

## 9

**(Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta**

The (Eights) Discourse on the Restive | **A 8.14**  
 Or, **(Aṭṭha Assa) Khaluṅka Sutta** The (8 Horses) Discourse on the Restive  
 Theme: Psychological defence mechanisms  
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003, 2021

*Celebrating 2 decades of full-time sutta work (2002-2022)*

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## 1 Early Buddhist psychology

### 1.1 CONTENT SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### 1.1.1 Sutta summary and significance

**1.1.1.1 The (Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta** (A 8.14)<sup>1</sup> is an interesting study of the 8 defects of a person (*aṭṭha purisa, dosa*).<sup>2</sup> It gives us an insight into some of the disciplinary difficulties facing the early Buddhist sangha with the growth in the population of unawakened monastics. It clearly shows that the Buddha is aware of this, as evident from the various measures of “quality control” described in this Sutta. It reminds us to be constantly mindful of our own negative emotions and not to fall into any unwholesome thought or misconduct.

**1.1.1.2** Interestingly, it is also an important study of the psychological aspect of the settled monastics in terms of *sārajjā*, which here has the sense of “deference,” that is, a regard for the monastic sangha.<sup>3</sup> The Sutta lists 8 kinds of reactions of a “restive” monk who is accused of various misdeeds. His negative reactions are compared to those of *a restive horse*, showing its intractability.

Sections **1 and 2** are commentaries on the Sutta.

**1.1.1.3 The Khaluṅka Sutta** is a short but remarkable document on the Buddha’s acute sense of observation and has provided grist for the mills of modern psychotherapists. **Rune Johansson**, in his “Defence mechanisms according to psychoanalysis and the Pāli *Nikāyas*,” (1983)<sup>4</sup> gives an insightful modern analysis of this Sutta which helps us appreciate its significance in mental health and cultivation as envisioned in early Buddhism.

#### 1.1.2 A psychology of Buddhist cult leaders

**1.1.2.1** Sections **3 and 4** discuss defence mechanisms in more practical real-life situations based on my personal experiences of Buddhism in the years when I was a monk. **Section 3** discusses the various defences related to those mentioned in the Sutta in broader reality. It helps us to better understand how such defences may affect any of us.

**1.1.2.2 Section 4** first [4.1 + 4.2] discusses the defences as expressions of our latent tendencies (*anusaya*), and also discusses some pathological aspects of cultish Buddhism. “**Cultish**” means relating to a person of charisma to whom others are drawn, and whose personality profoundly defines and limits our lives, often in negative, even destructive, ways.

In the last half of Section 4 [4.3 + 4.4], I use the format of “**attachment, avoidance and desensitization**” to explain how the defences operated in a few Buddhist cult figures I personally knew and also from reliable documents. The overarching lesson here is that religion, especially its leaders, can appear respectable, even beneficent, when we only know them by reputation, but have not really suffered their notoriety.

According to **the Satta Jaṭilā Sutta** (S 3.11 = U 6.2):

- through living with another, we know his *moral virtue*;
- through dealings with another, we know his *honesty*;

<sup>1</sup> Another horse-simile sutta is **(Navaka) Assa Khaluṅka S** (A 9.22/4:397-400).

<sup>2</sup> Vbh 387,16-388,18. See also SD 55.9 (2.2.2.2(76)).

<sup>3</sup> On *sārajjā*, see **Piṇḍolya S** (S 22.80), SD 28.9a (3).

<sup>4</sup> See esp 1983:17-21; see biblio for details.

- through adversities (with another), we know his *fortitude* (or his lack of it);
- through discussing (learning) with another, we know his *wisdom* (or lack of it).<sup>5</sup>

To a significant extent, I had lived with these cult figures, and served them, went through adversities with them, and discussed Buddhism with them (learned from them).

## 1.2 “DEFENCE MECHANISMS” IN EARLY BUDDHISM

### 1.2.1 “Defences”: the early Buddhist context<sup>6</sup>

**1.2.1.1** In modern psychology, especially psychodynamics, **defense mechanisms** are psychological processes that are generally attributed to our organized ego or constructed self. We construct, organize and maintain for ourself optimal psychic conditions in a way that helps us (our self-notion) both to confront and avoid anxiety and psychological difficulties. They are therefore part of our efforts to work through mental conflict, but if these reactions are excessive or inappropriate, they can stunt or distort our mental growth.<sup>7</sup>

An older psychoanalytic term, **defence**, refers to all the techniques deployed by the ego in conflicts that have the potential to lead to neurosis.<sup>8</sup> In the sense in which Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) first used the term, defences are unconscious because they stem from a conflict between the drive and the ego, or between a perception or representation (memory, fantasy, etc) and moral imperatives.

The function of the defences is thus to support and maintain a state of psychic stability by avoiding anxiety or mental pain. The concept of defence was broadened somewhat when Freud attributed an important role to the reality principle and to the superego. Later, Austrian psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960) formed a more radical view that the defences exist within an archaic ego.<sup>9</sup>

**1.2.1.2** Since early Buddhism, as a teaching, is versatile and existentially relevant, we can discuss the benefits of comparing the teachings of **the (Aṭṭhaka) Kḥaluṅka Sutta** (A 8.14) with the way “defence mechanisms” work. This does not mean that we are trying to measure up to modern psychology or even traditional psychodynamics. These later concepts (and their evolving forms) help us better understand early Buddhism and see its relevance to this day.

My very biased view is that Buddhism does *not* need any modern self-labelled psychology, but it needs early Buddhism; and the world needs both psychology and Buddha Dharma. The psychology professional who sees early Buddhism as being “inferior” to psychology is neither professional nor Buddhist, but a hubristic plagiarist, living off Buddhism, like a salaried non-Buddhist lecturer of Buddhism. The one who respects early Buddhism for what it is—not cannibalizing Buddhism and then “killing the Buddha”—will, of course,

<sup>5</sup> S 3.11/1:78 f = U 6.2/64-66 (SD 14.11); see also **Ṭhāna S** (A 4.192/2:187-190), SD 14.12.

<sup>6</sup> As background reading to this section, see C Brenner, *The Mind in Conflict*, 1982:ch 5, esp p92.

<sup>7</sup> Based on Elsa Schmid-Kitsikis’ def: (ed A de Mijolla), *Macmillan International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 2005: 374; see also “Defense.” Further see Alf Gerlach, “The mechanisms of defence,” in M Elzer & A Gerlach (eds), *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, London: Karnac Books, 2014:68-74.

<sup>8</sup> **Neurosis** (or psychoneurosis) refers to any mental disorder characterized by significant anxiety or other distressing emotional symptoms, such as persistent and irrational fear, obsessive thoughts, compulsive acts, dissociative states, and somatic and depressive reactions. The symptoms do not involve gross personality disorganization, total lack of insight, or loss of contact with reality (cf psychosis). Most of the disorders that used to be called neuroses are now classified as “anxiety disorders.” **Psychosis**, on the other hand, is when our feelings, perception, intention, emotions or cognition are characterized by delusion, hallucination and significantly disorganized speech, interfering with one’s activities essential to daily living. (APA *Dictionary of Psychology* 2nd ed, 2015: neurosis. (APA *Dictionary of Psychology* 2nd ed, 2015: neurosis; psychosis)

<sup>9</sup> Def by Elsa Schmid-Kitsikis, ib 2005:374.

have the benefits of both systems, and find himself rising above his own professional limitations, who may even have a taste of true renunciation.<sup>10</sup>

What we understand as “**psychology**” is only one aspect (a mundane one at that) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> training (*sikkhā*) of the path, that is, the training in mental concentration (*samādhi, sikkhā*). The 1<sup>st</sup> aspect is the training in moral virtue (*sīla, sikkhā*). Building and refining our moral virtue and concentration, we work on to gain insight wisdom as the basis for spiritual awakening, the real goal of early Buddhism. [3.3.3.3]

**1.2.1.3** For the sake of a useful discussion of early Buddhism, we may see “defence mechanism” as a self-driven reaction, a compulsive rejection, of an external situation we see as threatening us in some way, or at least as being negative or unwholesome. On the positive side, this is often a natural response in a human being who desires happiness and progress. In other words, suffering and unsatisfactoriness are naturally undesirable; hence, we would, consciously or unconsciously, work to remove or lessen them.

The point remains, then, that, according to early Buddhism, “**defence mechanisms**” do not work in themselves, as some kind of self-contained mental activity, at least as they are envisioned in the psychodynamic tradition. However, the idea of psychological defence can help explain how our unconscious (the latent tendencies) [3.6.3.3] works on the preconscious (intentions that are wholesome or unwholesome).<sup>11</sup> [3.3.3.2]

**1.2.1.4** As we examine the idea of “defence mechanism” in this way, we may notice that it can be a misleading term. Firstly, according to early Buddhism, there is no part of our mind that functions specifically for “defence” and nothing else. Our mind simply works on the bases of **cognizing** sense-experiences and thoughts. Then, *re-cognizing*, in our **perceptions**, arouses sensations and **feelings** (affective reactions) in us. Cognizing and perceiving, we go on to **construct** reactions (conative tendencies) that grow within us into habits: we become reactive beings—creatures of karma.

This is where the idea of *defence mechanism* may fit in. Our mind or “self” works to reject or reduce what we see as painful; hence, undesirable. In fact, every aspect of this mind as “self-constructing” can be, and, often enough, is used for “self” defence. It is as if we are constantly building and repairing this house we call “self,” and defending it against threats and damages from outside. Hence, our notion of “self” functions in every way to defend its self-constructed reality. “Defence mechanism,” or simply “defence,” *should be understood in this manner* as used here in our commentary on the suttas.

**1.2.1.5** One of the commonest psychological defence mechanisms that we use is that of “**denial**.” In fact, all defensive actions are manifestations of denial in some form and depth. Charles Brenner, one of the most insightful psychodynamic theorists of recent times, observes that “every defense is a denial in the colloquial sense of the word. When its meaning is extended, as has been done, denial loses its specific psychoanalytic meaning and becomes a mere synonym for defence.”<sup>12</sup>

Although we can list a number of common defences, our capacity for psychological defence is as versatile as the ways in which we think and express ourselves. These defences become characteristic and stereotyped only when we are caught in a particular “**compromise formation**,”<sup>13</sup> such as when we have a negative desire that is simply unacceptable that we disguise it so that even we do not notice it.

<sup>10</sup> Renunciation pericope: (**Ānanda**) **Subha S** (D 10,1.7) n, SD 40a.13; explanation, SD 40a.1 (8.1.2). Meditation as renunciation: **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12,) SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2). Purpose of renunciation: **Danta, bhūmi S** (M 125,) SD 46.3; SD 46.15 (2.7.1.4); SD 66.13 (1).

<sup>11</sup> On the preconscious, see SD 17.8b esp (1.1.2; 2.2); SD 7.10 (3.3).

<sup>12</sup> C Brenner, *The Mind in Conflict*, 1982:92; see esp ch 5 Defense.

<sup>13</sup> **Compromise formation**, in psychoanalytic theory, a conscious form of a repressed wish or idea that has been modified or disguised, as in a dream or symptom, so as to be unrecognizable. Thus, it represents a compromise between the demands of the ego’s defenses and the unconscious wish. That wish is expressed in a disguised form (for example, hoarding money as a substitute for hoarding faeces). This serves to protect the person from the perceived

**1.2.1.6** A psychological defence is directed not only against *an unacceptable cue from others*, but it may also be targeted at what is seen as a source of our anxiety or depression, a disagreeable percept that we reject. Hence, the defence may be directed towards a thought or a feeling that is disagreeable, or both at the same time, usually the latter.

In the early Buddhist teaching of **the perceptual process**,<sup>14</sup> it is said that when we perceive an object as pleasant, we tend to *like* it; when we perceive it as unpleasant, we tend to *dislike* it; when we perceive it as being neither pleasant or unpleasant, we tend to *ignore* it.<sup>15</sup> When we pursue what we like, or when we reject what we dislike, we are likely to defend why we react in that manner in some kind of inner speech or a thought. This is, in fact, the process of **karma-formation** (*saṅkhārā*).<sup>16</sup>

Hence, in early Buddhist psychology, such defences do not disappear. In fact, they tend to **proliferate** (*papañceti*), driven on with a flow or flood of compulsive ideas. We only learn to lessen or end such drives (that's what they really are) when we mindfully see and accept them for what they really are with wisdom. For this, we need to know the relevant sutta teachings and apply the appropriate practices as a mindful process or a meditation, or through spiritual counselling.

### 1.2.2 The 8 types of persons

In his article, Johansson [1.1.3] analyzes **the 8 types of persons** [§§10-17] in terms of the “frustration” that psychoanalysts have found to be behind all psychological defence mechanisms.<sup>17</sup> The Buddha's key teaching is immanent suffering or existential unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), which is defined in the well-known statement: “to wish for something and not to obtain it is suffering” (*yam p'iccham na labhati tam pi dukkham*, D 2:305).

