anything without investigating it, just because it sounds wise and nice.
- (7) See all problems as life challenges: use mindfulness towards the negative side of life. See them as opportunities to learn and to grow.
- (8) One should not make contrasts: when one contrasts things, one becomes attached to things, and this creates egoistic feelings. For example, when a girl contrasts herself to another girl who is prettier than she, she feels envy or jealousy. This type of comparison is a mental habit, and it leads to unwholesome feelings such as envy, pride, jealousy, and hatred.

## Chapter Four: Metta (Loving-Kindness)



*Just like space  
And the great elements such as earth  
May I always support the life  
Of all the boundless creatures.  
-Ancient scriptures-*

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored profound Buddhist meditation, both its theory and practice. In particular, I explained the method of practicing the breathing and walking techniques and contemplation on actions, feelings, mind and mental objects to arouse mindfulness. In this chapter, I am going a further step from being aware of the state of mind to what we could do about it or how we could train our mind to go to the next step. For this purpose, I will explore the *metta* or “loving-kindness” meditation. In comparing *metta* with mindfulness, it should be noted that mindfulness meditation is the basis for *metta* or any other kind of meditation technique. Without having mindfulness or total awareness one cannot concentrate properly on any object or action. Therefore, mindfulness is the prerequisite for all forms of meditation.

It is a common human experience that our relationships with other people, with animals, with our own thoughts, are often marred by resentment etc. From inner tensions come tensions with those around us; and we also store up the charge of outer tensions as inner tensions. Loving Kindness warms up and opens out the heart, in aspiration for the happiness of all beings, starting with oneself, thus working directly on such inner tensions. Any degree of loving-kindness practice is very beneficial, for the seeds of this quality are

already latent in the ‘brightly shining mind’ which is the unconscious resting-state of the mind (Harvey, 1997, p. 348).

*Apart from mindfulness, the children practice “Metta or Loving-Kindness” every Sunday in their meditation sitting in Sunday school. First, one student recites the designed metta form while other students concentrate on the reciting student’s voice, after that all the students concentrate on loving-kindness for five to ten minutes. This helps students to clear their attitude in relationships with others; relationships with parents, family members, teachers, friends and even unfriendly people, a hard part of life as many have experienced. There is a very important matter here that is nurturing humane feelings of love and compassion among my Sunday school students. This harmonious attitude of metta helps them not only during their time at Sunday school but also at regular school. I will discuss the metta or loving-kindness meditation technique, and its profound descriptions and experience with my Sunday school students in this chapter.*

As I discussed in Chapters One and Two, the mind is able to control and subdue itself through intense training. We recognized that the most immediate internal “causes” of “mental disharmony” are unbearable feelings and emotions such as anger, jealousy, hatred, lack of positive relationships and helplessness. Therefore, if these internal causes can be eliminated, we can potentially prevent

“mental disharmony” from arising in the first place. This is where *metta* comes in. Metta meditation works to reduce negative emotions and feelings such as anger, jealousy and hatred, and to strengthen positive relationships, the sense of self, and self-esteem in students. Metta is the supreme virtue, which students should cultivate in their mind.

According to Buddharakkhita (1989), the Pali word *metta* has numerous meanings such as loving-kindness, friendliness, benevolence, fellowship, fraternity, harmony, inoffensiveness and peace. In texts such as the Visuddhimagga and the Vimuttimagga, *metta* is defined as strong thoughts for the welfare and happiness of everyone, both oneself and others, without asking for anything in return. Buddharakkhita (1989) states: “Through *metta* one refuses to be offensive and renounces bitterness, resentment, and animosity of every kind, developing instead a mind of friendliness, accommodativeness, and benevolence which seeks the well-being and happiness of others” (p.1). Metta is not selfish love, which “clings” or attaches to the object of one’s love and pursues the self-centred fulfilment of desires. When self-centred desires arise, they may be followed by offensiveness, resentment, and animosity in later stages. Strong egocentric desires cannot tolerate the non-fulfilment of desires or the loss of cherished possessions. Negative thoughts such as resentment and anger may arise. Metta meditation is first of all a refusal to allow egocentric desires to proliferate by arousing the opposite desires: friendliness, benevolence, harmony and

inoffensiveness. Harvey (1997) distinguishes how *metta* thoughts can be expressed at any time as a mental attitude, in kind words and deeds, which can be deliberately cultivated through *metta*:

- \* The heartfelt aspiration for the happiness and health of a living being, whether oneself or any other; for all wish to be happy.
- \* A genuine liking of self and others.
- \* A feeling akin to the love of a mother for her young child, but without its tendency to over-attachment, and radiated to a range of people.
- \* Rejoicing at the goodness of people.
- \* A warm, accepting patience, free from all hatred, ill-will, bitterness festering self-pity, resentment or stoic indifference.
- \* A willingness to patiently work without anger toward what life and other people present us.
- \* A warm glow of zestful energy in the 'heart', which melts some of the icy-encrustations from our ego (p.349).

When one practices *metta* with pure thoughts, selfish desire is overcome by sympathy. First of all one creates the opportunity to extend positive feelings towards others by detaching oneself from one's selfish desires and aversions. *Metta* meditation creates the energy to go beyond ego-self, which is the tendency to be self-centred, or to consider only oneself and one's own interests. For instance, when the meditator practices *metta*, he is able to generate empathy and appreciate better the feelings of sorrow and pain, joy and happiness in others. The *metta*-meditator awakens his thoughts of well-being and safety for others by realizing that: "All individual beings fear being harmed; life is dear to all; comparing others with oneself, one should neither hurt nor kill nor cause to hurt or kill anyone" (Dhammapada, No.129). In this way, when the *metta* meditator



generates pure thoughts of loving-kindness, she will be able to transform thoughts, undisturbed by such impediments as anger, jealousy and hatred, into the wish for the happiness and welfare of others. Thus, *metta* meditation aims to generate within oneself a warm-hearted feeling of friendliness, empathy, sympathetic joy and love, which would enhance the ability to overcome such social barriers as race, religion, gender, age and social status. It also helps one to avoid feelings of resentment, frustration, insecurity and hopelessness as mentioned earlier. The latter emotions are known as direct causative factors of mental disharmony.

In addition to the *metta* meditation technique described in the Visuddhimagga and Vimuttimagga, there is another explanation of the *metta* technique in the *Metta-Sutta*, which is an ancient Buddhist chanting and meditation scripture (see Chapter Two). This *Metta-Sutta*<sup>12</sup> explains how to follow *metta*, and what should be done by the meditator in order to prepare for meditation practice. Before discussing the *Metta-Sutta* and its practices, I shall relate the story of how the *Metta-Sutta* originated because the story reveals an important insight into the power of *metta* in protecting oneself from negative emotions. It so happened that one time five hundred monks received meditation instructions from the Buddha, and went to the forest to meditate. These monks couldn't concentrate because, so they claimed, they saw terrifying visions and heard dreadful noises made by invisible deities. The monks returned to the Buddha with distressed

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<sup>12</sup> Metta Sutta is a part of great teachings of the Buddha (Sutta-nipata I, No 8)

minds and bodies, and they explained to him the disturbing events in the forest. After listening to the monks, the Buddha taught them the *Metta-Sutta* and asked them to go back to the forest. The monks returned to the same place where they meditated before, recited the *Metta-Sutta* and set their minds on *metta*. Eventually, the monks were no longer disturbed by the terrifying visions and dreadful noises, and they could continue their meditation practice. What the story demonstrates is that true *metta* or loving-kindness has the power to overcome one's own mental disturbances and to change the negative attitude towards others.

When one practices *metta* as set forth in the *Metta-Sutta*, his attitude will be shaped into positive action. Here is how Buddharakkhitha (1989) explains the benefit of *metta*:

*Metta* is the protective and immensely patient attitude of a mother who forbears all difficulties for the sake of her child and ever protects it despite its misbehaviour. *Metta* is also the attitude of a friend who wants to give one the best to further one's well-being. If these qualities of *metta* are sufficiently cultivated through *metta-bhavana*--the meditation on universal love--the result is the acquisition of a tremendous inner power which preserves, protects and heals both oneself and others (p.2).

