

**Practices and wisdom in Nichiren Buddhism:
Implications for Western Counselling**

by

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ABSTRACT

Practices and theories of Buddhist psychology are explored in general, and those of Nichiren Buddhism in particular. Three aspects of Buddhist psychology are given particular emphasis: interdependence, mindfulness, and confronting negative tendencies. These three qualities are essential for compassionate counsellors. Possible implications for counselling practices in the West are drawn from this exploration. It will be suggested that some concepts and practices of Nichiren Buddhism are useful for the personal growth of counsellors, especially in terms of counsellors' abilities to accompany others' sufferings and to believe in clients' strength and potential. In addition, Buddhism offers alternative conceptions of pathology, addiction, and how we pay attention to our inner states and emotions.

Key words: Nichiren, Buddhism, Mindfulness, Compassion, Counselling, Attitude, Ten Worlds

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PROLOGUE

I encountered Buddhism and counselling around the same time. While I was an undergraduate university student interested in psychology and counselling, my mother introduced me to an international lay Buddhist organization, the Soka Gakkai International, which belongs to the Japanese school of Buddhism called *Nichiren Buddhism*. At first I was sceptical about religion, let alone Buddhism, altogether. However, I have encountered many compassionate, energetic, and happy people in this community—including my mother. These people, and the empowering and practical aspects of Buddhist philosophy, inspired me to take up the practice of this tradition of Buddhism. However, I often felt ambivalent about studying psychology and practicing Nichiren Buddhism side by side. Psychology's modernist empiricism and Nichiren Buddhism's pre-modern spirituality seemed to be incompatible. I tried to treat them as two separate aspects of my life: when I went to school, I studied counselling, and when I went to a Buddhist meeting, I practiced Buddhism. Yet, towards the end of my undergraduate degree, I found myself starting to integrate counselling theories with Nichiren practices. This thesis is the fruit of that integration. The fruit has not been easy to bear for various reasons.

A lot of Buddhist wisdom has helped me to go through my recent life of coming into a Western culture as an Asian student. I struggled being in a foreign country, learning a new language, and studying at the graduate school level. My journey to be a counsellor has been a double challenge. It has been a struggle to stay psychologically healthy. In retrospect, I feel that my Buddhist practice kept me joyful and appreciative, and it enable me to make sense of my struggles. Most helpful was the fundamental practice of Nichiren: chanting, which is an active meditation that consists of repeating the phrase *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*.

However, in order for me to deepen my practice of chanting, studying Buddhist teachings and receiving support from my Buddhist community was essential.

When I see my clients, I realize that my meditative practice has been helpful for me to be fully engaged, mindful, and compassionate during sessions. I also began to explore how the wisdom and ideas in the Nichiren Buddhism might be integrated into my counselling practice.

Each school or tradition of Buddhist practice is different. My expertise is in Nichiren Buddhism. While I appreciate other schools of Buddhism, understanding them deeply from the standpoint of practice and personal experiences is challenging if not impossible for me at this time. I have not had the time to study in depth the long and complex history of Buddhism, let alone the diverse teachings of Buddhism. Hence, my thesis work focuses on one small branch of Buddhism that I am familiar with: Nichiren Buddhism.

This thesis project investigates the implications of Nichiren Buddhism for counselling practices in the West. I hope that my ideas may contribute, first of all, to the theories, practices, and personal growth of counsellors and clients, and secondly, to the East-West dialogue in the area of counselling psychology. I recognize that my work has limitations, particularly language limitations, because I am not a native speaker of English. While I strove to make my English grammatical as much as it is within my power, the bigger issue is that I still think and “see” things in many ways through the lens of Japanese culture and language. However, I am hoping that this weakness is in fact a strength of some sort in terms of demonstrating a different way of knowing: Nichiren Buddhism teaches using a different “language” and understanding of life.

CHAPTER 1: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM NICHIREN BUDDHISM?

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the history of Buddhism—including an explanation as to how different schools have developed. This will situate Nichiren Buddhism among other branches of Buddhism. I will also outline several reasons why I choose Nichiren Buddhism and clarify the goals of my thesis. The general purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with Nichiren Buddhism and to clarify my intent of bringing this perspective to this thesis.

History of Buddhism: situating Nichiren Buddhism

My description of history of Buddhism will be brief and illustrate only those points that are important to understand how Nichiren Buddhism developed.

The origin of Buddhism can be attributed to one single individual approximately 3000 years ago. The historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Shakyamuni was the son of the ruler of a small tribe, the Shyaka clan. He lived in affluence. Shakyamuni had strong existential angst, particularly related to four sufferings, birth, sickness, old age, and death. He began a spiritual journey to resolve this angst. At the age of thirty, he left his father's palace, his wife and son, and began the life of a wandering ascetic. He tried various ascetic practices under several teachers, but none of these gave him the answers he was seeking. He then abandoned these practices and began his meditation. Under the Bodhi tree, he is said to have attained enlightenment. He spent the rest of his life

preaching to others that all people have enlightened nature. In his last eight years, he taught Lotus Sutra, which teaches that we all possess our true potential, Buddha nature.

The following is what Shakyamuni taught in the Lotus Sutra based on the Nichiren's interpretation. Enlightened nature, also called Buddha nature, is eternal. His enlightenment or his recollection was about impermanence, interconnectedness, all people's enlightened nature, and the eternity of life, repeating itself in the cycle of birth and death. Impermanence means that change is inevitable and that things are always changing. Human sufferings stem from not realizing that all things are impermanent. Another thing Shakyamuni realized was interconnectedness. Everything is related; nothing exists in isolation. Thus, according to Shakyamuni, life is eternal and everything is constantly undergoing change in an interconnected manner.

Furthermore, what Shakyamuni wanted to teach others were his recollections during his meditation. He basically recalled all his previous lifetimes. As Ikeda (1996) writes,

“[Buddha] recalled his first, second, and third lifetimes, and so on through countless eons of time and countless formations and destructions of the universe; he recalled what his name had been in each existence, what he had eaten, what joy and sorrow he had known, what kind of death he had undergone... his present existence was part of the unbroken chain of birth, death, and rebirth that had been continuing...” (p.g., 65).

It was a real and vivid recollection, rather than intuition or realization. It is commonly believed that he was enlightened under the Bodhi tree for the first time. But this is a mistaken view. Based on the Lotus Sutra, he reached enlightenment millions and millions years ago (i.e., time without beginning). He was enlightened every single lifetime. It did not take Buddha to go through many lifetimes of training to be finally enlightened. The message is that all people have potential to reach enlightenment in this lifetime.

After his passing, Shakyamuni's teachings were spread and taught by his followers. The south route is known to be the Theravada Buddhism practiced in south East Asia. The northern path is the Mahayana Buddhism starting from India, Tibet, China, Korea, and to Japan. Shakyamuni's teachings were conveyed through his disciples, and his teachings were mixed with the local beliefs and practices in each country and flourished in various forms.

It was in the 5th century when T'ien-t'ai (538-598 C. E), the Chinese Buddhist scholar, classified and systematized Shakyamuni's teachings, stories, poems, and metaphors. T'ien-t'ai stressed the importance of Lotus Sutra. He came up with certain meditative practices in order to observe our mind. He taught that our emotions and mental states were in a constant flux. Each moment of our lives encompasses three thousand realms. All phenomena in the universe are contained in a single individual's each moment of their lives. T'ien-t'ai's teachings and practices were so complex that only Buddhist monks were able to engage. His contribution did not influence many lay people. His teachings were brought to Japan by Dengyo

It was in the 13th century (1222) when Nichiren, son of a fisherman, was born. He was sent to a local temple to study. By studying all different Buddhist teachings intensively for 14 years, he questioned other Buddhist schools, and concluded that Lotus sutra is the most essential teaching in Buddhism. Then, he revealed that the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the essence of life and the rhythm of the universe. Although it is hard to believe that this phrase is the essence of life, he wanted to establish the practice that everyone can use to achieve happiness. By chanting this phrase, we can tap into our enlightened nature (more discussed later). Nichiren had a turbulent life. He protested the government because they were exploiting money and food from the general public (discussed more later). Thus, Nichiren was persecuted and exiled to the island of Sado and Izue. Despite these struggles, he encouraged people around him and preached on behalf of his followers' happiness. His mission, similar to

Shakyamuni, was to find a way for all people to be empowered and happy despite power and exploitation of government in 13th century Japan.

Today, Nichiren Buddhism is practiced as an organized religion. Soka Gakkai International is, for example, the largest Nichiren Buddhism organization, having 13 million practicing members in 192 countries. There are also a few other smaller organizations in Japan that practice Nichiren Buddhism. This thesis does not focus on the religious aspect of Nichiren Buddhism. Instead, I am interested in the philosophical aspects: Buddhist concepts, practices, teachings, and lives of Buddhists.

Why was Nichiren's teaching revolutionary?

There are several reasons why Nichiren was considered to be a revolutionary person: (1) Nichiren's courage and compassion to speak up for justice in society; (2) Nichiren's emphasis on everyone's inner potential, the Buddha nature; and (3) revealing a practical tool for us to be strong and happy

First, during the 13th century Japan, people in general were poor and suffering from exploitation. Nichiren spoke out against the exploitation. There was a constant threat and attack of Mongols who had taken over countries such as China and Korea. Nichiren claimed that we needed to realize that we were in charge of changing ourselves and our surroundings. Thus, we should not feel powerless in the face of poverty or exploitation. Nichiren was persecuted several times, yet even after being persecuted and physically attacked, he kept on protesting and continued to share the teaching of Buddhism.

Second, like Shakyamuni, he spent his whole life preaching to others that we all possessed positive inner potential, the Buddha nature. Nichiren's mission was to do the same. This was extremely difficult at a time period when pessimism and nihilism were deeply rooted in people's psyche.

Third, Nichiren revealed a daily practical tool for meditative practice. By stressing the importance of the Lotus sutra, he realized that by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo out loud, we can tap into our Buddha nature. This meditative practice can help people cultivate positive human qualities such as joy, confidence, and wisdom. Nichiren was concerned about happiness of ordinary people. He struggled to reveal a practical tool or meditation technique for people to practice. An analogy may help. It was Shakyamuni who formed an idea about the house. It was T'ien-t'ai that made the blueprint of the house. It was Nichiren that build the house so that people could live in it. It does not necessarily mean that Nichiren was the only Buddhist who was practical. All three of them were teaching and helping others to understand life and teachings. The point of this analogy is to illustrate how Nichiren came to reveal this specific phrase or mantra, which is the essence of life and the law of the universe. This phrase also contains the essence of the Lotus Sutra. By tapping into our true potential, he proclaimed that we can attain enlightenment in this life time in this present form. This was revolutionary because most Buddhists thought that attaining enlightenment takes many lifetimes. To be enlightened or simply being happy was believed to be extremely challenging. But Nichiren taught that by chanting this phrase, everyone could truly be happy in this lifetime. It was revolutionary for him to proclaim that regardless of our age, gender, and social status, we all could still attain happiness just as who we were. Thus, his practice was revolutionary because it gave people hope and optimism in the dark ages of Japan.

Why I chose Nichiren Buddhism to investigate for my thesis

Nichiren Buddhism has not yet been applied to Western forms of counselling

During the past half-century, hundreds of studies, papers, and books on meditation have been published about the field of Buddhism and therapy. While

psychotherapists have started to integrate Eastern philosophies, especially the different schools of Buddhism (i.e., Zen, Tibetan, and Pure land) into counselling theories and practices, Nichiren Buddhism is still fairly new to the field of Buddhism and psychotherapy exchange.

Zen Buddhists, for example, were eager to exchange ideas and dialogue with psychoanalysts. Zen did not really spread to the general public; rather it became popular among scholars. In 1950's, The Zen practitioners such as D. T. Suzuki and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu began to have a dialogue with the psychoanalysts such as Jung and Erich Fromm, and Karen Horney. Since then the exchange and integration of the east and the west have continued. It seems that the exchange between Zen and psychoanalysis has been a popular trend. Recently, Young-Eisendrath and Muramoto (2002) edited a book based on a seminar held in Kyoto, Japan, on Zen Buddhism and Depth psychology. Safran (2003) discusses the commonalities and the differences between psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism in terms of the structure of mind, the transference, and the Lacanian analytic approach.

Other Buddhist schools have been also integrated with western psychotherapies. Brazier (2003), for example, discusses Pure Land Buddhism by outlining the Buddhist views of the self, the concept of change, and the mind as possible implications for the advancement of western psychotherapy. Some writers incorporate Tibetan school of thought and emphasize compassion in counselling practices. Recently, Ladner (2004) and Glaser (2005), devoted an entire book on compassion in counselling from the Tibetan Buddhist perspective.

There are a few publications that integrate psychology and Nichiren Buddhism. Dockett (1998), for instance, discusses the issue of stress resistance by comparing the ideas of western psychology and the Nichiren Buddhism. Dudley-Grant (2003), for example, applies Nichiren's models and ideas to explain addiction.

Lotus sutra contains many concepts and wisdom

The reason why Shakyamuni, Siddhartha Gautama, taught the Lotus Sutra is that he wanted all people to attain enlightenment and to realize qualities of Buddha in all people (i.e., compassion, courage, wisdom, and joy). He truly believed that every person was capable of possessing these qualities. To him, everyone was a Buddha. Accordingly, the central theme of Lotus sutra is that all people have potential for “Buddha nature” (explained further in Chapter 3).

The Nichiren Buddhism, focuses solely on the Lotus Sutra, and contains a lot of concepts and ideas about compassion. Scholars in the field of counselling and psychology have not yet discussed this Sutra and concepts in it. As the Dalai Lama puts it, “beings who seek enlightenment for themselves in order to lead all beings to nirvana are known as bodhisattvas...The Lotus Sutra, the central discourse of the Chinese Tendai and Japanese Nichiren sects, stresses the role of faith in the liberation of all beings” (1999, p. 249). As he explains, the Lotus Sutra deals with the sufferings and happiness of all beings. Because the Lotus Sutra is known as a teaching that helps all people to be happy, it follows that this sutra contains what it means to be compassionate individual.