### 1.2.3 The various types of defence mechanisms [2.2]

In his study of the Sutta, Johansson identifies **6 types** of defence mechanisms that may be used to explain how the offending monks in this Sutta react to **frustration** or fear of failure, that is, by way of repression [§10], regression [§§13, 16], aggression [§11], projection [§12], compensation [§14], isolation [§§13, 15, 17] and denial [§16] [for details: 3]. “We see then,” concludes Johansson, “that nearly all of the defence mechanisms discussed by psychoanalytic writers have actually been discovered and described, although not explained and named, in this passage” (1983:19).<sup>18</sup> [2.2; 3]

In our discussions of these defences, we will also mention related defences, since all defences are rooted in denial [1.2.1.5], but manifest themselves in different ways. Examining these specific defences helps us gauge the nature and severity of the conditions behind each defence. We can then better understand those conditions and are able to correct them radically, down to their roots, not merely symptomatically.

## 1.3 “PSYCHOLOGICAL CASES” IN THE SUTTAS

**1.3.1** In other words, what we have here are examples of “**psychological cases**” analyzed by the Buddha himself. However, the Khaluṅka Sutta (A 8.14) merely lists the cases, comparing them to 8 kinds of intractable horses, representing negative emotional and spiritual states, without further comment. Most suttas of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, however, are, as a rule, often given only briefly, with the assumption that we should be familiar with related teachings in the preceding Nikāyas.

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feeling of anxiety, conscious or unconscious. APA *Dictionary of Psychology* 2015; *Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology* 1995. For refs, see *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* sv.

<sup>14</sup> On the perceptual process, see SD 17.3 (1.3); cf SD 57.25 (1.2.2).

<sup>15</sup> See (**Saḷāyatana**) **Hālidakkāni S** (S 35.130), SD 58.9.

<sup>16</sup> On **formations** or karma-formations, see **Saṅkhārā**, SD 17.6.

<sup>17</sup> On defence mechanisms, see SD 24.10b (2).

<sup>18</sup> For other similar passages where defence mechanisms are mentioned, see Johansson 1983:20 f.

Indeed, we find that many of the Buddha's longer discourses or sections from them, especially those of the Dīgha Nikāya and the Majjhima Nikāya, are "hypothetical case histories," as **Joy Manné** calls them.<sup>19</sup> In this sutta commentary, we will attempt to relate the explanations of the defences to other suttas where relevant. Furthermore, the explanations given here are also based on my understanding of the Buddha's teachings, relating them to historical and social situations in our own times and for the benefit of posterity.

### **1.3.2 Psychotherapy and Buddhism**

**1.3.2.1 Jeffrey B Rubin**, in his book, *Psychotherapy and Buddhism: Toward an integration*, in a section entitled, "What psychoanalysis offers Buddhism," writes:

My experience as a psychoanalyst and meditator convinces me that Buddhist explanations of resistance [to meditation] provide a necessary but incomplete account of what interferes with meditation practice. The problem, I believe, is this: Interferences to meditation are acknowledged although not fully clarified in Buddhism.

A classical Buddhist text dealing with eight ways people relate to frustration is illustrative. In "eight recalcitrant men and their eight defects" (Johansson, 1983, p 19), several defensive processes, eg, forgetfulness, aggression, projection, denial, and withdrawal are described but not explained. Why people utilize these strategies is not clarified and remains a mystery. (1996:134 f)

Rubin is, of course, right in stating that, in modern psychological terms, **the (Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta** (A 8.14) does not speak the language of psychodynamics, or even psychology. We could reverse the table and say that psychodynamics does not speak the language of moral training, concentration training and wisdom training that leads to mental focus as the basis for awakening. We are speaking of lotuses and daffodils: they each need different soil conditions and climate to grow. They both beautify Nature and our lives all the same.

We may say that lotus are *not* daisies, hinting that this is to the disadvantage of whichever flower we have or like. Prince Charming, the fairy tale says, makes every effort to find the perfect fit for the tiny glass slipper, and found Cinderella. We would not fret that Charming and Cinderella are not the same person! The point is that modern psychotherapy is, even now, taking a quantum leap, rising to new levels of examining, learning and healing the human mind on account of Oriental spirituality, especially early Buddhism. This should be the way that human learning and evolution progress. [3.3.1.2]

**1.3.2.2** Nevertheless, Rubin has a magnanimous purpose in writing his book. Chapter 4, ominously entitled "**The emperor of enlightenment may have no clothes**" (1996:83-96), is a succinct and sincere update on the western Buddhist approach to meditation specifically, and Buddhism generally. Essentially, he reminds us of the dangers of taking Buddhist teachers by way of their status as "enlightened teachers," which in the 1990s had led to profound sufferings and embarrassments for the Buddhists of north America with the sexual and financial scandals involving a Vajrayana tulku and Zen senseis. This reminder should be echoed in their graphic details: the "Emperors of Enlightenment" are indeed naked and horny, and that we should be ashamed of the fact, and clothe ourselves appropriately in moral virtue before teachers; above all, we should place the teaching above teachers.<sup>20</sup>

He also discusses the difficulties that psychologists and professionals face when they teach meditation. The impression we get is that the traditional Buddhist luminaries are not really effective teachers, since they neither know nor understand psychology (surely I am wrong). He seems confident that psychology has or

<sup>19</sup> Joy Manné, "Case histories from the Pali Canon I & II," JPTS 1995:1-128. See biblio for details.

<sup>20</sup> For a survey on these scandals, see **Bad friendship**, SD 64.17.

will have the solutions that haunt meditation, including our “resistance” to it (I guess this refers to the mental hindrances).<sup>21</sup>

The uncertain tone of my notes here is not that I doubt Rubin (I have no good reason to), but because I am neither a psychologist nor a professional meditation teacher (one who sees Buddhism or meditation as a profession or lineage status). For those of us who are concerned with Buddhism in its sterling quality, his book is full of the most commonsensical observations and valuable advice given from experience. They should be studied, discussed and heeded so that we do not repeat the mistakes and immoralities of the Emperors of Enlightenment, or make any such error, for that matter, in connection with meditation and Buddhism.

**1.3.2.3** Having said that, I do not envy the position of a psychologist or a professional. One simple reason is that academic and self-propelled professions of meditation and Buddhism have a shelf-life and an almost predictable trajectory. They start with childlike wonder for Buddhism and meditation; they court it with adolescent vigour; they harvest the wealth and wisdom of the field in unequal measures; the marriage then fails (“I’m not a Buddhist”) or tires (“Kill the Buddha!”); they then have to turn to some more promising diversions as the sun sets on their lives.

In the closing of her paper, “The Buddha’s influence in the therapy room,” Belinda Siew says:

“... it certainly does not require the practitioner to become a Buddhist. I often explain to people that ‘I don’t counsel as a Buddhist therapist but that I am informed by the Buddha’s teachings.’ What this means is that whenever appropriate, I incorporate Buddhist ideas and practices in counseling, ... they can complement and in some cases surpass Western therapies. ... I learn that if you encounter the Buddha in the therapy room ‘Kill him,’<sup>22</sup> for the Buddha in each of us is unfolding moment-to-moment.”  
(*Hakomi Forum* 18, summer 2007:17)

The “killing the Buddha” trope, well used by psychotherapists, tries to tell us that no meaning that comes from outside of our experience is real or beneficial: we need to understand our own mind in order to heal and master ourself. The question now is what do we do with the therapist after we have healed, or worse, when we don’t?<sup>23</sup>

**1.3.2.4** Like all academic fields before psychology, it is itself an evolving discipline (was it a science or an academic anatarabhava?). The point is that it is still growing. Thus, whatever we say about it is here-and-now at best. There was a time when many adored Freud, but more do not now. We remember and utter the names of some famous psychologists or strange mind-healing products, but most only blossom unheard in the academic desert. New mind-products are the tsunamis in the next generations. The paths of psychology lead but to the home, if mercifully dementia does not first blur the once brilliant minds.

The Buddha’s teaching, as a rule, primes us away from the comforts of home, to live independent lives in the space of the heart. The truth-language of early Buddhism has always been the same: it may not fully clarify why there is resistance to meditation, but when we love and live Buddhism as it is, early and true, then, we see for ourself what neither tongue of man nor angel can speak of; only our heart knows its own joy while the stranger only stands afar awondering. [3.1.3.2]

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<sup>21</sup> For a useful article on this central concept in psychoanalysis, see Hanni Scheid-Gerlach, “**Resistance**,” in Elzer & Gerlach (eds), *Psychoanalytic Psychoanalysis*, 2014:111-117. The closing of this article contains important notes on ethical aspects in psychotherapy.

<sup>22</sup> On the original Zen koan, see 64.17 (1.2.2).

<sup>23</sup> Further see S B Kopp, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!: The pilgrimage of psychotherapy patients*. Ben Lomond, CA [later, Palo Alto]: Science and Behavior Books, 1972. Repr Toronto, NY, London: Bantam Books, 1976.

### 1.3.3 What the Sutta is really about

From what we have discussed—*the nature of defence mechanisms* themselves [1.2.1] and the cases of *the reactions of the offending monks* [3.7.2.2]—we must understand that *neither the (Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta* (A 8.14) *nor* Buddhist psychology is about defence mechanisms. The Sutta lists the faults of monastics when questioned in matters of the Dharma or the Vinaya before the sangha; that they should be amenable to instruction on account of having requested **the tutelage** (*nissaya*) as part of their ordination procedure.

As interestingly as Buddhist psychology may describe or explain how an offender thinks, whether they are actually “defence mechanisms” or not, is not an issue at all in Dharma training. The purpose of **Buddhist psychology** is that of knowing, shaping and freeing the mind so that we are able to attain mindfulness, if not dhyana, for the sake of gaining deep insight into true reality leading to the path of awakening.

## 2 Defence mechanisms in the Sutta

### 2.1 AN OFFENCE MAY BE DONE CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY

**The (Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta** (A 8.14) records the Buddha as giving a list of cases of monks accused of various offences. The monks seem to have intentionally (*sañcicca*) committed the offence, and may be either conscious (*sacittaka*) of it or unconscious (*acittaka*) of it. Whether he has consciously or unconsciously committed the offence, but *refusing to admit it*, they are guilty of a Vinaya offence.

We are not told whether the accused monk has actually committed those offences he is accused of, or he has not committed them but *thinks* he has. But if he *refuses to admit the offence*, and defends himself—then, he is putting up a **psychological defence mechanism**. In either case, he does have a flaw in his moral character: in the former case, he is a recalcitrant offender; in the latter, a liar.

### 2.2 SUMMARY OF DEFENCES MENTIONED IN THE SUTTA

	<u>the accused monk</u>	<u>defence mechanism</u>	
[§10]	(1) pleads forgetfulness	repression	(1) [3.1]
[§11]	(2) “Think about what you should say!”	aggression	(1) [3.3]
[§12]	(3) “You make amends first!”	projection	[3.4]
[§13]	(4) evades the issue with various others	isolation	(1) [3.6]
	(5) raises unrelated issues, shows anger, hate and bitterness	regression	[3.2]
	(6) shows anger, hate and bitterness	aggression	(2) [3.3]
[§14]	(7) speaks before the sangha, gesticulating his arms	compensation	[3.5]
[§15]	(8) ignores his accuser, and wanders where he wishes	isolation	(2) [3.6]
[§16]	(9) “I have not committed any offence!”	denial	[3.7]
	(10) by his silence, vexes the sangha	repression	(2) [3.1]
[§17]	(11) gives up the training and returns to the lay life	isolation	(3) [3.6]

## 3 Defence mechanisms in real life

### 3.1 REPRESSION

#### 3.1.1 The defence mechanism of repression

**3.1.1.1** The APA *Dictionary of Psychology* defines **repression** as follows: “In classical psychoanalytic theory and other forms of depth psychology, [repression is] the basic defense mechanism that excludes painful experiences and unacceptable impulses from consciousness. Repression operates on an unconscious level as a protection against anxiety produced by objectionable sexual wishes, feelings of hostility, and ego-



threatening experiences and memories of all kinds. It also comes into play in many other forms of defense, as in denial [3.7], in which individuals avoid unpleasant realities by first trying to repress them and then negating them when repression fails.” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015)

**3.1.1.2** The psychoanalytic idea of repression fits familiarly with the early Buddhist teaching of **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*), the unconscious, deep within our karmic being. Indeed, it is the source of our karmic being that feeds on our daily experiences [3.6.3.3]. However, repression as described above seems to fit in with only the negating aspect of the **feeling** aggregate, when we perceive a sense-experience as being disagreeable; hence, as being unpleasant.

The unawakened worldling, as a rule, will, in diverse ways, as defined by repression, reject or deny such an experience. But then there is the other side of the coin: there is the “attraction mechanism” (here, “mechanism” simply meaning *intention*), a compulsive drive to draw in, accumulate what is deemed agreeable; hence, pleasant and desirable. This is, of course, **sensual lust** (*kāma-rāga*), the slave that feeds the unconscious, consolidating it with even more sensuality.

This **sensuality**—the urobolic feeding of the senses—that creates our being, our sense of self. This is what rumbles ominously below our public mask, the repressive yet compelling drives rooted in our unconscious, expressed through our body, speech and silence. This is the negative essence of the karmically reactive life of the uninformed unawakened being. [4.2.1.3]

### **3.1.2 The repressed person**

**3.1.2.1** In the Khaluṅka Sutta (A 8.14), we see **repression** manifesting itself on 2 occasions of defence by the monastic accused of an offence. On the 1<sup>st</sup> occasion, the offender pleads forgetfulness [§10] and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> occasion, “by his **silence**, he vexes the sangha” [§16]. The monk, accused of an offence, anxiously reacts against that accusation, refusing to accept to maintain the status quo of his sense of self. Hence, it becomes a struggle of the offender’s old self confronted by the revealing searchlight of the Vinaya that invites *growth* and *change* into a new Dharma-wise person.