When one develops *metta*, one's mind becomes free from impediments such as anger, jealousy, aversion and even selfish love, and instead fills with the wish for the happiness of not only all human beings but also all sentient beings. Now, such universal love is not possible if that love is conditioned by one's likes and dislikes. Being human, we have our individual likes and dislikes, but if these

are the ground for love, then we cannot generate universal love. Therefore, *metta* as universal love has to transcend and overcome personal likes and dislikes. I do not mean not having likes and dislikes; as humans, it would be impossible not to have desire. But the idea here is that love is to be distinguished from personal likes and dislikes: an idea that would appear radical to us because we often equate love with personal liking. But we can unlink love from likes. Thus, with the mind of *metta*, we can show compassion towards everyone, even those whom we dislike because they are unfriendly to us.

When these characteristics of *metta* dwell in the meditator's mind, the mind becomes calm and tranquil due to the absence of mental disturbances, which I have described above as impediments. The psychological benefit of having positive thoughts influences both the self and society as a whole. For example, when one's mind is calm and tranquil, free from anger, jealousy and resentment, and one has empathy and compassion, then naturally one's conduct will not disturb society. When people practice this way of *metta* meditation, their thoughts and emotions are calmed and peaceful, guiding them towards calm and peaceful conduct. Calmness doesn't mean being anti-social or lethargic: it means that one's mind becomes relaxed and full of "positive energy" and allows one to form healthy relationships with one's fellow human beings. In other words, one has less negative thoughts, such as anger or hatred. I have to emphasize that this type of

practice takes a long time to develop, and training should be approached with honest, determined effort. It is a life-long effort.

As long as unwholesome thoughts, such as anger and aversion, remain in the mind, it is hard to generate the characteristics of *metta* or to practice the attitude of *metta* in one's mind. Therefore, vigilantly one should watch one's mind and steadily let go of unwholesome thoughts, known in Buddhism as impediments to the calm mind. What are the impediments to establishing *metta* in one's mind? Among the various impediments, anger, hatred, aversion, conceit and jealousy are considered the strongest. When such negative thoughts arise in the mind, they create what is described in Buddhism as the unwholesome mind, and *metta* cannot germinate in such a hostile soil. If someone wants to *cultivate metta*, that is, not leaving to chance the arising of goodwill only when one is pleased, one has to establish mindfulness and become very well acquainted with the wholesome mind, as I explained in Chapter Three. To emphasize, unwholesome and wholesome thoughts cannot go together. In other words, characteristics of *metta* such as friendliness, tenderness, sympathy and empathy do not arise in the unwholesome mind.

The attitude or characteristics of *metta* provide not only a sense of well-being to the meditator, but also feelings of fearlessness and security. For example, when loving-kindness is set up in the mind, one does not look at others as actual or

potential threats. By not perceiving others as potential threats to oneself, one relaxes and approaches others with friendliness. When others sense one is not threatening, they in turn may relax, perhaps even disarming themselves if they were hostile in the beginning.

By following *metta*, one may gradually increase their ability to maintain peacefulness. This peacefulness is easier to cultivate when one leads a humble and unburdened life, “simple and frugal.” This doesn’t mean eliminating all desire for worldly things, but it does mean maintaining contentment with what one already has, not desiring more and more. When true *metta* is present, the mind is free from agitation stemming from inadequacy and insecurity; so the meditator’s mind is at rest, calm, content, and this allows him to be satisfied with what he possesses at the moment. Buddharakkhita (1989) notes:

A materialistic and egocentric life is characterized not only by an increase in wants but also by restlessness, showing itself in being over-busy and over-active and lacking in moderation and self-restraint. Metta, which promotes the well-being of all, naturally has to be built on such qualities of sober humanism as are reflected in having a few meaningful and select tasks which conduce to the maximum well-being of all concerned (p.17).

As Buddharakkhita realized, when one becomes “over-busy and over-active”, his mind is restless, and this state of mind is liable to generate anger and resentment. Therefore, by avoiding an over-busy and over-active life, and by following a “simple life” as an expression of *metta*, one reorients one’s outlook

and conduct, especially in relation to our competitive, pleasure-seeking and money-minded world. A person of simple living can be gentle, yet efficient and effective, and has restraint over one's sense-faculties; one is frugal, self-disciplined and exercises moderation. Mental cultivation through *metta* meditation allows for such a person to become happy and face life with equanimity, even though she is surrounded by a very materialistic world. *Metta* leads one to a simple and easily supported life. A person who has a complicated, "overloaded" life may find it difficult to develop loving-kindness properly.

*Metta* is not a form of attachment in that it is not selfish love for another. When one loves others out of attachment, one is ultimately aiming at satisfying oneself. One is using others for one's own satisfaction. This is not true *metta*. *Metta* is instead having happy thoughts for others, in a somewhat detached manner, much as a doctor may compassionately help a patient without becoming emotionally involved with the patient: this state of mind is free from self-interested thoughts or self-satisfying thoughts. Such a doctor is full of compassion, and thoughts of safety for and happiness of the patient. When the mind reduces its selfish attachments towards worldly things, such a mind takes the opportunity to practice equanimity: the equal response to everything, by gradually reducing negative opinions or feelings such as dislike and conceit, as well as the attachment to a desired outcome. When one is attached to the result, what started out as *metta* may turn into calculated, avaricious thinking.

In practicing *metta*, it is not enough that one should *behave* in a good way. When one follows *metta*, his way of thinking should also change, especially regarding the welfare of others. When one's mind becomes infused with true *metta* through sustained *metta* meditation, one thinks, perceives, feels, and of course, acts, in the mode of *metta*. The following is a summary of the characteristics associated with *metta*:

- (1) Non-hatred and the sharing of joy and happiness for all.
- (2) Non-hostility and the irradiating light of sympathy and empathy.
- (3) Wholesome speech, non-use of harsh words.
- (4) Restraint from destructive, anti-social behavior and building harmony and friendliness.
- (5) Avoid conceit and practice equanimity.

Loving-kindness and compassion neutralize and disperse anger, hostility, conceit and destructive thoughts towards others, making it difficult for the latter to dwell in the mind. In other words, a mindset of *metta* forces out negative emotions and attitudes by actively putting into practice the correlated positive ones. It is only when one actively practices non-hatred and equanimity towards all beings that one can outgrow the tendency to entertain negative thoughts and emotions towards those who are disliked and perceived as a threat. However, one does not have to be fully free of negative thoughts in order to practice *metta*. *Metta* is used

as a way to gradually reduce negative thoughts because *metta* is a remedy for the undisciplined mind.

Let us take a look at each the above five characteristics associated with *metta*. Hatred is the desire to oppress or damage; hostility is the tendency to hurt or injure; harsh words come from the desire to make others feel pain or worry; destruction is the desire to kill or demolish; and conceit is the tendency to disparage others. Each of these tendencies is rooted in antipathy and malevolence, and provides a contrast with *metta*, both as a mode of conduct and as a psychological state or attitude of mind. The substitution of a negative trait by the opposite positive one implies a well-developed and mature approach to life: one should overcome anger by love; cruelty by compassion; hatred by sympathetic-joy; and conceit by equanimity. When one's whole being is well established in *metta*, he is able to maintain no-hatred, no-hostility, no-harsh words, no-destructiveness and no-conceit. The end result is a well-cultured personality in a world where interactions among human beings create so much disharmony, tension, fear, insecurity and stress.

In addition to the above aspects of *metta*, there are three more qualities related to *metta*. I have touched on them already, but I will summarize them in more detail here. They are compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*). If one practices *metta* he considers everybody as his friend.



If there is a sympathetic feeling of friendliness with others, this generates compassion, a deep understanding of the sorrow and pain in others. One feels others' pain and sorrow as if they were one's own. Similarly, by virtue of the sympathetic feelings generated by *metta*, one can also easily show and celebrate others' success and good fortune, even if being bothered by jealousy and envy. This is *mudita*: the ability to feel others' joy as if it were one's own. Equanimity is the response to both negative and positive events with calm neutrality. When one meditates on loving kindness and then compassion and then sympathetic joy in that order, *upekkha* or equanimity will naturally occur of its own accord.

The Buddha described these four states of positive emotions as the four sublime or boundless states or divine abodes (*brahma-vihara*). They are the fundamental functions in developing all the other types of wholesome acts, such as generosity, or honesty. For example, we can practice generosity with impartiality when we have overcome egocentric likes and dislikes, and cultivated *metta*. Whereas, when we do not practice *metta*, we may be inclined to be generous only to those whom we like. The four sublime states are the basis for the performance of moral actions. We should conduct wholesome deeds without expecting favours in return. From this one can learn to forgive other people, even if they harm us. If we feel hatred towards those who harm us, as a rule, the only results we may get are increased blood pressure and stomach upset. There is likely to be no positive change in the behaviour of the person we hate. But when we develop and maintain

*metta*, we can learn not to get upset at the behaviour of others, and therefore not develop anger towards them. We will learn not to think of them in terms of “us versus them” or superior or as inferior: this is ego-centred conceit. When we closely inspect all our thoughts and feelings with full mindfulness, we will get to know through our own experience that wholesome mind or *kusala citta* is totally different from unwholesome mind or *akusala citta* as we discussed in Chapter Three.

