



**BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS-BASED PRACTICE ON DEPRESSION  
AMONG PEOPLE IN MODERN SOCIETY**

**BACH THI BICH HANH**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

C.E. 2022



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The Graduate School of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has approved this thesis entitled “Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society” submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.



(Phramaha Somboon Vuḍḍhikaro, Assoc. Prof. Dr.)

Dean of Graduate School

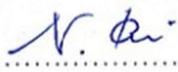
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### **Abstract**

This thesis entitled “Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society”, which has three objectives as follows: (1) To examine the problematic situations and causes leading to depression of people, (2) To study the concept and practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism, and (3) To apply Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression of people in modern society. This thesis is a qualitative research by using primary documents, research reports on depression, and in-depth interviews.

The findings found that depression is a commonly worldwide mental disorder relating to negative feelings, painful sensations, inappropriate thoughts, and wrong behaviors. It is the state of the unbalanced mind coming from wrong views, which results in turning away, unaccepting, being incapable of seeing the true nature of all phenomena as they are, and finally having a period of living full of suffering. Mindfulness is the awakened state of mind toward experiences in the present moment providing an objective and correct view. The Buddhist mindfulness practice is the best remedy as a natural antidepressant for managing depression of people in modern society

according to the general principle of CARE technique. The presence of mindfulness in this technique brings out the development of concentration (C), awareness (A), right understanding (R), and empathy (E) that helps one calm, easily accept everything, gain wisdom, increase more self-confidence, compassion for oneself and others for preventing relapse and recurrence of depression, and get a truly happy life.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani who gave me advice and motivation to complete this topic.

Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to my teacher, Dr. Pintong Chatnarat, for her kindness, comments and suggestions which are useful for my research. Her guide helped me all the time to research and writing this research.

Finally, I have to express my deep gratitude to all the masters, my teachers, my beloved parents, my sisters and good friends who have supported me and encouraged me throughout my academic years, and during the time I study and write this work. This achievement will not be possible without their help.

I would like to dedicate this work to the Buddha, to my revered Masters, my respected teachers, my good friends, my loved ones. May they always live in the light of Dhamma. May the world be peaceful, and all beings are happy.

Bach Thi Bich Hanh  
6 September 2022

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## List of Symbols and Abbreviations

The abbreviations are used in thesis for reference:

### 1. The Description of Abbreviations

In this research paper, the researcher has referred various sources of data both primary and secondary from Pāli Canon (*Tipiṭaka*), Commentaries (*Atthakathās*). The system of abbreviations will be systematized as follows:

The Pāli Canon, using the Pāli texts series edited in Roman by the Pāli Text Society (PTS). Its forms are to be quoted firstly an abbreviation of the scripture, then followed by volume and page number (s) respectively, e.g., A II 52 refers to *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, volume II, page 52; M III 203 refers to ‘volume, page 203.

#### A. Abbreviations for the Original Texts

|        |                            |
|--------|----------------------------|
| A      | Āṅguttara Nikāya (5 vols.) |
| D      | Dīgha Nikāya (3 vols.)     |
| Dhp    | Dhammapada                 |
| M      | Majjhima Nikāya (3 vols.)  |
| S      | Samyutta Nikāya (5 vols.)  |
| Sn     | Suttanipāta                |
| Trans. | Translated by              |
| Thī    | Therīgāthā                 |

#### B. Other Abbreviations

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| BPS       | Buddhist Publication Society   |
| B.E       | Buddhist Era (appears “before” the date)                             |
| C.E       | Common Era (appears “after the date)                                 |
| Ed./(Eds) | Edited by/ Editor(s)   |
| e.g       | exempli gratia/ for example  |
| Ibid.     | Ibiden/ in the same book or place which has been “cited just before” |
| Loc. cit. | Loco Citato/ as referred (in the place cited)                        |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Op.Cit.  | Opera Citato/ as referred (to the prior reference<br>by the same author) |
| p./pp.   | Page/pages   |
| par      | paragraph  |
| PTS      | The Pali Text Society  |
| Sk       | Sanskrit   |
| Tr./trs. | Translated by/ Translator(s)   |
| UK       | United Kingdom   |
| Vol      | Volume   |

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Significance of the Problems

Emotions are necessary for our personal development, survival, and thriving as human beings. They save lives, motivate behavior, and help us form relationships. Balanced emotions are essential for effective communication and the welfare as well as wellbeing of our families and communities. In general, our psychological tendency is to find a solution to escape from suffering by looking for pleasure in countless lives. We have a tendency to tie up our feelings with the measure of success and happiness. Such a tendency to think and the fast pace of life make us cut off or ignore our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that could complete their natural lifespan. We are constantly demanding new and more constant stimuli. The rapid, rushing effects of sensory impressions dull our sensitivity. So we are always necessary of new stimulation, louder, and more varied. A fleeting emotion, a certain indulgence, a sudden whim can become a habit if it is repeated over and over again. It becomes an uncontrollable desire and eventually becomes an automatic action that we can't control. The uncontrolled habit grows into a compulsion. Such a process, if it isn't unchecked, will only bring disaster.

“Shallow mental breath” is the main culprit for the growing superficiality and shallowness of “civilized man”, and for the frightening spread of mental disorders in modern society.<sup>1</sup> As the old Buddhist teachers have said: “Negligence produces a lot of dirt. As in a house, so in the mind, only a very little dirt collects in a day or two, but if it goes on for many years, it will grow into a vast heap of refuse.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the daily little negligence in thoughts, words and deeds is chiefly responsible for the untidiness and confusion we find in our minds. This negligence creates the trouble and allows it to continue. For example, depressed emotions gradually appear more every

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<sup>1</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Power of Mindfulness*, (Sri Lanka: Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc, 2001), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

day but we think that this is normal. We all unintentionally have not recognized or avoided, suppressed, ignored them. Finally, emotions can be unbalanced, dysfunctional, painful, and destructive. Especially, the angry feeling could escalate to aggression, violence, and hostility and contains self-hatred which ensues depression.

According to modern science, depression—literally, the state of being pushed down—is commonly used to refer to emotional states of sadness, despair, numbness/ emptiness /deadness/ hopelessness, and related “down” or “blue” moods that often involve a depletion of normal levels of energy, interest, mental focus, pleasure, social engagement, and appetite.<sup>3</sup> It can happen with anyone no difference age, gender or social in any period in their life. Depression is one of the most prevalent worldwide mental illnesses, has become a dangerous development, which affects society at individual and family levels as well as in organized groups such as security forces and various guilds. This illness eats into productivity, efficiency and happiness in life.<sup>4</sup> It becomes a serious alarm sign of health issues. In 2007, World Health Day – on 7 April – is the highlight of a one-year campaign run by World Health Organization entitled: “Depression: let’s talk”.<sup>5</sup> Hence, healing depression is a very essential problem nowadays. But in many countries around the world, there are a limited number of health professionals available or trained to provide effective treatments.

Negative emotion is a natural mind-state, an inherent part of being human. It is neither realistic nor desirable to imagine that we can or should get rid of it. Resistance is an expression of unpleasant feelings to loss or changes’ life, which is similar to the meaning of the term “*dukkha*” in Pāli or in Sanskrit is “suffering” or “unsatisfactoriness”.<sup>6</sup> Buddhist teacher Shinzen Young also said: “Pain comes and goes in life. But that is not yet suffering. Suffering is the product of the pain and our resistance to it”.<sup>7</sup> Herein, depression is to cluster depressive feelings and therefore

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<sup>3</sup> Jerome C. Wakefield, “Definition of Depression”, *The International Encyclopedia of Depression*, ed., Rick E. Ingram (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2009): 205.

<sup>4</sup> H.S.S. Nissanka, *Buddhist Psychotherapy*, (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 2009), p. 167.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization, *Let’s talk about depression during emergencies*, on online, <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-05-2017-let-s-talk-about-depression-during-emergencies> (accessed March 8, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, (America: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 270.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Bien, *Mindful Therapy*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, Inc., 2006), p. 87.

known as “*dukkha*” mentioned in the First Noble Truth (*dukkha-ariyasacca*). In Buddhist psychology, it is asserted that ‘the mind is the forerunner of all things’. When the mind is shaped by depression, depression becomes the forerunner of all things, including one’s self-image, perceptions and behaviours.<sup>8</sup> This implies that the manifestation of mental defilements in the mind of an individual is the basic criterion to determine the existence of depression. Human mind is the main concern of Buddhism, the teachings of the Buddha basically deal with mental problems to lead to the end of suffering, to peace. In his first teaching, the Buddha compares the stages of freeing the mind to recovery from an illness: “if we don’t first recognize that we are ill, we won’t seek help. And if we don’t know the origin of our illness, we cannot choose the most effective therapy”.<sup>9</sup> Firstly, the researcher wants to examine the nature and effects of depression as well as factors that lead to depression according to the Buddhist viewpoint. Besides, exploring modern science’s study of depression to find mutual support relationship of two aspects.

When our body is unhealthy, sick or painful, we know there are toxins in our body. In order to remain healthy, our body works to expel the toxins. Our mind is too in a defiled state; it needs to be purified. Our mind almost is not trained, we will see everywhere a tangled mass of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and casual bodily movements showing a disorderliness and confusion which we would certainly not tolerate in our living-room.<sup>10</sup> The untidy corners of the mind attack us unawares, and much too often succeed in defeating us. That twilight world peopled by frustrated desires and suppressed resentments, by vacillations, whims and many other shadowy figures, forms a background from which upsurging passions – greed and lust, hatred and anger – may derive powerful, support. Besides, the obscure and obscuring nature of that twilight region is the very element and mother-soil of the third and strongest of the three roots of evil (*akusala mūla*), ignorance or delusion. Usually we try to ignore it and to rely on the counteracting energies of our surface mind. But the only safe

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<sup>8</sup> Christina Feldman and Willem Kuyken, “Compassion in the Landscape of Suffering”, *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (May 2011): 152.

<sup>9</sup> Gesha Tashi Tsering, *Buddhist Psychology*, (America: Wisdom Publication, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Power of Mindfulness*, Op.Cit, p. 1.

remedy is to face it – with mindfulness.<sup>11</sup> Because mindfulness is the unfailing master key for knowing the mind; the perfect tool for shaping the mind; the lofty manifestation of the achieved freedom of the mind.<sup>12</sup> Mindfulness involves the non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Mindfulness and practicing of mindfulness can also decrease negative thoughts that intrude upon a leader's mind.<sup>13</sup>

The research has shown that *Sati* (mindfulness) leads to a better quality of life through feeling better and having less emotional distress. *Sati* plays a central role in the teachings of Buddhist meditation where it is affirmed that "correct" or "right" mindfulness is the critical factor in the path to liberation and subsequent enlightenment. *Sati* is unique to Buddhism and it is spread to every religion and philosophy. It is the Buddhist code of mental and physical conduct leads to the end of suffering. Secondly, in order to understand the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, the researcher must examine the meaning and significance of the Buddhist term *sati* as well as its practice method. Its practice is mentioned clearly in *suttanta Piṭaka*. The Buddha describes practicing method of mindfulness: mindfulness as mindfulness of the body in the body, mindfulness of the feelings in the feelings, mindfulness of the mind in the mind, mindfulness of the *dhamma* in the *dhammas*.

Lastly, the researcher would like to provide applications of mindfulness to manage depression. Depression seems to be a universal experience, a period of unhappy withdrawal, an uncomfortable hibernation where the person comes to realize that something has gone wrong with his life and that something needs to be put right.<sup>14</sup> It is also the time when people got depression to begin to be aware of persistent blue feelings are present within them and wish to be treated. The popular feature of depression is despair. Confidence is the opposite of despair, being hope for ill people because they believe that there is a method to cure their disease. Mindfulness supports to increase faith strength of every individual because of its practice. Mindfulness (*sati*) is mostly linked with clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) of the right purpose of an action, and

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<sup>11</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society Kandy, 2005), pp. 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> Srinivasan S. Pillay, *Your Brain and Business*, (America: Pearson Education, Inc., 2011), p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Rowe, *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (England: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2003), p. viii.

other considerations. Therefore, the potential power of mindfulness is called ‘bare attention’. It is “bare” because it attends to the bare facts of a perception without reacting them by deed, speech, or mental comment.<sup>15</sup> Then we can understand the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and inside us, at the successive moments of perception. Practicing in this way is an antidote to the mistaken effort to deny one’s emotions and other aspects of one’s experience. More accurately, mindfulness is entering fully into each experience, knowing that this experience is precisely what it is and neither more nor less, knowing that it is impermanent. Knowing suffering comes within, depressed people will gradually let go and not clinging to negativities. The presence of mind is here and now being the basis to build a mindful lifestyle in daily life, a wholesome lifestyle. Understanding everything always changes, the cause of suffering derives from within, the seed of love will begin to appear. Loving-kindness is known as *adosa* which is also reflected as goodwill for its nature of kindness and helpfulness.<sup>16</sup> It is opposed to ill will for depressed people.

Based on these above issue the researcher found that Buddha’s teaching along the power of mindfulness is the most effective remedy to heal all illnesses, wash and clean the mind, transform suffering and create happiness. Thus the researcher chose this research work title as follows: “Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society.”

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems Desired to Know**

- 1.2.1 What are the problematic situations and causes leading to depression of people?
- 1.2.2 What is mindfulness in Buddhism? How is its practice?
- 1.2.3 How is Buddhist mindfulness practice applied for managing depression?

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<sup>15</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, Op.Cit, p. vii.

<sup>16</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Myanmar: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 2015), p. 77.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research**

- 1.3.1 To examine the problematic situations and causes leading to depression of people.
- 1.3.2 To study the concept and practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism.
- 1.3.3 To apply Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression of people in modern society.

### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The scope of the research can be divided into the following three dimensions:

#### **1.4.1 Scope of Sources of Data**

The researcher focuses on studying the primitive teachings on Mindfulness that appeared in the primary source of *Tipiṭaka*, the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries, by using the *Pāli* Text Society's English translations series. As well as the secondary source of Buddhist textbooks, and journals respectively, together with the later interpretation from modern scholars, research reports application mindfulness based on therapy for depression also be cited respectively.

#### **1.4.2 Scope of Contents**

This research focuses on “Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society” the first, the researcher would like to examine the problematic situations and causes leading to depression of people and following namely: (1) definition of depression according to modern science and Buddhist perspective, (2) the problematic situations of depression, (3) causes leading to depression, (4) influences of depression, and (5) method in managing depression.

The second, the researcher would like to study the concept and practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism, focuses on the following points: (1) the meaning of mindfulness, (2) the role of mindfulness, (3) the practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism, and (4) benefits of cultivating mindfulness.

The last, when applying Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression, the work will be focused on the following extents: (1) the general principle

of CARE technique and (2) the general principle of CARE technique to manage depression.

### **1.4.3 Scope of Population**

The population appeared in this research denotes a group of Key informants who will be interviewed in order to obtain the most flesh and new data and information. A population comprising of the following individuals:

1. Venerable Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr. International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phanakorn Si Ayutthaya, Thailand.
2. Venerable Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr. Chairman of the Sangkha Meditation Centre, Sangkha District, Surin Province, Thailand.
3. Venerable Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr. Vipassana Master in Wat Daen Sa-ngob Asabharam, Muaeng, Nakhon, Ratchasima Province, Thailand.

## **1.5 Definition of the Terms Used in the Research**

In this research has terminologies related to the study. Thus, in order to benefit the study, definitions are defined as follows:

**1.5.1 Problematic Situation** refers to a depressing matter or situation regarded as feelings of severe despondency and dejection, loss of interest, typically also with feelings of inadequacy and guilt, often accompanied by lack of energy and disturbance of appetite and sleep.

**1.5.2 Cause** means the origin for an action, phenomenon, or condition leads to depression.

**1.5.3 Depression** is known as major depression or major depressive disorder, clinical depression, or unipolar depression. Major depression means a mental disorder characterized by at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood most of the day, sometimes particularly in the morning, or (2) loss of pleasure or interest in normal activities and relationships, and four (or more) of other symptoms. These symptoms are present every day for at least two weeks. Major depression is often with other symptoms such as weight, disturbed sleep, noticeably agitation or retardation, fatigue or loss of energy feelings of guilt or despair, difficulties in concentration or the ability to think,

and suicidal thoughts. It is a serious mental illness that affects how people feel, think, and behave. The exact causes of major depression are unknown. It does not result from a single event, but from a mix of events and factors. Some risk factors include a family history of depression, and significant life events such as trauma, times of high stress, loss of a job or relationship, or the death of a loved one. Major depression can happen with any age, no difference of gender, of rich or poor. But it frequently goes undiagnosed and untreated in the populations.

**1.5.4 Mindfulness Theory** means meanings, types, and characteristics, significance, practice methods of Mindfulness.

**1.5.5 Mindfulness Practice** refers the oldest of Buddhist mindfulness practices. The method comes directly from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (the Four Foundations of Mindfulness), a discourse attributed to the Buddha himself, part of the Pāli language scriptural canon of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, mindfulness practice is applying mindful attention to four domains, the body, feelings, the mind, and mind-object. Namely, mindfulness of the body (*rūpa*) refers to mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of postures, full awareness or clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) of bodily actions and movements, contemplation of the anatomical constitution of the body (both internally and externally), contemplation of the body in terms of its elemental structure, and contemplations of the body's various stages of posthumous decomposition. Mindfulness of feelings (*vedanā*) pertains to meditation, not on the present-day understanding of particular emotions but on the three basic and underlying qualities that accompany discrete experiences: pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensations. Mindfulness of consciousness is also a contemplation of mental things, the mental factors, or mind states. The contemplation of mind-objects is a contemplation of material as well as mental things. It is mindful of five specific doctrinal lists relating to the development of spiritual insight: the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six sense bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the four noble truths. And practicing these four foundations leads to spiritual insight into the impermanent and selfless nature of phenomenal experience and allows practitioners to overcome attachment and aversion, cultivate transcendental wisdom, and, ultimately, achieve liberation.

**1.5.6 Application of Mindfulness** refers to the method called the way to deal with depression based on practicing mindfulness so that prevents and relapses depression and have a happy and peaceful life.

**1.5.7 Buddhist Psychology** means self-knowledge- finding out more about who you are, understanding your decisions, actions, thoughts, feelings, etc. Buddhist psychology is ‘radical,’ as it aims to challenge your worldview (as all authentic spirituality and psychology does). It is radical in that it addresses the basis or foundation of our psychological functioning, our sense of who we are, and our relationships with others and with the world. As a result, the fruit of applying the psychological insights of the Buddha requires diligence, perseverance and discernment as they will naturally encounter the resistances and obstacles inherent in our conditioned nature.

## 1.6 Review of Related Literature and Research Works

The researcher has reviewed the literatures, information together with research works which related to the study as follows:

**1.6.1 Mary Jane Tacchi and Jan Scott** wrote about depression related to a book named “Depression A Very Short Introduction”.<sup>17</sup>

In this book, the authors present all aspects of depression. The concept of depression theory is described from the initial time to modern society by many scholars. Besides, there is a classification of depression; evolution of methods of treatment; current controversies, future directions to problems of depression in modern society. Especially, the risk factors lead to depression as well as impacts of depression to individual, society, economic and mental health. The short introduction and selective review give rise to us a total look at depression.

**1.6.2 Rick E. Ingram (ed.)** summarized about the vast information on depression contributed by all the experts in the world related to a book named “The International Encyclopedia of Depression”.<sup>18</sup>

This book provides an important resource for public on depression clearly progress over the past decade in authors’ quest to understand, treat and prevent the onset

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Jane Tacchi and Jan Scott, *Depression: A Very Short Introduction*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. xvi.

<sup>18</sup> Rick E. Ingram (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Depression*, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2009), pp. 165-187; pp. 363-467.

of depression. From this book, there is a clear view to understand vulnerability, risk, and models of depression. This book also describes understanding of depression as it occurs in specific populations.

**1.6.3 Bhikkhu Anālayo** wrote about exploration of *Satipaṭṭhanā* related to a book named “*Satipaṭṭhanā: The Direct Path to Realization*.”<sup>19</sup>

This book refers to the author’s several important observations regarding the detailed exploration of the significance and the practice of mindfulness meditation according to its exposition in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and placed within its early Buddhist canonical and philosophical context. The author emphasizes that to have a proper understanding and implementation of mindfulness meditation, the Buddha’s original instructions on *satipaṭṭhāna* need to be taken into consideration. It shows the *sutta* as a wide-ranging and multi-faceted source of guidance that allows for alternative interpretations and approaches to practice.

The author mentions that *Satipaṭṭhāna* means “direct path” to *Nibbāna*. “Direct path” is a translation of the Pāli expression “*ekāyano maggo*”. For understanding this particular expression, a path qualified as *ekāyano* could be understood as a “direct”, path in the sense of leading straight to the goal, “the only path”. *Satipaṭṭhāna* is the “direct path” for crossing the flood in past, present, and future times.

His purpose of this book is less to prove and establish a particular point of view than to provide suggestions and reflections in the hope of opening up new perspectives in regard to *Satipaṭṭhāna* and in the hope of inspiring the reader engage in its actual practice.

**1.6.4 Nyanaponika Thera** wrote about diverse perspectives of mindfulness related to a book named “*The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*”.<sup>20</sup>

The purpose of this book is to draw attention to the far- and deep-reaching significance of the Buddha’s Way of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), and to give initial guidance to understanding of these teachings and their practical application. The

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<sup>19</sup> Bhikkhu Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhanā: The Direct Path to Realization*, (London: Windhorse Publications, 2003), p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society Kandy, 2005), p. 32.

teachings of the Buddha offer a great variety of methods of mental training and subjects of meditation, suited to the various individual needs, temperaments and capacities. Yet all these methods ultimately converge in the “Way of Mindfulness” called by the Master himself “the Only Way”. The Way of Mindfulness may therefore rightly be called “the heart of Buddhist meditation”.

It emphasized phrase “Bare Attention” which is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception. Here starts the work of Bare Attention, being a deliberate cultivation and strengthening of that first receptive state of mind, giving it a longer chance to fulfill its important task in the process of cognition. Bare Attention proves the thoroughness of its procedure by cleansing and preparing the ground carefully for all subsequent mental processes. Bare Attention has the same threefold value in knowing, shaping and liberating the mind. Thus, mindfulness is the unfailing master key for knowing the mind; the perfect tool for shaping the mind; the lofty manifestation of the achieved freedom of the mind. Hence the attitude of Bare Attention – bare of labels – will open to man a new world.

**1.6.5 Thich Nhat Hanh** wrote about healing mental diseases by mindfulness related to a book named “Reconciliation Healing the Inner Child.”<sup>21</sup>

This book describes the way to heal our present sufferings derived from our inner sufferings when we were a child and inheritance from our ancestors. Firstly, it is to explore our own inner body-mind. We will realize that we ignored our suffering seeds in our body-mind so long, we did not know the way to care for and transform them.

Secondly, the author presents the method to recognize, befriend and embrace them by the light of mindfulness. Next, it emphasizes mindfulness practicing through mindful breathing, walking meditation, and learn ways to let go. This helps us to transform sufferings, nourishing and developing the good seeds. The last, the ways to heal the Inner Child are a meditation on the five-year-old Child, listening and talking to our Inner Child, writing a letter to ourselves, and sharing delights with our Inner Child. Healing is very effective when we sit and practice with Sangha friends.

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<sup>21</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Reconciliation Healing the Inner Child*, (California: Parallax, Berkeley, 2010), p. 3.

**1.6.6 Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, Jon Kabat-Zinn** wrote about managing depression through the practice of mindfulness related in a book named “The Mindful Way through Depression”.<sup>22</sup>

This book describes how the mind, body and emotions work together to compound and sustain depression and what this view emerging from cutting-edge research tells us about how to break out of this vicious cycle. It brings into sharp relief how we are all prey to habit-driven patterns-of thinking, feeling, and doing-that curtail the joy inherent in living and our sense of possibilities. It makes the case that there is an unsuspected power in inhabiting the moment you're living in right now with full awareness. The practice of mindfulness can prevent the normal unhappiness we all experience from spiraling down into depression. It helps us to get back in touch with the full range of our inner and outer resources for learning, growing, and healing, resources we may not even believe we have.

It also mentions the term “experiential avoidance” that can be the core cause leading to depression. We ignored and avoided our own emotions, thoughts, feelings and body sensations that creates habitual patterns to lead to persistent suffering. It provides the methods of mindfulness with the shift from trying to ignore or eliminate physical discomfort to paying attention with friendly curiosity, we can transform our own experience.

**1.6.7 Sayadaw U Pandita** wrote about directing the three-month retreat through practicing mindfulness related to a book named “In This Very Life”.<sup>23</sup>

This book is a collection of talks from the first three-month retreat that Sayadaw taught at the Insight Meditation Society. He describes in detail both the practical journey of awakening and a profound theoretical model of understanding. The profound theory is the enormous essential foundation for all of us to practice the Buddha’s teachings. This is explained detail and everyone is understandable.

This book presents clearly the step by step of the practice method. That way is not differentiated, and available to all as a chariot to carry us to *Nibbāna*. It is a do-

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<sup>22</sup> Mark Williams et al., *The Mindful Way through Depression*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), p. 119.

<sup>23</sup> Sayādaw U Pandita, *In This Very Life*, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 1992), p. 395.

it-ourselves kit. It will only be useful if it becomes our own property. By the way, we must have faith at the start that *nibbāna* is in our reach, and faith in the path that will lead us to your destination. We must also have motivation, a sincere and committed desire to strive for that goal. But motivation alone will not get us far unless we act upon it. We must work, put in the effort to be mindful, persevering and enduring moment after moment so that concentration builds and wisdom begins to blossom and mature. This vehicle leads to something priceless. These discourses reward a thoughtful reading, allowing the familiar aspects of the teachings to mature in our minds, and challenging us with new perspectives on some old and cherished viewpoints.

**1.6.8 Alex Korb, PhD** wrote about using neuroscience to reverse course of depression related to a book named “The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time”.<sup>24</sup>

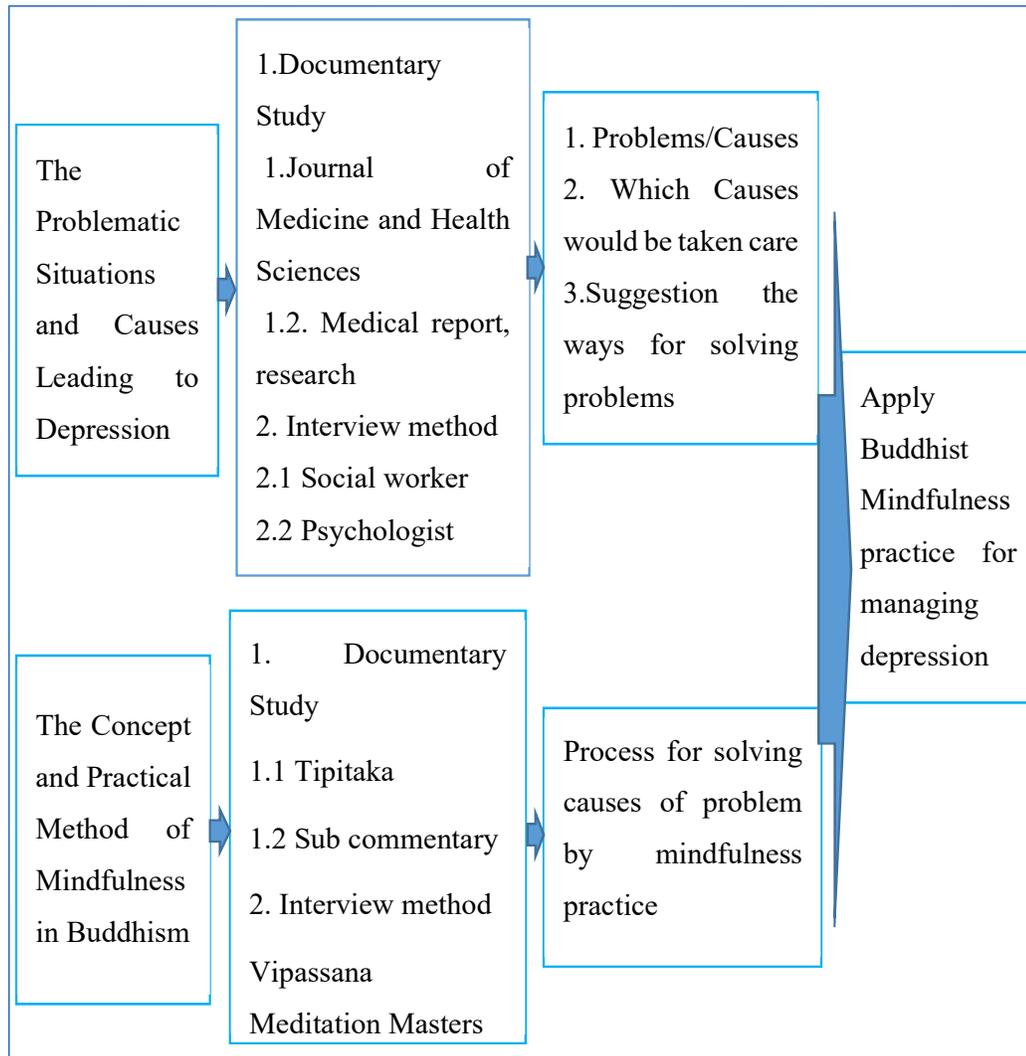
This book offers powerful and practical ways we can use this neural knowledge to enhance our relationships, decrease worry and anxiety, lessen the burden of depressive thinking and moods. Depressive people can turn a tendency toward a downward spiral of depression and anxiety into an upward spiral of joy and clarity in your life. This book describes why the brain gets brain stuck in the downward spiral of depression, detailing the circuits and chemicals involved. It mentions that depression comes from problems with frontal-limbic communication, and that it happens because of the specific tuning of your neural circuits. Since it gives understanding what we can change and accepting what we can't, which are both keys to an upward spiral. It also presents the methods to change activity in various brain circuits to reverse the course of depression. Aside from understanding and acceptance, there are eight powerful life changes that contribute to the solution: exercise, decision making, sleep, habits, biofeedback, gratitude, social support and professional help.

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<sup>24</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2015), p. 31.

## 1.7 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework of the research exhibits the significant research process in terms of input, process and putout as follows:



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

## 1.8 Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative research. The methodology of the research can be divided into five stages as follows:

### 1.8.1 Data Collection

Collection Data from the primary source of English translation of *Tipiṭaka* in order to explore the body of knowledge of *Satipaṭṭhāna: Foundation of Mindfulness* in Buddhist scriptures for accurate description. As well as the secondary source of commentaries, sub-commentaries, textbooks, research books, Buddhist Journals, article mental health together with the new interpretation from the modern scholars respectively in English language. This is to survey the viewpoint from later literatures in detailed explanation for clearer comprehension.

### **1.8.2 In-depth Interview**

Interviewing the four Buddhist scholars in present Thai society to gain the contemporary of viewpoints. Name lists as follows:

1. Venerable Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr. International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phranakorn Si Ayutthaya, Thailand.

2. Venerable Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr. Chairman of the Sangkha Meditation Centre, Sangkha District, Surin Province, Thailand.

3. Venerable Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr. Vipassana Master in Wat Daen Sa-ngob Asabharam, Muaeng, Nakhon, Ratchasima Province, Thailand.

### **1.8.3 Analysis and Synthesis:**

Analyzing and synthesizing the raw data as well as systematizing the collected data in order to give a clear picture of *Satipaṭṭhāna: Foundations of mindfulness*.

### **1.8.4 Outline Construction**

Constructing the overall outline of the work in all related dimensions corresponding to the objectives.

### **1.8.5 Problem Discussion**

Discussing the problems encountered according to the significance of the studies.

### **1.8.6 Conclusion and Suggestion**

Formulating conclusions, identifying significant research findings, and suggesting useful information for further research.

## **1.9 Advantages Expected to Obtain from the Research**

After doing the study, this research paper contributes to the following advantages and results may be obtained:

1.9.1 Having knowledge about problematic situations and causes leading to depression of the people.

1.9.2 Gaining knowledge about doctrines relating benefits of Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression.

1.9.3 Understanding clearly the application of Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression.

## **Chapter II**

### **The Problematic Situations and Causes Leading to Depression of People**

Nobody wants suffering, we all want happiness. We desire to live with psychological ease and joy. However, it is not an easy reality. We all often don't get what we want, get what we don't want, and are separated from people or things that we love. Many of us experience intense mental or emotional distress. This might be the form of hopelessness, despair, anxiety, depression, guilt, sorrow, irritation, or a sense of meaninglessness in many wide experiences, from the coarse to the subtle, the intense and traumatic to overwhelming mental intensity, and is a part of human life. We differ only in the level and intensity of our experience. Those people who are suffering from what our society calls depression are merely at a more intense point of the *dukkha*.

Thought can be our friend, thought can be our enemy. Our thoughts can bring out us happiness or can lead us to suffering. Thought can include thoughts of appraisal, evaluation, compare, judgment, and comments with negative or positive aspects. What we think about our life, our relationship, and the world, those thoughts can influence the way that we feel and act. No one can harm us as much as unwise thought and vice versa. Our life is molded and determined by our thoughts. Most of our mental suffering comes from how tightly we hold our wrong thoughts. Depression is a psychiatric illness that can spring from our negative thought patterns. In Buddhism, they are the primary manifestations of the inaccurate views that contain seeing what is impermanent as permanent, what is unpleasant as pleasant, seeing what is not "I" as "I", not "mine" as "mine". A mistake view leads to a wrong belief that leads harmful actions because there is no consideration of the consequences.

This chapter focuses on the problems and causes of major depression in modern science's view as well as Buddhist perspective. In this chapter, the researcher will study about four topics namely: -1. Definition of Depression 2. The Problematic

Situations of Depression 3. Causes Leading to Depression 4. Influence of Depression. 5. Method in the Management of Depression. The details are as follows:

## **2.1 Definition of Depression**

The term “depression” is the earliest described under the word “melancholia” in the ancient civilizations of Greece and Mesopotamia. The disorder was initially thought to be caused by an imbalance in black bile (one of the four bodily humors of ancient medicine). It is characterized mood disorders by despondency, aversion to food, sleeplessness, irritability, and restlessness. Hippocrates, a Greek physician who is considered the Father of Medicine, lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, is the first person describes melancholia as a specific disease.<sup>1</sup> These ancient descriptions are reminiscent of the same symptoms used today to diagnose major depression. Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a highly prevalent psychiatric disorder.

