CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCES OF THE BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICE : A CASE-STUDY APPROACH

Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The concern of this investigation is to explore a range of contemporary experiences of the Buddhist Meditation Practice of three South Africans of Western origin and to understand what factors were involved in their meditation practice. The number of people practising Buddhist Meditation in this country is gradually increasing and retreat centres for the meditation practice are emerging at various places in this country. A wide range of experiences accompany the meditation practice but very little research has been done amongst adults to study this phenomenon.

Initially, in this study, the researcher practised Buddhist Meditation by participating in a meditation programme at the Buddhist Retreat in Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal, for twenty-one days, to familiarize herself with the experiential knowledge of Buddhist Meditation. This was done by the researcher compiling a detailed diary of the meditative experiences and various themes were drawn from it. The data collected was compared and validated with contemporary research findings on Buddhist Meditation. This data was then used to formulate some of the questions for the semi-structured interviews that were conducted subsequently.

Three adult subjects of Western origin, one male and two females were interviewed. Each subject had been meditating for an average period of ten years and can therefore be regarded as long-term meditators. They had practised Buddhist meditation in groups at various retreat centres around the country and also individually at home. The average age of the subjects was forty-five years, with the youngest subject being forty years old

and the oldest being fifty-three years old. All three subjects were professional people employed at a university in South Africa and all were able to articulate their meditative experiences very well.

Since the research project involved the study and exploration of the human experience related to Buddhist Meditation, it was more appropriate to use the phenomenological case-study approach rather than a measurement orientated procedure. The descriptive, phenomenological perspective is more appropriate for the elucidation of the data collected. It gives greater and clearer meaning to the human experience of meditation that is being investigated.

The results of the study can best be summarised by stating that all three subjects undertook the Buddhist Meditation Practice because of their awareness of an existential conflict in their lives. Another reason for practising meditation was for personal development. The study also shows that a variety of effects of the meditation practice was experienced by the subjects. These included experiencing feelings of calmness, peace and relaxation, transformation of consciousness, heightened or increased awareness of certain external and internal stimuli, conscious of the changing nature of experience and experiences of objective consciousness.

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Dedicated to

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and

to the memory of my parents

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The Buddhist Meditation Practice originated in India in the sixth century BC. Numerous people in the East, aware of some of the healing properties of meditation, have practised it since ancient times. However, it is relatively recently that the Buddhist Meditation Practice was introduced to the Western world. According to Goleman (1988), it was in the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies that there was a blossoming interest in meditation like none the West had witnessed before. Since then, millions of Americans have tried meditation and many have incorporated it into their busy lives (Goleman, 1988). A great deal of research has also been conducted on Buddhist Meditation in the U.S.A. Some of these researchers include Brown (1980), Epstein and Lief (1986), Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986), Goleman (1988), Goldstein (1976), Walsh (1982) and many others. In fact the research findings on the healing properties of meditation have lead to the National Institute for Health to recommend meditation to be used initially for the treatment of mild hypertension. This is usually done in combination with salt and dietary restrictions and a drug programme (Goleman, 1988).

> Meditation is now a standard tool used in medicine, psychology, education and self-development
>
> (Goleman, 1988, p. xxii).

In South Africa, there is a growing interest in the Buddhist Meditation Practice today. This is shown by the fact that a number of private Buddhist retreat centres are now in existence in various parts of the country, for example at Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal, at Grahamstown and recently a Buddhist Temple has been established in Johannesberg. However the majority of the people in this country know very little about Buddhist Meditation. This may have been due to the largely Christian orientated educational policies of this country in the past and the divisive effect of the apartheid policy. Consequently very little research has been conducted on this topic.

1.2. Aims of the Study

The general aims of this study are to :

a. explore the variety of experiences of Buddhist Meditation amoungst a sample of South Africans of Western origin

b. to understand what motivates these individuals to engage in the Buddhist Meditation Practice and

c. to explore the effects (if there are any) of the Buddhist Meditation Practice.

1.3. General Introduction to :-

1.3.1. Buddhism

Buddhism arose in India over twenty-five centuries ago and is centred on the enlightenment (*Bodhi*) experiences of Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha Gautama was born in Nepal, India and taught his doctrine during the sixth century BC. The Buddhist teachings then spread over to countries like Tibet, China, Japan, Thailand and Sri Lanka and it has been a great inspiration behind the the Eastern culture. The Buddhist teachings are based on the assertion that the true nature of reality can only be known experientially. Therefore according to Buddhist writings reality does not lie in an individual's views, beliefs, opinions, concepts or through intellectualization. Buddhists regarded Buddhism as a way of life that is often described as "The Middle Way", since it adopts a position midway between extremes in blind faith and materialism and between extreme asceticism and sensualism.

There are various schools of Buddhism such as the Theravada and the different Mahayana schools, but all Buddhists acknowledge the Pali Canon which is part of their sacred scriptures. This is divided into the three Pitakas or baskets. They include:

(i) Discipline Pitaka which is composed of five books on monastic rules

(ii) The Sermon Pitaka which is also made up of five books which explain the core of Buddhist thought, and

(iii) Further Teachings Pitaka which is designed to guide the analysis of human experiences, which is the key to Buddhist Psychology.

The most famous item in the Pali Canon is Buddha's First Sermon in which he expounds the "Four Noble Truths" and, which contains details of the human situation and experiences that are regarded as universal. No person, irrespective of his/her social, economical or geographical situation can avoid these experiences. Buddhism contains insights that are believed to be universal (Hall & Lindzey, 1978). It also outlines the root causes of the human condition and experiences and gives a guide as to how this situation can be rectified and prevented. These details are contained in the Pali Canon under the "Eightfold Path". See Appendix E, under the section describing the Buddhist ethics. This forms the core of the Buddhist Doctrine.

Buddhism is largely psychological in nature. According to Buddhist psychology the human condition is far from ideal. Buddhists believe that one universal human experience, is that of suffering. This may be mental suffering or physical suffering or both. However, Buddhists believe that an individual can improve his/her condition with mental and physical discipline if he/she desires it. The path for this transformation of the human condition is laid out in the Buddhist writings and the main means of this transformation is through meditation (Goleman, 1988). Buddhist writings also contain detailed descriptions of human experiences and the way these experiences unfold.

Classical Buddhism, called the *Abhidhamma* in the Pali language, has one of the most systematic and intrinsically laid-out psychologies. This psychology elaborates on Buddha's original insight into human nature. The *Abhidhamma* gives us a description of an "ideal or perfected personality around which its analysis of the working of the mind is oriented" (Goleman, 1988, p. 116). The human personality is seen as a sum total of impersonal processes

that come and go (Goleman, 1988). The personality arises from the intermingling of these processes. In the *Abhidhamma,* the concept *"atta"* corresponds very closely to the Western concept of personality or "self" and the "*atta*" or "self" or the personality is "the sum total of body parts, thoughts, sensations, desires, memories and so on" (Goleman, 1988, p.117).

Consciousness or "*bhava*" is regarded as the continuous thread in the mind linking all this from each moment to moment in our lives. The *Abhidhamma* views the human personality like a river which seems to have a constant form and single identity, yet its contents is changed from moment to moment. It studies human mental states which fluctuate from moment to moment. The *Abhidhamma* thus presents us with a set of concepts for understanding mental activities.

Buddhist psychology offers introspection as a basic method to study the multitudinous changes in the human mind. This method is also used for a close and systematic study of the individual human experience. The *Abhidhamma* lists the various mental states which tend to fluctuate and intermingle with one another. Human behaviour is regarded as neutral and is motivated by an underlying mental state. These mental states can either be healthy or unhealthy. These mental states are listed in Appendix E. According to Buddhist writings, the absence of healthy mental states and presence of unhealthy states bring about mental disorder and good mental health is attained by the presence of predominantly healthy factors. Buddhist psychology is concerned with the states of consciousness and the laws that govern their alterations. The aim here is to alter a person's consciousness in order to transcend the limits imposed by the habits of an individual's personality.

The path to good mental health according to the *Abhidhamma* can be attained through meditation. In Buddhist doctrine, the mind is the starting point and the purified (liberated) mind is the culminating point. During meditation the person concentrates on one object, and with continued one-pointed concentration where the meditator's mind can remain undistracted for a long period of time, the meditator may experience a total break with normal consciousness. This altered state of consciousness is called *jhana* in Pali or *samadhi* in Sanskrit. In *jhana,* normal perceptions and thoughts cease and the mind seems to merge with the object. This merging of the mind and the object is accompanied by a sense of rapture, bliss or ecstasy (Goleman, 1988). According to Buddhist writings there are eight levels of consciousness or *jhana* from the first one, and each one is more intense and is accompanied by a more subtle bliss.

Finally Buddhist philosophy, psychology and meditation is regarded as a way of experiencing the world. A Buddhist aims experientially at being in the world as an integrated, flowing, spontaneous and fully functioning individual. Buddhism is regarded as a path to liberation by its followers. It is a "way of liberation" that is compatible with the therapeutic goals of several theorists like Jung's individuation, Maslow's self-actualization, Allport's functional autonomy and Adler's creative selfhood (Watts, 1961 in Goleman, 1988, p. 158).

1.3.2. Meditation

Meditation as a psychotherapeutic endeavour has existed since ancient times. According to Walsh (1982), it is only recently that it has attracted scientific attention. Meditation can be found in a variety of cultures and it dates back nearly two and a half thousand years. The chief

aim of meditation is to enable its practitioners to enhance control of their minds and develop levels of well-being and states of consciousness beyond those recognised in traditional Western psychological models (Walsh, 1982).

The Buddhist meditation system may be regarded as an application of one of the spiritual psychologies. Meditation can be defined as the conscious training of attention aimed at modifying mental processes so as to elicit enhanced states of consciousness and well-being (Walsh, 1982). This definition of meditation recognises that meditation can be independent of posture or behaviour and is not restricted to sitting meditation. Meditation involves a largely, subjective experience and individuals often claim that meditation has "radically altered their lives and given them a new sense of meaning and purpose, new values and new relationships not only with themselves, but with others and the world around them" (James, 1901 in Shapiro, 1983, p. 62). Although these experiences are of great significance to the individual, they are not easy to communicate to others (Shapiro, 1983). Ancient Buddhist scriptures and most contemporary writers on Buddhist Meditation regard meditation as a developmental process. According to Epstein and Lieff (1986), meditation may be conceptualised as a developmental process, that may have side-effects anywhere along the continuum depending on the development of the individual's self-structure.

A lot of Buddhist writing is a phenomenological description of meditation. Buddhist Meditation aims at trying to quieten the mind until it becomes still. According to Buddhist teachings when the mind is quietened, it will reflect a true picture of whatever is presented to it.

> Buddhist, *Vipassana* or insight meditation is so called because its aim is insight into the nature of psychic functioning rather than induction of altered states of consciousness
>
> (Engler, 1986, p. 20).

According to Buddhism, "*samma samadi*" which is right concentration or meditation, is the last stage of the eightfold path which leads to reducing and eventually ending suffering.

Today empirical research into meditation is being done and favourable research findings have paved the way for further scientific inquiry in this field (Walsh, 1982). A number of behavioural scientists have undertaken meditative practice and have described positive results as well as expanded comprehension of meditative claims once they had an experiential basis for its understanding (Tart, 1975; Walsh, 1977, 1978, 1982; Shapiro, 1980, 1983 and Wilber, 1981).

1.3.3. Transpersonal Psychology

> Psychology is primarily the science of Consciousness
>
> (Ornstein, 1973 in Tart, 1975, p. 3).

Psychologists are constantly returning to questions about how the mind works, what the major dimensions of the human consciousness are, and whether consciousness is individual or cosmic. Psychology is not just an interesting academic study, but it may be the ultimate key to understanding ourselves (Ornstein, 1973 in Tart, 1975).

Western Psychology is relatively young since it has only developed in the last ten decades. The problems involved in studying human nature and the human mind are enormous. One of the reasons why there is such a slow growth in Psychology is because it is culture bound. It is frequently linked to and limited by the numerous implicit assumptions that create the consensus reality of the Western world today. It fails to deal adequately with human experiences in the realm we call the spiritual. Orthodox, Western psychology has dealt very poorly with the spiritual side of human nature, choosing either to ignore its existence or to label it pathological, and much of the agony of our time stems from a spiritual vacuum (Tart, 1975). Therefore, if we want to find our spiritual side, it is important to work with psychologies that have dealt with it.

There are many traditional philosophical systems which are largely psychological in nature, in that they contain detailed description of human experiences and the way that experience unfolds. These include Christianity, Yoga, Sufism, Buddhism and many others. Traditional Spiritual Psychologies like Buddhist Psychology stress the importance of direct experiential knowledge of their subject matter. These psychologies are working bodies of knowledge which can be looked at independently of their religious belief.

The creation of this Transpersonal Psychology is a long term project. However, we are fortunate in that we can draw information from humanity's rich spiritual traditions and disciplines. Many of the traditional, transpersonal psychologies may not be known to many Westerners, but they have grappled with vital human problems for many centuries. We can use them as a source of inspiration, by studying them in such a way that we neither embrace them uncritically nor reject them unthinkingly. Traditional, transpersonal psychologies have grappled

with human problems for many centuries and transpersonal psychologies are integral parts of the various spiritual disciplines (Tart, 1975).

According to Sutich (1969 in Goleman, 1988), Transpersonal Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in psychology by researchers who are interested in studying the ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in the behaviouristic theory (first force), classical psychoanalytic theory (second force) or humanistic psychology (third force). The emerging transpersonal psychology (fourth force), is concerned specifically with ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experiences, self-actualization, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, cosmic awareness and related concepts, experiences and activities. Therefore, transpersonal psychology is the branch of psychology that tries to conceptualise human spiritual nature and its relationship to personal and emotional life. It involves the study of the ultimate human potentialities and capacities. Meditation has been of interest to Transpersonal Psychologists for both personal and theoretical reasons and it has been used for both personal and transpersonal growth. It is for this reason that Buddhist Meditation is studied within the framework of Transpersonal Psychology.

1.4. Psychology as a Human Science

Psychology has been studied along the natural scientific lines for a very long time. One of the reasons for this may be, that through embracing the positivistic principles, it gained

respectability as a scientific discipline (Edwards, 1990). However, in spite of the great contribution it has made to increasing the knowledge in this discipline, the full richness and variety of the human experience and behaviour have not been covered by the methods prescribed by the natural sciences. Psychology, in its attempts to emulate the natural sciences, has dehumanised its human subjects and according to Kruger (1979), human existence cannot be quantified.

Natural scientific data do give legitimate data of human behaviour, but do not reveal the humane qualities of people (Giorgi, 1970). Psychological phenomena like the mind and consciousness actually exist, but cannot be fully investigated according to the methods of the natural scientific approach.

In Psychology, if a person's full range of experiences and behaviour is to be studied scientifically, then a scientific conception of psychology is necessary. It is necessary for psychology to develop within the framework of human science, since it will be possible to investigate human phenomena with and in traditional areas. Psychology must be seen as an empirical human science to study human experiences scientifically. Experiential behavioural relationships of a person can also be studied in this way. A human scientific approach to psychology will enable us to broaden the range of topics that can be studied in psychology. Psychology studied on a human level will also take into consideration the role of both the subjects and the researcher. The researcher can retain the attitude of a scientist while studying the human subject matter. However, the researcher also adopts a human attitude when studying the human subject matter. When conducting research in psychology conceived as a human

science, the research design is not a subject-object relationship as in the natural sciences, but rather as subject-subject relationship (Giorgi, 1970). The object of the research is an experiential-emotional being (Stones, 1976). Psychology therefore, should be seen as a human science and not only as a natural science. This approach will do justice to both the phenomenon of human experience and to the practice of science.

To be rigorous in the investigation of any phenomenon, it is important that the investigator makes explicit his/her approach to the study (Stones, 1976). Many humanistically orientated scientists such as Farger, Natanson, Schutz and Strasser argue that researchers should adopt a procedure that strives to investigate lived-structures directly, without prior scientific and philosophical commitments (Stones, 1976). The researcher has to begin by describing the phenomena as they occur before formulating theories or hypotheses in this approach. The researcher aims at describing, as accurately as possible, the phenomena as they appear. He/She has to be faithful to the data as they appear (Stones, 1976). According to Giorgi (1970), the investigator should actually concentrate on the directly experienced phenomena as they present themselves and then direct specific questions at the phenomena.

Buddhist Meditation is a largely subjective experience, and in the light of the aims of the study, we cannot approach it by using exclusively the natural scientific approach. In order to understand the experience of meditation, and the implication of the meditative practice, one needs to understand the practice of meditation experientially. For this reason we need a non-measurement orientated, scientific methodology to study human phenomena like different kinds of experiences and feelings. Active participation in the form of participant-observation,

interviewing and making use of the case-study approach are commonly used by the qualitative researcher to gather data. In this study, the initial data were collected when the researcher was a participant observer at the Buddhist retreat at Ixopo. Some of the questions for the semi-structured interviews were then formulated from the initial data collected and finally the interviews were conducted with three long-term meditators. It is for this reason that the phenomenological case-study approach is ideal since it is concerned with occurrences, events and experiences and it deals with facts. Psychology, therefore, has to be studied as a human science if we wish to study an individual in a holistic manner.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND ON BUDDHISM

2.1. Introduction

Over the centuries the the manner in which human societies have existed has undergone a rapid social change. The Pre-industrial period was characterised by people living in close contact with one another and with nature. This may have been due to people having been engaged mainly in primary activities like farming, fishing, hunting and so on. This may have given rise to a certain degree of balance in their physical, emotional, social and spiritual development. However the post-industrial period was marked by a radical shift in the lifestyle of most communities all over the world. Large urban areas arose and more and more people were concentrated in these areas with the passage of time. With rapid technocratic changes there was a drastic change in the economic activities of these people and the social situation in these communities changed dramatically.

Contemporary Western societies are characterised by the presence of high technology goods and innovations in homes, at workplaces and in recreational areas. These time and labour saving devices have made living and working much easier for the individual today. However, these changes in modern societies have had an effect on the lives of many individuals. People spend more and more time at their place of employment, away from their homes, families and

friends. Many people are totally engrossed in trying to acquire money, prestige, power and material possessions. The production and acquisition of more and more material things have become important in life. People evaluate themselves in terms of their material possessions rather than in terms of their holistic development as human beings. Progress in human life is measured in terms of the individual's ability "to have" rather than his/her ability "to be" (Fromm, 1977, p. 79). This has led to people having less time for personal and interpersonal relationships and for the environment.

This type of lifestyle has given rise to certain dilemmas and in some cases crisis experiences in the lives of many individuals. People have experienced feelings of separateness or alienation from themselves, from other people around them and from their natural enviroment. The individual's feeling of well-being seems to have been compromised. These dilemmas are also experienced by individuals in contemporary Western societies. However this is not a new phenomenon.

> To speak of modern man (sic) as being alienated, anomic, living in a Godless, meaningless universe, of being in despair and so on is not new. Certainly these terms were used in the nineteenth century by people such as Soren Kierkgaard and Friederiech Nietzche as well as others
>
> (Kruger, 1979, p. 1).

Many individuals are experiencing what is now described as an existential conflict and many are seeking answers to the fundamental questions of human existence. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the existential conflict facing the individual in contemporary, Western societies and examine the psychological nature of Buddhism and the Buddhist meditation practice to understand why people are drawn to the Buddhist meditation practice.

2.2. The Existential conflict experienced by the individual in modern, Western societies

Although the roots of Western culture in the Greek and Hebrew civilization aimed at the holistic development of an individual, today's Western societies are geared towards people having the best acquisitions of life. Inspite of this, there are many individuals in Western societies who are searching for the true meaning of life. However they are caught up in the strong current of humanity in their quest for the best status, possessions and positions in life. As a result many people feel anxious, depressed, desperate and disillusioned in varying degrees. Although people today acknowledge the importance of initiative, individualism, contentment, happiness and serenity, their acknowledgements lack conviction. Many people are not clear about why they are living in this world and what are their aims and goals in life.

> Western society has rapidly become spiritually disenfranchised through the secularizing impact of industralization and its concomitant technocratic ethos
>
> (Stones, 1976, p. 8).

One might ask the question what is the individual's position in the world. People are social beings and tend to live in groups in society. People's perception of reality is influenced by society. The contents of an individual's consciousness and unconsciousness -which is an integral part of the human psyche- is actually socially conditioned. The society in which we live tends to filter into our consciousness and unconsciousnes what are acceptable norms and values of society and what are not acceptable. Therefore

> consciousness and unconsciousness are socially conditioned
>
> (Fromm, 1977, p. 104).

The contents of the consciousness therefore include values and norms acceptable to the society in which the individual lives. The conscious part makes up the social being of the individual. The average person is usually conscious of the social reality, and his/ her behaviour is guided by this. The contents of the unconsciousness contains all human characteristics, which include that which is good and evil as well as that which is rational and irrational. The unconscious realms make up the whole being or person which is succinctly described by the following extract.

> Unconsciousness represents (the) universal being, the whole being, rooted in the cosmos, it represents the plant in him/her, the animal in him/her, the spirit in him/her, it represents his/her past down to the dawn of human existence, and it represents his/her future to the day when people will have become fully

> human, and when nature will be humanized as people will be "naturalized"
>
> (Fromm, 1977, p.106).

Since people's perception are influenced by social norms, values and beliefs -which make up a sort of a social filter- they tend to repress thoughts and feelings that are incompatible with their culture and their perception of reality has thus become distorted (Fromm, 1977). This has given rise to them experiencing feelings of separateness or alienation from themselves, from others in their environment and also from nature. This usually gives rise to a 'crisis' experience or conflict which is known by most people in modern society. This crisis is described as "ennui", "mal du siecle", "malaise", "deadening of life", "existential conflict" and so on, and it seems to alienate the individual from him/herself, from other people and from nature (Fromm, 1977, p. 78; Kruger, 1979, p. 1 and Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 117). The individual feels cut off from the vast field of human experiences. Many of the patients visiting psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health workers are those who are suffering from this "malaise" or "alienation" or "inner deadness" (Fromm, 1977, p. 85). Their complaints include lack of fulfillment in their work, marriages or other areas of their lives. Complaints such as depression and insomnia are some consciously expressed symptoms of this conflict which are socially acceptable.

Many individuals may experience separateness, aloneness and powerlessness sometimes during their lives. Most people avoid this by following a routine in life, conformity with society, in their search for power, prestige, money, dependency on idols, by having a self-sacrificing life-

stlye, masochistic life-style or a narcissistic inflation, which usually tends to cripple them psychologically and are compensatory mechanisms (Fromm, 1977).

Many people in Western societies today are attempting to attain this release from suffering caused by alienation from oneself, from others and from nature by going in for psychotherapy, by exploring and engaging in different religious practices, by taking drugs, meditating and engaging in alternative lifestyles and so on. Many people have turned to religion to escape their feelings of insecurity and aloneness, but this is an "ideological reaction" (Fromm, 1977, p. 79).

Any person who seeks the meaning of human existence and makes it his/ her ultimate concern to answer such a question may be regarded as religious, whereas, on the other hand, those who are deaf to these existential questions may be regarded as irreligious (Fromm, 1977). This seems to be true of many people of the twentieth century who are deaf to the questions of human existence or have no answers for them. One might ask the question what is religion?

> Religion is the formalised and elaborate answer to man's existence, and since it can be shared in the consciousness and by ritual with others, even the lowest religion creates a feeling of reasonableness and of security by the very communion with others
>
> (Fromm, 1977, p. 91).

Different religions have different perspectives on their concept of God. Christianity for instance emphasises the existence of an omniscient God who is regarded as a fatherly or parental figure. People tend to depend heavily on the father-saviour figure for their well-being. Buddhism and other Eastern religions do not dwell extensively on a father-saviour figure.

> Taoism and Buddhism had a rationality and realism superior to that of Western religions. They could see man (sic) realistically and objectively, having nobody but the 'awakened' ones to guide him, and being able to be guided because each man (sic) has within himself (sic) the capacity to awake and be enlightened
>
> (Fromm, 1977, p. 80).

These religions advocate that the individual's attainment of well-being lies within the individual's own power and that it can be realised with the assistance of those individuals in the environment who have already attained it. The true aim of all humanistic religions both from the East and the West is to overcome the limitations of an egotistical self, achieving love, objectivity, humility and respecting life so that the aim of life is living itself, and the individual reaches his/ her full potential (Fromm, 1977).

Western psychotherapy has made a tremendous contribution in trying to resolve these feelings and experiences of the individual. The experience of separateness or alienation from the self and from others and from nature has been resolved by analysts and patients alike through attaining experiential knowledge, which involves self analysis on the part of each individual

which may bring about the ever-increasing awakening of the consciousness necessary for final enlightenment (Fromm, 1977). Fromm (1977), believes that the individual can become conscious of the true reality that lies in the unconsciousness, beneath the social reality or the conscious level. The process of discovering and exploring the unconscious involves a person undergoing a wide range of personal experiences that goes beyond his/her intellectual and theoretical knowledge. This is experiential knowledge. This type of experiential knowledge transcends the Western, rationalistic concept of knowing. An individual in the modern Western society is guided and controlled by the intellect which constitutes the "self". In today's world this control of the intellect of the individual has helped people to control themselves, other people and their environment. However, in Western tradition, this experiential knowledge is dealt with in "Spinoza's highest form of knowledge, intuition; in Fichte's intellectual intuition and in Bergson's creative consciousness" (Fromm, 1977, p. 111).

2.3. Psychological nature of Buddhism

The existential conflict is experienced by more and more people in western societies today. Most people are not consciously aware of living through this crisis in Western culture but more and more are acknowledging the existence of this crisis. The role of psychoanalysis has been crucial in the individual's experience of the existential crisis today. According to Freud it is through self knowledge that transformation of the human personality is possible. Freudian theory and psychoanalysis place emphasis on the tremendous effect of the unconscious part of the human psyche on conscious behaviour. The Free Association technique of psychoanalysis

assists in breaking through the unconscious level to achieve insight into the true human nature. The unconscious is held to be the source of the human personality.

According to Fromm (1977), and Goleman (1988), many concepts and goals of Freudian psychoanalysis are similar to Eastern thought, especially that in Buddhist writings. There are many other psychologists, psychiatrists, writers, academics in the West like Joseph Goldstein, Allan Watts, Roger Walsh, Ken Wilber, Daniel Brown and others who have also pointed out similarities in Western psychology and in the Buddhist writings. Buddhism is largely psychological in nature since it deals with human nature and offers a practice that encourages both the physical and mental well-being of a person. Buddhist writings offer a practice that lead to the transformation of human nature. Buddhism helps the individual to answer questions about human existence and it has answers that are similiar to those given in Judeo-Christian traditions. These answers do not challenge the modern achievements that are so important to the individual. This may be the reason why Buddhism and other Eastern religions are of importance to the West today. There is increasing of interest in Buddhism amoungst Western psychoanalysts and psychologists and the study of Buddhism may be of vital significance to students of psychoanalysis (Fromm, 1977).

Buddhism is a way of life and its practice cannot be implemented in a short period of time. The beneficial effects and the transformation of the human personality may sometimes only be achieved after many years of dedicated practice. Psychoanalysis also extends over a prolonged period of time. The goal of Buddhism is promoting the well-being and emancipation of the

individual which will finally lead to enlightenment. These goals are similar to the goals of most Western therapies.

However the Buddhists assumptions about human nature, like many other Eastern religions, differ from the assumptions held by many Western personality theorists. In the psychoanalytic theory, Freud saw man as being governed by instinctal forces. He saw man as an isolated, competitive being whose contact with other people in the enviroment was for the satisfaction of instinctal and economical needs (Fromm, 1977). In the Western world the split in the affect and intellect of a person is more pronounced. Since the advent of science, there has been more emphasis placed on the development of the intellect of a person.

In the *Abhidhamma,* which is an integral part of the Buddhist writings, a person is seen as part of nature and an individual is viewed in a holistic manner. The intellect of a person is regarded as part of the other senses and is not overemphasised in the overall development of a person. Brotherly love is commonplace and acceptable and mystical experiences and altered states of consciousness are acceptable parts of life.