I wish to emphasize that the practice of *metta* is an arduous labour for us because we have the tendency to be strongly egocentric. One has to be constantly vigilant about not succumbing to ego-centricism and its manifestations like strong greed, lust and anger. Traditionally, in the Buddhist texts, these negative emotions are depicted as enemies to developing *metta*. Commenting on the *Vissuddhimagga*, Buddhārakkhita (1989) notes that there are two types of enemies: the near and the remote.

Greed, lust, worldly affection, sensuality—all these are said to be the ‘near enemies’ because they are similar in tendencies. The lustful also sees the ‘good side’ or ‘beauty,’ and therefore gets involved. Love should be protected from it lest the masquerades of these emotions deceive the meditator. Ill-will, anger, and hatred, being dissimilar emotions, therefore, constitute the “remote enemy.” The remote enemy can easily be distinguished so one need not be afraid of it, but one should overcome it by projecting a higher force, that of love. But one has to be wary of the near enemy because it creates self-deception, which is the worst thing that can happen to an individual (p.23).

It is more difficult to overcome the near enemies of *metta* because they all have the appearance of love. It is important that one establishes mindfulness on the present moment in order to perceive the characteristics of *metta*. This may help one to distinguish true *metta* from self-centred desires such as selfish love, greed and egotistical fulfillment. If we cannot, the question of recognizing true *metta* can be the biggest problem. It is said that *metta* begins only when one can distinguish between the wholesome mind and the unwholesome mind, and when one is able to cope with the obstacles of the five hindrances, which I explained in Chapter Three.

### **Meditation technique of Metta**

There are various ways of practicing *metta* meditation based on the Vissuddhimagga, Vimuttimaggā and Patisambhidamaggā<sup>13</sup>. One of the well-known, principle methods will be explained below.

There are four postures, which meditators can choose from: sitting down, standing, walking and lying down. Most people prefer the sitting posture. Whichever posture is selected, one should be comfortable, in a quiet place, such as a quiet room, a park, or any other similar peaceful place. Keeping the eyes closed lightly, repeat the word “*metta*” or an English translation such as loving-kindness or universal friendliness a few times, while absorbing its meaning and characteristics, which I have described above.

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<sup>13</sup> Patisambhidamaggā (the path of discrimination) is one of the early Buddhist meditation scriptures compiled by Venerable Mahanāma in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Next, you visualize your own “happy mood picture”. Imagine looking at your face in the mirror, and seeing yourself in a happy mood. Maintain this positive image and mood in your mind during meditation. A person in a happy mood cannot become angry or harbour negative thoughts and feelings. One should remember that this is a mental cultivation program of wholesome thoughts; when one gets used to the practice both mentally and physically, positive images and feelings will naturally occur in one’s daily activities, such as during work, studies and even resting. Soon they will occur without any conscious effort.

Having freely visualized yourself being in a happy frame of mind, now focus on the following thoughts:

*May I be well, happy, peaceful, and prosperous. May no harm come to me; may no difficulties come to me; may no problems come to me. May I always meet with success. May I also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.<sup>14</sup>*

The significant principle here is that one begins by concentrating metta/Loving-Kindness on oneself first hand. It has beneficial effects on one’s relationships with and attitude toward himself/herself, and propels the mind/heart toward improving one’s relationship with and attitude toward others. This is

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<sup>14</sup> This Loving-Kindness meditation phrase is based on explanations in the Visuddhimagga, Vimuttimagga, Patisambhidamagga and Metta Sutta.

important; learning how to practice honest and genuine *metta* toward oneself helps overcome self-antipathy; which leads to tension, burden, anxiety, self-blame and guilty feelings. Any of these feelings lack in contribution toward one's own happiness in a moral sense. The Metta practitioner is able to acknowledge his actions, whether he knew right from wrong or not at the time. If the actions are understandably unwholesome, then, he can resolve them and determine to act better in the future. The outcome is based on the person's understanding of moral integrity, and his vigilance toward the consequences of unwholesome deeds.

Harvey (1997) states:

Certainly, we all have faults and limitations, and a complacent attitude to them is no use. They should be acknowledged and lived with until they have been gently undermined. Buddhism does not hold that faults are best undermined by repressing them, or doing battle with them as hateful enemies; to do so is simply to strengthen aversion and ill-will. It is like trying to untangle a ball of string by pulling at it; it only makes matters worse. A good attitude to have is that of forgiving oneself-as that helps one to be able to forgive others (pp. 349-350).

When the practitioner interacts with fellow humans, in a school, office or even in a bus or train, he is able to maintain his 'mental harmony' without being agitated or angry. Metta/Loving-Kindness moves his/her mind to create the same feelings toward others as he/she has toward himself/herself; "I love myself, and, as I do not wish to get sick or create problems, I will be happy. If everybody loves themselves and strives not to get sick or get into problems, then, they will become happy too. I wish that I and everybody around me will be well and happy." This

can be critical to someone who is not familiar with Loving-kindness, and might think it does not fit in modern society, which is mostly economically and socially competitive and aggressively competes for status.

In order to be able to genuinely like others, one must first get on good terms with oneself, experiencing what it is like to feel Loving-Kindness—initially for the person it should be the easiest for us to like. If one can accept oneself and with oneself well, with all one's (real and imaginary) faults—liking oneself 'warts and all', then one can do this as regards others, too. Often, we most dislike in others what we dislike in ourselves, so this is another good reason to start with oneself (Harvey, 1997, p. 350).

Next, concentrate your happy thoughts on your parents; then, family members; teachers, friends, neutral people, unfriendly people, and all living beings, following the same format as above. The standard and traditional order is: one should concentrate one's positive thoughts first on himself, then on those closest to himself, and then towards those increasingly distant from him. One directs happy thoughts towards oneself first because it is easier to arouse *metta* towards oneself. Once *metta* is aroused, one can then direct it outwardly towards others. It is very difficult to feel positive towards others when one feels negative about oneself. The meditator directs happy thoughts in this progressive order simply because it is easier to feel positive towards those close to himself. Over time, one will more easily be able to feel positive thoughts towards neutral or unfriendly people. The meditator should create each person's image in the mind. For example, you should visualize your parents' faces while they are in a happy

mood. Following this pattern, you should concentrate on each of the people listed above, and you can expand this list to include any individual you wish. If you have difficulties with directing loving-kindness towards somebody, who is unfriendly to you or with whom you have a temporary misunderstanding, you should reserve directing *metta* towards him until your mind is well established on *metta* by practicing loving-kindness towards other people. When one has a misunderstanding or dispute, *metta* has no opportunity to arise because negative thoughts are occupying the mind. Having generated thoughts of *metta* for himself first, one should now concentrate on one's loved-ones, beginning with the members of one's family, suffusing each one with pure thoughts of loving-kindness. While spreading *metta* towards one's own family members, care should be taken to think of very dear ones, like one's parents, brothers and sisters, or any other close family members.

A point to emphasize is that it is important to concentrate fully on the person you are directing a positive feeling towards while you meditate. This concentration must be clear and the positive thoughts must be well focused. One must clearly understand that thinking or just repeating the word "*metta*" is one thing and practicing true *metta*, actively performing the *metta*, quite another. It is noted in *Visuddhimagga* (Nanamoli, 1991):

For even if he developed loving-kindness for a hundred or a thousand years in his way, 'I am happy' and so on, absorption would

never arise. But if he develops it in this way: 'I am happy. Just as I want to be happy and dread pain, as I want to live and not to die, so do other beings, too', making himself the example, then desire for other beings' welfare and happiness arises in him (p.290).

These feelings of *metta*, which I mentioned above, are known as "the profound absorption": it is a clear consciousness being united with the mind and the body in *metta*, which one has to follow in order to reach true *metta*. Therefore, until one reaches that state of profound absorption, the meditator should not misunderstand that he follows true *metta*.

