

Samsara and the Organization

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A person's perception continually ebbs and flows on a daily basis with changes in intelligence, knowledge and understanding, based on the type of emotions one feels and their individual strength, pull and intensity. This process makes a person happy, sad, excited, hesitant or anxious about people, things and events around them. One may feel angry, greedy, jealous, trusting, lustful, and confused all in one day. More often than not, we are not aware of the influence of our feelings upon how we perceive things and behave, as this process is partly sub-conscious (Tashi Tsering 2006). Feeling is what drives a person, whether it is to seek shelter and food, clothing and medical care, love and sex, career and comfort, etc. According to Buddhist Dharma (*theology*), desire is a major part of our motivation and psych.

Within the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, the last of three parts to the *Pali Cannon (the scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism)* are a number of texts concerning psychology, philosophy and metaphysics. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* describes the structure of the human mind and perception with amazing accuracy to the accepted views of modern neuro-science. The mind is described as a continual conscious process or experience in the metaphor of a '*mindstream*' (something similar to phenomenological psychology)¹. Buddhism sees mankind living in a deluded reality caused by infatuation, *attachment*² and clinging to desire for objects and permanence in the world as the source of all suffering. The pathway to wisdom³ is found through understanding '*The Four Noble Truths*'⁴ and practice of the '*Eightfold Path*'⁵. Many of these practices are being used in modified forms for therapy today (Epstein 2001).

Within Buddhist philosophy, consciousness and metaphysics are combined in the concept of *Pratītyasamutpada* or dependent origination. This is where reality is seen as an interdependent timeless universe of interrelated cause and effect. A human's existence is interwoven with the existence of everything else and the existence of everything else is interwoven with the human's existence in a mutually interdependent way. Because this concept is past, present and future, everything in the universe is only transient and has no real individual existence.

This is a very important concept because it is only our ability to free ourselves from attachment and delusion about our sense of self and values unconsciously placed on others, will we be able to see the world as it really is, rather than what we wish it to be. In fact our view of self and existence is created through our clinging and craving which blinds us to the reality of dependent origination. Buddhism is about transcending these delusions so human perception is clear and unbiased. This makes Buddhism an ethical philosophy of life, rather than a religion in strict terms (Watts 1996).

1 The early concept of phenomenology was developed by G.W.L. Hegel, who was interested in exploring the phenomena of conscious experience. These concepts were further developed by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, later enlarged upon by numerous philosophers including Franz Brentano, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Emmanuel Levinas. Phenomenology looks at the consciousness as a process of experience rather as a static state. Consciousness is seen as a continual process where something is always in view, whether it be a perception of an object, event or fantasy. Therefore to consciousness it is not important whether the object is real or imaginary – the conscious intention exists of the object. In phenomenology the truth is what is intelligible based on one's subjective opinion rather than physical reality. The perceived reality comes from the individual's emotions, which are within the consciousness. The consciousness exists in the lifeworld, which in addition to the physical world includes all life experiences and memories. Some view the world as being completely transparent before the consciousness.

2 Attachment in Buddhism is a much wider concept than attachment in psychotherapy where it is primarily concerned about infant/caregiver relationships in early life. Although there are many similarities, the two concepts should not be confused.

3 Wisdom in Buddhism can be interpreted as acceptance of Karma and conscious awareness of those actions that will bring us happiness and those that will bring us suffering and the understanding of the concept of non-duality, recognizing that there is no permanence.

4 The Four Noble Truths are: 1. Our delusions of self cause our suffering, 2. Suffering is a fact of life resulting from our attachment to what we desire, 3. If we extinguish our attachment, we reduce our suffering, and 4. By following the Eightfold Path and developing wisdom, we can alleviate our suffering.

5 The Eightfold path consists of right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, mindfulness and right concentration. Practice of the Eightfold Path may assist in raising consciousness to a completely non-dualistic view of subject and object.

Since the beginning of the Twentieth Century, especially after World War II, there has been a growing interest in Eastern philosophy in the West. The teachings of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* have inspired and influenced many psychoanalysts and psychologists (Trungpa 1975, de Silva 1991, Claxton 1990, Epstein 1995), including Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, Albert Ellis, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Marsha M. Linehan. There has been a great leap forward in humanitarian and transpersonal philosophical influence both in therapy and management theories (Goleman 2004). Dialogue between philosophy theorists and practitioners of East and West has led to mutually influential relationships between them (Safran 2003). This has led to new insights into therapies and new schools of thought on both sides (Grossman 2004, Safran 2003, Sherwood 2005). Aspects of Buddhist Dharma are also incorporated in the works of Western philosophers including Caroline A. F. Rhys David and Alan Watts.