**3.1.2.2** In the Sutta’s 1<sup>st</sup> case of a monastic offender’s defensive reaction to his accusers, it is said that:

That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, **strongly objecting**<sup>24</sup> to the accusation, pleads forgetfulness, “I do not remember! I do not remember!” (*na sarāmi na sarāmīti asatiyā ‘va nibbeṭheti*). [§10]

In his paper, Johansson remarks that “To be reproved by the order of monks is of course a frustration, and this monk replies that he does not remember. This is a defence, and it may be that he has really forgotten. In this case we have the defence mechanism of **repression**. If his defence is a conscious lie, it is of course still a defence but not a defence mechanism in the psychoanalytic sense, since these are always unconscious transformations of forces in the id.” (Johansson 1983:18).

**3.1.2.3** On the 2<sup>nd</sup> occasion of defence through **repression**, the monk accused of an offence:

strongly objects (and) says,  
‘But I have not committed any offence! I have not committed any offence!’  
And by his **silence**,<sup>25</sup> he vexes the sangha. [§16]

<sup>24</sup> “Strongly objects,” *paṭippharati*. The Pali word has 2 senses: it connotes “to effulge, shine forth, stream out, emit,” and figuratively denotes “to splurt out, bring against, object” (PED).

<sup>25</sup> On this kind of silence, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (2.1).

Evidently, an act of **repression** is involved here, which may have created a certain tenseness which makes him silent, and this annoys his fellow monks. He refuses to discuss the problem, since he dares not even direct his own consciousness to it (Johansson 1983:19). His silence may have resulted from a sense of shame or pride, or from the fact that he actually believes that he is innocent.

**3.1.2.4** A person with an obsessive compulsive tendency, sees meditation as a kind of cumulative achievement. However, he fears failing in his practice. In his effort to cope with this conflicting thought, he repeatedly forgets that he has not meditated but remains unaware of forgetting. Remembering might arouse guilt because he has failed to live up to his image of being a dedicated meditator.

During a counselling session, he is told that meditation is just like **breathing**: we do not fear that we are not minding the breath. There are occasions when we forget to note that we are breathing. Once we are aware of this, we bring the mind back to the breath. He is told that part of the meditation is knowing that we forget, accepting it and simply making a conscious effort to feel the peace in simply watching the breath.

### **3.1.3 Dealing with repression**

**3.1.3.1** The more significant issue here is not that the accused monk needs to be punished. Far from this, his accusers are simply acting from their understanding of the Dharma-Vinaya and faith in it. They notice that the monk has lapsed from its standards, and is thus weakened, in danger of failing in the training. He needs to be re-empowered by the sangha. The corrective measures will remind him that he is not alone as the offending “self” has conjured up for him, but that he is a living and growing part of a spiritual community dedicated to the attaining of the path of awakening and nirvana.

**3.1.3.2** Examining the reaction of the accused monk in terms of a defence mechanism may be interesting from a psychological viewpoint. Certainly, a psychologist or the general reader may be drawn to looking deeper into the Sutta for what it is, rather than as a mere foil for a psychoanalytic idea. Such ideas evolve, change, or are even rejected, in due course. But this simple point of a lapsed monk being admonished by other monks—and similar accounts in the suttas—will continue to be relevant and beneficial in time to come, for as long as these classic texts exist. [1.3.2.4]

## **3.2 REGRESSION**

### **3.2.1 The defence mechanism of regression**

**3.2.1.1** The APA *Dictionary of Psychology* defines **regression** as “a return to a prior, lower state of cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning. This term is associated particularly with psychoanalytic theory,<sup>26</sup> denoting a situation in which the individual reverts to immature behavior or to an earlier stage of psychosexual development when threatened with overwhelming external problems or internal conflicts.” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015, sv)

**3.2.1.2** The defence that is regression can be as *simple* as someone bursting into tears to solicit sympathy or be forgiven for a misdeed, or as *sophisticated* as getting into a trance when one feels threatened in any way. As an example of the latter, there was the case of a Malaysian elder who let his house be used as a village Buddhist temple. For effective running of the temple, a committee was formed. However, on account

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<sup>26</sup> Freud explains repression as occurring when one excludes from awareness some painful aspect of reality and then remains unaware of the exclusion. For details, see *Macmillan International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* 2005: Repression.

of misreading the committee's efforts, the elder, fearing that he might lose his house (on not being consulted regarding the proposed changes), sat on the floor, gesticulating himself and kicking his legs about, went into a half-weeping trance-like state. The committee members were terrified by the elder's performance. When the elder was calmly reassured by the temple monk-advisor that he (the elder) would never lose the temple premises, he happily emerged from his trance as if the whole affair did not occur (**denial**).

### **3.2.2 The regressing person**

**3.2.2.1** In the Sutta, we see **regression** manifesting itself in the 5<sup>th</sup> example of defence, when the monastic offender:

“strongly objects (and) ...

“**raises unrelated matters**, shows anger, hate and bitterness.” [§13]

According to Johansson, “This man evidently finds no intelligent defence but reverts to a rather childish and disorganized behaviour. This is what the psychoanalysts call **regression**, although there are also aggressive elements [3.3.2.3].” (Johansson 1983:18)

**3.2.2.2** Regression is usually expressed in childish actions, giving the impression that we are incapable of thinking or acting as an adult; hence, we would not be held responsible for our actions, or would not have to go through the threatening situation. A woman who was forced into an impending marriage to a man she disliked, dressed herself as a young girl with long pony-tails, and sat down on the floor, making child-like sounds and playing with toys.

Technically, only when this girl is actually unconscious of the motivation behind her childish acts would it be a *defence mechanism*. On the other hand, when she cunningly acts this out convincingly before her parents who are uninformed about such a defence, we may say that she has used a clever ruse or skilful means!

### **3.2.3 Dealing with regression**

**3.2.3.1** Psychological defence is not always a bad thing, especially when it is a means of coping with a situation of which we are not fully in control, but which causes us great fear or unhappiness. Here is a story about a fan of a popular meditation teacher who was a “helicopter parent” who insisted that her young son meditated everyday. This made the poor boy very unhappy because he had difficulty doing so.

To free himself from this tedious routine and his mother's unbearable pious threats, he started to shake his head about during the sitting, and sporadically burst out giggling with eyes closed; or, he would glare wide-eyed into open space and uttered, “Ghost! Ghost! ...” He did this routine only when he was sure that his mother was watching him.

When his worried mother asked why he did so, he hung his head and explained that he laughed because he saw Jim Carrey (the movie comedian), and cried in fear because he saw a preta lurking by. This was enough for his mom to stop forcing him to meditate as a daily routine.

Strictly speaking, this is more of a Buddhist skillful means with elements of regression, especially when the boy is highly intelligent and knows how to outwit his unwise mother. Morally, no lying is involved since there is no unwholesome thought behind his action. The idea was to impress on the mother the danger of forcing a delicate mental exercise on someone who is unwilling or unready.

**3.2.3.2** A childish behaviour may be a symptom of a regressive defence, but a childlike conduct is not. When communicating with children, we would often act out in some childlike manner to reach out to their level. While childishness entails ignorance, even greed, hate or delusion, or all three, childlikeness usually

exudes innocence, even a simple goodness. A reliable rule of thumb: when we are surprised by goodness, we tend to be *child-like*; when we do show desire, hate or delusion, we are *childish*.

### 3.3 AGGRESSION

#### 3.3.1 The defence mechanism of aggression

**3.3.1.1 Aggression** is any behaviour aimed at harming others physically or psychologically. While anger is directed at *overcoming the target* but not necessarily through harm or destruction, aggression is *often violent and destructive*. As **affective aggression**, it is an emotional response that is targeted toward the perceived source of the distress but may be displaced onto other people or objects if the disturbing agent cannot be attacked (this, then, is called **displaced aggression**). It may occur as an unconscious reaction to frustration, or as a socially learned defence.<sup>27</sup>

**3.3.1.2** If modern psychological theory tends to recognize symptoms (such as those of defence mechanisms), **Buddhist psychology** goes down to their roots. If modern psychology works to give symptomatic healing, early Buddhist psychology attempts a **radical cure**, that is, to expose and remove the roots of deficiency and suffering. Clinical psychology works through vicarious therapy, dependent on a therapist; Buddhist psychology is about self-healing, where “self” is a synonym for the mind as well as independent effort.

A key teaching in Buddhist self-healing and mental health is that of recognizing **wrong thought**—sensual desire, ill will and violence—and to uproot them. Since these root defilements lurk unnoticed deep in our unconscious, they demand a great amount of effort and time to be removed. However, in Buddhist **moral training**, our constant task is to notice and remove greed, hate and delusion in our **preconscious** mind, so that we act with *charity, love and wisdom*. In short, *aggression* has no place in the Buddhist life, even as a psychological defence.

#### 3.3.2 The aggressive person

**3.3.2.1** The (Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta presents 2 cases of defence by **aggression**: the 1<sup>st</sup> is mentioned in §11 [3.3.2.2] and the 2<sup>nd</sup>, in §13, in connection with other defences: isolation [3.2] and regression [3.6], too. This shows that a defensive state may involve multiple defences. This is simply because a defense is an emotional state, often negative: it is a mental storm which never rains but pours!

In §13, the monk, strongly objecting to the accusation against him, becomes defensive in the following ways:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| (1) “(he) evades the issue with various others,” | <b>isolation</b>  |
| (2) “raises unrelated issues,” and               | <b>regression</b> |
| (3) “anger, hate and bitterness.”                | <b>aggression</b> |

Notice how these defensive reactions are interrelated. In trying to stop the accusation,

- (1) he isolates himself by cutting himself off from his accusers;
- (2) he regresses (tries to return to the previous status quo) by pushing aside the issue; and
- (3) reacts aggressively, perhaps threatening violence should anyone pursue the matter.

**3.3.2.2** In terms of **feeling** (*vedanā*) or sense-experience, there is really only one defense here: that of **denial** [1.2.1.5]. When we are unmindful, our perceptual process works in 3 predictable ways:

<sup>27</sup> APA *Dictionary of Psychology* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015: aggression; also *Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2001 sv.

- when we recognize an object as agreeable, we *affirm* it (we desire it);
- when we see it as disagreeable, we *deny* it;
- when we fail to recognize the object as agreeable or disagreeable, we *ignore* it.

We should then note that these are 3 aspects of **perception** (*saññā*) that are closely interrelated and are all manifestations of craving (*taṇhā*) rooted in ignorance (*avijjā*), by which we *deny* true reality. When we have craving, we *desire* someone or something; this means that there are people or things that we do *not* desire, which we *reject* or *deny*. When we are unable to measure our experience by our craving scale, we become *bored, depressed, mentally uneasy*. This is also a form of **denial**.

**3.3.2.3** In the Sutta (A 8.14), we see **aggression** manifesting itself as the 2<sup>nd</sup> case of defence [2.2]; as aggression, this is the 1<sup>st</sup> occasion, when the monk accused of an offence,

strongly objects (and) says,

“What is there to **your foolish and ignorant talk**? Think about what you should say!”<sup>28</sup> [§11]

“This is evidently,” concludes Johansson, “a case of **aggression**, ie the most original and ‘natural’ way of reacting to frustration.” (Johansson 1983:18). Here, “frustration” means a feeling of being threatened from others against what we are, against what we have, or what we want to do. We feel that we are “cut off” from our status, property or actions.

Our rationale for defence against a perceived threat may be that others do not really know who or what we really are, or what we are thinking, whatever it may be: this is but their “foolish and ignorant talk.” We feel entitled to have our way: we put ourself before and above others. However, the person here is a **monastic** who has pledged to submit himself to the sangha as his community of co-practitioners, and to seniors from whom he receives constant tutelage (*nissaya*).<sup>29</sup> [3.3.3]

**3.3.2.4** The 2<sup>nd</sup> occasion of **aggression** presented in the Sutta is when the monastic offender retorts to his accusers,

strongly objecting to the accusation, ...

raises unrelated matters, and shows anger, hate and bitterness. [§13]

This is bare aggression, that is, *anger*, but it is attended by possible *violent retaliation*, on account of the monk’s unhappiness with being accused by others. In a significant sense, there is nothing *psychological* (or merely psychological) about such a situation: they are all related to monastic discipline, that is, the Vinaya. They are included in a sutta (A 8.14) to remind us that the Vinaya protects the purity and efficacy of the Dharma as teaching and practice. When we are accused of an offence—meaning we have broken a Vinaya rule or misunderstood a teaching—then, the sangha will act to heal us or rectify the situation.