In Buddhism, it is considered a problem of mental defilement. When the mind is imbalanced, the body is unhealthy. Then happiness and peace will not appear. So, in order to find out the efficacious and cost-effective ways is very essential nowadays. Because it affects us all, on an individual, community, and national level. Therefore, it is time for us to know enough about major depression to help ourselves and support those who are suffering from this mental disorder. In this section, the researcher will study about thesis topics in two namely: - 1. Depression according to modern science. 2. Depression according to Buddhist perspective. The details are as follows:

### **2.1.1 Depression according to Modern Science**

Depression is a human experience that has various forms. In its subtler form, depression is a momentary feeling of sadness or despondency, most often related to a perceived loss or sense of helplessness about a particular event. Moderately, intense experiences of depression often involve biological, psychological and social elements. For example, the affected person may have a strong “blue” or down feeling, coupled with a reduced desire to engage in the world and decreased appetite or an increased

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Jane Tacchi and Jan Scott, *Depression: A Very Short Introduction*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 1.

desire to withdraw from usual activities.<sup>2</sup> The form that most people think of when we hear “depression” is major depressive disorder or unipolar depression, or major depression, or clinical depression.

In its clinical state, major depression is mainly diagnosed by the clinical history given by the patient and mental status examination.<sup>3</sup> According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) published by the American Psychiatric Association, the diagnostic criteria are for major depressive disorder as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Five (or more) of the following symptoms have been present during the same two-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

1. Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day. In children and adolescents, it can be irritable mood.
2. Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.
3. Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
4. Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day.
5. Psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day.
6. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
7. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day (not merely self-reproach or guilt about being sick).
8. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness
9. Recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.

The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The episode is not attributable to the physiology effects of a substance or to another medical condition.

**Figure 2:** Diagnosis Criteria for Major Depression

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<sup>2</sup> Keith S. Dobson and David J. A. Dozois, *Risk Factors in Depression*, (USA: Elsevier, 2008), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Navneet Bains and Sara Abhijadid, *Major Depressive Disorder*, on online, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559078/> (accessed February 19, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (USA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), pp. 160-161.

Major depression is a syndrome characterized by persistent anhedonia, low or dysphoric mood, low energy or fatigue, and a number of other neuro-vegetative and cognitive symptoms. Despite its name, perhaps the most defining and relatively specific symptom of major depression is anhedonia, that is, the loss of the ability to experience pleasure or a disinterest in pleasurable activities that a person would normally enjoy. Another core symptom of major depression is low or dysphoric mood, namely persistent despondency and sadness. In adolescents, irritability often accompanies or substitutes for a low mood during a depressive episode. The final core symptom is low energy or fatigue. Accompanying low energy is often the cognitive experience of a loss of motivation so that even simple tasks, like showering, seem insurmountable to someone who is depression. These three core symptoms – anhedonia, low mood, and low energy commonly co-occur and in many ways define depression in and of depression. These additional symptoms reflect disturbances in neuro-vegetative functions, behavior, and cognition such as sleep and appetite, psychomotor changes, anxiety and nervousness, loss of self-esteem and thoughts of low self-worth and hopelessness, concentration difficulties and suicidality.<sup>5</sup>

Depending on the number and severity of symptoms, major depression is classified as mild, moderate, or severe, based on the number of symptoms and level of functional impairment. Mild cases exhibit a number of symptoms that just meet threshold with minimal functional impairment. Severe cases meet all or nearly all of the symptoms, experience psychosis, or demonstrate marked functional limitations. Moderate depression lies between these two extremes.<sup>6</sup>

Depression is primarily a result of poor communication between the thinking prefrontal cortex and the emotional limbic system. Together, these parts of the brain are often called the fronto-limbic system because they form a group of closely interacting regions. The fronto-limbic system regulates your emotional state, and when not functioning, it well can push into depression.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen M. Strakowski, MD and Erik B. Nelson, MD, *Major Depressive Disorder*, (America: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2015), p. 17.

Depression is widely undiagnosed and untreated because of lack of awareness, of stigma, lack of effective therapies and inadequate mental health resources.<sup>8</sup>

The exact causes of major depression are unknown. It results from a complex interaction of social, psychological, and biological factors. While most diseases are defined by their cause (for example, cancer, cirrhosis, of their liver), a person meets five or more symptoms in **Figure 2**, a person is diagnosed with major depression. There's no lab test, no MRI scan; it's just the symptoms.<sup>9</sup>

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is one of the most common, costly, and disabling mental health conditions worldwide. It is a highly recurrent disorder, with nearly three quarters of people with MDD experiencing a second episode at some point in their lives. Depression contributes substantially to excess mortality, either directly through suicide or indirectly through comorbid chronic conditions, increasing mortality risk by 60-80%. The associated loss in productivity and years of life lived with disability due to MDD also impacts society as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

Depression is a disorder that can be reliably diagnosed and treated in primary care. The effective treatment and prevention of MDD is an international priority. It is understood well in the medical aspect. It is easily treatable through medications, a combination of medication and talk therapy.<sup>11</sup>

Depression is also a condition that can ebb and flow across a person's lifetime. It is therefore not considered "curable", but it with the right treatment the symptoms of depression can be managed and alleviated over time.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it can come and go over time. And it is so common in all cultures and throughout history. Each person has different degrees of depression. Therefore, practicing mindfulness

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<sup>8</sup> K Smith, "Mental health: A world of depression", *Nature*, Vol. 515, (2014): 180–181

<sup>9</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral*, Op.Cit, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Roger S. McIntyre (ed.), *Major Depressive Disorder*, (Netherlands: Elsevier, 2020), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, *Depression: A Global Crisis World Mental Health Day October 10 2012*, (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2012), pp. 6-8.

<sup>12</sup> Dina Cagliostro, *Types of Depression: The 10 Most Common Depressive Disorders*, on online, <https://www.psycom.net/10-types-of-depression/> (accessed March 5, 2022).

might be the most effective way to manage it in a long time. The high or low effective is to depend on a depressed person's determination.

In sum, major depression is among the most common medical illness in the wide world. It is a period of two weeks or longer when a person experiences the symptoms such as a persistent feeling of sadness or lack of interest in outside stimuli, hopelessness, fatigue, sleep and weight disturbances, and suicidal thoughts nearly every day. But in particular, a person must experience a depressed mood and/or loss of interest in activities most of the day.

### **2.1.2 Depression according to Buddhist Perspective**

Buddhism is known as a compassionate and wise religion. The Four Noble Truths are the core topics of the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha shows what is suffering (*Dukkha*), the origin of suffering (*Samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*Nirodha*), and the way to liberate suffering (*Magga*). The message of the Buddha's First Noble Truth is all beings experience suffering. We suffer because we experience aging, illness, and death. We suffer physically and emotionally because of misfortunes of all kinds. We regularly experience sadness and distress. In essence, we suffer whenever we encounter anything or anyone that is unpleasant or harmful and whenever we are separated from anything or anyone that is pleasant or comforting. With a moment's reflection, we can all list many personal examples. Whether we call it stress, anxiety, depression, chronic illness, fear, or nervousness, the Buddha's first truth reminds us that in our unenlightened state, suffering is unavoidable. The uncomfortable experiences that are described above can all be referred to as *dukkha*. Every being involves the reality of *dukkha* but we differ only in the degree and intensity of our experience.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding the symptoms of depression mentioned above, from the perspective of Buddhism, all those symptoms are associated with the term "*dukkha*". Depression is a bunch of physical and mental suffering. These suffering are derived from impure mind: "Mental phenomena are preceded by mind, have mind as their

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<sup>13</sup> Henepola Gunaratana, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 133.

leader, are made by mind. If one acts or speaks with an evil mind, from that sorrow follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox”.<sup>14</sup>

According to Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr., he explained depression is physical pain that is called *dukkha*, and mental pain is called *domanassa* because the body and the mind have an association with each other. The impact of earning a living and other difficulties related to it, cause physical pain or weariness. This kind of impact always refers to the mental pain such as anxiety, depression, disappointments, and despair that pertain to the mind and they are collectively termed *domanassa*. The goal of mindfulness meditation is to end this self-focus, this negative feeling.<sup>15</sup>

Through the study of the *Abhidhamma*, the core features of depression are related to unpleasant mental feelings, which are similar to the term “*domanassa*”. *Domanasa* comes from ‘du’ and ‘mana’. ‘du’ means bad. ‘Mana’ means mind. It is a feeling, a bad feeling, a displeasurable feeling.<sup>16</sup> It is a bad mental state when we experience fully the undesirable aspects of the object.

In Pāli such aversion is termed *dosa* or *paṭigha*. *Dosa* is derived from √ *dus*, to be displeased. *Paṭigha* is derived from ‘*paṭi*’, against, and √ ‘*gha*’ (han), to strike, to contact. Ill will, hatred are also suggested as equivalents of ‘*paṭigha*’.<sup>17</sup> Whenever we feel angry or displeased or sad or depressed, *dosa-mūla citta*s will arise. And whenever it arises, it is accompanied by ill will and mentally painful feeling.<sup>18</sup> So, *domanassa* and *dosa* always arise together. Furthermore, *dosa* is not only violent but it also soils the mind. It is not only wild and rude, but also depressive resulting in inferiority complex and living in fear; they all belong to the category of *dosa* or hatred (ill will).<sup>19</sup> Because the mind is soiled, it makes our feeling, thought and behavior worse and worse. *Dosa* is also depressed, *dosa* as the one felt by a sad or depressed person is destructive. *Dosa*

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<sup>14</sup> K.R. Norman (tr.), *The World of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)*, (Oxford: The Pāli Text Society, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, March 28, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Nārada Mahā Thera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Malaysia: The Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Myanmar: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 2015), pp. 34-35.

<sup>19</sup> Ashin Janakābhivaṃsa, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, trans., Professor U Ko Lay, (Malaysia: Inward Path Publisher, 2012), p. 38.

gives rise to stress and strain, mental depression and mental tension which in turn gives rise to many diseases.<sup>20</sup> This is similar to the worst tendency of depression is to think death or to attempt suicide. Thus, depression is *dosa*, *dosa* is depression.

We would like to have more wholesomeness in life, but often we are unable to do wholesome deeds, to speak in a wholesome way or to think wholesome thoughts. Our accumulated defilements hinder us in the performing of *kusala*. From the Buddhist teachings, our mind is not quiet; it is always stirred up by five hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*) in Pāli language, which are *akusala cetasikas* arising with *akusala cittas*. The hindrances arise time and again in daily life. Namely, sense desire (*kāmacchanda*) influences the mind to be wandering about sensuous objects which it has enjoyed before. Ill will (*vyāpāda*) agitates the mind by taking notice of disagreeable things. Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) blind the mental vision and disturb the concentration<sup>21</sup> maybe correspond to the other various symptoms of depression.

In Pāli, torpor and languor are *thīna and middha*. Or they are translated as “torpor” and “languor”, or as “sloth” and “torpor”. *Thīna* and *middha* cause us to have lack of energy for *kusala*. *Uddhacca* is translated as “agitation” or “excitement” and *kukkucca* as “worry” or “regret”. *Uddhacca* arises with each and every type of *akusala citta*. It prevents the *citta* from wholesomeness. *Vicikicchā* is translated as “doubt”, Doubt is *akusala* and a hindrance to the performing of *kusala*.<sup>22</sup> Like losing of interest or pleasure, feeling tired, and lack of energy are similar to *Thīna* and *Middha*. It is the factor to trigger no energy to live and hope in the future in depressed people. Restlessness may be compatible with difficulty in focusing, remembering detail; skeptical doubt can be very hard to make decisions. All of the hindrances are obstructions to the performing of *kusala*. They obstruct happiness and obscure a person’s view of himself, his surroundings, and the interaction between him and his surroundings. The more and stronger these hindrances are, the greater the suffering and stress a person will experience. The thinner and thinner these hindrances are, the less

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<sup>20</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Myanmar: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 2015), p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> Nina van Gorkom, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (London: Zolag, 2010), pp. 137-138.

their suffering will be and their happiness will increase. Depression is very strong *nīvaraṇas* of people in daily life.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, all very strong unwholesome mental factors are compatible with the symptoms of depression in Western research.

In short, major depression is the continuous manifestation of physical and mental pain that comes from the strong *dosa* and pertains to the very strong other *nīvaraṇas*. It is itself not regarded as a “mental affliction” (*kilesa*) but is rather a symptom of the underlying afflictions of craving, hostility, and delusion in the Buddhist psychology outlook. All mental afflictions are characterized by their quality of unsettling the balance of the mind, resulting in painful sensation, and unwholesome behavior, which in turn gives rise to suffering for ourselves and others. The best way to develop a steady mind and eliminate these afflictions is to practice mindfulness. A person who always lives mindfully will have a happier life.

## 2.2 The Problematic Situations of Depression

Nowadays, a number of people are facing serious mental health problems, some of them don't even realize that she/he is being undergone a stage of major depression. There are symptoms of major depression as follows; depressed feeling, hopeless feeling or loss of interest; changing in thoughts and making decisions; altering bodily function (such as fatigue, sleeping, and eating), and abnormal behavior. Each individual suffers alone and is not taken care of properly. The mutual impact between emotions, thoughts, physical sensations, and behaviors develops a downward spiral of depression. This vicious cycle repeats over and becomes a conditioned habit; only a single stimulus maybe a negative thought, or feeling depressed or physically tired can trigger the loop. In Buddhist psychology, five hindrances are similar to a collection of symptoms of major depression make depressed person's mind impair. In this section, the researcher will study about topics in three namely: - 1. A chain of negative feeling. 2. A Negative automatic thought style. 3. Painful sensation and abnormal behavior.

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<sup>23</sup> Ven. Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, April 5, 2022.

### 2.2.1 Depression as a Chain of Negative Feeling

Life is full of sorrow because of loss, separation, dissatisfaction, and unwanted changes. We all might feel sad, miserable, unhappy, angry, irritable, anxious, frustrated, hopeless, disappointed, and guilty in our lifetime. No one wants to experience those situations, we try to seek solutions to come happiness back. But the way itself that we cope with those negative emotions becomes an important part of major depression. The particular feelings caused by major depression can be persistent sadness, hopelessness and despair, anxiety and fear, irritability and anger.

According to Buddhist psychology, depression is the manifestation of various degrees of *dosa* such as aversion, ill will, anger, irritation, annoyance, and animosity. When *dosa* arises; *domanassa vedanā*, unpleasant mental feeling is always accompanied with it. Normally, *vedanā*, feelings affect so much in our daily life; they modify the stream of consciousness and serves both as a life-promoting and life-destroying force. Pleasure, for example, promotes life; pain impairs it.<sup>24</sup> When mentioning major depression, sadness is an integral part of depression. It is different from normal sadness but too sad every day without reason. It is an expression of extreme sadness that has been accumulated from being ignored, denied, and repressed for a long time when a person's grief is unresolved. Sadness was found to be significantly associated with major depressive disorder symptom expression. It was associated with higher rates or reactivity of mood, social impairment, social withdrawal, physical complaints, and terminal insomnia.<sup>25</sup> Thus, "*domanassa vedanā*" or sadness is the core feature of depression. When *dosa* arises, there exists suffering; sadness arises, happiness disappears. The more sadness is, the more *dosa* increase in its intensity. As a result, happiness starts disappearing in those who experience depression.

In one research, the adolescents also reported experiencing depression as a combination or blend of anger and sadness (Harter, 1998).<sup>26</sup> In the first, there is profound sadness in combination with anger toward others. In the second, sadness is

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<sup>24</sup> Nārada Mahā Thera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Malaysia: The Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> Mouchet-Mages S, Baylé FJ, *Sadness as an integral part of depression*, on online, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18979945/> (accessed February 19, 2022).

<sup>26</sup> Greenberg and Watson, *Emotion-Focused Therapy for Depression*, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), p. 45.

accompanied by anger directed toward others as well as toward the self. Anger is a common negative emotion among depressed people. They feel angry about the world, about the past undesirable events and about themselves. Anger can take several different forms in depression such as irritability, hostility and anger attacks.<sup>27</sup>

Irritability is a form of anger but also a feature of depression itself. This state is seen in men experiencing depression. Men are less likely to show more “typical” signs of depression such as sadness. It may cause them to keep their feelings hidden. Instead of expressing a depressed mood, they may seem more irritable and aggressive.<sup>28</sup>

When we are unhappy or even if we have suffered the most grievous blow, we are able to seek solace and through it to relieve our pain. We can seek out and obtain another’s sympathy and loving concern. We can be kind and solace ourselves. But in depression, neither the sympathy and concern of others nor the gentle love of oneself is available. Inside the wall, one does not only refuse oneself the smallest relief and comfort but also punish oneself by words and deeds. It is not simply loneliness. It is an isolation that changes even one’s perception of one’s environment. Outwardly aversion can become aggression and inwardly aversion can become self-hatred.<sup>29</sup> A UK study from 2013 suggested that going inward and turning our anger on ourselves contributes to the severity of depression.<sup>30</sup> So, depression is a prison where you are both the suffering prisoner and the cruel jailer.<sup>31</sup> Some people who suffer from depression are trapped by inner-voice in the form of self-criticism and unrealistic negative judgment. It makes us see only the negative qualities in people, places, or things and creates them as intrinsically bad.

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<sup>27</sup> Arlin Cuncic, Review of *The Connection Between Depression and Anger*, on online, <https://www.verywellmind.com/connection-between-depression-and-anger-5085725#citation-1> (accessed June 9, 2021).

<sup>28</sup> Jennifer Casarella, Review of *Depression in Men*, on online, <https://www.webmd.com/depression/depression-men> (accessed June 9, 2021).

<sup>29</sup> Malcolm Huxter, *Healing the Heart and Mind with Mindfulness: Ancient Path, Present Moment*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Lybl Ma, Review of *The Role of Anger in Depression*, on online, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/compassion-matters/201710/the-role-anger-in-depression> (accessed June 9, 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Dorothy Rowe, *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (England: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

In Buddhist psychology, when aversion (*paṭigha*) happens, the displeasure feeling (*domanassa*) also arises and vice-versa. When *paṭighānusaya* arises, it is not the end of story yet. The remaining *akusala* mental factors will also take place.<sup>32</sup> Here, *anusaya* means an underlying tendency, potentiality, proclivity; it is made of two words: *anu* means “continue”, “non-stop”; *saya* means “existing by itself when the suitable conditions exist” or the arising of something when conditions conducive to it. So, *anusaya* follows feelings and it is included in the feeling group.<sup>33</sup> In other words, when unpleasant feeling arises, it is always accompanied by latent defilements. Furthermore, when any unpleasant feeling arises and we are not mindful or know its existence, then the underlying aversion (*paṭighānusaya*) will take place. When the unpleasant feeling occurs again, the aversion will occur just a road is opened up already. So for the first time it has a chance to take place, then for the second time, the third time etc. it will happen.<sup>34</sup> Thus, persistent sadness and despondency in major depression might be the result of the activation of the latent sadness or past unpleasant experiences and the present sadness. In a research of major depression, the primary emotional reaction like sadness and distress evokes related emotional experiences in the previous life that produce a fundamental evaluation of diminishment or abandonment accompanied by earlier experiences of sadness, loss, or failure. In this case, sadness evokes sad memories and their attendant unresolved emotions. The activation of core maladaptive emotion schemes by the initial primary adaptive emotion is central in the production of both a lasting set of negative cognitions and a hopeless sense of self characteristic of depression.<sup>35</sup>

If *paṭighānusaya* has taken place, delusion (*moha*) is included already. When bad or good feeling arises; she/he only thinks as ‘she/he is feeling sad or ‘she/he is feeling happy’. She/he sees the feeling as ‘belonging to self’, ‘belonging to sentient beings’. This is wrong view and wrong knowing. For one’s whole life, wrong view is deep-seated in the mind and one will think, ‘this feeling is his/her’.<sup>36</sup> Herein, she/he

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<sup>32</sup> Sayādaw Dr. Nandamālābhivamsa, *Analysis of Feeling*, (Myanmar: Aggācāra Dhamma Distribution Group, 2014), pp. 108-109.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>35</sup> Greenberg and Watson, *Emotion-Focused Therapy for Depression*, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> Sayādaw Dr. Nandamālābhivamsa, *Analysis of Feeling*, Op.Cit, p. 15.

tends to identify feelings are hers/him. But she/he doesn't know that only the feeling, not a sentient being, is experiencing good or bad objects. Moreover, she/he doesn't know neither its conditions and causes nor realize its true nature. Sadness or disappointment is only simply a state of feeling or emotion. Everything is always changing, so are feelings, come and go. Specifically, major depressive disorder has been characterized by hyper-connectivity in the default-network in the brain.<sup>37</sup> The default mode network that is responsible for self-reference and emotional appraisal.<sup>38</sup> The emotional appraisal is where one person forms of judgments about a particular situation.<sup>39</sup> Herein, the first emotional appraisal is more negative and hopeless. The second appraisal is more hopeful and focuses on solving problem. But, in depression, she/he selectively focuses on negative things and wallows in negative self-appraisal. The negative feelings are produced and come with negative self-appraisal are exaggerated in depression. The activation of the powerless, trapped sense produces a secondary emotional response of hopelessness, resignation, and the enduring depression.<sup>40</sup> The feelings by which we generally define depression are usually thought of as an end point.<sup>41</sup> They are feelings of sadness, misery, hopelessness, despondency, and desperation. In other words, the sad depressed people are, the more defeated sense of self they also bring. It is of feeling worthless, hopeless, unloved, abandoned, alone, and empty prevails. Furthermore, restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) also arise. The more distracted we are, the less free we are. One person without freedom feels powerless. This means that she/he will lose self-esteem. Although a person makes a small mistake, she/he will easily multiply new dissatisfactions. This is repeated over and over. Those feeling states will obscure some positive qualities of mind and impair one's judgment, the ability to correct evaluation of the nature of things when they appear. So, negative or positive feeling must be understood and noticed clearly.

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<sup>37</sup> Marc G. German et al., "Depression, rumination and the default network", *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (October 2011): 548-555.

<sup>38</sup> Wikipedia, *Default model network*, on online, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Default\\_mode\\_network#Nomenclature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Default_mode_network#Nomenclature) (accessed February 19, 2022).

<sup>39</sup> Greenberg and Watson, *Emotion-Focused Therapy for Depression*, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Williams et al., *The Mindful Way through Depression*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), p. 19.

Avoidance is a form of aversion; avoidance is central to the development and maintenance of depression. The avoidance of core emotion is an aspect of depression. People with depression fear their core feelings. Women most often disown their anger and men their sadness and vulnerabilities.<sup>42</sup> The reason for avoidance may spring from the way that they cope with their distressing emotions. They desire to change their present situation but their attempts are failed. They feel fearful, unconfident, and hopeless about how they feel. Since then they automatically attempt to suppress and distract themselves from their emotions and withdrawal, thus exacerbating depression. Despair is the severe state of depression. Depression is like a dark mist lurking in the corners of the room, always there, always ready to come surging forward and rising up to envelop you. It is blackness, emptiness, meaninglessness, and total inner despair.<sup>43</sup> The person suffers from depression thinks that she/he is a disaster of the world. She/he is sunk and limited herself/himself in the darkness that he/she creates and there is no way to escape.

Through of the study of *Abhidhamma*, in conjunction with *dosa cetasika* (hatred), *soka*, *parideva*, *dukkha*, *domanassa* and *upāyāsa*. *Soka* means sorrow is the state of being unhappy on coming across unpleasant incidents. Wherever sorrows appear, hatred will also accompany it. Therefore, sorrow should also be understood in conjunction with hatred. Weeping or lamentation is called *parideva*. But at the root of these lamentations lies *dosa* and *domanassa* (mental pain). Most people feel sorrow and grief when they see the coming of the fall in status, fame, power, wealth, etc. They also feel down-hearted, which is *soka*, a form of *domanassa*, they weep aloud.<sup>44</sup> Physical suffering is called *dukkha* and mental suffering *domanassa*.<sup>45</sup> *Upāyāsa* means intense anger that affects persons who have weak minds and those who depend too much on each other. The weaker sex is more prone to suffer from *upāsāya*. They easily suffer from *soka* and *parideva*, which overwhelms their subtle physique, and develop into the state of *upāyāsa*.<sup>46</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa summarizes those features in

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<sup>42</sup> Greenberg and Watson, *Emotion-Focused Therapy for Depression*, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> Dorothy Rowe, *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*, Op.Cit, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ashin Janakābhivāṃsa, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, trans., Professor U Ko Lay, (Malaysia: Inward Path Publisher, 2012), pp. 42,44.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

*Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) by as follow: sorrow is like the cooking of oil in a pot over a slow fire. Lamentation is like its boiling over from the pot when cooking over a quick fire. Despair is like what remains in the pot after it has boiled over and is unable to do so any more, going on cooking in the pot till it dries up.”<sup>47</sup> These commentaries give a simile to explain the expression of *dosa* in increasing degrees that are similar to negative feelings in major depression in intensity.

In other aspect, anxiety disorders often go hand in hand with depression. George Brown said that depression is a response to past loss, and anxiety is a response to future loss. According to James Ballenger, a leading expert in anxiety, “they’re fraternal twins.” And anxiety is the precursor form of depression.<sup>48</sup> Anxiety is accompanied by negative emotions. Anxiety worsens a person’s mood, and when his/her mood is worse, he/she feel anxiety, which is a typical downward spiral. Anxiety makes most situations feel more difficult than they need to be that drains his/her joy. In other words, anxiety is nothing more than a negative state of mind arising out of attachment to past happiness.

Anxiety is potential danger that is concern for events that only might happen. Events may be unpredictable and that you may lack control over. Fear is actual danger that is a response to actual danger that is right here, right now.<sup>49</sup> Fear is to sadness as hope is to pleasure. In Buddhism, fear is also included in *dosa*. Fear is described as passive *dosa*.<sup>50</sup> There are so many things in life we are afraid of; we are afraid of the future, of diseases, of accidents, of death. In depression, fear of abandonment or rejection, and fear of failure block patients from expressing themselves and taking the risks they wanted to take. Especially, fear of feelings involves the covering up of primary emotions that need to be discovered to facilitate emotional change. Some degree of fear and anxiety is natural and may even be necessary for self-preservation. But when it is not under

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<sup>47</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans., Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 2010), p. 517.

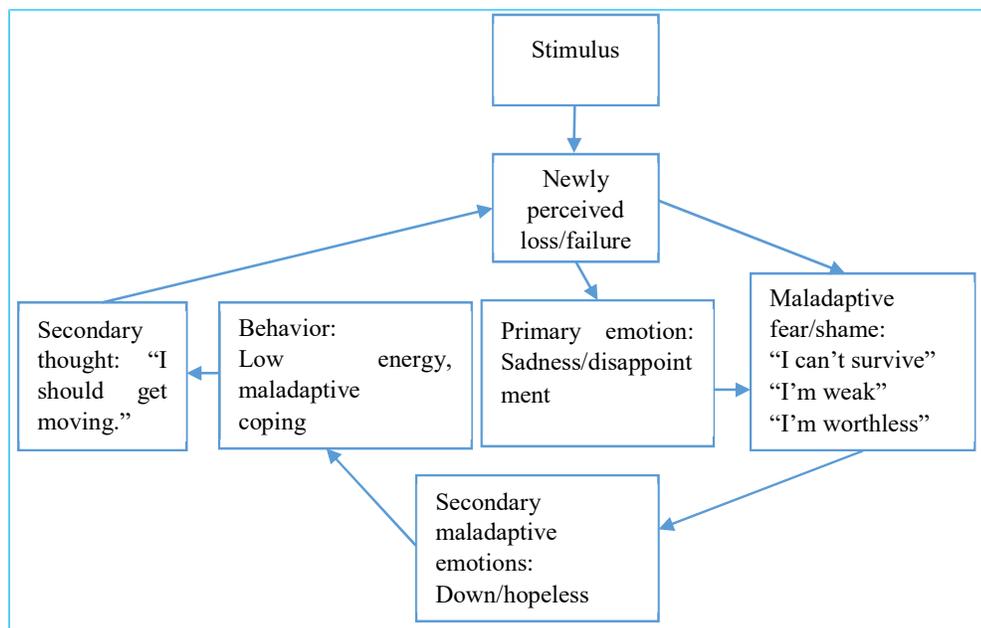
<sup>48</sup> Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, (USA: Scribner, 2001), p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2015), pp. 39-40.

<sup>50</sup> Sayādaw U Silānanda, *Handbook of Abhidhamma Studies*, Vol. I, (Malaysia: Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society, 2012), p. 64.

control, constant fear and prolonged worry will only wreak havoc on the human organism. These factors all contribute to the weakening of normal bodily functions.

In short, the above negative feeling states play a central role in major depressive syndrome that needs to be known and understood enough. Depressed feeling systems based on response to loss, failure, unwanted changes are basic forms. When negative feelings in the present situations occur that is like past experiences, this system is activated, once reawakened and influenced current perceptions and experiences. Depression-prone people are easily overwhelmed by negative cognitions and trapped in their ways of trying to regulate their feelings that leads to difficulties. Feeling (*vedanā*) is understood as a combination of physical sensations, states of the mind (*citta*), mental and physical patterns. A feeling of discontent will strain the body and mind and vice-versa. All feelings, whether positive or negative feelings are inevitable, it is impossible to overcome the feeling. The thing that we need to do is just to know them. Knowing the feeling means knowing the nature and characteristics of feeling whenever they appear.



**Figure 3:** Emotion Systematic Cycle of Responses to Loss Leading to Depression  
by Leslie S. Greenberg.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Greenberg and Watson, *Emotion-Focused Therapy for Depression*, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), p. 54.

### 2.2.2 Depression as a Negative Automatic Thought Style

In depression, the negative mood has been found to be associated with negative thoughts which further strengthen the symptom of hopelessness. This affects cognitive symptoms of major depression such as concentration difficulties, distractibility, attention deficits, indecisiveness that are exhibited in all aspects of information processing, including attention, memory, and interpretation according the researchers.<sup>52</sup> Depression might be considered the problem of lacking cognition.

In Buddhism, the first kind of *dukkha* is unsatisfactoriness related to ordinary inherent suffering: uncomfortable physical sensations, emotional pain, unpleased things, unobtainable things, or being separated from loved ones. They all themselves are not the problem; the matter is when one reacts to them by one's weak awareness that is also the root factor of unhappiness. As the Buddha taught this as follows:

“Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments; he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings - a bodily one and a mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, and then they would strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by two darts.”<sup>53</sup>

This teaching implies that uncomfortable feelings are unavoidable as bodily pain, the first dart. Because his awareness is dominated by aversion, greed, and delusion; he hates the painful feeling, and then he seeks comfort, but he cannot avoid that feeling. This results in mental suffering that is created by none other than himself.

According to John D. Teasdale and Michael Chaskalson, in depression, the first arrow of a simple feeling of sadness is transformed into a more intense and persistent state of depression when the second arrow of ruminative thinking is added by themselves depressed people.<sup>54</sup> The psychologists' research, rumination is a

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<sup>52</sup> Ian H. Gotlib and Constance L. Hammen, *Handbook of Depression*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), p. 301.

<sup>53</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, Vol. II, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), p. 1264.

<sup>54</sup> John D. Teasdale and Michael Chaskalson, “How Does Mindfulness Transform Suffering? I: The Nature and Origins of Dukkha”, *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (May 2011): 92.

particularly detrimental response that hinders recovery from negative mood and prolongs depressive episodes. Because rumination is often described as a “recycling” of thoughts, and not necessarily by the content of these recurring thoughts.<sup>55</sup> Its tendency is to focus on one’s symptoms of distress, and the possible causes and consequences of these symptoms, in a repetitive and passive manner rather than in an active, problem-solving manner.<sup>56</sup>

The normal default mode network of the brain is to wander and think about things from the past and future. In recent findings, the default mode network of the brain has been implicated as the neural substrate for depressive rumination.<sup>57</sup> People who suffer from depression often have trouble remembering happier times but have no problem recalling sad events. They are more likely to store more bad memories than good ones.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, in depression, the brain’s negative bias is responsible for making bad situations seem a lot worse than they actually are.<sup>59</sup> Depressed people’s brains automatically focus more on the negativity. Their brains are inclined toward pain, loss, and the emotionality of mistakes. They often mislead memories of the past and expectations of the future. For example, with depressed individuals, they are self-focused (I think “My life is a mess” or “why can’t I ever succeed?”), symptom-focused (“I don’t think I can go on”), and focused on the possible consequences and causes of one’s mood (“I can’t finish anything”).<sup>60</sup> Hence, the negative mood relates to more frequent negative thoughts that exaggerate the true state of things in the present. The impact of negative mood and negative self-talk is to rehash distressing events from the past, analyze the current problems, and worry about the future. Since then the

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<sup>55</sup> Ian H. Gotlib and Constance L. Hammen, *Handbook of Depression*, Op.Cit, p. 312.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>57</sup> Stacey Neglia, *The Default Mode Network and Depression*, on online, <https://knowingneurons.com/2020/12/20/the-default-mode-network-and-depression/> (accessed March 19, 2022).

<sup>58</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2015), p. 22.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>60</sup> Steven D. Hollon and Philip C. Kendall, “Cognitive Self-Statements in Depression: Development of an Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire”, *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1980): 383-395.

pessimistic view has chance showed; dreams, plans, expectations about the bright future like flowers that have not budded have quickly perished.

The passive manner means to know clearly and be trapped in negative states without taking any action. This process of self-talk has occurred for a long time and will become frequent thoughts that depressed individuals believe are true. Furthermore, they feel their surroundings seem to oppose and obstruct their problem-solving way. Because when we normally face up to the problems of life, we tend to think and focus on them more to give plans and solutions. The thoughts are sometimes useful; on the other hand, they will soon turn bad for us when they make us worry by predicting a particular outcome in the future and ruminate over negative things again and again. They would rather believe that rumination will help them to overcome their unhappiness and depression. They think if they do not do anything, their condition will become worse and worse. This may state that depression produces rumination and rumination nourishes depression more severely. Thus, from modern sciences' viewpoint, the process of solving emotion produces, increases, and prolongs negative thoughts accompanied by a sense of hopelessness by the activation of bad memories, interpretation, and attention to negative life events. The nature of the relations between thought, emotion, and depression is a vicious cycle of increasingly negative ruminative thinking and deepening sad moods.

As we know, the so-called being is divided into its two constituent parts, the mind (*Nāma*) and the body (*Rūpa*). *Nāma*, *Viññāṇa*, and *Citta* are all used as synonymous terms in Buddhist psychology. For the commentary, *Citta* is that which is aware of (*cinteti=viñānāti*) an object.<sup>61</sup> The *citta* (consciousness) itself cognizes objects and all other mental states arise together with *citta*. *Citta* itself is equated with thought.<sup>62</sup> Dysfunctional attitudes and negative self-referent thoughts may be viewed as the content of the mind (Beck & Clark, 1988), whereas rumination refers to the processes of the mind (Hayes & Kelly, 2003; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). Moreover, the recycling of rumination will increase the chances of relapse and the

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<sup>61</sup> Nārada Mahā Thera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Malaysia: The Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Bhaddanta Dr. Rewata Dhamma, *Process of Consciousness and Matter*, ed., Ven. Dr. Kumarabhivamsa, (Malaysia: Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, 2007), p. 12.

severity of depressive episode.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the mind combines unwholesome mental factors works in a passive and repetitive direction that will make depression more severe and prolonged.