Buddhist Dharma describes the mind as five *Skandhas* (layers) consisting of;

The body including sight, hearing, taste, smell and tactile feeling (*rupa*),
Sensations and feelings (*vedana*), (contact between the body senses and objects),
Perceptions and ideas (*samjña*), (our ability to recognize objects and ideas),
Mental acts (*samskara*), (willpower and attention), and
Basic consciousness (*vijñaña*)⁶.

The last four layers make up the psych (*naman*). Under *Mahayama*, but not *Theravāda* Buddhism there exists a 'storehouse' consciousness of inborn templates⁷ designating how to perceive the world resulting from one's karmic history (*bijas*). *Bijas* combines with *naman* to form an ego or collective consciousness⁸ creating the conscious illusions of everyday life.

The senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) when see, hear, smell, taste or feel an object do so without identifying and giving any label to it. The senses collect raw data which must be identified through the process of discernment where the object's characteristics are matched against templates in the mind (memory). Once the object is identified, pleasure or pain feelings develop from the sense consciousness. This feeling then develops into like or dislike for the object which triggers feelings of desire or repulsion. Desire or repulsion varies in its intensity from a mild to a strong attraction or repulsion for the object. It is this feeling which gives any object value to a person.

Feelings can be generated from our natural condition, mental disposition, personality and training. Our natural condition is the intuitive tendency we feel whenever an object comes in contact to the senses. There will be a natural tendency to go towards or away from the object. In contrast our mental disposition is affected by our moods and can also be influenced by altered mind states like intoxication. Our life experience, environment and cultural influences all contribute the development of our personality, which also influences how we react to something. Finally through mental conditioning developed by training, we can change our programmed responses to objects. This can be seen when learning to drive a car. When just learning we need to concentrate on every action taken but once driving is conditioned within our mind, we do not require the same concentration, and actions taken appear to happen intuitively naturally.

Once we have a feeling about any object, our intention coordinates and directs the rest of the elements of our mind in respect of the object. Intention activates any action that will be taken based on the strength of our feelings. Our feelings and intention are very strongly related to our motivation. Our decision to act on anything is intention.

Our thoughts, speech and actions create karma. Karma is the law of cause and effect in relation to our mind, speech and actions, *i.e.*, moral causation. New karma is continually generated through our '*mindstream*' and is kept within us like a storage bank. Karma can be good or bad depending on the nature of the actions.

6 See Tejguru Sirshree Tejparkhiji, (2006). Detachment from Attachment – Let Bliss Succeed, Let Sorrow Fail, Bombay, Tej Gyan Foundation.

7 This would be something like psychic inheritance.

8 This would be something like Carl Jung's concept of collective unconscious.

Our stored karma determines how we perceive and respond to stimuli in the world. These are considered our natural or intuitive responses.

Due to the large number of stimuli within the world we live within, attention focuses our mind on specific objects in a similar way a filter takes away things that are unwanted. There are many stimuli and corresponding mental factors operating at once, however the mind is unable to process them simultaneously. In this situation only data from one sense can be processed at a time. This means for example if driving a car and speaking on a phone at the same time, stimuli from outside the car and from the phone can only be processed sequentially meaning we are experiencing an illusion that both are operating together (Tashi Tsering 2006, P. 26).

There are a number of higher mental processes which are sometimes present. Aspiration, similar to intention, moves a person closer to an object of attachment or away from an object of aversion. This can occur both consciously and unconsciously. Aspiration is much stronger and not always present. Aspiration is the basis for enthusiasm. Appreciation develops aspiration by signaling positive or negative qualities of the object in attention. This has the effect of directing the mind closer to or further away from the object. Appreciation also develops the feeling of desire and secures its recollection in the mind. Recollection is the ability of the mind to return to any object, and forms part of the memory. Concentration is the ability of the mind to remain focused on any object. Intelligence is the ability to examine an object and determine its value. It does this by examining an object's characteristics to determine whether it is attractive or repulsive. These decisions are made on what information the mind can retrieve about the object from memory. Therefore for the mind to carry out these functions there must be an object whether physical or imaginary.