This means that **the sangha** is a living and proactive community of Dharma-spirited individuals acting in common wisdom and harmony. Sadly, we almost do not see today such living concern and responses by the sangha: organized Buddhism has become a free market of competitive religious businesses, each out to win

<sup>28</sup> *Codakam̐ yeva paṭippharati “kin nu kho tuyham̐ bālassa avyattassa bhaṇitena, tvam pi nāma bhaṇitabbar̐ mañ-ñasī ti*, lit “What is there by speaking with your foolishness and ignorance? Think about what should be said!”; alt tr: “What right have you to talk, an ignorant fool? Why do you think you must speak?” “This is evidently a case of **aggression**, ie the most original and ‘natural’ way of reacting to frustration.” (Johansson 1983:18).

<sup>29</sup> On *nissaya* as the basic 5-year monastic tutelage, see SD 40a.8 (4.2.2.3). See the case of the 21<sup>st</sup>-cent monk Brah-mavamso, who was excommunicated, but rejected the decision of the forest sangha: SD 1.9 (8-10).

the patronage of devotees and fans. The modernist monastic, unlike Ānanda before the 1<sup>st</sup> council, sees himself as an entitled individualist against the sangha, upholding Dharma truth and Vinaya standards.<sup>30</sup>

### **3.3.3 Dealing with aggression**

**3.3.3.1** Psychologically, **aggressive behaviour** is often used to claim status, precedent or access to an object or territory. Although aggression is usually expressed *physically*, verbal affronts, especially those aimed at causing psychological harm, also constitute aggression; as also fantasies of hurting others. The key component in aggression is that it is intentional (rooted in greed, hate or delusion), whether conscious (*sa-cittaka*) or unconscious (*acittaka*). Only accidental or unintentional injuries are not regarded as aggression.

**3.3.3.2** Although aggression may seem to be inherent in a person, it is usually learned or one is inducted to react aggressively when pushed into a defensive corner. In Buddhist training, aggression may be corrected with **social learning** or moral training (*sīla sikkhā*), when we see and accept the difference between unwholesome acts (*akusala kamma, patha*) and wholesome ones (*kusala kamma, patha*), on account of their karmic consequences, that is, personal accountability.<sup>31</sup>

A basic appreciation of such social learning is then consolidated with **cognitive training** or skills in mindfulness and meditative concentration (*samādhi sikkhā*). This kind of training shows us the way to not only master our own body and speech, but also, in wholesome ways, influence others to be well disposed towards us (through lovingkindness cultivation).

**3.3.3.3** Both Buddhist social learning and cognitive training prepare us with training in **existential insight** or wisdom (*paññā sikkhā*) so that we have a better direct understanding of the true nature of reality. We then understand that aggression is a conditioned reaction. When we understand the conditions bringing about the aggression, and work with those conditions, we will correct, even uproot, that aggression. This is one of the profound benefits of the reflection of impermanence, and experiencing its positive effects.<sup>32</sup>

## **3.4 PROJECTION**

### **3.4.1 The defence mechanism of projection**

**3.4.1.1** From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, **projection** is an intrapsychic process that creates or shapes a perception (or a collection of perceptions) with reference to an object in the outside world, which, although the subject believes he or she is perceiving it “objectively,” is actually being perceived according to the subject’s own conditions and biases; the most interesting case is when this object is a real person (sometimes called an external object).

Passing through all possible intermediary cases, this ranges from cases where the perception is entirely invented, in the absence of any concomitant sensory reference (as in hallucinations, but also nighttime dreams), to cases involving the subject’s “colouration” of an otherwise objective perception (for example, an unknown person’s attitude is perceived as being vaguely hostile by one person, while another perceives it as being fairly friendly).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> On Ānanda’s acceptance of the sangha’s decision on his “wrong” acts while he was the Buddha’s personal attendant, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, ch 6.28 Ānanda’s “trial.”

<sup>31</sup> See **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7; **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,7.2-12), SD 3.9; SD 4.13 (2.2.3).

<sup>32</sup> See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

<sup>33</sup> See *Macmillan International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 2005 sv Projection.

**3.4.1.2** In psychodynamic theory, **projection** is the process by which we attribute our own positive or negative traits, affects and impulses to another person or group. This is often a defense mechanism in which unpleasant or unacceptable impulses, stressors, ideas, affects or responsibilities are attributed to others. For example, we may project a conflicted notion by expressing anger, charging, “I hate him” (the real situation) to “He hates me” (the projection).

Such defensive patterns are often used to justify prejudice or evade responsibility. In more severe cases, this may worsen into paranoid delusions in which, for example, we blame others for our problems, believing that they are plotting against us. We may be conscious or unconscious of our defence by projection.<sup>34</sup>

In Buddhist terms, it is still a deliberate karmic act with its commensurate potential. Hence, it is clearly to our advantage to understand this process, and work to ensure that we habitually keep our mind wholesome, so that we will act wholesomely even unconsciously.

### **3.4.2 The projecting person**

**3.4.2.1** In the Sutta, we see **projection** manifesting itself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> case of defence, when the monastic offender, strongly objects (and) says,

“**You make amends first!**” [§12].

When we do not recognize an undesirable motive in ourself but accuse others of having it, it is called **projection**. The Sutta gives a very clear example of this mechanism. (Johansson 1983:18).

This is also an example of the logical fallacy of “**tu quoque**” (Latin, “You, too”), where a criticism is answered by another criticism, instead of a counter-argument. Basically, this is claiming that “You are as bad as I am!” which is really a “lose-lose” situation, and thus is not helpful at all. Defences are unhelpful, even harmful, psychologically and spiritually, when they prevent us from *learning more about ourself so that we grow as a person*. However, they can be helpful and healing when they help us cope with a negative situation which would otherwise harm us emotionally or incapacitate us socially, or the defence is of a positive nature. [3.5.1.2]

### **3.4.3 Dealing with projection**

**3.4.3.1** We have noted that when we resort to projection as a defence, we fail to see our own unwholesome mental state, which may be greed, hate or delusion. This is karma working in us, and karma works as long as there is an **intention** (that is, a state of greed, hate or delusion). Whether we are conscious of this or not, the karma is potent; it may fruit not just one more time, but whenever the condition is right. Sow a deed, harvest a habit; sow a habit, reap a destiny.

**3.4.3.2** As a psychological defence, **displacement** is when we fear or hate a weakness we have, or we are blamed or reprimanded (usually unjustly) by someone in a position of power (like our boss or a guru). Out of frustration, we scold or show aggression towards someone our junior, our spouse, our students, or children.

However, when we attribute a flaw or issue we see in ourself onto someone else; or, we identify with something negative that we perceive in another—this is called **projective identification**. Take the case of an affable man whom a foreign woman befriended and married. Once they had a child, she left him. This deeply frustrated the jilted man.

When he heard that a lay teacher had given up monkhood after a decade living a celibate life, and got married, he sharply rebuked him for being “weak”: “What! After a decade on monastic training, you still

<sup>34</sup> See APA *Dictionary of Psychology* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015: projection 1.

cannot be celibate!” He has *projected* his own failure to be celibate (thus letting the woman use and then jilt him) onto the ex-monk.

**3.4.3.3** To overcome or prevent such projections and identifications, we begin by mindfully accepting our fault or negativity for what it is, that is, it is simply a thought. We need to see our own goodness and believe in our own potential for good. Further, it helps to consolidate our own self-worth by seeing and rejoicing in the goodness of others. Some humour—learning to laugh at these “antics” of life—helps us to defuse their negative element, so that they become valuable lessons for us.

**3.4.3.4** By “**not owning the pain**”—not using “I, me, mine”<sup>35</sup> as far as possible in describing our negative perceptions—it is easier for us to see and accept our **projection** just as it is. We examine it in our conscious mind of clarity: we notice whether it is rooted in greed, in hate or in delusion. This is like “knowing Māra”: he is expelled simply by knowing him for what he really is<sup>36</sup> [4.5.3.1]. It remains a problem when we reject its reality: then, it remains *unconscious*, but still is working its effect on us, pulling the strings of our actions. We become the puppet of our own projections.

Once we see our projection for what it really is, we are conscious of it; we *know* our mind, we know ourself in the moment. That moment then passes, and we know it. We do not keep living in the past, dragging it along, projecting it into the present, following us into the future, haunting us all life long. With mindfulness, we free ourselves from the projection; we see the true reality of the situation.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.5 COMPENSATION

#### 3.5.1 The defence mechanism of compensation

**3.5.1.1** Psychologically, **compensation** is a substitution or development of strength or capability in one area to offset real or imagined deficiency in another. This may be referred to as **overcompensation** when the substitute behaviour exceeds what might actually be necessary in terms of level of compensation for the deficiency. Hence, a strong sense of *inferiority* or *low esteem* may make us compensate it through narcissistic behaviour by drawing attention to ourself in overt or in subtle ways.<sup>38</sup> [3.5.3.1]

**3.5.1.2** When compensation is consciously made, it may be a positive reaction in mitigating the effects of a weakness or deficiency: this is known as compensatory mechanism or **sublimation** in psychoanalytic terminology. For example, it can be an important component of graceful aging because it reduces the negative effects of cognitive and physical decline associated with the aging process. In this case, the compensatory effort should be intended with a wholesome mind expressed through wholesome acts and speech.

#### 3.5.2 The compensating person

**3.5.2.1** In the Sutta, we see **compensation** manifesting itself in the 6<sup>th</sup> case of defence, when the offender:

strongly objects and  
“speaks before the sangha, **gesticulating his arms**” [§14].

<sup>35</sup> On disowning the pain, see **Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 61,17), SD 3.10; SD 26.9 (4.1.2).

<sup>36</sup> See **(Māra) Samiddhi S** (S 4.22), SD 36.11.

<sup>37</sup> Further on the defence of projection, see SD 24.10b (2.4).

<sup>38</sup> See *APA Dictionary of Psychology* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015: compensation 1.



Johansson observes: “It is not mentioned what this monk had to say, so the Buddha probably just wanted to draw the attention to his performance. Probably the monk wanted to make a good impression by an imposing performance; in this way he could make his fellow monks forget the real issue, ie his offense. The order of monks admires and has use for a good speaker and can, therefore, disregard minor offences. Such an attempt to hide a weakness by a good achievement in a different field is what we call **compensation**.” (Johansson 1983:18)

Ironically, the accused monk, in gesticulating himself (as a psychological defence), only affirms the fact that he lacks understanding of the Vinaya, or worse, that he chooses to ignore the rules, or in his unconscious drive to defend himself, he simply forgets about the monastic rules against gesticulating (*bahu-p,-pacāḷaka*)<sup>39</sup> in public.<sup>40</sup>

**3.5.2.2** A famous case of **sublimation**—where a controversial aspect of person is directed towards a positive end, is that of the gay US poet, Walt Whitman (1819-1892), who spent much time, from late 1862, tending devotedly to the wounded soldiers of the Union army during the American Civil War (1861-1865). Many were very young wounded and frightened soldiers, a high number of whom had to be amputated in some way, others died on account of their pre-antiseptic conditions.<sup>41</sup>

Sublimation, then, is a positive form of defence where our difficulties are channelled towards something constructive. The unhappy lives of artists, musicians and dancers thus often find joyful expression and release through art, music and dance. Sports is another medium of transforming our negative energies, especially aggression, into something physically and socially constructive.

**The Tāla,puṭa Sutta** (S 42.2) records the Buddha as stating that **stage-acting**, in fact, performance of any kind, that arouses any of the unwholesome roots (greed, hate, delusion) in us, is wrong livelihood, with bad karmic consequences. However, when such performances inspire charity, love (and also ruth, joy and peace), and wisdom in the audience, it is wholesome; hence, a right livelihood. This is understandable since acting can only *sublimate* our negative traits into something positive through the wholesome.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.5.3 Manifestations of compensation

**3.5.3.1 Overcompensation** can occur when we think that we are lacking or have failed in some area, that is, we have a sense of *inadequacy*, personal or social. Buddhists who are told of the “power” or “superiority” of Abhidhamma studies may take it up zealously, and, in due course, even become Abhidhamma gurus. Such a compensating person may expect others to show him respect, but he painfully lacks friendliness and warmth, and is intolerant of those who disagree with him. [4.5.2.3]

**3.5.3.2 Undercompensation**, on the other hand, can occur when we fail to overcome some shortcoming (perceived or real), and we become overly engaged in some ways of gaining empowerment. Pained by lack of parental warmth or by unrequited love, we may constantly crave for the attention and approval of a father-figure or authority-figure like a Buddhist teacher or religious guru.

Such a situation is also called **transference**, that is, a certain desirable quality in a parent (especially love) which we fail to get, is projected onto the authority-figure mentioned and we crave his attention and company. When that authority-figure returns the feelings, it is called **counter-transference**.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Bāhu*, “arms,” + *pacāḷa*, “swaying, swinging”: In **Pacāḷa S** (A 7.58), SD 4.11, *pacāḷa* refers to nodding and bodily swaying when sleepy during sitting meditation. Broadly the word includes the action of gesticulating.

<sup>40</sup> Sekh 11-20. The training in self-restraint and mindfulness clearly implies that monastics should be well restrained in regards with their body and limbs.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/anc.00156.html#r32>.

<sup>42</sup> See **Tāla,puṭa S** (S 42.2), SD 20.8.

<sup>43</sup> On transference, see SD 17.8c (8.4.1.1); SD 19.2a (2.5.2); SD 24.10b (2); SD 64.17 (3.1).