For the Buddhist view, this is mentioned in *Dvedhāvītakka Sutta* (Two Kinds of Thought) that the two classes of thoughts are thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of cruelty; and the other side thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-ill will, and thoughts of non-cruelty. The Buddha taught bhikkhus as follows:

“Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks with ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to the thoughts of sensual desire. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill will...upon thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thoughts of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty.”<sup>64</sup>

The people experience in depression is prone to self-critical thoughts that are equivalent to thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of cruelty. These thoughts are like the consequences of five hindrances with five kinds of water. Lord Buddha compared sense desire with water mixed with manifold colours, ill-will with boiling water, sloth and torpor with water covered with mosses, restlessness and remorse with agitated water whipped by the wind, skeptical doubt with turbid and muddy water. Just as in such water one cannot perceive one’s own reflection, so in the presence of these five hindrances, one cannot clearly see one’s own benefit, nor that of others, nor that of both.<sup>65</sup> The mind overwhelmed by lust is compared to colored water that prevents the object's honest reflection on that water. Thus a person obsessed with lust is not able to have an honest view of himself or of others or of his surroundings. A mind obsessed with anger compared to boiling water cannot give an accurate reflection.

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<sup>63</sup> Istvan Schreiner and James P. Malcolm, “The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation: Changes in Emotional States of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress”, *Behaviour Change*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2008): 156–168.

<sup>64</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Vol. I, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 208.

<sup>65</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Myanmar: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 2015), p. 46.

So when a person is possessed by anger, it is not possible to realize the true nature of the problem.

When the mind is lazy, sluggish clinging to it is like water covered with moss. The light cannot even penetrate water and reflection cannot. Lazy people do not even bother trying to get something right. When we are worried, our mind is like water that is stuffed with turbulence and cannot reflect truthfully. An anxious person, eternally insecure, is unable to make a good judgment on a matter. When the mind is in a state of doubt it is compared to muddy water placed in a dark place that cannot clearly reflect an image. Thus, all five hindrances deprive the mind of the right understanding and happiness; and cause much stress and suffering. In addition, when they are frequently nourished, they will become the habitual patterns of the mind. These unwholesome mental factors arise and develop in depressed people are more than non-depressed people. So, this results in the people with depression being drowned in their own thoughts.

With excessive thinking and pondering one might tire the body, and when the body is tired, the mind comes disturbed, and when the mind is disturbed, it is far from concentration.<sup>66</sup> It is the style of the untrained mind; it works in the habitual wild manner like a monkey.<sup>67</sup> Everything is impermanent, the mind does not also except, it always varies in every moment. Markedly, this is the function of the mind without a self, “I” that controls it. The mind is only working in its process or thought is only thought. Therefore, the thing that we need to do is to train the mind by comprehending its tendency, characteristic, and nature. Then it will go in the right direction and happiness will come back in depressed people. Otherwise, in the vicious cycle, the negative mental factors affect the depressed feelings deepen and persist; as well as affects the bodily changes and behaviors of a depressed individual.

### **2.2.3 Depression as Painful Sensation and Abnormal Behavior**

In psychology, depression often starts with a cue which is an initial sense of unease is brought on by emotions, thoughts, sensations and behavior. When thoughts

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<sup>66</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), p. 595.

and emotions become dark, physical sensations and symptoms such as heaviness, fatigue, insomnia, and appetite change set in. All difficult emotions, negative thoughts, and uncomfortable sensations skew one's perception and one's ability to make healthy choices about behavior. This in turn can lead to even more negative thoughts, difficult emotions, uncomfortable sensations and abnormal behavior.

Philosophers used to refer to “mind and matter” as the two basic principles of the world. In Buddhism, these two terms are equivalent “*nāma* and *rūpa*”. Through *Abhidhamma*, the term “matter” is to spring from “*rūpa*”. *Rūpa* has been translated as ‘matter’, ‘corporeality’, ‘material’, ‘body’, ‘form’, etc., but none is exact. *Rūpa* comprises the characteristics of matter as well as those of energy.<sup>68</sup> *Rūpa* and *nāma* are interdependent. Pain of the body may be a result of pain in the mind. And pain in our minds may be connected to pain in our bodies. The characteristic of aversion is the avoidance of physical and emotional pain. When one is despair, the *rūpa* becomes correspondingly downcast. When a person is very dejected his features look very aged; when the anguish is extreme he dies broken-hearted.<sup>69</sup> The people suffer from depression behave differently because of their condition of the body and mind.

In the Buddhist viewpoint, the symptoms of depression are the outstanding manifestations of the *akusala cetasikas*, example for *thīna*, *middha*, *uddhacca*. While sloth - sluggishness (*thīna*) of mind and body, and torpor (*middha*) or dullness of mind and body. These two mental factors arise together. They deprive one of zeal and vitality.<sup>70</sup> Namely, *thīna*, its characteristic is lack of driving power. Its function is to dispel energy. It is manifested as the sinking of the mind. *Middha* is the morbid state of the mental factor. Its characteristic is unwieldiness. Its function is to smother. It is manifested as drooping.<sup>71</sup>

In science, loss of interest is usually mentioned with the term “anhedonia”. The term “anhedonia” is the diminished capacity to experience pleasure, is said to be a

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<sup>68</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Myanmar: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 2015), p. 174.

<sup>69</sup> Ashin Janakābhivaṃsa, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, trans., Professor U Ko Lay, (Malaysia: Inward Path Publisher, 2012), pp. 239-240.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>71</sup> Ācariya Anuruddha, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhamma Saṅgaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*, ed., Bhikkhu Bodhi, (Kandy: BPS, 2006), p. 84.

central feature of depression.<sup>72</sup> It is loss of interest in all activities, loss of working, loss of feeling warmth and ability to have pleasure, loss of feeling love and respond not capacity to close to others. Some people who experience anhedonia with both physical and social aspect. The physical anhedonia is an inability to feel pleasure in eating, touching and sex. The social anhedonia is a disinterest in social contact and a lack of pleasure in social situations.<sup>73</sup> Although, they have private interests accompanied with their characters. They are always excited and interested in their dreams. They feel hopeful when they think and expect future plans what will being happening. But since they get sad, those pleasures are lost. They are even neglectful of what they especially enjoy before.

Lacking of pleasure or interest is derived from prolonged sadness. Losing of pleasure in eating is considered eating disorder. Some people suffer from depression experience the condition of overeating or loss of appetite. It's also well known that depression is often associated with low levels of serotonin, as is food craving.<sup>74</sup> Some people don't feel any taste of the food that they liked before. They cannot distinguish which food is delicious or not. Good food may taste like card-board.<sup>75</sup> Every emotion, pleasant or unpleasant, is accompanied by physical changes which become more profound the longer the emotions persist. Being depressed is a profound emotional experience, and this upsets the body's functioning. The body becomes lack of energy, insomnia or hypersomnia, tiredness and fatigue. The next bodily sensation aspects are affected by depression are sleep disturbance and fatigue.

Sleep improves many aspects of waking life. It elevates mood, lowers stress, strengthens memory, and reduces pain. It also helps with concentration, thinking clearly, and making decision. Sleep disturbances encompass a wide range of complaints, including difficulty falling or staying asleep and poor sleep quality. Sleep

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Keedwell, "Brain Circuitry", *The International Encyclopedia of Depression*, ed., Rick E. Ingram, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2009): 91.

<sup>73</sup> Jennifer Purdie, *what is anhedonia*, on online, <https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/anhedonia> (accessed July 9, 2021).

<sup>74</sup> Alexandra W. Logue, *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (London: Book Now Ltd, 2015), p. 162.

<sup>75</sup> Donald F. Klein and Paul H. Wender, *Understanding Depression: A Complete Guide to Its Diagnosis and Treatment*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 15.

disturbance and short sleep increase risk of depression development and chronicity.<sup>76</sup> Sleeping too little or has interrupted sleep with frequent awakenings during the night is found in people have depression.<sup>77</sup> After a bad night of sleep, the people tend to be harder in their thinking, less adaptable to new information, and making decreased in attention. The poor sleep is also a part trigger people with depression have difficulty in thinking clearly, concentrating, being decisive, and doing small tasks. It can cause more negative moods and increase pain, which can lead to worse sleep.<sup>78</sup> The sleep, mood, and pain interact together. The effect of poor sleep quality is even larger for people with depressed mood. So, a poor sleep increases one's pain and depresses one's mood. And the further depressed mood is, the worse pain becomes; then both of them is able to be affected by sleep. The sleep disturbance of depressive illness at least exacerbates fatigue.

In the DSM-IV-TR criteria of the definition of depression, fatigue is described in three various dimensions, physical fatigue (loss of energy), mental fatigue (difficulty concentrating), and emotional fatigue (loss of interest and pleasure). It may be a primary factor of depression, along with other feelings of low mood, sadness, or loss of interest.<sup>79</sup> When it occurs, the patient normally complains of feeling "tired all the time".<sup>80</sup> Tiredness and lack of energy make one's action slow down. Fatigue can also significantly impair one's ability to function and carry out one's daily tasks.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the most typical pattern in depression is to feel worse in the early morning hours and better during the evening.<sup>82</sup> So, the vitality of a depressed person is dramatically pushed down to perform tasks they are used to having. Depression depletes

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<sup>76</sup> David A. Kalmbach et al., "Sleep Disturbance and Short Sleep as Risk Factors for Depression and Perceived Medical Errors in First-Year Residents", *Sleep Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (March 2017): 1-8.

<sup>77</sup> Susan J. Noonan, *Managing Your Depression: What You Can Do to Feel Better*, (America: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Kerstin Uvnas-Moberg, "Oxytocin May Mediate the Benefits of Positive Social Interaction and Emotions", *Psychoneuroendocrinology Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 8 (1998): 819-835.

<sup>79</sup> Susan J. Noonan, *Managing Your Depression: What You Can Do to Feel Better*, (America: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 40.

<sup>80</sup> Susan J. Noonan, *When Someone You Know Has Depression*, (America: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), p. 15.

<sup>81</sup> Susan J. Noonan, *Managing Your Depression*, Op.Cit, p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> J. Raymond DePaulo, *Understanding Depression: What We Know and What You Can Do About It*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), p. 14.

one's ability to concentrate or think clearly. This maybe springs from mental fatigue. The impact of thoughts, feelings on the body or vice versa gradually makes the body more weariness and slower. All these elements produce the exhaustion in the depressed patients. Some of those who have depression, may have thoughts of death or suicide. They show a loss of interest, withdrawal and isolation from others, or substance or alcohol use.<sup>83</sup> The core feature of depression is behavioral avoidance that is systematically avoiding, limiting time spent in, or escaping from situations, events, or interactions that could potentially trigger distressing, unwanted experiences.<sup>84</sup>

*Uddhacca* - restlessness. It may also be called the unsettled state of mind. The mind which cannot rest quickly on an object but flits about from object to object is said to be distracted. The mind arising together with *uddhacca* is called the distracted mind. When one is overpowered by distraction, one will become a drifter, a floater, a loafer, an aimless person.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, all the unwholesome mental factors make the depressed people exhausted; their energy is drained out of. After that, they behave differently like compulsive behavior, death suicide and it also feeds depression.

The risk of suicide and suicidal behavior is intimately tied to depressive disorders. Suicide ideation or attempt is one of the nine criteria that define major depression. Also three symptom clusters—anhedonia, hopelessness, and anxiety; agitation and panic; and aggression and impulsivity—have been hypothesized to increase risk for suicide (Fawcett, Busch, Jacobs, Kravitz, & Fogg, 1997).<sup>86</sup> Death may bring peace, but it will take away the hope that one day the terrible grief you bear will be recompensed, that your heart will be lightened.<sup>87</sup> It may be the terminal result which some people suffer from depression is feeling exhausted.

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<sup>83</sup> Susan J. Noonan, *When Someone You Know Has Depression*, Op.Cit, p. 92.

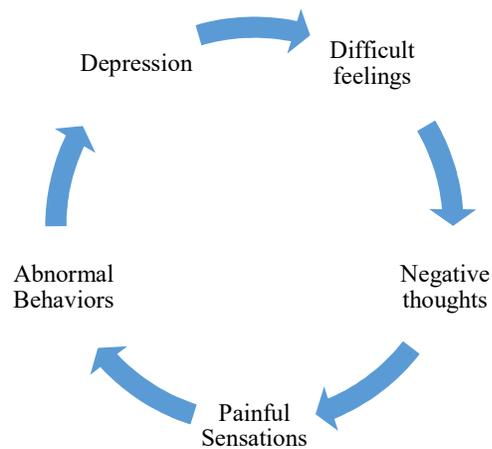
<sup>84</sup> Kirk D. Strosahl and Patricia J. Robinson, *The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Depression: Using Acceptance & Commitment Therapy to Move Through Depression & Create a Life Worth Living*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2017), p. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Ashin Janakābhivaṃsa, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, Op.Cit, p. 20.

<sup>86</sup> Ian H. Gotlib and Constance L. Hammen, *Handbook of Depression*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), pp. 510, 516.

<sup>87</sup> Dorothy Rowe, *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (England: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2003), pp. 6-7.

Besides, depressed people are very prone to catching colds or flu, and, sadly, some go on to develop cancer or heart disease.<sup>88</sup> This maybe summarizes that the changes in weight impair the body. The body's dysfunction makes the mood bad. The mood tends to create thinking negatively. The negative thoughts make the mood worse; the mood affects the body. The body becomes lacking energy, tiredness, and fatigue. Aches and pain are ignored because of being busy thinking. Depression causes a person to withdraw from the before liked activities, the tendency of being isolated is built within oneself. The relationship in work, family, and the connection between the close members is therefore broken. Like existing a firewall to prevent the depressed people from the outdoor world.



**Figure 4:** The Cycle of Depression

In sum, one experiences depression that like a person is strongly dominated by five hindrances. In *Mahā-Assapura Sutta*<sup>89</sup>, the Buddha teaches that one who is dominated by lust is like a debtor. A mind dominated by anger is like a sick person who has lost his appetite. The mind that is dominated by sloth and torpor is like a person imprisoned in a dungeon seeing only a few glimmers of light outside. The mind that is dominated by restlessness and remorse is like the mood of a slave who cannot decide everything on his own, always waiting for the decision of his master. A mind dominated by doubt is like a person lost in the desert, bewildered and does not know the way. It is

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> M I 275-276.

the mutual impact of the body and mind trigger depression excessive; being relapsed and recurrent for each individual as well as every episode. Or one's suffering is stretched endlessly with no end. Unless one finds the source of those sufferings and has methods to overcome them. By being aware of one's own cues and triggers makes it more likely that one will notice when that person is about to be pulled into a depression loop.

## **2.3 Causes Leading to Depression**

There is no perfect answer for the cause of depression, because it will arise depending on the structure of the brain, circumstances and personal character of each person. Some people experience depression is caused by changes in the body's chemistry that influence mood and thought processes. In other cases, some people have depression owing to distorted thinking patterns. Some of remaining cases become depressed for no obvious reason. In this section, the researcher will study the particular causes leading depression in two namely: 1. Causes Leading to Depression according to Modern Science. 2. Causes Leading to Depression according to Buddhism. The details are as follows:

### **2.3.1 Causes Leading to Depression according to Modern Science**

Depression is a complex illness. It is not a genetic fault or a mysterious illness that descends on one. It is something that one creates for oneself, and just as one creates it.<sup>90</sup> Most findings suggest that depression arises from biological factors. But biology is a part of one of the causes that trigger depression. Because it relates to one's feeling, thought, and behavior to oneself, others, and the world. At the root of this problem lies the need to understand individual differences in response to stress and adversity. To determine whether one becomes depressed or not will be dependent on a complex set of interlinked opinions relating to the particular circumstances of one's life that one has acquired over the years.<sup>91</sup> Most recent findings state that depression can result from a complex interaction of social, psychological, and biological factors. But one's experience is toward one's life through one's cognitive aspect that is influenced by psychological and social factors. Objectively, the first factor that causes depression

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<sup>90</sup> Dorothy Rowe, *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (England: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2003), p. 13.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

is negative thought. And depression can also result from the physical dimensions of the chemistry in the brain.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.3.1.1 Negative Thought Leading to Depression

Our thought patterns have a profound effect on our behavior and our health, whether is for better or worse. Because our thought patterns determine the ways that we perceive and explain reality, including our relationship to ourselves and the world. They also underlie our motivations for doing things and for making choices. The negative thoughts lead to an overwhelming mind-body crisis.

As the ancient Greek philosopher, Epictetus said that “It is not things in themselves which trouble us, but the opinions we have about these things.”. Indeed, some people tend to be extremely negative in the ways that they explain to themselves the causes of a bad event. This manner involves blaming, criticizing themselves for the bad things that happen to them. It also contains about thinking the effects of happened things that will last a long time and affect many different aspects of their lives. This reflects a person who experiences depressed, hopeless. Some people call this mode of thinking catastrophizing.<sup>93</sup> For example, when a person experiences a failure, this reaction style might be “ I always know I am dull and I always do everything wrong, this consequence verifies it”. That’s a distortion. Because cognitive therapists say that people often make assumptions about things. Unhelpful thinking often involves assumptions that are unrealistic, incorrect, destructive and focused on the worst-case scenario. It is like a dirty lens can distort the way we see the world. Unhelpful thinking patterns also distort the way we see things.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, each individual’s negative thoughts determine how that a person will experience life and becomes depressed.

The event-thought-feeling sequence is the basic building block of emotional life. Thoughts cause feelings and many feelings are preceded and caused by a thought. As we know, depression and other negative emotions persist and prolong because we get stuck in repetitive negative thinking about upsetting personal experience. This

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<sup>92</sup> Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, April 5, 2022.

<sup>93</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, (New York: Bantam Dell, 2005), p. 200.

<sup>94</sup> Malcolm Huxter, *Healing the Heart and Mind with Mindfulness: Ancient Path, Present Moment*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 99.

mindset is called *repetitive negative thought (RNT)*.<sup>95</sup> We encounter negative life events that easily trigger RNT. It traps people into a negative perspective about themselves, their life circumstances, and the future. Its main features are a passive, intrusive, uncontrollable, and abstract form of thought that contributes and accompanies anxiety and depression. Because RNT contributes to personal distress by narrowing our attention, intensifying a sense of lost control, magnifying negative thoughts and feelings, and promoting social withdrawal and isolation.<sup>96</sup> Rumination is a common form of RNT that contributes to sadness and depression.

Besides, negative thought tends to have inflexible personal standards and accompany typical words such as: “should,” “ought,” “must,” “require,” “need,” “demand,” and “expect.” This distorted pseudo need can lead to frustration, self-blame, and anger can lead to frustration, self-blame, and anger.<sup>97</sup> For example, some people often wouldn’t have the right attitude toward a sense of failure.<sup>98</sup> This is repeated over and over. They ask a lot of why questions: Why did this happen to me again? Why doesn’t my life ever get better? Why am I being punished? Why do I keep failing? Because rumination is all about asking why bad things happen to us, their consequence, and what it all means.<sup>99</sup> And day-to-day, they have been sunk and live with a bunch of confusion in these thoughts that they create. They only focus on problem-solving for unpleasant emotions. They unintentionally don’t realize that those unhelpful thoughts make them more distressing.

Furthermore, negative thought of self comes with the attachment style. The attachment style is the connection with others that are problematic in childhood or adolescence that may create vulnerability for later depression. They are rooted in an interpersonal perspective. The negative view primes the interpersonal problems arise when form the basis of misinterpretations of interaction and lead to criticism.<sup>100</sup> Some

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<sup>95</sup> David A. Clark, *The Negative Thoughts Workbook: CBT Skills to Overcome the Repetitive Worry, Shame, and Rumination That Drive Anxiety and Depression*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2020), p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>97</sup> William J. Knaus, *Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression: A Step-By-Step Program*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2006), p. 88.

<sup>98</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, Op.Cit, p. 90.

<sup>99</sup> David A. Clark, *The Negative Thoughts Workbook*, Op.Cit, p. 81.

<sup>100</sup> Rick E. Ingram (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Depression*, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2009), p. 352.

people make negative judgments about themselves that extend entire rejection of themselves. The inappropriate thinking happens in early attachment experiences and their cognitive, emotional, and social consequences are compelling candidate contributors to risk for depression in later life.<sup>101</sup> Because the child brings past relational experiences and resulting models of self and others into new relationships and experiences, and becomes an active participant in determining the trajectories of later social experiences and adjustment (Egeland & Carlson, 2004). These internal working models of attachment not only affect the individual's relational behavior (as experienced by others), but also her internalized perceptions, attributions, and emotional understanding of these relationships.<sup>102</sup> The negative thoughts arise in the process of the maturity of every individual through the close relationship, interpersonal problems, and the difficult experiences.

In sum, gain and loss, fame and disgrace, praise and blame, pleasure and pain are common; this is a natural rule in human life. But one's negative thought patterns oneself contribute to one's depression. That negative thought almost always involves this narrative about oneself and one's circumstances that ends with the conclusion that things are not good. It can have a powerful effect on that person's behavior, decisions, and even relationships. This is the first cause leading to depression.

### **2.3.1.2. The Physical Dimensions of the Chemistry in the Brain**

#### **Leading to Depression**

Recent discoveries about the brain suggest that the activities of brain cells are the culprits that cause us constant suffering in the process of evolution and maintenance of the body-mind balance. Mostly, our stress comes from real or imagined threats to our social status, not to our life. Then the brain may be signaling that situations are threats to our survival and readying us for extreme action that isn't necessary or appropriate to our day-to-day challenges.

The whole brain is just billions of neurons sending electrical signals. They turn into chemical signals that are called neurotransmitters to communicate. The

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<sup>101</sup> Keith S. Dobson and David J. A. Dozois, *Risk Factors in Depression*, (USA: Elsevier, 2008), p. 310.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.

information supports the view that depression results from a chemical imbalance. The relevance for depression is that certain neurotransmitters are known to play a role in the regulation of mood. Three neurotransmitters seem particularly important in depression: norepinephrine, dopamine (both very close chemical relatives of adrenalin), and serotonin.<sup>103</sup> Namely, a dysfunctional serotonin system is responsible for the lack of willpower and motivation. The difficulty in concentration and thinking is probably due to problems with norepinephrine. Dysfunction in the dopamine system leads to bad habits and lack of enjoyment. All of these neurotransmitters are necessary for proper functioning of dozens of circuits through the brain, and to make things more complicated, they all interact.<sup>104</sup> According to 2021 research, brain circuits involved in depression. Too much or too little activity in a given circuit may play a role in the onset of depression.<sup>105</sup>

Depression might be the result of an overactive default mode network – the site in the brain where rumination appears to take place. The thoughts and feelings may be the products of an overactive default mode network that tightly linked set of brain structures implicated in rumination, self-referential thought, and metacognition – thinking about thinking.<sup>106</sup> The circuits of the default mode network include the medial prefrontal cortex and the posterior cingulate cortex. The medial prefrontal cortex functions by linking subjective experiences over time. It holds memory of self-traits, traits of similar others, reflected self-knowledge, and future aspirations.<sup>107</sup> In depression, the prefrontal cortex is responsible for worrying, guilt, shame, problems with thinking clearly, and indecisiveness. The limbic system is the emotional part of the brain. It is responsible for things like excitement, fear, anxiety, memory, and desire.

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<sup>103</sup> Donald F. Klein and Paul H. Wender, *Understanding Depression: A Complete Guide to Its Diagnosis and Treatment*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 94-95.

<sup>104</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2015), p. 16.

<sup>105</sup> Sarah Wilson and Molly Burford, *how does Depression affect the Brain*, on online, <https://www.healthline.com/health/depression-physical-effects-on-the-brain> (accessed April 23, 2022).

<sup>106</sup> Michael Pollan, *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), pp. 378, 386.

<sup>107</sup> Ronald D. Siegel, *The Science of Mindfulness: A Research-Based Path to Well-Being*, (USA: The Great Courses, 2014), p. 378.

It is primarily composed of four regions: the hypothalamus, the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the cingulate cortex.<sup>108</sup> The hypothalamus is brain's operations manager. It coordinates the release of stress hormones to ready one's body for fighting or fleeing. The amygdala is brain's alarm center. It senses threats and other emotionally significant information and initiates the stress response.<sup>109</sup> The hippocampus is responsible for creating long-term memories. And because its neurons are very sensitive to stress, it often acts as the canary in the coal mine of depression. Lastly, the cingulate cortex controls focus and attention, which is of huge importance in depression, because what you focus on, whether by automatic habit or willful choice, makes a huge difference to your mood.<sup>110</sup> Each region has specific connections with other regions. Different regions often rely on different neurotransmitters. For example, the prefrontal cortex relies a lot on serotonin and norepinephrine to function properly, whereas the striatum depends mostly on dopamine. This means that changes in these neurotransmitters can have big effects on these regions.

The hypothalamus activity is a symptom of increased emotional arousal. Oxytocin is often called the "love hormone". It relates to feelings of trust, love, and connection, and reduces anxiety. The disruption of oxytocin and frontal-limbic circuitry reduce connectedness.<sup>111</sup> Dopamine neurons connect to the part of the hypothalamus where oxytocin is produced, and oxytocin stimulates the area of the brain stem where dopamine is produced. In addition, the dopamine-rich nucleus accumbens receives input from oxytocin neurons. When oxytocin isn't working properly, its proper interactions with dopamine are disrupted, and thus social interactions aren't always as enjoyable.<sup>112</sup>

Difficulty in concentration is a symptom of depression and a greater focus on the negative which are mediated by the cingulate cortex. The front of the cingulate is the anterior cingulate which is covered by the prefrontal cortex and is closely connected with it. While the neurotransmitter serotonin is highly concentrated in the anterior cingulate. Reducing serotonin makes fatigue; sluggish plan and decision;

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<sup>108</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral*, pp. 18, 20.

<sup>109</sup> Melanie Greenberg, *The Stress-Proof Brain: Master Your Emotion Response to Stress Using Mindfulness and Neuroplasticity*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2016), p. 14.

<sup>110</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral*, p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

reduced activity in the dorsal striatum. Poor sleep also has numerous negative effects in the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus. It also alters the function of the serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine systems.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, it worsens the mood, lowers your pain threshold, and interferes with learning and memory. Thus, the serotonin level is low that leads to depression manifested insomnia, anxiety, boredom, impatience and lack of enthusiasm. Sleep disruptions reduce the production of norepinephrine in the whole frontal cortex and affect it.

Moreover, the prefrontal cortex and limbic system, two other regions play important roles in depression: the striatum and the insula. Depression is often accompanied by bad habits that are primarily caused by disrupted activity in the striatum. The striatum has two main parts that are particularly important in depression: the dorsal striatum and the nucleus accumbens. Reducing dopamine activity in the dorsal striatum is primarily responsible for feelings of fatigue. The reduced dopamine activity in the nucleus accumbens explains why nothing seems enjoyable.<sup>114</sup>

The depressed people are more likely to suffer from chronic pain and tend to worry more about getting sick. The insula is part of the cortex that is sitting close to the amygdala and hippocampus. It's one of the main regions in the pain circuit and contributes more generally to bodily awareness. These symptoms arise from an increased awareness of bodily sensations, which is mediated by the insula.<sup>115</sup> Besides, genetics clearly plays an important role. A particular gene in the serotonin system affects the development of the anterior cingulate and its interactions with the amygdala. It increases one's risk for depression.<sup>116</sup> So, the gene factor can give one brain circuitry that is more likely to get depressed.

In short, the prefrontal cortex worries too much, and the emotional limbic system is too reactive. The insula makes things feel worse, and the anterior cingulate isn't helping by focusing on the negative. And the prefrontal cortex has a hard time inhibiting the bad habits of the dorsal striatum and nucleus accumbens and the contributions of the different neurotransmitters interconnected. Those factors state that

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp. 22, 69, 108.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

how one's brain circuits interact to create the downward spiral of depression. Depression is so hard to overcome because each circuit pulls the others downward.

### 2.3.2 Causes Leading to Depression according to Buddhism

Happiness is often defined in the world as getting what we like. Suffering is endurance, strain, confrontation, and acceptance of what we hate. Happiness comes from the two resources that are what we have and what we do not have. And suffering is also like that, “*yam piccham na labhati, tampi dukkham*”-suffering due to not getting what one wants as well as not wanting what one gets.”<sup>117</sup> We have got happiness or suffering is to depend on the present environment or the impact of the social circumstances on the stress we experience, our psychological tendency, and the past and present *karma* that we had created and have been creating. Depression is a kind of suffering that comes from those factors.

*Kamma* is the law of moral causation, one of the fundamental doctrines in Buddhism. The Buddha describes “Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.”<sup>118</sup> *Kamma* is volitional activity associated with wholesome or unwholesome *cittas*; its results are other *cittas* which experience the maturation of *kamma*.<sup>119</sup> *Kamma* does not necessarily mean past actions. It embraces both past and present deeds. Hence, in one sense, we are the result of what we were, we will be the result of what we are. In another sense, it should be added, we are not totally the result of what we were, we will not absolutely be the result of what we are.<sup>120</sup> In other words, we ourselves are responsible for our own happiness and misery. We create our own heaven. We create our own hell.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, one suffers from depression is due to oneself created unwholesome *kamma*.

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<sup>117</sup> Ashin Janakābhivaraṇsa, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, trans., Professor U Ko Lay, (Malaysia: Inward Path Publisher, 2012), p. 47.

<sup>118</sup> M III 203, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, trans., Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 1053.

<sup>119</sup> Ācariya Anuruddha, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhamma Saṅgaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*, ed., Bhikkhu Bodhi, (Kandy: BPS, 2006), p. 32.

<sup>120</sup> Nārada Mahāthera, *The Buddha and His teachings*, (Taiwan: Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., 1998), p. 267.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

In another aspect, *kamma* is an individual force, and is transmitted from one existence to another. It plays the chief part in the moulding of character.<sup>122</sup> Under the effect of *kamma* is that a person must be born and grown up in that environment. That person has those psychological tendencies. Then that person has feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that correspond to that person's psychology and in that place. In this way, *kamma* causes depression.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) or not knowing things as they truly are, is the chief cause of *kamma*. The Buddha states in the *Paticca Samuppāda* (Dependent Origination) that dependent on ignorance arise *kamma* activities (*avijjāpaccaya samkhārā*). Associated with ignorance is its ally craving (*taṇhā*), the other root of *kamma*. Evil actions are conditioned by these two causes. As mentioned above, depression is *dosa*, *dosa* is conditioned by *lobha*. So, *lobha* is cause, depression is result.

Through the study of *Abhidhamma*, *lobha* means greed, the first unwholesome root, covers all degrees of selfish desire, longing, attachment, and clinging. Its characteristic is grasping an object. Its proximate cause is seeing enjoyment in things that lead to bondage.<sup>123</sup> *Lobha* is not only looking for pleasure but also brings out sorrow; it is when we lose people who are dear to us or when we lose the things we enjoy.<sup>124</sup> As the story of Kisāgotamī<sup>125</sup>, she experienced a very enormous suffering, she lamented and sorrowed over her child's death. She was always despised by her in-laws her life because of coming from a poor family, her son was her only wealth. After she gave birth to a son, her in-laws started treating her more favorably. Loss of such a precious son equaled to loss of everything in her life. Instead, she was considering him as sleeping and ran around to look for a remedy to save her dead baby in hopelessness. She didn't accept the truth of life that everyone experiences birth, age, sickness, and death either sooner or later. Also in Paṭācāra's story<sup>126</sup>, she experienced a great loss, a series of traumatic and unexpected losses when her parents, husband, and babies all died. Her hope just arisen, it was lost due to their sudden death. Her weak expectation

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>123</sup> Ācariya Anuruddha, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, Op.Cit, pp. 83-84.

<sup>124</sup> Nina van Gorkom, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (London: Zolag, 2010), p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> Thī 144.

<sup>126</sup> Thī 135.

of support from her parents was also over when she heard that her parents were dead in the storm. Thus, she was feeling completely unsupported. Her shock was so intense that she had lost touch with reality completely and even lost her sense of appropriate behavior and started wandering on the street naked. In other words, greed and lust are attempts to get “some of that” for me; hatred and aversion are attempts to place greater distance between “me and that”. All the defilements depend upon the perception of a barrier between self and other, and all of them foster this perception every time they are exercised.<sup>127</sup>

Perception plays an important role for arising and developing depression. Because most of our world views are based on ideas from our families, friends, and religions that we are born into. They mold our perceptions and how we think and generate action. Depression can spring from one’s perverse look view, or *vipallāsa* of the nature of phenomena. The word “*vipallāsa*” means derangement, corruption, perversion.<sup>128</sup> The Buddha states that there are three kinds of perversion: the perversion of perception (*saññā vipallāsa*), the perversion of thought (*citta vipallāsa*), and the perversion of view (*diṭṭhi vipallāsa*) about impermanence (*annica*), ill (*dukkha*), not-self (*anattā*) and foul (*asubha*). All of these *vipallāsa* derive from *diṭṭhi* (*micchādiṭṭhigatā sattā khittacittā visaññino*).<sup>129</sup> *Diṭṭhi* here means wrong view, seeing wrongly. Its characteristic is unwise (unjustified) interpretation of things. Its function is to preassume. That means to take wrongly. It is manifested as a wrong interpretation or belief. Its proximate cause is unwillingness to see the noble ones (*ariya*), and so on.<sup>130</sup>

*Diṭṭhi* is a *cetasika* which can arise with *lobha-mūla-citta* (*citta* rooted in attachment). It is responsible for extending the life cycle or the round of rebirth that is known as *samsāra*. It has been explained that *moha* clouds the mind and blinds the eye not to see things as they really are. It makes one see things as *nicca* (permanent), *sukha*

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<sup>127</sup> H. Gunaratana Mahathera, *Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1991), p. 178.

<sup>128</sup> A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera, *Concise Pāli-English Dictionary*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1997), p. 239.

<sup>129</sup> A II 52, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikaya)*, trans., F.L. Woodward, (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2008), pp. 60-61.

<sup>130</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *Handbook of Abhidhamma Studies*, Vol. I, (Malaysia: Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society, 2012), p. 251.

(pleasant), *atta* (self or person) and *subha* (beautiful). Because of this wrong vision, *lobha* clings or attaches to this ‘self or person’ and *diṭṭhi* takes the wrong view that ‘self’ and ‘person’ really exists.<sup>131</sup> In other words, one’s perceptions (*saññā*) are closely associated with one’s views (*diṭṭhi*). Both of those affect how we think (*citta*) and generate (*saṅkhāra*). For this reason, one suffers from depression because one has the wrong view about “this is me, this is mine”, or “this is my living soul” through some aspects of experiences in life. Then, one develops unconsciously numerous sorts of *vipallāsa* about things in this world such as permanent, happiness, beautiful, and worthy of desire and so on. As a result, one does everything in order to prolong happiness, but the consequence makes depression get stronger.

As we know, everything itself is neither good nor bad. But the mind is blinded by *moha*, *Moha* is delusion, *moha* is a synonym for *avijjā*, ignorance. It is manifested as the absence of right understanding or as mental darkness. Its proximate cause is unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). *Ayoniso manasikāra* is the opposite of wisdom or *paññā*.<sup>132</sup> One is lack of wisdom; one cannot see what is true or the nature of objects. At this time, there are tension, agitation and afflictions have chance to come in and annoy the mind. Gradually, these defilements are accumulated and become that person’s psychology tendency. In addition, that person lives in the inconvenient environment, that cannot afford to overcome the obstacles in one’s life.