After the meditation on oneself and one's parents and family members, next comes a *metta* meditation on one's teachers. For some students in secondary school, stresses are related to their teachers' actions. The teaching method, workload, the attitude of the teacher, and the interactions between the teacher and the student can have a dramatic effect on how well the student performs. Because of this, students need good relationships and understanding with their teachers. Loving-kindness meditation will help them to have patience and understanding towards, and positive relationships with, their instructors. As the student develops positive relationships with one's teachers, the student may increase one's feelings of trust toward them. Without trust, the student may be reluctant to approach the teacher with questions or problems. The student should also feel comfortable in disagreeing with the teacher in order to learn properly. In a meaningful education, students should listen, read, write, discuss, ask questions and engage in debates



and so on. For this, there should be a classroom environment that is safe, friendly, and harmonious. To use one of my prior examples: we trust our doctors because they are educated in medicine and have experience in treating illness. But when they check our body, we should ask them questions in turn. And we may disagree with our doctors' recommendations. There is nothing wrong with a patient disagreeing with his doctor, as long as it is done in a respectful manner. Likewise, with the students, just as a doctor should not discriminate against patients on the basis of gender, race, social status or wealth, a teacher should make the effort to show *metta* toward all his students, regardless of their backgrounds and individual differences in intelligence and aptitudes. Metta helps both the teacher and the student to maintain a healthy relationship. Here I suggest that when *metta* meditation is implemented in the classroom, it would be very beneficial for the teacher to participate as a meditator himself.

According to the standard format, the next step after one's teacher is to concentrate *metta* on one's own friends. Let us pause here to muse on the meaning of friendship because this notion and sense of friendship is central to *metta*. Another good translation for "*metta*" is friendliness. To practice *metta* is to practice friendliness. Thus, our friendships with people teach us a lot about the quality of *metta*. Salzberg, (1995) notes:

Think about what friendship means to you, what you value most in a friend and what you would most like to offer others as a friend. Are

there qualities of trust, candor, fairness, or humor that stand out as being most important to you? What kind of person would you be able to turn to if you were in need? What does it mean to you to feel “at home” with someone? What would you like others to value in you as their friend? (p.59).

To be a friend to someone, we have to cultivate friendly thoughts, feelings, speech and conduct. We cannot be friends if our thoughts are egocentric and calculating, our feelings are ungenerous, our speech is harsh or derisive, or our conduct uncaring. These qualities that we require in the development of friendship are precisely the qualities of *metta*. Hence, actual friendships are the most valuable opportunities for cultivating *metta*. And for this reason, a *metta* meditation towards our friends easily generates *metta*. When directing loving-kindness towards friends, we should visualize them, getting a feeling of their presence. However, a word of caution is due here. The traditional teachings remind us to be careful about thinking of a friend towards whom we entertain sexual desire. In such case, *metta* may be disguised by our own sensual desires.

Next, we should concentrate on neutral people, people for whom one has neither likes nor dislikes, such as our neighbours, colleagues in school and so on. Next, one may now concentrate on unfriendly people, even those with whom one may have had a temporary misunderstanding or conflict. At this stage, we have to be mindful of our feelings towards the person who is unfriendly. Unfriendliness is never overcome by hostility: it can only be overcome by our friendliness, compassion and forgiveness. One may concentrate on the following phrase: “I

have no angry feelings towards him. May he also not have any angry feelings towards me. May he be free from danger, may he be well and happy like these feelings I have towards myself.” Finally, the meditator comes to direct her pure thoughts towards all living beings without having any specific objects.

When *metta*/loving-kindness, leading to calmness of mind, is ardently practiced, well developed, unrelentingly resorted to, used as one’s vehicle, made the foundation of one’s life, fully established, well consolidated and perfected, then eleven fruitions can be achieved (Anguttara Nikaya 1:16; Buddharakkhita, 1989; Salzberg, 1995)

- (1) One will sleep happily
- (2) One will wake happily
- (3) One will have pleasant dreams
- (4) People will love him/her
- (5) Celestial beings and animal will love him/her
- (6) Celestial beings will protect him/her
- (7) External dangers (poisons, weapons, and fire) will not harm him/her
- (8) One’s face will be radiant
- (9) One’s mind will be serene
- (10) One will die without being confounded
- (11) One will be reborn in happy realms

When we contemplate each of these fruitions, we can understand in all respects how *metta*/loving-kindness revolutionizes our lives. When one cultivates *metta*/loving-kindness in his heart, it means self-respect in life, to walk through one's life with grace and confidence and having a commitment to non-harming and to loving care. If one is not able to cultivate these noble seeds in the mind, he/she is neither at rest nor at peace; we will constantly fight against our own negative emotions and feelings. "The feelings we create by harming lead to guilt, tension, and complexity. But living a clear and simple life, free from resentment, fear, and guilt, extends into our sleeping, dreaming, and waking" (Salzberg, 1995, p. 41). This mental clarity of loving-kindness extends its energy to receive in return the love of others. It is a natural phenomenon that when we release our loud voice in a mountain forest, the echo brings our voice back to us. In a similar manner, the energy we transmit among fellow beings draws to it that same kind of efficacy. Salzberg (1995) states that this is how the law of nature works--opening to the energy of love within us, we may be able to notice it more specifically around us. When we channel energy of *metta*/loving-kindness toward other people, they develop greater trust in each other. They recognize that no one is deceitful and will not become a threat to their lives. More respectfully, this is what is urgently needed in modern society where there is an abundance of fear, stress, insecurity and disharmony.

## **Analysis of Metta/Loving-Kindness**

In a critical situation of anger, jealousy and hatred, both parties may wish each other harm and tribulation. If they react to their anger with anger, they may undergo mental and physical tension, pain and distress as immediate results of that negative emotion of anger. It is like a burning fire within oneself, and ruins 'oneness', concentration and stillness in one's mind. The person who burns with angry feelings may lose his appetite for food and drinks, and may even have interrupted sleep and bad dreams. Finally, anger becomes the major cause of one's chronic stress, depression and anxiety (Swick, 1987; Mirisse, 2000). In any situation that one suffers with mental and physical impediments we can share our feelings of loving-kindness to heal the person's suffering. Rainer (1995, p.78, cited in Salzberg) stresses, "Perhaps, everything terrible is in its deepest being something that needs our love."

A question may arise regarding the practice of loving-kindness that when one practices loving-kindness he might become a doormat, letting people walk over him/her. Through meditation, one may resist someone's unjust conduct with mindfulness and determination; not involving any characteristics of anger or hatred whatsoever. Theoretically, it appears that this might not work for an ordinary person. That is the point here, when the true *metta*/loving-kindness appears in the mind, it sets the ground for ego-less thoughts, and then, the person is able to act like a noble mother who diffuses love toward her own child

regardless of the child's misbehaviour. From this perspective, one should consider three aspects to be a true *metta*/loving-kindness practitioner, and to cope with anger and hatred. These three aspects are social status, morals and health.

An angry person disturbs these three aspects of his own life with angry reactions. For example, "it is like picking up a stick to hit someone, but finding it is alight and smeared with cow dung, so one burns oneself (with anger) and gets a bad smell (inner tension, which one radiates to one's environment) (Harvey, 1997, p. 352). The person, who becomes angry, disturbs his social image among others. This has to be distinguished by observing an angry person who expresses his anger with abusive words and deeds, loses respect, self-esteem and moral identity among fellow beings. Arguably, this may cause him to lose his friends and to make enemies, and it may create chronic problems of stress, anxiety and anti-social behaviour while the calm and mindful person makes good friends and practices an effective social life. Swick explains, "learning how to care for self, others, and the environment is a key stress-prevention practice" (1987, p.46). Anger not only causes social and moral problems but also has many damaging effects on one's physical health. The suppressed anger can be related to a number of medical conditions such as hypertension, coronary artery disease, and cancer (Greer and Morris, Harburg, Blakelock, and Roeper, Spielberg, 2002, cited in Wild). This is a pivotal situation where the individual has to be aware of his own physical and mental health apart from social and moral perspectives. On a more theoretical

level, constant anger damages someone's entire life perspectives as he/she satisfies his/her selfish emotions through negative reactions. From another point of view, people can become angry with themselves in the same way that they become angry with others. Afterward, they might feel that they have acted as they should not have and are 'useless' for doing so. Feelings of dissatisfaction with one's own actions may also cause chronic problems of stress and depression. Wilde (2002) states "Anger at oneself can also lead to depression and feelings of guilt" (p. 73).

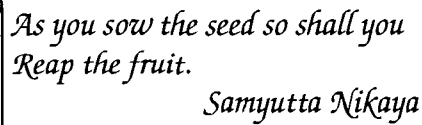
To reiterate, *metta*/loving-kindness has the ability to attack the root cause of anger in every aspect; anger at oneself, anger at others and anger of guilt. Virtually the entire *metta*/loving-kindness path has to do with going beyond emotional grasping. Meditative techniques of mindfulness and loving-kindness, the process of study and contemplation, and social and moral actions develop one's inner and external character satisfaction, and harmonious livelihood among fellow humans.