**3.5.3.3 Displacement** may arise by itself or in connection with compensation. Suppose we overcompensate our perceived inadequacy [3.5.3.2] by being close to a famous guru, zealously promoting his wisdom, compassion and greatness. When we think that the guru does not like us enough, we may react with overt anger, even aggression, to others whom we see as vulnerable or lacking the qualities we have or desire.

A common overcompensation seen in pious Buddhists with significant social inadequacy is the habit of attributing **arhathood** to those monks (they are usually monks). Should anyone point out any weakness in that “sage” or “saint,” or even disagree with him, that accuser is warned by the former that he is “slandering a sage, ... creating hell karma ... ,” and so on. [3.5.3.4]

**3.5.3.4** Furthermore, Buddhists who have been unhappily tolerating long periods, even generations, of being an “inferior” or servile subculture, first dominated by foreign colonialism, then, by a society where many see a particular culture as superior, may compensate by regarding that foreign (say white-skinned) monks and nuns are “better than local ones.”

This is also known as **the “Pinkerton syndrome,”** that is, the tendency (seen even today in some Asian Singaporeans, for example) to be favourably disposed towards, or prejudiced in favour of, Caucasians to the detriment of those of local origin and of other ethnic origins.<sup>44</sup> This “measuring” (due to “conceit,” *māna*),<sup>45</sup> is actually a symptom of the defence of **displacement** [3.4.3.2], when, unconscious of their own feeling of inadequacy, they look down on locals, for example, as being unintelligent, unreliable, unsophisticated, etc. [3.4.3.2]

**3.5.3.5** A very interesting type of overcompensation is to actually **identify** with those we see as our aggressors, even those who threaten our lives. The most notorious form of this identification was seen in the hostages who actually showed signs of loyalty, even admiration, for their captors (robbers of the Kreditbanken at Norrmalmstorg in Sweden, 1973). Such a defence is rooted in an unconscious drive for survival by cooperating with the aggressors.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, we are also likely to attribute a flaw or issue we have onto someone else; we identify with something negative that we perceive in another. This is called **projective identification**. [3.4.3.2]

### **3.5.4 Buddhism as compensation**

**3.5.4.1 The (Dasaka) Jāṇussoṇī Sutta** (A 10.177) is an instructive discourse related to the psychological defence of **compensation**, one that is of profound significance in the psychology of religion. The Sutta thesis is this: *those who do charitable work but are immoral* will still enjoy their appropriate karmic fruitions: giving also bears its fruits. But there is a karmic catch.

Such a person who habitually breaks the moral precepts—killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct; lying, slandering, using harsh speech, talking frivolously; covetous, malevolent, holding false—*but is a donor* of food, garlands, ointments, dwelling and other suitable offerings to good religious practitioners. After death, he will be reborn amongst *animals and receive food, drink, garlands and various adornments*. In other words, they will be reborn as pets or well treated animals.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> On the Pinkerton syndrome, see SD 19.2a (2.3.2).

<sup>45</sup> On *māna*, see **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a.

<sup>46</sup> A similar defence mechanism, rooted in the unconscious drive to identify with a dominant culture or religion, is the phenomenon of “Christmas Buddhists” in late 21<sup>st</sup> century Singapore and to some extent, Malaysia. On both these extreme cases of defence, see SD 24.10b (2.3).

<sup>47</sup> A 10.177/5:269-273 (SD 2.6a).

**3.5.4.2** This teaching makes perfect sense when we see today, how, for example, celebrity priests and popular lay leaders, do a lot of “good works” of charity, social works of benefitting the public, but they are, in reality, immoral people, who do not keep even to the basic moral precepts. These immoral people make a public show of their good works to compensate, as it were, for their serious lack of morality. According to the Sutta, such people will be reborn as well-cared-for animals.<sup>48</sup>

**3.5.4.3** On religion as defence mechanism, see SD 24.10b (2) esp (2.4.2).

### 3.6 ISOLATION

#### 3.6.1 The defence mechanism of isolation

**3.6.1.1** In psychoanalytic theory, a defense mechanism that relies on keeping unwelcome thoughts and feelings from forming associative links with other thoughts and feelings, with the result that the unwelcome thought is rarely activated. When we separate our emotions or feelings from a certain action, it may be a psychological defence of isolation.

On a deeper level, “**isolation**” as a defense mechanism may characterize obsessional neurosis. An experience, impression or thought is rejected or broken by means of pauses, rituals, magical words, or other such devices. When such a reaction is habitual, we are likely to become socially isolated, too, when others have difficulties communicating with us. Hence, it is vital to notice these signs and correct them immediately.

**3.6.1.2 Compartmentalization**, like isolation [3.5.1.1], is a defense mechanism in which thoughts and feelings that seem to conflict or to be incompatible with oneself are isolated from each other in separate and apparently impermeable psychic compartments. An example of compartmentalization is when a habitually dishonest salesman who has no qualms cheating old folks, spends Sundays or holy days in some superpious ritual of accumulating merits. Or a successful professional may evade paying huge sums in taxes, but makes generous, well-publicised donations on strategic occasions. [4.2.4]

#### 3.6.2 The isolated person

**3.6.2.1** In the Sutta, we see **isolation** manifesting itself thrice:

- (1) in the 4<sup>th</sup> case of defence, when the monastic offender “evades the issue with various others” [§13];
- (2) in the 7<sup>th</sup> case, when he “ignores his accusers, and wanders where he wishes” [§15]; and
- (3) in the 10<sup>th</sup> case, when he “gives up the training and returns to the lay life” [§17].

We have noted that all psychological defenses are manifestations of denial [1.2.1.5]. We can thus see isolation as a form of *denial*. In fact, **isolation** is *denial in terms of mental and social space*. We block our thoughts from such perceived threats and avoid them, that is, distance ourselves from them.

**3.6.2.2** In the Sutta, we see the 1<sup>st</sup> display of the defence of **isolation** is seen in the 4<sup>th</sup> case, when the accused monk:

strongly objects (and) ... **evades the issue** ...  
**raises unrelated matters**, and shows anger, hate and bitterness .... [§13]

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<sup>48</sup> A notorious case here is that of the 21<sup>st</sup>-cent Chinese Mahāyāna priest Mingyi of Singapore: see **The 3 Roots, Inc**, SD 13.12 (3.4.4); SD 4.19 (9.3); SD 30.8 (8.1).

According to Johansson, “This monk seems to refuse to see the problem and try to disregard it completely and behave as if it did not exist. This means that he **isolates** himself from his problems; he uses then another psychoanalytic mechanism of withdrawing from the demands of life by refusing to see some of his own tendencies.” (Johansson 1983:19)

As we have noted, in this case, besides the defence of isolation, the offender also shows 2 other kinds of defences, as follows [§13]:

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| (1) “(he) <b>evades the issue</b> with various others,” <sup>49</sup> | isolation;        |
| (2) “(he) <b>raises unrelated matters</b> ”                           | regression; [3.2] |
| (3) “(he) <b>shows anger</b> , hate and bitterness”                   | aggression; [3.3] |

The number of defenses used reflects the gravity of the denial or rejection of an accusation or statement that we see as offensive or negative. Since we fear having to deal with such a threat, that it may expose what we would rather keep hidden, we react *defensively* by isolating ourself from the perceived source of this threat.

**3.6.2.3** In the Sutta, the 2<sup>nd</sup> display of the defence of **isolation** is seen in the 7<sup>th</sup> case, when the offender: strongly objects (and) ignores the sangha, ignores his accusers, wanders about as he wishes as an offender. [§15]

In this case, the accused’s defensive isolation is rooted in his self-view and the desire to protect that self-view. The sangha or monastic community, on the other hand, is the wholesome fellowship of all the monastic members bonded by *love, ruth, joy and peace* (the 4 positive emotions). This can only properly happen and persist when the individual sees that the self (the person) exists and thrives in relation to others. Should everyone isolate himself as a social island, there will no community, no sangha.

**3.6.2.4** In the Sutta, the 3<sup>rd</sup> display of the defence of **isolation** is seen in the 10<sup>th</sup> case, when “the monastic offender:

strongly objects (and) says, ‘Why do you bhante fuss so much over me?  
Let me now give up the training and return to the low life [to life as a layman]!’  
Having given up the training and returned to the low life, he says thus,  
‘Now, bhante, **are you satisfied?**’ [§17]

“This monk,” says Johansson, “evidently was conscious of his offence, but his self-image would not permit him to repent and make amends. Therefore, he withdraws from the whole situation. This can be understood as another case of **isolation** or **restriction of the ego**. In this case, the self-image is saved by a physical escape from the problem and in the case mentioned earlier, by a psychological screening-off.” (Johansson 1983:19)

### 3.6.3 Dealing with isolation

**3.6.3.1** When the lapsed monk gives up the training, it only shows his failure or rejection of the idea of **saṅgha**, especially as “spiritual community.” He sees himself narrowly as being self-sufficient despite the fact that he has not attained the path, his lack of awakening. This attainment and awakening only begin

<sup>49</sup> “Evades ... others,” *aññen’aññam paṭicarati*, lit “wanders about from one to another.” This is an example of **isolation** [3.6].

when he is willing and able to give up his self-view, the notion that he is his *body, feelings, perceptions, formations and thoughts*.

**3.6.3.2 The sangha**, on the other hand, inspired by the Buddha and rooted in the Dharma, provides the ideal space (“ideal” meaning relating to the mind) that is conducive for true personal development. In other words, we become veritable “islands” in the floods of samsara. When we fail to see how the sangha works to free us from our narrow self-view, we are driven to isolate ourself from the very thing that will free us from suffering.

The accused monk, instead of submitting himself for admonition by the sangha, resort to a psychological defence of isolation. He cut himself off from the sangha, pretending to be all alone, above everyone else. In pretending to be all by himself, in his own right, he forgets what he is: a monk, a renunciant. We must be careful who we pretend to be; we may forget who we really are.

**3.6.3.3** For us, in general (whether we are monastics or not), we should work with understanding the difference between a **correlation** and a **conditional cause**. The first is simply an external stimulus (not a cause) that is merely a sign of our seeing it as a threat our self-view, how we see ourself. These external realities are the projections of our own mind, from our past memories and conditionings. Hence, they are *not* the conditions or causes of any of our weaknesses or failures; only symptoms of them.

The real conditional causes of our negative feelings come from within us, the way we think, and how it drives us to project our greed, hate, delusion and fear. These **4 biases** (*agati*) are the extension of the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate, delusion) which are, in turn, rooted in the unconscious, as lust, aversion and ignorance [1.2.1.3]: these are the primary **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*).<sup>50</sup>

The events we see out there (through our physical senses), what we make sense of, though real in themselves (as aspects of external reality), are really the workings of our own mind. Our wholesome mind-management starts with the cultivation of **moral virtue** (*sīla*), shaping and refining our bodily action and speech, so that our body is a conducive vehicle for **mental concentration** (*samādhi*), that is, mindfulness and meditation. Both moral virtue and concentration should be the bases for **insight wisdom** (*paññā*), which, in turn, leads to awakening.

### **3.6.4 Reaction formation**

**3.6.4.1 Denial** [1.2.1.5] is the root of all defenses: we defensively deny whatever we perceive as a threat to our self-view (“ego”). The various forms of denials are our reactions to the *fear of shame or suffering* but which is directed towards self-preservation without understanding what that *self* really is, that it is our own creation or projection. In other words, that self-view is merely a phantom, a non-existent but virtual reality that limits our growth, stunting us into a relic, a shadow, of our past (the glorious past, the sweet memories).

In our desperation to preserve our self-view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), we often may resort to any manner of defence strategy. We will go as far as forming peculiar reactions which will probably confuse, hence, control the source of the threat. This is the defence of **reaction-formation**, which is one of the trickiest defences to understand.

**3.6.4.2** When we have a reaction that is too painful or threatening to feel (such as intense hate for someone with power over us), we turn it into just the opposite (intense liking for that person). We act **supersweet** to that person. We may have repressed our dislike or hate for that person: this is a *denial* of our negative attitude towards another, but we are not conscious of it (most of the time, anyway). A mundane

<sup>50</sup> On the latent tendencies, see *Anusaya*, SD 31.3.

example is that of a husband who hates his overbearing mother-in-law, but treats her in a supersweet way when she drops in for a visit.

Acting in this way, we are able to cope with it; may not even be aware of the negative feeling. If we are religious, we may even think and say that this is “lovingkindness,” an unconditional acceptance of others. However, like denial and repression, we do this unconsciously, and, as a result, never know what our true feelings are. We only say those words to complete the defence mechanism, as it were. [4.2.3]

### 3.7 DENIAL

#### 3.7.1 The defence mechanism of denial

**3.7.1.1 Denial** (also called disavowal) is the process of excluding from awareness, and distorting the actual nature of some disturbing experience.<sup>51</sup> (Brenner, 1974, 1982). It is usually an unconscious act of rejecting the reality of a perception on account of its potentially traumatic associations.<sup>52</sup> When we are *conscious* of it, then, it is simply **lying**; or, at best, strategically withholding the truth. Karmically, this is still lying, but whose consequences are probably less drastic than actually truly expressing our dislike or hate for the person.