In short, there are many triggers that influence each other and cause depression according to the Buddhist aspect. They can derive from *kamma*, the environmental life, the psychological tendency, the unwise attention and the core factor is the wrong view.

## 2.4 Influences of Depression

Depression is a mental disorder that is pervasive in the world and affects us all. According to the World Health Organization’s report, depression estimated 3.8% of the population affected, including 5.0% among adults and 5.7% among adults older than 60 years. Approximately 280 million people in the world have depression.

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<sup>131</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Myanmar: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 2015), p. 71.

<sup>132</sup> Sayādaw U Silānanda, *Handbook of Abhidhamma Studies*, Op.Cit, pp. 244-246.

Especially when recurrent and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide. Over 700 000 people die due to suicide every year. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in 15-29-year-olds.<sup>133</sup>

It is also a mental health disorder that prevents people from conducting a normal life, including the ability to hold down a job, attend school, and perform other normal functions. It affects all ages and those people who are employed, unemployed, and retired. According to the World Health Organization (2012), MDD is a leading cause of disability, affecting nearly 350 million individuals worldwide and contributing significantly to the global burden of disease.<sup>134</sup> The Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) showed that one of the most disabling mental disorders is depression ranked among the top 25 leading causes of burden worldwide in 2019. This burden was high across the entire lifespan, for both sexes, and across many locations.<sup>135</sup> Worldwide, including in the developing world, depression accounts for more of the disease burden. Depression claims more years than war, cancer, and AIDS put together. Other illnesses, from alcoholism to heart disease, mask depression when it causes them; if one takes that into consideration, depression may be the biggest killer on earth.<sup>136</sup> By 2030 it is expected to be the largest contributor to the disease burden for women in both high-income and low- and middle-income countries.<sup>137</sup>

Although this disease is treatable, there are effective treatments for mental disorders. More than 75% of people in low- and middle-income countries receive no treatment. There are barriers to effective care that include a lack of resources, lack of trained health-care providers and social stigma associated with mental disorders. In

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<sup>133</sup> World Health Organization, *Depression*, on online, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression> (accessed October 28, 2021).

<sup>134</sup> World Health Organization, *Depression: A Global Crisis World Mental Health Day October 10 2012*, (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2012), p. 6.

<sup>135</sup> GBD 2019 Disease and Injuries Collaborators, “Global burden of 369 diseases and injuries in 204 countries and territories, 1990–2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019”, *Global Health Metrics*, Vol. 396, (October 17, 2020): 1204-1222.

<sup>136</sup> Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, (USA: Scribner, 2001), p. 36.

<sup>137</sup> World Health Organization, *Depression: A Global Crisis World Mental Health*, Op.Cit, p. 14.

countries of all income levels, people who experience depression are often not correctly diagnosed, and others who do not have the disorder are too often misdiagnosed and prescribed antidepressants.<sup>138</sup>

The economic consequences of these health losses are equally large: a recent study estimated that the cumulative global impact of mental disorders in terms of lost economic output will amount to US\$ 16.3 trillion between 2011 and 2030. The recent analysis calculated treatment costs and health outcomes in 36 low-, middle- and high-income countries for the 15 years from 2016-2030, low levels of recognition and access to care for depression and another common mental disorder, anxiety, result in a global economic loss of a trillion US dollars every year.<sup>139</sup>

In sum, depression, especially in its self-destructive clinical expression is one of the major psychopathological conditions that are linked with economic crises. Whether mild, moderate, or severe, depression contributes significantly to the burden of disability and affects the quality of life people enjoy. Hence, we must find the best way to heal this disease. We together use the resources at our own to build increased resilience in individuals and society in order to reduce the burden of disease and individual suffering resulting from depression.

## **2.5 Method in the Management of Depression**

The management of major depression involves establishing a correct diagnosis, applying evidence based, and goal directed principles of treatment. If one has the cues of depression, firstly, that person has to seek help from related professionals such as a psychologist, therapist, or psychiatrist in order to identify the severity of the symptoms and the cause of depression. The treatment plan is different for everyone depending on the degree of symptoms. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression is usually treated with medications, psychotherapy, or a

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> World Health Organization, *Mental Health: Massive Scale-up of Resources Needed If Global Targets are to be met*, on online, <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-06-2018-mental-health-massive-scale-up-of-resources-needed-if-global-targets-are-to-be-met> (accessed October 28, 2021).

combination of the two. If these treatments don't reduce symptoms, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and other stimulation therapies may be options to explore.<sup>140</sup>

Mindfulness is the best way to be with our suffering without being overwhelmed by it. Mindfulness is the capacity to dwell in the present moment, to know what's happening in the here and now.<sup>141</sup> Mindfulness like many forms of therapy, loosens the repression barrier. Depression involves shutting down and turning away from pain while mindfulness turns toward the experience at hand, and in so doing, it challenges the depressive stance.<sup>142</sup> That's why mindfulness could help us so much with depression.

Through the support of a medical professional, antidepressants have a strong evidence base for the treatment of MDD, for moderate-to-severe major depressive episodes (MDEs). There are many kinds of antidepressants help improve by increasing levels of chemicals in the brain that control mood or stress levels. The main drug classes of antidepressants are SSRIs, selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitors (NDRI), noradrenergic and specific serotonergic agents (NaSSAs), TCAs, MAO-Is, and melatonin modulators (agomelatine), multimodal serotonin modulator and stimulator (SMS) antidepressants.<sup>143</sup> Most antidepressants aim to reduce depressive symptoms. All antidepressants have a delay in therapeutic response of 2–4 weeks from the initiation of treatment, and a full response (i.e., remission) may take as long as 8–12 weeks. Given similar effectiveness among medications, the choice of which antidepressant to use as first-line treatment is typically based on the relative safety, tolerability, and ease of use of each drug. However, there are a few side effects which a person can experience while taking antidepressants such as gastrointestinal disturbance (nausea, diarrhea, gastroesophageal reflux), activation of insomnia, anxiety/agitation, and sexual

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<sup>140</sup> NIH, *Depression*, on online, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression> (accessed April 26, 2022).

<sup>141</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *No Mud No Lotus*, (California: Parallax Press, 2014), p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> Ronald D. Siegel, *The Science of Mindfulness: A Research-Based Path to Well-Being*, (America: The Teaching Company, 2014), p. 229.

<sup>143</sup> Roger S. McIntyre (ed.), *Major Depressive Disorder*, (Netherlands: Elsevier, 2020), pp. 103-104.

dysfunction. Medication is not usually suitable for long-term use.<sup>144</sup> Importantly, medications cannot address these issues directly.

Cognitive behavioral therapies (CBT) are the most well-established evidence-based psychotherapeutic treatments practiced in mental health care. Originally developed by Aaron Beck, cognitive therapy is based upon the premise that depression arises from negative automatic thoughts that are an individual's default response, setting one up for a vicious cycle of negative thoughts, followed by corresponding negative behavior and expectations, leading to additional negative thoughts and emotions that ultimately result in impaired function and depressive symptoms. Cognitive therapy is designed to identify and modify these automatic negative thoughts to break the cycle. Behavioral therapy is an extension of this cognitive approach in which modifications based upon correcting negative behaviors are implemented to further disrupt this vicious cycle.<sup>145</sup> So, the goal of CBT shows how automatic negative thoughts and behavior distorted beliefs that lead to depressive moods. Patients need to learn strategies to modify these beliefs and practice adaptive thinking patterns about their lives and about themselves.<sup>146</sup>

In many recent years, mindfulness has been applied increasingly often in treating mental health care. It is considered a supplementary treatment option for people who have been diagnosed with depression. Mindfulness-based interventions are positive treatments that can be used for depression, anxiety, stress, and suicidal ideation as well as drug-dependent depression and addiction. Mindfulness and MBCT may be superior to psychoeducation in the treatment of unremitting or recurrent major depression, yet can be used concomitantly with first-line medication. Because MBCT has been found to be as effective as antidepressant treatments in preventing depressive

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<sup>144</sup> Stephen M. Strakowski, MD and Erik B. Nelson, MD, *Major Depressive Disorder*, (America: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 52-58.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>146</sup> Sidney H Kennedy, Raymond W Lam, David J Nutt, Michael E Thase, *Treating Depression Effectively: Applying Clinical Guidelines*, (UK: Informa Healthcare, 2007), pp. 13-14.

relapse, patients who do not want, or cannot tolerate, long-term antidepressant treatment can use MBCT as an alternative therapy.<sup>147</sup>

Unlike cognitive therapy, the mindfulness approach does not try to change the content of negative thinking. Rather, it encourages participants to change their relationship to thoughts, feelings and body sensations, so that they have an opportunity to discover that these are fleeting events in the mind and the body that they can choose to engage with – or not. That is, repeated practice in noticing, observing with curiosity and compassion, and shifting perspective helps participants to realize that their thoughts, emotions and sensations are just thoughts, emotions and sensations, rather than ‘truth’ or ‘me’. They learn to see more clearly the patterns of the mind, and to recognize when mood is beginning to dip without adding to the problem by falling into analysis and rumination – to stand on the edge of the whirlpool and watch it go round, rather than disappearing into it. This helps break the old association between negative mood and the negative thinking it would normally trigger. Participants develop the capacity to allow distressing emotions, thoughts and sensations to come and go, without feeling that they have to suppress them, run away from them or fight them. They learn to stay in touch with the present moment, without being driven to ruminate about the past or worry about the future.<sup>148</sup>

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is based on Jon Kabat-Zinn’s stress reduction program (MBSR, 1970s) at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, which was developed to help people with chronic physical pain and stress. It includes meditation techniques to help participants become more aware of their experience in the present moment, by tuning into moment-to-moment changes in the mind and the body. Early in the 1990s, psychologists John Teasdale and Mark Williams (from the United Kingdom) and Zindel Segal (from Canada) reasoned that mindfulness training could have powerful effects in preventing relapse in recurrent depression. Over the past 20 years, they and others have continued this research. As a result, mindfulness

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<sup>147</sup> Lindsay Maxwell, MN, NP, and Elsie Duff, PhD(c), NP, “Mindfulness: An Effective Prescription for Depression and Anxiety”, *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners – JNP*, Vol. 12, No. 6 (June 2016): 403-409.

<sup>148</sup> J. Mark G. Williams and Willem Kuyken, “Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy: a promising new approach to preventing depressive relapse”, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 200, No. 5 (May 2012): 359-360.

has become part of mainstream evidence-based psychological treatments. MBCT reduces the recurrence rate over 12 months by 40–50% compared with the usual treatment and has proved to be as effective as maintenance antidepressants in preventing new episodes of depression. The UK government’s national institute for health and Clinical excellence (NICE) has recommended it as a cost-effective treatment for preventing relapse in depression. The development of MBCT was not only a highly significant advance in evidence-based therapy for recurrent depression, but also a milestone in the field of mental health, with huge potential of global significance. MBCT is a cost-effective way of reducing the risk of depression without relying on medication. It can build resilience that can help people suffering from a wide range of emotional problems: from health anxiety, social phobia, panic, and agoraphobia to bipolar disorders and chronic depression.<sup>149</sup>

Mindfulness, also known as mindfulness meditation, is the core component of MBCT. Mindfulness has been described as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are”. Awareness of the patterns of thought, feelings, and body sensations that characterize relapse-related mind states (and the driven–doing mode of mind more generally) is an essential first step in recognizing the need for corrective action. Intentionally (on purpose) changing the focus and style of attention is the “mental gear lever” by which processing can be switched from one cognitive mode to another. And the nonjudgmental, present-moment focus of mindfulness indicates that it is indeed very closely related to the being mode of mind.<sup>150</sup> The structure of MBCT is similar to MBSR, only it’s done in groups of up to 12 recovered depressed patients over the course of eight weeks or eight sessions. They also give daily homework assignments that help people both do their mindfulness practice and help them notice what their thought patterns are about. The first week of practicing is the body scan, cultivating mindfulness in daily life by bringing moment-to-moment awareness to routine activities such as brushing your teeth, showering, drying your body, getting dressed, eating,

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<sup>149</sup> Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale, *The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-Week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress*, (USA: The Guilford Press, 2014), p. 30.

<sup>150</sup> Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*, (USA: The Guilford Press, 2013), p. 76.

driving, or taking out the garbage, knowing what you are doing as you are actually doing it and on what you are thinking and feeling from moment to moment as well. The second week is the body scan, ten-minute sitting with awareness of breath, being aware of one pleasant event per day in your life. Week 3 is mindful standing yoga, mindfulness of the breath, and body, three-minute breathing space, awareness of unpleasant feelings. Week 4 is mindful standing yoga, mindfulness the breath, and body, awareness of pleasantness and unpleasantness, and three-minute breathing space. Week 5 is mindfulness of breath and body, then exploring a difficulty, three-minute breathing space, and opening the Body Door. Week 6 is mindfulness of breath, body, sounds, and thoughts, three-minute breathing space, and opening the Thought Door. Week 7 is alternate daily (1) meditation of choice with (2) mindfulness of breath, body, sounds, and thoughts for forty minutes per day. Week 8 is the rest of your practice: choose a sustainable pattern of formal and informal mindfulness practice.<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, the first for these “third wave” or generation of interventions with behavior therapy is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) that known as “ACT” (pronounced as the word “act). ACT developed by Hayes et al (2004) is similar to MBCT in likewise promoting mindfulness, but it goes beyond MBCT to also incorporate commitment and behavior-change processes as part of therapeutic change. ACT is as mindfulness and acceptance processes. In ACT, mindfulness defines as a combination of defusion, acceptance, contact with the present moment, and a transcendent sense of self that is a powerful cooperation in producing therapeutic change. Depressed people learn to reduce the impact and influence of unwanted thoughts and feelings, through the effective use of mindfulness. They learn to stop fighting with their private experiences—to open up to them. From the perspective of ACT, the pathogenic processes contribute to depression - fusion, experiential avoidance, rumination, attachment to a damaged conceptualized self. The goal of ACT is not to eliminate depression, rather is to increase psychological flexibility to freely choose various ways of leading a vital and valued life. The six core processes that contribute to psychological flexibility—defusion, acceptance, self as context, contact with the present moment, values, and committed action—and the three groupings into

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<sup>151</sup> Mark Williams et al., *The Mindful Way through Depression*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), p. 234.

which they can be paired—defusion and acceptance, commitment and behavior change, mindfulness and self as context—while instrumental in all cases of depression for which ACT is an appropriate treatment option.<sup>152</sup> Each principle has its own specific methodology, exercises, homework and metaphors. For example, (1) defusion: learning to perceive thoughts, images, memories and other cognitions as what they are—nothing more than bits of language, words and pictures—as opposed to what they can appear to be—threatening events, rules that must be obeyed, objective truths and facts, through the effective use of mindfulness. (2) Acceptance: making room for unpleasant feelings, sensations, urges, and other private experiences; allowing them to come and go without struggling with them, running from them, or giving them undue attention. (3) Contact with the present moment: bringing full awareness to you’re here and-now experience, with openness, interest, and receptiveness; focusing on, and engaging fully in whatever you are doing. (4) Self as context: accessing a transcendent sense of self; a continuity of consciousness that is unchanging, ever-present, and impervious to harm. From this perspective, it is possible to experience directly that you are not your thoughts, feelings, memories, urges, sensations, images, roles, or physical body. These phenomena change constantly and are peripheral aspects of you, but they are not the essence of who you are. (5) Values: clarifying what is most important, deep in your heart; what sort of person you want to be; what is significant and meaningful to you; and what you want to stand for in this life. (6) Committed Action: setting goals, guided by your values, and taking effective action to achieve them.<sup>153</sup>

Finally, mindfulness-based treatments can produce lasting beneficial changes in our brains. Mindfulness strengthens the brain’s networks that regulate emotional reactivity. In depression, one potential way to reduce default mode network activity in the brain is through the practice of mindfulness meditation. A study by Garrison et al. (2015) indicates that meditation is associated with reduced activations in the DMN relative to an active association task for meditators as compared to controls. For depression, reduced default-mode network activity in regions associated

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<sup>152</sup> Robert D. Zettle, *ACT for Depression: A Clinician’s Guide to Using Acceptance & Commitment Therapy in Treating Depression*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2007), p. 53.

<sup>153</sup> Russell Harris, “Embracing Your Demons: An Overview of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy”, *Psychotherapy in Australia*, Vol. 12, No.4 (2006): 2-8.

with subjective evaluation of emotional experience and self-referencing are thought to allow the individual to experience the present moment with greater objectivity, reducing bias or valuation. A reduction in self-referential evaluation trains the individual to abandon emotionally charged assessments of their internal and external world, thus altering patterns of self-judgment and value assignment. Through meditation, the patient's self-perception changes from an enduring entity to a transient entity. In this way, the patient becomes less fixated and less likely to ruminate on faults and mistakes. Moreover, the benefits of reduced DMN interferences include improvements in attentional control. Specifically, the brain activation during mindfulness meditation involve relatively increased connectivity between DMN and brain structures that are implicated in monitoring for conflict, as well as cognitive control, such as the dorsal anterior cingulate and dorsolateral prefrontal cortices.<sup>154</sup> The mindfulness technique helps activate the prefrontal cortex. It simply means that a person is aware of his emotions and his emotional responses to other people and the outside world. Emotional awareness increases activity in the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, which then communicates through the medial prefrontal cortex to reduce amygdala reactivity. That means that if a person can have the wherewithal to recognize his feelings when he is upset, sad, anxious, or stressed, he will actually feel a little better. Mindfulness training reduced the usual deactivation in their insula and lateral prefrontal cortex so that they kept their same level of functioning, despite feeling sad. Mindfulness increased activity in the ventral anterior cingulate, which is the area that correlates with increased optimism.<sup>155</sup> Hence, mindfulness can help to manage depression by itself or in its combination with other therapies.

## 2.6 Concluding Remarks

In my concluding remarks in this chapter, the problems of depression appear as a worldwide mental disorder of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors manifestations. It

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<sup>154</sup> Rozalyn Ayers Simon and Maria Engström, "The default mode network as a biomarker for monitoring the therapeutic effects of meditation", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 6, No. 776 (Jun 2015): 1-10.

<sup>155</sup> Alex Korb, *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*, (Canada: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2015), pp. 134, 185.

is known as a kind of suffering deriving from the mind defilements and is classified into five categories named “five hindrances” mentioned in Buddhist psychology. Its main cause might come from the wrong view. Depression has a bunch of symptoms that can range from mild to severe and may come and go over time. It is a highly chronic, relapsed, and recurrent disease that differs from person to person.

There are two main ways to manage major depression. Firstly, Western medical treatment is the antidepressants to reduce its symptoms and help improve by increasing the chemicals of the brain. Secondly, psychotherapies are critical for managing patients with mild to moderate depression by replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts in order to avoid the activation of frequent maladaptive response thoughts. They also manage effectively the negative psychosocial consequences of major depression when combined with antidepressants.

The way for managing major depression that experts had advised and applied popular in the Western clinics are mindfulness-based therapies such as Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) or Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is a comprehensive integration of mindfulness in the treatment of depression.

## Chapter III

### The Concept and Practical Method of Mindfulness in Buddhism

The use of mindfulness as a therapeutic method in psychotherapy, psychiatry, education, leadership and management, and a wide range of other theoretical and practical disciplines has sparked a surge in interest in the Buddhist idea of mindfulness during the last several decades. In Buddhist perspective, mindfulness is the most important factor for spiritual cultivation or the key to the entire process of liberation from defilements. It is both the purpose and also the solution used the end of the path. There are various ways to explore mindfulness; it may be beneficial to take a fresh look at mindfulness by clarifying its meaning, role, and effective method to practice.

In this chapter, the researcher will study about four topics namely: 1. The Meaning of Mindfulness, 2. The Role of Mindfulness 3. The Practical Method of Mindfulness, and 4. Benefits of Cultivating Mindfulness. The details are as follows:

#### 3.1 The Meaning of Mindfulness

“Mindfulness” happens to be the modern English rendering of the Buddhist psychological term “*sati*” which literally means “memory.”<sup>1</sup> The most common and rewarding aspect of mindfulness is expressed in Buddhism in terms of its practice, which is called *Satipaṭṭhāna*, usually translated as “establishments” or “foundations” of mindfulness. So, strictly speaking, *sati* is not really memory, but it does activate memory. In the context of mindfulness practice, it has nothing to do with past memory; it is not to remember anything in the past but to remember everything in the present; that is, to be mindful of present psycho-physical phenomena that represent or constitute

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<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, (Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 635.

what we really are. In this sense, mindfulness is “observing power”.<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of practice mindfulness was claimed by the Buddha as follows: “This is the only way, *bhikkhus*, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for reaching the Noble Path, for the realization of *nibbāna*, namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.” Moreover, the Buddha always addressed the monks as *bhikkhus*, in the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, “*bhikkhus*”, it must be understood monks as well as nuns and lay person.<sup>3</sup> Thus, many contemporary Buddhist teachers, especially who follow the Theravāda tradition advocate mindfulness. There are these four establishments of mindfulness.

“What are the four? Here, *bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* abides contemplating the body as body, ardent, full aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, full aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, full aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, full aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”<sup>4</sup>

The emphasis on remembering as a prominent quality of mindfulness is expressed by Ānanda when he explained to the Sākya Mahānāma of the Buddhist path of training the mind. *Sati* is mentioned among seven good qualities to be cultivated. And in this explanation, it involves the ability to remember things done or words spoken even a long time ago in the past with the strength of memory (*satimā hoti, paramena satinepakkena samannāgato, cirakatampi cirabhāsitampi saritānussaritā*).<sup>5</sup> It implies is not that *sati* itself is memory, but that it is a quality of the mind that facilitates and enables memory. This meaning of *sati* points out that if *sati* is present, memory will be able to function well. In other words, *sati* is required not only to fully take in the moment to be remembered, but also to bring this moment back to mind at a later time.

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<sup>2</sup> U Hla Myint, *Great Observing Power (Satipaṭṭhāna): In remembrance of the late Sayadaw U Sīlānanda*, (Tathagata Meditation Center, 2013), pp. 65-66.

<sup>3</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004), pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> M I 356, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Op.Cit, p. 462.

To “re-collect”, then, becomes just a particular instance of a state of mind characterized by “collectedness” and the absence of distraction. In addition to its relationship to memory, this quality is to be sharpened in the Buddhist practice so that it finally leads to the liberation of the mind from all cankers.<sup>6</sup>

The meaning of *sati* (mindfulness) memory becomes particularly prominent with the recollections (*anussati*). The employment of *sati* in Buddhist practices relates to the higher development of the mind. One often practices the six recollections (*anussati*), they are recollection of the Buddha’s virtues, of the Dhamma’s virtues, of the Saṅgha’s virtues, of one’s ethical conduct, of one’s generosity, and of deities (*buddhānussatiṃ, dhammānussatiṃ, saṅghānussatiṃ, sīlānussatiṃ, cāgānuassatiṃ, devatānussatiṃ*)<sup>7</sup> that lead to joy and peace. In these contexts, it is reflection on certain chosen objects along with their associations so that they could be utilized for cultivation of one’s own spirituality. They have been considered as quite useful in the development of *samādhi* and *samatha*.

Mindfulness must be understood from descriptions of its practice, the compound *satipaṭṭhāna* is itself composed of *sati* and *upaṭṭhāna*. Herein, *upaṭṭhāna* means, firstly, ‘setting up, establishing,’ which is what one does with mindfulness. Bhikkhu Bodhi explained mindfulness as a stance of observation or watchfulness toward one’s own experience. He characterized this stance of *sati* as a ‘bending back’ of the light of consciousness upon the experience subject in its physical, sensory, and psychological dimensions. This act of ‘bending back’ serves to illuminate the events occurring in these domains, lifting them out from the twilight zone of unawareness into the light of clear cognition. Furthermore, *sati* is equated with *upaṭṭhāna* which means, secondly, ‘the presence’. So, mindfulness establishes the presence of the object and thereby makes it available to scrutiny and discernment. In other words, mindfulness is characterized in the simplest term as lucid awareness. Bhikkhu Bodhi stated that mindfulness implies two meanings as memory and as lucid awareness: “When the object being cognized pertains to the past-when it is apprehended as something that was

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<sup>6</sup> Bhikkhu Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhanā: The Direct Path to Realization*, (London: Windhorse Publications, 2003), p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> A III 285-288; Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans., Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 2010), pp. 197-288.

formerly done, perceived, or spoken-its vivid presentation takes the form of memory. When the object is a bodily process like in-and-out breathing or the act of walking back and forth, or when it is a mental event like a feeling or thought, its vivid presentation takes the form of lucid awareness of the present.<sup>8</sup> In Abhidhamma, he also defined that mindfulness (*sati*) “as a mental factor, it signifies presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, rather than the faculty of memory regarding the past.”<sup>9</sup>

Mindfulness is the core factor of the *satipaṭṭhāna*, which is a process on the liberation path in Buddhism. Then mindfulness is employed in different practices. For example, Nyanaponika Thera defined *Sati* (mindfulness) is “a kind of attentiveness that is good, skillful or *kusala*.” This comes through bare attention. Bare attention is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at successive moments of perception. It is called ‘bare’ because it attends just to the bare facts of a perception as presented either through the five physical senses or through the mind which, for Buddhist thought, constitutes the sixth sense. When attending to that six-fold sense impression, attention or mindfulness is kept to a bare registering of the facts observed, without reacting to them by deed, speech, or by mental comment which may be one of self-reference (like, dislike, etc.), judgment or reflection.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Dr. Khammai Dhammasami explained that bare attention is the major instrument used to observe the experiences, thoughts, and emotions one has. No denial, but acceptance is the principle. Awareness and acceptance of the phenomena will lead to a discovery of their true nature and comprehensive understanding, which alone can control and liberate the mind from the circle of frustration and disappointment.<sup>11</sup>

Bhikkhunī Kusuma said “*sati* (mindfulness) is one of the twenty-five “states that are good”. *Sati* accompanies every skillful consciousness; *Sati* does not accompany

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<sup>8</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, “What does Mindfulness Really Mean, in Mindfulness”, *Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins, and Applications*, eds., J. Mark G. Williams and Jon Kabat-Zinn, (New York: Routledge, 2013): 25-26.

<sup>9</sup> Ācariya Anuruddha, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhamma Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*, ed., Bhikkhu Bodhi, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 2006), p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 2005), p. 10, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Ven. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, *Difference Aspect of Mindfulness*, (Malaysia: Penang, Inward Path Publication, 2009), p. 4.

unwholesome consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> In this sense, mindfulness is non-forgetful of what is *kusala* and it keeps us from *akusala*. Also, those who do not know about the Dhamma are able to perform wholesome deeds; but it is through the Dhamma that one can know more precisely what is *kusala* and what is *akusala*. Association with the good friend in Dhamma, listening to the Dhamma and considering it are most helpful conditions for mindfulness in the field of *dāna*, *sīla*, *samatha* and insight; thus, for all levels of mindfulness. The generosity, the patience and all the other good qualities of the true friend in Dhamma can remind one to develop such qualities as well. Because there are many opportunities for generosity, for morality, and for mental development but we are often forgetful of *kusala* and we waste such opportunities. When mindfulness arises, there is heedfulness of *kusala* and then the opportunity for *kusala* which presents itself is not wasted. So, there has to be mindfulness with *dāna*, with *sīla*, with *samatha*, and with the development of insight.<sup>13</sup> Hence, in *Dhammasangani*, the first book of Theravāda Abhidhammapiṭaka mentions *sati* as a concomitant (*cetasika*) arising with sensuous wholesome consciousness and also explain as follow: the mindfulness which on that occasion is recollecting, calling back to mind; the mindfulness which is remembering, bearing in mind, the opposite of superficiality and of obliviousness; mindfulness as faculty; mindfulness as power, right mindfulness.<sup>14</sup>

Mindfulness is one of a number of qualities whose cultivation is presented as the core foundation to the Buddhist path to “enlightenment” or “awakening”. Therefore, it is included in occurs in the Buddhist scriptures in many contexts and is a member of several groups of doctrinal terms. ‘Right Mindfulness’ (*sammā-sati*) is the seventh factor of the ‘Noble Eightfold Path leading to the Extinction of Suffering’ that constitutes the fourth of the Four Noble Truths. In a threefold division of that eightfold path—into Virtue, Concentration, and Wisdom—Right Mindfulness belongs to the second group, Concentration (*samādhi*), together with Right Effort and Right Concentration. Mindfulness is the first of the seven Factors of Enlightenment. It is the

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<sup>12</sup> Bhikkhuni Kusuma, *A Mental Therapy: The Development of Four Foundation of Mindfulness*, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Nina van Gorkom, *Cetasika*, (London: Zolag, 2010), p. 191.

<sup>14</sup> Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*, (Oxford: PTS, 1997), p. 14.

first among them, not only in the order of enumeration, but because it is basic for the full development of the other six qualities, and in particular, it is indispensable for the second factor, the ‘investigation of (physical and mental) phenomena’ (*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*). Direct experimental insight into reality can be accomplished only with the help of the enlightenment factor Mindfulness (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*). Mindfulness is one of the five Faculties (*indriya*); the other four are: confidence, energy, concentration and wisdom. Mindfulness, apart from being a basic faculty in its own right, has the important function of watching over the even development and balance of the other four, in particular of confidence (faith) in relation to wisdom (reason) and of energy in relation to concentration (or inner calm).<sup>15</sup>

The practice of mindfulness on the liberation path calls for greater effort and systematic understanding of the different phases of either tranquility meditation (*samatha*) or insight meditation (*vipassanā*). Also, especially the insight meditation techniques are more complex but vibrant and generate greater energy. Herein, mindfulness is a process of bringing one’s mind to the present moment. When we try to bring our mind to the present moment, we observe its true nature – how it habitually wanders around, day dreams and fantasizes. We are always preoccupied with the past and the future. The mind is rarely in the present.<sup>16</sup> Also, Ajahn Chah said: “Mindfulness is knowing, or presence of mind. Right now what are we thinking, what are we doing? What do we have with us right now? We observe like this; we are aware of how we are living.”<sup>17</sup> The Most Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh defined: mindfulness is always mindfulness of something. It’s the energy that helps us be aware of what is happening right now and right here, in our body, in our feelings, in our perceptions, and around us.<sup>18</sup> It is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life.

Capturing the sense and meaning of the mind state is the understanding of mindfulness as “fullness of mind.” In this fullness of attention there are no barriers, no

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<sup>15</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, Op.Cit, pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> Padmasiri de Silva, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology and Counselling: Pathways of Mindfulness-Based Therapies*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 127.

<sup>17</sup> Harnham Buddhist Monastery Trust, *The Collected Teachings of Ajahn Chah*, (UK: Aruna Publications, 2011), p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *No Mud No Lotus*, (California: Parallax Press, 2014), p. 17.

exclusions; it includes and encompasses every aspect of experience. Nothing lies outside the field of awareness. Whatever we are doing and wherever we are, it is possible to arouse this quality of awareness. Mindfulness is the first factor for our enlightenment, central to the whole practice of buddha-dharma, is the quality of mindfulness, a clear awareness of what is happening each moment. Mindfulness is where we start; it is the first ingredient in the Buddha's recipe for awakening. Mindfulness means seeing how things are, directly and immediately seeing for oneself that which is present and true. It has a quality of fullness and impeccability to it; a bringing of our whole heart and mind, our full attention, to each moment.<sup>19</sup>

Mindfulness is a mental state often described as “thoroughness”, “alertness”, or “awareness”. Mindfulness is actually a type of knowing and should be differentiated from just knowing. A mad man knows things his own way but he is far from mindful. Mindfulness cannot occur when there is greed, anger, or delusion. When one is mindful, there is, at the moment of mindfulness, no greed, anger, or delusion. One who is mindful is in full control (of his mind) and is in a position to handle well any situation he is in. Moreover, mindfulness is not thinking. We do not think, we just observe. This means we still think; we are mindful of the thinking. Then mindfulness is the ability that helps the mind be kept to the present or present occurrences. So, mindfulness has qualities such as clarity of the mind; stability, calmness, and peace; alertness of the mind, and awareness. These conditions are developed and maintained during practicing meditation. Then the process of insight development arises.<sup>20</sup>

Mindfulness is the center of *Vipassanā* meditation and the key to the whole process. It is both the goal of this meditation and the means to the end. One reaches mindfulness by being ever more mindfulness. Mindfulness reminds the meditator to apply one's attention to the proper object at the proper time and to exert precisely the amount of energy needed to do that job. When this energy is properly applied, the meditator stays constantly in a state of calm and alertness. As long as this condition is maintained, those mind-states called ‘hindrances’ or ‘psychic irritants’ cannot arise –

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc. 1987), pp. 76, 161.

<sup>20</sup> Ven. Sujiva, *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice*, (Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2000), pp. 11-12,26.

there is no greed, no hatred, no lust, or laziness. Thus, mindfulness is the specific antidote for hindrances. It is both the cure and the preventive measure.<sup>21</sup>

In short, mindfulness is employed from the term “*sati*” that there are the basic elements in the Buddhist literature: (1) *sati* remembers or does not lose what is before the mind; (2) *Sati* is a natural “presence of mind”; it stands near and hence serves and protects the mind; (3) *Sati* “calls back to mind”, that is, it remembers things in relation to things and thus its presence leads to a broad and even boundless state of mind; (4) *sati* covers the object completely, penetrating into it, not losing any part of it; (5) *Sati* is thus closely related to wisdom; it naturally tends to see things as they truly are.

Through the years, mindfulness has become the most interesting subject in the West in its benefits and effectiveness, especially in relation to physical and mental health problems. Because it has offered a set of tools for working with the mind in a very direct and immediate way. A prominent pioneer in this respect is Jon Kabat-Zinn, whose secular application of mindfulness in dealing with chronic pain has evolved into a highly successful eight-week program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This program has been well researched, and there is now a good evidence base for its efficacy in dealing with stress, boosting our immune system, and even influencing how our brains work. An application of mindfulness for preventing relapse in depression called Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) also has well-established benefits. So, mindfulness practice is making increasing contributions to education, therapy, and health care throughout the West. Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) provides that “mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally”.<sup>22</sup> Regular mindfulness meditation practices are used to instill a particular kind of awareness, one colored by curiosity and gentleness. Mindfulness is a flexible and unbiased state of mind where you are open and curious about what is present, have perspective, and are aware of choices.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Henepola Gunaratana, *Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Taipei, Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1991), pp. 151-153.

<sup>22</sup> Krik Warren Brown, J. David Creswell, Richard M. Ryan (ed.), *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2015), p. 133.

<sup>23</sup> Elisha Goldstein, *Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion*, (New York: Atria Paperback, 2016), p. xiii.