Nichiren stresses that the Lotus Sutra is the ultimate Buddhist teaching. Nichiren Buddhism provides a deep insight about what is it like to be a compassionate being and may provide possible implications for counsellors. Two of the chapters within the 28 chapters of Lotus sutra contain the essence of this Sutra. According to Nichiren:

“As I said before, though no chapter of the Lotus Sutra is negligible, among the entire twenty-eight chapters, the "Expedient Means" chapter and the "Life Span" chapter are particularly outstanding. The remaining chapters are all in a sense the branches and leaves of these two chapters... the remaining twenty-six chapters are like the shadows that follow one's body or the value inherent in a jewel (The Writing of Nichiren Daishonin, p.g., 71).

Life span and expedient chapter of Lotus sutra are the most essential chapters. They embrace the whole sutra. These chapters of sutras teach, in a nut shell, that we all possess pure and unlimited potential within, Buddha nature, and that through Buddhist practice we can become like a Buddha and possess the qualities of Buddha (i.e., compassion, wisdom, joy, confidence). Thus, we are all Buddha in some sense; we just have not realized or awakened these qualities.

Purpose of my thesis

I believe that Nichiren Buddhism has a lot of wisdom and ideas that are worth investigating for possible implications for counsellors practicing in the West. The purpose of my thesis is to contribute to the field of Buddhism and counselling. I will specifically focus on the concept of compassion from Nichiren Buddhism and draw out possible implications for current counselling practices, for therapists, and for clients.

CHAPTER 2:

HOW ARE THE BUDDHIST IDEAS INTEGRATED IN THE WEST?

After stating my intent of this project, the next step for me is to dig into what has been said already in this field. By reviewing the relevant literatures on “compassion, Buddhism, and therapy,” ideas of other Buddhist schools have been applied to how we practice therapy in west. I will discuss three topics: interconnectedness, mindfulness, and negative tendencies. In brief, first, seeing ourselves that we are all interdependent may allow us to see that my well-being and others well-being are same. Second, mindfulness practice has been incorporated in western therapies and integrated into therapists’ lives for their self-care and personal growth. Third, Buddhism encourages us to see and deal with our negative tendencies. By dealing with such tendencies and treating ourselves compassionately, we can also be compassionate to others. For each of these topic, I will be describing what it is, how it is practiced, and possible implications.

Interconnectedness and view of self

Theravada Buddhism holds the view that the self is not a permanent and distinct entity (Daya, 2000). Thus, “non-self” (anatta) is commonly used to explain this Buddhist view. In Buddhism, believing in the existence of substantive ego, self is considered as an illusion in the sense that one’s sense of self emerges from our consciousness and sensations (Daya, 2000). From the Buddhist standpoint, it is a delusion for one to view the sense of self as something real, distinct or as a permanent entity. In addition, it holds that the attachment to the

sense of self or the illusion of self is the cause of suffering. Therefore, one must be liberated from the notion of self in order to attain enlightenment (Dudley-Grant, 2003). The Buddhist idea of non-self or selflessness can be misunderstood to mean that self does not actually exist, or that we should devote ourselves to others because the self does not exist. Rather, non-self refers to the interconnectedness of all life (Kornfield, 1999). Accordingly, Watson states, “it is not so much that there is no self as often stated, but rather that the imposition of a permanent, separate self onto the interaction of self processes is an error” (1998, p.104). No-self does not signify the depersonalization or going back to the pre-personal stage of development. Rather, no-self means going beyond the individual self, and reaching for a transpersonal view of self. Therefore, the term “no self” should be understood carefully. Thus, no self means that each of us only exist in relation to others. Buddhism argues the importance of understanding the self in the larger context in which each individual exists in an interdependent manner. To understand this idea using the metaphor of ocean: each wave in the ocean symbolizes each self, it rises and falls endlessly, but, after all, each wave is nothing but part of the vast ocean.

Young-Eisendrath (2003) points out that because of the delusion that each self is separate from one another, it is difficult to perceive that helping others (e.g., clients) benefits all people. Thus such delusion does not allow one to develop compassion to everyone. In more concrete terms, the client exist in the social network in which therapists live. Client’s issue is a part of everyone’s issue. The implication for counselling is that, from this perspective, client’s issues and problems are part of counsellors’ lives because we are all interconnected. Seeing others’ problems as our own and have a sense of interdependence facilitates more compassion.

Glaser (2005) argues that instead of thinking only “me and my lover” or “me and my family”, having a sense of “me and all other living beings” encourages us to replace suffering with happiness of all beings. This will eventually establish

the sense of equality between ourselves and others and a desire to work for the happiness of everyone unconditionally. When we see clients, it is natural that we are concerned about this specific person, and it is in reality impossible for one counsellor to make every person on the planet be happy. What is necessary and helpful is an attitude change to: “I am concerned about everyone’s welfare as a human being and as a counsellor.” This perspective, in turn, may help us to cultivate more compassion, influencing us to be a better counsellor in the end.

To elaborate further: Bien (2006) cites the Bodhisattva vow from the Zen tradition which says, “Innumerable are sentient beings; I vow to save them all... Infinite is the Buddha’s way; I vow to fulfil completely” (p. 16). He points out that this vow maybe too extreme for westerners, but we can try to think of this as aspiration and attitude shift. When we make a vow to help others by making a difference in their lives, we will feel satisfaction and joyful. This can be applicable to counsellors who make a “vow” and nurture the attitude of “I will help all people.” Such counsellors might be less likely to burn out because of satisfaction and sense of mission of what they do.

Another aspect of interconnectedness is that we are often too concerned about our selfhood. Segall (2003) points out that if therapists cannot see self interdependently, they may suffer from selfish preoccupations. Therapists may try to protect themselves by saying “I have to be smarter and healthier than clients” or “why is this client so angry after I have helped him in his misery?” Such self-talk prevents therapists to be really free and open to clients’ suffering. Segall goes on to say that if we can loosen our attachment to self, we naturally come to connect with others and care for those who are suffering instead of getting caught up with therapists’ identity and selfhood.

Mindfulness

What does it means to be mindful? To be mindful we need to pay attention non-judgementally in the present moment to things that we take for granted

(Williams, Teasdale, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). We have a tendency to solve our problems and see things in a way it is supposed to be, but mindfulness is just the opposite of this tendency. We should not be strategizing or idealizing things if we want to be mindful. We want to pay attention to things as they are in our present moment. Accordingly, Germer (2005) defines mindfulness as “awareness of present experience with acceptance” (p.g., 9). Awareness, being in the present moment, and acceptance are key concepts in mindfulness practice. In order to understand how awareness, present moment, and acceptance are core of mindfulness practice, I will describe its role in three therapeutic approaches:

- 1) Dialectical behaviour therapy for BPD,
- 2) Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for depression,
- 3) Morita Therapy.

Rather than describing these approaches in general, I will illustrate the aspects of mindfulness practice in these approaches. We will see that three aspects of mindfulness - awareness, present moment, and acceptance - are embedded in each of these three approaches. Thus, by reviewing these therapeutic approaches, we can get a better overall picture of mindfulness-oriented therapies. I will then look at the concept of mindfulness practice for counsellor’s self-care and personal growth.

Dialectical behaviour therapy for BPD

I will present a perspective on Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) in order to illustrate the element of “acceptance” in mindfulness. DBT incorporates mindfulness and principles from Zen Buddhist traditions such as nonattachment and acceptance of experience in order to treat Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Unsatisfied with traditional cognitive behavioural approach that primarily focus on the skills oriented change, Linehan incorporated mindfulness practices into CBT in order to add an acceptance and validation component to CBT (Lau & McMain, 2005).

Lynch, et al., (2006) explain that DBT encourages clients to develop awareness of themselves and things around them. Rather than distancing or being objective about our experience, the goal is to “become one with experience” by accepting emotions, thoughts, and situations.

As an example of how DBT therapists may respond to the borderline patient with a cutting habit: “it makes sense that you would want to relieve yourself from painful emotions, since most people don’t like to experience painful feelings” (Lau & McMain, 2005, p.g., 866). As we can see, such response has the element of “acceptance” and “validation” for clients.

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT)

This therapy shows “awareness and acceptance” aspects of mindfulness practice. Since relapse of depression is common after treatment, mindfulness practice is incorporated into the treatment protocol in order to prevent relapse. This is called Mindfulness-based Cognitive therapy, developed by Kabat-Zinn (1990). It focuses on formal sitting meditation, yoga, and mindfulness in everyday life and sensation throughout our bodies. Thus, MBCT is not about modifying the content of thoughts. Rather, it encourages clients to relate to and be aware of their thoughts. Rather than getting rid of anxiety for example, we want to simply feel the anxiety come and go and accept the feeling.

MBCT is specifically designed for patient with recovered depression. Segal et al. (2002) describe an 8-week treatment program. It starts with a simple exercise on how to be mindful about specific and tangible things and also pay attention to bodily sensations. Mindfulness practice is then incorporated in paying attention to one’s complex emotions.

Both approaches, MBCT and DBT, borrow ideas from the Zen principle that only nonattachment and acceptance of experiences can bring an end to suffering. Traditional cognitive behavioural approach itself was an unsatisfactory treatment as too much emphasis was placed on change-based skills. In order to

bring about the change, awareness and acceptance are essential, and need to be added to the CBT approach. Thus, mindfulness practice is incorporated in CBT oriented western psychotherapies in order to create a balance between approaches based on fixing or changing problems and accepting issues.

Morita therapy

Morita therapy was developed around the early 1900's. This therapy borrows ideas from Buddhism and contains the element of what is now referred to as mindfulness practice. Morita therapy assumes that human beings have two opposing desires: desire for self-actualization (i.e., desire for a healthy and productive life) and desire for escaping suffering and negative emotions. Morita asks clients to simply ignore and accept negative feelings such as anxiety and instructs them to take desirable actions even if they feel anxious (Ishiyama, 1990).

Morita therapy framework makes the following assumption regarding our emotions:

“There is no right or wrong emotion. Emotion simply is, and our task is to accept and appreciate the richness and the complexity of emotions while taking positive actions, which often are rewarded by positive feelings of accomplishment and constructiveness. Therefore, clients are warned not to aim at inducing good feelings and avoiding inconvenient or unacceptable feelings as the main objective of implementing a desired behaviour... the primary purpose of such action taking is doing the job that needs to be done here and now” (Ishiyama, 1987, p.g., 549).

Morita therapy is about taking desirable actions and accepting who we are, including our negative tendencies. As we can see, this therapy is largely influenced by mindfulness practice of accepting the here and now.

“One socially avoidant client ashamed of his nervous and self-conscious nature, complained: I can't speak up in class or approach girls with self-confidence. I brush and stutter and worry about making a fool of myself” After recognizing how he had been neglecting his social desires, he decided to risk to feel nervous and take action at the same time. He later reported, ‘It's kind of funny,

but I feel more self-confident when I accept that I am not a confident and self-fired person. I'm confident, however, that I will get things done" (Ishiyama, 1990, p.g., 3).

In Morita therapy, clients are encouraged to accept and stay in any emotion while they are engaged in desirable and productive actions, then they start to forget their negative emotions over time which Ishiyama calls "ego-transcendence" (1990). For example, even if a client is feeling anxiety about how he or she speaks in front of people, Morita therapy encourages this client to take productive action (e.g., speak in front of people) despite the anxiety. After taking more actions, clients will "forget" their negative emotion. Clients come to surrender their moment to moment suffering (e.g., anxiety) and are able to value their desirable actions.

Therapists may have evaluative and judgemental attitudes towards their own and client's emotions by saying that emotions are bad and have to be minimized through treatment. The implication of Morita therapy might be that such evaluative judgement towards oneself or clients may be minimized if the therapists adapt this approach.

Ishiyama (1990) points out cultural differences, suggesting that the Japanese way of counselling might be too directive for westerners. Yet this approach may be done in the empathy framework of the West. Rather than giving guidance for western clients to take desirable actions in the midst of suffering, several sessions of empathy work and relationship building might be needed first. It is possible that regardless of whatever theoretical approaches therapists have, Morita intervention can be implemented toward the end of treatment as a therapeutic tool.

These three therapeutic approaches clearly incorporate the element of mindfulness. It seems that all three approaches encourage clients to accept and be mindful of their problems and whatever comes up in their lives. Experiencing

things or reality as it is and accepting it seems to foster the attitude change, which then has an impact on the problems clients have.

These three therapeutic approaches seem to be related to the Bien's (2006) idea about not resisting the pain or suffering. We often try to think too much of how things should be and needs to get rid of problems or sufferings. Through mindfulness practice we come to feel that we do not really have to get rid of such sufferings, and hence we become open and embrace our sufferings. Suffering is pain times resistance. The more we try to resist the pain, the more suffering will increase. In other words, zero resistance means zero times pain, which equals to zero suffering. To be mindful is to embrace pain and struggles in our lives. What is common in these therapeutic approaches is that they all insist that there is "no need to resist the pain." Mindfulness encourages us to become *aware* of the pain and *accept* the pain in the *present moment*.

Mindfulness practice for therapist

Key elements in mindfulness - awareness, being in the present moment, acceptance - apply to therapists as well. Other than these three key components of mindfulness, through practicing mindfulness, therapists may develop several qualities:

- 1) attention,
- 2) tolerance,
- 3) awareness and understanding,
- 4) empathy,
- 5) equanimity,
- 6) "no self" or interconnectedness,
- 7) embrace of suffering.

Let us discuss some of these qualities.

Fulton (2005) discusses that through mindfulness we may come to understand the interdependent nature of ourselves instead of seeing the self as an independent entity. Furthermore, the interconnectedness between the therapist's well-being and his client's well-being encourages the feeling in the therapist that clients are nothing but himself (Bien, 2006), and fosters understanding.

Being mindful can increase our "attention" during therapy sessions. The following is an excerpt of the personal experience of a therapist who attended mindful meditation retreat for 10 days:

"All of his activities, including working with patients, seem to occur in a space of stillness and openness. He finds that listening is effortless and deep, and he resonates more naturally with each patient during sessions... Insights flow like water during the sessions. Both the therapists and his patients feel these sessions are special in some way. As weeks pass, the therapy experience seems to return to normal" (Fulton, 2005, p.g., 58).