Denial, then, is a defense mechanism in which unpleasant thoughts, feelings, wishes, or events are ignored or excluded from conscious awareness. It may take such forms as refusal to acknowledge the reality of a terminal illness, a financial problem, an addiction, or a partner’s infidelity. It is driven by the unconscious reaction that functions to resolve emotional conflict or reduce anxiety by projecting a virtual reality of rejecting the undesirable thought.

#### 3.7.2 A person in denial

**3.7.2.1** In the Sutta, we see **denial** manifesting itself in the 8<sup>th</sup> case of defence, when the monastic, strongly objects (and) says,  
 “But I **have not committed any offence!** I have *not* committed any offence!  
 And by his silence, vexes the sangha.” [§16]

According to Johansson, “This would be a case of **denial** [as a psychological defence]. The monk refuses to see his own offence and may sincerely believe that he is innocent. We are not told whether the monk actually believes that he is innocent, or that he has totally forgotten about his offence, or that he is lying. If he knows that he has committed the offence, then, clearly, he is lying. However, his conduct will, of course, be noticed and teased by in a Socratic way (by question and answer). As a disciplinary case (involving the Vinaya) before the sangha headed by the Buddha, the question whether his mental state is that of a “defence mechanism” does not arise at all. [1.2]

**3.7.2.2** Since this is a **Vinaya matter**, the monk, whether he is innocent or guilty, should submit himself to the deliberations of the sangha (or the Buddha speaking for or before the sangha). If he is innocent, then, his name would be cleared; if he is guilty, admits it and is contrite about it, then, the Buddha would praise him as being exemplary, and conclude with a relevant teaching.

Whether the offender admits his guilt or not, the Buddha would, as a rule, point out why the offence is unwholesome, and follow up with relevant teachings. In **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22), when the monk

<sup>51</sup> C Brenner, “Depressive affect, anxiety, and psychic conflict in the phallic-oedipal phase,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 48,2 1979 (online 2017):183-186; *The Mind in Conflict*, 1982:72-92 (ch 5).

<sup>52</sup> For explanation, see *Macmillan International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 2005 sv Disavowal.

Ariṭṭha has a wrong view (that it is all right for monastics to indulge in sensual pleasures, including sex), the Buddha explains his stand and gives related teachings, highlighted by the parables of the water-snake and of the raft.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.7.3 Dealing with denial

**3.7.3.1** A meditator had a very unhappy childhood with a weak mother and an abusive father feared by both mother and child. Depressed by this early lack of warmth and love as a child, he denied his sad past, and, consequently, was also unable to accept the positive effects of his meditation. It was as if he felt he did not deserve such happy feelings, since he had never known them.

**3.7.3.2** During meditation counselling, he is helped with unconditional acceptance of **the past**, which is gone and cannot be changed, and embracing **the present** which he is free to choose how he would mentally cultivate and accept. With a lesson in the nature of **disowning the pain** [3.4.3.4], he is able to let go of the past pain, that it was not his fault in any way.

**3.8 OVERCOMING DEFENCE MECHANISMS:** See SD 24.10b (2.5)

## 4 Overcoming defences in path-training<sup>54</sup>

### 4.1 DEPENDENT BEINGS

#### 4.1.1 The path or pathology?

**4.1.1.1** The Buddha's teaching is said to be a **path** (*maggā*) that leads through the jungle of views and wilderness of defilements to the ancient city where the ancients dwell. In this parable, the path is the noble eightfold path, and the city is nirvana, populated by the "ancients," that is, the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats. This is the famous parable of the city given by the Buddha in **the Nagara Sutta** (S 19.21).<sup>55</sup>

The idea of the teaching being a path means that the Buddha's training for us is like a journey we must make. Before we go on a journey, we must prepare well for it: this is the training in moral virtue (*sīla, sikkhā*), the foundation of our Dharma practice. Then, we head out to the path: this path is actually a river, where we board a boat that goes upstream (against the currents, *paṭisota, gāmi*)<sup>56</sup> towards the city. This refers to the training in mental concentration (*samādhi, sikkhā*). Firmly rooted in moral virtue and mental concentration, we go on to the training of insight wisdom (*paññā, sikkhā*).

Our actual journey starts when we board the boat named "the Path": this represents attaining at least streamwinning, which means that we have overcome **self-identity view** [4.1.2.2], **doubt** [4.1.2.3] and **attachment to rituals and vows** [4.1.2.5], collectively known as the "3 fetters."<sup>57</sup> This makes us streamwinners,

<sup>53</sup> M 22/1:130-142 (SD 3.13). Another famous example of such a disciplinary and exhortatory discourse is **Mahā Tanhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 28), where the monk Sāti is exhorted to correct his wrong view that it is the "same consciousness" moving through our life and into another (M 28/1:256-271, SD 7.10).

<sup>54</sup> In this section, I include an analysis of 3 key reasons that led to my resignation from monkhood: 4.4.2.3, 4.4.3.3, 4.4.3.6.

<sup>55</sup> See **Nagara S** (S 19.21/1:105 f), SD 14.2.

<sup>56</sup> S 6.1/1:136 (SD 12.2); A 4.5/2:6 (SD 78.15), A 4.200/2:214 (SD 105.11); It 109,6 + SD 52.11 (1.2.2.2 f).

<sup>57</sup> SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

meaning that we have truly started our journey on the path of awakening, heading for the ancient city, nirvana.<sup>58</sup>

**4.1.1.2** Before we have really understood the basic teaching and practice of the Buddha Dharma, we are, as a rule, fettered and burdened by how we think about ourself (self-view), our inability to help ourself (doubt), and our dependence of some kind of outside help (attachment to ritual and vows). Even after coming into contact with the teaching, very often, we are still entrenched in these wrong views, and we reactively hear only what we like, reject what we dislike, and ignore what we do not understand [4.1.3.2].

A very common attitude with people new to Buddhism, and those who do not understand the sutta teaching on **impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself**, or who fail to find the right teacher, they will use Buddhism to deny or avoid any personal issues and emotional wounds, or rationalize them, so that they are repressed and denied, that is, unaddressed [3.1].

Or, we tend to use Dharma teachings, which we see as the “absolute truth” [4.1.3], to disparage or dismiss “relative” or worldly realities that are our human needs, feelings, problems and lacks. We think of learning Dharma as collecting “power,” instead of straightening and renouncing our views. When we fail to do this, we are but hollow beings dependent on the attention and approval of the guru, and the adoration of the crowd.

**4.1.1.3** In our struggle to find ourself (often not even knowing we are struggling), we turn to **religion** or to **teachers**. Instead of using the teachings to work with our emotional and personal issues, and heal ourself, we use the teaching, practices and guru-worship to avoid those issues, leaving them unaddressed. Or, we are unwilling or unable to uphold the monastic rules and routine, we settle for the charisma of the robes and tonsure, and turn to academic excellence, ending up with Venerably Doctored Buddhism to impress patrons and crowds rather than better lives and free our minds from subhuman states. [4.1.4.3]

Thus, we simply avoid or prematurely transcend our basic human needs, feelings, emotions and developmental tasks. We stand on the pedestal of **status** without any real state of moral virtue or mental calm and joy. We reject the Vinaya for some revisionist semblance of popular Buddhism in the tradition of Dale Carnegie (“How to win friends and influence people”) and Napoleon Hill (“Think and grow rich”)—the notorious High Priest of the Dharma of Wealth and Success.

What the outspoken Sinhala priest, Ananda Mangala [4.4.1], observes of interfaith dialogues clearly applies to Buddhism, too:

Multi-religious conferences are now turning out to be academic exercises for clever manipulations of mere knowledge without any standards of spirituality. Some of them covering up their lack of a true interiority by their “Doctorates.” At a conference I participated with the Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jew-Buddhist it was not possible to draft a resolution defining the word “Spiritual.”

(“Random thoughts—Reminiscences,” *The Young Buddhist*, Singapore, 1978:184)

**4.1.1.4** Our personal difficulties are often rooted in our childhood lacks and traumas; or our adult life-pattern of recurring dissatisfaction with a happy job, a failing relationship or shaky marriage, feeling a lack of any meaningful social connections. We rationalize and reinforce our old habits, especially our psychological defences. We are told to “let go” of our past, but we do so without resolving it, not even knowing what we are letting go.

We hear talks: “All thoughts and feelings are false. Pay no attention to them. Their nature is empty. Cut through them here and now!” Zenning things up this way may be helpful in our meditation practice, but in

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<sup>58</sup> SD 3.3 (5).



real-life situations, these very same clever words may movingly surprise us but they only deny our real feelings or suppress our concerns that seriously need attention behind a supersweet facade.

US psychologist John Welwood relates how a Western Zen teacher profiled in *The New York Times* who quoted one of his teachers as saying: “What you need to do is put aside all human feelings.” After taking up psychotherapy decades later, he recognized that this had not been helpful advice, and it took him decades to realize this.<sup>59</sup>

**4.1.1.5** When such a practice becomes routine, we end up using it to create a new “religious” identity for ourself, but we’re still the same sick wolf in new sheep’s clothing: our old dysfunctional self in a new guise. Our weaknesses and issues remain unaddressed. To aggravate the situation, we highlight our religious status or position, our special relations with the teacher—this only feeds our false sense of desperate self-importance. The best of us then end up as dour Vipassana gurus, aloof Abhidhamma acharns or classy feng-shui shifus.

When religion shores up our personal weaknesses and developmental deficiencies, we only invite and encourage a host of pathologies, personal and group: narcissism (an over-blown sense of self-importance), Bodhisattva-Hero complex (playing into the a sense of group grandiosity), group narcissism (an elitist sense of belonging, love-bombing with the notion that we are all accumulating good karma or merits), spiritual materialism (using religion for personal gain) and groupthink (uncritical acceptance of tribal ideology). All this is symptomatic of **spiritual bypassing**.<sup>60</sup> [4.1.2]

#### **4.1.2 Fettered selves**

**4.1.2.1** When we “spiritually bypass” Buddhism, it means that instead of using Dharma teachings to better and transform ourself, heading towards the path of awakening, we use Buddhism to sidestep dealing with our emotional and psychological issues. Our vision of the Buddha is skewed; hence, he is no more the awakened one, but some vague power-figure we look up to. We have a lop-sided misconception of self at the expense of other wholesome qualities.

We effectively alienate ourself from others because we fear that any kind of openness or communication will remind us of our past pains put us at a disadvantage. We fear revealing our weaknesses and failings, which we dare not even think about. The result of all this is that we do not know what we actually fear; there is only **fear** itself, constantly shadowing our thoughts and actions.

**4.1.2.2** In our daily experience, we only see ourself, our deficiency, in some form, in how we feel about things, how we perceive things, how we react to situations, how we sense every event before us. The abuses or lack of love and warmth in our childhood, or some emotional trauma from rejection by significant others, we suffer from symptoms of **insecure attachment** (being caught in negative thoughts and actions that weaken our self-image): self-hate, disembodiment,<sup>61</sup> lack of grounding,<sup>62</sup> chronic insecurity and anxiety, an over-active mind, lack of trust, and a deep sense of self-deficiency.

<sup>59</sup> Welwood, “Human Nature, Buddha Nature,” *Tricycle* interview 2011:6.

<sup>60</sup> On spiritual bypassing, see J Welwood, *Toward a Psychology of Awakening*, 2014: ch 1 . See also “**Spiritual bypass**” (R474+475), Inspiration reflection, 2016: R474 (1) <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/R474-161109-Spiritual-bypass-1of2-307.pdf>; R475 (2) <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/R475-161116-Spiritual-bypass-2of2-308.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> “Disembodiment” means that our feelings are not healthily reflected in our actions and speech, a kind of emotional disengagement. See “embodiment” [4.1.3.1].

<sup>62</sup> “Grounding” is a coping strategy where we immediately connect ourself with the present moment of reality in the face of any memory flashbacks or dissociation (such as during post-traumatic stress disorder). “Dissociation” is an

In early Buddhist psychology, all this feeds of our **self-identity view** (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*):<sup>63</sup> how we view our self or personality that shapes or influences how we view others and our world-view. Basically, it is rooted in the notion that we are our body, that how we feel, perceive, react and sense<sup>64</sup> things *permanently* shape us and dictate our actions and lives. Hence, we have no control over ourself or our lives. This is a false view that needs to be overcome by our constantly reflecting (or perceiving) of impermanence.<sup>65</sup>

**4.1.2.3** Most religious teachings demand that we depend on some external source of succour. We are told that we have no power whatsoever to help ourself. Hence, we are disempowered with crippling self-doubt, that is, we must depend on some external source (like a God-idea or authority figure) for salvation. In early Buddhist psychology, this is called a “fetter” (*samyojana*), so called because it binds us to the suffering generated by such doubts, preventing our personal development.

The most crippling of the mental fetters is that of **doubt** (*vicikicchā*), which makes us become dependent on others. We are drawn to some power-figure, in whose image we imagine some kind of strength in ourself. In a religion, such as Buddhism, we tend to see the teacher as an embodiment of the moral and spiritual dimensions of the teachings. When this is powerful enough to inspire unquestioning faith in followers, it is called charisma.