The process of attachment begins at birth where we are quickly dependent on our mother and create likes and dislikes for things. As these emotions are so strong, the majority of people are incapable of withdrawing from these attachments in later life⁹. The thought processes that lead to attachment are important to how we identify our own sense of self and being. This is agreed upon by many psychoanalysts, including Freud, who see traits like anger, aggressiveness, craving, hatred and lust make a large contribution to how we see ourselves (Metzner 1997, Engler 1993, 2003, Epstein 1995, 2007). Attachment also gives things value or meaning, rather than the perception of the actual reality (Tart 1997). It becomes the "*lens*" through which the environment is experienced and interpreted (Welwood 2001, Zimberoff & Hartman 2002).

There are different forms of attachment¹⁰. Sensual attachment occurs when we like processing objects that we are enchanted with. These objects include colours, shapes, sounds, odours, flavours, other objects of desire, images (*whether real or imaginary*) of the past, present and future that are in the mind. Sensual attachment can lead to feelings of envy, anger, arrogance, hate and can even lead to acts of murder and suicide. Everything a human does has some origin in sensual attachment and it is the power that drives people to study, work and earn money in the search of pleasure. Because of the desire to feel good, one can become a slave to another for the trappings of status, power, wealth and comforts that it brings, even though it forces one to agree all the time. Such a relationship brings out arrogance, ostentation and blind-less attachment. The desire to go to heaven preached in most religion also has its roots in sensuality. Sensuality is the primary form of attachment.

To have one's own opinions is very natural. However when ideas and opinions become cemented into a person's mind and they cling to them, this becomes attachment. Many of these opinions are bound up in customs, professions, religions, traditions and rituals and our perceptions become dogma based upon the beliefs a person subscribes to (Vajiranama 1962). They become stubborn convictions which cannot be changed due to the cement of long held traditions, professional practices and/or beliefs. The clinging to views and opinions is based on original ignorance, where existence becomes very mechanical with programmed type responses. If we see wrong we rarely admit it, often leading to anger and even violence or war, where naïve doctrines are held. When we become attached to our sheltered culture, imagination and perceptions, the

9 This has many similarities to some of the concepts in Freudian Psychoanalysis, see Wallin, D. J., (2007). Attachment in Psychotherapy, New York, The Guilford Press, P. 31.

10 For a discussion on the various types of delusions and attachment see: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (2007). Handbook for mankind: Realizing your full potential as a human being, Bangkok, Amarin Publishing (Translated from the Thai edition by Aniyana Bhikkhu Roderick S. Bucknell).

potential for progress and development is hindered. When things are considered sacred and cannot be changed under any circumstances, i.e., beliefs about *'artifacts'* like qualifications, *'magical processes'* like strategic planning and *'secret procedures'* like employee selection, rationality is distorted and becomes a barrier to change.

Finally, one can be attached to the belief of the idea of *'self'* or *'I'*. This is also a common occurring form of attachment and like attachment to opinion, is very hard to detect. The paradigm of *'me and mine'* is based on our primal instincts to hunt and gather, procreate and protect, etc. We also tend to see our existence as eternal and fear the concept of death. This form of attachment eliminates any beliefs in transience where the person unconsciously develops delusions of permanence and solidity. This creates the fear of loss and desire to defend and protect both time and space as something needing to be held onto. Freud (1926) also saw the importance of the sense of loss to a person – love, object or experience, and saw that loss (*and potential loss*) can lead to manifestations of depression and anxiety. This most often leads to the search for pleasure seeking experiences to avoid further pain and suffering.

Another consequence of the *'me and mine'* paradigm is the development of aversion. When something threatens our self image, aversion steps in to maintain our self notion of permanence. Aversion may range from simple avoidance of the issue, to dissatisfaction, frustration or intense anger. The source of all these symptoms is our ignorance of our self at the unconscious level where the mind exaggerates the negative parts of our self image (Tashi Tsering 2006, P.54). Attachment can also feel good as it may be covered in love, i.e., slave of a person, or anger with oneself may be covered with hate for something or someone external to oneself. These symptoms develop a number of defense mechanisms discussed in the next section.