By practicing *metta* in the above way, one can reduce one's own strong ego or selfishness that harms oneself and others. According to Buddhist psychology, this is the ultimate cause of all mental suffering and disharmony within the individual and others. Regarding its educational practice, if students practice *metta* as I discussed above, they fill their minds with thoughts of loving-kindness, compassion, and there is little room for anger, jealousy or hatred. Therefore, this state of mind is able to stimulate positive relationships with fellow students and

teachers, and with other people: this positive attitude also generates a strong sense of self. This strong sense of self helps to create compassion, which will not be eroded by external causes of anger, jealousy and hatred such as the environment and society. I will present and investigate the Buddhist norm of compassion and its educational relevance in the next Chapter.



## Chapter Five: Compassion (*Karuna*): From a moral perspective toward education



*As you sow the seed so shall you  
Reap the fruit.*  
*Samyutta Nikaya*

### Introduction

In the last Two Chapters, I introduced techniques of mindfulness and loving-kindness, aiming at compassion based on the cultivation of mind/consciousness. In this chapter, first, I will offer a discussion on an in-depth investigation of compassion. Compassion is included in the four sublime states (*Brahma Vihara*) of the mind. I will explore the two other sublime states, sympathetic-joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*Upekkha*) as well. The fourth, loving-kindness, has already been examined as one of the four sublimes. These four sublimes support each other to enhance qualities to their full strength. As mentioned in the Buddhist philosophy, I call these *Dharma*, the law of true nature. True nature cannot hide or pretend, but is the reality in the journey of life (*samsara*) by itself. The four sublime states are *Dharma* because they are inherent in the human mind; however, they can be obscured or obsessed by unwholesome desires such as greed, ill-will and self-centred attachments. By knowing and practicing the *Dharma*, one may be able to reap full qualities in humans, which exist in the mind by its nature. This kind of *Dharma* does not belong to any specific group or to a belief system.

In the second part of this Chapter, I will investigate how education can benefit from the moral ethos of compassion in students and teachers. There will be three perspectives in compassion, which I hope to investigate and apply in education: 1) promoting compassion in students by focusing on an environment that is receptive, caring, mutual and non-violent; 2) using compassion as a tool to remove obstacles such as anger, jealousy, hatred, frustration, mental insecurity and its relative factors of stress, depression and anxiety in students; and 3) compassion; as central venue in education, so teachers can be benefited for developing intellectuality, motivation and integrity in students. Finally, these perspectives lead to a friendly and supportive teaching-learning educational environment in schools.

Recent interest and concern with dealing with the problems of serious learning disruptive behaviour in schools has led to the development of many creative approaches to provide support and education for students, parents, teachers and administrators (Malicky, Shapiro & Mazurek, 1999, p. 5).

This is very important in my research since I hope to deal with the very heart of education, which is the cultivation of mind/consciousness. It is essential to provide teachers and students with the tools to make schools more humane and a more compassionate place. Arnoson (2000) states, “There is nothing mutually exclusive about learning biology, literature, and calculus while also learning important human values” (p.20). There is more interest among educators, teachers and parents in disciplining and developing morals in students after the Columbine

high school tragedy in Colorado and its copycat-shooting event in Taber, Alberta. It is clear that schools are increasing their attention on moral education by providing numerous educational, social and athletic programs as solutions to defeat the contemporary uprising problems in schools (Gurp, 2002; Clements and Sova, 2000; Aronson, 2000; Malicky, Shapiro & Mazurek 1999). These programs generally focus on creating a caring-teaching-learning environment in schools as school boards regulate their policies. For instance, the Calgary Board of Education<sup>15</sup> describes their policy as focussed on a “safe and secure school learning environment.” The Calgary school board felt the impact of the Taber School shooting as it happened next door to its region.

Caring; respect for law and order; respect for democratic values, rights and responsibilities; respect for cultural diversity; community, family, student and staff involvement; appropriate modeling by staff and students; clear, consistent expectations for behaviour and consequences for misconduct which are communicated to students, staff and parents (MacDonald, 1999, p.232).

These policies indicate that the urgent necessity of forming a “caring” and “respectable” atmosphere currently surround the school and its sphere. School is not isolated from the outside world, therefore, whatever the ethos schools formulate, it should be connected to students’ family and society. This does not mean that students’ parents should be involved in all the activities of the school, but the philosophy of caring, respect, empathy, sympathy and equality should be

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<sup>15</sup> The largest public school district in Alberta (Calgary Board of Education) has promulgated its policy according to the Schools Act in 1994 (Section 19, 1.1, of Bill 19).

conveyed to the students' living world. Students' life experiences, including in the home and school environments, influence how they nurture their abilities to effectively respond to social and emotional challenges. Unique and positive environments at home can trigger social, emotional and behavioural responses that may impact learning and academic progress (Fopiano & Haynes, 2001). The foundation of my program of cultivation of mind/consciousness is based on self-observation, inner-experience and practice, and does not serve only in a specific sphere such as school or home, but it covers the individual's thoughts, words and actions wherever he/she generally occupies his/her living world. Then, this affiliated mind/heart culture of the individual, affects his/her school, home and social environment.

I would argue that compassionate feelings in students, teachers and educators would lead to a more powerful awareness of their living environment with deep caring toward each other and to working more diligently to prevent harm and danger. Though compassion exists with a form of caring, compassion has its own identity; it is a selfless state of mind that expects and wishes only for the suffering person's welfare, and includes no desires or expectations of anything in return from the person who was suffering and in hardship. In a Buddhist philosophical meaning, expectations might cause damage to the nobility of compassion, turning it to disappointment, despair and to aversion in a later part of the action. For example, when somebody helps a victim or someone in danger

with expectations of returns, and the aided person cannot reciprocate as expected, there might be a disparity.

Noble compassion will make a healthy physical and mental environment, in school, where less disappointment, despair, aversion, anger, jealousy, hatred and finally even stress depression arise. It establishes a place to practice harmony by engaging in compassionate relationships with patience, tolerance, respect, sharing and equanimity between students and teachers, students and students. The vital and pivotal question arises here of compassion in the Buddhist understanding and how it integrates into current schooling regarding a healthy teaching-learning environment with a sense of security and well being in students and teachers. I will begin with an erudite discussion to answer these questions.

Buddhist contemplation of mental and physical discipline is geared precisely to the understanding and implementation of a compassionate, generous, friendly and harmonious human relationship with the total surroundings. At this stage, compassion, a sublime mental state (*Visuddhimagga*), appears in the first place with *Metta* (loving-kindness). Its most significant factor lies in its inception and sustenance of the boundless or illimitable dynamic nature through mindfulness. It should be re-stated that compassion and loving-kindness are based on mindfulness, like many other meditation techniques. Loving-kindness and compassion, like twins, feed each other's growth. "Mindfulness, used in this way

to lessen difficulties, is obviously a method by which compassion and loving kindness are put into action” (Weissman, & Weissman, 1996, p.30). By implementing mindfulness in the mental sphere of students, they can see where and when pain, sorrow, stress and unhappiness arise and what factors cause them. Thus, they can discover ways to avoid similar difficulties as their lives progress.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, by developing stronger mindfulness in students, their understanding of the difficulties and problems will mature. Then, they are able to analyze when and how a problem arises. And, most significantly, students learn how the problem can be prevented in the future. This understanding helps students to alleviate or remove the cause of their problems and difficulties. As this way of compassionate understanding grows, which arises through loving-kindness and the ability that arises from mindfulness, to alleviate stress, depression and unhappiness for themselves and others will also grow.