**4.1.2.4** When the teacher is spiritually wholesome, he serves as the ideal and exemplar of the path of personal development and awakening. However, when the followers are drawn to the teacher merely by charisma, there is invariably an asymmetrical, lop-sided, relationship between a teacher as a “God-figure” and his followers as the “creatures.”

Such idealization often leads a follower to experience strong emotional attachment to the teacher, with feelings that parallel those associated in Western culture with **romantic love**.<sup>66</sup> This entails an intense attraction and devotion to the guru, involving idealizing him or her, often within an erotic context. This one-sided devotion often leads to self-doubt, self-abandonment and a glorification of the other (the teacher or guru), who thrives on such sentiments.<sup>67</sup> The follower is then but an appendage of the guru, lost in his shadow.

**4.1.2.5** When we have a negative self-image [4.1.2.2], we are likely to have self-doubt, too [4.1.2.3]. This is worsened by a 3<sup>rd</sup> fetter, which binds us to repeat and relive our past over and over. While self-doubt makes us seek answers and happiness outside of ourself, this 3<sup>rd</sup> fetter makes us compulsively repeat an action, driven by the false view that repeating something will make it true or real. Something that we do over and over, even when we do not know what it really is, we imagine or hope, will work in our favour. This is called **attachment to rituals and vows** (*sīla-b, bata parāmāsa*), or more simply, superstition.<sup>68</sup>

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unconscious defence mechanism in which conflicting impulses are kept apart or threatening ideas and feelings are separated from the rest of the psyche [mind] (APA *Dictionary of Clinical Psychology*, 2013).

<sup>63</sup> **Self-identity view** is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 3 fetters, breaking which we reach the path of awakening as a streamwinner: SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

<sup>64</sup> These refer to the 5 aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness [SD 17].

<sup>65</sup> On the perception of impermanence, see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

<sup>66</sup> On romantic love, see SD 38.4 (3.2.3).

<sup>67</sup> On doubt, see SD 40a.8 (2); SD 56.1 (4.4.1.3). See Welwood, “Human nature, Buddha nature,” 2011:3; Michelle Haslam, [https://info-buddhism.com/PDF/Psychological\\_report\\_on\\_The\\_New\\_Kadampa\\_Tradition.pdf](https://info-buddhism.com/PDF/Psychological_report_on_The_New_Kadampa_Tradition.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> On attachment to rituals and vows, see SD 40a.8 (3); SD 51.5 (5.2.4.2-5.2.4.5); SD 56.1 (4.4.1.4).

### 4.1.3 Absolute truth, relative truth

**4.1.3.1** In the *Neyy'attha Nī'tattha Suttā* (A 2.3.5+6), the Buddha states that when explaining a sutta, we should correctly ascertain whether the teaching is one “whose sense has been drawn out” (explicit) (*nī't-attha*), or one “whose sense is to be drawn out” (implicit) (*neyy'attha*).<sup>69</sup> Often, the Buddha will state whether his teaching is given “provisionally” (*pariyāyena*, in relative terms, or “non-provisionally,” that is, in ultimate (or absolute) terms, also called *dhamma* language.<sup>70</sup>

The commentarial tradition developed these twin ideas into the teachings or truths that are “ultimate” (*param'attha,sacca*) and that are “conventional or relative” (*sammuti,sacca*)<sup>71</sup> or in personal terms (*puggalâdhiṭṭhāna*).<sup>72</sup> Although we speak of “ultimate truth” as being expressed in “Dharma terms” (*dhamm'ādhiṭṭhāna*)<sup>73</sup> or “Dharma language” (*dhamma,vohāra*),<sup>74</sup> it properly refers to our direct experience of true reality so that we understand it in “absolute” terms, that is, directly, even fully.

**4.1.3.2** When we speak of a “direct experience” or “ultimate truth,” technically, it is nothing but still a conventional, personal or worldly (*lokiya*) statement, by way of instruction to benefit the unawakened, but our own unawakened state simply lacks the experiential basis for such a direct vision. Without such a vision, we *think* that we are experiencing true reality, but we are only speaking of it; at best, pointing to it. Teaching it or learning it, even in the clearest terms, and realizing it for oneself, are quite different things!

Speaking of such truths are only useful insofar as it inspires the unawakened, including oneself, to seek a better understanding of the path and attaining it. When we have ourselves *not aspired for the path*, how can we speak of it as any kind of experiential or liberating truth? We are like an ass following a herd of cows, thinking, “I’m a cow! I’m a cow!”<sup>75</sup>

**4.1.3.3** Hence, we may *think* that we understand the Dharma in terms of the “ultimate (or absolute) truth” and “relative truth,”<sup>76</sup> such as in our Abhidhamma studies, but these are merely statements, at best, of a theoretical learning of what we have not yet realized for ourselves. Understandably, we would favour absolute truth over *relative truth*, the impersonal over the *personal*, emptiness over *form*, transcendence over *embodiment*,<sup>77</sup> detachment over *feeling*. However, so long as we have not directly seen these truths for ourselves, we are only making self-centred statements, which may or may not be helpful or even true.

When we are still burdened with personal difficulties, such a stand or statement will also be ridden with difficulties. For example, we think we are practising **non-attachment** by dismissing our need for love and friendship, but this only drives our need deeper into our unconscious, so that we act this out in ways that hurt ourselves as well as others, hiding behind Buddhism or religion or psychology or science or whatever.

In other words, we should not hide behind learning or words because we are *unwilling or unable to love*; then, we will form a **compensatory attachment**<sup>78</sup> to crowd adoration, to power or to money, or all of these.

<sup>69</sup> A 2.3.5+6/1:60 (SD 2.6b).

<sup>70</sup> See SD 2.6b (2); SD 33.2 (2.1); **Pariyāya nippariyāya**, SD 68.2.

<sup>71</sup> See AA 1:95; DhA 3:403; KvuA 34; PugA 12.

<sup>72</sup> On *puggalâdhiṭṭhāna* and *dhammâdhiṭṭhāna*, see SD 10.6 (3.1, 6.2).

<sup>73</sup> See prec n.

<sup>74</sup> PmA 3:601.

<sup>75</sup> **Gadrabha Samaṇa S** (A 3.81), SD 24.10b.

<sup>76</sup> On the 2 truths, ultimate and conventional, see SD 2.6b (1); SD 5.17 (5.3.7); SD 10.6 (3.3). See also the 2 languages: SD 7.14 (4.2).

<sup>77</sup> “Embodiment” is technically the claim that much human thinking is a metaphorical extension of experiences of the body and its immediate surroundings (attr to US cognitive linguist, George Philip Lakoff) (APA Dict of Clinical Psychology, 2013. Here, it is used non-technically to mean that our feelings or emotions are healthily expressed through our actions and speech.

<sup>78</sup> This is a form of the psychological defence of compensation [3.5].

Even as renunciants and lay practitioners, we must frequently examine whether we are working to renounce such compensatory attachments, or are we merely trying to vainly fill our hollowness under our robe or looks.<sup>79</sup>

**4.1.3.4** With proper study of the suttas followed up by some sustained practice of meditation or mindfulness, we will then see how our study and practice work to help us see deeper into our own personality and being. One of the great benefits of meditation theory and practice is that they help us to distinguish between our **present experience** and our mental interpretations of it.

This mindful observation allows us to see our **pains** (*dukkha*), not so much as sufferings, whether physical (*dukkha,dukkha*) or mental (*vipariṇāma,dukkha*), but as manifestations of the 5 aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, that is, as “suffering related to mental formations” (*saṅkhāra,dukkha*).<sup>80</sup>

In this way, we do not see our pains or those of others (we are listening to or counselling) as a burden, but as a lesson that we need to attend to and from which to learn. It becomes liberating to follow someone’s genuine living experiences in this way. Instead of being burdened by the weight and narrowness of *suffering*, we are gaining insight into the nature of our body (form) and mind (feeling, perception, formations and consciousness). In this sense, we say that “**Pain is natural, suffering is optional.**”

**4.1.3.5** In symbolic language, we can say that our body or **the form aggregate** (*rūpa-k,khandha*), made up of earth, water, fire and wind,<sup>81</sup> and comprising of the 5 physical senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body),<sup>82</sup> are the ground for our experience of true reality, that is, **the 3 universal characteristics** of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself.<sup>83</sup> In this sense, our conscious body is a vehicle of self-awakening.

Our body of the 4 elements are essentially of the same composition as *the earth* that supports us. Hence, we are, in essence, interconnected with everything else in this universe: we are by nature **impermanent** and **unsatisfactory**; and, in principle, **nonself**, without any essence.<sup>84</sup> The earth also represents our good karma which supports us, and, as it were, is the silent witness to all the good that we do—symbolized by the Bodhi-sattva’s *touching the earth*, summoning Mother Earth as witness to all his past good deeds when challenged by Māra.<sup>85</sup>

**4.1.3.6** When we meditate, we are grounding ourself in our mind’s space for a direct vision into true reality. The classic depiction of a true meditator is the Buddha sitting radiant under **the Bodhi tree**. He sits facing the east, welcoming the rising sun at dawn. The tree stands straight up into the sky, the space of the heavens. The tree connects earth and heaven through **the sun**. By this connection, trees convert the power of the sun through plants to give the air we breathe and the food we eat, thus giving and keeping our lives.

Through meditation, the Buddha frees himself from the earth, the world, and from himself, the 4 elements. He rises into **the heavens** of form-dhyana, the formless heavens, and renouncing even the idea of self, he breaks through into **nirvana**. The Bodhi tree shelters him, and represents his noble quest for awakening. If Mount Meru is the axis mundi of the physical universe, then, *the Bodhi tree* represents the axis or middle ground between the world of beings and the space leading to awakening.

<sup>79</sup> See Welwood 2011:1, 17.

<sup>80</sup> See eg **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,5), SD 1.1.

<sup>81</sup> These are the “4 great elements” (*mahā,bhūta*): **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 11,8-11, with §12 on “space”), SD 3.11; **Mahā Hatthi,pādōpama S** (M 28,6), SD 6.16.

<sup>82</sup> On the 5 physical senses (*pañc’indriya*), see SD 17.2a (9.2).

<sup>83</sup> On the 3 universal characteristics (*sāmañña,lakkhaṇa*), see SD 1.2 (2); SD 18.2 (2.2).

<sup>84</sup> See **Dhamma,niyāma S** (A 3.134) SD 26.8.

<sup>85</sup> See SD 52.1 (16).

#### 4.1.4 Relational training

**4.1.4.1** The fundamental Buddhist training incumbent on all Buddhists who look up to the 3 jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the noble sangha)<sup>86</sup> is that of **moral training**, entailing at least the keeping of the 5 precepts.<sup>87</sup> In psychological terms, this is a **relational training** rooted in lovingkindness, the very foundation of a wholesome and productive society.

Ethically, **the 5 precepts** against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication (clouding the mind), as moral training (*sīla, sikkhā*), are rooted, respectively, in **the values** of life, happiness, freedom, truth and a healthy mind.<sup>88</sup> A healthy social relationship entails the respect for *life*, the *property* and the *personal freedom* of others, a relationship that is based on truthful and wholesome *communication*. Such a community conduces to the cultivation of healthy minds, those that are creative, productive and happy.

**4.1.4.2** Such an ideal state of affairs [4.1.4.1] is easily upset or threatened when our negative tendencies become widespread and protracted. Even on a **preconscious level**, we are driven by greed, hate and delusion to act and speak negatively, antisocially, against the relational training. We are driven by greed to break the precepts and condone their breaching; we are driven by hate to kill, steal, molest, rape, lie and cloud our minds. Blurred by delusion, we are not even aware these are wrong, but they have bad karmic consequences all the same.<sup>89</sup>

Manipulated by the hidden strings of our **unconscious** (the latent tendencies, *anusaya*), we grasp at what we deem desirable and cling to them; we hate what appears undesirable and *reject*, even hurt or destroy, them; we ignore what is unfamiliar to us, *desensitized* by what we see as neither desirable nor undesirable. Thus, we are driven by the unconscious tendencies of *lust, repulsion and ignorance*.<sup>90</sup> [4.2]

**4.1.4.3** The evolution of species is still going on amongst us, in us. Through the genes of our parents and those before them in evolutionary time, we are born with our human body. We are only “**human**” in body, but our mind is still very formative and evolving. In other words, our **unconscious** has the potentials of all the beings that had existed, leading up to the human state.

We still have, deep in our unconscious, the karmic genes of **the animal** (caught in a rut of fear and routine), **the asura** (the exploitatively grasping and clinging), **the preta** (the depressed and addictive), and **the hell-being** (violently suffering). We often see clear manifestations of these subhuman traits in those lost in crowds or when our mind is troubled or deranged.

We here see the vital role of **moral training**—rooted in the values of life, happiness, freedom, truth and mental health—to rise to the human state and not fall back into the subhuman levels. Good parenting and a healthy family and peer socializing build up our **humanity** or humanness. We are only born with a human body, and then we are humanized by good parenting and socializing. This is what relational training or moral virtue is basically about.

**4.1.4.4** We have mentioned that Buddhist moral training uplifts us from our subhuman states and keep us human so long as we understand and keep to the moral precepts [4.1.4.1]. Since we already *look* human in body, being **human** here refers to keeping our mind and heart *human*, that is, we are able to think clearly and feel joyfully. However, this is only a first taste of mental peace, clarity and joy: a body-based and human experience of the good life.