According to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (2007, P. 65) suffering arises because of unsatisfied desire and infatuation, leading to a vicious cycle. This is known as the *Wheel of Samsara* which pictorially depicts the endless cycle of suffering continually flowing through our life in the past, present and future, leading to endless births, deaths and rebirths through various realms (mind-states) for all forms of life.

Central to the *Wheel of Samsara* is the concept of *Paticcasamuppada* or *dependent origination* which is a perception state based on ignorance. Through sensual (*eye, nose, ear, tongue, body or mind*) contact with something, feelings are derived. This is because of our notion of self (*"I and mine"*) and desire, always bringing suffering through feelings, attachment and clinging. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1992, pp. 32-41) gives numerous examples of *dependent origination* like when a baby is upset when her doll is broken, a boy fails an exam and ends up fainting or crying, a girl sees her boyfriend walking with another girl and becomes inflamed and furious and people become attached to foods they like. In each case Buddhadasa explains that the sensual consciousness is aroused giving rise to feelings, bringing a conditioned response based on ignorance, triggered by one or more of the types of desire, discussed above.

Dependent origination occurs within the context of flowing through a number of states of ignorance and types of attachment, being continually re-born within one of the realms (*mind-states*). Thus living things are just transient beings through each realm (*mind-state*), which infers that the perception of an independent self life existence is an illusion. The Twelve *dependent origination* links, which resemble a person's thought processes on the outer part of the *Wheel of Samsara* are explained below:

Ignorance is the first of twelve situations in dependent origination. A blind woman who is about to fall over a cliff is metaphorically depicted. This shows that a person with a mind deluded in ignorance will stumble through rebirth, after rebirth ignorant of what really constitutes her individual existence and reason for her suffering. Therefore unable to break the *cycle of samsara*.

Karma or action is the second link where we shape our lives by the actions we take. This is symbolically depicted by the potter creating pots. Good karma leads to our transition to the higher realms (*mind-state*) and bad karma leads us to the lower realms. Ignorance leads to being imprisoned within the *cycle of samsara*.

Consciousness of mind is the third link, usually depicted by a swinging monkey representing how our mind moves from object to object through boredom without examining oneself. This is confused and ignorant consciousness where understanding of the concept of non-permanence is impossible. If the consciousness

cannot be transformed from ignorance to enlightenment, then the person will continue going around the *cycle of samsara*.

Name and form make up the fourth link referring to the five forms that constitute a person, physical being (the senses), contact with objects, perception, mental labeling and consciousness. If our consciousness still retains some ignorance before death then the fourth form will go to the intermediate period between death and rebirth. This is depicted by a man rowing a boat halfway across a river, yet to reach the other side.

The five senses are the fifth link following on from the last link where a person is about to undergo rebirth. The five senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch are physically formed in the mother's womb but yet to have the power of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch because as depicted in the picture, the house is still empty.

Contact is the sixth link which is the point where the senses make contact with an object but are yet to form any reaction to the contact. This is usually depicted by two embracing lovers.

Perception is the seventh link where contact with an object gives a basic intuitive feeling of pain or pleasure. This stimulus is not felt as something liked or disliked at the perception stage. The power of perception is usually depicted in the *cycle of samsara* as a man with an arrow through his head.

Attachment is the eighth link. A person begins to mentally label perceptions as good or bad according to our self-centered desires and aversions. This attachment builds our desires, contributing to our suffering. The person addicted to alcohol in the *cycle of samsara* is symbolic of the attachments we create.

Craving is the ninth link, which is more intense form of attachment. People are not content with what they have and desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain, even at the cost of harm to others. This is intensely selfish and leads to bad karma which traps one to going around the *cycle of samsara*. This is depicted by a monkey reaching out on a tree for more fruit.

Another birth within *samsara* is the tenth link. A person with a life of craving through ignorance will be doomed to be re-born within the *cycle of samsara*. This is depicted by the pregnant woman.

Existence is the eleventh link where the woman has already given birth. The karma from selfish attachment and craving of the last life has caused an existence within the *cycle of samsara* in the next life.

Death is the final link in the *cycle of samsara*. If death occurs with any semblance of ignorance in the mind, then birth will occur again and again in the *cycle of samsara* until it can be broken through an understanding of dependent origination. This is depicted in a picture of a person taking a corpse out for burial.