Mindfulness may help therapists to increase their attention and to be open and calm during their sessions.

As Bien (2006) explains, mindfulness practice is not just therapists attending meditation sessions. This practice begins the moment we wake up in the morning. Being a mindful therapist does not just mean that we try to be present during a session with clients. Mindfulness practice is how we live our lives moment by moment. For example, when we brush our teeth, are we mindful in brushing teeth? Or are we preoccupied with what we need to do on that day? If we cannot be mindful during brushing our teeth, chances are that it is difficult for us to be mindful during sessions. Thus, being present with clients in a session is simply the continuation of how mindful we are in our lives.

Dealing with our negative tendencies

Being compassionate is not simply about concern for all people discussed on the above but also concern for ourselves. In other words, if counsellors want to

be compassionate to their clients, they need to face their own negative tendencies and be empathic to themselves. Helen Luke (as cited in Glaser, 2005, p.g., 35) points out that we often try too hard to solve other people's problems without addressing our own darkness. Only having compassion for one's own weaknesses can make one compassionate to others. By reviewing the Buddhist oriented therapists' work, I identified several negative qualities that we may want to deal with. Here, I will specifically look at narcissism, self-hatred, and desire.

Narcissism

Buddhism cautions us to be aware of our narcissistic tendencies. Narcissism means believing that one's happiness, needs, and status are more important than those of others, and that our happiness is not related to others' happiness (Glasser, 2005). Narcissism prevents us from cultivating compassion. Narcissism and compassion are the two opposite sides of the same coin. If we can handle our narcissistic tendencies, compassion will increase. The level of narcissism reflects how much we suffer.

Ladner (2004) believes that dealing with narcissistic tendencies is difficult, and that we need to target because it is the "leader" of our inner darkness. Other negative tendencies, such as doubts, self-hatred, or shame, are the "disciples" of narcissism. Narcissism is often about self-deception. It is a difficult task because we are often deluded and blind to our narcissistic tendencies. Anxiety or depression, on the contrary, is easy to detect because we simply feel uncomfortable.

Several authors (e.g., Bien, 2004) have argued that narcissism also means seeing self as an independent being instead of seeing it as interdependent.

Fulton (2005) discusses that therapists may fall into the preoccupation with their self-esteem and self-image in order to be a "good" counsellor. In dealing with narcissism, we first have to be aware of this pattern. Furthermore, therapists may confuse their narcissistic needs and clients' therapeutic needs. The key is to

be aware of our narcissistic projection so that we can deal with it in consciousness. In addition, in order for us to be successfully aware and deal with narcissism, mindfulness practice comes into this picture. It makes sense that counsellors would benefit from examining their narcissistic tendencies, and that the way to be aware and deal with narcissism is by mindfulness practice.

Self-hatred

According to Ladner (2004), when we try too hard to get rid of our narcissistic patterns, we fall into self-hatred or self-destructive behaviours. Self-hatred is also one form of narcissism because it is still concerned entirely about selfhood that “I” am a bad person. He remarks that Tibetan lama could not respond to the westerner’s question of how to deal with self-hatred or self-destructive behaviours because there are no such concepts in Tibetan culture. We can learn from different cultures such as Tibet and learn their practice, philosophy, or a way of living. By doing so, we may be able to decrease the patterns of self-hatred or self-destruction.

Desire

The popular understanding of Buddhism is that desires lead to suffering and thus we need to get rid of them. As pointed by Epstein (2005), such understanding of Buddhism is incorrect, and argues that desire does not lead to “suffering” in the sense of pain or struggle. Desire leads to “pervasive unsatisfactoriness.” We just feel discontent in what we do if we are following desire all the time. Thus, desire is not the same thing as pain or suffering. It is more to do with “having no preferences.”

Ladner (2004) points out that seeing our suffering accurately and correctly leads to compassion. He also suggests a few observational points about how desire plays a role in our daily lives. (1) We often engage in self-deception about our desire (i.e., I am denying that I am attracted to my client). (2) Repressed desire leads to an unhealthy mind and may develop psychological

problems such as guilt and self-hatred. (3) Most of what we think is largely influenced by our desire.

Indeed, we are often unaware of how desires play a role in our lives. The goal is to be aware of and pay attention to how they function. Thus, Ladner advises us to pay attention to how we feel when we cannot satisfy our desires. In this way, we will notice how desire functions in our lives. Desire does not give us happiness. Rather, it leads to more desire. Thus, letting go and getting rid of any desire leads to being able to stay in the present moment and have more mental space for clients.

Epstein (2005) acknowledges that desire is worth investigating and can transform into compassion and happiness. His approach is not to get rid of desire, but to accept and validate desire. Our desire is an important part of our human experience and an inevitable reaction against our suffering. If we feel sad, it is natural for us to want to feel joy. If we try to eliminate desire, it will come back for revenge. This is clearly a different approach to the previous discussion by Ladner that desire is a negative thing that needs disposal.

Possible implications for counselling are that it might be wise to explore how desires play a role in clients' lives. Questions can be: Do you deny your desire? How much are clients aware of desire? How do they function in their lives? What do you do with your desire? For counsellors, these questions are equally useful. Counsellors may educate clients about desire, and they may clarify their own view of desire. Do we need to get rid of desire? Or can desire be transformed into something positive?

CHAPTER 3: NICHIREN'S CONTRIBUTION

In this chapter, I will re-examine the concept of interconnectedness, mindfulness, and negative tendencies discussed in the previous chapter, from the Nichiren's perspective. I will be bringing in concepts to illustrate the uniqueness of this perspective. Many concepts and theories I introduce are Shakyamuni's ideas, which then are systematized by Tientai, and revised and modified them into practical theories by Nichiren.

From Nichiren's perspective, interconnectedness can be comprehended in a systematic manner; to show precisely how we are all interdependent. Chanting/meditative practice is introduced. Lastly, the unique perspective of dealing and transforming our negative tendencies is provided. I will link and apply to practices of counselling in the following chapter 4.

Interconnectedness revisited

In this section, I will introduce several concepts that may help us understand how each of us is precisely and systematically interconnected in terms of Ten Worlds, Buddha nature, oneness of self and environment, and respecting self and others. I have discussed in the previous chapter that seeing ourselves as interdependent beings may help us as therapists (1) to avoid egoistic preoccupation, and (2) to foster the attitude "me and all people" rather than "me and people I like" among counsellors. This perspective maybe useful, but it did not provide the systematic explanations precisely how we are interdependent. Thus, it might be difficult to accept the view that we are interconnected. Having the knowledge of how we are related with each other and interact with our

environment may foster our perception changes in view of self. Some of these concepts and theories are not inventions by Nichiren; however, he emphasized the importance of these concepts and added extra knowledge to make them practical and accessible.

Ten Worlds

The concept of the *Ten Worlds* is described in detail in the following page. It postulates that the human “life condition” has ten inner states, levels or “worlds” which can be manifested in our human experiences of daily lives, from lowest to highest, Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, and Buddhahood. Buddhists assume that any of these states of life can be manifested within us at any moment of our lives, and that they are in a dynamic condition. For example, a person who receives an “A” in school may be in the state of Heaven (temporary happiness), but if his girlfriend dumps him when he gets home, his life condition may plummet to the Hell state (despair). Then, if he drinks all night, he is in the state of Animality (instinctive). Thus, every moment of our lives may manifest a different life condition.

Table 1: The concept of the Ten Worlds

What are the Ten Worlds?
One way that Buddhism explains life is through a concept known as “the ten worlds.” These are ten states or conditions of life that we experience within ourselves and are then manifested throughout all aspects of our lives. Each of us possesses the potential for all ten, and we shift from one to another at any moment, according to our interaction with the environment. That is, at each moment, one of the ten worlds is being manifested and the other nine are dormant. From lowest to highest, they are:
Hell —This is a state of suffering and despair, in which we perceive we have no freedom of action. It is characterized by the impulse to destroy ourselves and everything around us.
Hunger —Hunger is the state of being controlled by insatiable desire for money, power, status, or whatever. While desires are inherent in any of the ten worlds, in this state we are at the mercy of our cravings and cannot control them.

Animality—In this state, we are ruled by instinct. We exhibit neither reason nor moral sense nor the ability to make long-range judgments. In the world of Animality, we operate by the law of the jungle, so to speak. We will not hesitate to take advantage of those weaker than ourselves and fawn on those who are stronger.

Anger—In this next state, awareness of ego emerges, but it is a selfish, greedy, distorted ego, determined to best others at all costs and seeing everything as a potential threat to itself. In this state we value only ourselves and tend to hold others in contempt. We are strongly attached to the idea of our own superiority and cannot bear to admit that anyone exceeds us in anything.

Humanity (also called Tranquillity)—This is a flat, passive state of life, from which we can easily shift into the lower four worlds. While we may generally behave in a humane fashion in this state, we are highly vulnerable to strong external influences.

Heaven (or Rapture)—This is a state of intense joy stemming, for example, from the fulfillment of some desire, a sense of physical well-being, or inner contentment. Though intense, the joy experienced in this state is short-lived and also vulnerable to external influences.

The six states from Hell to Heaven are called the six paths or six lower worlds. They have in common the fact that their emergence or disappearance is governed by external circumstances. Take the example of a man obsessed by the desire to find someone to love him (Hunger). When he at last does meet that person, he feels ecstatic and fulfilled (Heaven). By and by, potential rivals appear on the scene, and he is seized by jealousy (Anger). Eventually, his possessiveness drives his loved one away. Crushed by despair (Hell), he feels life is no longer worth living. In this way, many of us spend time shuttling back and forth among the six paths without ever realizing we are being controlled by our reactions to the environment. Any happiness or satisfaction to be gained in these states depends totally upon circumstances and is therefore transient and subject to change. In these six lower worlds, we base our entire happiness, indeed our whole identity, on externals.

The next two states, Learning and Realization, come about when we recognize that everything experienced in the six paths is impermanent, and we begin to seek some lasting truth. These two states plus the next two, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood, are together called the four noble worlds. Unlike the six paths, which are passive reactions to the environment, these four higher states are achieved through deliberate effort.

Learning—In this state, we seek the truth through the teachings or experience of others.

Realization—This state is similar to Learning, except that we seek the truth not through others' teachings but through our own direct perception of the world.

Learning and Realization—are together called the "two vehicles." Having realized the impermanence of things, people in these states have won a measure of independence and are no longer prisoner to their own reactions as in the six paths. However, they often tend to be contemptuous of people in the six paths who have not yet reached this understanding. In addition, their search for truth is primarily self-oriented, so there is a great potential for egotism in these two states; and they may become satisfied with their progress without discovering the highest potential of human life in the ninth and tenth worlds.

Bodhisattva—Bodhisattvas are those who aspire to achieve enlightenment and at the same time are equally determined to enable all other beings to do the same. Conscious of the bonds that link us to all others, in this state we realize that any happiness we alone enjoy is incomplete, and we devote ourselves to alleviating others' suffering. Those in this state find their greatest satisfaction in altruistic behavior.

The states from Hell to Bodhisattva are collectively termed "the nine worlds." This expression is often used in contrast to the tenth world, the enlightened state of Buddhahood.

Buddhahood—Buddhahood is a dynamic state that is difficult to describe. We can partially describe it as a state of perfect freedom, in which we are enlightened to the ultimate truth of life. It is characterized by infinite compassion and boundless wisdom. In this state, we can resolve harmoniously what appear from the standpoint of the nine worlds to be insoluble contradictions. A Buddhist sutra describes the attributes of the Buddha's life as a true self, perfect freedom from karmic bonds throughout eternity, a life purified of illusion, and absolute happiness. Also, the state of Buddhahood is physically expressed in the Bodhisattva Way or actions of a Bodhisattva.

(SGI USA) <http://sgi-usa.org/>

The lower six worlds tend to be controlled by the environment. For example, in the world of Heaven, getting an "A" in a course gives us transient happiness. This type of happiness does not last because it is governed by external circumstances. In other words, stable or lasting happiness, from a Buddhist standpoint, does not come from outside influences. Instead, happiness comes from one's inside, allowing a person to manifest a higher state of life condition in this Ten Worlds scale. In daily life, we tend to go back and forth among six lower worlds often controlled by external influences.

Another example: in both Bodhisattva (compassionate state) and hell (despair), the actual situation and environment may be the same, what makes the

difference is the mind or the heart of people who are situated in each world. A story of having a five-foot long chopstick is an illustration of this point (Ikeda 1996). In lower world, people were fighting with each other and complaining about the length of chopstick by saying “how can we use this to eat?” But in the higher world of compassion, people were enjoying their meal because they were using the long chopstick to feed with each other.

Thus, this concept of ten worlds encourages us to take ownership of our happiness and to understand that situations and environments need not determine our psychological state. The concept of the ten worlds allows us to think that even if we are in a hellish environment, it is possible to feel extreme and absolute joy or happiness. In the same way, happiness achieved by external forces or situation is not true happiness. It is relative happiness that associated with the sixth level of ten worlds. For example, if we are in a happy environment, friendly family members and a great meal, it will obviously influence us to feel joyful. However, absolute happiness (highest life states) is not the result of being in a happy environment. Thus, it implies that inner change leads to external change.

This model explains that all entities possess the Ten Worlds including humans, inanimate objects, and animals. It may be helpful to think that ten worlds are ten different “energies.” Rocks, for example, also have ten worlds or states, but rocks itself cannot change their states to higher level. Rocks do not really “have” ten worlds within. The point is that our life states reflect and influence our environment and inanimate objects. Only self-conscious beings can achieve higher life states such as Buddhahood or enlightened states. Our life states influence one another. Our communities and environments are the reflection of our inner states. A typical example is that the current environmental crisis is the result of human greediness which is a hunger state, the second lowest of ten worlds. The implication of this model is that each of us has a power and an opportunity to influence others in either positive or negative ways. The purpose of

this concept is that we have the power to influence others and change the situation and surrounding if we focus on our inner change first.