Similarly, Bishop & al described mindfulness as “a kind of non-elaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is.” He explained mindfulness as a dispassionate state of self-observation that creates a “space” between our perceptions and our responses to them. In a state of mindfulness, thoughts and feelings are observed as events in the mind, without over-identifying with them and without reacting to them in an automatic, habitual pattern of reactivity.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, mindfulness is the heart factor in Buddhism through its practice and application. It is the basis for development for the inner mind and its role is like a gatekeeper allowing the people to enter into the city. Only mindfulness, unwholesome afflictive mental states will not enter our mind; only mindfulness will help keep the mind pure. This is the method that during the 45 years of spreading the Dharma, the Buddha always mentioned, emphasized, and encouraged his disciples to practice. The ultimate goal of liberation from suffering can only be attained for one who has presence of mindfulness, but not for one who has lost mindfulness. More understanding about mindfulness can be gained by considering its role.

### 3.2 The Role of Mindfulness

Mindfulness in the context of practice is presented as a basic tool of Buddhist meditation toward the liberation path, namely, *Nibbāna*. “This is the only way” is explained from the term “*ekāyana*” in *Satipaṭṭhāna*. “*Ekāyana*” means “only way” because it is the way that leads only to one destination, that is, to *nibbāna*. So, the *satipaṭṭhāna* or mindfulness way is the only way to *nibbāna*, the end of suffering, destruction of mental defilement.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding how to practice mindfulness meditation, meditators are contemplating the body in the body, “ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful”. “Ardent” refers to the energy or effort you invest to keep your mind on the object.

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<sup>24</sup> Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., et al., “Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition”, *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2004): 230–241.

<sup>25</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dharma Dana Publications, 2004), p. 19.

“Clearly comprehending and mindful” means that you must always be mindful when you practice meditation. You must be mindful of the breath, the movement of your abdomen, the different deportment, and the small activities of the body. Mindfulness is something like a stone hitting a wall. In order to throw a stone and it hits the wall, you must put our energy. Like the stone hitting the way, mindfulness hits the object. Whatever the objects are the breath, or the movement of the abdomen, or the activities of the body, your mind, as it were, goes to these objects. That hitting of the object is mindfulness. The stone only gets stuck in the wall or the mind goes to objects when it is helped by energy and mindfulness. So, when you have mindfulness, you will achieve concentration. Only when you have developed concentration, you will have wisdom and the understanding of the nature of things. You will have a clear comprehension of things. In other words, concentration and wisdom only arise when mindfulness is well-established. Moreover, mindfulness and concentration belong to the group of concentration. There are eight factors of the Paths that are divided into three group, namely, the morality group (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood), the concentration group (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration), and the wisdom group (Right Understanding, Right Thought). When one is practiced, the others have also to be practiced.<sup>26</sup>

The first factor of enlightenment is mindfulness (*sati*). *Sati* (mindfulness) is a mental factor by which one can remember the object or whatever is happening at the present moment. When mindfulness is there, one's mind is with objects or things. It has the quality of going deep into the object to see things precisely, thoroughly, and from all sides. Moreover, mindfulness develops all the other factors of enlightenment. As it grows, it brings with it steadiness, calm, and equanimity. It enhances our ability to investigate the whole nature of life. All of these grow out of our careful attention. Mindfulness can be a universal quality. It helps in all circumstances. When strengthened, it serves as a reference and protection for us and keeps us from being too caught up in the changing circumstances of life. Mindful attention is the ground out of which wisdom and love can grow. Mindfulness also balances the others of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23.

enlightenment.<sup>27</sup> Thus, mindfulness is firmly established and brought to perfection when its role is among the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅgas*).

Mindfulness plays an important role in the development of wisdom that is reflected in many early Buddhist discourses, such as in a verse from the Suttanipāta. The defilements that flow into the mind and trap the person in the cycle of suffering that is checked by the presence of mindfulness. As stated in the Pārāyanavagga of the Suttanipāta, Ajita questions the Buddha, “Streams flow in all directions. What obstruction is there for the streams, speak to me of the restraining of the streams and by what would the streams be shut off?” The Buddha answers “Whatever streams there be in the world, mindfulness is their obstruction. I speak of the restraining of the streams and by wisdom would they be shut off”.<sup>28</sup> Mindfulness restrains the streams of craving in the sense-organs contacting sense-objects and so forth, and wisdom dries up these streams entirely. Mindfulness is explained here is that prepares the mind to obtain insight by preventing the defiling influxes of mind. According to Ashin Tejaiya, wisdom arises when awareness (mindfulness) works at the data level; awareness is just gathering data. Our innate wisdom, our intelligence, collects and channels the data into streams of information, and by comparing these streams of information it creates knowledge. Wisdom then uses this knowledge about the interaction of physical and mental processes in skillful ways in order to positively influence events. To the extent that wisdom understands causes and effects, it knows how to work on the causes and conditions.<sup>29</sup> This is illustrated in another simile, mindfulness is like the probe of a surgeon (*esanīti*).<sup>30</sup> Mindfulness or the probe’s surgeon collects essential information of wound to prepare for treatment. This quality of mindfulness is conveyed again by another simile. Mindfulness relates to the ploughshare and goad (*phālapācanam*).<sup>31</sup> This simile points to the combination of clarity of direction with balanced effort in

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc. 1987), pp. 77-78.

<sup>28</sup> K.R. Norman (tr.), *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipāta)*, (Oxford: PTS, 1995), p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> Ashin Tejaiya, *Awareness Alone Is Not Enough*, (Singapore: Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, 2018), p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> M II 260, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, trans., Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 867.

<sup>31</sup> Sn 77, *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipāta)*, trans. K.R. Norman, (Oxford: PTS, 1995), p. 9.

developing *sati*. Because plowshare is controlled to go ahead for protecting the yoke, likewise, mindfulness protects and guides wisdom. Because wisdom can only penetrate phenomena that have been carefully examined by mindfulness, and whereby there is no longer any confusion. The function of mindfulness is to develop the energy of practice—just like the function of the goad is to make the ox have an effort to pull the plow and stay on the right track because it is afraid of the painful whip. Mindfulness also keeps that effort energy from being dominated in wrong actions. Thus, mindfulness is the mental quality that balances the mind and enables wisdom to arise.

Due to the recognition of the role of *sati* (mindfulness) plays in Buddhist practice, the Buddhist teaching characterizes it as the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*). *Sati* occupies the middle position. Here *sati* has the function of balancing and monitoring the other faculties and powers, by becoming aware of excesses or deficiencies.<sup>32</sup> Because faith (*saddhā*) and wisdom (*paññā*) should balance each other, because too much faith leads to unreasonable belief and too much investigation leads to no concentration. Similarly, effort (*vīriya*) and concentration (*samādhi*) should balance each other, because too much effort may lead to restlessness and too much concentration may lead to drowsiness. *Sati* need not be balanced by any factor; the more *sati* there is, the better it is.<sup>33</sup> In support of right effort, *sati* performs a protective role by preventing the arising of unwholesome states of mind in the context of sense-restraint, which in fact constitutes an aspect of right effort. It is a faculty and a power that needs to be cultivated and sharpened.

The simile of the gatekeeper is often used in Buddhist texts to signify the role of mindfulness. This quality of careful supervision is implied by the gatekeeper (*dovārika/ dvārika*)<sup>34</sup> of a town. This town has energy (*virīya*) as its troops and wisdom (*paññā*) as its fortification. As a gatekeeper is wise, experienced, intelligent-to keep out those he doesn't know and to let in those he does, for the protection of those within, and to ward off those without; in the same way, a disciple of the noble ones is mindful,

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<sup>32</sup> Bhikkhu Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhanā: The Direct Path to Realization*, (London: Windhorse Publications, 2003), p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> Mehm Tin Mon, *Buddha Abhidhamma Ultimate Science*, (Malaysia: Fo Guang Shan, 2002), p. 283.

<sup>34</sup> A IV 107 -111, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, trans., Bhikkhu Bodhi, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), pp. 1075-1078.

endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering and recollecting what was done and said a long time ago. With mindfulness as his gatekeeper, the disciple of the noble ones abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is blameless, and looks after himself with purity. The role of mindfulness is to guard the mind (*ekārakkho*).<sup>35</sup> In the Sutta texts, where the Buddhist path of liberation is laid down systematically as a gradual training among others such as morality, and contentment the restraint of the senses is also considered as a prerequisite. According to Theravada textual descriptions, it is mindfulness that enables such restraint. This point is expressly stated by Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga* as: “What is signified by saying one protects one’s faculty of eye, and keeps restraint with regard to the faculty of eye is restraint by way of mindfulness”.<sup>36</sup> Buddhaghosa compared the senses to doors through which covetousness etc., might invade. The mind in case the doors are not closed with mindfulness, which is comparable to a door-panel (*satikāvateṇā*).<sup>37</sup> Mindfulness is what keeps a person alert and awake to the possibility of the intrusion of unwholesome states into the mind (*sati lokasmiṃ jāgaro*).<sup>38</sup>

Mindfulness brings benefit not only to oneself but also others. There is mindfulness in all actions of body, speech and mind in daily life, will create a superman<sup>39</sup> who can bring peace, happiness for oneself and others. Because a superior is a person who has a large vision, a compassionate heart, a super knowledge, but his demands in one’s life are very few. One easily tolerates other’s faults, loves others with compassion. This function is toward the social aspect of individual both the internal and the external life. And it holds that values in the two realms are inseparably connected that they correspond, and are, in fact, identical:

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<sup>35</sup> A V 30, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, trans., Bhikkhu Bodhi, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 1359.

<sup>36</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans., Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 2010), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> S I 44, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, trans., Bhikkhu Bodhi, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), p. 137.

<sup>39</sup> F.L. Woodward (tr.), *The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Saṃyutta-Nikāya) Part V, The Book Called Mahā-vagga*, (Oxford: PTS, 1994), p. 137.

And how is it, bhikkhus, that by protecting oneself one protects others? By the pursuit, development, and cultivation of the four establishments of mindfulness. It is in such a way that by protecting oneself one protects others.

And how is it, bhikkhus, that by protecting others one protects oneself? By patience, harmlessness, lovingkindness, and sympathy. It is in such a way that by protecting others one protects oneself.<sup>40</sup>

Looking at *Sati* from the point of view of ethics, we will discern both negative and positive aspects of the functioning of *Sati*. Negatively, *sati* restrains the mind from agitation, protects one from error, and prevents one from stumbling into undesirable mental states or situations. It allows no opportunity for unwholesomeness to enter the mind and prevents the misuse of thought. On the positive side, *Sati* is the controller and inspector of the stream of sense-consciousness, mentality and one's all actions, ensuring that they all lie within desired parameters. *Sati* keeps the mind harnessed to the chosen object. *Sati* is thus the tool for laying hold of or clasp into an object, and its action is rather like placing the object in front of the mind for consideration.<sup>41</sup>

Although mindfulness is rooted in Buddhism, the practice of mindfulness has undergone extensive scientific study in the West and has been shown to be a powerful, effective way of eliciting psychological wellness. It has been used with great success to help people with depression, anxiety, stress-related disorders, chronic pain, addictive behavior, and even chronic stress. Mindfulness is one of the ways that we can take advantage of the brain's plasticity in order to strengthen our emotional resilience. In recent years, psychology researchers have found the practice of mindfulness to be particularly helpful in reducing the risk of relapse in people who have experienced depression. Many studies have found it to be a significant alternative to or support for medication. Mindfulness works by interrupting the conditioned cycle of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and behavior that mire people in a downward spiral of depression. Using mindfulness allows us to transform our harsh inner critics to voices of support

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<sup>40</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, (USA: Wisdom Publications 2000), p. 1648.

<sup>41</sup> Prayudh Payutto, *Sammāsati: An Exposition of Right Mindfulness*, (Thailand: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1988), p. 14.

by increasing the capacity for self-compassion that nurtures self-worth and resiliency. The social psychologist Ellen Langer refers to mindfulness as “a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context.” Scientists now know that mindfulness trains the more evolved areas of our brains to overcome the impulsive firing of some of our more primitive structures. Mindfulness is fundamental to creating an antidepressant brain.<sup>42</sup>

Mindfulness is a particular attitude toward experience, or way of relating to life, that holds the promise of both alleviating our suffering and making our lives rich and meaningful. It does this by attuning us to our moment-moment experience and giving us direct insight into how our minds create unnecessary anguish. When our minds topple toward worries about being attacked or running out of food, mindfulness practice helps bring us back to the relative safety of the present moment. When our minds make envious or competitive comparisons with our neighbor’s husband, wife, or home, mindfulness practice helps us see that these are just symbols and no lasting victory is possible. When our minds protest against the heat or cold, mindfulness helps us notice that it is actually the protesting – not the temperature itself – that causes our suffering. Even when illness or death visits us or our loved ones, mindfulness helps us understand and accept the natural order. By helping us observe exactly how we create our own distress, mindfulness practices teach us how to let go of painful mental habits and replace them with more useful ones.<sup>43</sup>

In sum, the role of mindfulness plays in Buddhist practice as (1) a faculty and a power, and an awakening factor that needs to be cultivated and sharpened. It should be prevented from degrading itself by falling into wrong mindfulness (*micchā sati*). When it is cultivated in the right way, i.e. the way leading to the ultimate freedom of the mind and freedom through insight. (2) It reminds us of what we should do, helps us to see things as they actually are, and the true nature of all phenomena to gain a peaceful mind and worthy life. (3) The best and sure way to deal with mental disease is

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<sup>42</sup> Elisha Goldstein, *Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion*, (New York: Atria Paperback, 2016), pp. xvi, 66.

<sup>43</sup> Ronald D. Siegel, *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), pp. 5-6.

to practice mindfulness on them. That is why the Buddha said, “This is the only way for the purification of the minds of beings.”

### 3.3 The Practical Method of Mindfulness in Buddhism

Mindfulness is the mental activity that observes an object with attention. Mindfulness takes note of whatever object is being experienced or perceived right now, in the present moment, as it arises and falls away. For example, we might be aware of a sound, a sight, a smell, a feeling of itchiness or pain, a thought, an emotion such as anger, and so forth. Mindfulness knows these and other things immediately and clearly, the moment they actually appear, instead of remembering them after the fact. There are various degrees of mindfulness, similar to different types of camera lenses. A wide-angle lens gives a panoramic view; a medium-range lens shows more precise detail, and a narrow lens targets a specific area in even greater detail. Now think of a film — it is possible to slow down the speed of a film so as to examine each detail of the action. It is this type of precision that is used during the initial stages of meditation training. Just as a photographer adjusts the focus of a camera to get a sharp image and then closes the shutter, so mindfulness focuses the attention clearly on an object, from the time the object presents itself to consciousness until it disappears. In *Vipassanā* meditation, there are four kinds of objects for mindfulness to focus on: body, feeling, consciousness, and mind-object.<sup>44</sup>

#### 3.3.1 The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

In many Buddhist traditions, *vipassanā* meditation is commonly based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The Buddha’s original discourse on the foundations of mindfulness occurs twice in the Buddhist scriptures. They are the discourses on the foundations of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*) and the Great Discourse on the foundations of mindfulness (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*). In the Theravāda Pāli Canon, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is the 10th discourse of the “Middle Collection of Discourses (*Majjhima Nikāya*). This is the most important

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<sup>44</sup> Achan Sobin S. Namto, *Insight Meditation: Practical Steps to Ultimate Truth*, (USA: Vipassana Dhura Meditation Society, 2011), p. 26.

discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development (meditation)<sup>45</sup>, with particular emphasis on the development of insight. More generally, we find in the Sutta the instructions for practices, which developed in various ways, are taught throughout the Buddhist tradition: in particular, the recommendations for activities during daily life as well as in meditation practice.<sup>46</sup> The contemplation of the four objects associates with three important factors and causes (ardent, full aware, and mindful) to cease the two unwholesome states: covetousness and grief.

### 3.3.1.1 Contemplation on Body (Kāyānupassanā)

The first foundation of mindfulness is the contemplation of the body in the body. The Buddha described it in fourteen different ways:

#### A. Contemplation on Breathing

In order to establish mindfulness of the body, the Buddha first described the contemplation of the breath. This contemplation on the breath is probably the most well-known among Buddhist meditations, because Buddha himself practiced it until he attained high-level concentration (*jhāna*). The highly-developed concentration (*jhāna*) brought the Buddha supernatural powers that enabled him to see his and others' past lives, and to realize the laws of *kamma* that determine the quality of one's life. And then, he applied this powerful level of concentration to his mind and body, and saw the psycho-physical phenomena arising and passing away at every moment.<sup>47</sup>

When the Buddha taught us how to practice mindfulness of the breath, He first mentioned preparations for this efficient practice as follows:

And how, bhikkhus, does a bikkhu abide contemplating the body as a body? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established

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<sup>45</sup> Walpola Rahula, *What The Buddha Taught*, (New York: Grove Press, 1974), p. 69.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from the Pāli Canon*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> U HIa Myint, *Great Observing Power (Satipaṭṭhāna): In remembrance of the late Sayadaw U Silānanda*, (Tathagata Meditation Center, 2013), p. 84.

mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.<sup>48</sup>

The Buddha indicated the places such as the forest, the root of a tree, or an empty hut are the most suitable for beginners who need a place that is both quiet and free from distractions. With these words, “*sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him*”, the Buddha showed how you should prepare yourself for meditation, and what purpose you should select.<sup>49</sup> The phrase “*established mindfulness in front of him*” means that practitioners focus their mind on the object of meditation. Here, the object of meditation will be the breath. “*Ever mindful he breathes in; mindful he breathes out*” explains the practice of meditation. When you practice meditation, you keep your mind on the breath. You breathe in and out mindfully. Actually, you put your mind at the entrance of your nostrils and observe the breath as “in-out, in-out”, and so on. Your mind must stay at the tip of your nose; it must not follow the breath into and out of your body. You must try to see the in-breath and the out-breath as two separate things. The in-breath is not existing at the time of breathing out and the out-breath is not existing at the time of breathing in. When you practice breathing meditation, you can observe your breath in many different ways. The Buddha described four ways of contemplating of breathing in the *sutta* as follows:

“Breathing in long, he understands: ‘I breathe in long’; or breathing out long, he understands: ‘I breathe out long’. Breathing in short, he understands: ‘I breathe in short’; or breathing out short, he understands: ‘I breathe out short’. He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body’; he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body’. He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in tranquillising the bodily formation’; he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation’.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), pp. 145-146.

<sup>49</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004), pp. 33-34.

<sup>50</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), p. 146.

## **B. Contemplation on Postures**

The word “*postures*” here means the four departments of the body; walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. The Buddha said:

“Again, bhikkhus, when walking, a bhikkhu understands: ‘I am walking’; when standing, he understands: ‘I am standing’; when he sitting, he understands: ‘I am sitting’; when lying down, he understands: ‘I am lying down’; or he understands accordingly however his body is disposed.”<sup>51</sup>

We are to us all four postures in mindfulness. When we sit, we know we are sitting. When we stand, walk, or lie down, we know we are standing, walking, or lying down. It is not just a superficial knowledge; it is a deep knowledge of what is going on. When we practice this way, mindfulness is there. In the statement, “*he understands accordingly however his body is disposed*”, Māhasi Sayadaw said that the statement covers all the small departments or postures of the body as well; not only going, standing, sitting and lying down but also the small movements like stretching, bending, or looking forward or sideways, and rising and falling of the abdomen. When you fail to make note of these small movements, there may be a tendency to cling to them, by way of craving or wrong views.<sup>52</sup> When practicing mindfulness, you must be aware of everything that is present at the moment. Therefore, mindfulness must be practiced not only in the four main postures but also in the various small postures.

## **C. Contemplation with Clear Awareness**

The third subsection on the contemplation of the body is the contemplation with clear awareness. The Buddha taught us:

“Again, a monk, when going forward or back, is clearly aware of what he is doing, in looking forward or back he is clearly aware of what he is doing, in bending and stretching he is clearly aware of what he is doing, in carrying his inner and outer robe and his bowl he is clearly aware of what he is doing, in eating, drinking, chewing, and savouring he is clearly aware of what he is doing, in passing excrement or urine he is clearly aware of what he is doing, in walking,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004) pp. 50-51.

standing, sitting, falling asleep, and waking up, in speaking or in staying silent, he is clearly aware of what he is doing.”<sup>53</sup>

According to this passage, the Buddha instructed us to be mindful of all our activities with clear awareness at anytime and anywhere even in the bathroom. The phrase “clearly aware of” or “clearly knowing” is similar and differentiates the mindfulness of bodily activities from the mindfulness of the four postures. This phrase is defined as “knowing the body correctly, comprehensively, and evenly”. This is implied that contemplation with clear awareness includes a restrained and dignified behavior that helps protect one’s mind away from mental distractions. Unless we restrain our senses, our minds will be distracted by objects all the time. If we are mindful of our activities, we spontaneously restrain our senses; then we become aware clearly of the body and develop the progressive *vipassanā* insight leading to *magga-phala* enlightenment. There are four kinds of clear awareness mentioned in the commentaries. They are benefit, suitability, domain, and non-delusion. So, whatever activity we do, we should be clearly aware of whether it is beneficial, and purposeful; whether it is suitable, whether it is in our domain, and whether it is devoid of delusion. In sum, in this practice aspect, we can accomplish the mindfulness practice by being mindful of our activities with four kinds of clear awareness or by seeing our bodies correctly, comprehensively, and evenly.<sup>54</sup>

#### **D. Contemplation on Parts of the Body Impurities**

The next instruction, the Buddha taught us by direct our attention to an analysis of what constitutes the body through a contemplation of the parts of the body impurities. Contemplating on thirty-two body parts is practiced as follows:

“And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, bounded by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: ‘In this body, there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs,

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<sup>53</sup> Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), p. 337.

<sup>54</sup> U HIa Myint, *Great Observing Power (Satipaṭṭhāna): In remembrance of the late Sayadaw U Silānanda*, (Tathagata Meditation Center, 2013), pp. 132-148.

intestines, mesentery, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of joints, and urine.”<sup>55</sup>

### **E. Contemplation on the Four Elements**

This section in the *sutta* talks about contemplating of the four kinds of basic elements which constitute our bodies and, in a broader sense, the entire world we live in. In other words, the four elements are found in all creatures, plants, and inanimate objects. And how meditators should contemplate on their body whatever posture they might be assuming, whether they are sitting or walking, standing or lying down. They will reflect on their body with respect to these four primary elements.

“Again, a monk reviews this body, however it may be placed or disposed, in terms of the elements: “There are in this body the earth-element, the water-element, the fire-element, and the air-element”.

Just as if a skilled butcher or his assistant, having slaughtered a cow, were to sit at cross-roads with the carcass divided into portions, so a monk reviews this very body...in term of the elements: “There are in this body the earth-element, the water-element, the fire-element, and the air-element”.<sup>56</sup>

The purpose of this kind is to remove the concept of a being or seeing oneself and others as beings. To remove this concept, one needs to practice the meditation of mentally dividing the body into four parts and seeing them separately, each as one of the four elements that are called “great element”. Traditionally, there are four material elements; the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element. The first is the earth element; its characteristics are hardness or softness; its function is to act as “foundation and its manifestations are “receiving or accepting something”. Next, you have the “water element”. Water element here means not the water as you know it, but its characteristics, which are “trickling” or “cohesion” or “fluidity”. Trickling or cohesion or fluidity indicates the presence of water element. It is present in everything. Next, you have the “fire element”. Heat, cold or “temperature” is the characteristic of

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<sup>55</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), p. 147.

<sup>56</sup> Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), p. 338.

the fire element. The last element is the “air element”. The characteristics of the air element are “extension, expanding, or distending”. Its function is to “cause motion”.<sup>57</sup>

### F. The Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations

The Nine Cemetery Contemplations are designed to cultivate the concept of repulsiveness of the body. This is used to develop detachment from the body. One is attached to one’s body and to the bodies of others. As long as there is any attachment, there will be suffering. In order to get rid of suffering, one should have no attachments to your body and the bodies of others. The Buddha explained that there are the nine kinds of cemetery contemplations dwell on the different stages of decay of a corpse as follows:

The first contemplation is on a “festering body”:

“And again, bhikkhus, as if a bhikkhu sees a body one day or two days, or three days dead, swollen, blue, and festering, discarded on the charnel ground, he then applies this perception to his own body: “Truly, this body too is of the same nature, it will become like that and will not go beyond that nature.”

The second to eighth stages of decay of the dead body, mentioned in the *sutta* are:

devoured by crows, by hawks, by vultures, by herons, by dogs, by leopards, by tigers, by jackals, being devoured by various kinds of worms; reduced to a skeleton, held by the tendons, with some flesh adhering to it; reduced to a skeleton, held by the tendons, blood-smearred, fleshless; reduced to a skeleton, held by the tendons, without flesh and blood; reduced to loose bones, scattered in all directions, here bones of the hand, there bones of the foot, shin bones, thigh bones, pelvis, spine, and skull; reduced to bleached bones of shell-like colour; reduced to bones more than a year old, lying in a heap. The ninth stage is “as if a bhikkhu sees a body, discarded in the charnel-ground, reduced to rotten bones, crumbling to dust, he then applied this perception to his own body, saying, “Truly this body

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<sup>57</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, rev. ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004), pp. 95-99.

too has the same nature; it will become like that body and won't go beyond that nature."<sup>58</sup>

In short, there are fourteen sections in contemplating of the body in body. They are contemplation of breathing, contemplation of the body's postures, contemplation of action and manner, contemplation of the repulsiveness of the body, contemplation on the material element, and contemplation of nine cemeteries.

### **3.3.1.2 Contemplation on Feeling (Vedanānupassanā)**

The second object for contemplation is feeling. In this discourse, feeling is divided into nine kinds. The Buddha taught us how to contemplate on feeling as follows:

And how, monks, does a monk abide contemplating feelings as feelings?

Here, a monk feeling a pleasant feeling knows that he feels a pleasant feeling; feeling a painful feeling he knows that he feels a painful feeling; feeling a feeling that is neither-painful-nor-pleasant he knows that he feels a feeling that is neither-painful-nor-pleasant; feeling a pleasant sensual feeling he knows that he feels a pleasant sensual feeling; feeling a pleasant non-sensual feeling he knows that he feels a pleasant non-sensual feeling; feeling a painful sensual feeling...; feeling a painful non-sensual feeling...; feeling a sensual feeling that is neither-painful-nor-pleasant..; feeling a non-sensual feeling that is neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he knows that he feels a non-sensual feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant.<sup>59</sup>

Whatever feeling we experience, we must take note of it and observe it. This is the Contemplation of feeling in the feelings.

### **3.3.1.3 Contemplation on consciousness (Cittānupassanā)**

Consciousness is a part of the mind. In the teachings of the Buddha, there are two component parts of the mind – consciousness and mental factors. There are many beautiful aspects of our consciousness, like faith, humility, self-respect, non-craving, non-anger, non-ignorance, diligence, ease, care, equanimity, and nonviolence. The basic unwholesome mental formations are greed, hatred, ignorance, pride, doubt, and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 103, 112-113.

<sup>59</sup> Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pp. 339-340.

views. The secondary unwholesome mental formations, arising from the basic ones, are anger, malice, hypocrisy, malevolence, jealousy, selfishness, deception, guile, unwholesome excitement, the wish to harm, immodesty, arrogance, dullness, agitation, lack of faith, indolence, carelessness, forgetfulness, distraction, and lack of attention.<sup>60</sup> To be aware of consciousness is to be aware of mental states. When we have anger in our mind, and note it, “angry, angry, angry”, we practice mindfulness of this consciousness. “Angry means our mind is angry, or “I have a consciousness that is accompanied by anger.” So when we note “angry, angry, angry”, we are practicing the Mindfulness of Consciousness.<sup>61</sup>

In this discourse, the Buddha classified consciousness into sixteen kinds and instructed how to contemplate on consciousness follows as:

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating consciousness in consciousness? "Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu understands the consciousness with lust, as with lust; the consciousness without lust, as without lust; the consciousness with hate, as with hate; the consciousness without hate, as without hate; the consciousness with ignorance, as with ignorance; the consciousness without ignorance, as without ignorance; the shrunken state of consciousness, as the shrunken state; the distracted state of consciousness, as the distracted state; the state of consciousness become great, as the state become great; the state of consciousness not become great, as the state not become great; the state of consciousness with some other mental state superior to it, as the state with something mentally higher; the state of consciousness with no other mental state superior to it, as the state with nothing mentally higher; the quieted state of consciousness, as the quieted state; the state of consciousness not quieted, as the state not quieted; the freed state of consciousness as freed; and the unfreed state of consciousness, as unfreed.<sup>62</sup>

This is called the Contemplation on Consciousness.

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<sup>60</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings*, (US: Parallax Press, 1999), p. 73.

<sup>61</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004), p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> Soma Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness: The Satipatthana Sutta and Its Comentary*, (Sri Lanka: Kandy, 1998), p. 27.

### 3.3.1.4 Contemplation on Mind-objects (Dhammānupassanā)

The contemplation on the Body is the contemplation of the physical or material body. The contemplation on Feelings is the contemplation of what is the mental experience of physical feeling: “pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral”. The contemplation on consciousness is also contemplation of mental things, the mental factors or mind states. The contemplation on mind-objects is the contemplation of material as well as mental things. There are five items mentioned in this section: (1) the “five hindrances” are mental; (2) the “five objects of clinging” are material and mental; (3) the “six internal and the six external sense-bases are material and mental”; (4) the “seven factors of enlightenment” are mental; and (5) the “Four Noble Truths” consists of both material and mental things.<sup>63</sup>

#### A. The Five Hindrances

Whatever we are doing, we will face some kind of obstacles or distractions to overcome. The most powerful of these distractions are called “hindrances”. They interfere with our ability to concentrate both during meditation and in daily life. For instance, we noted that our sense-desire for pleasure and hatred for pain hide behind many of our feelings. Other hindrances to progress on the path are restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor, and doubt. Mindfulness helps us to know five important things about the hindrances: when they are present, when they are absent, how they arise, what to do to make them go away, and how to keep them from coming back.<sup>64</sup> When the hindrances have been overcome, the mind automatically becomes calm, bright and clear. This clarity is essential to insight into the impermanence, suffering and selfless nature of everything that exists. The Buddha instructed the contemplation of five hindrances as follows:

“And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects? Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances? Here, there being

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<sup>63</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004), pp. 131-132.

<sup>64</sup> Henepola Gunaratana, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 80.

sensual desire in him, a bhikkhu understands: ‘There is sensual desire in me’; or there being no sensual desire in him, he understands: ‘There is no sensual desire in me’; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sensual desire’.<sup>65</sup>

The same is true with the other four hindrances: aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.

### **B. The Five Aggregates of Clinging**

When the Buddha described the world, the animate as well as the inanimate one, He described it sometimes in terms of the “five aggregates”, sometimes in terms of the “twelve sense-bases, and sometimes in terms of the Four Noble Truths. He did so according to needs and degree of understanding of his listener. When the Buddha described the world in terms of the five aggregates, He spoke about the five aggregates of clinging. When the Buddha talked about “aggregates”, aggregate means a “group or heap”. There are five aggregates: the aggregates of matter (*rūpa*), the aggregates of feeling (*vedanā*), the aggregates of perception (*saññā*), the aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The whole world is composed of these five aggregates and includes all physical and mental phenomena. Herein, “clinging” is understood as a figure of speech because no physical grasping is meant. This means that it is mental grasping, mentally clinging to different objects.<sup>66</sup>

The Buddha taught us the contemplation of five aggregates of clinging as follows:

“Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the aggregates affected by clinging. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the aggregates affected by clinging? Here, a bhikkhu understands: ‘Such a material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is perception, such its origin, such its disappearance; such are

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<sup>65</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), p. 151.

<sup>66</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004), pp. 153-154.

the formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance’.”<sup>67</sup>

### C. The Six Internal and Six External Sense-Bases

The six internal sense-bases are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. The six external sense-bases are visible objects, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and mental objects. The first is the eye and visible objects; the second is the ear and sounds; the third is the nose and smells; the fourth is the tongue and tastes; the fifth is the body and tangible objects; and the sixth is the mind and mental objects. The source of our confusion is the fetters, deep-rooted habits in the unenlightened mind. Fetters are triggered by contact between the six senses and six sense objects. The fetter is not the eye, nor is it the visible forms that the eye perceives. Rather, fetters arise as a result of contact between the two and consciousness.<sup>68</sup> There are altogether ten kinds of fetters described such as: sense-desire, ill will or anger, pride or conceit, false, doubt, belief in rites and ceremonies, desire for existence, envy or jealousy, avarice, and ignorance.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the contemplation of the six bases was taught by the Buddha:

“Again, bhikkhus, bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases? Here, a bhikkhu understands the eye, he understands forms, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned fetter. He understands the ear, he understands sounds, .....the mind and mental objects.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), p. 152.

<sup>68</sup> Henepola Gunaratana, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 87.

<sup>69</sup> Sayādaw U Silānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, Op.Cit, pp. 167-169.

<sup>70</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), pp. 152-153.

### D. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

The Buddha instructed this section in the discourse:

“Again monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in respect of the seven factors of enlightenment. How does he do so? Here, monks, if the enlightenment- factor of mindfulness is present in himself, he knows that it is present. If the enlightenment- factor of mindfulness is absent in himself, he knows that it is absent. And he knows how the unarisen the enlightenment- factor of mindfulness comes to arise and how the complete development of the enlightenment- factor of mindfulness comes about.”<sup>71</sup>

The same is true with the remaining factors, namely, investigation, effort, delight, tranquility concentration, and equanimity.

### E. The Fourth Noble Truths

After attaining enlightenment, the first teaching of the Buddha has come to be known as the Four Noble Truths. In brief, the First Noble Truth is suffering, the Second Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Third Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering. The way to contemplate on mind-objects in mind-objects in the Four Noble Truths is taught by the Buddha in the *sutta* as follows:

“Again, monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in respect of the Four Noble Truth. How does he do? Here, a monk knows as it really is: “This is suffering”; he knows as it really is, “This is the origin of suffering”; he knows as it really is, “This is the cessation of suffering”; and he knows as it really is, “This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.”<sup>72</sup>

According to the above passage, contemplating on the Four Noble Truths means contemplating: (1) Suffering refers to mental and physical phenomena; (2) The origin of suffering which relates to attachment to sensual pleasure and existence, and so forth; (3) The cessation of suffering means to experience *nibbāna*, which indicates the cessation of attachment and attachment-generated suffering; and (4) The path

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<sup>71</sup> Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, Op.Cit, p. 343.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

leading to the cessation of suffering is to walk on the Eightfold Noble Path that leads to the cessation of suffering, which refers to *magga-phala* enlightenment that can be attained by practicing as instructed in this discourse.<sup>73</sup>

In short, there are twenty-one objects divided into four foundations for practicing mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna*. In the ending of every object, there is the similar statement described; for example, contemplating of breath as follows:

“In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in the body its nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in the body its nature of both arising and vanishing. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.”<sup>74</sup>

The Buddha explicitly assures us that the practice of mindfulness leads to the four stages of culmination such as (1) the first stage: discerning the body internally means one’s own body, whereas externally implies someone’s else. In this regard, Mahāsi Sayādaw described two sorts of *vipassanā* insights that are empirical insight (*paccakkha-vipassana*) and inferential insight (*anumana vipassana*). When one is aware of one’s body and mind with empirical insight, one can understand those of others in the world by inferential insight.