The links in the cycle of *Paticcasamuppada* (dependent origination) are states conditioned by the previous link and go on to condition the following link. Through ignorance there is karma that creates a conditioned consciousness of despair. The physical senses condition the mind consciousness through perception, creating feelings that trigger attachment and craving. This escalates into clinging which conditions karma, the force which determines which realm (*mind-state*) the person will enter into at rebirth, continuing the *cycle of samsara*. This links the past, the present and the future.

The six realms (5 in *Theravada Buddhism*) inside the links of *Paticcasamuppada* can be seen as metaphors for various '*mind-states*' one experiences during life¹¹. The depicted realms can be correlated to psychotic pathologies (Buddhaghosa 1991). Existence in each realm creates a different sense of self (Mitchell 1993) reflecting distorted views of their own ego (Moacanin 1986), leading to certain types of behavior. Unless one can break free of their karma, one is trapped into moving between these different realms or '*mind-states*'. One's actions of body, speech and mind extend beyond the present life will determine what realm one will be re-born into in the next life. Each realm has particular advantages and disadvantages for obtaining enlightenment.

The Realm of the *Deva* (gods) is a world where the *Deva* have great power, are very wealthy, have a long life and are relieved of all forms of suffering. They have got to this realm because of amassing lots of good karma. The *Deva* are complacent and therefore blind to the suffering of others and cannot learn compassion and wisdom. During their long life in this realm they use up all their good karma and are re-born in lower realm in the next life as they are still tempted by sensual pleasures and distracted from meditation. In

¹¹ Individuals can have several views of themselves which can change over time depending on life circumstances and on personal and interpersonal processes. External experiences are absorbed into the consciousness and given form through both sense of self and projection onto others.

Theravada Buddhism the *Deva* share a realm with the *Asura*. The *Asura* are depicted in the *wheel of samsara* as gods with access to the wishing tree and are waging war with the *Devas* for control of the tree. The white Buddha is playing the vena to remind the gods that their time in this realm is only temporary.

The Realm of the *Asura* is a world of envy, jealousy and hate. The *Asura* have the same comforts as the *Deva*. They have gotten into this realm because they had good intentions but committed bad acts, most likely harming others. They have enough good karma to get into the *Asura* realm above the lower worlds but their hate and jealousy prevents them from entering the realm of the *Devas*. The *Asura* see themselves are superior to all others with no patience for inferiors and usually look down and belittle others. Outwardly they show themselves pious, wise, just and fair, devoted to worship. The *Asura* are mortal enemies of the *Deva* and are fighting a continual feudal war over the wishing tree. The roots of the wishing tree are in the realm of the *Asura* but the wishing fruit only grows in the realm of the *Deva*. The Buddha depicted in the realm is holding an arrow and preaching moral restraint.

The *Manusya* or the Human realm is based on passion, doubt, desire and pride, all qualities of human existence. This realm is the most advantageous and most precious, as there are fewer humans than other creatures, except for *Devas*. Only humans have the wisdom to practice Buddhism. Therefore the human realm is the only realm where one can obtain enlightenment because humans have much more potential when life is pursued correctly. However most people waste their lives in the pursuit of material objects which end up reinforcing attachment, craving and clinging. Therefore most descend to a lower realm in rebirth. The scene depicts Buddha teaching the benefits of mental discipline and *The Four Noble Truths* to his disciples.

The *Naraka* or Hell Realm is the most terrible of all the realms containing a number of cold and hot hells. People are rebirthed into the Hell realm because of burning hatred, coldhearted cruelty and aggression. People remain in the hell realm until all their bad karma is extinguished and they are propelled into another realm. The lord of death is depicted in the top right hand corner of the realm where he holds a mirror so people can see their own bad karma. On the top right hand side is a Buddha holding water to signify patience and a flame as the light of hope.

The *Tiryagyon* or Animal Realm is a world based on stupidity, prejudice, complacency with little intelligence. People who are ignorant, act upon primal motivations without any moral reflection and contented are destined for rebirth in the Animal Realm. Within the realm one lives a sheltered life of slavery trying to avoid discomforts. As animals cannot reason they are incapable of learning Buddhism and will stay there for many rebirths. The Buddha is depicted in this realm as holding a Dharma scroll to show the benefit of perfect wisdom and ethical conduct.