This Buddhist Ten Worlds can be compared to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow argues that there is an order in which we satisfy our needs, from basic to spiritual needs, that is, from physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and to self-actualization. We have to satisfy our basic physiological needs first before we can acquire higher needs. This model is similar to the Ten Worlds, which postulates that our basic needs and emotional needs have to be satisfied before we can pursue self-actualization.

What Ten Worlds adds or different from the Maslow's model is that the former allows us to pursuit enlightenment even when we are in a lower life states. It explains that these lower states are necessary and are the fuel needed to achieve higher states, "turning poison into medicine." This model is also very dynamic in the sense that these ten levels are changing moment by moment partly due to external changes and partly due to our motivational change from within (Discussed more later). Maslow's model in contrast is "static" in the sense that we work on one level then move on to the next. Each level of the ten worlds are interconnected, all necessary and inherent aspects of human experiences. However, some other Buddhist schools may interpret this model as "static" that we work on one level for a long time and then move on to the next. Ten worlds also allow us to understand that achieving the highest states or even enlightenment is not too far. We do not really need to be stuck in a one state for half a life. Each world or life state is transient: a moment-by-moment manifestation of different condition of our lives (this point is more discussed later).

The concept of Ten Words is similar to Morita therapy's philosophy (discussed on chapter 2) in that all emotions such as anger or anxiety are natural parts of our lives, and that we should not try to fix or get rid of them. Thus, instead of seeing anxiety condition in clients as something that needs to be fixed or

modified, we accept mindfully whatever the conditions of clients, and do not pathologize “problematic emotions.” In a similar manner, the ten worlds explain that all ten worlds are inherent and cannot be eliminated. Anger, helplessness, cravings, intellectualization are all necessary and part of human experiences, but they all can be transformed into something more positive such as compassion.

Buddha nature

The ultimate happiness, as opposed to the relative happiness that comes from the outside, is the world of Buddhahood, the Buddha nature, the highest life state of the ten worlds. Causton (1995) defines the Buddha Nature as “absolute happiness and is attained only as a result of the actions we take when in the state of Bodhisattva” (p.g., 36). Watson (1998) describes this term as “all beings possess a core nature which is basically pure and luminous with qualities of openness, clarity and sensitivities, though veiled by the obscurations” (p.g., 90). A similar Christian term may be “God within.”

As Causton (1995) explains, it is only manifested in the here-and-now as a result of compassionate actions by people in a real world. Thus, it is not extraordinary power or supernatural experiences; rather, there will be enormous joy in what seems to be mundane activities and problems in our lives. It can be only understood experientially. An analogy may be found in the taste of chocolate. Imagine someone describing it theoretically, including a detailed description of what chocolate tastes like, to those who have never eaten chocolate. They will find it hard to grasp until they actually eat and experience the taste of chocolate.

Jung’s concept of Self seems to resemble to the Buddha Nature. The Self is an organizing archetype that integrates all the components of the psyche. It exists in the deeper part of the collective unconscious. The Self is manifested as symbols, images, and metaphors (Hopche, 1989). The Self is symbolized, for example, in the eastern mandala. The Self is not limited to time and space, and it is the part of us that concerns immortality and indestructibility, telling ourselves that, for

example, we can achieve anything (Allan, 1988). Accordingly, while the ego can be changed or strengthened, the Self does not involve the element of change nor attach a name, and it is something like unlimited potential (Kawai, 1993).

Allan (1988) explains the way in which the Self develops. At birth, the ego is part of the Self. As we grow, the ego splits from the Self so that the ego can function well in society. Thus, there is an axis of ego-Self. In order for us to continuously experience and connect with the Self, this axis needs to be strengthened. Thus, by the fact that the Self was initially part of our ego, it makes sense to connect those two.

Von Franz (1993) pointed out that Jung noticed that Yoga and other forms of meditation can bring the Self into the fore and allow people to experience the Self. For Nichiren Buddhists, the goal of life is to manifest our Buddha nature, strong life force from within. Thus, Jung and Nichiren Buddhism agree with the need to tap into and manifest Buddha nature or Self.

Kawai (1993) shares one episode: When Jung was asked to define the Self in more concrete terms, he replied by saying that all of you are my Self. What he meant was that in order for us to reach our Self, we need to connect with others because the Self exists in our collective unconscious in a connected manner. Accordingly, Nichiren Buddhist practice suggests that we want to connect with our own Buddha nature and to encourage others to realize that they have also this quality within. Thus, such compassionate action to help others can help us to get in touch with own Buddha nature. Just as the ten worlds are inherent in all of our lives and our environment, Buddha nature also exists in relation to others' Buddha nature.

Furthermore, Jung says that we cannot fully understand the Self itself. What we can do is to just circle around or contemplate this concept because the unconscious realm is irrational. Buddha nature is also hard to conceptualize. Although I gave conceptual explanations of this term for the purpose of this

thesis, personal experiences of this concept are different, just as the description versus actual taste of chocolate are different.

From Nichiren's standpoint, it is only chanting/meditative practice (discussed in the next section) that a person can tap into this realm of Buddha nature. For other perspectives, the ways they may connect to the Self or Buddha nature are through art, varieties of meditative/chanting practices, breathing, yoga, play, intuition, etc. The fundamental purpose of life, for Buddhists, is to access this enlightened nature. By tapping into it, we can manifest positive qualities such as joy, compassion, confidence, and appreciation.

Mutual possession of ten worlds

Buddhists assume that each of the Ten Worlds also contains the ten worlds simultaneously. This is called the mutual possessions of ten worlds. To explain, within the state of hell, all of the conditions from hell to Buddhahood, exist. Metaphorically, this idea teaches us that in every moment, we can manifest different levels of life energy or states.

The fact that there are ten worlds within the world of Hell indicates that a person can be enlightened (Buddhahood) right after experiencing despair. This idea reflects the core Buddhist notion of impermanence; that everything is changing constantly and nothing is permanent. As Nichiren puts "the great demon of fundamental darkness can even enter the bodies of bodhisattvas who have reached near perfect enlightenment and prevent them from attaining the Lotus Sutra's blessing of perfect enlightenment" (WND, Page 496). Even those who are enlightened still need to continuously fight their negative tendencies such as greediness and despair. In other words, we are never free from problems. It is a fact of life.

This concept of mutual possession of ten words explains how our lives and emotional experiences are in a constant flux and dynamic. The ten words are conceptualized differently in other branches of Buddhism that each worlds are

static in a sense that we are stuck in one level. If we work hard enough for decades, we may be able to go up one level or two. This idea seems to make people powerless because achieving enlightenment or true happiness seems too long of a journey. Only monks who train all their lives can achieve such states. Accordingly, Maslow's concepts influence people to believe that those who cannot satisfy the basic needs cannot be self-actualized. In contrast, mutual possession conceptualizes that different human life and emotional experiences are complex, dynamic, and intertwined.

Causton (1995) responds to the question, "if one world is manifested in a moment, what happens to the other nine worlds that are not manifested?" If someone is in a hunger state, where do other states or worlds exist? Buddhism is about non-duality; some concepts or things are neither in existence nor in non-existence. One state can be manifested or dominant, while other states can be latent. For example, we have CDs to listen to music. CD itself exists, but music neither exists nor non-exists. Music is in a state of "latency." Only external the certain set of stimuli can "manifest" music (i.e., to press the play button on the CD player). In a same way, we manifest one life state and other states are latent. But, external or internal forces can influence other worlds to be manifested.

World of Bodhisattva (9th world or compassion) is the key to the ultimate happiness. As in other schools of Buddhism, in Tibetan Buddhism, for example, compassion is the most important mental state required of people to have a meaningful and happy life. Accordingly, the ten worlds explain that only taking compassionate actions towards self and others, in the world of Bodhisattva, can we experience the true happiness from within and able to deal with the negative qualities found in the lower worlds. Thus, ninth world, compassionate feelings and actions, are closely related to the highest world and key to attain enlightenment or Buddhahood. This point may help us to see how our happiness is closely associated and dependent on others' happiness.

This idea of mutual possession seems to be very optimistic and leads to the expectation that being truly happy and attaining enlightenment is quick and easy. It takes enormous effort to manifest higher life state in a continuous base. Ikeda (1996) explains that though one's life condition our tendency shifts from one world to another in each moment, there is also a "habitual tendency" of a person's life to fit into one particular world. For example, those who have a strong drug addiction issue are in a world of hunger, state of deluded desire. Additionally, Buddhists believe that Buddha, upon manifesting the state of Buddhahood, became enlightened, but this does not mean that he is free from suffering. Buddha may have felt fear and suffered when his cousin, Devadatta, tried to persecute him, manifesting a lower state of life. However, Buddhists speculate that because of Buddha's life basic tendency as enlightened, he dealt with his weaknesses and shifted back to the highest state. Thus, there are two aspects. Our life states dynamically fluctuate in each moment. Our life states have a patterns and tendencies to be dominant in one world.

Each of us may be situated more dominantly in a certain world. Those who have a tendency for anger for example are not far from happiness. There is no value judgment involved in where a person is situated in the Ten Worlds. It is simply a scale that assess where we are in a given moment and to understand what our habitual tendency is. Those who are angry or have deluded desire can turn their anger or desire into kindness for others. For Buddhists, how we can exert influence on our life state, or turning lower worlds into higher world, is the result of the Buddhist practice (i.e., compassionate action for self and others and chanting/meditation). This meditative practice will be discussed later.

Oneness of self and environment

One's life state or energy influences others. If a person is compassionate or manifesting Buddhahood, it will influence others. An implication is that we all have the capacity to influence our environment to some degree (negative or positive). "Without the body, no shadow can exist, and without life, no

environment” (WND, Page 644). “Oneness” is the translation from the Japanese term “funi” meaning “two but not two.” Thus, self/life and its environment seem to be two entities, but not really two separate entities. These two are not just interdependent; they are inseparable entities like fish and water. Because life and environment are inseparable, there are two things that follow: (1) we are concerned with others’ welfare or happiness because one’s happiness is partly connected to others’ happiness; and (2) we need to take 100% responsibility for our environment without blaming our surroundings. Whatever happens to us, we are responsible for it.

Respecting self and others

Because we all possess Buddha nature and unlimited potential, we respect such quality in both self and others. Self-respect is related to being compassionate to others. Shakyamuni realized that because we love ourselves and because our lives are valuable, we come to respect other’s lives. In a similar way, if we were feeling more positive about ourselves, we would be more compassionate to others. Respecting self and other seems different from love or unconditional positive regard. From the perspective of respect, we do not really need to love everyone or unconditionally give affection. Rather, we come to respect others because others are human beings and possess enlightened quality, Buddha nature (this point is further discussed in the next chapter).

“Bodhisattva Never Disparaging” in the Lotus Sutra respects other people as persons who possess the Buddha nature. He wanted to respect others’ Buddha nature or potential as human beings. He was abused and people threw rocks at him, but he still respected these people because of their Buddha nature. He did not really love them, but simply respect them despite of abuse he received. “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was for many years cursed and humiliated, beaten with sticks and staves, and pelted with tiles and stones by countless monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen because he venerated them by uttering the twenty-four characters that read: ‘I have profound reverence for you, I would

never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practicing the Bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood ” (WND, p.g., 322).

In summary, there are varieties of concepts that help us understand the ways in which we are interdependent. Having such knowledge may help us to believe or simply have a perspective that we are all connected rather than accepting this idea blindly.

Mindfulness revisited

Awareness, being in the present moment, and a state of acceptance are the three key elements of mindfulness which are achieved by meditative practices and various therapies that incorporate mindfulness. How might Nichiren’s meditative/chanting practice differ and be similar to this mindfulness? For Nichiren Buddhism, the purpose of all of Buddhist theories and teachings start from the meditative/chanting practice. Accepting our negative aspects, attaining enlightenment, seeing all entities are connected, and developing positive personal qualities are largely the result of this meditative practice and our actions towards them. Mindfulness focuses on the inner exploration that fosters awareness and acceptance in the present moment. As opposed to mindfulness meditation, Nichiren’s meditative practice falls into the concentrative meditation where mantra or a particular phrase is repeated while focusing on the Mandala. By chanting a phrase, we can tap into our Buddha nature, enlightened quality, and manifest positive qualities such as compassion and courage.

Practice of chanting

Nichiren Buddhists repeat the mantra Nam-myoho-renge-kyo rhythmically for a few minutes a day to one or more hours a day depending on the practitioners’ preference. The purpose of this practice is to feel better and happier. There are no rules as to how fast or how long the chanting should be. Nichiren

Buddhists believe that by chanting this phrase, we can have access to our Buddha nature or the Self or true potential. We can then bring out strong life force or positive inner qualities, such as joy, compassion, wisdom, confidence, and appreciation. For example, if we are angry about a certain person or bothered by someone, through this chanting one can turn negativities into positive (e.g., anger turning into compassion for the specific person you are bothered by). By bringing out the positive qualities, we may perceive things in a different way. By identifying the reasons why we are bothered by a certain person, we have an opportunity to deal with the part of the self that causes us to dislike something. By overcoming this challenge, we grow and less likely to be bothered by this person.

In practice, we do not really think about the meaning of phrase while we chant. What kind of thoughts or mindsets exists depends on the state and mood of those who are chanting. We may chant according to whatever emotions come up. We may also chant for a specific goal in mind. When we chant, we focus on whatever is the most salient at the time of chanting. If someone is worried about an exam, he should try to set a specific goal (e.g., study 8 hours a day) or transform an intense anxiety. Thus, while chanting we often visualize the ideal goals or engage in self-talk. I may visualize the ideal job situation. I may engage in self-talk, "I will get the job I want." Thus, it is not begging, rather it is making a strong determination to achieve a goal. In one sense, it is the cognitive approach to attitude change. Such strong determination can change our attitudes and behaviour, eventually making our goals a reality if we keep this daily practice. Thus, this is different from mindfulness that encourage acceptance. Nichiren's meditative practice seems to be solution focused and goal oriented.