The aim of Buddhism and many Western therapies involves promoting the well-being of the individual. According to Fromm (1977), for those suffering from alienation, the answers lie not in the removing of the symptoms, but in the presence of well-being. We may ask what do we understand by the term well-being? Well-being has been defined as attaining the full development of reason by grasping and understanding the truth of "letting go" or "letting things be" (Fromm, 1977, p. 91). In other words, it is allowing things to be as they are without

forceful resistence to them. Well-being involves the person being open to new experiences and knowledge and being sensitive, responsive, awake and relatively free of narcissistic tendencies. Well-being involves being fully connected within oneself, to other people and to nature, and thus being free of the experience of alienation or separateness. This connectedness leads to the feeling of oneness with everything that exists that still allows for the experience one's individuality in the sense that "I" exist. Well-being means being fully born and realizing one's full potential. The experience of well-being allows the individual to experience both joy and sadness and all other emotions. It is in other words, to be fully awake mentally and not in the partially awake state most average people live in. It is a state enhancing creativity in the individual. The individual responds to him/herself and to others and to everything in the environment sincerely and sees and experiences the world as it is. Finally well-being involves relinquishing one's ego, giving up greed, giving up the chase to preserve and glorify the ego so as to experience one's self in the act of being. Well-being is also being in harmony with human nature.

Humans differ from animals in that they have a well developed cortex on the brain which makes them capable of higher level intellectual functioning. Humans are in nature and are part of nature, but they can also transcend nature. Humans have an awareness of themselves and this awareness of being a separate entity can/may arouse at times intense feelings of aloneness, powerlessness and emptiness. How can humans overcome this suffering, the imprisonment and shame, which the feelings of alienation from the self, from other people and nature bring about? How can humans attain union with themselves, with nature and with other fellow human beings? This can be attained in two ways, as suggested by Fromm (1977).

Firstly it is by an individual regressing to a state in which humans existed before they were born. The regressive attempt to answer the question of human existence involves an individual's attempt to go back to the prehuman existence which was in union with nature. This attempt is very difficult for humans and often leads to suicide or insanity. An individual's attempt at regressive unity may be at various levels. He/She might have a passion to return to the mother's womb, to mother earth or to death. This may lead to insanity or suicide. A less pathological way to regressive unity may result in the individual remaining tied to the mother's breast or to the father's command. The first type feels euphoric when he/she is loved, taken care of, protected and admired but is filled with anxiety when threatened by separation from a protective mother. The one bound to the father's command may develop initiative and activity on condition the authority figure is present and who gives orders and praises or punishes him/her. Another form of regressive orientation lies in destructive behaviour. Indulging a passion for destroying everybody and everything can serve the aim of overcoming separateness.

The second way of overcoming feelings of alienation and separateness is when humans are fully born by developing their awareness, their reason and their capacity to love high above the ego-centric level so that they attain new harmony or new union with everything and everyone in the world.

> The aim of life is to be fully born, though its tragedy is that most of us die before we are born. To live is to be born every minute. Death occurs when birth stops
>
> (Fromm, 1977, p. 88).

Another way of trying to heal the suffering of separateness is by the building of an ego as a separate, fortified and indestructible thing. One experiences oneself as one's own property, one's power, one's prestige, one's intellect and so on. When an individual overcomes regressive unity it is accompanied by the gradual overcoming of narcissism (self love).

To understand a person is to know his/her answer to the question of human existence. In other words what is the individual's religion? Towards what goals are his/her efforts and passions directed?

There are religions trying to attain unity with nature by emerging fully from prehuman existence: by developing fully the human potentiality of love and reason and by thus finding harmony with other humans and with nature. This attempt by humanity has been made since ancient times with the rise of religions like Zoroastrianism in Persia, Judiasm in the Middle East, Ikhnaton's religious revolution in Egypt, the Quetzalcoatl religion in Mexico and Taoism and Buddhism in the Far East (Fromm, 1977). The individual seeks unity with him/herself, with other people and with nature not in a regressive fashion by going back to the pre-individual and preconscious unity one had before birth, but by trying to seek unity at a new level. This unity can be arrived at only after the person has experienced his/her separateness, after he/she has gone through the stages of alienation from him/herself and from the world and he/she feels he/she is reborn or fully born. This new unity the individual experiences is accompanied by the full development of human reason and leads to a stage of reason where reason no longer dominates the individual's life but works in harmony with the individual's "intuitive grasp of reality" (Fromm, 1977, p. 94). The individual has new goals for the future which may be in the

form of various symbols like *Nirvana* and *Satori* in Buddhism, *Tao* in Taoism, *Moksha* in Hinduism and Union with God in other religions.

Enlightenment, Satori, Nirvana and so on is a perfectly normal state of mind (Fromm, 1977). The individual's mind works at a different level which is more satisfying, peaceful and joyful. The state of well-being is truly fulfilled. In psychological terms it means being in complete tune with reality both inside and outside the person. It is a state the individual is aware of and he/she is fully responsive to the world, since he/she becomes "empty" to receive. *Nirvana* or enlightenment involves "the full awakening of the total personality to reality" (Fromm, 1977, p. 99). In this way the individual can experience freedom in the true sense. According to Buddhist writings freedom can be attained by allowing the free flow of all the creative and benevolent impulses that are within the individual.

Finally the process of making the unconscious conscious is to experience reality fully as it is and for this the conscious and the unconscious has to be trained (Fromm, 1977). Consciousness has to loosen its reliance on the social filter and the unconsciousness must be trained to emerge from its secret or separate existence. People must be trained to drop their capacity for repression and experience reality fully and clearly, in all its awareness and without intellectual reflection. This type of training is found in the Buddhist meditation practice and in many other meditation systems and in Western psychoanalysis. In this way when Enlightenment is attained it results in abolishing the split between the universal being and a social being (Fromm, 1977).

2.4. Buddhist Meditation

> At the most universal level, all meditation systems are variations on a single process for transforming consciousness
>
> (Goleman, 1988, p.102).

The Buddhist meditation practice offers us a very special opportunity to look within ourselves, and to find out about ourselves and about who we are in a quiet and secluded setting. It is like a journey into our minds: a journey of discovery and exploration of who and what we are (Goldstein, 1976). It is regarded by Buddhists, as a spiritual quest or as a path to freedom. It is a path that has been trodden upon by many people in the past and it is well mapped-out by many people. For the Buddhist, one of the clearest descriptions of this path, is the one found in the teachings of Buddha who expressed it as the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Buddhist Meditation Practice requires a great deal of patience and perseverance. Meditation can be good, beautiful and insightful, and yet there are times it will be boring, painful, full of restlessness and doubt (Goldstein, 1976). Being patient throughout these experiences will help the individual to keep the mind and body in balance. Being patient means remaining in a state of balance regardless of what is happening. One has to be relaxed and alert. Another aid for deepening meditation is by maintaining silence during the practice. This is necessary since it is not possible to examine the contents or workings of the mind if one is talking. Talking distracts the attention and uses up energy. This energy, according to Buddhist writings, could be used for the development of awareness and mindfulness. This

silence should also be easy and relaxed. By keeping silent, a whole range of physical and mental activities can become clearer and "... verbal silence makes possible a deeper silence of the mind" (Goldstein, 1976, p.3).

Everything in nature appears to be in wholes, which are in hierarchical order. Each whole is part of a larger whole. While thinking along these lines it could be said that the human mind or psyche has this same hierarchical arrangement of wholes. The whole of the lower level of the psyche is part of the whole of the next level, which in turn is part of the higher level of the psyche and so on throughout human development. Each level of the mind is more integrated than the lower levels.

According to most psychologists like Jung, Werner and Welwood, whatever development occurs it starts from "...a relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation and hierarchical integration" (Wilber, 1979, p.1). This holistic evolution of nature is also present in the human psyche and in a person's psychological growth and development from infancy to adulthood.

Modern psychology tries to uncover the various areas or realms of the mind. The transpersonal realms are actually parts of the repressed, submerged and unconscious areas of the psyche. According to Buddhism, the meditation practice helps to lift the repression and stop the selective perception in the individual. The transpersonal realms are therefore part of the emergent unconscious, and meditation facilitates and speeds up the emergence process.

According to Wilber (1979), meditation may be regarded as a sustained instrumental path of transcendence and it fosters a sustained development of an individual. Meditation is one aspect of the Buddhist Practice and it has to be combined with the practice of generosity, gentleness, non-violence, patience, contentment and humility for the complete development of an individual. The traditional Buddhist meditation or awareness practice (*Vipassana*) has been described by writers like Goleman (1988), Goldstein (1976) and Walsh (1977, 1978) and many others. According to Kornfield (1979), the above-mentioned writers undertook these studies to counter the lack of phenomenological data in present studies of meditation. Although phenomenological descriptions of the meditative practice do exist in traditional Eastern psychological literature, these have focussed almost entirely on advanced levels of meditation practice (Sobhana, 1965 in Kornfield, 1979; Buddhaghosa, 1976 in Kornfield, 1979).

This study will help to give us more knowledge of phenomenological data in the early stages of meditation practice and the frequency and the variety of experiences during the meditation practice. According to Kornfield (1979), Western psychology has often given a pathological interpretation to meditative experiences which is quite erroneous and this view is shared by many other psychologists, writers, psychiatrists, academics, the researcher herself and many others already mentiond in this research work.

Insight meditation begins by an individual concentrating on his/her breath sensation for several days until the mind becomes quieter. A person from this point onwards may be able to focus his/ her attention more frequently on the breath sensation. This exercise, after a period of time, will enable meditators to focus their attention on the predominant experience of the body or the

mind at a particular time. Mindfulness is defined as a careful, non-judgemental attention developed by looking at the natural sequence of changing experience, whether it be a breath, body sensation, sounds, feelings, taste or thoughts. This mindfulness is crucial in meditation since one tries to understand the process of experience.

Daily meditation is an integral part of the life of a Buddhist. At a retreat centre, meditation practice is carried out in groups. Seven to nine sessions (about 30 to 45 minutes long) of sitting meditation, and four or five periods of slow, mindful walking meditation are carried out. In addition to this, regularly scheduled periods for meals, rest and meditation instruction are included. Each student is told to develop careful attention to each movement of his/her body and of what is occuring in the environment. This is the practice of mindfulness.

A Buddhist believes that everything in the universe, like gods, human beings and animals, is in a state of continuous flux, and when one is within and part of this flux, it involves suffering. If one wishes to experience liberation from this sorrow, it will require concentration (*dhyana*) on one's part. This, according to Buddhist writings, will lead to *prajna* the highest wisdom and transcendental insight into the final truth (*bodhi*) or enlightenment.

The Theravada Scriptures prescribe four stages in this process of concentration. In the initial stage, the meditator suppresses sensual desires successfully. He/She also rids him/herself of impure mental states like ill-will, sloth and doubt. In this way he/she experiences detachment, which is regarded as a liberating experience. In the second stage he/she reaches a state of mental concentration, which is called "one- pointedness". This enables the meditator to direct

his/her thoughts on one object only. It is a state marked by a feeling of confidence and serenity. In the third stage the meditator experiences growing alienation and indifference to everything except for his/her own sense of well-being. In the fourth stage even this sense of well-being is no longer felt, since the meditator has erased the last bits of egoism or self-awareness and he/she is now ready to go on to *Nirvana*. Entering *Nirvana* or obtaining Enlightenment comes with the realisation of the ultimate reality that must be "behind or beyond the appearances known to the human consciousness" (Noss, 1980, p. 149). According to Buddhism the things that are truly real reside in a spiritual world, which transcends words and speech. This is a world without perception, name, concepts, knowledge or sensations. There is no ignorance, decay or death. It is a Void.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH INTO THE BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICE

3.1. Introduction

Human growth and development begins at conception and continues until death. This growth and development is multi-dimensional and brings about changes in the physical, mental and spiritual or transpersonal realms of the individual. This means there are a changes in the person's size, proportions, bodily functions, attitudes, interests and patterns of behaviour. A vast amount of research has been conducted on human development to date in Western societies, which has lead to the creation of various theories of human development.

3.2. Limitations in the present Conventional or Western Psychology

Conventional psychology originated in the Western world about a hundred years ago and it includes theories of human development belonging to the psychoanalytic school, the cognitive school and the humanistic school. These theories use the stage model to describe human development (Wilber, Brown & Engler 1986). These theories usually describe human development as

> an invariant sequence of discrete and increasingly complex developmental stages, whereby no stage can be passed over, and each higher stage implies or presupposes the previous stage
>
> (McCarthy, 1978 in Wilber, Brown &Engler 1986 p. 4).

However, many of the theories of conventional psychology concentrate in detail, on only the physical and cognitive development of the individual up to the adulthood period. They do not deal with the higher level of personal development, that is, in the transpersonal stage during adulthood. Human development does not cease with the attainment of full physical development. There are many experiences like peak experiences, unitive consciousness, cosmic awareness, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, wonder and bliss that promote personal development which are not explained by these theories (Goleman, 1988). Therefore many conventional theories do not explain the full extent of human development. It is for this reason that many psychologists, psychiatrists, academic scholars and other writers have turned to other sources to extend their knowledge concerning human development. One such source that they turned towards was the traditional or spiritual psychologies which are found in the many religions of the world. The Eastern psychologies found in Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism were explored and studied by many psychologists, psychiatrists, writers and many others looking for answers for human development on the transpersonal level. This gave rise to the emergence of and development of the contemporary transpersonal psychology. This chapter deals with the development of contemporary transpersonal psychology and examines what research on Buddhist Meditation has been conducted to date.

3.3. Eastern Psychology and Western Psychology

According to Goleman (1988), the systematic understanding of human personality and mental health did not originate with contemporary Western psychology, which is relatively young. Well-formulated psychologies and visions of extensive human possibilities form the core of many Eastern religions. These psychologies are clearly seen when separated from the dogmatic beliefs and rituals that are present in many Eastern religions. This unfortunately is little known to the majority of adherents to these faiths (Goleman, 1988).

There are a multitude of personality theories in both the Eastern and Western psychologies. However, one common feature of Eastern psychologies is that the ideal human condition can be attained by any individual who deligently seeks it, and this path of transformation, where ideal human qualities become stable traits, is through meditation. One of the most systematic and intricately laid-out Eastern psychologies is that of classical Buddhism, known as the *Abhidhamma* in the Pali language. See Appendix E. Many Western personality theorists were oblivious of Eastern psychologies and this may have been due to the fact that many theorists were unfamiliar with the Pali, Sanskrit and other Indian languages (Goleman, 1988). Furthermore, Goleman (1988), believes that even if these psychologies came to their attention, they would discount the validity of these theories because of their introspective and phenomenological nature. This is because Western psychology, in its attempt to be accepted as a scientific discipline, in the early years aligned itself to the positivistic methods of the natural sciences.

There are some themes that are common to both Western and Eastern psychologies: for example, the models of sanity in Western psychology show remarkable similarities to models of sanity in Eastern psychologies. A mature adult is described as having characteristics like a realistic self-perception, self-acceptance or contentment with oneself, compassion and warmth, which are also found in the Eastern psychologies (Allport 1968 in Goleman, 1988). The closest similarity is found between Abraham Maslow's description of a self-actualised person and the characteristics of an *arahat* (Buddhist saint) in Buddhist writings (Goleman, 1988). These characteristics include the person having a clear perception of reality, spontaneity, detachment in relationships, independence from flattery, criticism and compassion. Common themes were seen between these two psychologies as early as 1941, when American psychoanalyst, Franz Alexander, studied the Buddhist text in the Pali language and compared symptoms of progression into insight meditation with symptoms of melancholia and schizophrenia (Goleman, 1988).

3.4. Western Psychology meets Eastern Psychology

Western thinkers have been influenced by Eastern philosophies since Roman times. Plotinus (AD 205-270 in Goleman, 1988) studied Persian and Indian Philosophy around AD 242. His work influenced Christian mystics centuries later. Plotinus mapped out experiences in the transpersonal realms. This means a person can transcend the ordinary limits of the body senses and the mind, and experience a transformed state of awareness. "This same doctrine became part of the Christian psychology, surfacing in one form or another within the influential writings

of the Egyptian St. Antony (Waddell, 1957), St. John of the Cross (1958) and Meister Eckhardt, to name a few" (Goleman, 1988, p.151).

With the emergence of the natural sciences in the Western world, the positivistic approach dominated the sciences. Western psychology in its attempt to be accepted as a science could not study spiritual development or transformation of consciousness with this method, and Eastern psychologies had little impact on it during the nineteenth century. A large range of experiences were ignored by Western psychologists. This may have been one of the reasons why some psychologists turned to the Eastern theories to look for answers about aspects of the mind about which Western psychology has little to say. Modern interest in Eastern psychology is also due to the reporting of an increasing number of experiences of altered states of consciousness by people in Western societies (Goleman, 1988).

However, there were psychologists and writers in the West, who were still keen on Eastern and Western religions. One of them was America's most prominent psychologist, William James, who wrote about religious experiences in his books. Psychologists, psychiatrists, authors and academics in the Western societies who studied and wrote about Eastern psychologies include Carl Jung, Ken Wilber, Allan Watts, Daniel Goleman, Joseph Goldstein, Erich Fromm, Epstein and Lieff, Roger Walsh, Ken Russell and many others.

Among the personality theorists, Carl Jung is probably the most knowledgeable about Eastern psychologies (Goleman, 1988). Jung's idea of religion is that religion develops as a means for humans to know their archetypes which are potentialities for thought and action inherent in the

very structure of the human psyche (Goleman, 1988). According to Jung, religions in Europe were far younger and less sophisticated than those in the East. In the East religions represented a higher level of development that reflected the maturity of ancient civilizations. Just as people go through various stages of development to reach maturity, so must various societies. The goals of Eastern psychologies are similar to the goals of Western psychologies. However the methods are different, and the Eastern method according to Jung is unsuited to the Western mind and the West must follow the way of its own spiritual history.

Other Western theorists influenced by Eastern (traditional) psychologies include Angyal and Maslow. Humanists like Buber and Fromm and the existentialist, Boss, were also influenced by Eastern psychologies. After Boss returned from India, he was convinced that

> ...in the light of the teachings and behaviour of Eastern masters, the methods and the aim of Western psychotherapy were inadequate
>
> (Goleman, 1988, p. 157).

Tart (1976 in Goleman, 1988) also states that Western psychology has dealt very poorly with the spiritual side of human nature. He argues that, the realm of the spiritual is connected to the altered states of consciousness experienced by people, and traditional Eastern psychologies, like Buddhist psychology, explain and help us to predict and control these altered states of consciousness. Tart's studies of the traditional Eastern psychologies were aimed at using them as a guide for Western theorists' attempts at formulating more comprehensive theories and he

envisions "the development of scientific tradition with the vast, unchartered (to science) sea of human potentials we call (hu)man's spiritual potentialities" (Goleman, 1988, p.161).

Allan Watts, though not a psychological theorist, recognised that the Eastern "ways of liberation" have similarities to Western psychotherapy in that "both are concerned with changing peoples' feelings about themselves and their relation to others and to the world of nature" (Watts,1961 in Goleman, 1988, p. 157). Watts saw the aims of the Eastern ways of liberation as similiar to the goals of Western theorists like Jung's individuation, Allport's functional autonomy and Adler's creative selfhood (Goleman, 1988). It is as a result of this link between the Eastern psychologies and the Western psychologies that a new force known as Transpersonal Psychology emerged.

3.5. Contemporary Transpersonal Psychology

The far-ranging interests of transpersonal psychology can best be described as follows:

> Transpersonal Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group ... who are interested in those ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no systemic place in the... behaviouristic theory ("first force"), classical psychoanalytic theory ("second force"), or humanistic psychology ("third force"). The emerging Transpersonal Psychology ("fourth force ") is concerned specifically with...

> ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness ... and related concepts, experiences, and activities
>
> (Sutich, 1969 in Goleman, 1988, p. 160).

Since transpersonal psychologists are concerned with the study of phenomena like unitive consciousness, awe, wonder, bliss and so on, they often turn to the Eastern psychologies for guidance. The Eastern psychologies found in Buddhist and Hindu scriptures deal with human spiritual aspirations which are not covered by the first three forces of Western psychology. We are very fortunate that we can draw from the very rich spiritual traditions and disciplines of the East which have grappled with human problems for centuries and are an integral part of the various spiritual disciplines (Tart, 1975). Transpersonal psychologies attempt to bridge the conventional (Western) discipline and the traditional or contemplative (Eastern) disciplines (Wilber, 1986).

As a result of the work of psychologists like Maslow, Sutich and many others, the first Journal of Transpersonal Psychology was published in 1969. This journal has become the forum for psychologists with interests in studying the phenomena listed in the first paragraph of this section. These psychologists, writers, academics, psychiatrists and other interested persons are most open to studying and borrowing from the Eastern psychologies, and contributors to this

journal over the past two decades, have built up a core of sound literature drawn on academic reflections and studies of these experiences (Edwards, 1991).

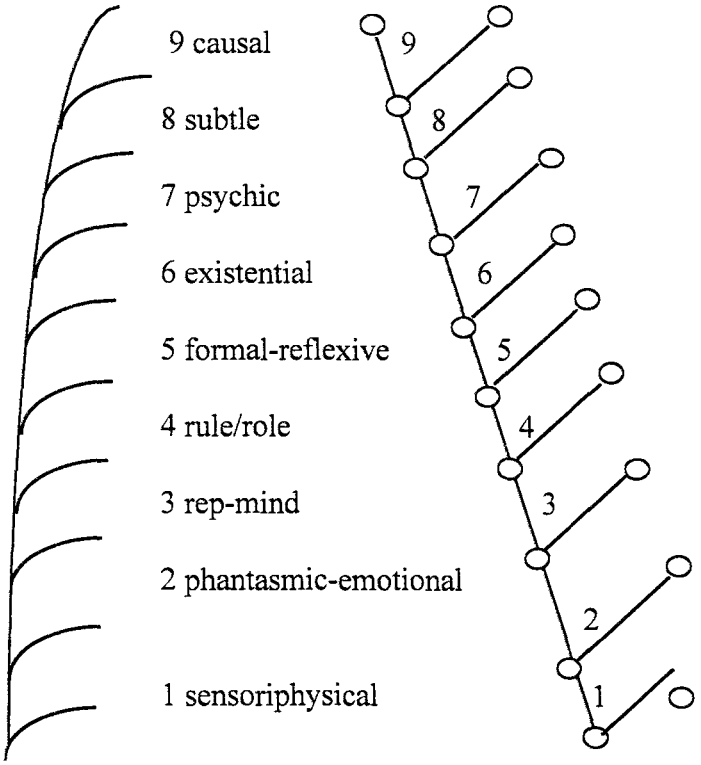
Transpersonal psychologies contain psychodynamic, behavioural and humanistic approaches alongside the contemplative and meditative approaches of the world's great spiritual traditions (Wilber, 1986). However one must remember that the creation of this Transpersonal Psychology is a long term project.

A great deal of effort has been made at integrating the Eastern (contemplative) psychologies and Western (conventional) psychologies over the past two decades. The most sophisticated attempt at integrating these two psychologies to date includes the works of Western scholars like Wilber (1975, 1979, 1981), Goleman (1988), Kornfield (1979), Goldstein (1976), Shapiro (1980, 1983), Russell (1986), Walsh (1977, 1978, 1982, 1983), Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986) and Epstein and Lief (1986).

Wilber (1986) argues that an adequate grasp of the full range of human capacities from the lowest to the highest must require a combined and integrated conception of human development. Therefore

> I have attempted to develop an overall spectrum model of psychology, one that is developmental, structural, hierarchical and systems-orientated and that which draws equally on Eastern and Western schools
>
> (Wilber, 1986).

This model includes affective, cognitive, moral, ego, object relationals and other levels of development. The model includes nine of the most basic and central developmental levels that are contained in three main realms, that is the prepersonal, personal and transpersonal realms. Each of these stages has three major fulcrums or turning points for the development of the "self". Wilber also lists an overall spectrum of pathology that may arise at each of the nine general stages, and suggests treatment modalities at each level. The following summary shows Wilber's Spectrum model of the development of consciousness, the corresponding fulcrums of self-development and the possible pathologies that may occur at each fulcrum and treatment modalities at each level.



CORRELATION OF STRUCTURES, FULCRUMS, PSYCHOPATHOLOGIES AND TREATMENTS

(Source: Wilber, 1986 in Wilber, Brown & Engler, 1986, p.145)

This full spectrum model of human growth and development includes stages of development covered by conventional psychology and stages of development covered by the world's meditative and contemplative traditions. It is within this framework that this research study was conducted.

3.6. Research into the Buddhist Meditation Practice

The bulk of the research on Buddhist Meditation has been conducted in the United States of America. Walsh (1982), states that meditation has met the criteria for acceptance as a serious area of investigation since a broad range of significant responses has been identified, and most research on meditation has been carried out in Western laboratories and field settings and has focussed on physiological and behavioural changes in the person.

Research studies of Michaels, Huber and McCann (1976 in Shapiro, 1983), Beiman et al.(1983 in Shapiro, 1983), Marlatt et al. (1983 in Shapiro, 1983) focussed primarily on physiological and overt behavioural change resulting from meditation. They found no difference in the changes brought about by meditation and other self-regulation strategies. In some cases there have been no physiological or overt behavioural differences between meditation and other self-regulation strategies. However, subjects in the experimental group reported that their experience of meditation had a profound, deep and enjoyable experience compared to the reported experience of members of the control group (Morse et al, 1977 in Shapiro, 1983; Cauthen & Prymak, 1977 in Shapiro, 1983; Travis et al, 1976 in Shapiro, 1983; Curtis & Wessberg, 1975 in Shapiro, 1983; Curtis & Wessberg, 1976 in Shapiro, 1983).

Today many Western investigators of meditation such as Tart, Shapiro, Walsh, Wilber, Brown, Engler and many others have called for a more detailed phenomenology of the meditation experience in order to assess subjective changes during meditation more precisely.

There are three approaches to studying the phenomenology of meditation (Shapiro, 1983). One way to gather information of the phenomenology of meditation is to gather information by studying the classical texts like the Abhidhamma and its summary by Buddhaghosa, the Visuddhimagga as done by Goleman (1972, 1977 in Shapiro, 1983), and the classical root texts of the Mahamudra tradition as done by Brown (1977 in Shapiro, 1983). The advantage of this method is that it provides phenomenological reports of the experience of advanced meditators. The disadvantage of this method is that the investigator may not be trained in the behavioural science skills, hence his/her inattention to expectation effects and demand characteristics; he/she may be more biased and may not have the acute, accurate discriminative skills of a scientist (Shapiro, 1983).

The second experimental methodology is to have individuals meditate and allow them to describe the meditation experience afterwards. In this approach the meditator and investigator are two different individuals.

A research study where information was collected about the subjective experience of meditation was done by Maupin (1965 in Shapiro, 1983). Twenty-eight subjects' meditative experiences based on self-reports were collected and rated on a five point response scale. Subjects were grouped as high experiencers or moderate experiencers or low experiencers depending on their

responses rated on the scale. This scale did not register all observed responses. Lesh (1970 in Shapiro, 1983) adapted Maupin's scale slightly and replicated the study and derived essentially the same results.

A study using external concentration, had subjects to focus or concentrate on a blue vase was done by Deikman (1966 in Shapiro, 1983). He found strong subjective changes in the subjects' phenomenological perceptions. Every subject reported an alteration in their perception of the blue vase on which they were concentrating. These alterations in perceptions included changes in the colour of the vase to a deeper more intense blue colour, the vase being brighter, more vivid and more luminous, loss of third dimension in perception or diffusion of perceptual boundaries, feelings of merging with the vase and reports of instability in the vase's shape and size. One subject noted complete loss of body feelings during the study.

Another study using the second methodology was conducted by Kornfield (1979 in Shapiro, 1983). Kornfield collected extensive data from meditators engaged in Vipassana Meditation. His data was collected from answers to a series of questions based on sleep and food intake, changes in clarity of perception, concentration and mindfulness and what was currently predominant in the meditative experience and any unusual experience. Although this study produced an enormous amount of rich information, Shapiro (1983) believes the interpretation of the data should be tentative because of the way it was processed. However this type of heuristic study is necessary initially to give us information about the phenomenology of the meditative experience.

Van Nuys (1973 in Shapiro, 1983) studied subjects' experiences during meditation by allowing them to push a button whenever certain thoughts or feelings occurred. The nature of these intrusive thoughts and feelings was then reported in a post-meditation interview. Many subjects reported subjective responses like vivid visual experiences, feelings of paranoia, dreamlike experiences, temporary loss of orientation in time or space and perceptual distortions.

Osis et al. (1973 in Shapiro, 1983) carried out a study where meditators responded to a questionnaire after their meditation session after which a factor analysis was performed. This involved the application of the multivariate statistical analysis to the issue of the meditation experience. Kohr (1977 in Shapiro, 1983) later replicated this study. Both Osis et al.(1973 in Shapiro, 1983) and Kohr (1977 in Shapiro, 1983) found there was no correlation between the initial mood of the meditator and the meditation experience, suggesting that meditation did produce a state of consciousness different from the state of consciousness which the person brought into the meditation practice (Shapiro, 1983). Other studies using the same methodology include the work of Kubose (1976 in Shapiro, 1983) and Banquet (1973 in Shapiro, 1983).