(With permission Wat Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, Thailand)

Figure 1. The Wheel of Samsara.

The Realm of the *Preta* or Hungry Ghosts is where people have an insatiable hunger and craving which cannot be satisfied. A hungry ghost is always looking outside himself for new things that will satisfy his hungry and craving. People are rebirthed into this realm because they are addicted to something, obsessed, compulsive or possessive in their previous lives. The hungry ghosts are depicted as beings with big empty stomachs, long necks that cannot swallow and a pinhole mouth, so their desires will always torment them. They have fire coming out of their mouths because their cravings cannot be satisfied. A Buddha is seen carrying a container of nourishment to sooth their pain.

The black and white circle inside the realms shows that karma drives people around the realms. The white side shows ascension into the higher realms of the *Asura*, *Manusya* and *Deva*, while the black side shows the

dissension into the lower *Tiryagyoni*, *Preta* and *Naraka* realms. The very centre of the *wheel of samsara* shows the tree poisons we develop from birth. The snake shows anger which is very powerful as it can destroy previously collected good karma. The Rooster represents high sexual drive and the pig represents ignorance. These three animals are shown chasing each other because each poison reinforces the other two. This is the reason why people keep having rebirths within the *wheel of samsara*.

The *wheel of samsara* is held by the demon *Yama* who depicts death and suffering as an inevitable fate within *samsara*. One is encouraged to forsake attachment for the pleasures of wealth, material things, beauty, youth and reputation that hinder an enlightened mind free of anger, greed and ignorance. The Buddha on the top right hand side points to the moon which represents *The Third Noble Truth*, the cessation of desire, *i.e.*, there is a way to end suffering and escape *samsara*.

Although the *wheel of samsara* specifically refers to individual delusion, analogies can be drawn out to organizations. The physicist David Bohm (1965) conceptualized consciousness as a collective stream of thought where meaning is developed through language and individuals make sense of it. As a 'collective consciousness' where individuals share the assumptions, beliefs and values of the group, an organization can also be seen as being trapped within the *wheel of samsara*, unable to see though its collective delusions. The 'collective consciousness' of the organization would hold views about how much the organization can influence the environment it operates within, the nature and strength of their own competencies, how competitors will react to their actions, how consumers think, how employees are motivated and what constitutes an opportunity to the organization. The story of the CEO and the three letters has probably been told in many countries with local variations:

After a poor year of corporate performance the company was about to have its annual board meeting. The CEO felt responsible and decided it was necessary for him to resign. The board accepted his resignation and appointed a new CEO. The new CEO met with the outgoing CEO in his office as he was packing his things and asked what advice he could give. The outgoing CEO replied "*I have put three letters in the top right hand drawer, if you get stuck, open them for my advice.*"

A year went by and company performance had not improved. The new CEO had to face the board the next day and was stressed for what answer he could provide at the meeting. He remembered the letters the outgoing CEO had placed in the top right hand drawer. Hoping for an answer he opened the drawer, took out the first letter and opened it. The letter told him "*to advise the board to carry out a complete restructuring and reorganization*".

The CEO was excited and went to the meeting suggesting the restructuring and reorganization. The board was very happy with the plan and gave him another year to implement it.

Another year went by and company performance was still poor. It was the night before the annual board meeting and the CEO knew he had to face the board again. He remembered the letters in the drawer the last CEO had left and rushed for the letter. Opening the letter and reading the advice he was excited. "*Advise the board that the company's strategy has to be realigned with its structure*". The CEO went into the meeting confident and got another year to implement the plan.

Another year went by and there had been no improvement in company performance. The CEO was really perplexed and didn't know what to say. He remembered the letters the former CEO had placed in the drawer and took the last letter out and opened it. The letter read "*put in your resignation tomorrow and leave three more letters in the top drawer*".

Contemporary Buddhism is taking a more liberal view of attachment/detachment (Ghose 2004). Some detachment could actually be apathy towards anything and everything by a person. Detachment itself can be a sign of the inability of a person to handle life situations, for example use detachment as a defense mechanism to cope with distress; *such as a child coping with the distress of the absence of a parent* (Kobak 1999). This can possibly leave unresolved issues between the child and parent, which can be considered unhealthy and detrimental to emotional growth and learning. There is a difficulty of distinguishing apathy from the type of

detachment that liberates the consciousness. Therefore a possible reason for and effect of detachment, is people become apathetic losing any care about the world and being unhappy.