The phrase “contemplating the body as the body both internally and externally” refers to the moment when one becomes aware of the body as it is without discriminating between one’s own mind and another’s. Such awareness will leave no room for an illusory sense of “I” and its subsequent attachment. Thus, contemplating the body internally, externally, or both, one develops two kinds of insight, empirical and inferential, which together culminate in the complete discernment of the body. (2) In the second stage, Mahāsi Sayādaw said that one practitioner who closely observes

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<sup>73</sup> U Hla Myint, *Great Observing Power (Satipaṭṭhāna)*, Op.Cit, pp. 346-347.

<sup>74</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Op.Cit, p. 146.

the process of breath will see the arising, or disappearance, or both arising and disappearance of breath, bit by bit, at every moment and at any place (such as the breath touching the tip of the nose). Moreover, when one becomes aware of breaths, one will discern physical phenomena related to the breaths and their conditionality, appearance, and disappearance without deliberate analysis of the conditions for breaths. (3) In the third stage mentions that mindfulness of the body is to see the body as the body without identifying as “I” or “mine” which means bare knowledge or the insight into the body (physical phenomena). The Buddha vividly described the bare knowledge and steadfast mindfulness as the culmination of mindfulness. So, one establishes mindfulness to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And (4) in the fourth stage, the discernment of psycho-physical phenomena, relating to the breaths (or the whole body) without identifying them as “I” or “mine” so that one can develop *vipassanā* insights step by step until one can eradicate attachment once and for all. Indeed, one can then dwell independently without clinging to anything or anybody in the world. This is called contemplating of the body as the body.<sup>75</sup>

### **3.3.2 The Practical Methods of Mindfulness Practice Taught by Buddhist Masters**

Mindfulness is a very important factor that needs to be acquired and developed in meditation. Our practice consists of two types of meditation: concentration meditation or *samatha* and insight meditation or *vipassanā*. To develop *samatha* (calm) and *vipassanā* (insight) meditation means that you need a very strong base of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a clear state of awareness, no confusion, no muddle-headedness, having full control. The word *samatha* by itself means tranquility, and *vipassanā* means insight or knowledge. When we refer to just *samatha* or *vipassanā*, what we generally mean is right concentration. This means the factor of one-pointedness of mind has to arise with mindfulness. Not with obsession, not with anger, not with greed but with clear awareness.<sup>76</sup> Concentration meditation suppresses the hindrances and makes the mind calm, peaceful, and luminous. Hindrances are negative

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<sup>75</sup> U Hla Myint, *Great Observing Power (Satipaṭṭhāna): In remembrance of the late Sayadaw U Silānanda*, (Tathagata Meditation Center, 2013), pp. 104-111.

<sup>76</sup> Ven. Sujiva, *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice*, (Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2000), pp. 162-163.

tendencies that obstruct our spiritual progress and interfere with our ability to concentrate. Insight meditation, which we have been calling mindfulness or mindfulness meditation, eradicates the hindrances and all other negative tendencies. It helps us overcome ignorance so that we can be liberated from samsara, the cycle of repeated births and deaths.<sup>77</sup> Mindfulness is useful and applied to all people that depend on the practical method. There are several mindfulness masters in the world recognize and spread it for practitioners.

Firstly, insight meditation was taught by the Indian S.N. Goenka (1924-2013), a disciple of the Burmese meditation teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899-1971). He began to spread *Vipassanā* teaching around the globe, which has become the most widely form of insight meditation worldwide. This meditation tradition centers on observation of bodily sensations. The practice of contemplating of feelings is based on the previous development of a foundation in mental tranquility through mindfulness of breathing. This technique is taught as a standard ten-day course. The first three days of practice are dedicated. Subsequently, feelings are observed through continuous scanning of the body in the up and downward directions that leads to a penetrative awareness of their changing nature at increasing subtler levels. Finally, such practice leads to an awareness of the entire spectrum of the body and the mind in constantly changing flux.<sup>78</sup>

Secondly, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, his name as Servant of the Buddha (1906-1993), one of the most influential and well-known Thai monks at Suan Mokkh a forest monastery (The Grove of the Power of Liberation) in Southern Thailand. His practice method is to focus on mindfulness of breathing called *ānāpānasati* that is a complete meditation practice in itself. It is complete from the beginning to the end-even up to the path-fruit (magga-phala), that is *Nibbāna*. This practice has breath-in and breath-out as its only object.

The constitution of the system of practice is divided into sixteen steps arranged into four groups, or tetrads, of four steps each. The first four steps have the

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<sup>77</sup> Henepola Gunaratana, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 70.

<sup>78</sup> Bhikkhu Anālayo, *The Dynamics of Theravada Insight Meditation*, on online, <https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/the-dynamics-of-theravada-insight-meditation/> (accessed June 9, 2022).

development of concentration (*samādhi*) as their goal. The practice focuses on refining breathing by making it subtle and calm, with the result that *samādhi* is developed. The next four steps contemplate the rapture (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*) which arise from the concentrated mind. In this level, the practitioner begins to know that which conditions the mind. The next four steps specially examine the mind and its varied manifestations. In the tetrad, the meditator tries to control the mind in this and that way, looking at the mind as he or she pleases. The last four steps contemplate impermanence. Insight contemplates the impermanence until the mind becomes fed up and detached to the point of liberation. He taught that the most appropriate time for meditating would depend on each individual. At the outset, the meditator should try to meditate at a regular time or times. When progress is made, the meditator will find it is possible to meditate under a variety of conditions throughout the day, such as on a bus, on the way to work.<sup>79</sup>

Lastly, *vipassāna* meditation is taught by the Burmese monk Mahāsi Sayadaw. This tradition has attracted thousands of people, both monks, nuns, and laypersons to practice. From this tradition, there are many famous meditation teachers such as Sayadaw U Pandita, Sayadaw Janakabhivamsa, Sayadaw Kundala, Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw, Sayadaw U Silananda... who have also devoted their entire lives to the Buddha's Sasana. The characteristic of this method is called "*direct vipassāna*". The main meditation technique in this tradition is to apply labeling or naming to perceive the phenomena involved in an object like "rising and falling" of the abdomen when breathing. All things are the objects for this technique while mindfulness of the body is used as the beginning point and the breath is only the "home" object. When making bodily movements, the practitioner should begin to act slowly so that one's concentration, mindfulness, and insight knowledge can keep up with the objects.<sup>80</sup>

There are two kinds of mindfulness, intensive and general. The first one is developed in intensive meditation while the latter is in normal working life. Intensive

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<sup>79</sup> Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, *The Meditative Development of Mindfulness of Breathing*, trans., Stephen R. Schmidt, (Thailand: Buddhādāsa Foundation, 2019), pp. 6, 9-10.

<sup>80</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *Seven Commentaries*, on online, <https://fr.scribd.com/document/48034287/Silananda-Venerable-Sayadaw-U-Seven-Commentaries>, (accessed May 31, 2022).

mindfulness is what we have been doing for the last five days, with 20, 30, 40 minutes, and one-hour sessions. You are determined to practice and develop mindfulness intensively. You pay attention to even a slight sound and a mild pain intensively. You try to develop unbroken mindfulness continuously. We have retreats of ten days, one week, one month, or a few months. Those are all intensive retreats. The purpose of intensive training such as this is to learn the techniques under the close supervision of a teacher.<sup>81</sup> The types of mindfulness practice are popularly seen as sitting meditation, walking meditation, and eating meditation in intensive retreats. So, detailed instructions are given by Sayādaw U Sīlānanda as follows:

The prerequisites for *Vipassanā* meditation are (1) need a genuine desire to practice and a readiness to follow the instruction closely; (2) have confidence in the practice, the teacher, and an open mind to try it and see what it can do for you; and (3) have patience is also very important. When you meditate, you have to be patient with many things.

### **A. Sitting Meditation**

When beginning meditation, one can select a basic sitting posture such as a lotus posture, Burmese posture, and so forth. As long as the mind and the body are able to relax as much as possible. The most important thing is that you need to keep the upper portion of your body erect. There are two objects that the practitioner must observe, namely, the primary object and the secondary object. The movement of the abdomen is the main object, and all other phenomena that occur when observing the original object will be the secondary objects. So, keep your mind on the abdomen and be really mindful of the rising movement from the beginning to the end, and also of the falling movement from the beginning to the end by noting as “rising, falling”, “rising, falling”, “rising, falling”. You may even put your hand on the abdomen to feel the rising and falling movements. After some time, you will be able to follow the rising and falling movements without your hand on the abdomen.

While observing the home object, if one of the secondary objects emerges and becomes more prominent than the home object, one should shift to observe the

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<sup>81</sup> Ven. Khammai Dhammasami, Dr., *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*, (Independently Published, 2021), pp. 127-130.

second object until it disappears, then return to the main object. The secondary objects can be any type of phenomena through six sense doors such as sound, thought, laziness, doubt, anger, and so forth. If you are observing the movement of the belly, for example, and you remember something in the past or think of the future, you note “remember, remember, remember”, or “planning, planning, planning”, until those objects disappear from your mind; then you go back to the main object. Or, if you talk to someone in your thoughts, or if you talk to yourself, be mindful of it by noting “talking, talking, talking” until it disappears, and then go back to the movement of the belly. If you speculate about things, be mindful of speculating; if you analyze something, be mindful of analyzing; if you make judgments, be mindful of making judgments. From time to time, unwholesome states of mind arise in your mind, such as laziness, boredom, greed, anger, and so forth; those states must be noted until they disappear.

There are times when your concentration is improved, you want to swallow your saliva, first, be mindful of the intention to swallow, then note, “intention, intention, intention”. And when you have gathered the saliva in your mouth, be mindful of the gathering, or say to yourself, “gathering, gathering, gathering”. When you swallow it down, be mindful of swallowing, or say to yourself, “swallowing, swallowing, swallowing” and then go back to the main object.

Furthermore, in the course of sitting meditation, you have to deal with not only psychological but also physical phenomena, especially uncomfortable sensations. They can manifest in various forms such as itching, pain, numbness, stiffness, or heat, and so on. Whenever they appear, do not act instinctively, but pay attention to them as long as possible until they disappear, then return to the primary object. However, if you cannot stand them after keeping mindful with great patience, you can overcome them in the usual way. For instance, you have a painful sensation, and cannot bear it even though you have noticed it continuously, so you may ignore pain altogether and go back to the main object. Or you may make movements or change posture to ease pain. But when making movements or changing postures, first note the intention to change, or be mindful of the intention to change, and then make movements slowly, one at time, following each movement with mindfulness. and when you have made the changes, go back to the movement of the belly. Indeed, you need patience in meditation whenever you have to deal with strong objects, they are very good objects for your concentration

and insight. So, be mindful of them and try to see them only as objects of meditation. And it is important that you do not identify them with yourself, like “this is my pain” or “I feel pain” and so forth.

### **B. Walking Meditation**

After practicing sitting meditation, you may practice walking meditation. When practicing *vipassanā* meditation, it is important to keep mindfulness with you always. So as you change from sitting to standing, keep mindfulness with you. Before standing up, therefore, be mindful of the intention to stand up by noting “intention, intention, intention”. Then get up slowly, keeping your mind on the whole of the body by noting, “getting up, getting up, getting up”. And when you are standing, be mindful of the standing position by noting, “standing, standing, standing”.

When walking, it is better to choose a walking path and stay on it. Walk on it back and forth. You should walk slowly, keeping your mind on the movements of the foot, being aware of a least four stages of each step. And keep your eyes down always. Do not close your eyes. Hold them slightly open and look at the floor, or look down about three or four feet in front of you. Also, when you walk, you may keep your hands in front or in the back or on the sides.

In order to make a step, you must raise your foot. Keep your mind on the foot and be mindful of the raising or lifting by noting, “lifting”. Then you push your foot toward, be mindful of that movement, saying to yourself, “moving”. When you put your foot down on the floor, be mindful of the putting down, or noting, “putting”. Then you shift weight to make the other step. Keep your mind on the whole body and note, “shifting”. Then make the next step, be mindful of lifting, moving, putting down, and shifting, making movements slowly. When you reach the end of the walking space, you stop and be mindful of stopping by noting, “stopping, stopping, stopping”. When you want to turn around, be mindful of the intention to turn around or note, “intention, intention, intention”, and then you turn slowly. Be mindful of the turning movement, or note, “turning, turning, turning”. Then walk again mindfully as you just did. In this manner, you walk back and forth until the end of the walking period.

Walking meditation is designed to give exercise to the body. When you are practicing for a half an hour or an hour, walking may not be necessary. But when you

are on a retreat and practicing the whole day, your body needs some kind of movement. Hence the walking meditation. At the end of the walking period, the sitting period begins again. So, you go back to the sitting place, walking slowly, making notes, being aware of the different stages, and steps as usual. This way, you alternate sitting and walking, and maintain your mindfulness, trying not to lose it at any moment during the retreat.

### **C. Eating Meditation**

When eating, one has to be mindful by making mental notes of the small activities involved in the act of eating. It includes the following activities practiced mindfully. When one looks at the food, be mindful of looking. When one picks up bowls, one notes “picking up, picking up”. When one takes the food into the spoon, one may make mental notes “taking, taking”. When one brings the food to the mouth, be mindful as “bring, bring”. When one opens the mouth, be mindful of opening. When one puts the food into the mouth, be mindful of putting it. When one chews, be mindful of chewing. When one swallows it down, be mindful of swallowing. And one knows whether the food is digested or not. When one knows the food is digested, then one should be mindful that it is digested and so on. So one eats with mindfulness in this way.

The intensive practice of a retreat is very beneficial for developing good concentration and quieting the mind. Concentration is essential for penetrative wisdom to arise. A meditation retreat gives you the best possible opportunity to be able to experience for yourself the true nature of reality. The timetable for a retreat is from 4:30 am to 10 pm. A retreat day consists of alternate periods of sitting and walking meditation, every kind for one hour. Continuity of practice is developed by bringing mindfulness to all other activities throughout the day as well. Noble Silence is observed during retreat. Retreats can last for a day, a weekend, a week, or longer.

In daily life, we eat every day; we care for our bodies every day. Since we almost always have mental defilements with us, we need to cleanse our mind every day. He recommended the morning hours because then your body and mind are rested. And you are away from the worries of the previous day. It would also do you good to meditate in the evening before you go to bed. But you may practice at any time. And if

you make it a habit to practice it every day, it will be good and beneficial to you. For example, in sitting meditation, the practice time depends on how much time you can spend on meditation. There is no fixed rule. It is good if you can sit for one hour. But if you cannot sit for one hour at the beginning, then you may sit for half an hour or fifteen minutes, and little by little extend the time until you can sit longer. And if you can sit for more than an hour without much discomfort, you may sit for two or three hours if you like.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, general mindfulness is also known as daily awareness. General mindfulness is what you practice in daily life – at work, at home, when we drive, when we play golf, or when we go shopping. This is the ultimate aim of establishing intensive mindfulness. For example, when you cross the road, develop one awareness in the mind “crossing the road”. Before you go into the kitchen, you bring one awareness to your mind “going to the kitchen”. When you are going to work, bring about one awareness in the mind “going to work”. When you are going to drive “going to drive”. Make yourself aware of them as soon as possible. So, you try to produce direct awareness of what you are doing of the time and the situation in which you are. Besides, we can never be satisfied with what we have and with the situation we are in. Life could always be miserable because of the lack of the right attitude and awareness. We spend many years of our lives in anxiety, worry, frustration, and fear. So, to be aware of the place you are in, the environment, and the people around you, the pressure and the time are all important. General mindfulness is assisted and sustained by regular practice of intensive mindfulness. Hence, it is important to adopt a regular intensive meditation practice as a way of life.<sup>83</sup>

### **3.4 Benefits of Cultivating Mindfulness**

The Buddha claimed the seven benefits of cultivating mindfulness are considered fruits of mindfulness practice that are described by Payuddha Payutto as follows (1) Purity: when mindfulness is focused on a chosen object and when clear

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<sup>82</sup> Sayādaw U Silānanda, *Seven Commentaries*, on online, <https://fr.scribd.com/document/48034287/Silananda-Venerable-Sayadaw-U-Seven-Commentaries>, (accessed May 31, 2022).

<sup>83</sup> Ven. Khammai Dhammasami, Dr., *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*, Op.Cit, pp. 131-136.

comprehension understands that things in its true light, then the stream of cognition and thought is purified. When one discerns phenomena simply as they are, without colouring the experience by emotions or reacting from personal prejudices and preferences, there is no clinging. (2) Liberation: when the mind is purified, it is also liberated; it is not shaken or disturbed by sense impressions. When these things are not misinterpreted by subjective mental taints, they have no power over people, and one's behavior is free from the controlling influence of unconscious drives and motivations. (3) Wisdom: when the mind is thus purified and liberated, wisdom functions most effectively. Because the mind is not "coated over" or detracted by emotions, prejudices, and biases. One then sees things as they are, according to the truth. (4) Freedom from suffering: when this state of vigilance and true understanding of things is sustained, prejudicial responses, either in a negative or a positive sense, which do not accord with pure reasoned discernment, cannot arise. There are no feelings of covetousness or resentment, and there is a liberation from all forms of anxiety. This is called freedom from suffering, which is marked by unbounded clarity, ease, peace, and contentment.<sup>84</sup>

The immediate benefit of the practice of the foundations of mindfulness is the development of the seven factors of enlightenment which eventually will lead to the utter release from suffering. A by-product of the practice are changes in material phenomena. When one is engrossed in insight meditation, one is with every moment of mindfulness, developing special qualities manifested as light, joyful contentment, and other non-sensual ecstasies. One becomes very calm and with the deepening of practice, mindfulness and insight arise to abandon the mental defilements. This also brings about a radical change for the better in the physiological system, especially in the blood circulation. As a result, there is heightened awareness and sensitivity through the sense organs. Cultivating mindfulness has benefits to cure many chronic ailments and diseases, especially for the blood, stomach, and nerves. The factors of enlightenment have great power and potential. So, they are said to be the most effective medicine. In others word, through the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness is essentially

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<sup>84</sup> Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacarya (Payuddha Payutto), *Buddhadhamma: The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Thailand: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 2021), pp. 1753-1754.

the process of purification of the mind; there are also results in the purification of the body.<sup>85</sup>

Mindfulness is the awareness that arises when we deliberately direct our attention toward our inner experience, toward others, and toward the environment around us. But more than just focusing our mind, it's about our mindset - how we view the world. Mindfulness reinforces a mindset of being open, receptive, accepting, and compassionate. And that starts with noticing our natural tendency to judge, assume we already know something, or resist what life brings or what is out of our control - things that everyone does.<sup>86</sup> Cultivating mindfulness brings out the following advantages:

Mindfulness is the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves. Mindfulness can call back in a flash our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life. Mindfulness itself is the life of awareness. It frees us of forgetfulness and dispersion and makes it possible to live fully each minute of life. Mindfulness enables us to live. We practice mindfulness in order to build up concentration. Breath is a natural and extremely effective tool to prevent dispersion and build up concentration power. Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites our body to our thoughts. Whenever our mind becomes scattered, use our breath as the means to take hold of our mind again.<sup>87</sup>

Through the practice of mindfulness, we learn to listen to the body through all its sense doors, as well as to attend to the flow of our thoughts and feelings and we are beginning the process of reestablishing and strengthening connectedness within our own inner landscape. That attention nurtures a familiarity and an intimacy with our lives unfolding at the level of what we call body and what we call mind that deepens and strengthens well-being and a sense of ease in our relationship to whatever is unfolding in our lives from moment to moment. We thus move from disease, including outright disease, to greater ease and harmony and, as we shall see, greater health.<sup>88</sup> With

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<sup>85</sup> Sayādaw U Pandita, *The Way to the Happiness of Peace*, (Penang, Malaysia: Inward Path Publisher, 1997), pp. 40-43.

<sup>86</sup> Laurie J. Cameron, *The Mindful Day: Practical Ways to Find Focus, Calm, and Joy from Morning to Evening*, (Washington: National Geographic Partners, 2018), p. 13.

<sup>87</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), pp. 14-15.

<sup>88</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Meditation Is Not What You Think: Mindfulness and Why It Is So Important*, (USA: Hachette Book Group, 2018), p. 136.

mindfulness, we can recognize the presence of suffering in us and in the world. And it's with the same energy that you tenderly embrace suffering. Practitioners of mindfulness can help and support each other in recognizing, embracing, and transforming suffering. With mindfulness, we are no longer afraid of pain. We can even go further and make good use of suffering to generate the energy of understanding and compassion that heals us and we can help others to heal and be happy as well.<sup>89</sup>

Studies have shown that specific applications of mindful awareness improve the capacity to regulate emotion, combat emotional dysfunction, improve patterns of thinking, and reduce negative mindsets. Research on some dimensions of mindful awareness practices reveals that they greatly enhance the body's functioning: healing, immune response, stress activity, and a general sense of physical well-being are improved with mindfulness. Our relationships with others are also improved perhaps because the ability to perceive the nonverbal emotional signals from others may be enhanced and our ability to sense the internal worlds of others may be augmented. In these ways, we come to compassionately experience others' feelings and empathize with them as we understand another person's point of view.<sup>90</sup>

According to research, mindfulness has plenty of benefits. For instance, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) have been found to be helpful with anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder, depression, relationship, sleeping, eating disorders, and stress management. Anxiety disorders, such as generalized anxiety disorder or GAD may be reduced with mindfulness-based intervention. With the use of such method, patients with anxiety disorders can efficiently lessen their depressive and anxiety symptoms. Likewise, people with greater mindfulness tend to have better and more satisfying relationships as well as to deal more constructively with stress. People who practice mindfulness have less stress when faced with conflicting situations. They are also able to communicate better. With regard to sleeping and eating disorders, mindfulness has also been to be beneficial. Cancer patients, for instance, were able to reduce their sleep disturbances while improving the quality of their sleep. Similarly, people with eating disorders are able to improve their condition. Furthermore, mindfulness can help people

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<sup>89</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *No Mud No Lotus*, (California: Parallax Press, 2014), p. 17.

<sup>90</sup> Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindful Brain*, (USA: Norton & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 6.

deal with stress better, daily stress and more serious stresses, including life-threatening illnesses. Mindfulness is beneficial in stopping ruminations over things that result in stress. It basically helps people avoid harboring negative thoughts, as well as being anxious towards the future. It provides a break from stressful thought activities and even allows you to gain perspective. Mindfulness also positively affects brain patterns associated with stress, anxiety, irritability, and depression.<sup>91</sup>

Mindfulness is about balancing the brain's implicit agenda by training it "to be" with what's there instead of needing "to do" something about it. In using mindfulness to learn how to be with our feelings, we send a message internally that we're worthy enough to pay attention to, closing the gap of unworthiness and disrupting the depression loop. Scientists now know that the practice of mindfulness can train our brains to have a new default. Instead of automatically falling into the stream of past or future rumination that ignites the depression loop, mindfulness draws our attention to the present moment. As we practice mindfulness, we actually start wiring neurons that balance the brain in a way that is naturally an antidepressant.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, mindfulness practice for depressed individuals may work on two levels: one, by increasing awareness of the present moment, depressed clients learn to shift their attention from recycling negative self-referent information to objectively attending to and processing all available information; and two, by accepting emotions non-judgmentally people learn to reduce their role in maintaining dysfunctional cognitive schemas.<sup>93</sup>

Besides, mindfulness has quantifiable benefits. During the past thirty years, research has shown that when people cultivate mindfulness, they do the following: become more flexible in their decision making; get better at regulating their bodies in moments of distress; are more successful at calming anxious minds that are snowballing with thoughts; develop a strong focus at home and works; feel more empathy and

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<sup>91</sup> Mia Conrad, *Meditation: Ultimate Meditation for Beginners Guide: How to Meditate and Benefit from Mindfulness Meditation, Increase Productivity, Spirituality, and Happiness*, (USA: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), pp. 37-38.

<sup>92</sup> Elisha Goldstein, *Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion*, (New York: Atria Paperback, 2016), pp. 70,75.

<sup>93</sup> Istvan Schreiner and James P. Malcolm, "The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation: Changes in Emotional States of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress", *Behaviour Change*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2008): 156-168.

compassion to themselves and others; communicate more effectively; and become more aware of what is most important in life.<sup>94</sup> In addition, people who regularly meditate become more creative, their memory improves, and their response become faster. They are able to achieve resilience at home and work, as well as balance. They are able to view situations more clearly. They recognize, stop, or slow down habitual and automatic reactions.<sup>95</sup> In short, that is the reason the Buddha said “mindfulness is all-helpful”.

### 3.5 Concluding Remarks

In my concluding remarks in the third chapter, the doctrines relating to the mindfulness, appearing the meaning and role of mindfulness, with mindfulness as the only way to eradicate sorrows and find out the light of wisdom to have a peaceful life and the ultimate purpose is to eliminate *samsara*. Mindfulness is the basic foundation for the development of the inner mind. With its protective role, it observes, prevents the unwholesomeness from the mind, and purifies our mind.

Regarding mindfulness practice, this method includes the four foundations: mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of the feelings, mindfulness of the consciousness, and mindfulness of the mind-objects. Every foundation helps us to penetrate the true nature of the body and the mind. It is called a being, in fact, the combination of *rūpa and nāma*, or five aggregates or four elements. And the law of everything on the earth is nothing without the three characteristics: *dukkha, anicca, anātta*. In order to not cling and grasp anything in life is the main purpose or the heart practice of the Buddha’s teachings. This road is suitable for everyone, not differentiated ordinary people and ordained people. Furthermore, mindfulness practice brings out many enormous benefits for our health and well-being in modern society. This practice frees us from stress, depression, anxiety, both mental and physical diseases, improves cognition, and all situations in our lives. The manifestations of mindfulness are concentration, awareness, right understanding, and compassion that break out the vicious circle of depression.

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<sup>94</sup> Elisha Goldstein, *Uncovering Happiness*, Op.Cit, p. 67.

<sup>95</sup> Mia Conrad, *Meditation: Ultimate Meditation for Beginners Guide*, Op.Cit, p.

Depressed individuals spend long periods of time with negative thoughts, ruminating over sufferings, poor problem solving, difficulty initiating any activity, impaired concentration, or lack of focus that are the manifestations of the very confused states of mind. Mindfulness may begin with a point of focus or concentration. Developing the mind to become calm is the first stage for managing depression. Depression all starts from lack of awareness, non-acceptance of the stress reactions, which are the interaction between negative emotions and unreasonable thoughts. Mindfulness helps us detect unwholesome emotions, inappropriate thoughts, stress reactions immediately, and provides an objective view through awareness and acceptance. Practicing awareness of emotions is the second stage for managing depression. Thirdly, mindfulness brings out the right understanding of all phenomena. Or mindfulness can perceive the three prime characteristics of the deepest truths of existence are *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), *anicca* (impermanence), *anatta* (non-self). While depression is the result of being unable to accept and see things as they are or lack of the right understanding that the physical and mental phenomena are *dukkha*, *anicca*, *anatta*. Finally, mindfulness itself tends to develop empathy or compassion, bringing in feelings of sympathy, forgiveness, tenderness, and love. Depression is a kind of suffering which is prominently accompanied by self-critical, self-isolative, negative self-talk. In a nut shell, mindfulness practice gives rise to four principles or the effective process to manage depression are C: concentration, A: awareness, R: right understanding, and E: empathy, which can be understood by the acronym “CARE”.

## Chapter IV

### **An Application of Buddhist Mindfulness Practice for Managing Depression**

Depression all starts from lack of awareness and rejection of the stress responses. It is a mature stress that lasts longer and has an impact even after the original stressors have disappeared. As the mind and body are pushed to their limit, recovery is no longer instant. Mindfulness helps us detect stress responses immediately and provides an objective viewpoint through bare attention and comprehension.

This chapter focuses on explaining an application for managing depression based on mindfulness practice with this CARE technique. The researcher will study two topics, namely: -1. The General Principle of CARE Technique. 2. The General Principle of CARE Technique to Manage Depression. The details are as follows:

#### **4.1 The General Principle of CARE Technique**

The practice of mindfulness is central to the Buddha's teaching. It is a key factor of the Noble Eightfold Path and the basis of meditation. An Application of Mindfulness Practice for Managing Depression (MPND) is the principle CARE. This principle as a path is based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Noble Truths, and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, Mindfulness (*Sati*), Investigation of phenomena (*Dhammavicaya*), Effort (*Vīriya*), Rapture (*Pīti*), Tranquility (*Passaddhi*), Concentration (*Samādhi*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*) that is the way to manage depression.

According to Ven. Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr., he confirmed that mindfulness process is the best way that can heal and help one out of depression. That's the practice of full *saṭṭhāna*; mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of the feeling, mindfulness of the thinking, mindfulness of the object in one's mind, mindfulness of emotion, etc. One should practice mindfulness from a short time to a long time; from the short courses to the long courses, and finally a regular course a day. For example,

one should practice mindfulness in the morning, the evening, and in daily life. If possible, one should try to join the formal courses in meditation centers where there are the kindness masters instruct.<sup>1</sup>

**CARE** is a process of mindfulness practice that can help us out of getting stuck in depression, change our attitude toward the feelings and thoughts that are there, and create insight to see clearly the true nature of all phenomena that we are facing in our lives. It integrates all the essential components of mindfulness, including calmness, awareness, wisdom, and compassion. It can calm our mind and body, train our brain smoothly, and direct a compassionate and awakened life.

The mindful technique that helps manage depression is summarized by the acronym CARE. Here are the four stages:

**C** - Concentration *is the ability to focus the mind on an object for a period of time.*

**A** – Awareness of Emotion *is emotional experience with full awareness in the Here and Now without resisting or clinging to it.*

**R** – Right Understanding *is the ability to understand the true nature of all phenomena as they really are*

**E** – Empathy *is the ability to understand and transform our own suffering and others.*

**Concentration** here means focusing attention on a meditation object continuously and repeatedly. The object of meditation is the breath, mantra, or whatever is happening in the present moment. This stage brings the mind to be momentarily free from defilements such as stress, restlessness, confusion, disturbance, anxiety, loneliness, depression, and so forth. It brings about relaxation, inner peace, and happiness. Concentration supports the mind in the cultivation of insight to eliminate defilements.

**Awareness of Emotion** means the immediate full experience of the emotion right now – by attending to what is happening at the present moment rather than speculating as to why it is happening. Emotional awareness involves awareness of the feelings, bodily sensations, thoughts, and images that make up an emotional experience

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<sup>1</sup> Ven. Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, April 5, 2022.

of depression. This way helps a person to see the habitual tendency of feeling responses and keep from getting stuck in depression. Awareness of emotion is to realize suffering exists within themselves.

**Right Understanding** means understanding rightly characteristics, nature, and the causes of all phenomena including depression; they possess the characteristics of suffering, their nature is impermanent, unsatisfied, and uncontrollable; their cause is the wrong view that underlies wrong reactions.

According to Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr., he explained that the comprehension based on the practicing of mindfulness or *Vippasanā* leads to attain the stopping of depression and its causes by helping one live in the present moment and control or stop repeatedly suffering thoughts. It is the right understanding of physical and mental processes in their nature as they really are without identifying them as “I” or “you”.<sup>2</sup>

It is the direct knowledge of the three characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self) of all conditioned things, feeling and thought. This step helps depressed people to have an objective view without identifying "I" about unwanted things happening in their lives and more self-confidence.

**Empathy** means understanding and transforming one’s own suffering and others, and that is usually called compassion.

This type of empathy is commonly referred to as compassion. In Pāli language and Buddhist terms have defined *karuṇā* as compassion. It conveys the sense as: “wishing a person who is in trouble, to be free from suffering or misery”.<sup>3</sup> It is the positive quality of mind which feels compassion and concern for suffering in others and oneself. And a person wishes to take action which can reduce or end to that suffering. Herein, compassion is the ground of all emotional healing. Compassion can help one free from the trap of destructive thoughts and emotions, as well as reduce depression and anxiety. Compassion brings oneself the love by fostering one’s intrinsic desire to

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<sup>2</sup> Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, March 28, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Sayādaw Mahāsi, *Brahmavihara Dhamma*, trans., U Min Swe, (Burma: The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1985), p. 271.

be happy and free from suffering. Cultivating compassion is a stable way to regulate emotion and connect again with one's life and surrounding people and environment.

## **4.2 The General Principle of CARE Technique to Manage Depression**

This general principle of CARE technique is divided into the four stages as follows:

- (1) Concentration
- (2) Awareness of Emotion
- (3) Right Understanding
- (4) Empathy

### **4.2.1 Mindfulness Practice to Cultivate Concentration**

Cultivating concentration or the practice of right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) is to cultivate a mind that is one-pointed. It involves the ability to keep one's attention firmly fixed on a given subject for protracted periods of time, thus overcoming the mind's usual discursive habit of flitting from subject to subject. One exclusively on breathing, walking, or whatever to the point of blocking all thoughts and emotions, one is thereby turning his attention away from the very mental defilements.

#### **4.2.1.1 Cultivate Concentration**

There are two kinds of concentration generally used in Buddhism meditation. The first type uses concentration on a fixed single object to focus the mind and stop its discursive thinking, to bring about profoundly steady and peaceful states. There are many ways to do this, focusing on the breath, on a mantra, on a feeling such as loving-kindness, or on a light or visualization. This produces a profound stillness of mind and a one-pointedness stillness with the object of meditation. This type temporarily clears the mind of distraction and worry; it is in effect a temporary suppression of the hindrances.

The second type of concentration is called moment-to-moment Samadhi. It is also a development of a powerful and steady attention but is done by concentrating on whatever object arises in each moment. This concentration can shift between the breath, sound, body sensations, and mental states as they arise, but it brings an immediate, deep, and unwavering quality to each object it observes. It is this moment-

to-moment concentration that is developed in insight meditation. Moment-to-moment concentration focuses more on developing a steadiness of mind in all situations rather than the aspect of suppression and removal from distraction. This type of concentration focuses attention on whatever is actually present. Each time we begin to concentrate, we will encounter the focuses of this habit, the powerful desires, fears, and resistances that keep our mind in motion. These may include pain or tension in the body, states of anger, loneliness, grief, longing, and any unfinished business that our busy mind has protected us from feeling. To concentrate and calm the mind, we must learn the art of settling, releasing, or passing through these layers without adding to the resistance. When we become more experienced meditators, concentration becomes more of a skill we have developed than an obstacle to surmount. We learn the ways to settle ourselves, what postures to take, how long to sit, how to use the breath, and how to skillfully work with the hindrances as they arise.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2.1.2 Mindful Exercises Develop Concentration

In this research work, on the way of developing concentration, the researcher focuses on deep relaxation, forgiveness and loving-kindness, mindful breath, and mindful activities.