### **Experiencing compassion among students**

*I was teaching my advanced class students in Sunday school. As we came to the point of compassion, the query arose as to why it was important. Have you ever been compassionate to someone? Or has anybody ever been compassionate to you? Indeed, almost everybody felt that they have had their own experiences with compassion within their own families. It is right to assume that new immigrants have to tackle all the challenges of living in a new*

*country such as culture, language and employment, and the Sri Lankan community is no exception. In our community, most new immigrants are with numerous ups and downs in their lives; most adults miss their parents and families, and some undergo unemployment with fear and insecurity. It is natural that this grief, pain, loss and insecurity are observed and experienced by their children, most of whom are in my Sunday school class. Some students were expressing their heartfelt gratitude toward their parents that they feel so much love and compassion in their hearts; they remembered that 'loving-kindness' taught of parents' real attitudes to their own children:*

*Even as a mother protects with her life  
Her child, her only child,  
So with a boundless heart...  
(Salzberg, 1995, p. vii)*

*They felt a need to be cared about at schools. Except for a few students, most of them struggled to recover from 'math anxiety'. One or two students were desperate and helpless due to frustration as the result of not being accepted into universities. The gravity behind these complexities was parents' expectations of them. If they cannot fulfil parents' expectations, it could be another reciprocal disaster to their family. I asked myself what could be done with these students to fix their mental insecurity, helplessness*

*and desperation before this unnecessary fiasco enters their lives. I communicated my own experience in transformation, which is the energy of mindfulness and loving-kindness leading to compassion. As I continued our discussion on it, students came to see the commonality of loss as a natural part of life but not the shame or weakness. They learned that the natural part of our life is not permanent, and can heal by finding a sense of acceptance and friendliness. Then they found that compassion for themselves, their parents and everyone is highly preferable to isolation, grief, regret and frustration. They realized that talking to someone who is loving and caring, and listening to someone's heart, eases the pain reciprocally. After a few weeks, they comment on how, through caring for each other and having a strong sense of trust, they are able to experience the feelings of their parents and classmates in a new and compassionate way. They are surprised by the depth of their compassion and the resultant caring. By sharing with me in their feelings, my students truly wanted to master compassion, and to know how it feels to others. True compassion naturally arises out of caring, friendliness and openness.*

Learning from a moral perspective requires compassion for others and oneself as well. Miller (2002) calls this 'compassionate knowing', arising from the realization that we are part of an interconnected universe. As I mentioned above, loving-kindness leads to the perception of receptivity and to inner feelings of



empathy in students. With this perception, when a student aspires to personal ease, comfort and happiness and wishes others to achieve the same, he may experience this interconnectedness. “We see that we are part of everything and that everything is part of us. Since we are interconnected in this way, a natural compassion for all beings arises” (Lusseryan, 2002, p.99, cited in Miller).

Rationally, compassion is more than pity or sympathy, and is more like sorrowful feelings and emotions toward someone’s pain, and to some extent, a willingness to help. Yet, compassion transcends this willingness to help, into caring and making some sacrifice. However, the person who becomes compassionate towards someone should not suffer by the gravity of the person’s pain and sorrow. The logic here is, if the compassionate person becomes hurt by the terrible pain and sorrow of the other person, he would not be in a position to be with the person who truly needed help and care. Being overwhelmed with pain and sorrow can lead someone into aimlessness, even anger, such that it cannot be compassion. For this reason, the student of compassion is trained to become strong in dealing with emotions of empathy and the potential repercussions of pain and sorrow.

Compassion entails a comprehension of the suffering experienced by another. If students feel that they are subdued by broken hearts and confusion and cannot fathom what should be done to reduce others’ suffering, they should be mindful to recognize, to open to, and to acknowledge that pain and sorrow arise everywhere, in one way or another. Some pain and sorrow are intensive and life-threatening, and some are simple and small, and this kind of realization can be called self-

acceptance through mindfulness (Gunaratana, 2001). This self-acceptance is likened to Noddings' receptivity (Goldstein, 2002); "each caring encounter is an interaction between a person giving care and a person receiving that care: a one-caring and a cared for" (p. 12). This moral cognition (Noddings, 2002) clarifies students' perceptions that suffering is inevitable in life, therefore, willingness to accept it and transform it to joy and happiness is the way of learning compassion. Salzberg (1995) states that "we have our ups and downs, we have pain or loss or sorrow, times when we do not get what we want, or we do get what we want but it goes away or proves to be not what we wanted after all" (104). When students become cognizant of this pattern, then they are able to be compassionate toward fellow students and society at large, regardless of any difference in colour, culture and tradition, but who are in trouble, people who are old, sick and dying. Students realize that their feelings are not different from our own. "Compassion involves a knowing, an understanding, a giving, a witnessing, an abiding, a doing, and an abstaining from doing that test the integration of our personalities, our resiliency, our consistency, our practical creativity" (Roger, 1996, p. 139). The acknowledgment of reality of suffering allows students to feel unity with others, and to understand what is natural in life, and to realize what is absolutely happening for others and for themselves. This willingness to accept what is reality is one way of developing compassion in students.

Compassion can be disguised by ‘righteous’ anger, fear or grief. These are named as near enemies to compassion in Buddhist psychology (Visuddhimagga, 1991). Students should thoroughly distinguish real compassion without being lost in aversion. They may feel anger at injustice, outrage and discrimination in schools, families and society. They may become afraid themselves when they see fear, grief and the sorrows of others. All of these emotions are similar to compassion, “the trembling of the heart” (Salzberg, 1995). This type of mental state may harm students rather than leading to compassion. It does not mean that it is wrong to feel them, but students must be mindful not to be opposed to another with anger, fear or grief because it leads to pain and sorrow for the other. However, students may act in energetic and forceful ways but without the power of anger or aversion. To borrow an example for this logic, when we see a small child trying to touch a hot burner on a stove, we suddenly take an action. Our response is purely born out of compassion: we direct ourselves to pull the child out, away from danger and suffering, but we have no intention of rejecting the child. Our perception of the child was, he/she is not grown up enough to know ‘things’ and we should protect him/her from danger. Students hold the same feelings without changing to anger, even if the child continually returns to touch the burner on the stove. By this same logic, to be compassionate is to wish that everyone is free from danger and distress regardless of their personal accountabilities.

For the purpose of developing compassion in another way, we have to look at what is actually happening and at the conditions that inspire it. This has been taught in the Buddhist philosophy; ‘every result has a cause, when the cause ceases the result will diminish’ (Kalupahana; 1987, Rahula, 1996). With the agreement of this point, students should observe the cause and its all-constituent parts instead of just looking at the object or the end result. They should assume that most of us are exposed to resentful experiences toward someone and develop an awareness of their background and what kind of life they have had that might have caused them to shape their attitude in such a way. This awareness clears the path toward compassion for them.

Compassion should be introduced in situations where someone is having constant aggressiveness or is fearful and becomes anti-social. One may have a background laden with negativity, which occurred in childhood, and this may daunt his/her feelings from time to time. As a result of those negative experiences, he may demonstrate a kind of traumatic behaviour and a certain negative attitude. Compassionate understanding does not mean that students should overlook a person’s conduct. They should observe mindfully all of the elements of that channel making up that person’s life, and can acknowledge his/her conditional nature. “To see the interdependent arising of these impersonal forces that make up our “selves” can provide the opening for forgiveness and compassion” (Salzberg, 1995, pp.110-111). This gives another facet of understanding to compassion,

which is taking the time to look at the nature of conditions of any situation.

Students use their mindfulness as a tool to look at the object as it is absolutely arising in each moment. With this mental state, they are able to create openness and receptivity to see both the conditions and the context. For example, the general norm of 'heroin' is that it is a dangerous drug. In a situation where someone is terminally ill and in excruciating pain, the question arises whether 'heroin' can give some relief. What is the context of the actual situation of the moment? If students have such mental clarity of the situation, that may set in motion their compassionate nature. This will help them to strengthen their ability to deal with any situation in life with less anger and aversion, less irritation and annoyance, and with more patience, acceptance, equanimity, and respect for life (Weissman & Weissman, 1996).

Buddhist philosophy explains that this human life is rare and precious, and it is to take birth as a human in the vast cosmological sphere (Dhammapada, v. 182). This perspective nurtures compassion in two ways in students. First, students themselves should learn how precious this life is and to foster a kind heart in every aspect of their lives. Secondly, they should be able to make other fellow students aware of this rare and precious human life, therefore, to take every opportunity to spend life in a harmless way toward oneself and others. Salzberg (1995) explains: "Living with this awareness, every aspect of our lives can be an opportunity for compassion. Even a very simple action may be an extraordinary expression of the

compassionate heart” (p. 112). It is clear that a simple action may not resolve someone’s distress, but still can be present for the person who suffers. Then, he might feel that he is not alone in his suffering, and this would be a great ‘gift’ of compassion which never harbours suffering but is full of joy.