Meaning of "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo"

Meditative practice among the Nichiren Buddhists is repeating the mantra "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo." Myoho-renge-kyo is the title of Lotus Sutra, which encompasses all other teachings. This phrase means: I devote myself to the Lotus

Sutra. More specifically, I fuse myself to the Mystic Law of cause and effect through vibration or chanting.

Theoretically, Nichiren Buddhism asserts that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is a universal law of life. Nam means give honour to, fuse, or devote oneself to. Myoho means the Mystic Law, which is the essential law of universe and life. Renge means Lotus flower, which symbolises the simultaneity of cause of effect: it gives the flower and seed at the same time. The effect is already there, but often it is latent and not manifested until later on. Kyo means vibration or the voice of Buddha representing the connection among all entities in the universe through sounds and vibrations.

Gohonzon (object of devotion or mandala)

There are various objects of devotion in religion (or in life). For Christians, Jesus on the cross can be the object of worship. Many Buddhists, especially in South East Asia, worship the Buddha statues. Many statues are golden or bronze and huge in size, often seen in temples. Others may worship varieties objects or entities. Some may worship money. For children, a famous cartoon character can be an object of worship. Nichiren did not focus on the Buddha statue. Rather than focusing on the Buddha (i.e., person or figure). He taught that we should focus on the law of life or Buddhist teachings and philosophy. This law that permeates the entire universe and ourselves is nam-myoho-renge kyo. Thus, we need to focus this universal law.

Jung created a few of his own mandalas. Many of them seem to contain different components of the psyche. For example, men and women on the outside may represent the anima and the animus; dark and light colors may represent good and evil; the star in the middle may symbolize the Self or Buddha nature, or Deity; the inner circle represents the unconscious realm, and the outer circle symbolizes the conscious sphere. Jung believed that these polar opposites are necessary in a mandala for harmonizing our psyche. Jung even observed such

effects of mandalas in his patients; “it is a fact that my patient felt a great deal better after the vision of the mandala. If you understand the problem which it has settled for him, you can also understand why he had such a feeling of ‘sublime harmony’” (1938, pg, 112).

In Nichiren’s practice, there is mandala called Gohonzon which is a sheet of paper with words written in Japanese. The size is 8 inches by 16 inches. It is enshrined in the wooden box in people’s homes. In the center of this mandala, nam-myoho-rence-kyo is written vertically followed by Nichiren’s signature or name. Figures or Buddhas are placed on the four corners. Other names of Buddhas that represents ten different life states are written. Figures that symbolized the evil function in our lives are also included. These elements of characters are all inherent within each person. Having different characters that symbolizes aspects of our psyche seems to match Jung’s idea of the mandala. Gohonzon is used to focus while practitioner chants. They focus on the mandala while repeating the mantra of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Symbolism of mandala

Mandala symbolises several things. First, the mandala represents to the practitioners’ inner self. The mandala functions as a mirror of self. In other words, the mandala is a representation of our inner psyche. Thus, Gohonzon is not higher power or God which may exists outside of ourselves. “Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself.” (WND Page 832). Although this mandala is considered as the object of worship, Nichiren Buddhists are not “worshiping” in the sense of external forces or power that can help us. To repeat, this mandala symbolizes life itself. It is Nichiren’s contribution for all people to have a practical tool for our happiness. “Therefore, this Gohonzon shall be called the great mandala never before known; it did not appear until more than 2,220 years after the Buddha's (i.e., Shakyamuni) passing,” (WND Page 832).

Another way to interpret Gohonzon is that it is the expression of Ten Worlds or ten different states/energy levels. Since this mandala is the representation of our inner self, it makes sense to have characters that represent Ten Worlds because Ten Worlds are inherent in our lives. By looking at this mandala we are symbolically reminded that we have negative tendencies that we need to deal with as well as positive qualities that are inherent in our lives.

Gohonzon is, after all, a piece of paper. What makes it meaningful is that we make it meaningful and practical. We can attach many things to a piece of paper such as money or a love letter because we find them meaningful. Nichiren studied intensively and went through a lot of struggle to find the practical tool for people to use. As a result of such struggle, he was joyful and filled with mission in his life. He was the example that how one person can achieve so much and be absolutely happy no matter what condition we might be in. Nichiren inscribed mandala, Gohonzon, in such a high life state reflecting his happiness and joy and hardships in life.

Interpretation of Nichiren's chanting practice

One way to interpret Nichiren's meditation is that Gohonzon/mandala represents the objective reality, and the meditator embody the subjective reality. The act of chanting is the fusion of those two realities (i.e., phenomenal/objective world and subjective world). In other words, through the vibration and voicing, meditator is connecting with the universe. By chanting, I (microcosm) can harmonize with the rhythm of universe (macrocosm). This explains the earlier points about this practice that it can be the integrative meditation where we not only pay attention to the inside of us, but symbolically connect with outside by fusing with universe. Once again it is this phrase of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo that can tap into our Buddha nature and connects with universe. Nichiren asserts, "I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in ink, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart. Buddha's will is the Lotus Sutra, but the soul of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-myoho-enge-kyo." (WND, p.g., 412).

After we chant intensely in front of Gohonzon, we often see colors or hear sounds more clearly than usual. Hochswender (2006) explains that this is probably the result of chanting and fusing with objective reality. Our subjective reality got much closer to the objective reality. (The topic of purifying our five senses is discussed later in this chapter.) Not just colors and sound, we often come to a greater awareness about what seems to be the complex interpersonal dynamic. For example, a husband is in a fight or tension with his wife for a while. After chanting, he may come to a new realization because he sees the situation in a keener and sharper manner. This is the result of fusing with the objective reality. Hochswender emphasizes that solving such complex human interaction is the main purpose of Nichiren's practice and Shakyamuni's effort, which is to eradicate the human suffering.

The above practice allows meditators to keep their eyes open and focus on the mandala instead of a visual focal point. Our mindset or attitudes during chanting are focused on the mandala. Mindfulness practice or meditation focuses on the different sensations or emotions that are experienced and pay attention to. Thus, it accepts and stays with such emotions as they come and go. For concentrative meditation such as chanting, it focuses only on the mandala or objective reality and excludes all other stimuli (in an extreme sense). Mindfulness or meditation allows us to accept and experience things as they are in the present moment. Chanting allows us to concentrate, be energetic, and more objective in daily life. Thus, chanting seems to be concentrating on the sounds and mandala, while meditation is paying attention to whatever happening or feeling at the present moment. The former focuses on the mandala; the latter focuses on the bodily sensations. Mindful meditative practices look inwards with our eyes closed, being mindful of what is happening inside, accept whatever arises. During chanting, in contrast, we visualize what we want to happen in our environment, and then attitude change or inner shift can eventually produce the change in the situation because our environment is the reflection of our inner states. As

Nichiren puts it, “When we revere Myoho-renge-kyo inherent in our own life as the object of devotion, the Buddha nature within us is summoned forth and manifested by our chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (WND, Page 887). This practice is done by focusing on the mandala.

From Nichiren’s standpoint, it is only this specific mantra “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” that can tap into our Buddha nature and manifest positive qualities. Any other words or mantra cannot tap into it. Even if we somehow translate this mantra into English or Sanskrit or any other language, we cannot tap into it. First, this phrase is the essence of universe as it is revealed by Nichiren. It is not his “invention” or “creation.” He simply “revealed” what is the essence of universe and a ways to tap into our enlightened nature by studying many Buddhist texts. Second, this mantra is chanted by Buddhists in an organized religion. My speculation is that if we chant a translated version of this mantra, people may modify the mantra or start to come up with their own version. Yet this mantra is embedded in the Buddhist philosophy and organization that practice it. This specific phrase has a history and meaning to practitioners. Suppose people come up with a phrase that contains a similar meaning, I cannot prove that chanting such phrase cannot have some kind of positive effects. All I can say is that such phrase has, no history, and no people involved, and thus, possibly, less meaning.

Negative tendencies revisited

In this section, I will describe three poisons representing the three lowest worlds of ten worlds and views of desire. I then examine how we may turn our negative karma into positive ones. As Nichiren puts it, “A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality.” (WND, Page 4)

During meditation, we seek the inner world and acquire self-knowledge by looking at a mandala that contains both good and evil. In this mandala, there are Buddhas and Budhisattvas that represent goodness in us, and there are also devilish figures. Such devilish figures are the personification of inner negative tendencies such as helplessness. We are reminded that good and evil are aspects of self and facts of life. If we want to overcome our problems and attain enlightenment or absolute happiness, we have to understand the nature of our positive or negative tendencies. As Nichiren puts it, “Never let life’s hardships disturb you. After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages...[people should] regard both suffering [i.e., darkness] and joy [i.e., goodness] as facts of life” (as cited in Dockett, p.g., 24, 1998). Another aspect of Gohonzon, Mandala is the expression of inner world or universe, containing symbolism of good and bad. Buddhists acknowledge that the evil and the good are inherent in our lives.

Nichiren Buddhism stresses that life is constant battle between Buddha (the positive) and evil (the negative). The purpose of meditation and other Buddhist practices is to win this battle. First, it is necessary to identify what is our devilish nature. Then, once identified, we can deal with it. Let us examine concepts that describe human sufferings and negativities from the Nichiren Buddhism and how it is possible to embrace and transform such dark side of human conditions.

Three poisons

Nichiren’s perspective on negative qualities such as three poisons is unique. Other perspectives I have examined in the previous chapter includes the notion that negative qualities are better to be eliminated because they are the source of human sufferings. However, Nichiren stresses that these negative characteristics are inherent and necessary for us to become compassionate and happy. For example, opposite of jealousy seems to be the compassion. From this perspective, jealousy is inherent human experience and can be embraced or

transformed into positive quality such as compassion. All these three poisons are collectively called “desire.”

Three poisons (anger, greed, stupidity) give rises to human suffering. They are the characteristics of lower three worlds of Ten Worlds. They cause delusion and force us to turn away from activities that create value in our lives. Ikeda (2003) explains three poisons. Anger is hatred that avoids goodness and disrupts the harmony between self and others. Greed is insatiable search for own desire; all energy is poured into the things we desire. Stupidity is lacking the awareness that we all possess positive quality, Buddha nature, and fixating on immediate gain.

Lower worlds as well as all other worlds are inherent in our lives. These qualities cannot really be eliminated because they are inherent in our lives. What we can do is to transform them into positive qualities. We have a battle everyday between positive and negative. For example, addiction is associated with the world of hunger, one of the poison, greed. In one sense, we are all addicted in some degree to something (e.g., TV). We may never eliminate the aspects of us that are addictive or state of deluded desire. But, such tendency can be the fuel for manifesting positive qualities through meditation/chanting practice. Addictive state, or deluded desire, can be transformed into a constructive desire to create value or to do something good.

Only by dealing with these lower worlds can one be compassionate and achieve happiness. In other words, characteristics of lower worlds are necessary for us to manifest higher worlds such as compassion and happiness. “The three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness can become the seeds of Buddhahood, and the five cardinal sins such as the killing of one's father can likewise become the seeds of Buddhahood.” (WND Page 228). This analogy is extreme, but it illustrates the necessity of three poisons. Furthermore, nine worlds, other than the highest world, are necessary for us to be truly happy. In order to further understand the necessity of three poisons in our lives, concept of desire is relevant.

Desire

It is often believed that desire is a delusion and a source of suffering, and that we have to get rid of it. This understanding that Buddhism thinks of having desire as a delusion or a source of suffering is a mistaken one. Nichiren also points out this fact, but goes on to further argue that desire is necessary and can be a fuel for compassion and happiness (concept called “earthly desire equals enlightenment”). Both earthy desire and enlightenment are intrinsic to our lives. As Nichiren puts it, “through burning the firewood of earthly desires, one can manifest the wisdom-fire of enlightenment” (WND, p.g., 710).

Desires are three poisons discussed before: anger, stupidity, or hunger. Accordingly, these lower worlds are inseparable from the enlightened state or compassion (ninth and tenth world). All of these ten worlds or states are inherent in our lives. “Among those who wish to become Buddhas through attempting to eradicate earthly desires and shunning the lower nine worlds, there is not one ordinary person who actually attained enlightenment. This is because Buddhahood cannot exist apart from the lower nine worlds” (WND, p.g., 403). Thus, Nichiren’s view is that there will always be desire. It is just a matter of embracing and transforming on a daily basis. We can never eliminate our desire because it is inherent in our lives, and is the driving force for life. If we have to eliminate our desire, we have to terminate our life. Thus, Nichiren conceptualized desire within the idea of Ten Worlds, and provided a way to transform desire into positive energy.

The key is to use and channel whatever emotions or desires we may have. The more emotions or desires we have, the better it is because we can then turn them into more valuable energies, such as compassion or happiness. For Nichiren Buddhism, it is the chanting of *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* and compassionate action for self and others that allows such transformation. It is the turning our poison into medicine. “Put faith in the Lotus Sutra alone, and chant *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*, will transform the three paths of *earthly desires*, karma,

and suffering into the three virtues of the Dharma body, wisdom, and emancipation.” (WND, p.g., 420).

Fundamental darkness

This concept encompasses and symbolizes all negativities, desires, and poisons. The word “darkness” is used because we often cannot see the tendencies that are repressed and stored in the unconscious. This is similar to Jung’s shadow in this sense. It is sneaky and hard to identify. How we make the unconscious conscious is discussed in the next section. In order to achieve enlightenment, we need to look at our darkness. As I said before, attaining happiness is the battle between the positive and the negative. The fundamental darkness tries to move us away from the path to the enlightenment, making hard for us to believe that we can manifest positive qualities from Buddha nature.

Once again, as three poisons and desires, we cannot eliminate the fundamental darkness, that is an inherent aspect of our lives, but we can embrace it so that positive qualities or life force from the deepest self, Buddha nature, can manifest themselves.