Although this approach gives useful information about the subjective experiences, these experiences are also susceptible to contaminating variables. Retrospective accounts may be affected by memory factors and the subjects' experiences may be influenced or filtered by the investigators' hypotheses, and furthermore, the investigator may miss the subtle nuances of the meditation experience (Shapiro, 1983).

The third approach is when the individual is both the subject and the investigator. This method was also used by several investigators in their study of the phenomenological experience of meditation. Three studies have been conducted by behavioural scientists with between one and several years of meditation experience between them. These include Tart (1971 in Shapiro, 1983) who conducted such a study after practising Transcendental Meditation for a year. Another researcher was Walsh (1977, 1978 in Shapiro, 1983) who described his experiences after practising Vipassana Meditation for two years. Shapiro (1980) also recorded thoughts and images he had during several meditation sessions.

The advantage of this method is that it allows immediate access of material between subject and investigator. However, it does pose potential problems of experimenter bias. To avoid this it has been recommended that the investigator should be someone trained in the behavioural sciences (Tart, 1971 in Shapiro, 1983).

Research has also been conducted on the practical applications of meditation. American psychologist Gary Schwartz found in his research that meditators reported much lower daily anxiety levels than non-meditators and many meditators also had fewer psychological or psychosomatic problems such as headaches, colds and sleeplessness (Goleman, 1988).

A study to see how the practice of meditation helps one to cope with stress was conducted by Goleman and Scwartz (1976 in Goleman, 1988). They found that the meditation practice seems most likely to cause a more rapid recovery from stressful situations. Their study also explains the lower incidence of anxiety and psychosomatic disorders among meditators.

In the mid-1970s there was a flood of research on the healing properties of meditation (Goleman, 1988). However, Goleman (1988) is critical of the methodological rigour of these studies, but the thrust of the findings of these studies is clear. Meditation is helpful in many ways. The findings indicate that regular practice of meditation lessened the frequency of colds and headaches and reduced the severity of hypertension (Goleman, 1988). Investigators also found that some of the effects of meditation were similar to the relaxing effects of autogenic training and other Western relaxation techniques.

According to Goleman (1988), although research on meditation and states of consciousness is largely piecemeal to date, these studies do confirm the state and trait changes in consciousness as described in classical sources.

Another interesting study of meditators at various levels of proficiency was performed by Brown and Engler (1980 in Wilber, Brown & Engler, 1986). These two researchers administered a battery of personality tests to accomplished Buddhist insight meditators in America and in Asia. Meditators who underwent intensive training in insight meditation were given Rorschach tests before and after the training, and their teachers rated each subject on how well they had developed traits of one-pointedness and of mindfulness. Those subjects adept at one-pointedness gave sparse, unimaginative responses while those adept in mindfulness gave plenty of responses with rich associations (Goleman, 1988). This pattern of responses seems to reflect the consequences of meditative training. Strong mindfulness seems to indicate the meditator is aware of details in his/her stream of consciousness, and powerful one-pointedness

seems to indicate the meditator disregards the train of mental associations in his/her mind. The study does not state how long these traits are retained by the meditator.

Recent empirical research on the personality changes of meditators indicates that there is a decrease in the negative and an increase in the positive psychological states. Meditators, when compared to non-meditators, have been found to be less anxious (Ferguson & Gowan, 1976 in Goleman, 1988; Goleman and Schwartz, 1976 in Goleman, 1988; Nidich et al., 1973 in Goleman, 1988). Meditators also report fewer psychosomatic disorders, more positive moods and are less neurotic on the Eysenck's scale (Schwartz, 1973 in Goleman, 1988). Meditators also have a greater internal locus of control (Pelletier, 1974 in Goleman, 1988); are more spontaneous, have greater capacity for intimate contact, are more accepting of themselves and have a higher self-regard (Seeman et al.,1972 in Goleman, 1988). Meditators find it easier to empathize with another person (Lesh, 1970 in Goleman, 1988; Leung, 1973 in Goleman, 1988) and show less fear of death (Garfield, 1974 in Goleman, 1988).

Finally, in South Africa very little research has been conducted on Buddhist Meditation. Edwards (1988) in her study of 'Vipassana Meditation and Transcultural Consciousness' reveals her deep commitment to working towards a meeting point between Eastern and Western spirituality. Much of this work is based on using as a framework Ken Wilber's writings of "the spectrum of consciousness" (Edwards, 1988, p.38).

Another study by Knight (1990) examines the contribution of meditative experience to personal growth on white, adolescent high school girls from a private school in Grahamstown. A single

case study has been conducted and the researcher states that there is no evidence of growth on the transpersonal level since the subjects may have been developmentally immature at this level, and also that the period of their meditation practice for a month may have been too short. However, there are indications of some development within the framework of Ego Psychology.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

> Our concept of ... a human person is comprehensive enough to include the highest forms of human activities conceiveable
>
> (Giorgi, 1979, p. 94).

4.1. Introduction

Research within the field of psychology can be conducted by one of two approaches, that is, the natural scientific (quantitative) approach, or the qualitative approach. The nature of the data of the phenomenon/a being studied, will determine the research methodology that is employed. In 1879 Wilhelm Wundt succeeded in introducing psychology along a scientific base, modelled after fields in physics and chemistry. Psychology then became the scientific study of consciousness. Although psychology was orientated around the working of the human mind, it demanded that the methods used should be those used by chemists and physicists. Great emphasis was laid on objectivity and measurement, and a great deal of psychological research included in journals has a measurement aspect in them to justify their validity and reliability. Psychology in its attempt to gain respectability as a science utilized the positivistic methodology extensively and adhered to these principles to be accepted as a scientific discipline.

According to many writers the natural scientific approach limits the phenomenon being studied in psychology. Many researchers realised that "these methods often fail to do justice to the realities of the human experience and ended up focusing the researcher's attention away from the questions of most interest" (Edwards, 1989, p. 1). There are psychological phenomena like different kinds of experiences and emotions that cannot be measured, yet they are crucial for our study in this discipline. For this reason we need a non-measurement orientated, scientific methodology to study these human phenomena.

There are many writers like Giorgi (1970), Kruger (1979), Stones (1976) and Edwards (1990, 1991), who have questioned the role of the human subject in psychological research. This could have been since the experimenter-subject relationship is gradually sliding from a "person-to-person relationship" to a "person-to-thing relationship" (Richardson, 1991, p. 101). Psychology in its attempt to emulate the natural sciences has dehumanised its human subject (Kruger, 1979). Human existence cannot be quantified and the "measurement option" is criticized by (Kruger, 1979, p. 15).

Research methods will vary according to the demands of both the discipline involved as well as the nature of the problem being studied. In the past fifteen years researchers have re-examined the research methods in psychology and qualitative methodologies were examined to give a balanced perspective in psychology. A significant contribution in this area was the Duquesne school's development of the phenomenological method pioneered by Giorgi (Edwards, 1989). Another very important contribution has been the re-examination of the case-study method in an

attempt to re-establish its place as a fundamental tool in research in the Social Sciences, especially psychology (Edwards, 1989).

4.2. Aims of the Research

A researcher usually initiates a project with a clear goal in mind (Edwards, 1993). There may be a particular aspect(s) of human experience that will form the focus of the study. In phenomenological case-study research, the main goal is to describe and explicate the experience of one or more people so that an in-depth understanding of that experience can be achieved (Edwards, 1993). Therefore, since this is a phenomenological case-study of the Buddhist Meditation Practice, the main aims of the research are to:

a. Find out why people engage in the Buddhist Meditation Practice
b. Explore the experience of the effects of meditation
c. Find out what the meditative experience is.

4.3. Methodology

Although psychology has been studied along the natural scientific lines for a long time, and in spite of the great contribution it has made to increasing the sum of knowledge in this discipline, the full variety and richness of the human experience and behaviour have not been covered by using this approach. A human scientific approach to psychology, however, will enable us to broaden the range of topics that can be studied in psychology. Buddhist Meditation is a largely subjective experience and in the light of the aims of this study, we cannot approach it using the

natural scientific method exclusively. A qualitative research method is more suited for such a study. Qualitative researchers do not operationally define the dependent and the independent variable. Research questions are formulated to study the phenomenon in its natural context and in the participants' frame of reference. The research is not initiated with specifically laid out hypotheses as in quantitative research, but the hypotheses are constructed as the data accumulate and take form. In qualitative research, the researcher tries to understand human experience through empathy, by trying to project him/herself into the life of the one being investigated, and to appreciate what the other individual is expressing. Knowing another person's experience is an important source of understanding. If the researcher is able to understand the meanings which a person gives to a particular event or experience he/she will be able to appreciate the impact such an experience or event has had on the person. Since people's experiences are described in depth in the qualitative approach it also allows the researcher to understand the subject/s in their own terms and in their natural environment.

Active participation in the form of participant-observation, interviewing and making use of the case-study approach are commonly used by the qualitative researcher to gather data. For these reasons the phenomenological case-study method is used in this study.

4.3.1. What is Phenomenology?

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena as experienced by man (Giorgi, 1970). The emphasis lies on how the phenomenon reveals itself to the person experiencing it. Phenomenology is primarily concerned with conducting research within a human framework, where the richness and complexity of the human experience is respected and retained and not

reduced to numerical data. Phenomenology is the description of the data of the immediate experience (Hall and Lindzey, 1978). Therefore it is a method of analysing psychological phenomena. It is also defined "as a method in psychology (that) seeks to disclose and elucidate the phenomena of behaviour as it manifest themselves in their perceived immediacy" (Van Kaam, 1966 in Hall and Lindzey, 1978, p. 312). According to Giorgi (1970), phenomenological thought is important for all aspects of psychology.

A proper understanding of the phenomenon can only be achieved by the researcher and the subject maintaining an attitude of openness. The role of the scientist in the phenomenological approach is very important. Priority is given to the phenomenon under investigation, without the researcher in any way predetermining the quality of the exposition of that experience. In other words, the researcher must, without interfering, gain insight into the subject's experience of the phenomenon. He cannot be viewed as an independant observer but must be seen as a participant observer (Stones, 1976). The phenomenologist examines how the world is experienced by a person, hence phenomenological research, aims at understanding and explicating the experience of being human.

Psychology is an intersubjective, communicative science, systematically studying the structures of human existence by explicating the lived experience (Kruger, 1979). Since it is described as an intersubjective discipline, it means it is a shared enterprise. The word "communicative" indicates that psychological views are on people relating their experiences and behaviour. This implies the use of language. If phenomenological psychology is to be a science it has to be rendered verbally. The researcher has to make explicit what people communicate to him about

their experiences and behaviour. In order to make meaningful explanations, he will have to draw on his own experiences which will have accumulated as a result of his dialogue with the world and other people. This communication with the person, the world and with other persons, is vital in phenomenological psychology. For "the phenomenologist the world is a system, a cosmic totality of *meanings*" (Kruger, 1979, p. 28). The researcher has to create conditions that will enable subjects to reveal their openness towards the world which is the same as being conscious (Kruger, 1979).

4.3.2 .The Phenomenological case-study approach

Although the case-study method has been in existence long before the rise of the natural scientific approach, its use had declined in psychology in its attempt to gain credibility as a scientific discipline. It has been said, with regard to the natural sciences, that science is not concerned with the individual case (Bromley, 1986). This is because the natural sciences deal with phenomena which are susceptible to close control and quantitative analysis, and can be conceptualized by means of highly abstract and general laws. Under these laws, individual instances occur in a regular and predictable way. Research findings in psychology using the natural scientific approach have also concentrated more on group performances rather than on individual performances. However, according to Bromley (1986), psychology began using the case-study research method in the early twentieth century.

> Some case-studies have been published in the literature of psychoanalysis, but these are surprisingly few. Studies like those of Traxler (1949) and Allport (1942) show that the case-study

> method has a long and a distinguished history. According to Strang (1949b), the earliest recorded educational case-study dates from about 4000 BC
>
> (Bromley, 1986, p. 16).

The social and behavioural sciences, on the other hand, deal with phenomena of more complex types, much less susceptible to control, quantification, and formal logical analysis (Bromley, 1986). The social and behavioural sciences are concerned with the individual human being and social organisations which are the basic constituent of their subject matter. Where human nature is concerned, it is so context-dependent that generalizations and abstractions are limited (Bromley, 1986). Hence the value of the case-study is that it deals directly with the individual cases in its context (Bromley, 1986). Private matters like personal experience can be investigated using a case-study approach with the permission of the participants.

The case-study approach can be used in a variety of disciplines such as anthropology, biochemistry, history, sociology, psychology and many other disciplines. However, a basic logic or methodology underlies case-studies in these diverse areas (Bromley, 1986). A psychological case-study is an account of a person in a particular situation. Usually there is something interesting about the person or the situation, or relationship between them that warrants a closer study of it. A case-study is not necessarily concerned with a difficult or deviant person, or with an unusual situation. It usually contains a short, self-contained episode or segment of a person's life. It can be regarded as a close view of one important life event. A psychological case-study is essentially a reconstruction and interpretation of a major episode of

a person's life (Bromley, 1986). The aim of the case-study, like any scientific investigation, is not to find the "correct" or "true" interpretation of facts, but rather to eliminate erroneous conclusions so that one is left with the best possible, the most compelling, interpretation (Bromley, 1986, p. 38). The individual case-study is vital in a scientific investigation of a human phenomenon. Today researchers realise the importance of the case-study method in order to acquire knowledge which may not be extricated through traditional positivistic methods. It has been found that the subject's experiential information is more easily obtained through the case-study method than by using questionnaires and structured interviews.

Case-studies can be used to illustrate experiences in a person's life as is done in this study by examining closely the participants' experiences of Buddhist Meditation. Case-studies deal with naturally occurring events of the world (Bromley, 1986). They are not events set up for experimental purposes or simulations of natural events. Fundamental existential questions also arise when studying the Buddhist Meditation Practice. These will include questions about the nature of thoughts, personality and the nature of human experience. These issues can only be handled adequately by using a human, scientific approach, and in this case, the phenomenological case-study approach is the most appropriate method.

A phenomenological case-study is one in which the psychological experience of the subject is the focus (Edwards, 1993). In this type of case-study the experience of the subject is of primary importance. It is the experience that is at the centre of the study. The researcher aims "to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject's experience and to present it in such a manner that it can be communicated clearly to others "(Edwards, 1993, p. 7).

The case-study method is ideographic, that is, individual cases are examined in depth (Edwards, 1990). Initially, an accurate description of the individual case is compiled and the data is systematically analysed and utilised to develop a theory, or general principles, or establish the validity or reliability of existing conceptualizations and conclusions present in existing research. One studies a case in order to develop a preliminary construct. This is compared with other cases so that the construct may be improved, modified or amended to achieve better interpretation (Edwards, 1989). Research into the Buddhist Meditation Practice has been conducted by Goleman (1988), Goldstein(1976), Walsh (1977, 1978, 1982, 1983) and Shapiro (1980,1983). Various conceptualizations of meditation and effects of meditation have emerged through this research, which has been used in this study.

By using the phenomenological case-study approach, various principles and assumptions derived from the study of one case can be used and tested against other cases. After examining a few cases "a basic theory is established which contains essential concepts, distinctions and principles linked in a logical manner ... " (Edwards, 1990, p. 14, 15). This "basic theory" will provide a framework for understanding the phenomenon being studied.

According to Bromley (1986), the object of the case-study is to allow a description and analysis of a case or incident which will contribute to our understanding of the area of inquiry. Mitchell (1983 in Edwards, 1990. p. 12) defines the case-study as "a detailed examination of an event or a series of related events which the analyst (researcher) believes exhibits ... the operation of some general theoretical principle". In this research on Buddhist Meditation, the guidelines for conducting phenomenological case-studies by Edwards (1993) has been used.

4.3.3. Objectivity, validity and reliability

> The individual case-study, or situation analysis is the bedrock of scientific investigation
>
> (Bromley, 1986, p. ix).

Phenomenology is regarded as a part of every science, since all scientific studies involve observation of phenomena. Phenomenology has played a crucial role in psychology. When doing research in psychology conceived as a human science, our research approach is designed on a subject-to-subject relationship. The "object" of research is an experiential being in the research situation (Kruger, 1979, p. 116). We must remember that in any form of research, the human element is always present. The phenomenological approach will involve the processes of intuition, reflection and description (Kruger, 1979). In phenomenology, one can, however, be rigorous or objective by adopting an attitude devoid of prejudice when studying the phenomena, and presenting them as they are. We concentrate on what is being experienced first, and then question the phenomenon. In this way the researcher allows the phenomenon to emerge as it is at first, and then selects those aspects that he may want to examine closely. The content of phenomenology is composed of the data of the experience, what it means to the subject, and also the essence of the phenomena (Giorgi, 1970). The experience is regarded as the original/authentic data alongside the human body and the external world.

> From the phenomenological viewpoint psychology belongs to the realm of the human sciences, which is a realm essentially different from the natural sciences
>
> (Giorgi, 1973, p. 11).

This approach is characterised by an attitude of openness on the part of the researcher as well as the subject. Psychology studied on a human level takes into consideration the role of both the subjects and the researcher. The researcher can retain the attitude of a scientist while studying the subject matter concerning people. A researcher also adopts a human attitude when studying the subject matter. Psychology is therefore to be seen as an empirical human science. According to Giorgi (1970), knowledge that is characterised as scientific, depends on how the knowledge is obtained and not the mere possession of it. In phenomenology, the researcher plays a crucial role not only in constructing, designing and conducting the study but also in interpreting the data. His influence on the study does not go unnoticed. Here the researcher also participates in the experimental situation as it is experienced by the subject (Giorgi, 1970). This is necessary if we wish to study an individual as a human person. Both the subject and the researcher play crucial roles in understanding the experienced phenomenon. Psychology conceived as a human science is not bound by the criteria of the natural sciences (Giorgi, 1970). The essential phenomenon as it is lived and experienced by man must be captured, otherwise the research loses much of its value (Giorgi, 1970). Humanistic psychology attempts to study the individual as a whole person rigorously and systematically without sacrificing a person's uniqueness and essential characteristics (Giorgi, 1970).

Achieving objectivity within the frame of reference of human science means that firstly, the data should be "intersubjectively valid" (Giorgi, 1970, p. 12). Secondly there is objectivity implied on the part of the human subject. The subject is open to the world in such a way that he/she may allow his/her experience to be presented in the way he/she experienced it. Objectivity or accuracy as preferred by human scientists, can be attained by the attitude the subject assumes. This leads us to believe that psychology is a human science since its aims are similar to other sciences.

The procedure used to explain the phenomenon should also be openly discernible so that it can be replicated by another researcher if he/she so desires. However, the validity and the reliability of the research does not depend on the replicability of the results only, but also on the reappearance of the main themes which leads to a better "intersubjective understanding of the phenomenon concerned" (Munro, 1975 in Kruger, 1979, p. 124). There is no one single method used when one conducts research as a human scientist. The method will depend on the nature of the phenomenon being investigated. Case-study research does not use statistical inferences. Validity is established by "the logical process termed 'analytic generalizations' or 'analytic induction' " (Yin, 1964 in Edwards, 1990, p. 14, 15; Mitchell, 1983 in Edwards, 1990, p. 14, 15). The aim of the case-study is to describe, analyse and explain facts of a case as fully as one needs to, in order to arrive at objective conclusions. These conclusions may take the form of inferences, decisions, recommendations or predictions (Bromley, 1986).

One of the limitations of case-study approach is that case-studies will not be completely exhaustive, truthful or valid. They will be, at best, approximations to knowledge. But this in no

way detracts from their scientific value, since any empirical investigation in science is bound to be limited in scope and subject to errors associated with current theory and limitations of current technology. Nevertheless, even though a case-study is an approximation to knowledge, it should, by scientific standards of evaluation, contain sufficient relevant evidence, adequately corroborated, to support the inferences and recommendations made in the case-report. In other words, it should be internally logical and coherent and correctly represent the real facts in so far as they can be ascertained (Bromley, 1986).

4.4. Subjects

4.4.1. Choice of subjects

According to Stones (1976, p. 69), the type of subjects interviewed is limited by the type of persons found in the groups being studied. In this case it will be from a group of people engaged in Buddhist Meditation Practice. Besides this limitation, other conditions also have to be met. These include:-

a. All subjects should come from a similar cultural milieu. This means including individuals from the same ethnic group and having the same home language.

b. The subjects should be willing to discuss freely and openly their experience of that which is being studied.

c. Subjects should have been members of this particular group (in this case Buddhist Meditators) for at least six months.

d. The researcher should create a rapport with the subjects so that the subjects feel unthreatened and relaxed when they are being interviewed.

All the above-mentioned conditions were met seeing that all three subjects, one male and two females of Western origin, were interviewed for this research project. All three participants were professional people living in South Africa. The home language of all the participants is English. All of them had been meditating for an average period of ten years and all participants were willing to be interviewed. These participants were selected since very little research on Buddhist Meditation has been done in South Africa. Furthermore in view of their experience in the Buddhist Meditation Practice and their linguistic abilities, they would be able to articulate their experiences more openly and clearly. Two of the participants were interviewed at their homes, and one was interviewed at her office at the institution where she is employed. This was done at the request of the participants.

4.4.2. Descriptive identification of participants of the research

The first participant is an unmarried male who is fifty-three years old. He is teaching at a tertiary academic institution in South Africa. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Cape Town and a Master of Arts degree from Cambridge University. He is currently reading for a Ph.D. degree. This participant recently lost his mother and is living alone. He is, however, involved in supervising resident students at the academic institution where he is employed. He follows the Christian religion. He has been meditating for over ten years.

The second participant is a divorced, forty-three year old female, who is the mother of one child. In addition to obtaining a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree, she also has a diploma for teaching English as a second language. She is employed as a senior instructor and co-ordinator

of the Academic Skills Department at a tertiary, academic institution. She describes herself as a Buddhist and has established a retreat centre at her home. A number of meditators from the surrounding areas attend the retreats conducted at this centre. Her home is in a secluded part of the town, and she has a special meditation room with meditation cushions and robes available for meditators who wish to participate at the retreats. Accommodation is also available for meditators from the distant surrounding areas. She has been meditating for five years.

The third participant is a single, forty year old female. She has a Masters Degree in Geography and lectured at the Geography Department at a university on a temporary basis. At the present moment she is employed as a researcher at a tertiary academic institution. She has been meditating for ten to fifteen years.

4.5. Data Collection

The fundamental source of data for any scientific inquiry, including the case-study, is the descriptive evidence supplied to the researcher. Researchers using the case-study method employ a variety of techniques for their investigations such as being a participant observer, making use of different types of interviews, studying routine records, diaries and so on. Data for this research was collected in two ways. Firstly, when the researcher was a participant observer at the Buddhist retreat at Ixopo, and secondly through conducting semi-structured interviews with three participants.

4.5.1. Participant observation

Data was collected when the researcher was a participant observer at the Buddhist Retreat at Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal for a period of twenty-one days. The researcher needs to be well-informed about the existing knowledge of the phenomenon he/she is investigating. One way of collecting data for his/her study is by being a participant observer. It allows the researcher to get as close as possible to the subject of interest since it involves direct observations in the natural settings. Its research design allows for the emergence of theoretical propositions and their subsequent verification. Hence it can be used as a technique in a theoretical-heuristic case-study.

A daily diary was compiled over the duration of the researcher's stay there that included all the activities she participated in and her experiences in Buddhist Meditation. This diary was studied closely and a selective synopsis was compiled and themes were drawn. This data formed the basis of the first case-study. See Appendix C.

4.5.2. The semi-structured interviews

The second method of data collection included semi-structured interviews conducted with three participants. Letters outlining the nature of the research project were sent to prospective participants inviting them to participate in the research project. A self-addressed envelope with a reply form was included with these letters. Prospective participants who wished to participate, could indicate where and when they would like to be interviewed on these reply forms. See Appendix A. They were also informed that the interviews would be tape-recorded.

At the start of the interview session, each participant was asked to complete a Personal Data Form. See Appendix B. This gave a certain amount of biographical information about each participant that was utilised to complete the case-study report. The participants were not required to fill in personal identification information on the forms, since this would make them feel more free and relaxed when expressing their feelings. Participants were also verbally assured that their anonymity would be strictly maintained. Tape-recorded interviews were utilised since they allow the participants to relate their experiences in their own words hence they will "be as near as possible to their lived experience" (Kruger, 1979, p. 126).

In the light of the above approach a semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant, once rapport between the participant and the researcher had been established. Participants were asked to speak as openly and honestly as possible about their experience of meditation. A number of questions that would yield the data required, were prepared prior to the interview sessions. These questions concerned looking at the experiential areas of Buddhist Meditation and were of such a nature that they led to further probing questions to be asked.

> It is imperative that the researcher has previously considered carefully the nature of the question or questions he wishes to put to the subject so as to be sure of anticipating a yield of fruitful data. The researcher must however, be mindful to remain faithful to his original project no matter how great the wealth of data
>
> (Stones, 1976, p. 73).

Furthermore the interviewer asks questions that deepen access to their experience and that focus on those aspects of their experience that are the focus of the study (Edwards, 1993).

In this type of interview, certain crucial information was elicited from all subjects but the manner in which it was phrased and the order in which it was presented differed to suit each participant. This enabled the participants to express or describe their experiences in the way most comfortable to them. In this way the researcher had access to the subject's thoughts, feelings and desires with the latter's consent. No two interviews were identical although the basic format followed was similar. Each interview retained a unique character of its own. This raw data formed the basis of the next three case-studies.

> A disadvantage of this technique is that it is inevitable, that many, if not all, of the descriptions by the subjects of their experience will be incomplete or imperfect. Lack of skill in expression, forgetfulness, poor vocabulary and inability to express oneself clearly, could all be contributing factors
>
> (Van Kaam, 1958 in Kruger, 1979, p. 127).

However, we must remember that these incomplete or imperfect descriptions would certainly not invalidate the subject's experience but may fail to reflect an essential part (Stones, 1979 in Kruger, 1979). This problem however, can be solved to a certain extent by using more than one subject. By doing this, the underlying common themes can be gauged.

The duration of the interviews ranged from one and a half hours to two hours. At a later stage each interview was transcribed and the data was reduced, using the guidelines for conducting phenomenological case-studies proposed by Edwards (1993). See Appendix D. Only two of the interviews are included due to the lack of space.

4.6. Data Analysis

4.6.1. Data reduction

The data base of raw data for this research study was the researcher's daily diary that was compiled by her over twenty-one days at the Buddhist Retreat Centre at Ixopo, and the interviews she conducted with the three participants. This data base was large and clumsy as described by Edwards (1993), and it had to be reduced to a manageable size. The manner in which the data is reduced should be one that "advances the researcher towards achieving the research goal" (Edwards, 1993, p. 14). For this, a rigorous methodology should be adopted for data reduction so that there is a scientific selection and interpretation of the material. As a result the following steps were followed in data reduction:

1. Becoming familiar with the material.
2. Constructing a synopsis.
3. Writing an extended and brief synopsis.
4. Type of synopsis selected: that is, will it be written in the first person or third person?
5. Ensuring the validity of the reduction.
6. Writing the integrative synopsis.

1. Becoming familiar with the material

The daily diary of the researcher (participant observer) and all interviews with the three participants were read and reviewed a number of times by the researcher. In this way she gained a holistic grasp of the data and this helped her to organise it thematically.

2. Constructing a synopsis

A synopsis was compiled after the raw data were reorganised and condensed and this involved the following steps :-

i. Removing repetitious material.

ii. Similar material from different parts of the data base was brought together and recorded.

iii. The data was rendered in a forthright manner in as few words as possible without sacrificing the content and the richness of the material. This is the "succinct rendering of the material" (Edwards, 1993, p. 15).

iv. Material that was relevant to the aims of the study was selected to compile the synopsis.

3. Extended and brief synopsis

This was the summary of the central themes of the study from which the researcher worked. Much of the interview material is presented in summary form, but some may be verbatim material so that the essence of the phenomenon being studied is not lost. In the brief synopsis the irrelevant material was omitted altogether. See Appendix D. Themes were selected from the extended and brief synopsis that was compiled from the researcher's daily diary, and these have been included in Appendix C.

4. Type of synopsis selected

The third person synopsis was written since it offered more flexibility and scope for the researcher to summarize, edit and explain the material in psychological language (Edwards, 1993).

5. Ensuring the validity of the reduction

The summary of the raw data has to be accurate to be valid. It should faithfully portray the experience of the participants and include all material relevant to the research aims. Validity of the material can be ensured by sharing it with an independent judge which was done with this research work.