In the *Kayagatasati Sutta*, the Buddha offers methods to help us know what is happening in our body. We observe non-dualistically, fully in our body even as we observe it. We begin by noting all of our body's positions and movements. When we sit, we know we are sitting. When we stand, walk, or lie down we know we are standing, walking, or lying down. When we practice this way, mindfulness is there. This practice is called "*mere recognition*".

The second way the Buddha taught us to practice mindfulness of the body in the body is to recognize all of our body's parts, from the top of our head to the soles of our feet. If we have blonde hair, we recognize and smile to that. If we have gray hair, we recognize and smile to that. We observe whether our forehead is relaxed and whether it has wrinkles. With our mindfulness, we touch our nose, mouth, arms, heart, lungs, blood, and so on. The Buddha described the practice of recognizing thirty-two

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1987), pp. 88-90.

parts of our body as being like a farmer who goes up to his loft; brings down a large bag of beans, grains, and seeds; puts the bag on the ground; opens it; and, as the contents fall onto the floor, recognize rice as rice, beans as beans, sesame as sesame, and so on. In this way, we recognize our eyes as our eyes and our lungs as our lungs. We can practice this during sitting meditation or while lying down. Scanning our body with our mindfulness in this way might take half an hour. As we observe each part of our body, smile to it. The love and care of this meditation can do the work of healing.

The third method the Buddha offered for practicing mindfulness of the body in the body is to see the elements that it is made of earth, water, fire, and air. “Breathing in, I see the earth element in me. Breathing out, I smile to the earth element in me”. “Earth element” refers to things that are solid. When we see the earth element inside and outside of us, we realize that there is really no boundary between us and the rest of the universe. Next, we recognize the water element inside and outside of us. “Breathing in, I am aware of the element of water in my body”. We meditate on the fact that our body is more than seventy percent water. After that, we recognize the fire element, which means heat, inside and outside of us. For life to be possible, there must be heat. Practicing this, we see over and over that the elements inside and outside our body belong to the same reality, and we are no longer confined by our body. We are everywhere. The fourth element of our body is air. The best way to experience the air element is the practice of mindful breathing. “Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.” After saying these sentences, we can abbreviate them by saying “In” as we breath in, and “Out” as we breath out. We don’t try to control our breathing. Whether our in-breath is long or short, deep or shallow, we just breathe naturally and shine the light of mindfulness on it. When we do this, we notice that, in fact, our breathing does become slower and deeper naturally. “Breathing in, my in-breath has become deep. Breathing out, my out-breath has become slow”. Now we can practice, “Deep/Slow”. We don’t have to make an effort. It just becomes deeper and slower by itself, and we recognize that.

Later on, you will notice that you have become calmer and more at ease. “Breathing in, I feel calm. Breathing out, I feel at ease. I am not struggling anymore. Calm/ease”. And then, “Breathing in, I smile. Breathing out, I release all my worries and anxieties. Smile/release”. We are able to smile to ourselves and release all our

worries. There are more than three hundred muscles in our face, and when we know how to breath in and smile, these muscles can relax. This is “mouth yoga”. We smile and we are able to release all of our feelings and emotions. The last practice is, “Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment. Breathing out, I know this is a wonderful moment. Present moment/wonderful moment”. Nothing is more precious than being in the present moment, fully alive and fully aware.<sup>5</sup>

Depending on the degree of symptoms of each depressed individual or a practitioner, the instructor helps him apply the right method for his depressed condition. The most effective way is he needs to live under the guidance of a respected teacher or good friends so that he is able to learn and understand this method principle. Developing concentration is not only based on sitting meditation, but also in all activities of daily life. If every individual spends 3-30 minutes in sitting meditation, he should do activities mindfully in the remaining hours of the day. Mindfulness meditation uses all the objects around us as an observer to see all things in every moment, everywhere, and in every circumstance. During sitting meditation, a depressed individual focuses attention on the breath to fix the mind on a point, to calm the scattered thinking, and to prevent negative emotional problems. Noting whatever is happening in the body and the mind merely, without judgment, without resistance. In daily activities, each individual tries to do slowly and notes all things in the present moment.

Mindful exercises to cultivate concentration is described as follows:

### **A. Deep Relaxation**

When sadness or anger arises in you for a long time, your body also becomes intense or losses energy. Your body is necessary to rest. When your body is at ease and relaxed, your mind will also be at peace. The first step in this stage is the practice of deep relaxation is a way to acknowledge and soothe your uncomfortable feelings in your body and mind. Breathing mindfully take your mind back to your breath and, if you continue, to your whole body. You go back your body and reconcile with it. You get to know what’s going on in your body, the wrongs you have done, the conflict you’re having, you will know what to do and what not to do in order to be on good

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<sup>5</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s teachings*, (US: Parallax Press, 1999), pp. 122-129.

terms with your body. With mindful breathing, you come to recognize your body as your home. You might say:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my body*

*Breathing out, I smile to my whole body*

It's very nice to recognize your own body and smile to it. If you have ten or fifteen minutes, we can try to the healing practice of deep relaxation. To do this, you find a comfortable position, ideally lying down, close your eyes, and come home to your breath:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my in-breath*

*Breathing out, I am aware of my out-breath*

You can lie down and just breath in and out, and enjoy the presence of your body. You give your body a chance to be there without doing anything. This is total relaxation, the practice of love directed to your body. You begin to pay attention to the whole body and then to different parts of the body:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body*

*Breathing out, I release all tension in my body.*

As you breathe in, you feel your abdomen rising, and as you breathe out, you feel your abdomen falling. For several breaths, just notice the rising and falling of your abdomen. Now, you can start with the head and finish with the toes. Or you can begin with the toes and work upward. You use the fully conscious mind to recognize that a certain part of the body is there. You recognize and embrace it with the energy of mindfulness and allow the part of the body to relax and release the tension. Then you begin to practice being mindful of each part of the body:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my brain*

*Breathing out, I smile to my brain*

You might take on in-breath and out-breath for each part of the body, or you might give each part ten in-breaths and out-breaths. You go through all the parts of your body. You practice scanning your body with a kind of beam of mindfulness.

*Breathing in, I am aware of my eyes*

*Breathing out, I smile to my eyes*

You allow your eyes to release the tension because there is often tension in the eyes. That's why smiling is very good, because it relaxes your face, and you can send that smile to different parts of the body.

In your face, there are hundreds of muscles, and when you are angry or sad, those muscles hold a lot of tension. But if you know to breathe in and be aware of them, and breathe out and smile to them, you can help them release the tension. You allow your eyes to release the tension and send you smile to your eyes. Then you come to your ears:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my ears*

*Breathing out, I smile to my ears*

When you come to your shoulders, you practice:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my shoulders*

*Breathing out, I smile to my shoulders*

You help your shoulders to relax and to not be stiff. When you come to your lungs, you embrace your lungs:

*Breathing in, I am aware of my lungs*

*Breathing out, I smile to my lungs*

They work so hard, and you don't give them enough clean air.

*Breathing in, I am aware of my heart*

*Breathing out, I smile to my heart*

So you go through your body, you scan your body with the light of mindfulness, recognizing, embracing, and smiling to it. You take time, perhaps ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes to scan your body slowly with the energy of mindfulness. Smiling to each part, you help that part release the tension. When you come to a part of the body that is ailing, you can stay longer and spend time recognizing and embracing it. You use the energy of mindfulness to embrace it, to smile to it, and to help it release the tension.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, breathing in, become aware of the whole of your body lying down. Breathing out, enjoy the sensation of your whole body lying down, very relaxed and calm. Smile to your whole body as you breathe in, and send your love and compassion

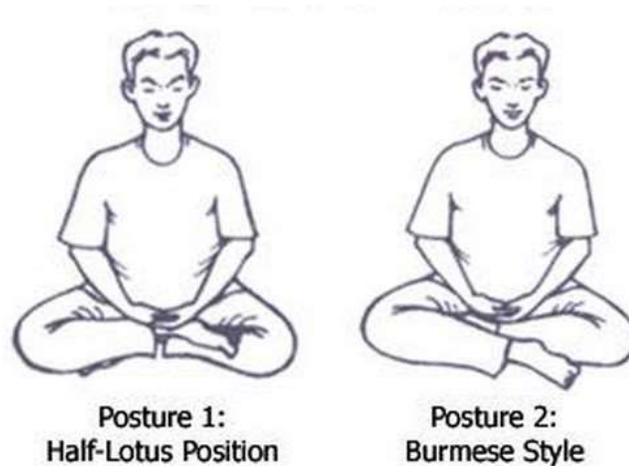
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<sup>6</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Reconciliation: Healing the Inner Child*, (USA: Parallax Press, 2010), pp. 37-41.

to your whole body as you breathe out. Feel all the cells in your whole body smiling joyfully with you. Feel gratitude for all the cells in your whole body. Return the gentle rise and fall of your abdomen. To end, slowly stretch and open your eyes. Take your time to get up, calmly and lightly.

### **B. Forgiveness and Loving-Kindness Meditation**

After your body and mind release tension and anxiety. The next step is the practice meditation of forgiveness and loving-kindness. First of all, settle into a comfortable sitting position. There are two comfortable postures of sitting meditation for depressed people:



**Figure 5: Sitting Meditation Postures<sup>7</sup>**

The forgiveness practice consists of asking forgiveness from others, forgiving others and forgiving ourselves. The practice of loving-kindness is beneficial in that it calms your mind down. So, practicing of forgiveness and loving-kindness is so necessary to practice mindfulness of breathing.

You practice forgiveness to remove any guilt feelings. When you are depressed, sometimes you did something wrong to somebody by body, speech, or in mind and then you have this feeling of guilty. Especially, when you are meditating, you want to keep your mind pure but these thoughts come to you again and again and spoil your meditation. Like cleaning the slate, you first ask forgiveness from others. This is

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<sup>7</sup> Ajahn Tong Sirimangalo, *Meditation Manuals*, on online, <https://suvacobhikkhu.wordpress.com/meditation-manuals/> (accessed July 10, 2022).

one aspect. The other aspect is to forgive others. There may be somebody who has done something wrong to you and you have some anger or grudge against that person. You have to get rid of this anger or grudge, too. In order to practice loving-kindness fully, you must be able to send thoughts of loving-kindness to all beings without exception. But if you cannot forgive some people (including yourself), you will not be able to practice loving-kindness meditation fully. So, loving-kindness and forgiveness go together. And thirdly, you forgive yourself. If you cannot forgive yourself, you will not be able to practice loving-kindness to yourself, and if you cannot practice loving-kindness to yourself, it is very unlikely that you can practice it to other beings.

Loving-kindness is a kind of love, love without attachment, craving or lust. It is a wholesome and genuine desire for the well-being of all beings including yourself. So when you practice loving-kindness and wish for your own happiness, saying, “May I be well, happy and peaceful”, this should not be interpreted as selfishness because, in order to send out thoughts of loving-kindness to others, you have to generate these thoughts first in yourself. Also, when you send thoughts to yourself, you can take yourself as an example. That means, when you say, “May I be well, happy, and peaceful,” you think, “Just as I want to be well, happy and peaceful, so do all other beings. So may they also be well, happy and peaceful”. To be able to practice loving-kindness towards other beings, you first have to practice loving-kindness towards yourself. Then you send your thoughts to other beings. You can send these thoughts in different ways. You can send thoughts to all beings by location. You can send loving-kindness to all beings in this house. By “all beings” you mean not only human beings, but also animals, insects, etc. then you send loving-kindness to all beings in this area, in this city, in this country, in this state, in this world, in this universe, and last, to all beings in general. When you say the sentences to yourself, please, mean them and try to see and visualize the beings you mention as really well, happy, and peaceful, and your thoughts of loving-kindness reaching them, touching them, embracing them and making them really well, happy, and peaceful. It will take about fifteen minutes.

When practicing forgiveness, fold your hands up, and say,

*If by deed, speech or thought,*

*Foolishly I have done wrong,*

*May all forgive me honored ones,*

*Who are in wisdom and compassion strong.*

*I freely forgive anyone*

*Who may have hurt or injured me.*

*I freely forgive myself.*

When practicing loving-kindness meditation by way of persons, repeat the following sentences silently about ten minutes each.

*May I be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May my teachers be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May my parents be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May relatives be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May my friends be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May the indifferent persons be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May the unfriendly persons be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.*

*May suffering ones be suffering free*

*and the fear – struck fearless be.*

*May the grieving shed all grief,*

*and all beings find relief.*

After you have sent thoughts of loving-kindness to the whole world and all beings.<sup>8</sup>

### **C. Mindful Breathing**

Mindfulness of breathing – a sitting meditation. There are two postures of sitting down described above. The first exercise of mindfulness of breathing is counting the breath. Just pay your attention on the nostril. As you breathe in, count “one”, and as you breathe out, count “one” again. Then “two/two”, three/three”, until you arrive at ten. After that, go back in the other direction: “ten/ten, nine/nine”, and so on, until you arrive back at one. If you don’t get lost, you know that you have good concentration. If you do get lost, go back to “one”, and begin again. Relax. It’s only a game. When you

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<sup>8</sup> Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, ed., Ruth-Inge Heinze, (USA: Dharma Dana Publications, 2004), pp. 302-305.

succeed in counting, you can drop the numbers if you like and just say “in” and “out”. Conscious breathing is a joy.<sup>9</sup>

If you are difficult to focus your mind on your nostril, you will practice the second exercise of mindfulness of breathing is to follow the rising and falling of your abdomen. You should focus your mind on the abdomen. You will feel it rising and falling. If you don't feel this clearly, place a hand on the abdomen and its rise and fall will become obvious after a while. When breathing in, you will experience the rising movement of the abdomen. Note this as “rising”. When breathing out, you will experience the falling movement. Note this as “falling”. While doing this you may reflect that observing the form or concept of the abdomen is not what you ought to be doing. So, you should concurrently and continuously note the movements of the abdomen as “rising” and “falling” from moment to moment. You should do this mentally, not audibly. Do not make the breath more vigorous than usual so as to make the rise and fall more distinct; neither slow down nor speed up the breath. If you change your natural pattern of breathing, you may get tired quickly and not be able to note properly. Just breathe in and out normally and regularly, and observe concurrently. From this exercise, you learn the actual manner of the upward and downward movements of the abdomen. What you actually perceive is the bodily sensation of pressure caused by the heaving movement of the abdomen. This is the most effective method of developing the faculties of attention, concentration of mind, and insight in contemplation. When you continually note the rise and fall of the abdomen, various kinds of thoughts will arise. When this happens, you note them. If you find yourself thinking, note it as “thinking, thinking, thinking”, until thought disappears. Then immediately return to noting the rise and fall of the abdomen.<sup>10</sup>

You must practice these three exercises day-to-day for a week to calm and relax your mind and body. In addition, you need to practice the following mindful exercises to maintain and create a new habit in your daily life.

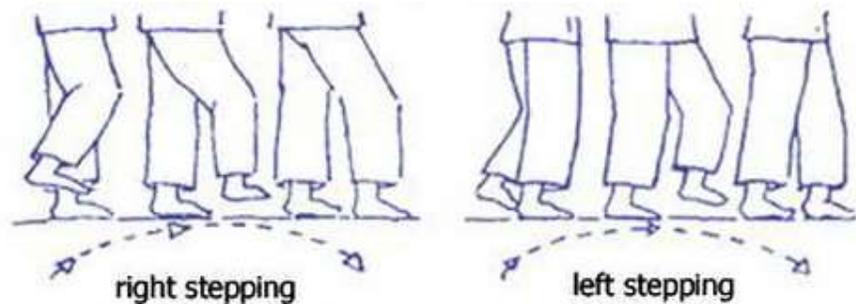
#### **D. Walking Meditation Exercise**

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<sup>9</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's teachings*, Op.Cit, p. 130.

<sup>10</sup> Sayādaw Mahāsi, *Manual of Insight*, trans., Vipassana Mettā Foundation Translation Committee, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2016), pp. 264-266.

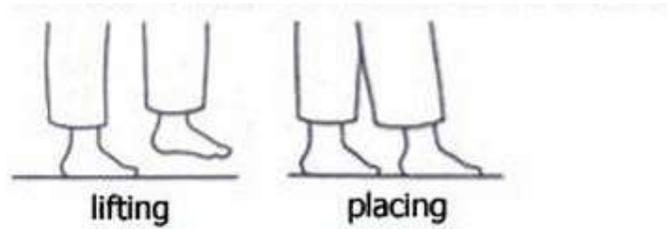
A complete beginner may be instructed to be mindful of only one thing during walking meditation: to be mindful of the act of stepping. He may walk at a slower speed than normal during this practice. This aim is to acquire confidence and firm concentration, and the increasing strong observation. Begin with Phase 1, he makes a note silently in the mind, “right stepping” (observe one object in a time), “left stepping” (observe one object in a time). As the right foot moves, note: “right stepping”. The condition of the right foot movement should be known from the beginning of the movement until the foot is fully placed on the ground (the beginning, the middle, and the end of each step in motion). This is the same as left foot and observe the walking meditation continuously, note: “right stepping – left stepping”, “right stepping – left stepping” until you reach the end of the determinate path. In this Phase 1, you should practice for ten minutes in the first two days.



**Figure 6:** Walking Meditation Phase 1 (Right Stepping – Left Stepping)<sup>11</sup>

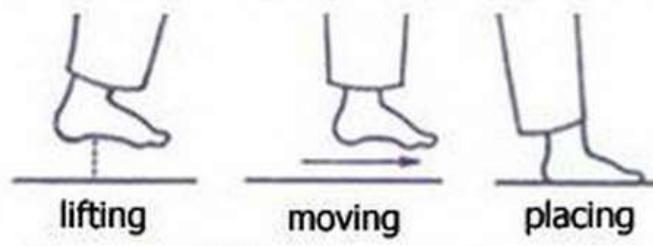
After a few hours, or after a day or two of meditation, you may be instructed to be mindful of two occurrences: “Lifting” and “Placing” for walking meditation Phase 2. When lifting the right foot, note: “Lifting”; when treading it down, note: “Placing”. Just as with right foot, when lifting the left foot, note: “Lifting”, and when treading, note: “Placing”. He will try to be mindful of two stages in the phase: “Lifting, Placing; Lifting, Placing”. After that, you should combine to practice Phase 1 and Phase 2 for twenty minutes in the next two days.

<sup>11</sup> Ajahn Tong Sirimangalo, *Meditation Manuals*, online, <https://suvacobhikkhu.wordpress.com/meditation-manuals/> (accessed July 10, 2022).



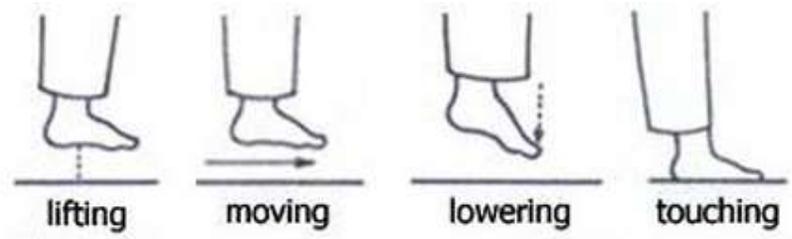
**Figure 7:** Walking Meditation Phase 2 (Lifting - Placing)<sup>12</sup>

For walking meditation Phase 3, there are three stages of observation on each movement: when lifting the right foot, note: “Lifting”; when pushing forward, note: “Moving”; when treading it down, note: “Placing”. When lifting the left foot, note: “Lifting”; pushing forward, note: “Moving”; treading, note: “Placing”.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 8:** Walking Meditation Phase 3<sup>14</sup>

For walking meditation Phase 4, there are four stages of observation of each movement. When lifting the right foot, note: “Lifting”; when moving forward, note: “Moving”; when dropping, note: “Lowering”; and when touching the ground, note: “Touching.”



**Figure 9:** Walking Meditation Phase 4<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Sayādaw Bhaddanta Wirosana, Ph.D., *How to Cultivate Mahāsatiṭṭhāna the path of practice*, (Myanmar: Ngwe Taung Oo meditation Center, 2018), pp. 149-158.

<sup>14</sup> Ajahn Tong Sirimangalo, *Meditation Manuals*, on online, <https://suvacobbhikkhu.wordpress.com/meditation-manuals/> (accessed July 10, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

In walking meditation, you should not walk for more than one hour at a time, but instead you should walk many times per day. If you intend to take forty minutes to practice, you should begin with every phase for about ten minutes.

### **E. Mindful Routine Activities**

Concentration is born from mindfulness; concentration is developed and maintained when mindfulness is strong enough. Mindfulness is sustained not only based on sitting meditation and walking meditation, but also on mindful activities in daily life.

#### **E1. Brushing Your Teeth Exercise**

Here's a challenge for you. You're going to spend one to two minutes brushing your teeth. How can you do it so that you really have happiness throughout that brief couple of minutes? Do not rush. Do not try to rush your teeth as quickly as possible and be done with it. Focus all your attention on your brushing.

You have the time to brush your teeth. You have a toothbrush, toothpaste, and teeth to brush. So the challenge is to brush your teeth in such a way that you have that ease and happiness during the whole one to two minutes of brushing. If you can do that, you have succeeded; you're meditating right there.

Here's a poem you can enjoy while brushing your teeth:

*Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth,  
I vow to speak purely and lovingly.  
When my mouth is fragrant with right speech,  
A flower blooms in the garden of my heart.*

The verses are meant to help us to bring our awareness back to what's happening in the present moment. We do not get caught in reciting the lines; if we already have mindfulness and concentration, if we really know how to dwell peacefully in the present moment already, we may be just as happy not using them at all.<sup>16</sup>

#### **E2. Washing The Dishes Exercise**

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<sup>16</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Breath: A Practice for Our Busy Lives*, (USA: HarperOne, 2011), p. 15.

To your mind, the idea that doing dishes is unpleasant can occur only when you are not doing them. Once you are standing in front of the sink with your sleeves rolled up and your hands in the warm water, it is really quite pleasant. You enjoy taking your time with each dish, being fully aware of the dish, the water, and each movement of your hands. You know that if you hurry in order to eat dessert sooner, the time of washing dishes will be unpleasant and not worth living. That would be a pity, for each minute, each second of life is a miracle. The dishes themselves and that fact that you are here washing them are miracles.

If you are incapable of washing dishes joyfully, if you want to finish them quickly so you can go and have dessert, you will be equally incapable of enjoying your dessert. With the fork in your hand, you will be thinking about what to do next, and the texture and the flavor of the dessert, together with the pleasure of eating it, will be lost. You will always be dragged into the future, never able to live in the present moment.

Each thought, each action in the sunlight of awareness becomes sacred. In this light, no boundary exists between the sacred and the profane. You must confess it takes me a bit longer to do the dishes, but you live fully in every moment, and you are happy. Washing the dishes is at the same time a means and an end – that is, not only do we do the dishes in order to have clean dishes, we also do the dishes just to do the dishes, to live fully in each moment while washing them.<sup>17</sup>

You should practice this way with routine activities such as eating mindfully, washing clothes, cleaning house, cooking, and dusting. In sum, the aim of these mindful exercises is to help you live in the present moment, temporarily turn off the negative automatic thoughts, restore and improve concentration, increase confidence, and reduce stress. Besides, they help you change your lifestyle; you have the motivation to do something in a day instead of lying down in bed, thinking unhelpful things, and feeling disappointed or hopeless. You can practice these mindful exercises for a week to establish a new habit in your daily life. So, cultivating concentration will strengthen awareness, relaxation, and find joy again in your daily life.

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<sup>17</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, (London: Rider, 1995), pp. 26-27.

## 4.2.2 Awareness of Emotion

Awareness of emotion is to recognize and accept emotions, whether are positive or negative, that appear in your mind and body at the present moment. You also come to observe bodily sensations, emotions, and mental reactions when emotions arise without resisting or clinging to them.

### 4.2.2.1 Basic Instructions

Our feelings play a very important part in directing all of our thoughts and actions. There are three kinds of feelings – “pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral”. When we experience an unpleasant feeling, our reaction may be want to chase it away. When we experience a pleasant feeling, our habitual tendency is to prolong that experience. All these reactions are completely automatic and out of awareness. In depression, negative emotions and reactions to them are often sadness - resistance; feeling low – rumination, anger – self-criticism, and anxiety – worry which are considered unpleasant experiences accompanied by aversion. A depressed person is trapped in the cycle of depression that does not know how to escape. Mindfulness practice is to see, accept these without judging, resisting, and try to understand them. In order to do that, you must grow your senses of awareness by practicing mindfulness meditation. After that, you try again and again to observe conditions that appear in your mind, try to identify them, not to justify them, just observe whatever appears in your mind, and when you spend your effort to monitor the conditions that appear in your mind. Gradually, you will see something that appears in your mind. If there were too many strong emotions, feelings, and reactions occurring in your mind, you would apply wise attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) by reminding yourself to accept fully unpleasantness with your full effort.<sup>18</sup> You should see these feelings, emotions, and reactions as meditation objects like the breath.

In addition, sadness is inevitable in our lives like the first arrow; rumination is the second arrow, fired by our own self; is our reaction, our storyline, and our despair. All these things magnify sadness. Many times, the ultimate disaster we are ruminating upon hasn't even happened. Rumination or persistent pessimistic thoughts are the inner

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<sup>18</sup> Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, April 5, 2022.

voices (“My life is a mess”, “My future is bleak”, “I will never make it”, “I cannot finish anything”, “No one understands me”, “I’m so disappointed in myself”, “I hate myself”, “I’m worthless”), is an object of the mind that can generate huge suffering. It can manifest as restlessness, remorse, doubt, desire, or ill will. As such, this thought is at the heart of the five hindrances. The aim of mindfulness practice is to learn, control, and liberate the mind. So, the art of learning from suffering is not to magnify our sadness by getting carried away in fear, anger, and despair. You should build and maintain our energy reserves to handle the huge suffering; the little suffering we can let go of.

In this step, the researcher focuses on mindfulness of bodily sensations and emotions, and mindfulness of negative thoughts through sitting meditation, walking meditation, and mindfulness in daily life.

#### **4.2.2.2 Mindful Exercises**

In sitting meditation, you should observe the rising and falling of the abdomen as usual, allowing any kind of emotions or thoughts related to emotions to come to your mind without any reaction and remind yourself, although any emotion or thought appears, you only come to see and accept it. However, in regard to being mindful of thoughts and emotional states, you will not be mindful of them in a usual way but you must note them somewhat quickly, energetically, and precisely because thoughts and emotions have their own power and they tend to repeat again and again to distract your mind; if you note them in a normal way, the power of awareness and concentration are not strong enough to help you overcome them and see them as they are.<sup>19</sup>

In case, you must confront with strong negative emotions, you should have the right attitude as follows:

Dealing with strong negative emotions, the most important thing is your mental reaction to them, not objects themselves. Check your attitude first, wishing for the negative emotion to decrease or disappear is the wrong attitude. Negative emotion is not the problem; your negative mental reaction to it is the problem. So, while

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<sup>19</sup> Sayādaw Chanmyay, *Vipassanā Meditation: Lectures on Insight Meditation*, (Myanmar: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, 2017), p. 83.

observing the negative emotion if there is no any mental reaction, you will observe it as usual. Otherwise, you should turn your attention to observe any mental reaction when it arises by noting, “reaction, reaction, reaction” until it disappears. Because your mental reaction becomes a more prominent principle than the negative emotion when it arises. So, it is necessary to watch your mental reaction, anger or resistance, tension or discomfort in your mind whenever it arises. Keep reminding yourself to relax the mind and the body, and observe how it affects your mental resistance. The more relaxed and calm the observing mind, the less intense you will perceive the negative emotion to be.<sup>20</sup>

### A. Mindfulness of Bodily Sensations and Emotions

When you feel ready, then pay your attention to your emotions by asking yourself, “what are you feeling? “calm”, or “sad”, or “angry”, or “agitated”, or “fear”, or “anxious”.

If you find yourself any emotion, then, you note quickly such as “calm, calm, calm... or anger, anger, anger... or fear, fear, fear... or sad, sad, sad...or agitated, agitated, agitated... not slowly as sad...sad...sad... or fear...fear...fear...until they disappear.<sup>21</sup> Return to notice the movement of the abdomen.

If you find your body becomes tense; bring your awareness to that place and make a mental note in a usual way, “tense, tense, tense”, you release tension in this part of your body. You let to do this way for any sensation occurs in the entire body with careful and calm attitude. In this way, you will bring your awareness to the most obvious phenomena that are arising in your body and mind in the present moment.

If you see your mind wanders somewhere, gently shift your attention to it and note quickly, “thought, thought, thought” until it disappears to see this thought as thought, then, return to the movement of the abdomen.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by emotions that come up such as anger, fear, agitation, despair. If you feel angry, you become aware of the presence of anger and note, “angry, angry, angry”. You notice anger and you are noticing it three

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<sup>20</sup> Ashin Tejaniya, *Don' Look Down on the Defilements: They Will Laugh at You*, (Singapore: Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, 2019), pp. 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> Sayādaw Chanmyay, *Vipassanā Meditation: Lectures on Insight Meditation*, Op.Cit, p. 83.

or four times. You may notice that anger has paused. You will probably notice bodily sensations associated with anger – tightness in your stomach, or pressure in your head. Relax and release these sensations with gentle attitude.

If you may also notice the strong emotion arises and you make a mental note but it continues to increase, you have to go there and stay longer with it. Do not come back to notice the rise and fall of the abdomen immediately; stay with the emotion and watch the emotion, focusing your attention on the particular spot where the emotion is. Then, the emotion may decrease or increase as you cannot control it. If it decreases, just come back to your primary object, the movement of your abdomen. In case, it increases, stay with it, and note it with some effort for a longer time. If that emotion makes you impatient, note, “impatient, impatient, impatient” or “agitation, agitation, agitation”, and come back to note that emotion until it decreases and disappears. Return to note the rise and fall of the abdomen. Make sure that you only move the object to observe without any resistance.<sup>22</sup>

Sometimes, you see the emotion becomes so strong and overwhelming that you are not able to deal with it as fear or despair; return to focus your attention on the breath-in and breath-out or noting, “sitting, touching” again and again for fifteen or twenty minutes and take refuge in the practice, your emotion will subside. Then you will be peaceful because you realize that you can handle your emotion with the practice of mindful breathing or observing “sitting, touching”. You experience that you have already survived that strong emotion. You don’t have to die just because of one emotion. And when the strong emotion is gone, you say, “next time, it can come. I know how to handle it. “I am not afraid”. And mindfulness is to help you calm down your body, your feelings, and your emotions. You remind yourself to practice like this for any emotion; you are strong enough to be with your anger, or to be with your irritation, or to be with your loneliness. You get a relief after a few minutes of practice, you will have confidence in yourself and in this practice.

When you continue practice this way for a week, you will develop the right practice. Then a strong emotion arises, you will remember the practice and you will succeed in soothing your emotion. Each time, your emotion becomes a little less

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<sup>22</sup> Ven. Khammai Dhammasami, Dr., *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*, (Independently Published, 2021), p. 14.

powerful. You don't have to fight; you just allow the energy of mindfulness to embrace your emotion. Then it will weaken and go back to the depths of your consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Mindfulness becomes sharper, concentration will be deeper and insight will be brighter. With these three kinds of energy, you can deal with whatever emotion that is happening in yourself.

And you realize that although an emotion may be strong, it will stay only for a while and then go; it cannot last forever. You might also notice that emotion itself will change.

When your mind is light and calm (a natural result of practice), you note, "calm, calm, calm". You observe that when sadness arises and you recognize it with freedom then you just suffer a little bit instead of resisting it. You know if you are mindful, you avoid the second arrow to come and hit you. And every time you see the substance, roots, and effects of your sadness, you are no longer under the control of sadness. The whole character of your feelings can change just by the presence of mindful observation. Then you discover that it is possible to relax in sadness, to be at ease in it; you say yourself, "ease, ease, ease".

Practicing this same way for other negative emotions; openness and curiosity with your full attention, you may notice that regret and sorrow about the past have paused, as well as uncertainty, fear, and worries about the future. You will also notice the link between emotions and thoughts, and the effects of thoughts bring about. Nonjudgmentally recognizing and embracing the great suffering is not at all the same thing as giving in to it. When you recognize and care for the suffering, it naturally will become less impenetrable and more workable, and then you have the chance to look into it deeply, with kindness, and find out why it has come to you. You have insight to see negative emotions makes you suffer and always change over the course of time. This process is done repeatedly again and again. Then your mind has a certain stability, this becomes the habit of mind and develop patience in the practice. Your brain also notes this tendency of reaction.

### **B. Mindfulness of Negative Thoughts**

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<sup>23</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Art of Power*, (USA: HarperOne, 2007), p. 195.

Sit comfortably and ready to focus on the inner voices in your head. This means to pay attention to thoughts without getting stuck in their content. Instead, you simply notice that thinking is happening in your mind. You often get lost in thoughts about the past or future. Labelling these thoughts as “remembering” or “planning” can bring you back to the present moment. Learn how thoughts are connected with bodily sensations and emotions.

You may also notice thoughts or stories about negative emotions in the past enter your mind. For example, sadness, stories will run, stories about the sadness or about who or what made you sad. If you find yourself judging or criticizing your emotion, you make a mental note, “judging, judging, judging”, or “criticizing, criticizing, criticizing” and you notice it disappears. After that, you focus on what is happening right then in your body, the emotion you are feeling right at the present moment. You may probably see that negative self-talk accompanied by aversion, you notice it by noting, "aversion, aversion, aversion" until it disappears. And you also find yourself sadness arises, you say yourself, "sad, sad, sad". If sadness in you becomes double, triple, ten times, or one hundred time more intense. Again, using the breath as an anchor to hold onto, just let all those reactions to sadness swirl around and in you. When your mind becomes calmer, then turn your attention to sadness and note, “sad, sad, sad” until it disappears. Return to notice breath-in and breath-out. After a few minutes the practice, you notice the negative thoughts make your emotions becomes worse and your bodily sensations becomes more tense. These new emotions draw a new story in your mind. You also realize that thought comes and stays for a while, it passes quickly as clouds in the sky.

### **C. Walking Meditation When Suffering**

While walking meditation, say, you are walking meditation with the first phase “left step, right step”. Although you have tried your best to observe the movement of the foot, your mind wanders feelings of suffering, fear, sadness, or negative thoughts. If these feelings and thoughts are not so strong that makes your awareness and concentration distracted, so do not follow them but let them float or ignore them, and bring yourself back to your attention on the movement of your foot in order to maintain and continuity.