There can be distinctions made between desires that are unwholesome like greed and desires that are consistent with Buddhist practice like the desires for auspicious virtues. This also implies some distinction could be made between *'positive'* and *'negative'* desires (Govinda 1991). The test here is whether any desires emotions or thoughts are ego-centric or not? (Ghose 2004). Even the desire to do virtuous things can be ego-centric in nature.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1976, P. 38) stated that every feeling whether good or bad, powerful or light should be paid attention to with mindfulness¹² that can be used as a force to protect the psych. This has two important implications. The first is to be aware of our own biases and distortive tendencies in our perception of objects. The second implication is that we protect ourselves from harmful influences and *'emotionally'* learn. Psychotherapy advocates a healthy ego which requires some *'healthy attachment'* like identification in the creation of a sense of self (Winnicott 1965, 1971). Das (2003) expands on identity as being something we experience spiritually, sexually, sensually, intellectually, economically, philosophically, and so on. Identity is situationally dependent upon the role one plays as a mother, father, worker, student, etc. However from the Buddhist perspective, this can lead to an ego produced out of mistaken identity, based on anxiety and confusion about *'who I am'* (Engler 2003, P. 36).

John Bowlby's (1980) seminal work on attachment theory defines attachment as one of the prime motivational systems with its own workings and interfaces with other motivational systems. What may be important is understanding desire as a driver of motivation (Smith 1987). Thus some attachment is considered to be a healthy part of a person's psychological make-up, a driver for action. However it should be noted that the motivation behind our actions is usually desire, which unchecked can develop into many abnormal pathologies like depression, anxiety, aggression, etc (Epstein 2005). It is not the desire that causes the suffering, but what we do with our desire. People need to feel secure and have loving relationships to provide a base for life exploration, which requires some attachment. Michael Porter (1980, P. 267) also recognized that emotional attachment can influence rationality of strategic decision making where one may be committed to a business, have a sense of pride, be concerned about the stigma attached to a decision, identify with the program or venture, etc.

A true understanding of the concept of attachment and detachment from the Buddhist perspective may have been lost in the semantics of translation, especially with the institutionalization of most of Buddhism's doctrinal interpretations. Modern Buddhist and psychology scholars with the benefit of hindsight have added new perspectives by taking more liberal semantic interpretations of translations providing new insights (King 1994).

Dharma seeks to make us aware of the emotions one is attached and clinging to so that we can be freed from the suffering it produces. We make sense of the world we see through the filters of our own attachments which distort reality. Griffiths (1986) used a very useful metaphor of a mirror that cannot reflect light because of dust that has settled upon the surface clouding any clear view. So Buddhism and psychoanalytic-theory may assist in helping one see the manifestations of attachment and their underlying causes. The task is to let go of the distortions of perception created through sub-conscious attachments. This means understanding illusion from biased judgments, aversion, prejudice and greed in us and seeing the environment for what it really is. Buddhist Psychology provides a non-linear model for seeing a non-linear world. According to Freud (1912, P. 112), one is*"in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows: and if he follows his inclinations he will certainly falsify what he may perceive"*.

We in adulthood have become a product of our own eyes, prisoners of our own mind, observing things with a construed reality (Welwood 1996, P. 122). Our attachment to thoughts, feelings and experiences continually reinforce and strengthen our narratives and rationalizations. In modern Western psychology the

12 Mindfulness is a state of open acceptance of one's own perceptions and sensibilities that helps our experience of being calm, relaxed and alert state of mind and be aware of our thoughts without identifying with them (Ladner 2005, P. 19).

tool to remedy distortion is termed cognitive reconstruction. One can learn to recognize weaknesses in beliefs, dysfunctional emotions that produce irrational thinking and resulting behaviors like stress, depression and anxiety, etc. Once these emotions are seen, and the motivations behind them are recognized, one can take responsibility for them. Then one's cognitive streaming can be changed, which will allow one to freely explore their internal and external worlds without the distortions of attachment and clinging. This may require changing cognitive streaming that has developed from early childhood.

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