6. Writing the integrative synopsis

The integrative synopsis is one in which data from several sources are organised into a coherent presentation (Edwards, 1993). This will include material from consecutive interviews arranged in a single presentation. Another form of integrative synopsis will include integration of material from several participants. The latter approach was adopted by the researcher.

4.6.2. Data interpretation and discussion

The data was used to validate existing constructs on Buddhist Meditation from existing research, and was used also to see if existing concepts or propositions needed to be extended or revised. This interpretation and discussion is in chapters five and six.

4.6.3. Organisation of and the discussion and interpretation

The data was then organised, discussed and interpreted in the light of the aims of the research study and this is present in chapters five and six.

4.6.4. Report writing

The final research report which is in chapter seven was then written.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

5.1. Introduction

The researcher needs to be well informed about the existing knowledge of the phenomenon he/she is investigating, and one way of collecting data for a qualitative research study, is for the researcher to become a participant observer. Meditation is a human, subjective experience that cannot be studied exclusively along the natural scientific paradigm. A phenomenological approach is more suited for this study, since it is primarily concerned with conducting research within a human scientific framework. Here the richness and complexity of the human experience is respected and retained, since the emphasis here is on how the phenomenon reveals itself to the person experiencing it. The participant observer technique was therefore utilised in this pilot study, to orientate the researcher to the Buddhist Meditation practice. The main aim of this case-study was to collect experiential data about Buddhist Meditation practice.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight themes that emerged when the researcher engaged in the Buddhist meditation practice. The researcher stayed at the Buddhist Meditation Retreat at Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal for a period of twenty-one days. She participated in the meditation

practice and all the associated activities at the centre for the duration of her stay. A detailed diary/journal was compiled daily by the researcher. At the end of the retreat programme, this journal was read and reread closely several times to gain a holistic grasp of the data. A selective, extended synopsis was then compiled followed by a brief synopsis. Themes were then drawn from this synopsis. The Buddhist literature was reviewed and themes were selected from it. The themes that were drawn from the journal were then compared with the theoretical constructs of Buddhist Meditation present in existing research conducted by Goleman (1988), Kornfield (1979), Goldstein (1976), Wilber (1975, 1979, 1981), Shapiro (1980, 1983), Russell (1986), Walsh (1977, 1978, 1982, 1983), Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986) and Epstein and Lief (1986). These themes have been presented with a discussion linked to the literature on meditation. In the light of the overall aims of this study, this knowledge was then utilised to formulate questions for the semi-structured interviews conducted with three participants at a later stage.

There is evidence that the researcher had a range of experiences and effects during and after the meditative practice. Some of these effects included experience of calmness, peace and increased relaxation, increased awareness of internal and external stimuli, conscious of being, being aware of the changing nature of experience, experiencing altered states of consciousness like dissolution of physical boundaries, experiences of one-pointed attention and experiencing transformation of awareness.

These experiential themes were placed into three categories. The first category included themes on experiences of calmness, peace and relaxation. The second category included themes on the

experiences of mindfulness. The meditative practice begins with mindfulness. Training in mindfulness involves the individual, focussing his/her attention on the bare facts of his/her experience (Goleman, 1988). Each experience is viewed as though it is taking place for the first time. Themes included here are mindfulness with the focus on the body, experiences of increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to internal and external stimuli, conscious of being and doing, and conscious of the changing nature of experience.

The third category of themes includes experiences of altered states of consciousness. The meditative practice may bring about a change in the quality of the normal state of consciousness. In fact, according to Goleman (1988), the goal of all meditative paths, whatever their ideology, source or method, is to transform the meditators' consciousness. These new levels of experiences are different from the normal state of consciousness. Themes included here are on dissolution of the physical boundaries, experiences of one-pointed attention and transformation of consciousness. All these effects on the researcher may have contributed to further development on a transpersonal level. It is not possible to claim that this growth is due exclusively to the meditative practice alone, since it is possible that other activities, people and circumstances may have simultaneously influenced or aided growth on the transpersonal level. However, there are indications of a relationship between the meditative experiences and the researcher's growth on this level.

These three categories of themes describe the experience and effects of the Buddhist Meditation Practice. These themes are documented and discussed from the perpective of Transpersonal Psychology.

5.2. Themes of the Meditative Experience

The meditation practice is like "A journey into our minds. A journey of discovery and exploration of who and what we are" (Goldstein, 1976, p. 7). It is a special type of journey, which like any other journey undertaken, requires prior preparations by the individual. The Buddhist meditative path is divided into three general stages. The first stage is known as the Preliminary or Moral Training stage, the second stage is the Concentrative Training stage and the third stage is Insight Training stage. The preliminary training stage was already undertaken by the researcher several months before she attended the Buddhist Retreat Centre at Ixopo. The next two stages, that is the Concentration Training and Insight Training, are more intensive and are restricted more to the formal sitting meditation practice and was undertaken by the researcher at the Buddhist Retreat. In any journey various experiences unfold along the way to the destination, and in the same way various experiences unfold along the meditative path. According to Brown (1986 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986), the meditative path undertaken is made up of a series of stages, during which there is a progression of changes in psychological structures which are experienced subjectively as a systematic unfolding of distinct stages of consciousness. The following themes are some of the experiences of the researcher during the meditative practice.

5.2.1 Experience of calmness and peace and increased relaxation

One of the effects of the Buddhist meditation practice is when the researcher experienced subtle but increasingly progressive feelings of calmness, peace and relaxation. Both physical and mental feelings of calmness were experienced by the researcher. Meditation has a calming

effect on "bodily processes" which include functions of breathing, mental processes and other biological processes (Solé-Leris, 1986, p. 80).

The researcher was aware of affective changes occurring within her from the fourth day of the meditation programme. Initially these experiences were described simply as

> I felt very calm and relaxed physically and mentally
>
> (diary/journal extract).

As the meditation programme progressed the experience of calmness, peace and relaxation also increased.

> I felt very relaxed and peaceful after the meditation periods. After maintaining "Noble Silence" for five days a feeling of calmness remains within me
>
> (diary/journal extract).

and

> The mental calm I had achieved from the past six days of practice still remains
>
> (diary/journal extract).

Maintaining silence during a meditation practice programme is advantageous since talking distracts the attention and hinders the meditator's attempt to concentrate on the present moment and on observing the working of the mind. Maintaining "Noble Silence" helps to deepen the meditative practice (Goldstein, 1976, p. 2). Silence during the meditation enhances the meditative practice and promotes the feelings of calmness and relaxation.

The calming of "bodily processes" that included calming of the breathing and thought process is evident from the following extracts:

> I noticed at the beginning of a meditation period, my breathing is deep, heavy and noisy. However this gradually settles down into light, silent breathing which the mind can still detect
>
> (diary/ journal extract).

In this calm and peaceful state the researcher was aware of her mind being empty of thoughts and experiencing a sense of peace. This is evident from the following extract:

> Sitting meditation was calm and peaceful. Most of the time my mind is empty of thoughts and I tend to be mindful of the sounds around me. With daily practice the peaceful mental state I have been experiencing seems to deepen
>
> (diary/journal extract).

There are two techniques that are used during meditation. The first is samathá and the second is vipassana. Samathá means "tranquillity", "calm" or "serenity" and samathá meditation or tranquillity meditation aims to achieve states of consciousness characterised by increasingly higher levels of mental tranquillity and stillness (Solé-Leris, 1986, p. 21). This is usually attained through an increasing focussing of attention. During this time the mind withdraws gradually and increasingly from all physical and mental stimuli. In this way there is a progressive, calming of the meditator's mental processes. Highly rarefied states of pure, undistracted consciousness can thus be achieved which are at the same time experiences of a supremely peaceful nature.

The calming effect experienced during meditation may be an indication of further advancement along the meditative path. It is during the second stage, called the Concentrative Training of the meditative practice, when the calming effect of meditation is witnessed and experienced. The concentrative practice is usually described in terms of one-pointed attention. This involves the meditator's ability to keep his/her attention steady on an object or subject of meditation with the minimum of distractions. This subject/object of attention may be on a mental image or on the breath of the person or the sound of the heart-beat and so on. The researcher's experience of one-pointed attention may be revealed in the following extract.

> Gradually I brought my awareness onto the breath. I seemed to get closer and closer to the breath until I became part of the breath. I felt a calming sensation radiating throughout my body and I felt totally relaxed. At the next two periods of sitting

meditation, I had the same experience

(diary/journal extract).

and

> Once again during sitting meditation I felt merged or united with the breath. I felt very calm and peaceful. There was blackness before my eyes yet I was aware of the sounds in the environment
>
> (diary/journal extract).

The data above also illustrate that the researcher experienced feelings of calmness and peace after she became "unaware of her physical body". This may indicate a certain amount of reduction in the sensory input. These feelings of calmness and peace appear to be the result of the meditative practice which could have been further enhanced by the quiet and tranquil surroundings. The experience of peace is also expressed several times. According to Vaughan (1985a :28 in Knight, 1990), we know that we are in touch with the transpersonal self when we feel at peace. This may indicate identification with the transpersonal self by the researcher.

The experience of relaxation is closely associated with the experience of calmness and peace. The researcher experienced both physical and mental relaxation after the fourth day of the programme. This experience also continued and deepened until the end of, and after the retreat programme. This is evident in most of the above-mentioned extracts. It is not possible to claim that the experience of relaxation is due exclusively to the meditation practice alone, since it

could have been aided by the yoga exercises done every morning and the peaceful surroundings of the retreat.

Research into the meditative practice indicates that meditation has many health benefits. One of these benefits includes experiencing physical and mental relaxation. According to Goleman (1988), the popular appeal of meditation is the promise of becoming more relaxed more of the time and the relaxing effects of meditation are similar to the effects of the various relaxation techniques used in Western societies today, like Jacobson's relaxation technique and autogenic training. These relaxation techniques are used as part of the treatment of a variety of disorders like initial hypertension, angina, diabetes and many others. Relaxation is also widely used as an adjunct in psychotherapy, where it has been well accepted far longer than it has been accepted in medicine and the therapeutic quality of meditation has its effectiveness in getting the meditator into a deep state of relaxation (Goleman, 1988). However it is important to note that meditation as a relaxation technique cannot be used by all people (Goleman, 1988; Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). People who are in acute emotional states may be too agitated to practise meditation, or people with obsessive-compulsions may either not be open to new experiences or be overzealous in their efforts. A schizoid may become excessively absorbed with inner realities which may arise with the meditation practice. Therefore more studies need to be done in order to be certain for which type of person/patients the meditation practice will be most effective. The existing research, however, indicates that meditation is an effective way to help an individual to relax.

5.2.2. Mindfulness

The meditative practice begins "with mindfulness *(satipatthana)*, proceeds through insight *(vipassana)* and ends in nirvana" (Goleman, 1988, p. 20). Training in mindfulness involves giving bare attention to what is happening at every successive moment of perception. Here the individual registers his/her attention on the mere occurrence of any thought, feeling or sensation exactly as it occurs, and enters the awareness from moment to moment without further elaboration (Engler, 1986). There is no selection, censorship or elaboration on these thoughts, feelings or sensations as they enter the individual's awareness. If the individual does react to these stimuli, then the reaction is then made the focus of bare attention. The aims of mindfulness are to know one's mental processes, to begin to have the power to control and shape them and "to gain freedom from the condition where one's psychic processes are unknown and uncontrollable" (Nyanaponika, 1973 in Wilber, Engler & Brown 1986, p. 21).

There are four different kinds of mindfulness, each having a different focus. Firstly, mindfulness can focus on the body, on feelings, on the mind or mind objects (Goleman, 1988). Secondly mindfulness involves the individual's increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to internal and external stimuli. Thirdly it involves the individual being, conscious of being. This means the individual allows things and events to be as they are and as they occur. Fourthly mindfulness invloves the individual being conscious of the constantly changing nature of human experience.

i. Mindfulness with the focus on the body

When the meditator is mindful of his/her body, he/she focusses attention on the body posture and movement of the various muscles. The meditator tried to be fully aware or conscious of her physical movements at each particular moment. The researcher's attempt at mindfulness with the focus on the body is evident in the following extracts:

> I woke up early this morning and went about doing my morning activities with mindfulness. When I was brushing my teeth I focused my attention on all the physical movements involved when doing this. I was aware of my body movements while walking. During sitting meditation I was aware of the air passing in and out of the nostrils
>
> (diary/journal extract).

and

> I noticed when doing yoga mindfully I am aware of minute muscle movements when moving slowly from one posture to another. By doing the exercises slowly and mindfully I feel the movements are executed more gracefully and successfully.
> During sitting meditation I managed to remain in the half-lotus position for fifty-five minutes without experiencing any physical

> discomfort *... Gradually I felt awareness of my body spreading first from the top of my head, then down my face, neck, chest, abdomen and finally down the limbs. I also noticed that my breathing was now gradually becoming deeper and heavier. Finally I opened my eyes
>
> (diary/journal extract).

In contemporary literature on Buddhism, *Vipassana* meditation is described as training in mindfulness, choiceless awareness or bare attention (Engler, 1986). This involves the individual trying to be aware of what is happening within him/her at every successive moment. In the cognitive context, it involves the deployment of attention to movement or sensation occuring on or within the body as it occurs from moment to moment without any extension or elaboration of it. This involves a tremendous amount of self-discipline and concentration on the part of the individual practicing mindfulness. According to Buddhism, being mindful with the focus on the body is the beginning of concentrative training, and it is only part of the meditator's attempt at full-awareness which is the final goal of meditation.

ii. Increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to internal and external stimuli

This theme is closely correlated to the previous theme. Here the meditator is mindful or closely aware of the stimuli within him/her and of those in the enviroment. These stimuli include sensations, emotions and different perceptual stimuli. During our normal everyday routine, we

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* ... indicates that a section of the transcript has been omitted.

do not focus our attention on most of the variety of stimuli that are found around us and within us. During meditation, especially during the second stage of concentration training, the meditator retrains or refocusses his/her attention to be more aware of these external and internal stimuli. The meditator becomes more aware of sights, sounds, smells and feelings within and around him/her. His/her perceptual abilities are raised to a higher level. This can be seen in the researcher's detailed description of her increased awareness to stimuli in and around her when she was engaged in sitting, standing or individual meditation and when engaged in activities like yoga exercises.

> I focused my awareness on the breath and eventually I was aware of only the air moving in and out of the entrance of the nostrils. I had no awareness of my physical body. I could hear clearly the sound of the birds and the wind passing through the trees. I remained in this state for some time
>
> and
>
> As the days progressed I felt more relaxed after each meditation period. It is also easier to be aware of the sounds around you and to become part of the sound
>
> (diary/journal extract).

Heightened awareness of visual (external) stimuli by the researcher can be seen in the following extract.

> Today was the last day at the retreat. I felt calm and relaxed. I seemed to view the environment in a different light. Colours in the environment appear brighter, and I seemed to notice the minor details in the environment that I did not notice before
>
> (diary/journal extract).

According to Buddhism, mindfulness usually breaks down stereotyped perception. We are so habituated to the world around us, that we do not take full notice of the familiar things in our environment. In mindfulness the meditator views every experience as though the event is occurring for the first time. He/she is continually attentive to his/her thoughts and to what the five senses receive. In Buddhism, the mind is regarded as the sixth sense. The meditator simply gives bare attention to what the senses are receiving, and also to any judgement or reflections that may arise as a reaction in his/her mind.

iii. Conscious of being

When an individual is conscious of being and doing, he/she usually shows an increased willingness to let things - all experiences and events that unfold - be as they are without trying to change or transmute them in any way with preconceived ideas. The individual just watches and becomes part of the experience without reaction. There is evidence that the researcher did not have great difficulty in focusing her attention on whatever activity she was engaged in at

that moment. This was evident from the very first day. The fact that she was conscious of what she was doing from moment to moment, or conscious of being, was revealed by the following extracts:

> I arranged myself comfortably in a half-lotus position, closed my yes and directed my attention onto the breath. At first I was aware of the rising of the abdomen, followed by the expanding of the chest and emptying of the chest. I then directed my attention to the air moving in and out of the nostrils. I was aware of the sensation of the air moving against the entrance of my nostrils. Thoughts appeared and disappeared in my mind but I did not resist them but allowed them to disappear, and redirected my awareness gently onto the breath. A feeling of calmness seemed to envelope my entire body. After eleven days I was able to sit for thirty minutes without experiencing any physical discomfort
>
> (diary/journal extract).

and

> Sitting meditation has also become less painful ... I was conscious of being in the present moment most of the time and not caught up in a world of thoughts and ideas
>
> (diary/journal extract).

Development or growth from the perspective of transpersonal psychology involves the acceptance of the self to be still and allow the individual to be fully included in the process of what he/she is being and doing. The above-mentioned extracts illustrate the researcher's total involvement in meditation and other related activities without being distracted by any external stimuli like sounds, smells and so on or internal stimuli like internal chatter, thoughts or pain. There is evidence of increased willingness to allow things to be as they are and watch, and surrender to whatever is happening from moment to moment.

iv. Conscious of changing nature of experience

In transpersonal psychology, development of an individual, involves the individual understanding the radical impermanence of events. Nothing lasts forever. Thoughts, sounds, visual images, emotions and so on arise and disappear. In nature birth is followed by growth, decay and death. According to Goldstein (1976), nothing anywhere, including the self, lasts forever.

The researcher was aware or conscious of the changing nature of experience. During meditation, the researcher was aware of the air moving in and out of the nostrils. She was aware of thoughts entering her mind and of allowing them to pass away. There is a beginning and an end to the experience which is changing from moment to moment. She was aware of the different sounds which were separated by periods of silence. She was aware of thoughts appearing and disappearing in her mind.

> During meditation I brought my attention to my breath. I was aware of the sensation of the air moving in and out of my nostrils. When thoughts entered my mind I did not resist them but examined them and let them go
>
> (diary/journal extract).

In everyday life people are not conscious of the subtle changes in their daily experiences. People search for security by chasing after "stable" pleasant experiences in life, and clinging to material possessions, friends, relatives and so on. According to Buddhism, the meditation practice helps to refocus the individual's awareness on to the present moment and enables the individual to detect the changing nature of all experiences.

5.2.3. Altered states of consciousness

When the meditator's concentrative training deepens he/she transcends the normal state of consciousness. This is an altered state of consciousness. This state of consciouness is exclusive of the normal state of consciousness like waking, sleeping and dreaming. There is a transmutation or change in the normal state of consciousness. The key attributes of this state are usually the same, namely "loss of sense awareness, one-pointed attention to one object to the exclusion of all other thoughts, and sublimely, rapturous feelings" (Goleman, 1988, p. 110).

i. Experience of dissolution of physical boundaries

The experience of dissolution of physical boundries involves the loss of sense awareness. The researcher writes in her diary/journal about becoming unaware of her physical body during

meditation. She writes about being aware of air moving in and out of her nostrils, the thoughts entering and leaving her mind without physically identifying with them. She is also aware when her sense awareness returns during meditation.

> I focused my awareness on the breath and eventually I was aware of only the air moving in and out of the entrance of the nostrils. I had no awareness of my physical body. I could hear clearly the sound of the birds and the wind passing through the trees. I remained in this state for some time. Gradually I felt awareness of my body spreading first from the top of my head, then down my face, neck, chest, abdomen and finally down the limbs. I also noticed that my breathing was now gradually becoming deeper and heavier. Finally I opened my eyes
>
> (diary/journal extract).

and

> I felt very calm and relaxed as it was a beautiful feeling. The different colours in the environment seemed to merge into one another and I felt part of the environment. I was not aware of my physical body. This experience lasted for a period of time. Then gradually I became aware of my physical body. I felt the sensation of touch returning first at the top of the head and then

the face, neck, chest, arms and the rest of the body

(diary/journal extract).

When the meditator is able to step back and observe without judging what is being experienced while experiencing it, it means the individual's further advancement along the path of psychological development (Russell, 1986). The person moves away or shifts from the ego or self, and is able to take up a position and witness both internal processes like his/her thoughts, emotions, pain and so on and also what is happening around him/her. This ability to be detached from the self is part of the development process beyond the prepersonal and personal stage of development. During the prepersonal and personal stages of development the emphasis is on the development of a cohesive sense of the self. At the beginning of the transpersonal level, the sense of self may begin to dissolve. There is a dissolution of physical boundaries. Personal growth may be seen as the movement towards the notion that a stable identity, a durable perceptual object, no longer appears possible, and for the meditator there is a deep conviction that nothing including the self is durable and everlasting. It is an indication of the individual's entrance into the transpersonal stage (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986).

ii. Experiences of one-pointed attention

An altered state of consciousness is characterised by the meditator losing his/her sense of awareness, one-pointed attention to an object to the exclusion of all other thoughts, and progressively subtle feelings of bliss (Goleman, 1988). The following extract, describes the researcher's experience of one-pointed attention.

> This afternoon I had another unusual experience during sitting meditation. I made myself comfortable in a half lotus position and directed my awareness onto the breath. Thoughts drifted through my mind and I gently brought my awareness back onto the breath. Gradually the breath became the centre or focus of my attention. I seemed to be virtually entering the breath. A beautiful sweeping sensation seemed to pass over my mind and then over my entire body. I felt very calm and relaxed. I was not aware of my physical body. This experience lasted for a period of time. Then gradually I became aware of my physical body. I felt the sensation of touch returning first at the top of the head and then the face, neck, chest, arms and the rest of the body
>
> (diary/journal extract).

During the concentrative training during meditation, the meditator focuses his/her attention to one subject/object of meditation. This could be the breath or the heartbeat or it could be a visual image. According to Buddhism, with intensive practice and training the meditator will be able to merge into the object/subject of meditation and transcend to a level above the normal state of consciousness. This is known as one-pointed attention. The meditator will be experiencing an altered state of consciousness.

iii. Transformation of awareness

Towards the end of the retreat programme the meditator experienced an altered state of consciousness that was slightly deeper than the access level. This is evident from the following extract:

> I was still feeling very calm and relaxed. Today I had another unusual experience. Towards the end of the first morning sitting meditation period, I just managed to settle in a comfortable position when the bell sounded to mark the end of the period. I stood up and made my way mindfully to the dining hall. I noticed that everything in the environment seemed to have a different quality in its appearance. The walls, windows of the room, the hedge outside all appeared in gentle wavy lines. These objects did not appear in the normal, flat, three-dimensional view. I experienced a floating sensation. The experience lasted for about an hour. The environment then appeared as it usually does when we are in the normal state of consciousness
>
> (diary/journal extract).

The ultimate goal of meditation is to transform one's consciousness and attain a state which is known as the "awakened state" which is then integrated with the normal state of consciousness (Goleman, 1988, p. 112). This is also the goal of many other meditation systems. The altered state of consciousness experienced on day nineteen is slightly deeper than the altered states

experienced before. It was an altered state of consciousness near the access level. At the access level, the subject or object of meditation is the main focus of the meditator's attention. At this level mental attributes, like one-pointedness and bliss may mature to full absorption simultaneously. This state is reached by arriving at it in varying degrees of deeper concentration. At the access level, there is a strong feeling of zest or rapture, happiness, feelings of equanimity and a floating sensation of the body. Sometimes the meditator sees luminous shapes or flashes of bright light (Goleman, 1988). This experience by the researcher is seen in the following extract.

> I noticed that my breathing was becoming progressively lighter, shallower and occurring at a slightly faster pace. Gradually became less aware of my physical body as my attention on the breath became stronger. I was also aware of what was happening in the environment. A thunderstorm was in progress during this period. Mentally I saw flashes of light which at that moment I associated with the thunderstorm. I was aware of the sound of raindrops on the windowpanes. At the end of the thirty minute meditation period I felt mentally alert and could recall the experience vividly
>
> (diary/journal extract).

According to Buddhist teachings this access level is a precarious level of conciousness. This access concentration has to be strengthened by the meditator with continued meditation practice if he/she wishes to reach higher levels of consciousness.

5.3. Summary

There is evidence to show that a variety of experiences and effects were experienced by the researcher during and after the Buddhist Meditative Practice. Since this is an exploratory case-study, it is not possible to claim that these experiences and effects are due exclusively to the meditative practice. These effects and experiences may be partly due to the mature age level of the researcher and the fact that she had undertaken the preliminary training intensively several months prior to attending the retreat programme. The preliminary training involved reading literature on Buddhism and practising the ethical precepts laid down which included adopting a vegetarian diet. These effects and experiences could also be due partly to the meditative practice. However, there is a strong relationship between the meditative practice and the experiences described.

Themes that emerged from this study have been discussed from the framework of Transpersonal Psychology. These themes include :

1. Experience of calmness, peace and increased relaxation.
2. Mindfulness.
   i. Mindfulness with the focus on the body.

ii. Increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to external and internal stimuli.

iii.Conscious of being.

iv. Conscious of the changing nature of experience.

3. Altered states of consciousness.

i. Experience of dissolution of physical boundaries.

ii. Experiences of one-pointed attention.

iii. Transformation of awareness.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWS

6.1. Introduction

Presented in this chapter are the results of the research compiled after interviewing three meditators who are professional people of Western origin, who are in their middle adulthood. All three subjects had been engaged in the Buddhist Meditation Practice for an average of ten years. Each subject had attended various conducted Buddhist Retreats held at Ixopo, Nieu Bethesda, Cape Town, Helderview in Somerset West and in Grahamstown a number of times during this period. Some of these retreats were conducted over weekends and some extended from over five, seven, ten to fourteen days. All retreats were characterised by the subjects maintaining "Noble Silence", following a vegetarian diet and engaging in the meditation practice for the greater part of each day. Each subject, however, indicated that there were periods of abstention from their practice during the past number of years.

The data collected by the researcher during her experience as a participant observer at the Buddhist Retreat at Ixopo, which are presented in the previous chapter, were utilized to formulate questions for the semi-structured interviews. Subject A was interviewed in her office

at the university where she was employed, and Subject B and Subject C were interviewed at their homes. Each subject completed a Personal Data Form at the start of the interview, which provided a certain amount of biographical information. See Appendix B. Information that may lead to personal identification was not required and this ensured that their anonymity was maintained.

The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. A brief synopsis was compiled after following the steps as described in the methodology outlined in Chapter Four. Each interview was read, reread and reviewed a number of times in order to gain a holistic grasp of the data. The material relevant to the aims of the study was selected. Then themes were drawn from it and were written down and organised in a logical fashion to compile the synopsis. This procedure was repeated when working with the data from each interview. See Appendix D. Similar themes were then selected from each interview and written down. Each subject also had certain individual themes that were related to the goals and aims of the study and these were also included. These themes were then compared and validated with the theoretical constructs of Buddhist Meditation present in existing research conducted by Goleman (1988), Kornfield (1979), Goldstein (1976), Wilber (1975, 1979, 1981), Shapiro (1980, 1983), Russell (1986), Walsh (1977,1978, 1982, 1983), Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986) and Epstein and Lieff (1986). The major themes that emerged are documented and discussed from the perspective of Transpersonal Psychology.

There is evidence that growth has probably taken place in the subjects largely within the framework of Transpersonal Psychology. This may be due to the mature developmental level

of all the subjects who were over forty years of age with high academic and professional qualifications. Furthermore all the subjects had been meditating for an average period of ten years.

Themes that emerged were discussed within the framework of Transpersonal Psychology. These themes include

- Experience of Buddhist meditation
- Awareness of an existential conflict in the subjects' lives
- Need for personal development
- Experience of calmness and increased relaxation
- Experience of objective consciousness
- Mindfulness : Increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to internal and external phenomena
- Consciousness of the changing nature of experience
- Tolerance and acceptance

In the light of the overall aims of this research, these themes were placed in one of three broad categories. The first category included the themes of the meditative experience. The second category included themes on the reasons why the meditators undertook the Buddhist Meditation practice and the third category included themes on the effects of the Buddhist Meditation practice.

6.2. Themes within the framework of Transpersonal Psychology

The following themes emerged after interviewing three subjects, one male and two females of Western origin. All three participants were employed at a South African university at the time when the interviews were conducted.

6.2.1. Experience of Buddhist meditation

The Buddhist Meditation Practice usually gives us an opportunity to look within ourselves. Insight meditation begins with the individual sitting in a quiet and secluded place and concentrating on his/her breath sensation for periods of about forty minutes, several times a day, for several days until the mind becomes quieter. According to Buddhism, by practising regularly like this, the person will be able to focus his/her attention more frequently and more successfully on the breath sensation. This exercise, after a period of time, will enable the meditator to focus his/her attention on the predominant experience of the body or the mind at a particular moment. This is the beginning of the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a careful, non-judgemental attention developed by looking at the natural sequence of changing experience, whether it be breath, body sensation, sounds, feelings, taste or thoughts. This mindfulness is crucial in meditation if a person wants to understand the processes of experience.