If the deep feelings, emotions, and thoughts make your mind so distracted that you cannot concentrate on the movement of your foot. It is possible to stop walking, bringing the back foot forward to stand with the front foot, say to yourself, “stopping, stopping, stopping”, then, “standing, standing, standing”, and begin to contemplate the distraction as in sitting meditation, “thinking, thinking, thinking”, “pain, pain, pain”, “angry”, “sad”, “bored”, etc., according to experience. Once the object of attention disappears, continue with walking as before, “stepping right”, “stepping left”.<sup>24</sup>

In the case, you feel negative emotions and thoughts overwhelmed your mind and body, you cannot bear them. They might be huge anger, loneliness, or despair. When big anger arises, you can practice walking meditation like this:

*Breathing in, I know that anger is here.*

*Breathing out, I know that the anger is me*

*Breathing in, I know that anger is unpleasant*

*Breathing out, I know this feeling will pass*

*Breathing in, I am calm.*

*Breathing out, I am strong enough to take care of this anger.*

To lessen the unpleasant feeling brought about by the anger, you give your whole heart and mind to practice of walking meditation, combining your breath with our steps and giving full attention to the contact between the soles of our feet and the earth. As you walk, you recite this verse, and wait until you are calm enough to look directly at the anger. Until then, we can enjoy our breathing, our walking, and the beauties of our environment. After a while, your anger will subside and you will feel stronger. Then you can begin to observe the anger directly and try to understand it.<sup>25</sup>

Through walking meditation, you can create techniques to get beyond focus-related obstacles. In the process, you will also establish a fundamental skill that will help you in other types of meditation and in everyday life. Awareness, productivity, creativity, and social skills all start with focus.

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<sup>24</sup> Bhikkhu Yuttadhammo, *How to Meditate*, on online, <http://www.sirimangalo.org/text/how-to-meditate/chapter-three-walking-meditation/> (accessed July 20, 2022).

<sup>25</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, Op.Cit, p. 61.

### **D. Mindfulness of Emotion and Thought in Daily Life**

*Step 1:* While doing something, if you notice that negative thoughts arise and immediately after that a strong emotion is coming, sadness or anger, you prepare yourself in order to receive it and handle it. Stop anything you are doing, sit down, and wait for it while practicing mindful breathing.

*Step 2:* In the sitting position, you breathe in and you become aware of the rising and falling of your abdomen. This is deep breathing. For a strong emotion, you need deep belly breathing. You breathe in such a way that your stomach will rise as high as possible. And when you breathe out, you bring it down as much as possible.

*Step 3:* Mindfulness is the kind of energy that helps you to recognize the emotion, to smile at it. The energy that helps you smile at sadness is mindfulness; you are not overwhelmed by sadness. If you know how to smile at it, “hello, my little sadness, I know that you are there, I will take good care of you.” So, you should be able to smile at your emotions, low feelings, disappointments, or anxiety.

Therefore, every emotion or thought arises, you can keep in touch with them and only note them. They automatically disappear in a while and you don’t need to try to suppress or respond to them. As a result, you are able to overcome that stressful moment. In the long run, your mindfulness and concentration become strong, you will notice that any negative emotion arises because you remember unpleasant memories in the past or you worry about anything in the future. Emotions and thoughts always change, they come and go. This gives rise you a knowledge of the nature of emotion and thought.

#### **4.2.3 Right Understanding**

Through practicing sitting and walking meditation, awareness of emotions and thoughts, and mindfulness in daily activities, you come to understand the nature of what arises in your mind and body; how emotions and thoughts support each other to impact on your life; how your reaction happens and makes your mind become worse, how to stop depression. All of those understandings come from wisdom which is developed through mindfulness practice. These comprehensions are to eliminate depression through right understanding of the true nature of physical and mental processes is impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Without rightly understanding the

nature of all the phenomena that arise in your daily experiences, you tend automatically to react according to defilement habits rather than responding in wise reflection. This is because your mind is almost occupied and driven by desire, aversion, and ignorance that are manifested under emotional reactions, like or dislike. These lead you to the wrong views of an "I" or "mine". The comprehension of impermanence, suffering, and non-self are perceived as follows:

#### 4.2.3.1 Comprehension of Impermanence

In the Buddha's teaching defines that impermanence refers to the five aggregates. These mind and body processes are materiality, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness – all these five aggregates are impermanent. The sign of impermanence is that lasting only for a moment – it's that arising and passing away. What we normally call change is the sign of impermanence. There is a beginning and an ending to it.<sup>26</sup>

Say, when you have sat meditation for a while as in previous practices, your mind becomes calm and sharp; then when any prominent emotions or thoughts arise in you, you do not react to them as you used to but you allow them as they are. And you only note, "emotion, emotion, emotion" or "thought, thought, thought" and emotions or thoughts disappear. You bring out awareness' home to the objects observed. Gradually, you are able to see the arising and disappearing of all phenomena more clearly. How? Herein, when anger arises, the mind first concentrates on anger and when you are aware of the nature of anger with pure mindfulness and bare attention at the present moment, you then only see anger appear and disappear one after another, this anger disappears other anger arises repeatedly until they completely stop, then you see anger as a continuous flow, arising disappearing and changing at all times. So, with bare attention at the present moment, you then only see the flow of mind and body. When you see only the flow, you see impermanence.<sup>27</sup> As well, you observe the movement of the belly, you notice the rising and falling of the belly. When the rising of the abdomen ends, the falling of the abdomen will begin. You come to realize that

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<sup>26</sup> Ven. Sujiva, *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice*, (Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2000), pp. 193-194.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

the rising and falling of the abdomen are two separate processes. So, the rise and fall of the abdomen as the physical phenomena are also impermanent because you are able to see clearly that they instantaneously appear and disappear.

Whenever a thought arises, not long after its arising, you are aware that there is a thought. Then you note it, “thinking, thinking, thinking”. After about three or four times of noting, the thought has disappeared. In this way, the thinking mind or the thought process is also subject to impermanence, arising and passing away. You realize that this one is impermanent, and another is similar, too. Hence, you understand that any phenomena in your life are impermanent even though happiness, sadness, anxiety, or despair always change from moment to moment.

In daily life, you also have the same knowledge when you observe any prominent phenomena in you and around you. For example, sadness arises, you note, “sad, sad, sad” and sadness disappears. After that, you feel at ease inside you. You realize that when ease is present, there is no sadness. When there is mindfulness, ease arises; or mindfulness is there, sadness does not exist. Sadness comes and goes, ease also arises and passes away. So, is ease impermanent or permanent? If ease were permanent, after you would not feel aversion, you would not feel disappointment, you would not feel despair. Then, is sadness permanent? If sadness were permanent, after you would not feel at ease. And sadness cannot arise unless ease has disappeared. Then, is sadness impermanent or permanent? Here, it is evident that sadness is impermanent, so it is subject to arising and passing away, it is ever-changing. And you also realize ease always arises, ceases, and changes.

According to Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr., he explained that if you know, you're depression. You should be mindful that this is depression, know that it's not I or You. if it's I or You, we can control or force it. Thus, you will need to be aware of knowingly mind, and see the impermanence of depression that it happens to us all the time or not like happiness and sorrow are not with us all the time. This is because it's not I or You.<sup>28</sup> This knowledge relieves your attachment or resistance to the mental states that occur in your mind and body because you see it as a process without assimilating it as your emotion, your thought, and your physical feeling.

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<sup>28</sup> Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, March 28, 2022.

### 4.2.3.2 Comprehension of Suffering

With careful observation and deeper concentration, you can observe suffering consistently and perseveringly so that your noting mind penetrates into the suffering. You can stay with it and observe it; you see suffering comes and goes, comes and goes. The suffering is a moment-to-moment change that comes in the form of an unstable or restless experience. It is a real experience something like sadness, despair, disappointment, anger, negative thoughts, and painful sensations. The sign of suffering is concerned with oppressiveness; the oppressiveness of the rise and fall continuously without stopping. This suffering always happens in your daily life but you cannot pay attention to it.

Through practicing mindfulness, the arising and passing away of thought, emotion, or bodily sensation can be seen. Because they continuously come and pass away, they are inherently unsatisfactory. You want things to be permanent; you want always happy, success, long life; and so on but you will get what you want. And because there is no satisfaction with the mental and physical phenomena happening in you and around you, they are unsatisfactory. It equates impermanence with suffering. You have to see the signs of change repeatedly. When you are able to see the signs of change repeatedly, then you are able to see the signs of suffering more clearly. Finally, when you see into the impermanence clearly, you will see the suffering clearly as well. In other words, you have finally to bring the mind to see the moment-to-moment change, the actual flow of the mind and body processes, as clearly as possible. Then you will realize that the moment-to-moment change of the mind itself, is suffering and the experience of it, is like a huge aversion.<sup>29</sup> Then you come to realize the impermanence of the aversion, knowing one wave of aversion after another, arising and passing away, arising and passing away. You find the aversion appearing and disappearing in many ways. The first, aversion is sadness; the next, aversion is avoidance of sadness or negative self-talk; and finally, the aversion is despair. You come to realize that the nature of aversion is impermanent and unsatisfactory. Then you do not identify it with yourself. In the same way, when there is the painful sensation, you note it, watch it, and

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<sup>29</sup> Ven. Sujiva, *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice*, (Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2000), p. 196.

you know that there is pain. Pain also comes and goes, pain is also not permanent. The pain is separate from your body, which is nothing connected with your body. Then you do not have any aversion to it; you are not angry with it. You easily get angry with the pain because you have not yet rightly understood the true nature of the pain, the characteristics of the pain.

By noting the mental phenomena involved in sensation, emotion, and thought, you can experience that they vanish even as you observe them. Because this incessant arising and disappearing is distressing, you understand that mental and physical phenomena are oppressive. Having had this experience and understanding, you understand that past and future mental and physical phenomena such as headache, fleeting sadness, and little criticism are the same as present ones. They are constantly oppressive, frightening, dreadful, and unsatisfactory.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, if you realize impermanence, and suffering coming from a result of change, then detachment will occur.

#### 4.2.3.3 Comprehension of Non-Self

Previously, you always believe in your experiences as “I feel bored”, “I am happy”, “My leg is in pain” and so on. In this way, you assimilate all phenomena that you have experienced from the past, present to future as you and belong to you. From such assimilation, you always react to your experiences in life, either like or dislike that makes you more and more tangled. However, through practicing mindfulness, your mind becomes calmer, and you are able to see and understand the characteristics of things by your own wisdom. When you pay your attention to something, what you can see that only the object is known and the mind that knows that object or you see your body is one thing, and your mind that sees the body is completely a separate thing. Apart from the mind and the body, there is nothing.

More specially, when you note thinking and you find only thinking and the mind that notes it, you do not find that “I am thinking” unless you add your idea as an afterthought. You really only find that there is only thinking occurring.<sup>31</sup> However,

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<sup>30</sup> Sayādaw Mahāsi, *Manual of Insight*, trans., Vipassana Mettā Foundation Translation Committee, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2016), p. 330.

<sup>31</sup> Sayādaw U Silananda, *No Inner Core: An Introduction to the Doctrine of Anatta*, (Malaysia: Inward Path Publisher, 1999), p. 40.

from time to time, there are some thoughts and emotions arising repeatedly so that you are not able to patience with them but you tend to react by looking for the answer instead. But now you have understood the nature of your mind and body to some extent, you will not follow those thoughts for so long by going back to your awareness' home, and you note" thinking, thinking", or "blaming, blaming" then those mental phenomena will disappear. And your anger also will be less. But, now you come to know that the thinking process is the cause, and the mind that notes it is the effect; the noting mind is also the cause, and anger decreases is the effect. When there is no thinking process, there is also no noting mind; and there is no mindfulness, anger is still there. You also realize that thinking is one object, mindfulness is other, anger is also another. Their arising and falling is interacted together but they are three separate entities. Here, you start to realize the cause and the effect of your experiences.<sup>32</sup>

After you have noted the thought process, you may find the rising and falling again. It has appeared again, and you note it as "rising", "falling", "rising", "falling". Here you vaguely come to realize that only when we have the rising movement can we note it as "rising", and only when we have the falling movement can we note it as "falling". It means that when there is the object of the rising movement or the falling movement, there arises the mind that notes it. So, the object of the rising or falling movement is the cause, and the noting mind is the effect. When your knowledge becomes more mature, you come to understand that the whole world arises dependent on its conditions. If there is no cause, so there is no effect. So, you come to conclude that all the problems in your life come from certain causes because you do not understand them, and as a result, you make your life become worse by avoidance, suppression, no attention to.

Then, gradually your detachment and acceptance become stronger and stronger through understanding the impermanence of every noting, one thought comes every moment, and then goes; another thought comes and goes, and this goes on and on. A new thought comes every moment, arising and disappearing. You directly see the impermanence of thought. You can also notice the impermanence of material things,

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<sup>32</sup> Sayādaw Chanmyay, *The Canberra 1992 Talks*, (Myanmar: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, 2017), p. 128.

such as physical pain, by noting the arising and disappearing of the pain in the body.<sup>33</sup> In this way, you understand that the bodily sensations are actually not you; that the mind that watches, is just the mind that watches, as well as that emotion and the whole mass of negative thoughts do not belong to “me”. “I” am not sadness and the mind that comes to see sadness so clearly is not “me” either; it is just the mind that is observing. Emotion is just emotion, thought is just thought, painful sensation as painful sensation.

These kinds of experiences can arise only when you can see their changes and the suffering that arises from the changes. Then the signs of impermanence become clearer, the signs of non-self become more obvious. Only when the signs of non-self become obvious, will the non-self become obvious.<sup>34</sup> And you also realize one basic problem that causes you to suffer is the idea that you are a separate self. This gives rise to the complexes of inferiority, superiority, and equality. As long as you have the idea of a self, you try to protect this self by running away from all kinds of threats and discomforts. From this perspective of the objectivity, you are able to see the cause and impersonal nature of these feelings; you see they are not I, not mine, not suffering, just nature as it is. You come to conclude the reason causes you suffer from your wrong view, and all phenomena in the world are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and impersonal.

In sum, mindfulness comes to the rescue. Because mindfulness can reduce self-critical thoughts or wrong views. It goes into the object and prevents the mind from becoming agitated and restless. It strengthens the connectivity between the thinking prefrontal cortex and the emotional limbic system. It weakens the connectivity and the default mode network. Mindfulness is to help one realize the true nature of the body and the mind.

#### **4.2.4 Empathy**

You have right understanding of the body and the mind, then you are able to understand yourself more and more, and easily understand others. Then, you also can change your attitude and perspective toward different aspects of life in a correct way. Because you know those you water are the ones that sprout, come up into your

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<sup>33</sup> Sayādaw U Silananda, *No Inner Core: An Introduction to the Doctrine of Anatta*, Op.Cit, pp. 40-41.

<sup>34</sup> Ven. Sujiva, *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice*, Op.Cit, p. 198.

awareness, and manifest outwardly. So, in your own consciousness there is hell, and there is also paradise. You are capable of being compassionate, understanding, and joyful. If you pay attention only to the negative things in you, especially the suffering of past hurts, you are wallowing in your sorrows and not getting any positive nourishment. You can practice appropriate attention, watering the wholesome qualities in you by touching the positive things that you are always available inside and around you. That is good food for your mind.

One way of taking care of your suffering is to invite a seed of the opposite nature to come up. As nothing exists without its opposite, if you have a seed of arrogance, you have also a seed of compassion. Every one of us has a seed of compassion. If you practice mindfulness of compassion every day, the seed of compassion in you will become strong. You need only concentrate on it and it will come up as a powerful zone of energy. Naturally, when compassion comes up, arrogance goes up. You don't have to fight it or push it down. You can selectively water the good seeds and refrain from watering the negative seeds. This doesn't mean you ignore your suffering; it just means that you allow the positive seeds that are naturally there to get attention and nourishment.<sup>35</sup>

According to Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr., who agreed with this way and gave an example: sadness appears in your mind and you know this sadness is not good for your mind, you understand how sadness affects badly your mind, it is an unwholesome mind. So, you decide not to be affected by it through developing wholesome mental states such as compassion, loving-kindness, joy.<sup>36</sup>

There are many levels on which you can strengthen and awaken compassion in your life. You can practice it in silence as you sit. You should find a quiet and peaceful place free of distractions and then settle into a comfortable position. You should gently close your eyes and take a few deep soft breaths to relax the mind and the body. Scan your whole body from the head down to the toes is to identify any areas of prevailing tension and continue to relax until there is no tension and you feel comfortable and relaxed in your current posture.

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<sup>35</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *No Mud No Lotus*, (California: Parallax Press, 2014), p. 62.

<sup>36</sup> Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr., Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh, April 5, 2022.

In the Path of Purification, Venerable Buddhaghosa recommends that one should begin compassion meditation by first choosing those who are currently in distress and in suffering from unwanted circumstances such as illness, injury, sorrow, depression, other suffering or discrimination, natural disaster, and so on. Choosing someone who is actually suffering stimulates a greater sense of compassion and a wish to help and alleviate suffering. It is important to choose an appropriate person in suffering. Having aroused compassion for that person in that way, one should next arouse compassion for a dear person, next for a neutral person, and next for a hostile person, and then all beings in the universe successively in the same way.<sup>37</sup> However, some meditation teachers suggest that similar to meditation on loving-kindness, meditation on compassion should also start by sending feelings of compassion to oneself first. You can practice this exercise about fifteen minutes.

***Step 1: Compassion for yourself***

You should first send loving-kindness to yourself and contemplate on your own suffering. You can connect with a moment of suffering by intentionally calling images of pain, sorrow, difficulties to mind, or you can do this with yourself when you spontaneously feel your own thoughts or images of the suffering arise as you are sitting here right now. You bring your attention to the area of the heart, letting yourself be touched in your physical or emotional pain, and allowing different reactions in your mind toward people or events with loving care and concern. Then you can wish for your own suffering and distress to stop and be happy. This could be helpful to mentally repeat certain phrases about three minutes to express compassion to yourself:

*May I be free from pain and sorrow*

*May I be well and happy*

(Allow for some silence here for 30 seconds)

***Step 2: Compassion for a loved one***

When compassion for yourself is developed well, then you can express compassion towards a good friend. This may be a loved one, a friend, a teacher, or even though a pet. Having chosen a person and visualizing him/her in your mind, you first send loving-kindness to that person and contemplate on their suffering. Then you wish

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<sup>37</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans., Bhikkhu Ñāṇmoli, (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), pp. 308-309.

for that person's misery and suffering to stop and be happy. Recite silently to them about three minutes:

*May you be free from pain and sorrow*

*May you be well and happy*

(Allow for some silence here for 30 seconds)

***Step 3: Compassion on a neutral person***

You bring your mind to a neutral person. This is someone you see in your daily life but you don't know very well. This may be a classmate, a coworker, a neighbor, or somebody that you meet a lot in any meditation center. Visualizing him/her in your mind, you first send loving-kindness to that person and contemplate on their suffering. Then you wish for that person's misery and suffering to stop and be happy. Recite silently to them about three minutes:

*May you be free from pain and sorrow*

*May you be well and happy*

(Allow for some silence here for 30 seconds)

***Step 4: Compassion for an enemy***

You pay your attention to somebody who you find difficulty in your life. This is a girlfriend or boyfriend, a roommate, someone with whom you find yourself agitated with or annoyed by. You intentionally offer the phrases with cultivating a heart inclined toward compassion and care. Repeat silently about three minutes:

*May you be free from pain and sorrow*

*May you be well and happy*

(Allow for some silence here for 30 seconds)

***Step 5: Compassion for all beings***

You send loving-kindness to all beings in the universe and contemplate on all beings' suffering. Recite silently this phrase about three minutes:

*May all beings be free from pain and sorrow*

*May all beings be well and happy*

(Allow for some silence here for 30 seconds)

Compassion meditation is the cultivation of the mind to recognize and accept the universality of suffering in human experience with kindness, love, and patience. It promotes life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and social connectedness and

inversely to self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination, and thought suppression. It is cultivating a healthy and natural response to suffering.

In sum, the technique CARE gives many benefits such as being simple to practice, easy to apply, cost-free, and helping patients change viewpoints. It is useful for patients with depression to manage emotions in their daily lives and help them to cultivate their minds in a right way and a wholesome way. Therefore, the practice of mindfulness is very important and it is necessary for everyone to practice it in order to avoid or prevent depression by doing regularly at least 20-30 minutes a day.

### **4.3 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter focuses on an application of mindfulness practice for managing depression (MPND). This process is manageable according to the General Principle of CARE technique. There are four key components in the General Principle of CARE technique and the specific exercises for each stage.

Stage 1: C: Concentration. CARE practice process leads to develop concentration. This makes one back home to the present moment, with body and mind united. Instead of staying here on the level of the brain, one should bring one's mind down at any point, the abdomen. It helps one calm down one's body, calm one's feelings, and one's emotions. The specific exercises for developing concentration are deep relaxation, forgiveness and loving-kindness meditation, mindful breathing, walking meditation, and mindfulness in daily activities.

Stage 2: A: Awareness of Emotion. CARE practice process leads to be aware of the present experience with acceptance of the bodily sensations, negative emotions, and thoughts. One notices a full range of feeling responses and are vulnerable to them all without resistance. One learns how to take care of him/her in the face of strong emotions. The mindful exercises practiced for this stage are awareness of emotion, thought, and bodily sensations.

Stage 3: R: Right Understanding. CARE practice process leads insight or right understanding. It is the return to see whatever is present in front of our eyes; the most ordinary things are easy to see. Having got understanding is what is the Truth – the true nature of mental and physical phenomena is impermanent, suffering, and non-self. This stage is the natural result of the practice of mindfulness in the previous stages.

Stage 4: E: Empathy. CARE practice process leads compassion with oneself and others. It is to wish all beings including oneself in the universal free from pain, sorrow and get happiness and peace. Compassion meditation exercise is applied for this stage to refrain the negative seeds and nourish the positive seeds in one's mind. The order of this technique can flexibly change and support each other. Besides, managing depression needs the help and support from loved relatives, good friends, respected teachers, suitable environments.

In short, the application of mindfulness practice for depression management is not the same as the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice: attaining *Nibbāna*. The core goal is to use bare attention to one's body and mind as a tool to manage depression that causes negative automatic responses. Furthermore, in the context of depression, another possible effect of this practice is the attainment of true happiness. The mindfulness technique is beneficial for depressed patients and anyone who may experience depression. The mindful practice is useful, simple to practice and apply, free of charge, and suitable to apply to their daily lives as a natural antidepressant.

**Table 1:** An Application of Mindfulness Practice for Managing Depression (MPND)

| <b>CARE Technique</b> | <b>Practice Process</b> | <b>Result</b>              |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>C</b>              | Concentration           | Relaxation and Calmness    |
| <b>A</b>              | Awareness of Emotion    | Recognition and Acceptance |
| <b>R</b>              | Right Understanding     | More self-confidence       |
| <b>E</b>              | Empathy                 | Openness Heart             |

## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Suggestions

The researcher has fulfilled this dissertation, “Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society”, this qualitative research consisted of three objectives: 1. To examine the problematic situations and causes leading to depression of people, 2. To study the concept and practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism, and 3. To apply Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression of people in modern society. Now, the research has been completed according to here following conclusions and suggestions.

#### 5.1 Conclusions

Firstly, the research found that depression is a worldwide psychological syndrome for people who have suffered from emotion. This kind of depression means people feel unpleasant, uncomfortable, and unsatisfied with their lives for a long time. It destroys the function in their daily lives that relates to bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. From the Buddhist viewpoint, it is a kind of suffering that is considered the manifestation of five hindrances but it stays in their mind longer and stronger. The cause of depression comes from the wrong view of whatever happens in daily life, the body and mind. Depression is the result of being unable to accept and see as they are. This leads to ignorance of depression and consequently worse the present situation. The other cause is to have some problems with the unbalanced chemistry in the brain. There are many ways to manage depression from Western treatment, antidepressants, psychotherapies, and a combination of two methods. They all have advantages in reducing symptoms of depression and preventing recurrence, and relapse of depression. Furthermore, nowadays there are many methods to manage depression based on mindfulness practice that are mindfulness-based therapies.

Secondly, in studying the concept and practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism. Mindfulness or *sati* is the core factor in cultivating the mind in the Buddhist

tradition. It characterizes the quality of mind as alert, awaken, and free from defilements. Mindfulness means mindfulness of everything that is happening, here and right now. Mindfulness is the awareness process of paying one's attention to experiences in the present moment with fulfilled acceptance. Mindfulness has been conveyed, studied, and applied extensively by Western scholars and practitioners in many fields of life.

Regarding the practical method of mindfulness, there are four objects of mindfulness mentioned in *Saṭipatthāna* and *Mahāsaṭipatthāna* discourse that are mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feeling, mindfulness of consciousness, and mindfulness of mind-object. Each foundation of mindfulness helps one to comprehend the true nature of the body and the mind. Mindfulness practice is utilized to develop self-awareness and insight that leads to seeing things as they are, impermanence, suffering, and non-self. The main goal of practicing mindfulness is to purify the mind, eradicate defilements, and attain enlightenment, *Nibbāna*. However, in this research, mindfulness practice is aimed toward training our mind to grow awareness of one's senses. One tries to just observe the conditions appearing in one's body and mind without identifying a self to break up the cycle of depression. It is performed by mindfulness of breathing, walking meditation, and mindful daily activities in order to be calm, relax, and purify the body and mind. This method is suitable for everyone, everywhere, and free of charge. This practice brings out many benefits to physical and mental health, free from stress, anxiety, emotional disturbances, depression, etc. It also improves confidence, concentration, patience, and intelligence to get a truly happy and peaceful life.

Finally, it is to apply Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression in modern society (MPND). In this technique, according to the general principle of CARE technique, there are key components of managing depression: C: Concentration, A: Awareness, R: Right Understanding, and E: Empathy.

Stage 1: C: Concentration. CARE practice process leads to developing concentration through deep relaxation, forgiveness, loving-kindness meditation, mindful breathing, walking meditation, and mindfulness in daily activities. It calms the body and mind, frees negative thoughts and emotions, restores and increases confidence, and improve concentration.

Stage 2: A: Awareness of Emotion. CARE practice process leads to being aware of the present experiences by mindful exercises of emotion, thought, and bodily sensation. This stage helps one to connect and experience whatever is happening in the body and mind in the present moment with acceptance and non-judgmental awareness. One learns how to deal with strong emotions through kindness, openness, and mere recognition.

Stage 3: R: Right Understanding. CARE practice process leads right understanding. This insight is to see all phenomena in the world as they are; it is wisdom of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. With this wisdom, one stops to cling to thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, or conditions happening in the body and mind; then one has an objective view of the situations in daily life. This stage is the natural result of the practice of mindfulness in the previous stages.

Stage 4: E: Empathy. CARE practice process leads to compassion with oneself and others. This is the stage of healing emotions, nourishing and watering the positive seeds, and preventing the unwholesome seeds. As a result, having established desire all beings are free from suffering and get true happiness. The order of this technique can flexibly change and support each other. Furthermore, managing depression needs the help and support from loved relatives, good friends, respected teachers, and suitable environments.

In sum, depression is a terrific friend. It claims that one's current way of life is intolerable and not suitable for him/her. And it gradually teaches one how to live one's life in a way that works best for him/her through practicing mindfulness. The mindfulness technique is beneficial for depressed patients and anyone who may experience depression. The mindful exercises are beneficial, easy to practice and apply, free of charge, and suitable to apply to their daily lives as a natural antidepressant.

## **5.2 Suggestions for Further Research**

The Buddha's teaching is all about suffering and its removal. Depression is a mental disorder or illness, a general description of suffering that impacts feeling, thought, and behavior. Buddhist practices are healing pathways for all suffering, physical and mental diseases. The applications of Buddhist principles for the management of depression have been based on understanding of the cause-effect

relationship between mental and physical phenomena and methods to free from them. The management of depression is a transforming process leading to enlightenment. This enlightenment is a deep comprehension of the true nature of the body and the mind by acknowledgment and acceptance of ourselves and our relationship with all sentient beings. It has been established on the foundation of healthy mental factors, non-attachment, non-aversion, and non-ignorance. Therefore, this research would like to open many new approaches to managing depression. It is a source of inspiration for later research works. The following suggestions might be interesting for future research:

1. Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice On Depression Among People in Modern Society: A Case Study of Depression Patients' Group in Hospital.
2. An Application of depression management based on Zen tradition in Mahāyana Buddhism perspective.
3. Depression management: An Integration Method of wise attention (*Yoniso-manasikara*) and mindfulness in Theravada Buddhism Perspective.
4. The exploration of various teachings of the Buddha could be applied as techniques for the depression management such as: The Four Divine Abodes, Seven Factors of Awakening, Five Faculties, Threefold Training, etc.
5. The CARE technique: An 12-Week Program to Healing Depression among People in Modern Society.

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Ven. Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr. Chairman of the Sangkha Meditation Centre, Sangkha District, Surin Province, Thailand. Interview by Bach Thi Bich Hanh. April 5, 2022.

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## **Appendix**

## Appendix A

### Name List for In-depth Interview

| No | Names   | Positions   |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Ven. Phramaha Phuen<br>Kittisobhano, Asst.<br>Prof. Dr. | Vice-Director of International Buddhist Studies<br>College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya<br>University |
| 2. | Ven. Phramaha<br>Wichan Suwichano, Dr.                  | Chairman of the Sangkha Meditation Centre,<br>Sangkha District, Surin Province,<br>Thailand                     |
| 3. | Ven. Phramaha Sawai<br>Nyanaviro, Dr.                   | Vipassana Master in Wat Daen Sa-ngob<br>Asabharam, Muaeng, Nakhon,<br>Ratchasima Province                       |

## Appendix B

### Letter for In-depth Interview



#### Memorandum

**Division:** Office of Academic Affairs IBSC, Tel. 035-248-000, Ext.7205

**No.** AW 8013.2/004

**Date** March 3, 2022

**Subject:** Kindly asking for collection data for research

**Dear** Phramaha Phuen Kittisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr.

**Enclosed:** 1. Interview form 1 copy

According to Bach Thi Bich Hanh, the MA student of International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Student Identity No 6201206026, field of study in Buddhist Studies is doing research entitled "Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society" in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Art (Buddhist Studies).

In this case, Bach Thi Bich Hanh would like to interview you to collect the data from your perspective for research. Therefore, if you please to allow she interview you for mentioned words above. At the same time, the details in interview form are already enclosed for you.

So, we, International Buddhist Studies College, may congratulate on your rendering services and thank you very much for kindly cooperation at this time.

Yours in the Dhamma,

(Phramahā Pichai Warapanee)  
Director, Office of Academic Affairs  
International Buddhist Studies College

**Office of Academic Affairs**  
International Buddhist Studies College  
Home phone 0 3524 8000 Ext. 7212,7208  
Email: [ibsc@mcu.ac.th](mailto:ibsc@mcu.ac.th)

AW8301.2/w015



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 Ayutthaya 13170, THAILAND  
 Tel. (6635) 248-000-5  
 Fax (6635) 248-034  
 URL : [www.mcu.ac.th](http://www.mcu.ac.th)

March 3, 2022

**To:** Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr.  
 Chairman of the Sangkha Meditation Centre,  
 Sangkha District, Surin Province, Thailand

**Subject:** Kindly asking for collection data for research

**Enclosed:** 1. Interview form 1 copy

According to Bach Thi Bich Hanh, the MA student of International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Student Identity No 6201206026, field of study in Buddhist Studies is doing research entitled "Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society" in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Art (Buddhist Studies).

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March 3, 2022

**To:** Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr.  
 Vipassana Master in Wat Daen Sa-ngob Asabharam,  
 Muaeng, Nakhon Ratchasima Province.  
**Subject:** Kindly asking for collection data for research  
**Enclosed:** 1. Interview form 1 copy

According to Bach Thi Bich Hanh, the MA student of International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Student Identity No 6201206026, field of study in Buddhist Studies is doing research entitled "Buddhist Mindfulness-Based Practice on Depression among People in Modern Society" in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Art (Buddhist Studies).

In this case, Bach Thi Bich Hanh would like to interview you to collect the data from your perspective for research. Therefore, if you please to allow she interview you for mentioned words above. At the same time, the details in interview form are already enclosed for you.

So, we, International Buddhist Studies College, may congratulate on your rendering services and thank you very much for kindly cooperation at this time.

Yours in the Dhamma,

(Phramahā Pichai Warapanee)  
 Director, Office of Academic Affairs  
 International Buddhist Studies College

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## Appendix C

### In-depth Interview Questions

**Objectives:**

1. To examine the problematic situations and causes leading to depression of people
2. To study the concept and practical method of mindfulness in Buddhism
3. To apply Buddhist mindfulness practice for managing depression of people in modern society.

**Part I: General Information of the Key Informant**

1. Name / Family name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
4. Academic Position \_\_\_\_\_
5. Institute \_\_\_\_\_
6. Fields of Expertise \_\_\_\_\_

**Part II: Information about Opinion on Specific Issues**

**Question 1.** In your opinion, what is the depression?  
 .....

**Question 2.** Do you think what is the causes leading to depression of people nowadays?  
 .....

**Question 3.** Do you think mindfulness in Buddhism can deal with the problems of depression?  
 .....

**Question 4.** How does the Buddhist mindfulness practice to stop such problem?  
 .....

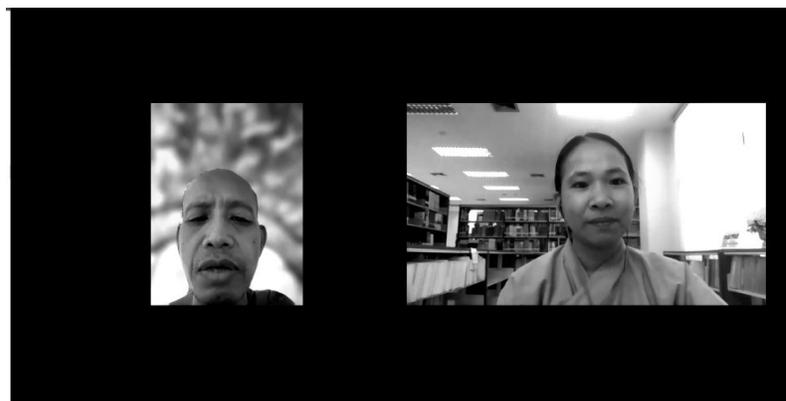
**Question 5.** Please tell me the way to apply Buddhist mindfulness for managing depression of people in modern society?  
 .....

## Appendix D

### Pictures of In-depth Interview



In-depth Interview with Ven. Phramaha Sawai Nyanaviro, Dr.,  
28 March 2022.



Online In-depth Interview with Ven. Phramaha Wichan Suwichano, Dr.,  
5 April 2022.



In-depth Interview with Phramaha Phuen Kitisobhano, Asst. Prof. Dr.,  
5 April 2022.

## Biography

Name-Surname : Bach Thi Bich Hanh

Date of Birth : 6 April, 1989

Place of Birth : Vietnam

Nationality : Vietnamese

Present Address : Linh Chieu Monastery, Long Thanh District, Ba Ria  
Vung Tau Province, Vietnam

Contact : 0972.913.047

Email : hanhbach89@gmail.com

Educational Background : 2019 – 2021, M.A (Buddhist Studies),  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,  
Wangnoi, Ayutthaya Province, Thailand.

: 2007 – 2011, BA (Bachelor of Accounting), University  
of Economic Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Year of Study : Academic Year. 2019

Year of Graduation : Academic Year. 2022