According to the Nichiren’s definition of the term fundamental darkness, it is “interpreted as ignorance of the ultimate Law, or ignorance of the fact that one’s life is essentially a manifestation of that Law, which he identifies as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.” (Soka Gakkai, 2002, p.g., 239). This may seem extreme in the sense that what he is saying is that all the sufferings comes from not knowing that our lives are manifestation of the Law, nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Many of us do not know about this Law. But, leniently speaking, what Nichiren appears to be saying is that we can turn sufferings into joy if we access our true potential, bringing out the positive qualities that already exists within.

Self-responsibility

To understand karma and self-responsibility, we need to briefly discuss Nichiren Buddhist view of life and death which is similar to other schools of Buddhism. The view is that life is eternal in the sense that the cycle of life and death is continuous and repeated. This cycle is similar to the cycle of how we sleep and awake. Even when we go to sleep, we carry on what we did in the past and goes on living the next day. It is also like the waves in the ocean. The waves going up represents life. The waves going down symbolizes death. When we die, we fuse with the universe. What continues is only our karma. When the right moment comes for our karma, we are reborn in this world. Thus, life and death is a cycle that karma continues.

Karma is created each and every moment as a result of what we think, what we say, and what action we take. Who we are at the present moment is the accumulation of the past karma we have created and the present karma that we are creating at each moment. Karma is created through what we speak, think, and do not just in this lifetime but including all past lives. It explains why some are born in a particular situation but not other people. However, in Nichiren Buddhism, karma is not perceived in a fatalistic sense that we have a fate. Rather, it is used in more future oriented fashion wherein how we live this moment can change the future direction of our lives. In other words, if we can work on how we think, behave, and speak, we can create a positive karma and cultivate positive qualities. Saying nasty things to our friend on one occasion may have a deadly effect on our future destiny. Karma depicts a very complex and dynamic model of our lives. Each moment is crucial. This concept is used more in future oriented way; because we make good causes in this moment, we can see the positive effect in the future.

At the APA's 108th Annual Convention, Bankart (2000, Web: SGI-USA) used a Buddhist perspective to explain that seeing our life through a concept of karma allow us to take full responsibility for our psychological health and one's

life in general because karma is about being responsible for who we are at this moment as a result of our behavior in the past. If we can really see that how we behaved in the past made who we are, we may try to behave in this present moment in more positive ways. Another aspect is that whatever happens to us we should not be blaming others. For example, those who are born in an abusive family, often find it hard to make sense of the reason why they are born there. But, “karmic rebirth” tells us that how we behaved in the past, even in a past lives, can influence us to be born in an abusive family. This does not mean that we are blaming children who are born in such environment. Instead, we want to have attitudes that there are unfortunate things, and that we can we change it to make better. The focus is on the present and having a positive impact on our future.

Furthermore, Dockett (1998) argues that the doctrine of karma contains the element of internal locus of control. Belief in the concept of karma can encourage one to take full responsibility in daily actions because the self is constantly constructed based on how we behaved in the past. Although it is easier to believe in the external locus of control and blame the environment for one’s problems, employing an internal locus of control may give one the realization of control over our illnesses or hellish environment. Furthermore, she points out that taking 100% responsibility is one of the main characteristics of being compassionate

Nine consciousnesses

The Buddhist concept of nine consciousnesses is well articulated by Causton (1995) and Ikeda (2003). It postulates that we have five senses that can take in stimuli from the environment (the 1-5th consciousness), which are integrated in the sixth consciousness, and that the seventh consciousness, our thinking mind, is the realm of abstraction and spirituality that allows us to form images, judgments and ideas. When we look at a book, for example, it is the five senses that encode information, the sixth consciousness that recognizes the object

as a book, and the seventh consciousness that enables us to say, “I think that this book is worth reading for me”.

The next deeper layer of consciousness is the eighth, the karmic storehouse. All karma we have created in many lifetimes, personally and collectively, are stored in this layer as a database. It is a karmic storehouse, in which all of our actions, thoughts, and speeches that we have accumulated from many lifetimes are stored, and that it is predominantly shared by our cultural background and even shared by all humanity. This idea is similar to that of Jung’s collective unconscious and personal unconscious. Karmic re-birth, part of eighth layer, seems to be embedded in Nichiren’s idea, which is not something that is included in the Jung’s collective unconscious. The idea that we have certain tendencies to respond in specific ways can be explained by karma that we have accumulated from many of our past lives.

The deepest layer of consciousness is the ninth, also called the Buddha nature or the enlightened state. This layer is pure because it is deeper than karmic storehouse. It is free from our negative tendencies. As I discussed in the Ten Worlds, the highest state of the human condition is the Buddha nature. By tapping into this deepest layer through chanting, we can connect with this layer. This layer corresponds to what Jung called the “Self”.

Awareness and transformation of our tendency, Karma

Nichiren Buddhist view of how change occurs can be explained again with the concept of the ninth consciousnesses. Although Jung used analytic techniques to tap into the unconscious, Nichiren Buddhists would practice meditation or chanting. By chanting, we can tap into our ninth consciousness. As I discussed earlier, during chanting, we can tap into our deepest layer of consciousness or the Buddha nature or the Self. By connecting with the Buddha nature, energy flows from the ninth consciousness towards the eighth and seventh layer and so on into outer reality. Thus, when energy flows, the contents of the karmic storehouse spill

over to our consciousness and five senses. When such contents are brought up to the surface, we come to a new realization about our attitudes, tendencies, and beliefs which might have been unconscious. One analogy can help explain this process. There is a hose that are clogged with dirt, and water is trying to push through this dirt to come out. Water represents the energy that flows. The hose means connection or pipeline from Buddha nature to eighth and into our consciousness. The dirt symbolizes the karma (both positive and negative) we have accumulated. Thus, chanting practice is the act of making the unconscious conscious (i.e., pushing the dirt out of hose so that clear water can come out from now on). Without understanding our true nature or the content of our unconsciousness, tendencies and conditions stored in the karmic storehouse, we cannot achieve happiness. Thus, making unconscious conscious is one of the goals. When especially negative contents emerge from our unconsciousness, there is a tendency to deny and escape from them. When people come to a new realization about themselves, it is necessary to provide support and explanation of this mechanism.

Buddhists use, in my opinion, the term “consciousness” even for the deeper layer which seems to be totally unconscious because they knew theoretically and experientially that they were able to bring the unconscious materials into consciousness. We can connect to the deepest layer, the Buddha nature, but our daily functions operate usually in the conscious mind (i.e., lower than the 7th layer). Nichiren teaches "you should base your mind on the ninth consciousness, and carry out your practice in the six consciousness" (WND, p.g., 458).

From Nichiren’s perspective, suffering comes from ignorance. Suffering occurs when we do not recognize our tendencies and our true nature. According to the Nichiren Buddhist view, since we are influenced by the personal and the collective karma that we have accumulated throughout many lifetimes, not having awareness of our karma and not having dealt with such karma are the roots of suffering. In order to understand the content of karma, our habitual thoughts or

behaviors, Buddhists use meditation and chanting. Thus, by making the unconscious karmic materials conscious, and correcting and dealing with them in our daily lives, we can achieve happiness.

Purifying our senses

The concept of nine consciousnesses explains how our five senses can be purified. By chanting and tapping into the ninth consciousness (i.e., deepest part of self or Buddha nature), it can transform our karma in the eighth consciousness, which then influence even our five senses. Having purified senses; we can pay more attention and concentrate more in daily lives and our surroundings.

The Lotus sutra states: “If good man or women accept and uphold this Lotus Sutra, if they read it, recite it, explain and preach it, or transcribe it, such a person will obtain eight hundred eye benefits, twelve hundred ear benefits, eight hundred nose benefits, twelve hundred tongue benefits, eight hundred body benefits, and twelve hundred mind benefits. With these benefits they will be able to adorn their six organs, making all of them pure” (Ikeda, 2003, p.g., 154).

The above statement is not to be taken literally. Rather, it is about the supreme benefits of working with the Lotus Sutra. By tapping into the ninth level of consciousness, the Buddha nature, it is possible to have keen and sensitive senses. By purifying our senses, we can be more aware of subtle differences of things around us. Purifying senses could possibly improve our eyesight. But more importantly, we will come to be able to use our eyes to notice complex phenomena in the environment and human interactions. We would be a better observer. We may be able to deepen the understanding of all phenomena and the nature of our true potential. Thus, purifying senses also means that we come to “understand” how things are manifested and how much positive qualities we possess.

Summary of Chapter 3

In this chapter, I have revisited interconnectedness, mindfulness, and negativity from the Nichiren's perspective. With regard to interconnectedness, many concepts may help us understand how things are interdependent. Nichiren provided a unique practice of chanting and focusing on mandala. Such practice can be considered as an integrative meditation. Lastly, Nichiren's approach to the negative qualities is interesting; such qualities are inherent in life and necessary for us to be truly compassionate and happy.

Concepts and practices I introduced in this chapter can be summarized well by looking at the Bodhisattiva way. According to Dockett and North-Schult (2003), Bodhisattiva or being compassionate means

- 1) taking 100% responsibility of one's actions in daily life (based on the concept of karma and internal locus of control);
- 2) suffering and obstacles are a natural part of life; they are valuable for one's growth and produce wisdom (dealing with our negativity);
- 3) one should actively try to turn negative experiences into positive ones,
- 4) helping all people to achieve Buddhahood or true happiness, and
- 5) generosity for all people.

These points correspond to what I have discussed in this chapter. From the Nichiren Buddhist perspective, chanting practice can help achieve these compassionate qualities such as caring for all people, taking responsibility, and transforming negativity.

One diagram that may help integrate all Buddhist models I described in this chapter is provided by Oonishi (2002) (Please see the next page). From the Nichiren's perspective each moment of our lives is constantly and dynamically changing, nothing is permanent. In the mental element of this model, we are

constantly changing one life state into another (Ten Worlds) and creating the karma or who we are by our speech, thoughts, and behaviours (nine consciousnesses). Our mind, body, and environment are all interconnected. As Nichiren puts it, “Life at each moment encompasses the body and mind and the self and environment of all sentient beings in the Ten Worlds as well as all insentient beings in the three thousand realms, including plants, sky, earth, and even the minutest particles of dust.” (WND, p.g., 3).

Figure 1: Three thousand realms in a single moment. Diagram that integrates several concepts

		Three thousand = universe		
		Internal element	External element	
	Mental element	Ten worlds	Nine consciousnesses	
		Each moment of our lives are connected to all these elements in universe		
	Physical element	Oneness of Mind and body	Oneness of Self and environment	

Source: Oonishi, 2002

Furthermore, Nichiren helps us to realize that chanting practice can tap into the enlightened nature within ourselves and have an effect on our inner states and external circumstances. By chanting, we can: (1) transform and purify our negative tendencies or karma; (2) turn negative qualities such as greediness into

positive one such as happiness and compassion; and (3) our mind can influence our body and environment.

CHAPTER 4: CLINICAL IMPLICATION

Introduction

In this final chapter, Nichiren's philosophy is applied to counselling. More specifically, through examining different Buddhist concepts, the following is discussed: raising questions about counselling practices in the west, exploring similarities and differences, and developing possible therapeutic tools for therapists and clients. I will explore these topics by situating the Nichiren Buddhist concepts within the conceptual framework of counselling. Thus, I am not trying to come up with "Buddhist therapy" or an ideological school called "Nichiren therapy." I am introducing Nichiren's concepts in order to compliment and compare with western counselling. This chapter explores several topics: addiction, self-awareness, counsellor's attitude, and chanting. These topics lend themselves well for integration with Buddhist concepts. The above topics that I will explore are examples of the possibility to incorporate Nichiren Buddhism into Western counselling practice.

Addiction and cravings

In the west, addiction tends to be seen as a "disease" that needs to be cured. In other words, addiction is often seen as a negative thing like illness that has to be treated and eliminated. As discussed in Chapter 3, from Nichiren Buddhist approach, addiction is the second lowest level of the ten worlds, and it is an inherent aspect of human condition. There is no negative value attached to this second level of the "hunger" world. It is simply a different human condition that is

manifested at a given moment of our lives. In one sense, everyone has addictive aspects, but those who can be labelled as “alcoholics” or “drug addicts” are those who predominantly situate themselves in the world of “Hunger” most of the time.

The predominant life state of people with addiction is situated in the Hunger (greed) level. Therapists may see such clients as something like “addiction with two legs and two arms”. Believing in the concept of the mutual possession of Ten Worlds may allow counsellors to break the cycle of belief that their problems or clients’ problems are hard to change, because the dynamic manifestations of various life conditions in each moment and one’s ability to exert influence on them can provide a new way of thinking. A person with addiction issues may situate himself in the lower level most of the time. But, he may be compassionate to others on some occasions and simply be in a relaxed state at other times. The main point is that mutual possession may help us to see that people’s issues and who they are should be seen differently.

Having knowledge of ten worlds allows clients to be more accepting and mindful about their addictive tendencies. Monitoring which level they belong to in a given moment could be a helpful tool for clients to realize they are not craving 24 hours a day. If clients are taught to monitor where they are at in the Ten Worlds in different instances of the day, they can observe how their addiction is not a fixed condition, but something that come and go like how our emotions come and go. They can see that they are not always in a hanger state of ten worlds. They can realize that they are also experiencing other states, relaxing (the 5th world) or wanting to help others in the 9th world.

Mutual possession of ten worlds posit that all ten levels of condition contain all other worlds within. Thus, we can manifest any of these ten levels in any given moment. The implication is that when counsellors see challenging clients such as people with heavy addiction, they may feel that clients’ issues are hard to change. Such helplessness may influence therapists to perceive their clients’ conditions or illnesses as inescapable. If we hold a view that our life states

are dynamic in the sense that each and every moment we situate ourselves in one of those ten worlds. Such view of life may allow therapists and clients to hold a more optimistic view of the prognosis. In addition, it may allow therapists and clients to be aware of the time clients are not in the hunger states. They can explore what is unique and different about being in states other than the hunger level. Such solution focused questions can open up more possibilities and realize that clients are not always craving.