The details of the meditative experiences of the researcher, who was a participant observer at the Buddhist Retreat at Ixopo, are found in Chapter Five. Although the researcher had some deep meditative experiences, not all experiences were experienced by all the subjects.

Furthermore, although there may be certain similarities in the experiences of the researcher and the subjects, one must remember that each experience is unique to the individual.

Subject A was sharing a small flat with a woman friend and she felt she was experiencing a crisis at that time. She described her meditative experiences at that time as follows:

> *... I felt sort of pressurised by her, just being around constantly, not having my own space and that sort of crisis, and going to the retreat centre and learning how to meditate and just sitting there knowing that I would sit here and nobody would disturb me was the most wonderfully releasing feeling that I have had for a long time, then, so I mean, really I got hooked straight away
>
> (Subject A).

and

> ... the most pressing thing was just knowing that I would not, nobody would come and sort of ask me questions when I was trying to be quiet, you know, nobody would be constant drawing on my energy, it was just a feeling like "Oh! I am just here, I can relax, you know, everything is fine," it was that sort feeling, which was very nice
>
> (Subject A).

Subject A found the meditative experience was very positive since she found that here she was alone, and no one would would demand her attention or "be constantly drawing on my energy". She felt relaxed and less harassed.

Subject B however, expressed the difficulties she had during the meditation practice. She found it difficult to focus her attention on her breath for prolonged periods of time. Her attention seems to be distracted by the workings of her mind. She felt restless and believes she has not meditated properly yet. This is revealed by the following extracts:

> ... the actual sitting (meditation) is quite difficult, it is difficult, sometimes I do not think I have ever really properly meditated yet, ever, because my mind is all over the place
>
> (Subject B).

and

> Well my mind is all over the joint and that is where I feel sometimes I am not sure that I have actually meditated properly because I feel restless. The meditation that we do is focussing on your breath. You breathe in and then when you breathe out, you feel the breath here, so that you are strengthening here, so most of the time that is what I do, but to try to control my mind? Sometimes I try to count those breaths and I find by the second

> or third (breath), my mind is already gone and I am continually having to come back ...
>
> (Subject B).

Buddhist Meditation requires a great deal of self-discipline, practice and perseverence. The meditation experience can be good, beautiful and insightful, and yet there are times when it will be boring, painful, full of restlessness and doubt (Goldstein, 1976). Some of these experiences have been expressed by the researcher and the subjects at some time or the other during the meditation process. According to Buddhism, if the individual is patient throughout these experiences, it will help the individual to maintain an equilibrium both physically and mentally. Being patient means remaining in a state of balance regardless of what is happening. The individual has to be silent and alert. Silence is necessary to deepen the meditative practice. Silence is necessary since it is not possible to examine the contents or workings of the mind if one is talking. By keeping silent a whole range of physical and mental activities becomes clearer and a "verbal silence makes possible, a deeper silence of the mind." (Goldstein, 1976, p. 3).

Subject C was the only participant who spoke of having a profound experience while attending a meditation retreat,

> I did have one quite profound experience when I was meditating which was in about 1980, may be 1981. I went up to Ixopo, we had been on a ten day silent retreat and it was actually Easter

> morning ... I went for a walk and I was on the edge of the lake. There was a little dam ... Somewhere I felt a tremendous sense of emptiness, but not emptiness in a bad sense, ... it was a sense of something profound that happened and it was sort of, whatever happened, made me feel that I did not want to go back into the the meditation hall and I wanted to be there alone ...
>
> (Subject C).

Transpersonal Psychologies are concerned with studying peak experiences, mystical experiences, unitive consciousness and other unique experiences. This usually involves alteration in the state of consciousness of the individual. Subject C talks of this profound experience which probably could have been described as mystical, involving an alteration in his state of consciousness. However, one of the disadvantages of these experiences is that, often the subjects cannot express it completely by just using words. It has to be experienced by a person to understand it fully. This can be seen in the way Subject C describes his experience. This is also expressed by Ramdass (1985 in Goleman, 1988) who says that these experiences we sense and sometimes cannot articulate, often have a very profound effect on our lives. These experiences are not mediated by our intellect, and soon after they pass, we return to our analytic mind and attempt to label what has happened. Psychology in its attempt to be a science has not allowed these experiences to be studied objectively. As a result many of these experiences have been suppressed or labelled deviant from our normal, rational states of consciousness (Goleman, 1988). Buddhist writings have listed altered states of consciousness, and have been evolving maps and charts for our exploration of the inner terrain of our minds. The researcher in her

experience as a participant observer also had experiences of altered states of consciousness which have been described in Chapter Five.

6.2.2. Why do people meditate?

The initial question posed to all three participants was why did they start meditating. The following two themes emerged in response to this question.

i. Awareness of an existential conflict in the subjects' lives

All three subjects had experienced an existential conflict in their lives, and in their search for a resolution for this conflict embarked on the Buddhist Meditation programme. Each subject spoke of a spiritual emptiness or a gap in their life during this stage. They all had the need to find a deeper meaning to life. Subject A expressed it as a "need" beyond the basic human physical and material needs that had to be satisfied.

> I think I was looking for something, you know, I think something spiritual * ... It was like a real, very deep sort of need inside myself to find something more than just material things. I do not know whether to believe in, to sort of make life more meaningful I suppose ... for me there was the acquisition of goods, and having a good life, it was really very superficial to life itself, and I was looking for ... something more meaningful,

* ... indicates that a section of the transcript has been omitted.

> so it was yes, in search of that, yes ... It was just sort of like a genuine feeling of emptiness, I suppose, and wanting to find something to fill that gap
>
> (Subject A).

Subject B spoke about her need for spiritual fulfilment and this "need" was not being satisfied by the Christian religion. She was also influenced during the sixties by the current interest and popularity of meditation and Eastern philosophy. This is evident from the following remarks

> A kind of need for some spiritual activity and not feeling that need met, say through my Christian upbringing. That was one and it was more or less being a product of the sixties you know and it was fairly popular as well, you know Alan Watts, India, those interests were you know. I got influenced by that as well
>
> (Subject B).

The lack of meaning in the subjects' lives, their lack of spiritual fulfilment, may be viewed as an existential conflict at this stage of development in their lives (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). This has also been described as "ennui", "mal du sicele", "malaise", "deadening of life" and so on which seems to alienate the individual from him/herself, from other people and from nature (Fromm, 1977, p. 78). The crucial question one asks at this point is how does Western

psychology view the emergence of such a crisis or conflict during the middle-adulthood stage of human development?

Many conventional psychologies do not explain adequately these conflicts and their resolutions at this level of human development.

> We live in a culture that holds a scientific world view. In attempting to be a science, psychology has adapted the view with much benefit but at great cost. To become a psychologist means being socialised to have a negative attitude towards spiritual evolution or to be oblivious to that possibility
>
> (Goleman, 1988, p.141).

There are many contemporary psychologists and writers in the West like Goleman (1988), Goldstein (1976), Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986), Epstein and Lieff (1986), Tart (1976) and many others who hold the view, that Western psychology or conventional psychology do not explain adequately the contemplative or transpersonal realm of human growth and development. Many of these writers like Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986), and Goleman (1988), believe that the information on these stages of development can be found in the world's great meditative and contemplative writings.

According to Tart (1976), the realm of the spiritual experience is connected to altered states of consciousness and many traditional Eastern psychologies explain and help us to predict and

control these altered states of consciousness. According to Buddhism, the meditation practice can bring about altered states of consciousness and this may facilitate a higher level of awareness in the individual.

The stage of human development characterised by the conflict experienced by the subjects may be explained by using Wilber's proposal of the "Full Spectrum Model of Human Growth and Development" (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. xiii). This model includes nine of the most basic and central developmental levels that are contained in three main realms, that is, the prepersonal, personal and transpersonal realms. It is at the end of the Personal realm and at the beginning of the Transpersonal realm that the individual may experience this crisis that is described as an existential pathology by Wilber (1986 in Wilber, Engler and Brown, 1986).

The "existential level ... is the highest level of consciousness that many authentic humanistic-existential approaches seem to acknowledge" (Wilber, 1986 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 117). This stage is characterised by the presence of the existential self in the individual. The greater part of the subjects' description of their conflict correlates with Wilber's description of the presence of the existential self and its concerns include gaining personal autonomy, striving towards self-actualization, concerned about the overall meaning of life. Many individual's in their attempt to find meaning for their existence turn to various religions of the world, seek therapy and/or engage in introspection and philosophizing.

> As introspection and and philosophizing are engaged and matured, the basic fundamental, or existential concerns of

being-in -the-world come increasingly to the fore

(Maslow, 1968 in Wilber, Enger & Brown, 1986, p.136;

May, 1958 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 136).

When an individual seeks therapy in an attempt to resolve this conflict the therapist may use varying methods (Wilber, 1986 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). One way will be when the therapist allows the client's philosophizing without interference. Another way is when the therapist becomes a co-philosopher. However whatever mode, system or therapy is used to assist the individual at this stage, the central issue here is that the resolution of the conflict begins when the self becomes less and less ego-centric and more authentic. This is when the individual strives towards egolessness, and the self becomes clear or transparent and the successful resolution of this conflict will promote the development of the self towards the Transpersonal realm (Wilber, 1986 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986).

All subjects made an active search for answers by turning to the literature of traditional psychologies to find a way to satisfy them, and they sought answers beyond their socialised spiritual tradition which is Christianity. Subject A, after reading through books on comparative religions, felt the Buddhist Meditation Practice was the one with which she felt most comfortable.

I remember taking out books and things from the library and reading through, like comparative religion books, reading through you know what the Jewish faith is about, what is

> catholicism, ... and the one book that I had was, it had amongst it some stuff on Buddhism, and I remember thinking that I really sort of clicked with that more than any other faiths, and I was really so interested in that, that I started reading up about it. That was about fifteen years ago
>
> (Subject A).

and

> ... I became really interested in reading about Hinduism, about Zen (Buddhism), reading about African, about Indian art and the Chinese art you know ...
>
> (Subject C).

Subject C had a Christian upbringing but he went through periods of uncertainty about it. Besides reading through Traditional Psychologies he practised Transcendental Meditation for a period of time. This did not satisfy him. Eventually he heard of the Buddhist Meditation Practice which appealed to him.

> It was in about '68, I had become, well I had grown up in a Christian home and I had gone through periods of doubt in faith ... so when I heard about this Buddhist Meditation, it seemed

worth exploring ...

(Subject C).

Today many psychologists, psychiatrists, academic and others are turning to traditional psychologies in an attempt to understand human existential problems and try to seek solutions for them. Among them have been Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Daniel Goleman, Joseph Goldstein, Roger Walsh, Ken Wilber and many others. Allan Watts, though not a psychological theorist, recognised that the Eastern "ways of liberation" have similarities to Western psychotherapy in that "both are concerned with changing peoples' feelings about themselves and their relation to others and to the world of nature" (Goleman, 1989, p. 158). The aims of the Eastern "ways of of liberation"are similiar to the goals of Western theorists like Jung's individuation, Allport's functional autonomy and Adler's creative selfhood (Watts, 1961 in Goleman, 1988, p. 158).

After exploring a number of different tradtional psychological perspectives, the subjects embarked on the Buddhist Meditation Practice in their attempt to seek answers to their existential concerns. Today many psychologists, psychiatrists and academics like Goleman (1988), and Engler (1986), believe that meditation can be used discriminately in conjunction with analysis and therapy to promote human development.

ii. Personal development

One of the central themes in Eastern (traditional) psychologies is that human nature is not ideal as it exists, and a person can attain the ideal mode of being if he/she seeks it diligently.

According to Buddhist writings the path for transformation of the "self" desired by those who seek it can be attained. The means by which this transformation of the "self" is attained is by meditation (Goleman, 1988). Personal development in Transpersonal Psychology, according to Wilber (1979), means that some sort of process occurs within the individual whereby he/she is fundamentally one with the universe. The person's sense of identity extends beyond the ego and he/she identifies with the transpersonal self (Walsh, 1980 in Knight, 1990; Vaughan, 1980 in Knight, 1990).

All three subjects realise that their sense of identity is now on a different level. However, it is Subject A who articulated this particularly well during the interview. Previously Subject A sought her identity by wanting to be recognised through her success in her work. She sought her identity by wanting to be seen as an important and useful member of society.

> Before I suppose I could have been described as quite ambitious in wanting to make my name in my work you know, using my work to become important or a useful member of society, you know, that sort of a thing ... my position has moved from one of quite sort of egocentric I suppose, to one of more, let my work help others and I, actually, do not, it does not matter if I am acknowledged or not ...
>
> (Subject A).

Subject A admits she was ego-centric and she realises that the recognition of her work by others will have strengthened her ego or sense of self. Now her view has changed. She feels satisfied if her work now helps others in the environment. Her work is no longer aimed for her exclusive benefit, that is, building and strengthening her ego or sense of self. The subject is slowly moving away from her strong identity of the "self" or what is described as dismantling of the ego towards a state of egolessness.

Transpersonal psychology sees that personal development or growth, not only means a healthy reconstruction of the ego-structure, but also the attainment of a state beyond the ego, or egolessness in which the spiritual consciousness is recognised and integrated into the personality structure in a wholesome manner (Epstein, 1988 in Knight, 1990).

There is a possibility that identification with the transpersonal self may have occurred in a subtle way in Subject A. This is also revealed by the following remarks:

> One likes to be appreciated I suppose, but it is not that important. You know I do not have to see my name on papers and so on ...

and

> ... my orientation is no longer for myself, to make myself important, and to value or evaluate my worth in those

terms, it is far more low-keyed. That is if I can contribute through my, through the sort of work that I do, whether my name is mentioned or not, actually I do not mind. If I can see that it is doing some good, that it is benefitting some people, then I am actually very, very satisfied

(Subject A).

Our normal sense of "self" is characterised by a feeling of temporal continuity and sameness over time by other people's recognition of this continuity and consistency, and by our own perception of other people's confirming recognition (Erikson, 1959 in Wilber, Engler & 1986). Most conventional (Western) theories place great emphasis on the development of the "self". In fact the deepest psychopathological problems from the psychoanalytic perspective, is the "lack of a sense of self", hence the aim of psychotherapy is the person's attainment of a cohesive sense of self (Engler, 1986, p. 23).

This sense of "I" of personal unity and continuity, of being the same "self" in time, place and across states of consciousness is seen not as something innate in our personality or inherent in our spiritual or psychological makeup, but as "evolving developmentally out of our experience of objects and kinds of interactions we have with them" (Engler, 1986, p. 22).

In Buddhist psychology this sense of "self" or "I" is formed in the same way as described in Western theories. The "self" is virtually constructed out of our experiences with the object world. This "self" or "me" or "I" which seems so real and present in us, is actually an

internalised image, a complex representation constructed by selective and imaginative "remembering" of past encounters with significant objects in our world (Bruner, 1976 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). However, according to Buddhist writings when the "self" is well formed and reaches an optimal level of development, it begins to disslove gradually to attain a higher level of human development. This change in the subjects' perception of the "self" may possibly be contained in their abovementioned remarks.

There is now a further development of the sense of self in the individual according to Buddhist writings. In Ken Wilber's model of human development the sense of self in human beings proceeds through various stages of development. The first six years of an individual are characterised by the emergence of the Physical Self which is followed by the development of the Emotional Self and then by the Mental Self. The Mental Self goes through three major levels of development, that is, the Concrete, Formal and Integrative levels. Then the self becomes Transmental (transrational or transpersonal) as it reaches the contemplative or spiritual realms of development.

Subject A is fully aware that her identity of the "self" depended on her work, using it to become important and becoming a useful member of society. She was concerned about building her self-structure through her work. The fact that she is no longer affected if her work does not build her ego or "self", but helps other people, probably shows her growing detachment from the "self" and increasing connectedness to the environment. It is possible that her identity now extends beyond the ego and may have begun to identify with the transpersonal self.

Buddhist psychology however does not have much to say about personality organisation and the various levels of ego functioning, and does not describe developmental psychology in the Western sense. Buddhist psychology presupposes a normal course of development with a normal or intact ego, and it assumes a cohesive and integrated self already exists in the person, and a person must generally be fairly well integrated psychologically to meditate effectively (Wilber, Engler & Brown,1986). The deepest psychopathological problem from the Buddhist perspective is the presence of the self. The deepest source of suffering is the attempt to preserve the "self" which is both futile and self-defeating and the severest form of psychopathology is the "clinging to personal existence" (Nyanamoli, 1976 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 24; Nayantiloka, 1972 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 24). In Buddhism the therapeutic aim is to realise that the "self" (*atta-ditthi*) is an illusion.

Buddhist Meditation aims at attaining liberation from selfhood. Buddhism points out that reinforcing the sense of "self" or "ego" leads to suffering. Psychotherapy seems to be perpetuating and reinforcing this illusion, since its aim is for the individual's attainment of a cohesive sense of "self" (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). However, Engler (1986), believes that these two therapeutic goals should be taken consecutively. One has to have a well-developed sense of self before one realises the futility of clinging to this selfhood.

> You have to be somebody before you can be nobody
>
> (Engler, 1986, p. 24).

Therefore, personal development does not only involve the development of the "self" as in the conventional theories, or the development of "no self" as contemplative theories like Buddhism describes: it involves first the development of the "self" before one gets insight into the ultimate illusion of the "self" (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). Complete psychological well-being includes both the development of the "self" and "no self". One cannot bypass the developmental tasks of identity formation and object constancy in order to "annihilate the ego" (Wilber, Enger & Brown, 1986, p. 49). However there is danger in this assumption if teachers or students do not understand this "normal selfhood" because students may mistake subjective feelings of emptiness for "*sunyata*" or voidness and they might mistake this lack of inward feelings of cohesiveness and integration for "*anatta*" or selflessness which might lead to other pathological conditions (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 34). Therefore, although meditation is often regarded as regression in the service of the ego, it is by design and practice a progression in the transcendence of the ego (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986).

Subject A has also always been close to nature. She hopes this link with nature which is simple and direct, can be extended to her relationship with other people in the environment.

> I do not feel that I have ever been alienated from nature ...
>
> and
>
> ... there is concern with say environmental issues and that sort of thing, but I am just hoping through the way I relate to nature, is what (I) communicate with other people

> and it is like a teaching in a way ... I think that is what I mean. I do not set myself up as a teacher for example to anybody, but it may be that, through being natural, more natural, more simple, less complex, more direct, all those sort of things, but yes, my relationship with other people is brought into that sphere and it is not conducted on a superficial level
>
> (Subject A).

Once again this reveals that the subject's identity goes beyond her own "self-structure" in that she feels close or linked to nature. She also hopes that such a link will also develop in her relationship with other people. This may also indicates the subject's development on the transpersonal level.

6.2.3. What are the effects of meditation?

A wide range of effects may be experienced by an individual with the Buddhist Meditation Practice. This range of effects includes a person experiencing feelings of calmness, peace and of relaxation, experiencing varying degrees of altered states of consciousness, a person getting in touch with his/her emotions like anger, sorrow, joy and so on, an individual gaining insight into the workings of his/her mind and finally experiencing nirvana. The following are some of the effects which were experienced by the subjects who were interviewed. Some effects were experienced by all subjects, however, not all the effects were experienced by all the subjects.

i. Experience of calmness, peace and relaxation

One of the first effects of meditation the researcher experienced was that of calmness, peace and relaxation as mentioned in the previous chapter. Meditation has a calming effect on the body processes (Sole-Leris, 1986). This includes the bodily functions of breathing, mental processes and other biological processes. All the subjects interviewed also experienced periods of calmness and peace during and after meditation. In this study the affective changes are evident from the following remarks:

> I think it does help to bring about a certain (amount of) calmness, yes after the sessions
>
> (Subject A).

> I felt let me think, calmer ...
>
> (Subject B).

> I feel very calm, in a way almost reluctant to go, it is a little difficult to get back into life, although well, once one gets back into life, it is okay ...
>
> (Subject C).

Relaxation is also seen as a by-product of meditation and both Subjects A and B felt relaxed after meditation periods. In fact, Subject C used it as a technique for relaxation.

Being relaxed may be, the ability to realise that I am
getting uptight about something and to say, hang on,
you know, relax, certainly there is that

(Subject A).

and

I have also used it sometimes as a technique for relaxation

(Subject C).

and

Generally I feel quite good after a meditation session.
I would say I feel yip, this is being good. I feel relaxed,
yes

(Subject C).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the relaxing effects of meditation is not very different from many of the relaxation techniques used in Western societies today (Goleman, 1988).

ii. Experience of objective consciousness

According to Buddhist writihgs, it is possible for an individual to be able to witness objectively, the contents and the workings of the mind, with an intensive practice of meditation.

> Meditation may be conceptualised as a process of attentional restructuring wherein the mind can be trained both in concentration, the ability to rest undisturbed on a single object, and in the mind, the ability to observe its own moment to moment nature, to pay attention undistractedly, to a sense of changing objects
>
> (Epstein & Lieff, 1986, p.58).

This process of "attentional restructuring" is evident in Subject A, since she is able to observe as a witness, without distraction what is happening in her mind. She is aware when feelings like frustration and anger arise. Being a long term meditator she is aware of how to observe these feelings objectively. This is revealed in the following remarks:

> Sometimes when I meditate, I mean like, or when I am quiet, my mind is sort of like still, things do come up like a bit of anger or something or frustration ... In meditation practice what you are supposed to do is actually watch the anger, you know sort of (you) almost distance yourself from it and if I am in meditation

> and that happens it is easier to do that. If I do not indulge in it (i.e. anger) if I do not follow it, there is not much effect
>
> (Subject A).

Today Buddhist or *Vipassana* (insight) Meditation is described as training in mindfulness, choiceless awareness or bare-attention. This is the practice of a "clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception" (Nyanaponika, 1973 in Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 20). In bare-attention, the meditator's cognitive attention is paid to registering the occurrence of a thought, feeling or sensation exactly as it occurs and enters our awareness from moment to moment without further elaboration. He/She notes only the succession of thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise and pass away. Emotions are also attended to without selection or censorship. The meditator attempts to attend to any and all stimuli without preference, comment, judgement, reflection or interpretation. If physical or mental reactions occur they are also noted and made the objects of bare-attention. Even lapses in attention, distractions, fantasies, reveries and internal dialogue are made objects of bare-attention as soon as the meditator becomes aware of them. In fact the meditator becomes a "witness" to his/her own experience. This also depends on the ability of the "ego" to be both subject and object of its experience at the same time. The aim is to come to know one's own mental processes and in this way have the power to shape or control them.

> One's ordinary consciousness is not dislodged, but full objectivity is superimposed on it
>
> (Goleman, 1988, p.6).

Subject A knows how to put herself in the position to witness her thoughts and emotions as they arise and pass away in her mind. According to Buddhist writings when a meditator is capable of stepping back and observing what is being experienced while experiencing it, it implies further psychological development. According to Transpersonal Psychology, this detachment from the "self" is an important part of personal growth. Since the subject has been meditating for a prolonged period of time, we can say that personal growth in terms of identification with the transpersonal self may very likely have occurred. In Buddhism, this usually marks the beginning of insight in the meditation practice.

The meditator on deepening his/her experience of insight, also realises that these dual processes (that is, awareness and the object being contemplated) are devoid of the "self". It is not under the control of the will of the meditator. This is the direct experience of the Buddhist doctrine of *annatta* which literally means "not self " and that all phenomena do not possess an indwelling personality (Goleman, 1988).

iii. Mindfulness: Increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to external and internal phenomena

Mindfulness which is an intergral part of the Buddhist Meditation Practice has also been experienced by the researcher and the participants of this research. Mindfulness usually breaks down stereotyped perception. In everyday life we do not take full notice of the familiar things in the environment. In mindfulness the meditator views every experience as though the event is occurring for the first time. He/She is continually attentive to what his/her five senses receive, and also to his/her thoughts. The Buddhist psychology *Vissuddhi-magga* regards the mind as

the sixth sense. A person simply registers whatever the senses receive. According to Buddhism, the best level of jhana for practising mindfulness is at the first level of concentration which is the access level, since a level of concentration below this will be affected by wandering thoughts.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, that there are four kinds of mindfulness, each having a different point of focus. Mindfulness can focus on the body, on feelings, on the mind or on mind objects (Goleman, 1988). When a meditator is mindful of his/her body, he/she focusses on body posture and movement of various muscles. Subject C was very conscious of his body during meditation.

> Oh, one thing I have discovered is that when I meditate, I become very conscious of my body, of the feelings in my body, of making contact with my body, so that, in so that, perhaps, so that what I have become very much aware of what is ... actually the way I experience meditation is very much something very physical ...
>
> (Subject C).

He is also more conscious/aware of the sounds and sights (external stimuli) around him and feelings within him (internal stimuli).

> ... just becoming aware of ... you know sounds, sights and then on sensation in the body ...
>
> (Subject C).

In mindfulness of feelings, the meditator focuses on all his/her internal sensations whether they are pleasant or unpleasant. In the same way when the meditator is mindful of mental states, he/she will focus on each state that includes mood, mode of thought and other psychological states, as it comes into his/her awareness. In this way, gradually, the meditator may be able to see the random, mental units from which his/her reality is built. According to the Buddhist writings, as a result of this, realisations about the nature of the mind emerge, and with mindfulness, they develop into insight.

iv. Conscious of the changing nature of experience through life

According to Engler (1986), his experience in teaching Buddhist psychology and Vipassana Meditation has made it clear that clinging to a sense of personal continuity and self-identity, results in chronic discontent and psychic conflict. According to Buddhism, every instant of our lives, this clinging, puts us in opposition to a universe in which nothing lasts for more than a brief moment. In fact, there are no things at all in any real sense, but only events in the order of milliseconds. As stated in Chapter Five, in Transpersonal Psychology, development of an individual involves understanding the radical impermanence of events. There is change in the physical, emotional and cognitive spheres throughout an individual's life. A person's values, attitude and experiences also change. Personal relationships also undergo change.

Subject A reveals her awareness of the changing nature of experience in her life and not just during meditation. She is aware of her shift in values, her personal relationships with herself and with others in her environment, and it seems that she has integrated this into her personality. There is a possilbilty that since Subject A is not clinging to her sense of "self", growth on the transpersonal level may be taking place. This is revealed in the following remarks:

> I have a different value system, I think, to what I had before. I was never terribly materialistic, but I suppose you know, I sort of hankered after certain things, you know to make life easier and certain comforts and things, not that I do not hanker after that now, but I am, you know it does not hassle me so much ... it is not so "goodie" orientated anymore. People have become very much more important to me, my personal relations, my personal relationships are very important, having friends around, that sort of thing, and it has definitely altered my relationship with my partner as well, into being able to see through all my expectations ... valuing what is happening now, than sort of, where things might go and then being disappointed in the long run ... I am much happier to make do with whatever it is, to work for the now basically, to perfect what I have got now and -work from that, rather than sort of always continuously be looking to the future, for something that I would really like, but will probably land up being terribly

disappointed ...

(Subject A).

Subject A realises this incessant change in life and talks of "valuing what is happening now". According to Goldstein (1976), and Walsh (1983), when a person experiences moment-to-moment living and being, there is a profound understanding of the radical impermanence of all phenomena, including events, experiences, thoughts, feelings and perceptions.

v. Tolerance and acceptance

All subjects have become more accepting of themselves and of other people in their environment. They are more tolerant of different opinions and behaviour of other people. There is no longer the pre-occupation with the "self" which may have been stilled during meditation and the strong personal identity with it may have been broken. Hence growth may have taken place on the transpersonal level. This may be seen in the following remarks:

> ... I think that I am probably very much more accepting of people being different, you know, they do not always have to conform to my way of being, and also to give them space as well ... I do not have to be dogmatic about my own perception of what is happening, of what is right and what is wrong ... they can have their opinions as well ...
>
> (Subject A).

and

> I do not know if it is meditation or just growing older, but to sort of accept things that I used to kick against quite a lot, accept them, or like difficulty with communication with my mother, of her foibles, you know. I can accept that better and my situation at work, I feel I am less kicking against it ... generally (I am) more accepting of what I am, of my age, of who I am, you know, more accepting ...
>
> (Subject B).

and

> ... I think it has made me more accepting of myself ...
>
> (Subject C).

Personal growth from the perspective of Transpersonal Psychology may be seen to be the acceptance of the "self" to be still, so that it may rest, so there is resolution, reparation and construction (Knight, 1990). Subject A has been meditating for over ten years and there is evidence that she has increased willingness to let things be as they are. She allows her experiences to be just as they are without trying to resist them. In fact the other two subjects also echoed this same theme, of allowing things to be as they are. Each subject expressed the sense of "letting go", of allowing experiences "to be as they are" without trying to resist or

transmuting them. Subject A does not feel the need to judge or change opinions that differ from hers. Subject B is also far more accepting of her mother as she is. Subject B is also far more accepting of herself and her age. Subject C is also far more accepting of himself.