Developing a compassionate mind is not just studying concepts and theories but observing the nature of suffering and opening to it. Out of this compassion, students are able to see a sense of purpose for human kind, a sense of meaning to life and a sense of feelings in the human heart. These are so strong in their lives that no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the situation, their aspiration or their wholesome desire at any moment is to feel and express impersonal love. Students’ latent abilities for impersonal or noble love can never be eliminated, most significantly, as Noddings (1984) describes a one-caring and a cared for. At some point, this becomes relative to Carl Rogers theory of a tendency toward actualization: “Our actualizing tendency is our inherent or natural disposition to develop all of our capacities in ways which maintain or enhance us as living organisms” (Martin, Sugarman & McNamara, 2000, p. 19). With the support of Buddhist theory in mindfulness which I have presented in Chapter Three, I will argue that when soundly trained to maintain such natural dispositions; one will not easily succumb to any external factors of negative attitude of others or the environment. “Just as the whole earth cannot be destroyed by someone repeatedly hurling themselves against it, so too a compassionate heart

will not be destroyed in an onslaught of adversity” (Salzberg, 1995, p. 115).

Through the practice of compassion, students cultivate their minds to be sublime and free from ‘selfish’ desire. This is boundless, impersonal love.

Compassion, as one of the four sublime states of mind, inherently co-operates with the other three, loving-kindness (*metta*), sympathetic-joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*) (Visuddhimagga, 1991) to function in full capacity. I will take this opportunity to explore sympathetic-joy and equanimity as I have already discussed loving-kindness and compassion. Though terms of sympathy and joy are clearly familiar words in our vocabulary, when it becomes a combined word, the virtual meaning is quite different. What is the meaning of sympathetic-joy in Buddhist philosophy? To grasp the answer to this question it is better to approach it this way. What do we feel when someone rejoices in our glory or happiness? We may be flooded with respect and gratitude for their appreciation. In the same manner, when students take delight in the glory or happiness of other students, when they genuinely rejoice at other students’ prosperity, success, or victory rather than begrudging them in any action, students are abiding in sympathetic-joy (*mudita*), which is a selfless state of consciousness (Punnaji, 2001).

Much of our discomfort and our unhappy states come from the constricting effect of our negativity towards each other (Salzberg, 1995). In general, we limit

ourselves and others with negative judgment, comparison, and jealousy, and we suffer the strangling effects of these limitations. When a student is in this mental stage, he is unable to be free with genuine thoughts, and then he might experience aloneness, loss and despair. It is worthwhile to recollect the two students involved in killing their fellow students and a teacher in Columbine High School, (April 20, 1999) Colorado, USA. They had similar symptoms of aloneness, loss and despair, with afflicted minds (Aronson, 2000). The abode of sympathetic-joy would challenge that type of afflicted mind and it has the power to control many of the afflictions that bind us in life. Rubin (1996) states that Buddhist philosophical values of selfless behaviour, cultivation of compassion and equanimity juxtapose to Western psychiatry and psychology regarding mental health. The Buddhist ancient tales articulate wonderful parables to define the complexity of the mind and its afflicted nature (Salzberg, 1995). I will share a story here about a monkey trap. To make a monkey trap, some glue is spread on a tree. A monkey then comes along and steps on the glue. First one small foot gets stuck. In trying to free itself, the monkey puts the other foot down. With two feet stuck in the glue, the monkey puts one hand down, then the other hand, finally, in a desperate effort to free himself, the monkey puts its head down. That monkey is completely stuck and has no way to escape.

The above parable explores the tormenting states of mind, such as prejudice, judgment, discrimination, jealousy and comparison, all of these collude



to get stuck in our own mind, and make us unhappy and lonely. After one foot in the glue, instead of putting down the next foot and then the hands, if the monkey were to reach out and grab a nearby tree branch and pull itself away, it could be free. The mental state of sympathetic-joy has the power to extricate students stuck in misery, and to empower them to find solutions for envy and jealousy. If students can use the mind states of loving-kindness, compassion and sympathetic-joy, based in mindfulness, to investigate and realize each of those mind states where they get stuck, they can begin to understand how cultivating sympathetic-joy is able to help free the afflicted mind. These three sublime states of mind guard each other with their complementary ways and keep students from building barricades behind which they confine themselves to experiencing only a narrow mind; which blocks them seeing the world due to limitations in the mind as explained above. Salzberg (1995) states:

*Mudita* along with compassion and *metta* are all engaged in a powerful dance of mutual support. The selflessness and boundless nature of *metta* enables us to extend the feelings of compassion or sympathetic joy not only to those we know but also to those we do not know. We proffer our openness of heart not just to those who are suffering but also to those who are happy, and not just to those who are happy but also to those who are suffering. We wish for beings whoever they are that they be free from danger and pain, that they be peaceful and happy (p. 133).

In this pattern, the three sublime states all coalesce, and become allied to brighten one's mind. Students can realistically see the mental and physical suffering that exists and maintains the mind to face it.

The next sublime state of mind is equanimity (*upekkha*), which joins the other three sublime states to suffuse the brightness of the mind. How can one live with vicissitudes in his own life? How can one open her heart to other's inconstancy? The practice of equanimity helps to find an answer. When I introduce loving-kindness to students, I ask them to take an example of their own life; how much they treasure being happy and comfortable. Predictably, in the same pattern, everybody loves being happy and comfortable. My students have already begun to grasp the idea; we are all equal and deserve to experience sorrows and pains, joys and happiness. This perception in life leads toward creating and culminating powerful thoughts of compassion and sympathetic-joy. Finally, it makes space to abide wholeness, coherence and harmony in the students' mind, which allows students to be present fully with their daily studies and all the different day-to-day changing experiences that constitute their world and lives.

*As I fully awakened while teaching in my Sunday school, I noticed that young-adult students showed most of the characteristics of the four sublime states in their attitude; they helped and wished each other success in exams, and shared each others' success and emotions of failure. I felt wholeness and coherence in their hearts, and this helped me to transform the knowledge and to balance their lives through Buddhist philosophical morals, which are based on*

*compassion and wisdom, seeing things as they truly are. As a teacher, I feel that I am performing a dual role that is virtuous parent and compassionate teacher. Both foster loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity. In the parents' manner, they have nurtured, have given so much care, have been loving, and then at some point they have to let go, but they do not have cold feelings of withdrawal (Salzberg, 1995). The four sublime states have all of the warmth and selfless happiness, but with balance, wisdom, and the realization that things are as truly they are, and that I cannot ultimately control someone's destiny, but as a teacher I can use the four sublimas as a way of guidance to achieve happiness in both parties: my students and myself.*

It is important that teachers experience compassion where they see themselves in their students. Griffin states (Miller, 2001, pp. 99-100):

You do not feel set off against them or competitive with them. You see yourself in students and them in you. You move easily, are more relaxed, and seem less threatening to students. You are less compulsive, less rigid in your thoughts and actions. You are not so tense. You do not seem to be in a grim win-or-lose contest when teaching.

In the presence of a compassionate teacher, the students feel a safe and harmonious school climate and are able to take an adventure and learn. Miller (2002) calls this the mental state of “psychologically safe” in any given situation

in students' lives or school environment. This leads students to feel a deeper level of closeness and thus can go beyond learning that is merely performance, which impresses the teacher. Miller explains (2002), "Through the presence of a compassionate teacher, the natural compassion of the student is also supported. The student does not see himself or herself as a separate ego competing with other students but as someone who is connected to others" (p.100). This is my key point in this Chapter, which I addressed rigorously in my discussion to encourage students to practice compassion, to remove obstacles in students' minds through compassion and to make a friendly and healthy teaching-learning school environment. Teachers and students have a role not unlike a parent-child relationship but in a more pragmatic sense and in more extensive teaching-learning pedagogy. I would like to quote one teacher who feels relaxed and happy in teaching (Miller, 2002, p. 100). She reflects her connection to compassion through mindfulness in each step of her teaching style:

As a teacher, I have become more aware of my students and their feelings in the class. Instead of rushing through the day's events, I take the time to enjoy our day's experience and opportune moments. The students have commented that I seem happier. I do tend to laugh more and I think it is because I am more aware, alert and 'present,' instead of thinking about what I still need to do (p. 100).

The school and classroom rooted in compassion through mindfulness become a place where students and teachers want to be because they feel affiliated there. They are also experiencing authentic learning that is not focused on just

“getting through” the tests but to learn and experience in a deep sense of joy and achievement. When I look into the compassionate classroom from a caring perspective, it’s significant to notice that the presence of compassion has more power to enhance the idea of ‘one-caring’ as Noddings argued. Goldstein (2002) stresses:

Teachers who meet their students as one-caring and who look upon the act of teaching as an opportunity to participate in caring encounters will be teaching their students more than academic knowledge. These children will have the opportunity to learn how to care. This moves beyond the mere modelling of desired behaviours. It is a moral stance that has the potential to transform education (p.16).