As discussed before, Nichiren Buddhism conceptualizes that desire or craving is inherent and necessary in our lives and can be transformed into positive qualities such as compassion rather than seeing desire as negative thing that needs to be eliminated. Furthermore, desire or cravings is categorized in the second lowest world of the Ten Worlds. Lower worlds are necessary and inherent in our lives in order for us to manifest higher worlds of enlightened states. Thus, rather than seeing addiction or cravings as “disease” or “issue” that has to be cured or eliminated, such craving can be transformed into something more valuable such as compassion. For Nichiren Buddhists, it is believed that the chanting and Buddhist practice (working for the happiness of others and self) allows such transformation. But for others there might be other ways to “redirect” negative energy (craving) into positive energy. The lower worlds, level of hunger, are natural human tendencies and can be a fuel for manifesting higher states such as compassion. Craving, for example, can be transformed into desire to help others.

How we channel the desire for cravings into something like compassion is an important question. For Nichiren Buddhists, as discussed in the chapter 3, it is the chanting and the Buddhist practice of compassion (i.e., working towards happiness of self and others) that allow our desire/craving to be transformed. How can this be helpful to counsellors and clients? If we borrow the ideas from Buddhists, clients who are suffering from addiction can be encouraged to practice compassion, helping others to be happy. By helping others, they help themselves.

This is consistent with support groups such as AA. Because they help others' suffering, they help themselves in their issues. Another factor that can help channel our cravings from a Buddhist standpoint is chanting. Clients with addiction can use meditative or chanting practices. Such clients may find these practices helpful to redirect their cravings into compassion for others. This discussion is simply providing suggestions based on the Nichiren Buddhist practices. With regard to introducing the "meditative" practices to clients, it has to be done with sensitivity because some people in western countries may find it strange and even nonsensical.

Dudley-Grant (2003) applies the Nichiren Buddhist model to explain addiction, placing it in the world of Hunger (insatiable greed). Any addiction falls into this world. For example, people with alcohol issues are influenced by the craving for drink (external factor), and they may feel powerless to quit. If people with alcohol issue attribute their addiction to external factors (i.e., blaming their circumstances), it is difficult for them to see that at any moment in their lives they can manifest a higher life state. Thus, the notion of the "Ten Worlds" views this kind of suffering as an inability to see the potential for recovery and a tendency to overuse external attribution.

Counsellors can also often have desires and cravings. They may have constant desire to be respected and liked by their clients. Such self-complacency may prevent therapists to grow and may have negative impact on therapy. This negative tendency is characterized as the lower states in the ten worlds (the world of Hunger). Thus, such characteristics can be transformed into something positive. Desire to be liked by clients can be transformed into desire to be better counsellors. "I want to get respect" can be switched to "I want to be better." Self-complacency can be changed into self-improvements. The first task for counsellors is to realize their addictive or craving tendencies. As I discussed in a previous chapter, such negative tendencies are sneaky and difficult to identify. It might be helpful to educate ourselves that all ten levels, including the world of

hunger or craving, are inherent aspect of our lives. Thus, we need to understand that cravings can be sneaky, and that a craving is an inherent fact of our lives. After identifying it, the next step is to transform negative tendency into the positive or higher state. From Nichiren Buddhist perspective, it does not see negative tendencies (self-complacency) as something that need to be eliminated, but it can be transformed into other useful qualities

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is an important value for therapy. Therapists use themselves (what they are feeling and aware) to understand clients. Williams, Hurley, O'brian, & DeGregorio (2003) discuss two types of self-awareness. First, it is conceptualized as "self-knowledge," knowing our goals, tendencies, perceptions, and experiences. Thus, it is the knowledge about one's enduring trait. Second, self-awareness is used as moment by moment awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It is the awareness of transient state of self, immediate awareness rather than past reflection about it.

By focusing on the latter type of self-awareness, Damsteegt & Christoffersen (1982) found that clients, who have high self-awareness, lowered their self-esteem after going through a therapy that increases self-awareness. Such therapy was not effective in inducing positive behavioural changes . Those clients were already keenly aware of what was happening inside of them, asking them to be aware even more is too overwhelming. On the other hand, clients, who have low self-awareness, benefited from such therapy that increases self-awareness; positive behavioural changes and increased self-satisfaction were evident. Thus, the former clients would benefit more from solution focused approach and action-oriented therapy which removes focus from self. The latter clients should be asked more to focus on their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours moment-by-moment in therapy.

For those clients who have low self-awareness may engage in therapy that focuses on the moment by moment inner processes. One thing to keep in mind is that such self-focused questions will increase whatever salient at that time (Scheier, 1976). For example, if a client is angry about something and asked to focus on themselves, such anger would be intensified. Therapists need to be aware of such process.

There are tools that help monitor the levels of self-awareness that are conceptualized as self-knowledge (e.g., private self-consciousness scale). I am not aware of any scale or concrete tools that help clients to increase moment-by-moment self-awareness in therapy sessions. Therapists usually ask, “What are you feeling right now as you shared your story?” or “what are you aware of right now?” Those clients who are not in tune with their own emotions, may find the questions that increase self-awareness difficult or uncomfortable to answer. For example, some clients, especially men, may not be good at paying attention to their emotion. Rather than processing experience through emotions, they may process it through intellectual understanding or rationalizing. It is often hard for men to be emotional because it is not “accepted” in society. Men are often taught to be tough.

What might be more helpful for those clients who have a hard time processing emotions or being more self-aware is first to go over the Ten Worlds scale with their clients. The Ten Worlds scale can be a good starting exercise for clients to get used to self-awareness. After, they are more likely to be able to experience deeper emotional processing (e.g., answering questions such as what might be underneath your anger?). These are the reasons for this hypothesis: First, using the Ten World approach allows them to choose from ten levels instead of describing feelings that are unfamiliar to them. If clients who are low in self-awareness can have choices as to which levels they fall into, this can make easier for them.

Second, all human experiences seem to fall into one level or the other. Are you in a hellish state? Are you feeling truly happy or only experiencing temporary happiness that comes from external factors? Are you intellectualizing the experience without attaching any feelings to it? It would be easy for a client to identify with at least one level to begin with. Being able to choose one level can be a good starting point for further development of self-awareness.

Third, there are no values attach to each of Ten Worlds. All ten levels are inherent aspects of our experiences. They always exist; one world is simply manifested in a given moment while other worlds are latent. We can simply pay attention to where we are and increase our awareness of inner states.

Therapists can make practical use of this scale with their clients. They can educate clients about this scale and familiarize themselves to the point at which they can identify which worlds they fall into in a given moment. This scale is a tool for monitoring overall emotional state of clients rather than focusing on one condition such as fear. Once clients familiarize themselves with the Ten Worlds concept, they may be ready to experience more kinds of specific emotions. Because they familiarized themselves with Ten Worlds idea, they have concrete concepts to hold onto.

First step is to locate where they are in ten worlds (e.g., anger or hell). Then, they are ready for more complex tasks and questions, such as how often and how strong they feel anger, what are associated self-talk goes along with anger, what are behaviours that are seen when they get angry, and any other associated emotions with anger. Thus, ten worlds conceptualization can be a practical tool in the initial stage of therapy where we try to increase clients' self-awareness.

Furthermore, it might be helpful for western counsellors to modify the name "ten worlds." The term "world" may be mis-interpreted as something outside of ourselves. This should be avoided because the whole point of the "ten worlds" conceptualization is to be aware that these different conditions of life

exist *inside*, not *outside* of ourselves. Thus, we can re-name it, for example, “varieties of inner condition” or “ten inner states.” Furthermore, some of the traditional names of the ten levels might need to be modified as well. The ninth world is the Bodhisattva. It can be re-named as “compassion.” The sixth level, rapture, might be labelled as temporary happiness or happiness from outside. The second level, hunger, can be named as “addiction” or “craving.” By changing the names to something familiar for the Western client and modern society, it would be easier to utilize this concept as a therapeutic tool.

Table 2: Ten worlds defined in western terminology

Ten worlds in western terms	
Hell	depression, helplessness, despair
Hunger	cravings, addiction
Animality	desire to control others
Anger	selfish, angry, wanting to be superior
Humanity	relaxation
Heaven	temporary happiness
Learning	desire to learn
Realization	understanding
Bodhisattva	compassion, desire to help others
Buddhahood	enormously joyful, positive energy from within

Counsellor’s attitude

In this section, several topics are discussed: respecting clients, lifelong career as counsellor, and burn out.

Respecting and liking

Counsellors' attitude is an important factor in therapy. In this section, unconditional positive regard and the Nichiren Buddhist view of respect are examined.

According to Rogers (1961), unconditional positive regard is defined as, "care for the client in a non-possessive way... prize the client in a total rather than a conditional way... ongoing positive feeling without reservations, without evaluations (p.g., 62). In his definition, therapists need to have positive feelings towards their clients despite client's negative qualities or behaviours. What constitutes "positive feeling" can be interpreted in many ways. But, for the sake of comparing this concept with the Buddhist "respect." I will interpret positive feeling as liking clients. As therapists want to build trusting relationship with their clients, they will strive to have more interests in clients' lives and try to "like" them.

Nichiren's idea of respect comes from the notion that we all possess true potential or "Buddha nature". This is the most important message from Nichiren and Shakyamuni. To illustrate this point further, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (BND), discussed in Chapter 3, respects all people including those who physically attack him and persecute him. Even toward such people, he granted respect: who they are as a person because they also possessed Buddha nature. Thus, respect equals seeing and believing in the enlightened nature and potential in other people.

Simply having positive feelings or regard does not really allow us to see the potential in others. Unconditional positive regard is "unconditional" that we provide positive feelings and care to another no matter what. This may allow clients to feel being accepted and even respected as who they are. Even in this case, counsellors may not see the potential or enlightened nature in clients. On the other hand, I am not so sure that having respect for their potential can bring the warmth and sense of being supported that a client can gain from therapist's

positive feeling. Thus, it seems that positive feeling and respect benefits clients differently. The deciding issue might be that what suits each therapist's style. For some people, respecting clients fits better; however, others may prefer positive feeling because they can manifest such love and kindness for all clients.

It would be ideal for therapists to both "like" and "respect" their clients. I have argued that to understand & respect or seeing clients' potential is essential. Does this mean that we do not have to like our clients? The answer seems to be yes if we adapt the value of Nichiren and BND. We do not always have to like them. Being able to like is an extra bonus because therapists might be more joyful in sessions. But, even counsellors do not really like their clients, as long as respecting and seeing potential in clients, counsellors are in a good shape. If we hold the idea that counsellors are type of people who can love and like all types of people, it would be a huge burden for them. It seems also impossible to do so even if we try. I am aware that there might be a case where liking clients can facilitate therapists to respect and see the potential. Once therapists can like clients, it might be easier for therapists to respect them. This means that liking itself is not sufficient. Liking can be helpful, but what is necessary is to be able to respect and believe in the potential in clients.

If I can share my personal approach on this issue, valuing the person for who they are and respecting others' Buddha nature fit me personally. If I have to have positive feeling towards all clients, "I like all my clients," it is often difficult for me to have such attitude. I tend to "get long" with some clients more than others. There is no need for me to feel guilty even if I do not have positive feelings such as feelings of "liking" towards some of clients I work with. Whatever the reasons, there are some clients that are difficult for me to "like" or to have positive feelings. But I still "respect" all my clients because I try to believe that all clients possess true potential, Buddha nature. This fits better for me.

Lifelong journey as counsellor

In this section, I would like to discuss: (1) lifelong journey of how Buddha and Buddhists lived their lives can be a model for lifelong development of a counsellor; (2) who we are and how much we have grown as person and as therapists is something that therapists can offer to their clients; and (3) how much we are bothered by others, which indicate our progress in our personal growth.

Buddha's journey to enlightenment can teach counsellors. Cohen & Bai (2008) discuss the Buddhist implications to counselling and provide an illustration of how journey of Buddha's enlightenment can be a good model for counsellor's lifelong learning process.

“To the degree that we, the companions, can sit in the midst of the raging fire of life, and engage in our process of becoming enlightened, to that degree can we provide service to the suffering persons who come to us for aid. And each and every time we can practice, however difficult, sitting with our clients in the midst of the pain that accompanies them as they enter our office, we potentially become a little more enlightened.”

Thus, they stress that day by day diligent practice of mindful listening, and being present with clients' suffering is an important element for counsellors' growth as person.

In a similar manner, how Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (BND) lived his life can also be a good model for counsellors' lifelong journey. All his life, BND continued to respect all people he met. He was even bowing to those who throw stone at him because he believed that each and every person has potential to be Buddha. He held everyone in respected and taught others that we all possessed the Buddha nature and could be truly happy. Such a life long journey of struggles by BND can be applicable to counsellors symbolically.

I will illustrate a few parallels between life of counsellors and of BND. First, therapists continue to practice seeing each client day by day. There are times when counselling can be challenging whatever reasons (criticism from clients,

lack of confidence, burnout, and loss of motivation). But, therapists, to their best of their ability, and try to wisely deal with their clients. This symbolizes how BND persevered wisely in spite of abuse by others. He survived through abuse because he was determined to accomplish his mission (i.e., all people to realize their potential within). Second, counselling as occupation can often be rewarding at the same time overwhelming. It is challenging to continue to be diligently listening to the story of someone else's suffering day by day and year after year. This resembles the practice of BND who continued to listen and believed others' enlightened nature throughout his life. This was his mission and purpose of life.

Third, I speculate that it was attitude of "respect" that BND had for all people's Buddha nature that allowed him to overcome struggles and diligently continue his journey. If counsellors can also "respect" clients' such true potential for happiness and healing, then counsellors are in a much better place to diligently continue their lifelong journey of accompanying someone's suffering. By doing so in a diligent manner, therapists can grow as person.

Our personal growth as human being is an essential in influence on our clients. From Buddhist standpoint, therapists' speech, thoughts, and deeds in each and every moment of their lives accumulate and influence who they become in the future. I am not suggesting that therapists need to be careful about what they think or say in every moment of our lives. This can be exhausting. Based on the idea of karma, we can suggest counsellors' lives outside of therapy rooms should also be given attention. If therapists can be mindful, genuine, and compassionate outside of therapy room, they are more likely to manifest such quality in therapy sessions because mindful practice requires daily efforts and diligence. Simply trying to be mindful only during sessions is necessary, but not sufficient for counsellors to be master mindfulness. If therapists spend time doing non-compassionate things such as hurting others or taking advantage of people, such habits (i.e., karma) will become part of who they are and eventually manifest

in therapy sessions. Counselling skills can be empathic and supportive, but bad habits can also influence who they are as counsellors.