6.3. Summary

The results indicate that meditation may be regarded as a developmental process. It has techniques that facilitate personal growth or development to higher levels. Meditation has very subtly changed the lives of the subjects, and given them a new sense of meaning and purpose in life. One subject tells of having new values in her life. All subjects believe they have a better relationship not only with themselves but also with others in their environment.

The results show a variety of meditative experiences as described by each subject. These qualitative descriptions of the effects of meditation practice are consistent with the descriptions of effects of meditation documented in the research work conducted by Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986), Goleman(1988), Goldstein (1976), Knight (1990), Kornfield (1979), Walsh (1977, 1978, 1982, 1983), Wilber (1975, 1979, 1981). Some effects of meditation were experienced by all subjects whereas other effects were experienced by just individual subjects. The researcher from her own experiences with and the practice of meditation, as well as her own exploration of and orientation in Transpersonal Psychology, had expected that the subjects would have experienced a wider range of the effects of meditation than those documented here. However, inspite of this, there is evidence that due to these experiences, transpersonal growth may be taking place in all three subjects. However, it is also important to note that the

researcher does not claim that this evidence of transpersonal growth is due exclusively to the meditative practice, since it is possible that other activities, events, circumstances and other people may have simultaneously aided the subjects' personal development. It is also not the aim of these exploratory case-studies to draw specific generalisations from the results.

Themes that arose from the study were discussed from the perspective of Transpersonal Psychology. The meditative experiences are used as tools to explore personal growth. It must be remembered that meditation is one aspect of the Buddhist Practice, and it has to combined with the practice of generosity, gentleness, non-violence, patience, contentment and humility for the complete development of the individual. Meditation may be regarded as a sustained, intrumental path of transcendence (Wilber, 1979). Finally, all the subjects and the reseacher recognised the need of a teacher to help an individual in the Buddhist Meditation Practice. According to Goleman (1988), the ideal teacher was the Buddha, who it is said, had developed the power to know the mind and heart of others. The Buddhist psychology *Visuddhimagga* advises meditators to choose the most highly accomplished teacher, according to the level of attainment of meditation.

Themes related to the meditation experience, and as to why people meditate and the effects of meditation were discussed within the framework of Transpersonal Psychology. These themes are:-

1. The experience of Buddhist Meditation -

2. Themes based on why people meditate are : -

   i. Awareness of an existential conflict in the subjects' lives

   ii. Personal development

3. Themes based on the effects of meditation are : -

   i. Experience of calmness, peace and relaxation

   ii. Experience of objective consciousness

   iii. Mindfulness: Increased awareness of and perceptual sensitivity to external and internal phenomena

   iv. Conscious of the changing nature of experience

   v. Tolerance and acceptance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore contemporary experiences of the Buddhist Meditation Practice amongst three adult subjects to find out why they meditated, what were their meditation experiences and what were the effects of meditation. All three subjects were professional people of Western origin in their forties, and were employed at a South African university.

The research findings indicate that the subjects undertook the Buddhist Meditation Practice because of their awareness of an existential conflict in their lives and also for further personal development. The results also indicate that the subjects and the researcher had a range of experiences and effects during and after the meditation practice. These effects included

experiences of calmness, peace and increased relaxation

increased awareness of, and perceptual sensitivity to internal and external phenomena

conscious of the changing nature of experience

experience of objective consciousness

conscious of being

tolerance and acceptance

experiences of dissolution of physical boundaries

experiences of one-pointed attention

transformation of awareness

The full range of effects was not experienced by all the subjects. However, most of the effects were experienced by each person.

All of these experiences are part of personal growth or development from the perspective of Transpersonal Psychology, since personal growth is seen as a drive towards wholeness, integration and self-actualization. The results indicate that the subjects may have experienced growth towards the transpersonal realm. This development may be due to the following factors

1. All the subjects were professional people in their forties, who were motivated in their search for the true meaning of life.
2. All the subjects have been meditating for a prolonged period of time, that is for an average period of ten years. They have attended various conducted retreats organised at different centres in South Africa under the guidance of various teachers. However we must remember that progress is relatively slow in terms of the stages of insight or *Vipassana* Meditation (Engler, 1986).
3. The subjects may have been developmentally ready in terms of cognitive, emotional and social maturity required to experience identification with the transpersonal self.

Meditation may be conceptualized as a developmental process that may produce various side-effects depending on the level of development of the self (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). Meditational experiences can be interpreted by the individual as to where he/she lies along the continuum of ego development. The aim of meditation is the attainment of higher states of consciousness, of which the most developed forms are considered to be universal or transpersonal stages (Russell, 1986).

These meditation induced side-effects can be best understood with the aid of the writings of Goleman (1988), Goldstein (1976) and Wilber, Engler and Brown (1986) who used the traditional Buddhist sources and studied and practiced meditation with advanced meditators. All writers have published numerous articles on Buddhist Meditation in the American Journal of Transpersonal Psychology.

The results of the research can also be fully understood by making use of Ken Wilber's proposal of the "Full Spectrum Model of Human Growth and Development" since he believes that the full view of human growth and development can be fully comprehended by studying both the conventional psychological traditions which include theories of development originating in the West, and the contemplative traditions that include the various spiritual psychologies. Wilber has developed a comprehensive and an integrated view of human development by bringing together these two major traditions, which contain affective, cognitive, moral, ego, object-relation lines of human development, and also various other levels.

Literature on the benefits of meditation has been included largely in the research work conducted in the United States of America.

In terms of these case-studies being dialogic-heuristic, the conclusions of the research confirms the following assertions:

1. Meditation may heighten awareness -

   Goldstein (1976), Goleman (1988), Brown (1980), Walsh (1982), Welwood (1979).

2. Meditation can enhance self-actualisation -

   Goldstein (1976), Goleman (1988), Russell (1986).

3. Meditation enhances perceptual sensitivity and psychological well-being -

   Walsh (1982).

4. Meditation is a technique promoting insight -

   Goldstein (1976), Goleman (1988).

5. Relaxation is an integral part of the effects of meditation -

   Goldstein (1976), Solé-Leris (1986), Goleman (1988).

6. Meditation facilitates emergence and acceptance of unconscious material -

   Goleman (1988), Russell (1986), Engler (1986), Welwood (1979).

7. Meditation does not resolve emotional conflicts -

   Russell (1986), Epstein and Lieff (1986), Goleman (1988).

7.2. Limitations of the Study

1. The Buddhist Meditation Practice is relatively young in this country, and is practised by a limited number of people who are separated by large distances. This placed limitations on the number of subjects available for exploring the wide range of experiences encountered in the meditative practice. Hence experiences explored in this study are limited. However, in view of the facts that all the subjects had been meditating for a prolonged period of time, and that the researcher had personal experience of the meditative practice, it was considered adequate enough to research this phenomenon.

2. The number of effects may also have been limited due to the fact that not all subjects were on the same developmental level. In spite of this, growth on the transpersonal level may have taken place in various degrees.

3. Research into the Buddhist Meditation Practice amongst adults is relatively young in this country. However, the results of this research could advance further research in the study of this multi-level phenomenon.

4. The lack of supportive, cultural context for the subjects may have limited their experiences of the meditative practice. Today in Western societies, the meditation practice has been lifted out of its larger context of culture, which is steeped in the Buddhist perspective and values, and where it is part of the total system of training (*bhavana*) and a way of life. Meditation is usually practised with other important behavioural, motivational, intrapsychic

and interpersonal factors like right livelihood, right action, right understanding and right intentions.

5. Although the case-study approach has unique advantages in studying meditative experiences, it also imposes certain limitations. Individual case-studies are examined in depth, that is, in an ideographic manner, but it is difficult to elicit distinct causes and to make generalizations from the results. In the light of this, the study group had no control group with which to compare and substantiate the research findings.

7.3. Recommendations for further Research

More research needs to be done in this country to determine similar findings to those of this study. Very little research has been conducted on the Buddhist Meditation Practice here in comparison to research work conducted in the United States by authors mentioned earlier in this chapter.

More research could be conducted on this topic, on a cross-cultural basis, using subjects from different race groups and different backgrounds, since this study was limited to studying subjects of Western origin.

Other deeper meditative experiences need to be explored in detail using a larger number of subjects.

This study concentrated on one type of meditation, that is, the Vipassana approach found in Buddhist literature. Further studies could be replicated with similar subjects engaged in other schools of meditation like Transcendental Meditation, Tantric Meditation, Zen Meditation, Sahaj Marg Meditation and others.

Finally, in this study meditation is shown as a technique which promotes personal growth by inducing feelings of relaxation, enabling persons to become more aware of the functioning of their minds and enabling them to retrain their perceptual focusing. Hence, since personal growth is an integral part of human development, the study of meditation and its practice should be made more accessible to more people in this country. This could be implemented if such studies are introduced at high schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE OF THE LETTER SENT TO SUBJECTS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

Psychology Department
University of Fort Hare
Private Bag X1314
ALICE

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms .....
P.O. Box 75
GRAHAMSTOWN
6140

Dear .....

I am currently involved in research on Contemporary experiences of Buddhist Meditation Practice, towards a masters degree in Psychology through Rhodes University.

I am making use of the case study approach, and I need to conduct interviews as part of my research. Prof. D. Edwards, has very kindly supplied me with a list of meditators whom I could contact in Grahamstown and your name was included in this list.

The interview will be recorded on audio cassette tape and transcribed after the interview. Participants in the study are guaranteed anonymity.

In view of the fact that you have been recommended by Prof Edwards, I believe that you could make a significant contribution to the research and I wish to appeal to you to participate. I would be very grateful if you could complete the reply form and return it to me in the addressed envelope provided for your convenience.

I am planning to conduct interviews in Grahamstown in December. Should you be willing to participate, I can arrange the exact time and date of the interview with you telephonically, so that any disruption to your schedule will be minimal.

Yours faithfully

.....
C.L. Ravgee (Mrs).

REPLY FORM

Dear Mrs Ravgee

(Please insert a cross in the brackets provided next to the appropriate statement)

I will be able to participate in your research. ( )

I am unable to participate in your research. ( )

I am able to participate, but another date would be more suitable. ( )

A more suitable date would be .....

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms .....
P. O Box .....
GRAHAMSTOWN
6140

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF THE PERSONAL DATA FORM COMPLETED BY EACH SUBJECT

PERSONAL DATA FORM

1) AGE: .....

2) SEX: MALE ..... FEMALE .....

3) MARITAL STATUS:

MARRIED ..... SINGLE ..... DIVORCED .....

4) NUMBER OF CHILDREN: .....

5) HOME LANGUAGE: .....

6) RELIGION: .....

7) EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS: .....

8) OCCUPATION: .....

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

CASE STUDY ONE

1. The Buddhist Retreat Centre

The Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo is at the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains in KwaZulu-Natal. It is situated on the highest point in the region and it overlooks the beautiful valleys of the Umkomaas River System. The centre offers a traditional, semi-monastic environment where one can study and practise Buddhist Meditation, psychology, philosophy and related disciplines. The Meditation instructions are in the tradition of the Buddhist Vipassana (Insight) Meditation, which emphasises the development of both tranquility and mindful awareness.

The Buddhist Meditation, psychology and philosophy taught at the centre does not constitute a system of beliefs or a self-improvement cult. It is actually a way of experiencing the world. Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic, and it does not challenge or compete with other religions. People of all religious denominations and philosophical persuasions are welcome to attend any retreat programme at the centre, since no allegiance or conversion is required. Both individual and work retreat facilities are offered throughout the year with a basic daily routine of meditation practice, work on the estate, talks on meditation and meditation-orientated activities

like yoga, arts and crafts. In addition to this, conducted Retreats of various kinds are held regularly. These may range from weekend retreats which may explore a particular facet of Buddhist thought, art or practice, to a longer Intensive Retreat stretching over seven or fifteen days. On such retreats the "Noble Silence" is maintained and retreatants are expected to refrain from talking for the whole day. The retreat accommodates about thirty people and there are separate living areas for males and females. In addition to this, the retreat has a large meditation hall, a reading room, an arts and craft studio, a large kitchen, a dining hall and an administrative building. The meals provided here are lacto-vegetarian which include home-grown vegetables, fresh milk, farm bread and fruit. The retreatants are requested to adhere to the five Buddhist Precepts necessary to establish the most conducive psychological and physical environment for the study and practice of meditation. These include :-

1. Respect for all forms of life
2. Celibacy
3. Absention from theft
4. Absention from idle gossip and untruths
5. Absention from alcoholic drinks and hallucinogenic drugs

The daily running of the centre is done by a resident staff, some of whom are permanent staff members and others are voluntary workers. The Principal Director of the centre is a practising Buddhist and a consulting civil engineer by profession. He also lectures on Buddhism at a nearby university.

A detailed daily programme on a Conducted Retreat is illustrated as follows:

DAILY SCHEDULE

5.30 a.m.	Rising Gong
6.00 - 6.30 a.m.	Yoga
6.30 - 7.15 a.m.	Sitting Meditation
7.30 a.m.	Breakfast
8.15 - 9.00 a.m.	Working Meditation
9.00 - 9.30 a.m.	Free Time
9.30 - 10.00 a.m.	Sitting Meditation
10.00 - 10.15 a.m.	Morning Tea
10.15 - 11.00 a.m.	Standing and Walking Meditation
11.00 - 12.00 a.m.	Individual Practice / Outdoor Meditation
12.00 - 12.30 p.m.	Free Time
12.30 p.m.	Lunch
2.00 - 2.45 p.m.	Interviews / Individual Practice
3.00 p.m.	Afternoon Tea
3.45 - 4.15 p.m.	Chatting Meditation
4.15 - 4.45 p.m.	Sitting Meditation
4.45 - 5.15 p.m.	Walking and Standing Meditation
5.30 p.m.	Light Supper
6.45 - 7.30 p.m.	Sitting Meditation
7.30 - 8.30 p.m.	Discussion
8.30 - 8.45 p.m.	Loving Kindness Meditation

This was the daily time-table followed for the three conducted retreats which were in progress during the researcher's stay at the retreat. The first retreat called "Stabilizing the Mind" lasted for six days. The second retreat called "Calming the Mind" lasted for three days and the third retreat lasted for seven days. The remaining five days between these conducted retreats periods were referred to as work retreat periods, and participants followed a flexible time-table during this time. A detailed, daily diary was compilied by the researcher. This diary was read thoroughly and reviewed a number of times by the researcher in order to gain a holistic grasp of the data. The data were then organised thematically and the following selective, extended synopsis was compiled.

2. Synopsis of the Daily Experiences at the Retreat

DAY 1. The Beginning Instructions

On the first day of the retreat all the participants were allocated their rooms and were taken around the retreat to familiarize them with their surroundings. The teacher was Godwin Samarathe who is a visiting Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka. In the evening, after supper, the new meditators were taken to the meditation hall by one of the staff members and shown the various sitting positions the meditators could adopt when practising meditation. A meditator can sit cross-legged with his/her palms resting lightly on the thighs, or he/she could kneel on the meditation stool provided. However, it is important to note that whatever position the meditator adopts he/she should keep the back in an upright position. The participants were advised by Godwin to approach meditation in a soft and gentle way.

They should be aware of what is happening in their environment at all times. This includes the sounds, sights and other sensory stimuli in the environment.

Meditation can be practised in a variety of positions such as while sitting, standing, walking or even when working. However, the meditator should be aware at each and every moment what he/she is doing, such as whether he/she is walking, eating or working. Each participant chose a suitable place in the large meditation hall where he/she placed a meditation mat and sat on a meditation cushion provided in readiness for the first sitting meditation practice.

> I sat cross-legged on the meditation cushion with one calf resting on the other, and my palms rested lightly on each thigh. I closed my eyes and directed my attention to my breathing. Initially my breathing was deep, long and heavy. Various thoughts passed through my mind and I focussed my attention on my breath again. As time went by while concentrating on my breathing I had a mental image of a bright, white light which I associated with a Supreme Being. I noticed that my breathing was becoming progressively lighter, shallower and occurring at a slightly faster pace. I gradually became less aware of my physical body as my attention on the breath became stronger. I was also aware of what was happening in the environment. A thunderstorm was in progress during this period. Mentally I saw flashes of light

which at that moment I associated with the thunderstorm. I was aware of the sound of raindrops on the windowpanes. At the end of the thirty minute meditation period I felt mentally alert and could recall the experience vividly

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 2. Resisting Thoughts

After tea we engaged in standing and walking meditation. Each person had to find a secluded spot and meditate and communicate/or relate to nature. I found a shady spot under a tree and closed my eyes to meditate. Contrasting colour images like black on red, red on black, green on black, black on green, yellow on black and black on yellow seemed to appear before my eyes. In the afternoon during individual practice I engaged in walking meditation. I tried to be mindful of the body movements involved while walking. I practised this for a full hour and then continued with this practice intermittently during the rest of the day. In the evening, during sitting meditation I first focussed my awareness on my breath. I was aware of thoughts wandering through my mind. I tried consciously to check or resist these thoughts by focussing my attention on my breath. I became aware of pain arising on my thigh muscles. As

> time passed the pain became worse. Although I tried to move and adopt another posture, the pain remained
>
> (diary/journal extract).

DAY 3. Meditation on Sounds

This was the daily timetable followed until the end of the retreat period that lasted for five days. Each day we went about our daily activities observing mindfulness. By being mindful one is conscious of every activity one is doing in minute detail. One focusses all one's attention on whatever task one is engaged in like getting out of bed, walking to the bathroom, turning open the tap and so on. With more practice, the meaning of mindfulness becomes clearer.

Meditation practice was varied during the course of the day. Besides sitting, walking, working and individual meditation the participants also engaged in meditation listening to Zen music. When a person is aware of sounds surrounding him/her during meditation the sounds are louder, clearer and more pronounced. Meditation is not only focussing one's awareness on one sound or thought only. It also involves letting one's mind free to examine thoughts, emotions, sounds and feelings. Usually in everyday life one does not pay close attention to the natural sounds around one since one is not being mindful.

> As the days progressed I felt more relaxed after each meditation period. It is also easier to be aware of the sounds around you and become part of the sound. When meditating we were asked to do

a great deal of introspection like reflecting on the mental wounds inflicted upon us by others and mental wounds we inflict on others thus creating guilt within us. This results in the emotion of suffering which is a mental factor. During meditation a person tries to view these emotions objectively without identifying with it. I felt relaxed and realized that one can feel detached from emotions and view them with the mind

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 4. Mindfulness

I woke up early this morning and went about doing my morning activities with mindfulness. When I was brushing my teeth I focussed on all the physical movements involved when doing this. I was aware of my body movements while walking. During sitting meditation I was aware of the air passing in and out of the nostrils. Later in the day while engaging in standing meditation I had a sense of feeling of unity or oneness with the sounds around me. The meaning of mindfulness becomes clearer with practice. I felt very calm and relaxed physically and mentally

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 5. Meditation on Thoughts

Today I noticed that when a person is going about his/her daily activities mindfully, the activity is executed successfully and in an easy and relaxed manner. I was able to do yoga exercises slowly and with greater concentration. It was the first day that I was able to do successfully the shoulderstand exercise. Close awareness of body movements during all activities results in the tasks being performed successfully. Sitting meditation has also become less painful. During meditation today I examined thoughts that came to my mind with detachment, and realised how during the conscious state we link thoughts with emotions and identify with them thus creating suffering. At the end of the sitting I felt mentally calm and relaxed. I was aware of the sensory information I was receiving for the rest of the day. In other words I was conscious of being in the present moment most of the time and not caught up in a world of thoughts and ideas

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 6

I felt very relaxed and peaceful after the meditation periods. After maintaining "noble silence" for five days a feeling of calmness remains within me

(diary/journal extract).

END OF FIRST RETREAT PERIOD.

DAYS 7, 8 AND 9. Work Retreat

We continued with yoga exercises every morning and with sitting and individual meditation. The mental calm I had achieved from the past six days of practice still remains. I am now trying to focus my awareness on the breath alone. This is one-pointed attention

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 10

During meditation I brought my attention to my breath. I was aware of the sensation of the air moving in and out of my nostrils. When thoughts entered my mind I did not resist them but examined them and let them go

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 11

I was aware of feeling very relaxed while meditating. I was aware of various sounds around me punctuated by periods of silence. I felt calm, relaxed and mentally alert. We were reminded by Godwin to remain mindful at all times. Sitting meditation was calm and peaceful. Most of the time my mind is empty of thoughts and I tend to be mindful of the sounds around me. With daily practice the peaceful mental state I have been experiencing seems to deepen. I realised that while meditating one should be aware of what is happening from moment to moment. One should meditate in a relaxed way without expecting anything

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 12. Sitting Meditation

I arranged myself comfortably in a half-lotus position, closed my eyes and directed my attention on the breath. At first I was aware of the rising of the abdomen, followed by the expanding of the chest and emptying of the chest. I then directed my attention to the air moving in and out of the nostrils. I was aware of the sensation of the air moving against the entrance of my nostrils.

Thoughts appeared and disappeared in my mind but I did not resist them, but allowed them to disappear, and redirected my awareness gently onto the breath. A feeling of calmness seemed to envelope my entire body. After eleven days I was able to sit for thirty minutes without experiencing any physical discomfort. The topic of group discussion that evening was on pain. We create our own pain and suffering when other peoples' thoughts and ideas do not fit our preconceived notions. We try to avoid pain since we dislike it. The first noble truth is on human suffering. No one is exempt from it. We suffer both physical and mental pain. During meditation we learn to explore pain and try to accept it without liking or disliking it

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 13

I noticed when doing yoga mindfully I am aware of minute muscle movements when moving slowly from one posture to another. By doing the exercises slowly and mindfully I feel the movements are executed more gracefully and successfully. During sitting meditation I managed to remain in the half-lotus position for fifty-five minutes without experiencing any physical discomfort. I focussed my awareness on the breath and

eventually I was aware of only the air moving in and out of the entrance of the nostrils. I had no awareness of my physical body. I could hear clearly the sound of the birds and the wind passing through the trees. I remained in this state for some time. Gradually I felt awareness of my body spreading first from the top of my head, then down my face, neck, chest, abdomen and finally down the limbs. I also noticed that my breathing was now gradually becoming deeper and heavier. Finally I opened my eyes. At the next sitting meditation period I was able to return to the state I had reached in the previous sitting, where I was only aware of my breath and the natural sounds and periods of silence surrounding me. Group discussion that evening was on how our suffering is brought on by emotions of hate, greed, anger, disillusion and pride

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 14

Today during sitting meditation we were asked to examine emotions like greed, hate, sadness and anger with detachment and become one with the emotion. I concentrated on sadness and I noticed that my breath became longer, deeper and heavier as I was examining this emotion. When I stopped examining this

emotion I noticed that my breath became lighter, less audible and I experienced a sense of relief

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 15

Today I had a calming effect that was even more intense. I was sitting in a half-lotus position and directed my awareness on to my breath. Thoughts drifted through my mind which I did not resist. I gradually brought my attention to the breathing and my attention remained with the breath for a period of time. I felt the breath rising from my nostrils to a position to the top of my head. This happened several times and I felt completely calm and relaxed

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 16

Today I participated in walking meditation through the estate. I was more aware of the different kinds of vegetation and the different types of bird calls in the environment. When we reached the highest point of the estate, we practised individual meditation. The view of the valleys below from this point was

breathtaking. We were asked to be "one with the environment" without labelling it with words or concepts. I felt very calm and relaxed as it was a beautiful feeling. The different colours in the environment seemed to merge into one another and I felt part of the environment. This afternoon I had another unusual experience during sitting meditation. I made myself comfortable in a half-lotus position and directed my awareness onto the breath. Thoughts drifted through my mind and I gently brought my awareness back onto the breath. Gradually the breath became the centre of focus. I seemed to be virtually entering the breath. A beautiful sweeping sensation seemed to pass over my mind and then over my entire body. I felt very calm and relaxed. I was not aware of my physical body. This experience lasted for a period of time. Then gradually I became aware of my physical body. I felt the sensation of touch returning first at the top of the head and then the face, neck, chest, arms and the rest of the body

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 17. "Bare-Attention Technique"

During the second sitting today I initially used the "bare-attention technique" for meditation. When using this technique a person

allows all stimuli in the environment to enter the senses without labelling them. The focus is not on one object like the breath or on one sound or sensation. Gradually I brought my awareness onto the breath. I seemed to get closer and closer to the breath until I became part of the breath. I felt a calming sensation radiating throughout my body and I felt totally relaxed. At the next two periods of sitting meditation, I had the same experience

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 18

Once again during sitting meditation I felt merged or united with the breath. I felt very calm and peaceful. There was blackness before my eyes yet I was aware of the sounds in the environment. It was a beautiful experience which is difficult to express in words. At the end of the sitting I tried to recapture the experience and succeeded in doing so a number of times. When the bell sounded to mark the end of the meditation period I was reluctant to get up. I felt relaxed and wanted to remain in this tranquil state

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 19

I was still feeling very calm and relaxed. Today I had another unusual experience. Towards the end of the first morning sitting meditation period, I just managed to settle in a comfortable position when the bell sounded to mark the end of the period. I stood up and made my way mindfully to the dining hall. I noticed that everything in the environment seemed to have a different quality in its appearance. The walls, windows of the room, the hedge outside all appeared in gentle wavy lines. These objects did not appear in the normal, flat, three-dimensional view. I experienced a floating sensation. The experience lasted for about an hour. The environment then appeared as it usually does when we are in the normal state of consciousness

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 20

The feelings of calmness and peacefulness still remain in me. I am more alert to the various stimuli in the environment. I have noticed that my attention is more focussed on the present mo-

ment. My consciousness is not invaded by uncontrollable thoughts

(diary/journal extract).

DAY 21

Today was the last day at the retreat. I felt calm and relaxed. I seemed to view the environment in a different light. Colours in the environment appear brighter, and I seemed to notice the minor details in the environment that I did not notice before

(diary/journal extract).

APPENDIX D

SUBJECT A

CASE STUDY TWO

When did you first become interested in Buddhist Meditation?

Yes, it was quite some time back. Probably about ten to fifteen years ago, yes and it was mainly, I think I was looking for something, you know, I think something spiritual, because I remember taking out books and things from the library and reading through, like comparative religion books, reading through you know what the Jewish faith is about, what is Catholicism, what all the things, and the one book that I had was, it had amongst it some stuff on Buddhism and I remember thinking that I really sort of clicked with that more than any other faith and I was really so interested in that, that I started reading up about it, that was about ten or fifteen years ago.

Was there any other reason besides an academic interest that made you interested in meditation?

Yes, I do not think it was an academic interest that started me going, it was like a real very deep, sort of very deep-rooted, need inside of myself to find something more than just material things. I do not know whether to believe in, to, yes to sort of make life meaningful I suppose. For me there was the acquisition of goods, and having a good life, it was like really very superficial to life itself, and I was looking for something more meaningful, so it was, yes, in search of that, yes.

Tell me more about this feeling that you had.

No, I did not know that there was much more, just sort of like a genuine feeling of emptiness, I suppose, and wanting to find something to fill that gap, yes.

When was the first time you actually meditated?

I think, I moved to Durban in 1982 and I think it was the same year that I went to the Ixopo Retreat Centre there and yes, meditated there, and was given instruction by A.O. who is now quite new here, he is in Colesberg and that was my first contact, real contact with meditation, rather than the academic part of just reading about it.

How would you describe the meditation experience and did it have a significant impact on you?

Yes, it did, yes. It was during a sort of slight crisis time too, it was quite funny because it was ... the retreat was a fairly academic one, I think it sort of said something about, some theoretical stuff about Buddhism, I forget the title of the retreat. So I was quite interested in that, having done the reading and stuff you see, and it was also a time when I was feeling very sort of like hounded by a person that I was living with, a girl friend of mine who was staying in the same flat, and it was very small and I was very, I felt very sort of pressurised by her, just being around constantly, not having my own space and that was sort of the crisis, and going to the retreat centre and learning how to meditate, and just sitting there knowing that I would sit there and nobody would disturb me was the most wonderfully releasing feeling that I have had for a long time. Then, so I mean, really I got hooked straight away.

Can you remember details about it?

I just, the most pressing thing was, just knowing that I would not, nobody would come and sort of ask me questions when I was trying to be quiet, you know, nobody would be constantly drawing on my energy, it was just a feeling of like "Oh, I can just be here, I can relax, you know, everything is fine", it was that sort of feeling, which was very, very nice.