When the classroom is in a position to maintain its integrity with a healthy teacher-student relationship, the teacher is free from a negative attitude of reluctance to being in the class. It is the central avenue for teachers to feel “mental wellness”. They feel stress and tension free, and are able to concentrate properly on their teachings and the students.

## **Conclusion**

The knowing pursuit of compassion in students is a central feature of the search for realization of the creative potentials of our virtues such as love, sympathy, empathy, tolerance, patience and equanimity. Roger (1996) states, “compassion is the virtue that comes from a considered application of the links that bind us each to the other” (p. 36). When compassion exists, its co-virtues of

loving-kindness, sympathetic-joy and equanimity engage in a role of shaping and balancing the mind, and cooperatively, counteract the negative emotions and of anger, jealousy, hatred and ill-will. As there are many issues in modern schooling such as diversity in students, multiculturalism, bullying and violence, compassion has the power to work with those intricate subjects. The student, who is mindful, is aware of his mind, feelings, speech and bodily actions. This skilfulness may direct him to see the reality of the nature of the mind. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the mind is responsible for all the mental, verbal and physical activities of human beings (Rahula, 1996e; Kalupahana, 1988; Narada, 1979). Agreeing with this theory, when the students are mindful and see the reality of the mind; they see that it does not stay on a one-object track, but flits wherever it lists rapidly. Then, students have more capacity in their minds to realize the 'instability' of the thoughts. Here lies the point, students should use the tool of mindfulness with this knowledge, observation and practice to 'let negative thoughts go' without holding them with the feelings of self, and to create feelings of acceptance, contentment, love, patience, and finally, compassion.

## Epilogue

The modern human world is becoming a small global village and each one of us is exposed to different skin colours, languages, cultures, traditions and characters. Because of misunderstood differences, we may feel doubt, suspicion, and fear, leading to aversion, anger and hatred toward each other. However, the reality is not as it first appears. Though people have different identities, the minds and hearts of humans function in the same way: beautiful feelings of nature, great feelings of love, sense of belonging and the same feelings of hunger and thirst. If people are not 'mindful' toward that experience, they become selfish and react to the stimulation of likes and dislikes. In an extreme state of the mind, one may become aggressive, violent and, perhaps enact mass destruction on beings. I made the case how one or one's mind behaves in such a way: by birth, the mind is calm and serene but later becomes desiring and restless because of attachments that come from one's outside world (Narada, 1988). When one becomes mindful of his own mind/heart/body behaviour and its nature, he is aware of his present moment in the internal and the external world.

As I built up my argument in the area of cultivation of mind/consciousness in students, the meaning of education incorporated not only teaching academic subjects to compete in growing global demands, but to cultivate children's minds to live in harmony within mind and heart, and to live peacefully among other fellow beings. Gandhi, (1980) argues for an approach of mind cultivation to learning:

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training and the bodily organs, e.g., hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quicker way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lopsided affair (p.138).

Miller (2002) articulates this, “education has tended to focus on the head and to ignore the rest of our being” (p.97). From the perspective of cultivation of mind, learning does not just involve the intellectuality; instead, it includes every aspects of human beings such as emotions, aesthetic, physical and mental wellness. These aspects also are interconnected and can be trained to create positive reflections on one’s actions.

The contemporary society is becoming more restless and mobilized toward finding material satisfactions. As a result, one may argue that society is fractured; people have lost their traditional and cultural values that once brought harmony, love, contentment, helpfulness and respect for life. Schools and students are not separate from this contemporary society; they also meet the challenges with repercussion of malaise in this modernity. Students experience stress, depression, frustration, helplessness and mental insecurity. I imbued my narratives with experience of students who became restless and aggressive and finally held their lives in jeopardy. I introduced these students to “mindfulness” with the understanding of its positive and negative behaviour in nature, and they were remarkably reformed, practising



meditation techniques of mindfulness and *metta* (loving-kindness). It is a challenging task for students to learn and practice of “letting go of negative thoughts”. For this reason, I argued that one should focus on releasing the intense grip of the ego. Miller (2002) supports my argument by clarifying:

Meditation, as well as other forms of spiritual practice, encourages the student to quiet down so that he or she can begin to see with some clarity. When the mind is filled with thoughts, some of which are compulsive and unexamined, it is very difficult to let go. Through meditation the person begins to quiet down and witness the flow of thoughts. By witnessing the thoughts, the student can realize that he or she is not the thought but merely the observer of thoughts. For example, if I have a negative thought about another person, I can see that as merely a thought floating by and not taking hold. This realization can greatly lessen the impact of the negative thought on myself and on my behaviour (p.96).

Through this process one can learn to let go of past conditioning and its gravity, a powerful source of tension in one’s mind. The pivotal key on meditation is attention. By focussing on what is happening in the moment, one becomes more present. Attending to the present moment means that one is not caught up in fantasizing about the future or moving the past. Miller (2000) explains, “when we cannot hold our attention, our mind wanders and loses focus so that we cannot function well” (p.96).

I taught and practiced this state of mindfulness leading to *metta* (loving-kindness) with my Sunday school students and I witnessed these effects: a harmonious teaching-learning environment and a peaceful existence in their daily lives. I have argued that introducing this cultivation of mind into the school

curriculum for adolescents could help them better cope with negative emotions and feelings such as anger, jealousy and hatred. The stress, depression, frustration, helplessness and mental insecurity can be transformed into growth and happiness. In this mental sphere, students are able to develop compassion for two aspects of their lives: enhancing compassion to practice love, sympathetic-joy and equanimity, and to remove obstacles in their minds that causes mental disparity such as anger, jealousy, hatred, aversion and prejudice etc. Hall (2003) comments on compassion, that it should be cultivated voluntarily. “It’s something they do everyday, and they have special exercise where they envision negative events, something that causes anger or irritability, and then transform it and infuse it with an antidote, which is compassion (p.3).

I offered a brief discussion on teachers’ “wellness” that is a significant part in teaching-learning process. When the teacher is stressed and depressed he is not in a position to concentrate on his teaching and students. If the teacher is mindful and trained to face the psychosocial problems, he is able to practice his teaching method in an enjoyable manner. That teacher will not become a threat to students, but they may feel safe in the caring environment surrounding them with the presence of their teacher. This psychological balance in both parties, in the students and the teacher, helps to enhance the teaching-learning process.

Buddhist meditation presents a set of aspects and techniques for long-term work on observing, understanding and reconstructing one’s mind. The subjects become more aware of mind and its behaviour and are drawn to a well-balanced

development of various beneficial ways of the mind, thus acknowledging and gradually abandoning certain negative images. Harvey (1997) articulate this process:

If the mind is garden, it seeks to grow a beautiful, fragrant one; and also to get rid of various 'weeds' and 'pests' (which can then be put on the compost heap to facilitate further growth). It is therefore encouraging of growth and inner strengthening, but sees a key obstacle to this as I-centeredness, thoughts of 'me' and 'mine', and fixed views about who or what 'I' am and 'I' believe (p.363).

If our schools are gardens, they seek to cultivate beautiful and fragrant blossoms of love, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity, and to get rid of various weeds of anger, jealousy, hatred and aversion, which can be transformed to further development of compassion. In these gardens of schools, mindfulness becomes the central avenue where students and teachers to find key factors of their educational world. They will see the path is beautifully formulated with the cultivation of mind and heart.

Through this thesis I have continued to journey as a monk and a teacher, to explore the benefits to all life of thoughtful presence in the moment. Stillness can bring the conditions under which we can learn what our thoughts are as they come and go. Calmness provides a space in which we can nurture compassion, within ourselves and our students. I would like to bring this sort of discussion and awareness to the concept of education and our ideals for schooling. As I said in the opening pages, the first part of the title of this work, *Education for*

*Mindfulness*, signifies the “contribution” of the thesis as a normative argument. Using my stories to help paint a picture—to help illustrate my argument—has been personally enlightening and useful. But, before closing the thesis, I would like to remark on remaining questions that arose while I was working with this doctoral project. These questions will help to shape my continuing journey as a monk and a teacher, and my future scholarly work: How do teachers and students find common values or virtues in a multicultural society? How can parents and teachers find a balanced educational system that addresses both academic subjects and character development? How do teachers benefit from such a mind-training program? What are the practical issues involved in implementing these ideas in schools, and how do teachers and administrators think about addressing them? In short, this work has addressed the question: *Why Metta?* The remaining question, which once again will help to shape my continuing existence as a teacher and scholar, is: *How Metta?*

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