The next challenge is to monitor their progress and growth. One possible way to do this is by looking at how much we feel comfortable or bothered by other people. The fact that therapists feel uncomfortable about a specific client can be an opportunity for the therapist to explore who he or she really is. There must be reasons why one feels uncomfortable. While practicing Nichiren Buddhism, I was often told by other experienced Buddhist practitioners that whenever I feel bothered by or felt uncomfortable towards someone or something, it has meanings. In such cases, Buddhist friends suggested that chanting practice will give me clues about what it is that I am bothered by. If I am bothered by someone, I am not seeing the potential in him/her. Potential means their Buddha nature and worthiness of being human. Second, if I am bothered by someone, I can work on the aspects of myself that are related to this person.

How much and what type of person we are bothered by can be a barometer /information for us to monitor our progress of personal growth. If therapists feel uncomfortable or bothered by many people, it gives them a better idea of how much growth is still necessary. If therapists are not so bothered by anybody, it is a good indication that such therapists can comfortably work with different clients.

Burn out

From the existential perspective (Pines, 1993), one of the causes of burn out is related to the need to for people do for work which is meaningful. When counsellors feel that they are not making positive changes in lives of clients, they might feel hopeless which could eventually lead to burnout. Many people in west, including therapists, find meaning in their work. Figley (1995) explains that burnout can be a slow process of emotional exhaustion which influence people to manifest depression, depersonalization, and substance abuse. In contrast, secondary traumatic stress, seen in therapists who work with clients with trauma,

can often be quicker in the sense that specific incidents or sessions can cause therapists to feel stress and manifesting similar symptom as PTSD.

I would like to discuss burn out as a slow process of emotional exhaustion. As I discussed earlier in this section, BND had a sense of mission and meaning in what he did all his life. If the reason for burnout is the lack of meaning, therapists should be encouraged not only to find the meaning in what they do, but also need to be reminded on a daily basis about why they are doing the counselling work. Even when therapists feel the sense of hopelessness for not making any difference in their clients lives, they can remind themselves about their mission as counsellor. The model of BND's lifelong struggle in the previous section, such discussion applies to the issue of burn out. If counsellors perceive their lifelong career as similar to the process of enlightenment, they are much better shape in terms of burn out. Such developmental work for counsellors can be helpful in preventing burn out.

Another way to tackle burnout issue is to visit the "ten worlds." In the concept of Ten Worlds, the ninth (compassion) and tenth levels (true joy) are closely connected. More specifically, if we are feeling compassion and taking such actions, we are more likely to feel joyful. The possible implication for counselling is that if they are truly compassionate to their clients, they are more like to get joy out of therapy. Thus, they are less likely to be burnt out from their jobs. Based on this model, it is important to ask ourselves, "Am I feeling compassionate to my clients?" Such reminder may prevent therapists to feel sympathy or indifferent to their clients. If counsellors are losing meaning in what they do or burning out, such question to remind themselves can be useful. If therapists are truly compassionate and caring their clients, joy and happiness should follow after each day of counselling. One exception is that if counsellors are over workied (e.g., 12 hours of counselling daily), it is natural for in such cases to feel burnt out because of mere physical fatigue. Thus, Ten Worlds model gives us an idea that therapists

should feel joy out of what they do. If not, compassion can be the key factor that counsellors need to look at and ask “am I empathic to my clients?”

Nichiren also suggested that cultivating compassion leads to greater wisdom. Through compassion, we are able to be more sensitive to how we want to help others and how we take care of ourselves. We need to balance between how much we take care of ourselves and how much we do for others. From a Buddhist standpoint, taking care of self and others are connected. Because we help others, we help ourselves. When we bring out our compassion and reach out and think about others, we can bring out the strong life energy, motivation, and joy. Such energy helps us realize that we know how we should go about helping others and how we take care of ourselves. The point here is that cultivating compassion leads to energy boost which gives us a better understanding of how we can take care of ourselves and others.

Chanting practices

Having explored several topics of implications for counsellors, I will now lastly examine the implications of chanting. The chanting practice might be too “religious” for some people. It is not my goal to encourage people to impose this practice. Rather, I would like to explore some of the elements that are essential in this practice. Self-talk and chanting will be compared. Self-talk can be thought of as one aspect of chanting, however, it does not represent the whole experience. I will then examine whether such compartmentalization loses the effectiveness of chanting and the point of applying it to the counselling.

The practice of cognitive restructuring (Michenbaum, 1972) identifies irrational or negative self-talk and replaces with positive ones. Habitual/negative thoughts are replaced by rational thoughts. Negative self-talk maintains mental illness or problems clients have.

Chanting practice has an element of self-talk. During chanting the phrase “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo,” we are not just repeating this phrase. We are actively engaging in our self-talk, saying positive things to ourselves. One of the purposes of chanting is to battle negative thoughts with positive thoughts. For example, a person might not be so confident about upcoming exam and telling himself repeatedly, “I will fail.” Prior to chanting, meditator usually thinks about what he wants to achieve or change and come up with the positive self-talk, “I am going to work hard,” or “I will pass the test.” By doing so, meditators can rise above their negativities. That is, anxiety for exam is there, but repeated positive self-talk during chanting allows them to go beyond anxiety or negative tendencies. Thus, daily chanting practice gives a chance to engage in positive self-talk.

It is assumed that a person will come up with an appropriate positive self-talk. Clients who are suffering might have a difficult time to come up with appropriate positive self-talk. If this is the case, those who cannot identify an appropriate positive self-talk should not be encouraged to do practice such as chanting. Chanting practice likely intensify the content of self-talk. For example, if a person truly believes that he or she does not deserve happiness, such a person will intensify this negative belief and self-talk through chanting. Thus, it is important not to engage in chanting if a person cannot come up with an appropriate positive self-talk.

The implication for therapy is that therapist should discourage clients from engaging in a practice that repeats their negative self-talk. Such practice can be chanting or meditative practice that repeats self-talk. Furthermore, if a client has a tendency to repeat their negative self-talk, therapists need to help the clients to reduce their self-talk. It is necessary for the therapist to monitor clients’ habitual thoughts and check to see if they engage in any meditation or chanting of some sorts.

Ladner (2004) offers an alternative approach but contain some element of chanting and self-talk. His “self-talk” practice suggests that we want to repeat

telling ourselves, “May I be free from suffering.” Then, tell ourselves that “May they be free from suffering.” They refer to people who are close in the beginning. Later close people can be replaced with stranger and those who we hate, and eventually all humanity. It starts from the self and extends to others and all people. By doing this activity, we can bring out our compassion from within and extends to others imagining that our compassion or energy is permeating others. Such self-talk practice can be used by therapists through repeating, “I will work with this difficult client.” Even the practice suggested by Ladner should be given attention to who is engaging in such practice. Those who engage have to be someone who can come up with an appropriate positive self-talk.

Is chanting useful after all?

Although I tried to see connections between self-talk and chanting, it seems difficult to find the useful implications for therapy. These are some of my conclusions after exploring this topic. First, I have come to believe that chanting can be effective in bringing people to be neutral and objective in looking at situation. Another thing I found some evidence for is that chanting has an element of “rhythmical repetition.” I explored how repeating different words can have different effect. Overall, I did not find any of these above topics useful for implications for counselling. Thus, I did not include in this section. However, it was worth putting an effort to find implications of chanting because by doing so I was able to realize that chanting is the “established” practice and thus cannot be modified or applied to something else easily.

I also wondered if by compartmentalizing/decontextualizing the practice of chanting it loses its effect. I was left with the question, “Is chanting practice effective to bring out joy and courage because of its *whole* experience. The chanting practice is not just positive self-talk. It is not just repeating phrase over and over. It is not merely being objective or neutral in looking at the situation. It has a spiritual aspect and a philosophy that underlying such practice.

In conclusion, I felt it was useful to examine “concepts” of Nichiren Buddhism such as the ten worlds. On the other hand, it was not useful to explore some of the “practices” of it. It seems that concepts can be modified and “cut in pieces,” and apply to other things. When it comes to the “practice” such as chanting, it cannot be compartmentalized or apply to other theories/practices. By doing so, it may lose the fundamental purpose and effects. In the West, mindful “practice,” as I discussed in Chapter 2, is applied to counselling practices. I wonder if we missed underlying culture, Zen philosophy, and Eastern beliefs all together when we brought and applied “mindfulness” to the Western counselling. Mindfulness is “being present and accepting in the present moment.” Is this too simplistic and even “missing the point” for us to integrate into, for example, the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy? Is being mindful about our emotions what Zen Buddhists or even Shakyamuni wanted to teach about mindfulness?

I mentioned that it is difficult to compartmentalize chanting practices. There is a need to look at the practice as a whole. Chanting itself is a part of Nichiren Buddhist practices that encourage studying Buddhist philosophy and taking action in our daily lives. Chanting is embedded in the philosophy and came out of it. In other words, chanting, studying Nichiren’s philosophy and culture, and actions in our daily lives come together in one package. From Nichiren Buddhist perspective, all three (faith, practice, study) are necessary for us to achieve enlightenment and be happy. From my personal experience and many others I talked to, chanting gives us joy, confidence, appreciation, and wisdom that allow us to rise above negative feelings. But, this chanting comes with studying Buddhist philosophy and our daily actions towards happiness of self and others.

Theoretically analysing the chanting and looking at its implications for counselling were challenging. Next I will introduce some of the empirical studies on chanting. Chanting would fall into the category of concentrative meditation. Travis, Olson, Egenes, and Gupta (2001) examined the physiological changes in

concentrative meditation. They found that when students were reading the Sanskrit Sutras that they do not really understand the meaning (i.e., similar to the process of concentrative meditation) their physiological pattern was different from when they are reading something in modern discourse. More specifically, when reading the Sanskrit words, increased and coherent alpha waves, associated with relaxation, were evident compared to the modern language. It seems to indicate that reading Sanskrit words involve more than phonological processes. Although this study does not seem to be relevant to psychotherapy, it is beneficial to know that there is a tool (meditation) that counsellors may use to increase their own or clients' alpha states.

Another study by Smith, Compton, & West (1995) showed that a normal population, students, who participated in the concentrative program (3 times a week of meditation), scored high in the Happiness Measure Inventory, and enhanced their low score on the Anxiety Inventory. Thus, simple concentrative meditation 3-sessions a week was powerful enough to enhance students' general well-being and to decrease their negative mood. Although this was done with a normal population, it may still be applicable to the clinical sample who want to increase well-being and decrease their negative mood.

These studies above were useful for providing evidence that concentrative meditation does have number of effects such as relaxation and positive mood. Furthermore, there are researchers (sociologists) studied practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism. Wilson & Dobbelaere (1994) wrote a book "Time to chant." They studied the group called an international lay Buddhist organization (Soka Gakkai International) in UK. 1000 members were given questionnaires (over 60 % replied). Over 30 members were interviewed in depth. They studied the core philosophy, the structure, the demographics, how members encounter this Buddhism, and how their lives been changed. One of the chapters is devoted to what chanting has achieved. Thus, this study is based on subjective reports of Nichiren Buddhist practitioners.

What these researchers concluded was that chanting achieved both tangible (money, job) and intangible goals (inner positive qualities). 55% of members in this study said that they achieved their goals by chanting in a direct way (e.g., chant for the job and got the job). 93% of members reported that what they are chanting for achieved in an indirect way (e.g., chant for a new job, but they start to find a joy in a current job). These authors pointed out that chanting does not always achieve what practitioners exactly desired in the beginning. However, they are satisfied with outcome because they chanted, took action about it, and come to realize a new perspective. Furthermore, it was reported that members felt healthier and improved their relationships with others. Other inner qualities were also reported; self-confidence, self-control, ability to face problems, self-respect, etc.

This study was not designed to prove empirically that chanting can produce specific effects. However, it was useful to explore how members' reports were described and put into perspective. Furthermore, it is not just chanting that members were engaging. They are also applying Buddhist philosophy to their lives. As many elements consist of chanting, Buddhist practice consists of many things. Chanting is only one practice that members do. Chanting is a fundamental part of the Buddhist practice, but chanting itself is not sufficient. Without guiding philosophy and applying to our daily lives, we will not achieve anything. Thus, this study was only useful to know the practitioners were subjectively feeling that chanting practice helps their lives in a positive way.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at possible implications for counselling practices. In retrospect, I see that many of implications are tailored to the personal growth of therapists. Nichiren Buddhism appears to be generally useful for how counsellors go about growing as counsellors. I also noticed the concept of ten worlds is interesting to compliment western understanding of emotions and

traits. Examining the implications of chanting was interesting. I found out how difficult it is to breakdown the chanting practices. Thus, the Buddhist “concepts” (ten worlds) seem to be easier to apply to counselling than “practice” such as chanting.

An important limitation of this chapter is that it is based on my speculations about applying the Buddhist concepts to counselling. Another doubt or question about this chapter is that I compartmentalized the Buddhist practice into its different concepts. At the end I am left wondering if Buddhist practice comes as “one package”; thus the whole of the experience of practicing Buddhism cannot be broken down. It might be more beneficial and practical tool for us to be happy if we purely practice “as it is”. The process of modification and implication may lose the “original effect and strength” But, it is also possible that by applying and modifying may even produce greater and different effects than the original. I am aware that we cannot bring Nichiren’s philosophy as it is in the east to the west. Thus, modifying and applying it to meet the needs of the West would be the best and only way.

I hope that this chapter challenges therapists to wonder and question: Are we constantly striving to be a better person? Are we paying attention to our desires and negative tendencies? Are we taking responsibility in our actions, speeches, and thoughts? Are we respecting our clients and their true potential? Are we becoming therapists who are not bothered by different clients? To get some hints about these questions, counsellors may want to learn from the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism.

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