Did you have a teacher helping you with your practice?

Yes, yes.

Could you tell us briefly about these teachers who had an influence on your meditation practice?

The first one was A.O. like I said, I think I was very lucky to have him, because he is a very competent teacher, very thorough and very gentle, and very allowing, a very nice guy. And, yes, I was introduced to Buddhism through him, after that, let me think who else, I used to attend sessions with M.C. in Durban after that, in the town rather than going out to retreat the whole time, so he sort of guided us as a bit as well. Then I gave it a break for quite a long time, I was moving around quite a bit and came here, yes, it was the next time, and A.O. was here, so I had him again, although he was not really teaching us much he was guiding more and sort of giving a bit of his interpretations of what it was about, what to look for, that sort of thing. And then I met up with a woman from Scotland, E.O. who was a teacher in Buddhist therapy, and she introduced me to Buddhist psychotherapy as it were, where you learn how to become your own therapist through various techniques and visualisations and things

like that. And her teacher was B.A., a Tibetan Buddhist, and I received a few teaching from him. His teacher was T., he was one of the four of the Tibetan Kamakazi School, and I received some teaching from him as well. So that about wraps it up ... The teachers I have had ...

Do you think it is possible to meditate without teachers?

I think it is possible but one does not really know what one is doing and how to do it, you can get a bit from books but it's, I think, it is very, very necessary to have a teacher.

You have been meditating yourself for about two years off and on. Let us talk about the effects you have experienced as a result of meditating.

My reasons for meditating, in a way, in that I find that especially say if I meditate in the morning it actually does set the tone of the day. You know it sort of gives me a grounded feeling to work from, and it does help. I find, it sort of clarifies one's thinking a bit, because I find that life is sometimes so hectic and so complex I would really like it very much more simple, and I think it does help me. I mean I am not at all advanced really in meditation at all, but I think it does sort of, every now and again, I can see that it does help in being able to sift out the noise, say of complex living, where you can actually see that this is a load of nonsense, I need not touch that, I need not get involved in that, that if I do this, this will be more real, this will sort of simplify my life a whole lot more. You know if I get involved in those other things, I just make my life terribly complex, I do not always get it right, but it does help, that sort of clarity in a way, and I feel that if I am a bit sorted out in myself, maybe I am in

a position to help other people as well, and it always seems to me that I am in that sort of like stable mood that I can help others, which is like a very nice thing to be. So those are sort of like going towards the reasons for meditating, but those are some of the benefits that I do find.

Are there any others?

You know as far as I can tell the benefits are not like terribly specific, they are not. It is not like you can actually list them, they are very general it seems and sometimes, almost intangible. One cannot really, it is like later you realise, oh maybe that happened because of meditating, I was in that sort of frame of mind. I was feeling steady then that is why things went so well. But it is nothing specific, if you get my meaning, I do not know.

Did you have any painful effects while meditating or any negative effects?

No, I do not think I have really had any painful effects. Sometimes when I meditate I mean like, or when I am quiet my mind is sort of like still. Things do come up like a bit of anger or something or frustration or something, that maybe would not come up if I was not meditating. If my mind was not still, you know maybe I would take it out and go and beat up the cat or something! But you know that is hardly the sort of negative effects from meditating. It's, I see it almost as a positive thing, but I have not had any sort of traumas or headaches or anything like that. Nothing like that, I can really think of.

How do you feel for instance, if the anger manifests during your practice, as you said it happened? How did you react to it?

In the practice what you are supposed to do is actually watch the anger. You know sort of almost distance yourself from it, and if I am in meditation and that happens, it is much easier to do that, I mean you realise you are meditating and that if you are feeling this frustration and you want to shuffle and stuff like that, you actually take note of it, but what I find difficult is that in real life to actually apply that, you know.

When you have finished a particular meditation session, how do you feel?

If I do not indulge it (anger), if I do not follow it, there is not much effect. If I indulge it, particularly, and it would not be during the meditation power, articulated it, if I went to somebody and complained about it, it seems to feed it, feed the anger so the meditation is very good, in that because you are not talking to anybody, you are not articulating, you know that what you are supposed to do, is drop it, leave it. It does not have the same sort of impact if you were not meditating and the anger came up. Does that answer it? (Laughs).

Could you please tell us about how you feel for instance before you meditate. Do you follow a daily or weekly timetable?

Yes.

Could you tell us the details?

We meet during the week, it is a group of us, actually only two of us, three of us at present. We are hoping that it will grow, and that others will get interested as well,

because it is really nice meeting as a group and we meet from Monday to Friday every morning at about 06h00 and it lasts about two hours. We do various things, we do bows, which is part of a particular Zen practice, we do bows first of all, then we chant, there are certain about four or five chants that we do, and then we sit for a length of time, so it is the same routine, for five days of the week, and the weekends, we decide we can either do our own thing or nothing at all. Yes, so it is pretty regular.

How do you feel before you engage in meditation, any particular feelings you would like to talk about?

Thinking it happens so early in the morning, I don't think I feel anything. (Laughs)

How do you feel after the meditation then, you usually practise it for about two hours, in the morning?

Yes, yes, doing different things, yes.

Tell us your feelings afterwards.

Afterward. Gosh, it's, I do not know. It is nothing terribly special, you know. It is not terribly dramatic, the change, but I think it does, just doing it first thing in the morning, as I said right at the beginning, I, it is just sort of setting the tone of the day so having been in a certain space, a certain feeling, and I am not quite sure what that is, it is a bit of calmness, stillness, sort of you know, simplifying sort of feeling of like really getting down to the here and now and having that, hoping to sort of like take that with me through the day and not getting involved in the complexities of life and trying always to be pleasant. So it is difficult to say what the feelings are. I mean it is

not sort of floating on clouds or anything. But I think it does help to bring a certain calmness, yes, after the session, because there is nothing that is frenetic that one does during the sessions at all.

Have you seen any physical effect as a result of practising meditation?

What sort of things are you thinking of?

Physically, for instance, as far as weight maintenance, or feeling relaxed?

Gosh, that is a difficult one. Nothing to do with weight really. Being relaxed maybe, the ability to realise that I am getting uptight about something and to say hang on, you know, relax. Certainly there is that. I cannot think of any other physical sorts of things, that it might have, not that I have really noticed.

Has it had any effects on your sleeping pattern?

Oh I always sleep like a log. I have noticed I was lecturing in third term, and not meditating at all. But I think it was, it was just like a very clear demonstration to me, that when I am very busy and over-busy that it can affect my sleeping pattern, because I was always worried about what, how the lecture was going to go the next day, had I prepared enough, did I have all the material I needed, you know, the whole thing and that did affect my sleeping pattern. And the fact that I was not meditating at the time may have had something to do with it. I do not really know. But I normally sleep very well.

Do you attend retreats regularly?

Fairly regularly, depending on you know what I am able to do. But I do like going to retreats, they seem to be a sort of, one can regenerate ones batteries as it were. Going there and also meeting with other people who are also into meditation, it really does help to spur one on. Before I started meditating with the group, I was meditating on my own and doing practices, mainly that was like therapy, like I was talking about earlier, on my own, and I could keep going. But it was quite difficult to be so self-motivated, whereas if you go to retreats and you are with other people you can, you sort of like get things into perspective again. It is very useful, I do try to go to as many as I can.

Which retreats do you attend?

There are sort of three main retreat places, the one is Ixopo, Colesberg where A., which is not really, I think a retreat centre, but it is more like a family homestead, and you are invited to join in and they do hold sort of like they, you are invited to join in the daily sort of routine, which includes sitting in the morning and the evening. But they do hold the occasional retreat as well and then, there is also the one at Helderview, in Somerset West. I have been to the Ixopo one, and A's one and I have been to one at Somerset West, but not at any sort of regular intervals, just depending on who is coming out, what they are offering, is when I would actually plan to go and we sort of try and organise our own retreats hopefully as well. That is just very recent that is over the last few months.

Have you been to an intensive retreat?

Not really, probably the most intensive has been like a long weekend, four days, or something, yes. I have not had any ten days, or anything longer than that.

All right, let us take the longest period you have attended a retreat. Did you have any significant experiences to share from the retreat, any significant experiences you might have had?

No , I haven't, no. It has just been straight meditation, straight practising basically, just struggling with myself, practising.

You talked about recharging your batteries. What exactly do you mean by that term?

It is, I think when one practises on one's own back home. It is like really easy to loose perspective of what you are doing. You start thinking well I am only one in the whole world that is doing this, and really what am I doing it for? You know like, what is this about, you know. I have got more important things to do, I have got to get this job done, you know you always find a whole lot of other things to do. But when one goes to say a retreat or meets with other people somehow you get a feeling that you are not the only one, that you are doing something very meaningful and it is worthwhile. You know this whole thing if you are sorted out then maybe you can help other people, in just very ordinary ways, you know. And, yes that is part of recharging the batteries. But if you come back you can keep going knowing that you actually, you are not alone in the whole thing and you are doing something actually quite meaningful, to maintain the momentum.

Would you say that you actually find it easier to meditate in these groups than alone at home?

Oh hell yes. There is a certain discipline that goes with the group. I mean you have to actually make the effort to go there and being there, just being with others, helps. Whereas if you are at home you can get distracted very very easily, you know you can sleep an extra ten minutes, and then an hour, and then it is too late to meditate now. You can always find excuses.

Has the meditation practice altered your life style?

Oh I think it has simplified it very much. I have a different value system, I think, to what I had before. I was never terribly materialistic, but I suppose you know, I sort of hankered after certain things you know to make life easier and certain comforts and things, not that I do not hanker after that now, but I am, you know it does not hassle me so much that I have got to have money to buy all the goodies to make my life comfortable. It is not so "goodie" oriented any more, materialist oriented. People have become very much more important to me. My personal relations, my personal relationships are very important, having friends around that sort of thing, and it has definitely altered my relationship with my partner as well, into, being able to see through all my expectations, what a relationship should be, and all the rest of it, and very much trying to be more in the present, valuing what is happening now, than sort of, where things might go and then being disappointed in the long run. So I mean, it has definitely affected that, that I am much happier to make do with whatever it is, to work for the now basically, to perfect what I have got now and work from that, rather than sort of always continuously be looking to the future, for something that I would

really like but will probably land up being terribly disappointed at the end of my life. But I have never actually achieved those things. So yes, it has affected that, definitely.

How important is the meditation practice to you?

How important is to me? In, I think the most significant thing, I think it does help sort of stabilise my life and give me some direction, whereas if I did not have it I feel that I would get so involved in such minor things that I would just land up chasing my tail the whole time, you know, and I think, yes, it does help me a bit you know, stay firm as it were, and sort of keep plodding on. I find the groups very nice, to be with the group, I suppose it is very special, sort of sense of community say, is very nice. Yes, community with common purpose. Some people find it in different things, you know. They might find it in their work or something like that. A large part of that for me comes in the meditation circle. That feeling of being with other people who accept you totally and yes, have like a common focus.

Has meditation changed your attitude towards your work?

Yes, no it has, I am just trying to think, it has probably changed the direction of my work. In my attitude towards my work I think, before I suppose, I could have been described as quite ambitious in wanting to make my name in my work, you know, using my work to become important or a useful member of society, you know. That sort of thing. I do not mean sort of like neon lights, the whole thing, that you know, to feel that I have made a contribution through my work and part of the process, I think, in a sort of academic life is, a lot of it is your ability to blow your own trumpet, and it definitely changed that in that my orientation is no longer for myself, to make

myself important, and to value or evaluate my worth in those terms, it is far more low key. That is if I can contribute through my, through the sort of work that I do, whether my name is mentioned or not, I actually do not mind. If I can see that it is doing some good, that it is benefiting some people, then I am actually very, very satisfied. So it has, it has changed that enormously in that, my position has moved from one of quite sort of egocentric I suppose, ambitious, to one of more, let my work help others and I actually do not, it does not matter if I am acknowledged or not. It does not come into it. One likes to be appreciated I suppose, but it is not that important. You know, I do not have to see my name on papers and so on, yes.

At the beginning of this interview you mentioned something about inter-personal relationship. After practising meditation, how did it have an effect on your inter-personal relationship?

Yes, just in the way that I relate to people. My expectations of people, I suppose, to a certain extent has changed. I think that I am probably very much more accepting of people being different, you know, they do not always have to conform to my way of being, and also to give them space and to give myself space as well, to know when to opt out and not to be worried about running away. You know, and to just, to humour people too, that I do not have to be dogmatic about my own perception of what is happening, of what is right and what is wrong. That they can have their opinions as well and if it is going to end up in a fight or something, I do not actually have to pursue that. I do not have to let it land up in a fight to prove that I am right, so, yes, it has affected me that way, very much. At times I think maybe it makes me a bit sort of

wishy washy, but maybe in the long run if it sort of keeps friends, then it is a good thing.

And what about the relationship with yourself?

Accepting myself, yes, not, it is, I have got a lot of work to do but, I, yes, I think it has helped a lot in seeing through myself basically, when I know, when I am violently justifying why I am doing something, I can sort of look at this and think "What is going on here?". You know, and I can see actually because of whatever it might be, that is why I am justifying it this way. I just have to accept that that is what I want, you know, I do not have to justify it, just go for it. (Laughs). You know, so it helps me see through myself as well. Possibly to see through others but I, you know, I would not want to judge that, you know, I will have to just let them be what they are, that sort of thing. They are doing that, because of that, that and that. I think that is very sort of arrogant, but I do not mind doing it with myself, it helps me sort of be more straight. You know, less complex.

You talk about being straight, what do you mean by that?

More honest I suppose.

With yourself?

More honest with myself, about what my true motives are. Yes, because I think one can really mislead oneself a lot of the time about why you are doing certain things, you know I might be working for a community organisation that, or feeding scheme, or something like that and my motivation may be way off beam. I might be doing it

like totally for myself, to become head of that, you know, and look at me, look I am doing the community so much good, those might be my motivations. But I feel that I, through meditation, I will be able to see through that, and get to the bottom of that and say "Just stop bullshitting yourself" you know. So that is what I mean, being more honest with myself about, I suppose, about my motivations for doing things, yes.

Are there any other sort of changes in your relationship, you talked about relationship with other people, your relationship with yourself?

And with work, no. I find I cannot think of anything.

What about nature?

Yes, I do, well just about all my life, I have been fairly close to nature. I was brought up on a farm, and I have always liked hiking and that sort of thing. A lot of outdoor activities, so I think, I have always been close that way, and I do not think much has changed because I do not feel that I have ever been alienated from nature, should I say. Whereas I know that I have been alienated from people, and I have been alienated from my work. So I do not feel as though I have, the connection is still very strong there, so I do not think that I have sort of, that there have been any major changes there. I mean there is a concern with say environmental issues and that sort of thing, but I am just hoping through the way I relate to nature, is what communicates with other people, and it is like a teaching in a way. That is not what I mean, it is you know, almost through being natural, I suppose, is what communication is about. I think that is what I mean I do not set myself up as any teacher or example to anybody, but it may be that, that through being natural, more natural, more simple, less

complex, more direct, all those sort of things, but yes, my relationship with other people is brought into that sphere and it is not conducted on an superficial-pseudo sort of level.

Has meditation changed your diet?

I fiddled with my diet quite a lot ... Yes, I tried to go vegetarian, which was fine, but it was, and I was very happy with that, but it created stresses and strains, especially with my family and socially, you know. Just going out for meals, being invited out for meals and things, it was like "Oh I don't eat this, that and the other", sort of thing. It created a lot of sort of stress until I just decided I actually need not do that if I can't even do it to myself, you know constantly having to watch what I eat and that sort of thing, because I try and eat healthily as well. So as far, meat was the big thing. As far as meat goes, I mean, I do not eat much meat anyway, and I think as a child I ate a fair amount of meat, but it was a fairly balanced diet. I probably eat less meat now than I did then and I am very fond of vegetarian food and vegetarian cooking. So I tend to, when I eat out for example at a restaurant, where I am free to choose, I tend to eat vegetarian foods, whereas if I go out for supper I will eat anything that the people present so yes, I was, I do not know that meditation actually did that. But maybe the whole sort of Eastern philosophy made me more aware of those sort of issues, yes.

Thank you very much for this interview.

You are very welcome.

SUBJECT B

CASE STUDY THREE

When did you first become interested in Buddhist meditation?

I first became interested actually a long long time ago, when I was about 24, even younger. I had a sort of interest, that I never properly followed up and then when I was in England, I lived in London and I joined the London School of Meditation and they gave me, you had to pay a bit of money, and they gave me a Mantra and I tried to follow it up but I sort of dropped out quite quickly so that was my first interest.

What actually brought about this interest in Meditation?

I wonder. I am not sure. A kind of need for some spiritual activity and not feeling that need met, say through my Christian upbringing. That was one and it was more or less being a product of the sixties you know and interest, it was fairly popular as well. You know Alan Watts, India, those interests were, you know, I got influenced by that as well.

Would you say it was through reading material or people who you have come into contact with that actually propelled you in the direction of Buddhist meditation?

Okay. Well originally reading, you know, reading like Alan Watts, but I think the reason I did not follow it up because I had not actually met anyone who was influential, and when I came to Grahamstown, seven years ago. D.E. was living in our

house, and he used to meditate in the morning and evening, and he just asked me to join him if I wanted one evening, and so I did that, and then I met A.O. shortly after that, who was in fact an ordained Buddhist Monk from, I forget the school for the moment, you know what branch of meditation he was originally, and he just had a very big influence, so it was initially reading and then the people.

Would you regard these people who have influenced you to Buddhist meditation as your teachers?

A.O. I thought of him, I do not know if I would call him my teacher, but I hold him sort of, in greater respect that I would a normal friend, you know. What I mean, although we are on very friendly terms.

When did you first start meditating?

Yes well like with the London School of Meditation, a long time ago. I did try, sitting by myself, but I do not really count it, somehow. So really I feel I properly began like five years ago, with D.E.

The initial meditation sittings, how did it have an effect on you?

It had immediate effect. I felt, I felt, let me think, calmer, just with, let us just think, well first of all calmer, and I felt more conscious. I felt I wanted to do things with more thought, whatever I was doing, you know. I felt a sense of mindfulness, greater mindfulness almost immediately, and with the real interest to continue, you know, never to miss. But my biggest influence was A.O. because I went on my first retreat with him and it was a two day retreat, and I had not actually sat with him before and

after that two day retreat, I was completely hooked. My feelings were of tremendous energy and excitement, you know. Not during that time, during that time it is hard and it is boring. But afterwards, of a lot of excitement and energy and wide awake and with no, for example, need to drink beer, like I would normally have.

Could you describe a typical meditation period to me? What happens during meditation, what actually goes through you or what you feel, the experience itself?

Yes. Well you see now by the meditation experience it, we have bowing and chanting as well, do you want that as well?

You can include it.

Okay, because the meditation sitting is now in the morning, we do quarter of an hour of bowing, and normally during that bowing my mind is all over the place, but if I count, what I try and do, is just give myself away in the bowing. That is what our instructions are. It is not like you are bowing to anything. It's, you just do it. Our instructions are as a group, just to do it and give yourself away. But my mind is not very particularly calmed by it either, bowing is not my favourite. Chanting is my favourite, and then I really enjoy the sounds, I like doing it with people. I do not even mind doing it alone. I get a sort of thrill of the ritualistic side of it, the bowing that goes with it, you know, you bow during certain of the chants and in a way it is less, my mind is, less thinking is going on because of the sounds and the reading and the certain sort of focus, you know, although I still can think about work and stuff. And

then the actual sitting, is quite difficult, it is difficult, sometimes I do think I have ever really properly meditated yet, ever, because my mind is all over the place.

You mentioned that you like chanting?

I like the chanting bit because I like the sound, the chants are pleasurable to my ears for a start, and I think maybe it has something to do with breathing as well. We are breathing through chanting, you know, and I think that also helps in calming. Okay, so it is the sound, the rhythm, I think because it is tied up with the breathing and probably the breathing when it is controlled like that has a calming effect. I like it because I like the harmony, well that is part of the sound, but the harmony of doing it with others. And I like the sense of ritual, I just, yes, okay.

You bow, you chant, you go on to sitting meditation, what happens then?

Well my mind is all over the joint, and that is where I feel sometimes, I am not sure that I have actually ever meditated properly, because I feel so restless. The meditation that we do is focusing on your breath. You breath in and then when you breath out, to feel the breath here, so that you are strengthening here, so most of the time that is what I try to do but to try and control my mind. Sometimes I try and count those breaths, and I find that by the second or the third, my mind is already gone, and I am continually having to come back. And then sometimes I have just gone so far and I have worked out a whole bunch of stuff I need to do or some problem, and what else, and then other meditation which I was trying, was just like being aware of the breath coming in and out of my nostrils, say if you were doorkeepers and that works for a while but always it is the same sort of problem that I have you know, is actually

keeping my mind on it, and then trying not to despair with it. But then to try and watch perhaps the state I am in rather than trying to keep awareness of the breath, just trying to watch what is happening with me even hearing what is going on outside, just listening to that.

Did you have any painful experiences during the meditation?

You mean psychically painful or physically painful?

You can talk about any of the experiences during meditation.

Not physically ever except normally, just the normal discomfort you know of knees, or back, back mostly. But virtually no discomfort now because I am so used to it and psychically one is on retreat only sort of feeling quite, I felt a bit, on the last retreat, quite sort of lonely and in a bit of a vacuum. It was a bit strange. As if all my normal props had fallen away, the word that comes to mind is that I just felt a bit freaked, that is I think really, to explain that feeling, it was not really pain, no, it was, I just felt a bit panic-struck and lonely and empty, you know, a bit like floating, like I did not have an anchor or framework.

You were talking about panic-stricken feelings you had.

Oh that feelings yes, that was the worst.

Did you react to this emotion?

Not really, I just sat through it, it was in the middle of a meditation anyway, there was nothing I could do. I just continued to sit through it and it gradually dissipated. You

know, I did not get up, it was not that strong you know, it was just sort of quite lonely. Lonely was the word that comes to mind.

So you just accepted it as it came up?

Yes, there was nothing I could do, I just continued.

I see, yes. What sort of beneficial or positive effects have you had from your meditation practice?

Okay. Well, I used to drink quite a lot, not alchoholically I do not think, but enough to disrupt the evening so that I did not have any energy left to do anything else and it really diminishes the need for me to relax. Through drinking, and in fact I cannot actually drink very much now, you know. Like I used to drink quite a lot I think, and I imagine that is one, and the other is I do not know if it is meditation, or just growing older, but to sort of accept things that I used to kick against quite a lot, accept them, or like difficulty with communication with my mother or her foibles you know, I can accept that better, and my situation at work, I feel I am less kicking against it, just trying to bring my practice into it, rather than uptight. I think calmer, definitely with more energy. You see sometimes it depends, my daily meditation is one thing and a retreat situation is another. I cannot tell anymore what the beneficial effects are daily, but after a retreat, I do feel quite different, tremendously energised.

Can you tell me more about this experience after a retreat?

Yes, after the retreat, focus in terms of knowing that this is what I want to do, you know, with the most important thing in my life, and that I want to follow meditation. I

want to go and live in a temple for quite a long time, you know, not forever but so very inspired to continue, much calmer, much happier, much lighter you know with, much readier to laugh, inspired you know, in talking, like telling stories, the Zen stories particularly I like. Mostly with greater energy and greater focus to follow that path, rather than any other path.

Talking about retreats, have you attended a number of retreats?

A fair amount, yes.

Could you name the retreats you have attended and what is the longest period you have spent at a retreat?

Okay. The first one was with A. That was two days, out on a little farm.

Near Grahamstown?

Yes and then I went to England, and I was on a five day retreat in Guyer House in the south of England, with a whole bunch of teachers of which one was C.T. who is quite famous and then there were shorter, we had two days, two days, quite a few, I have lost count of the two day ones, and then, oh and then two years ago there was the retreat in Cape Town that was about five days, I think, and then probably the longest one was just recently in Colesberg with A.O. It was actually for almost two weeks, but the intensity of the retreat was broken so we were for example in silence and meditating in a very constant, you know, very intense way for about four days at a time, and then there was a more relaxed conversation period in between, so I do not

know if that would count as two retreats or one retreat. Probably the longest single retreat speaking one was the one in Cape Town.

How long was that?

I think it was five days. Yes.

I believe you conducted retreats here in Grahamstown as well?

Yes we have had.

Can you tell me more about that and what is your programme for a typical retreat?

Okay. Waking up at, here we made it at six, although normally it is much earlier, 108 bows and then a little sort of ten minute, fifteen minute rest, chanting for half an hour, and then sitting for half an hour and then walking meditation, five minutes, ten minutes and then sitting again, and then walking and then a mealtime, and then a period of work which you are meant to keep silent throughout the work and mindfulness and the again a cycle of sitting, walking, sitting, walking, throughout the day you know, with breaks in for resting, or tea and then Dhamma talk at some point and that is it. We usually begin with the four vows and end the evening with four vows again.

Your retreats are conducted over a period of how many days?

Over here we have never had one longer than a weekend, beginning a Friday evening and ending Sunday about 4 o' clock.

This is actually a weekend of silence?

Yes. The last one we tried to maintain silence from the early morning on Saturday, but it was quite tricky. I do not know, there seemed to be a need for people to talk and so it was in semi-silence, you know. We were in silence throughout except for when there was actually a group discussion or Dhamma talk and question.

How did you react at these retreats where they had complete silence?

I love it, I love the silence, that is the best bit. Yes.

Do you follow a regular time-table when conducting your own retreats?

We try, we try to keep a retreat every six weeks or so, but that is very hard actually so at least every two, three months. A retreat of some kind, whether it is a day, or a weekend or longer. I mean we are having a retreat coming up now in February, 7th, 8th and 9th and then again end of March.

So actually it is fairly regular?

We are trying to, yes.

How do you feel after a sitting meditation session?

You know I cannot tell anymore, it is just like part of my normal day and I cannot isolate anymore except that I do feel more content, more, a sense of, as if I have brushed my teeth, you know.

How long have you been meditating?

It is about five years now, it has varied in intensity, you know, but five years really, I would say, yes.

How has it influenced your life style?

Well, to drink less. I have to go to bed early because otherwise I am too tired and then I feel very cross if I am too tired, because I do not want to be too tired to sit. Much much quieter, with actually quite a significant, I do not know if this is to do with getting older either, but with less need to socialize. In fact minimum need to go to gatherings of people, and a lessening of a need for even a husband or a partner you know, a gradual, yes, so my life style more just tends to be a quieter type of life style, yes.

How did meditation influence your inter-personal relationships and later on your relationship with yourself?

I do not know if I can sort of pin-point all, or whether there has been significant differences in relationships. Well there must have been. More just to, there seems sort of less need to rave, that is the only way I can describe it. You know to dance and you know bring somebody home to bed, as it were, I don't feel, I do not do that ever.

So would you say that your need for human contact has lessened to an extend?

Yes I would say that, I would say that yes.

That brings us to the relationship you have with yourself today.

Yes, well I feel, well it depends, one day I am generally more accepting of what I am, of my age, of who I am, you know, more accepting.

Would you say you have become less self-critical?

Yes, I would say that, yes definitely and yes, yes, that would fit.

You mentioned group meditation.

Yes.

Do you find it easier to meditate in a group or doing it by yourself?

Both. If we are in a group I sit stiller, for longer and for the time, you know, so it is more disciplined. But if I am on my own, sometimes I just relish the space of being silent and being alone. I sometimes, I just have so much contact with people in my working day that sometimes sitting in a room with more people I do not actually want, but I am happy because also it is disciplined and anyway, it is a different sort of activity, but both have their pros and cons, you know. If I am sitting alone I find I play with the cat.

Prior to your starting the meditation practice, what was your relationship for instance with nature, the environment?

Well I had a lot of love for it and I still do, I do not think there has been a change.

Did you have any significant experiences at any of the meditation retreats you attended?

I went to Nieu Bethesda. Actually the very very first time, and I have never been in a retreat, nothing, and I had just begun meditating and it was at the beginning of a very intensive retreat. But we were only there for a day and a half, and it was meant to be in silence, but there was not silence, and I did not know what to expect, and it was Tibetan style and I felt very freaked, that is the only word, I wondered, or I left a lot of, I do not know, if there were, I did not mention it, I think because I associated it with the person I was with and what was happening between us rather than the meditation, but maybe it stirred it up but I felt very lonely and frightened and oh, I just felt very bad on that particular.

It's like a negative experience?

It was very negative, yes that one.

Do you have them often, or just that particular one?

No, that was the only time, and that is why I think it was associated with the person more than and then the next retreat I went on was with A.O. and it was just totally, totally different, you know. It was just absolutely wonderful. The whole feeling, the whole, the humour of it, you know. It was not, it was just wonderful and that was when I was hooked.

When you talk about the humour of it, after meditating do you tend to laugh easily?

I do actually, yes. Yes especially during retreat again, you know, somehow or the other things become, everything becomes very funny very quickly.

Do you find that after a period of time it tends to diminish?

Yes it does.

It does, until you go for another intensive retreat?

Yes.

What about your senses, how do they feel, like your sense of hearing, your sense of smell, taste after a period of meditation, is there any difference?

There did seem and originally a difference in that I am very mindful you know, very conscious of what I was eating, what I was looking at, and really trying, but that of course would diminish over a time, it did not seem to have a really long term you know, unless I, you see it is as if meditation also sometimes it just becomes so part of the day, I cannot recognize anymore whether I am, if I am any different. My son just says, well imagine what you would be like if you did not meditate.

Why did he notice a difference in you after you started meditating?

Well he said, yes, he said over the period you know, not like after a single period, but he reckons I am much unless likely to fly off the handle, I think, yes.

So you are able to contain your emotions, better?

Yes. Not as agitated, yes, or dissatisfied even, you notice it, greater, yes.

Would you say you have a greater control over your emotions?

I think so, but I would not like to put it to the test, you know, I mean like in tragedy or something, but in daily stuff, I would say yes.

How is the meditation practice itself important to you as a person?

Well it seems to me part of a particular spiritual path and the fact that it is a spiritual path is important to me, so I feel good about it because I feel I am part of a spiritual path. I think that helps apart from its effects you know. Well in this particular school I suppose, it is to, the bows in the morning, in calming, in saving yourself you are helping to save the world, save is a bad word to use, so.

What word would you use in place of it?

What save? Let us think. You become conscious with the rest of the world, to leave, help towards alleviating suffering, to lessen, to stop making more suffering, rather, you know. So your question was, did I feel it gave me direction? Yes, in that I have the hope that through meditation or through my life in trying to bring meditation practice into my life, you know not just on the cushion, that I am not contributing to more suffering, yes.

Would you say your old personal pain or sorrows you might have experienced, has been contained through meditation or eliminated?

Yes I think so, I think so.

Or maybe you do not have any significant negative or experiences or hassles in your life again?

No, not really, I have not had any mystical type of experience, no lights, no sounds. No, so sometimes it is just strange to know why it is such an addiction.

You still cannot pinpoint why you continue?

Sometimes I cannot, it is, I know that if I stop for a while I feel uneasy, I begin to feel a kind of aggression.

Has the meditation practice affected your diet?

Yes a little bit, we do not eat meat now, yes, we do not buy it and cook it. Yes, but not significantly because it has always been a bit like that.

Well thank you very much.

Okay.

APPENDIX E

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON BUDDHISM

Introduction

This section examines the historical background conditions under which the Buddhist Meditation Practice developed. It describes the early life of Buddha (*Siddhartha Gautama*), the founder of Buddhism and his early life experiences and the factors which motivated him to take up the meditative practice. After Buddha reached the peak of the meditation practice, he decided to share his knowledge with humankind. Thus began the teachings of Buddha which are included in this section.

Buddhism is essentially psychological in nature. The final part of this section deals with the key concepts and theories of Buddhist writings that guided this research project.

Buddhism - Historical Background

The religions of India have, since ancient times, offered suggestions for meeting the needs of the individual for rational, emotional and spiritual adjustments to life and the world. People are often not satisfied with what the material world offers and this physical world is often of secondary or tertiary importance to them. Other realities like life, mind and spirit are explored.

There are other realms in reality like the mental and spiritual realms, and these, according to the Eastern religions, provide a firm reality which guarantees satisfaction.

When we examine the religions of India in a historical perspective, Hinduism is divided into "Early Hinduism" and "Later Hinduism". These two periods are separated by the time when the religions of Jainism and Buddhism were dominant in India. Early Hinduism included the Vedic Period and the Brahmanistic Period.

Although Buddhism arose a generation later than Jainism it seems contemporaneous since they share the same deep motives. Both aim at attaining liberation of the self from the suffering entailed in living in the world. Both involved independence of thought and action and appealed to all classes and conditions of people. Both Gautama and Mahavira, founders of Buddhism and Jainism respectively, found unacceptable the philosophy of the Brahmans and their unsubstantiated claims of Divine heritage and exclusive rights to religious education. They found the doctrine of the Vedas and the ritual observances that were practised during that period unacceptable. Although both Jainism and Buddhism share similar motives, their differences are also very pronounced. Jainism practised uncompromising and extreme asceticism whereas Buddhism found deliverance in a moderate or "middle" way (Noss,1980,p.105).

Early Life History Of Founder

Siddhartha (Pali: *Siddhatha*) was the given name of the founder of Buddhism. His family name was Gautama (Pali: *Gotama*). He was born in 563 BC in Northern India among the foothills of

the Himalayas. His father was the chieftain of the Sankya clan. Siddhartha's mother died when he was a few days old and an aunt became his stepmother. Young Siddhartha was a sensitive person with a "clear, analytic mind" (Noss,1980, p.106). Although there were varying accounts about the early life of Siddhartha, all writers do agree that he came from a privileged family. At sixteen or nineteen according to some accounts, Siddhartha was married to a cousin from the neighbouring state. Although Siddhartha was surrounded by all the material comforts, he became more and more uneasy inwardly. He decided secretly to move away from the household life into the homeless state of a mendicant. In his late twenties his wife bore him a son and he felt free to pursue his secret inclination.

One might ask what precipitated young Siddhartha to pursue the life of a homeless monk. The answer is given in many varying accounts of his life, and is to be found in the now famous legend of "The Four Passing Sights" (Noss, 1980, p. 108). According to this legend, Siddhartha's father was warned by soothsayers at his birth that his son might give up his household life for that of a homeless monk. However, if the Sankyan chief could take steps to avoid this, Siddhartha might grow up to become the Emperor of India. The father therefore made sure that in his youth Siddhartha did not see or experience the sorrows or the severities of life. He was not allowed to witness old age, disease or death in his youth. Siddhartha therefore grew up in ignorance of the common fate of all people. The gods, however, sent down one of them to assume the shape of an old man, a dead man and a diseased man in the presence of Siddhartha in order to lead the prince to his true destiny. One day the god appeared in front of Siddhartha as a feeble, decrepit old man. Siddhartha immediately ordered his charioteer to explain this vision to him. For the first time he encountered a fate that is experienced by all

people with the passage of time. The second apparition was that of a diseased man, and Siddhartha saw for the first time how physical illness and misery are experienced by humans. The third sight was that of a dead man being carried to a funeral pyre, and the young prince learnt for the first time about death; that which awaits every person. These three apparitions disturbed the sensitive prince profoundly and robbed him of his peace of mind. The prince realised that he would also be subjected to old age, disease and death, and he felt not only repulsed and disgusted by these phenomena but was also distraught by them. His father tried to cheer him up to no avail. However, it was the fourth vision that Siddhartha saw that brought some measure of relief to his distress. He saw a yellow robe-clad ascetic who emanated great calmness and serenity walking towards him. This person, who had gained true peace of soul, taught him how freedom from the miseries of old age, disease and death may be won. This strengthened the prince's resolve to move away from the household life to a homeless state.

Siddhartha began his six year period of intensive struggle for salvation in this way. At first he went to Rajagaha in the province of Magadha. There he became the disciple of two ascetic teachers and practised various Yoga disciplines. The first teacher, Alara Kalama, taught him about "the realm of nothingness" (Noss, 1980, p.109), which a person might attain if he followed the various stages of meditation. However, Siddhartha was disappointed and went to the second teacher, Uddaka Ramaputta, who taught "the state of neither ideation nor non-ideation" (Noss, 1980, p.109). This still did not satisfy Siddhartha who then decided to practise extreme asceticism. He wandered around for a period of time and then reached a grove at Uruvela. It was here that while sitting under a tree, he undertook for five years such extreme and rigorous self-discipline that he was reduced to just skin and bones. According to this theory

the mind becomes clearer as the body becomes more disciplined. Although he practised such rigorous self-mortification, Siddhartha was disappointed. He failed to transcend the ordinary human limits and reach the heights of nobler understanding and wisdom. He wondered if there was another path towards Enlightenment. During this period five other ascetics joined him hoping that Siddhartha would share his knowledge with them. One day Siddhartha fainted on his way towards a stream. He suddenly realised that enlightenment could not be attained through self-mortification, since without adequate nourishment his body could not support his intellect. He decided he would eat and drink to strengthen his body. He picked up his begging bowl and resumed the life of a wandering mendicant. While he was sitting under a banyan tree a young girl named Sujata, filled with compassion, gave him a bowl of cooked rice. The five ascetics who had accompanied him were outraged by his self-indulgence. They immediately departed with great indignation, believing that Siddhartha was abandoning his struggle for salvation. However, after six years, ascetic practice had yielded no results for Siddhartha, but he did not give up. His thinking became more profound and meaningful.

Siddhartha then went to a place called Bodh-Gaya in India and sat under a fig tree (Bo-tree) and began a process of meditation that later affected the thinking of millions of people. Here Siddhartha experienced the great Enlightenment. He suddenly realised that his inability to experience release from suffering was due to desire (*tanha*, Sanskrit : *trishna*, meaning "thirst" or craving). However, in order to get rid of the misery-producing desires one must determine their causes. Siddhartha realised desire arises from a twelve-linked chain of causation. However, he had escaped from it into a new life, that is, to a new form of consciousness. Siddhartha was now without desire. He had no sensual yearnings and was cleansed from the

"wrong states of the mind" (Noss, 1980, p.111). According to the Buddhist books, he passed into a state of "wakefulness" or "awareness", filled with ecstasy and reaching a state where neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction is known, where ignorance is destroyed and knowledge arises, darkness is destroyed and light arises. Siddhartha was also convinced that he would not be reborn. He felt he had lived the highest life and his work was done. He therefore tasted Nirvana (Pali: *Nibbana*) on earth. From then on Siddhartha was known as Buddha, the Enlightened One.

After the ecstasy had passed, Buddha was confronted with the problem of temptation. He had attained a "Doctrine that was profound, recondite and hard to comprehend" (Noss, 1980, p.112). He realised that if he was to preach his Doctrine or *Dhamma* to others, and if they did not understand him, it would annoy him. He struggled within himself about whether he should remain "one enlightened by himself" and after the end of his karma, enter Nirvana at his death, or whether he should become a Buddha for all, and postpone his entrance to Nirvana. He finally decided to become a teaching Buddha, and rose and went back to the world to teach others. Buddha then went out to seek the five ascetics who had deserted him. When he found them, they were struck by his serenity and radiance and thus Buddha began his teaching. According to Buddha there are two extremes that one who is seeking salvation must avoid. One is a life given to pleasures and lust, which is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble and profitless. The second is a life given to mortification which is painful, ignoble and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes the Truthfinder (*Tathagata*) can be reached. This is the Middle Path which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to enlightenment and to Nirvana. He urged the five ascetics to try the "Middle Way" and they were converted, and thus began the

Sangha or the Buddhist Order. Many followers joined Buddha's Sangha (community), and these members were not confined to a particular class or caste of society. All members were subject to definite rules and schedules. They all wore a yellow robe, shaved their heads, carried a begging bowl and engaged in daily meditation. All members undertook to obey the Ten Precepts which were :-

1. Refrain from destroying life. (The principle of *Ahimsa*)
2. Do not take what is not given
3. Abstain from unchastity
4. Do not lie or deceive
5. Abstain from intoxicants
6. Eat moderately after noon
7. Do not look on at dancing, singing or dramatic spectacles
8. Do not affect the use of garlands, scents, unguents or ornaments
9. Do not use high or broad beds
10. Do not accept gold or silver

(Noss, 1980, p.113).

Women were also admitted to the order as nuns. Buddha spent forty-five years preaching and teaching. At last, in the town of Kusihara, at the age of eighty, Buddha died.

Key Concepts Of Buddhist Psychology

The systematic understanding of human personality and behaviour is found at the core of most Asian religions. This is a practical psychology which is applied by the most dedicated, to discipline their own minds and hearts. One common feature of the Eastern Psychologies is the use of the phenomenological method.

> All seek to describe the nature of the person's immediate experience
>
> (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.348).

Some religions centre on the technique of meditation which enables one to observe a stream of awareness and helps one to get a detached view of his/her experiences. These psychologies also point out human failings or shortcomings, while one is searching for an ideal mode of being (Hall & Lindzey, 1978). This search for transformation is always through a far-reaching change in one's personality, so that the ideal qualities acquired will become stable traits.

> All Eastern Psychologies agree that the main means to this transformation of self is meditation
>
> (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.348).

Many psychological principles were propounded by Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. His basic psychological insights were developed into different systems of theory and practice by the various branches of Buddhism. The most notable branches or sects of

Buddhism include the Therevadans found in countries in South Eastern Asia, the Ch'an School of China and Zen in Korea and Japan. The key concepts of Buddhist psychology are found in the teachings of the Buddha.

The Teachings of the Buddha

The early teachings of Buddha were in the repetitious forms of the early tradition. It was after several centuries that the oral tradition was changed and the teachings took the form as the books of the Pali Canon. It was part of the Buddhist rejection of Brahminism that ensured that the books were written in the Pali dialect instead of the Brahmins' Sanskrit. These writings were divided into sections (*Tripitaka*).

Buddha rejected philosophical speculation as a way of salvation. He had a practical outlook. He was not interested in speculative philosophy that could not be directly related to the human situation. In Buddha's teachings he did not commit himself to issues that are not of consequence at the present moment. His psychological interest was expressed in the following sentences:-

> And what have I elucidated; the origin of misery I have elucidated; the cessation of misery I have elucidated; and the path leading to the cessation of misery I have elucidated. And why have I elucidated this? Because this does profit, has to do with

> the fundamentals of religion, and tends to absence of passion, to knowledge, supreme wisdom and Nirvana
>
> (Noss, 1980, p.114).

The basic difficulty of the individual is the way he/she feels. The individual's thinking should be devoted to understanding his/her desires and controlling them through the power of his/her will. Buddha rejected religious devotion as a way of salvation. Like Mahavira (Jainism) he believed the universe had gods, goddesses, demons and other non-human powers and agencies, and all were finite and subject to death and rebirth. Buddha does not acknowledge a transcendental, eternal Being who could direct people's destinies and grant their prayers and wishes. Hence worship of the many Vedic Gods, through performing various sacrificial rituals as a way of redemption was unacceptable to Buddha. Buddha taught each disciple how to rely for salvation upon oneself, alone, and on one's own powers. This is the "strictest sort of humanism in religion" (Noss, 1980, p.115). Buddha however held two major Hindu Doctrines. He believed in the Law of Karma and rebirth. However, his view of the Law of Karma is more flexible. According to Buddha a person of any caste or class could experience a complete change of heart or disposition, to escape the consequence of sins committed in his previous existences. The Law of Karma will not affect a person who is completely changed, for example, one who has attained Arahatship (Buddhist sainthood). These Arahats have with a steadfast mind become devoid, empty of evil desire, and their Karma is exhausted. There is no new Karma that is being produced. Their hearts are free from longing for a future life. Their cause for existence is destroyed and at death they will be extinguished "like a lamp. There will be no rebirth for them" (Noss, 1980, p.116).

One of the most obscure and most profound points in Buddha's system of thought is the absence of a soul or *atmana*. The continuing entity of the immortal soul is really an impermanent aggregation of states of being or skandhas (Pali: *Khandhas*). There are five skandhas:-

(1) The body (*Rupa*)

(2) Perception (*Jamjna*)

(3) Feelings (*Vedana*)

(4) Instincts or innate tendencies (*Samskharas*)

(5) Ideation or reason (*Vijnana*)

These five states of being combine to form the individual. As long as these five states are held together, the individual functions as a single being. At death this union dissolves and the skandhas disperse. Although there is no substantial entity (soul) that passes from one existence to another, according to Buddhist teachings, reincarnation does occur by a karma-laden character structure or "death-transcending pulse of being, marked with certain causative characteristics" going over to another life (Noss, 1980, p. 117) .

Dependent Origination

The first, and most fundamental cause of coming into being of every individual, is ignorance. This ignorance is based on the individual accepting the reality of the self and permanence of the world. This tendency is actually carried over from previous existence. Individuality is expressed through the exercise of the five senses and the mind. Sensation arises and this causes

desire (*tanha* or craving). Craving leads to clinging to existence. Clinging to existence entails the process of becoming, and becoming brings on a new state of being. This new birth inevitably leads to "old age and death, grief, suffering, dejection and despair. Such is the origination of the whole mass of human suffering" (Noss, 1980, p.118).

Anicca, Anatta And Dukkha

Buddha taught that all beings able to reason, suffer from three flaws disturbing their existence which are:

(i) Impermanence (*annica*)

(ii) The ultimate unreality of the self or atman (*anatta*)

(iii) Sorrow (*dukkha*)

The impermanence in everything that appears to exist filled Buddha with misery and he longed for peace or some state of consciousness with enough permanence "to guarantee deliverance from the wheel of perpetual and painful becoming" (Noss, 1980, p.118).

Buddha felt it was foolish, stupid and ignorant of people to cling to life with its few pleasures, since all through life the pain of change is present. This thirst or attachment to the world is the chief cause of rebirth.

Buddhist Ethics

The main ethical problem that Buddha addressed to himself was in which way could one live in order to cease pain and suffering, end the craving to live and finally how to attain fullness of joy of liberation. The answer to this problem is contained in the Four Noble Truths which is the official report of Buddha's first sermon in the Deer Park, at Benares, given to the five ascetics.

The First Noble Truth

This is the Noble Truth of suffering. "Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering. Presence of objects we hate is suffering, separation from objects we love is suffering, not to obtain what we desire is suffering" (Noss, 1980,p.119). This fivefold clinging to existence (by means of the five skandas) is suffering.

The Second Noble Truth

This is the Noble Truth of the cause of suffering. Craving (thirst) for existence, for pleasure and for prosperity is the main cause of suffering.

The Third Noble Truth

The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. Suffering ceases with the absence of thirst or desire or passion.

The Fourth Noble Truth

This is the Noble Truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. The Holy Eightfold Path includes:

1. Right Belief
2. Right Aspiration
3. Right Speech
4. Right Conduct
5. Right Means of Livelihood
6. Right Endeavour
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Meditation

The Negative And Positive Principles In Buddhist Ethics

Buddha did not believe that all desire should be condemned or that all existence is misery. There are good and bad values of desire, and a wise person is one who is able to discriminate between the two. However, all desire, all attachments must be overcome ultimately, if one is to realise Nirvana. The first negative principle in Buddha's ethic requires one not to indulge in desires that cause suffering. Misery according to Buddhist teachings arises from indulgence of some form of desire, therefore such desire is to be uprooted, if misery is to be overcome. If we take love as an example, such as love of parents, wife, or children, one tends to cling to the loved ones. This love will eventually lead to intense pain when one is separated from the loved

one. "Let therefore no man [sic] love anything; loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing or hate nothing have no fetters" (Noss, 1980, p.120).

Buddhists therefore renounce all attachments that disturb the absolute peace of mind and soul. Salvation here and hereafter is a state of perfectly painless peace and joy. It is a freedom from misery achieved by oneself. Buddhist literature lists many things that should be avoided. These include the "Three Intoxications", greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*); the "Five Hinderances" which include sensual pleasures, ill-will, sloth or torpor, doubt and restlessness (Noss, 1980, p. 121). The ten fetters which bind a person to the wheel of existence should also be avoided. These include :

(1) belief that the self exists

(2) doubt

(3) belief and trust in rituals and ceremonies to attain salvation

(4) lust

(5) anger

(6) desiring rebirth in a world of forms

(7) desiring rebirth in a formless world

(8) self-righteousness

(9) pride

(10) ignorance

Buddha formulated the Noble Eightfold Path which will help one to the path of no desire.

Step 1

Right belief in the Four Noble Truths, and its implied view of life.

Step 2

Right Aspirations or Purpose. This is reached by overcoming desires, having the right love of others, harming no living beings and uprooting misery-producing desires.

Step 3

Right Speech. This involves non-indulgence in loose or hurtful talk or ill-will.

Step 4

Right Conduct. One should love all creatures with the right sort of love and deed.

Step 5

Right Livelihood. This involves engaging in a livelihood which is consistent with the Buddhist Principles.

Step 6

Right Effort. This is consistent intellectual alertness in discriminating between the wise and unwise desires.

Step 7

Right Mindfulness. This is attained through well-disciplined thought habits.

Step 8

Right Meditation. This is the final attainment of trance-like states advancing on the road to arahatship (sainthood), and the assurance of entering Nirvana or the state of quiescence when all karma is consumed and the cycle of rebirth ends.

The Arahat, Nirvana And Love

The steps of the Noble Eightfold Path leads one to arahatship. This is the state of one "who has awakened" or "who has reached the end of the Eightfold Noble Path" (Noss, 1980, p. 122). The arahat is regarded as a Buddhist saint. Such a person has attained wisdom, morality, charity, forebearance, striving and meditation. He/She has conquered sensuality, ignorance and desire for rebirth (the Three Intoxicants) and now he/she enjoys the "higher vision" (*sambodhi*) which is joy, pleasure, calm, benevolence and concentration (Noss, 1980, p. 122). He/She experiences deep joy since he/she has already tasted Nirvana during enlightenment. He/She has purely spiritual energy and no longer experiences earthly suffering nor does he/she take pleasure in earthly joys.

One of the controversial aspects of Nirvana in Buddhist teachings is whether an arahat exists after death or not. At first Nirvana had a negative conception since it meant a complete end of a suffering existence, since the skandhas of earthly existence are dispersed. Nirvana meant annihilation. However, Buddha did not say that. He also did not think this was true. All he said was that Nirvana was an end to a painful existence. It was the final peace, it was an eternal state of being and not being. Human knowledge and human speech cannot adequately describe this state.

The arahat is no longer tormented by the self. When a human mind transcends its normal state of consciousness through meditation (*dhyana*) at the supraconsciousness, a true spiritual self that manifests is extinguished at Nirvana.

One of the outstanding qualities of the arahat is his/her benevolence. He/she is magnanimous and overflows with goodwill. Part of the Buddhist self-schooling is to sit quietly in a concentrated effort, and draw from the depths of the heart a love, so comprehensive and unlimited, that it includes all living beings in the universe. This is general universal love and is not the restrictive love of one individual for another. Such a love which is kept on a high, impersonal level can cause no pain.

The path to salvation does not lead into the world or through the world, but away from it. Each individual in a secluded life must bear the heavy task of working out his/her salvation by self-discipline, self-purification, study, thought, meditation and concentration. Buddhism in its original form found little response from the masses.

The Abhidhamma: An Eastern Personality Theory

Gautama Buddha's original insights into human nature are found in the *Abhidhamma* (Pali language) or *Abhidharma* (in Sanskrit) which means "the ultimate doctrine" (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.348). The Abhidhamma or the psychology very close to it, forms the core of most branches of Buddhism.

The Abhidhamma was developed in India over fifteen centuries ago and is used as a guide to the workings of the mind. This psychological theory stems directly from the insights of Gautama Buddha. The Abhidhamma, like other Eastern Psychologies, contains an ideal or perfected

personality. An analysis of mental activities is oriented around this perfected personality. Bhikku Nyanaponika, a modern Buddhist scholar, points out that the mind is the focal and starting point, and it is also the culminating point like the liberated mind of a Saint (Hall & Lindzey, 1978).

Many of the Abhidhamma principles represent "the psychological teachings common to all Eastern faiths rather than those limited to Buddhism" (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.349). The Abhidhamma actually gives sets of concepts for understanding mental activities. All Eastern Meditation Systems like Transcendental Meditation and Zen have arisen from this type of psychology. Eastern Psychologies are concerned with states of consciousness and the laws that govern their alteration. They also contain theories of personality. The goal of Eastern Psychologies is to alter the person's consciousness so as to transcend the limits imposed by habits that form a person's personality. Each personality type needs to overcome different obstacles to attain liberation from these limits.

The Abhidhamma theory provides avenues for meditation to students which help them towards a healthy personality. In the Abhidhamma the "*atta*" or self equates most closely to the concept of personality. The central core of the Abhidhamma however states there is no constant/abiding self but only a collection of processes that come and go. The intermingling of these processes forms this personality.

The "*bhava*" is the only continuous thread of consciousness of the mind. Each moment of our awareness is affected by the previous moment and this in turn affects following moments of

awareness. It is "*bhava*" which connects one moment of consciousness with another. The "self" is "the sum total of body parts, thoughts, sensations, desires, memories and so on " (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.359).

Self is also identified with psychological activities like thoughts, memories and perceptions. These phenomena (processes) are actually part of a continuous flow. According to the Abhidhamma, the human personality is like a river which keeps a constant form and the same identity, but the constituent elements will vary from time to time.

The study of personality in Buddhism deals with a series of events. The primary event is the continuous mental states to sense objects, for example, a feeling of love (mental state) of a mother towards a child (sense object). A person's mental state is continually changing from moment to moment, and it occurs very rapidly. The recommended method to study these numerous mental states is introspection and a close observation of one's experiences.

The Abhidhamma does not regard the objects of the five senses of the body alone. Thoughts within the thinking mind are included as a sixth sense. Thoughts can also be the object of mental states, for example, the thought "I should go to the dentist" might bring about a mental state of aversion. Each mental state is made up of a set of mental factors. The Abhidhamma lists fifty-three categories of such mental factors, and other branches of Buddhism lists one hundred and seventy-five categories. Mental states come and go in an orderly manner. Abhidhamma theorists believe each mental state arises from biological and situational factors and is a continuation of preceding psychological moments.

Mental factors are the key to "Karma" (*Kamma* in Pali). Karma is a technical word for the principle that every deed is motivated by underlying mental states. Behaviour is regarded as ethically neutral. Its moral nature cannot be determined without considering the underlying motives of the person, for example, a person's action based on malice or greed is regarded as evil even though the act itself might be regarded by the observer as neither good nor bad.

The Abhidhamma doctrine of Karma is found in the very first statement of the Dhammapada, which is a collection of verses spoken by Gautama Buddha. There are two types of mental factors. We have the pure, wholesome or healthy mental factors which are referred to as the *Kusula* and also the impure, unwholesome and unhealthy factors known as *Akusula*. Most perceptual, cognitive and mental factors can be grouped into either the healthy or the unhealthy category. The judgement of the "healthy" or "unhealthy" was arrived at empirically, on the basis of collective experience of a large number of Buddhist meditators (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.361). The criterion used was whether a particular factor facilitated or interfered with a meditator's attempt to still the mind during meditation. If any of these mental factors interfered with a meditator's attempt to still the mind, it was labelled as unhealthy and if it aided him it was regarded as a healthy factor.

There are also seven neutral factors (properties) present in every mental state. These include:

(i) Aperception (*phassa*) - this is the mere awareness of an object

(ii) Perception (*sanna*) - the first recognition as belonging to one or the other of the senses

(iii) Volition (*cetana*) - the conditioned reaction which accompanies the first perception of

the object

(iv) Feeling (*vedana*) - sensations aroused by the object

(v) One-pointedness (*ekaggata*) - which is the focussing of attention

(vi) Spontaneous Attention (*manasi kara*) - which is the involuntary direction of attention which is attracted by the object

(vii) Psychic Energy (*jivitindriya*) - this gives vitality and unites the above six factors

These factors provide the basic framework of consciousness.

Unhealthy Factors

Perceptual delusion is the central unhealthy factor. Delusion (*moha*) is defined as the cloudiness of the mind which causes one to misperceive the object of awareness. According to the Abhidhamma, delusion is seen as the basic ignorance and it is the "primary root of human suffering" (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p.361). Delusion does not allow a person to see the true nature of things. It is perception influenced by bias or prejudice. This is the core of all unhealthy states. Other unhealthy factors include shamelessness, recklessness and egoism. Affective unhealthy factors include agitation, greed, aversion, envy, avarice, worry, torpor and perplexity.

Healthy Factors

According to the Abhidhamma, each unhealthy factor is opposed by a healthy factor. Insight meaning "having a clear perception of an object" is a healthy factor which is opposite to the

unhealthy factor known as delusion (Goleman, 1988, p. 135). If a person has insight, he/she does not experience delusion at the same time. Insight suppresses delusion. Both factors cannot co-exist in a single mental state. Mindfulness, modesty, discretion and confidence are some of the other examples of healthy factors.

According to the Abhidhamma, a healthy mental state can be achieved by an individual by replacing unhealthy mental factors by their polar opposites (Goleman, 1988).

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