<sup>86</sup> On the 3 jewels (*ti, ratana*), see SD 47.1 (3.2.2.1); SD 51.8 (1.3.3.1).

<sup>87</sup> On the 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*), see **Dīgha, jānu S** (A 8.54,13), SD 5.10; **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); **Sīlā-nussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

<sup>88</sup> On the 5 values, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

<sup>89</sup> Karma is still potent when committed unconsciously (*acittaka*) or unmindfully (*asampajāna*): SD 51.20 (2.2.2).

<sup>90</sup> On the latent tendencies, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

Moral training, in itself, can easily be drowned or numbed by the human crowd or by any of our negative emotions (such as greed, anger, hate, fear). Moral virtue is not sufficient or strong in itself to keep us human. Even being human, even the most evolved human, we are still subject to the vicissitudes of life, the worldly conditions (*loka, dhamma*): gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, joy and pain.<sup>91</sup>

Although **moral virtue** (*sīla*)—the restraint and refinement of our bodily acts and speech—at best conduces to our human evolution, properly understood and applied, it becomes the foundation for our **mental evolution**. Based on a morally empowered body, we will be able to cultivate and develop **our mind** to such a level that we are able to transcend the limits of our physical being, even rise to the divine and beyond [4.2.4].

## 4.2 THE ROOTS OF UNCONSCIOUS DEFENCE

### 4.2.1 Roots and feelings

We have said that moral training—a disciplined body and refined speech—is the basis for mental training. Before we examine the nature of mental training, we need to understand the various negative tendencies that can weaken, even destroy, our human state, which then prevents us from ever evolving *mentally*. These insidiously negative habits are our **3 unconscious tendencies** (*anusaya*).

We have already mentioned how, driven by **the unconscious tendencies** of *lust, repulsion and ignorance*, we grasp at what we deem desirable and cling to them; we hate what appears undesirable and *reject*, even hurt or destroy, them; we ignore what is unfamiliar to us, *desensitized* by what we see as neither desirable nor undesirable. [4.1.4.2]

Psychologically, we can speak of these unconscious tendencies as **attachment** [4.3], **avoidance** [4.4] and **desensitization** [4.5]. Here, we will briefly examine what these are, and how we can work to overcome them, so that we can go on to cultivate and free our mind.

### 4.2.2 Sensation and feelings

Early Buddhism, such as in **the (Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta** (S 35.130), teaches that when having any sense-experience (or, technically, a sense-contact, *phassa*, or simply “sensation”), we should merely observe each of them as being agreeable (*manāpa*) or disagreeable (*amanāpa*): simply regard it as, “So it is!” (*itth’etan’ti*). Then, we simply recognize the agreeable experience (or sensation) as generating a pleasant feeling, and the disagreeable experience as generating an unpleasant feeling.

When there is *neither* the agreeable *nor* the disagreeable, then, we take this “as the basis for equanimity” (*upekkhā-ṭ, ṭhāniya*): “So it is,” a neutral feeling (that is neither painful nor pleasant).<sup>92</sup> How we should properly respond to each of these 3 kinds of feelings, and how an arhat does so, are explained in **the Indriya, bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152).<sup>93</sup> For our present purposes, the basic teaching of the (Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta suffices.<sup>94</sup>

### 4.2.3 The 3 unconscious tendencies

As unawakened beings, worldly people, we are manipulated and driven by our unconscious tendencies of *lust, repulsion and ignorance* [1.2.1.3], which we feel as greed, hate and delusion, respectively, in our

<sup>91</sup> See **Loka, dhamma S 1+2** (A 8.5+6), SD 42.2+3.

<sup>92</sup> S 35.130/3:115 f (SD 58.9).

<sup>93</sup> M 152/3:298-301 (SD 17.13).

<sup>94</sup> **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2) gives only this basic instruction on sense-restraint: “A monk dwells wisely restrained” in each of the sense-faculties (M 2,12), SD 30.3; fuller instructions are given in **Kūṭa, danta S** (D 5,64/1:70), SD 22.8. Se SD 30.3 (2.2.2.1 n).

preconscious (that is, in our impulse to act or speak). **The 3 unconscious or latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) are rooted in:

<b>lust</b> ( <i>rāga</i> )	as <u>greedy</u> intention	is the root of our expressions of <b>attachment</b>	[4.2]
<b>repulsion</b> ( <i>paṭigha</i> )	as <u>hating</u> intention	is the root of our expressions of <b>avoidance</b>	[4.3]
<b>ignorance</b> ( <i>avijjā</i> )	as <u>deluded</u> intention	is the root of our expressions of <b>insensitivity</b>	[4.4]

In this section, we will briefly discuss the nature and expressions based on **attachment**, that is, the kinds of impulsive, defensive or habitual actions that we do or don't (we may also *not* act on this account). The cases of psychological defences quoted below are taken from real-life situation so that we address actual problems or difficulties. All such discussions are done in good faith to help raise their unconscious roots so that we are empowered to deal with them and progress on the path as true practitioners.

#### 4.2.4 The Vihara syndrome

**4.2.4.1** In the **Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** (S 16.13), the Buddha declares to the elder Mahā Kassapa:

It is not the earth element, Kassapa, that causes the true Dharma to disappear, nor the water element, nor the fire element, nor the wind element. **It is the spiritually empty people (*mogha,-purisa*) who arise right here (in this religion) who cause the true Dharma to disappear.**

(S 16.13/2:225), SD 104.10

The Buddha Dharma is *neither* hindered *nor* destroyed from outside; indeed, a growing number of non-Buddhists are seeing the truth and beauty of early Buddhism, and adorning their lives and faith with it. Sadly, we Buddhists ourselves are mostly blissfully blindsided<sup>95</sup> by our own leaders and teachers who have themselves not tasted the Dharma, but see **the defensiveness** of the Buddhist community, and exploiting it, instead of correcting it. Indeed, they are themselves caught in the same rut, as the blind leading the blind.<sup>96</sup>

**4.2.4.2** Our study, at this point, is gravely concerned with the real root-cause and on-going conditions that have made Buddhism in Malaysia and Singapore little more than a competitive business run by professional Buddhists. Out of convenience and concern, we shall generally address all these good people (that's what they all are deep inside) as "**the local Buddhists.**"

The kind of Buddhism we are likely to see here today is, on the one extreme, a Vinayaless modernist secular system; on the other, a materialistic superstition where our every whim and wish seem to be fulfilled for the right donation.

Our leaders and teachers seem mostly helplessly, obviously attracted to and driven by what they see as *power, prosperity, pleasure and popularity* (the 4 P's). We seem to have only one sacred task: to enrich the monks and priests who have colonized our lives in a brahminical Buddhism, we have turned most of the Buddha's key teachings on their heads. We are idol worshippers in every sense of the word; we transfer merits as if they were Bitcoin; monastics, ashamed or unsure of themselves wear Dr titles and Money Smiles but care hoots about streamwinning.

**4.2.4.3** Most of us local Buddhists tend to see any kind symbolic cloth or impressive titles as signs of power, even holiness, so that we would kowtow to such power-figures, support them, for our own benefit through association. This is like shopping by brand, and not carefully comparing products, and testing them

<sup>95</sup> The "blind side" is the side away from which one is looking; hence, it connotes an inability to understand or accept a really bad situation, and so let it insidiously fester and infect all concerned.

<sup>96</sup> See **Te,vijja S** (D 13,15), SD 1.8.

before buying. We should never judge a book by the cover: at least, we should look at its contents page, skim through it to see if it is worth reading.

Moreover, as an ethnic minority, with a migrant ancestry, we may feel that we should not make waves or rock the boat. Even to speak in the manner of this paper, much less to write about it, is tantamount to Buddhist “blasphemy,” or simply that we do not know our place in society. On a darker level, this is **the Stockholm syndrome**.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the defence of **denial** is likely to kick in at the mention of any such problems. What problems, indeed, let us show respect and tolerance where they are due: keep our “noble silence”; this, too, will pass!

### 4.3 ATTACHMENT AS PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE

#### 4.3.1 Lust and attachment

**Lust** is the most powerful of the unconscious roots, driving practically all our negative actions and their objects, in grasping for them, clinging to them, or, as hate, in rejecting and pushing them away, or as delusion, in taking them for what they are not, or as ignorance, simply ignoring them, learning nothing from them.

However, for useful and practical discussions, it helps to categorize how lust functions in connection with certain defences that generate **attachment**. Here, we will discuss a few cases where *lust* drives us to act or not to act in some defensive manner either because we feel compulsively driven into such defences or because we value having a positive self-view, a sense of self-worth.

#### 4.3.2 Lust-rooted repression

**4.3.2.1 Repression** [3.1], as a psychological defence, may be rooted in a real situation and acting in ways that are unbeneficial for our wellbeing and spiritual growth. Monastics, for example, who forget their vows of **renunciation**, and feel embarrassed by looking different from others in respectable society may be driven to put on appearances by keeping some head-hair (not keeping their tonsure).

Traditional monks would keep both their shoulders and body properly covered in public.<sup>98</sup> The monks of the high-caste Siyam Nikaya of Sri Lanka, as a rule, keep their right shoulder bare. In recent times, however, we see them wearing an inner shirt so that their shoulders are both covered. Their well-tailored shirts thus only give them a proper and dapper look. The more Vinaya-conscious monks who wear such shirts to keep themselves warm in cold weather would, as a rule, keep themselves tonsured and well covered with their outer robes.

**4.3.2.2** This is not to say that all monastics who wear inner shirts have lust-driven repression, but rather that when, as monastics, we do so to gain the approval of the public and are, in some way, *ashamed* of our monkish looks of renunciation (a clean-shaven head and simple monastic robes), may realize that they are all dressed up for the wrong reasons, and should redress themselves in accordance to the Vinaya.

It is also to the monastic’s benefit to constantly reflect on the usage of the 4 supports of almsfood, robes, shelter and medicine (*catu, paccaya*). Whenever a monastic wears the robes, he or she should reflect thus: “Wisely he [she] uses the robe,” only for keeping away inclemency of weather and vermin, and covering oneself decently.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> On the Stockholm syndrome, see SD 24.10b (2.3.3).

<sup>98</sup> “I shall go [sit] well covered among the houses (when in public), this is a training-rule” (*supaṭichanno antara, ghare gamissāmīti [nisīdissāmīti] sikkhā karaṇīyā*), Sekh 3+4 (V 4:186).

<sup>99</sup> See **Sabbāsava S** (M 2,14+n), SD 30.3.



### 4.3.3 Lust-rooted reaction formation

**4.3.3.1 Reaction formation** [3.6.4] is a psychological defence in which a person goes beyond denial, and behaves in the opposite way in which he thinks or feels. Devotees and fans of friendly famous monks and teachers who are seen as good meditators, often also see them as counsellors, even healers, and turn to them when they have personal problems at home, at work, in relationships, or with themselves.

It is an occupational hazard that monastics, like many counsellors, often keep hearing similar issues of mundane affairs. Most lay followers are often mere believers and not practitioners, and only turn to such monks for succour when they have problems. Hence, they also lack even a good working knowledge of the Dharma. Such counselling sessions can thus be mundanely tedious.

At the end of one such counselling sessions, the counsellor, a popular monk, emerged from the counselling room, and meeting another brother monk, breathed a deep sigh of relief, and dismissively remarked “These lay people keep having the same problems. They think we can solve everything for them!”

**4.3.3.2** Monastics who run large temples and centres clearly need to be **supersweet** [3.6.4.2], or at least emit an aura of supersweetness to attract patronage and funds. One such Chief High Priest in a Buddhist Vihara in Malaysia, for example, welcomed all to his temple: “You are welcome here any time!” and so on. My octogenarian sister was a regular devotee to this Vihara.

When her son left home and did not keep in touch for a long time, she was worried sick. She then went to the Chief High Priest, seeking succour for her worries. Seemingly annoyed, the Chief High Priest retorted to her to the effect: “You think only *you* have problems! What about *me*; you think I don’t have problems?” This, of course, is not a case of reaction formation, but simply a sad lack of compassion.

### 4.3.4 Lust-rooted rationalization

**4.3.4.1** There are those who turn to the monastic life because of unresolved sexual problems. Often, they become monks, thinking that they may resolve their sexual difficulties. However, for many, especially those with some issues of narcissism, too, their problem only worsened as their sense of authority grew with their monastic status grew with traditional meditation and a sense of mission.

In the 1970s-2000s, a Thai priest set up a mission house in the Netherlands, a country that was open to homosexuality, and where he regularly indulged himself, even preying on young boys. Yet, he insisted on holding the fortnightly Pātimokkha recital. Apparently, his notion was that attending the ritual cleansed him of his “minor offence,” since he did not “touch women.” This is a case of **compartmentalization** [3.6.1.2] that is also related to rationalization.<sup>100</sup>

**4.3.4.2 Rationalization** is a psychological defence in which apparently logical reasons are given to justify unacceptable behavior that is motivated by unconscious or instinctual impulses. Common examples are: “Doesn’t everybody cheat?” or “You have to cane children to toughen them up.” Rationalizations are often used to defend against feelings of guilt, maintain self-respect, and protect oneself from criticism. In psychotherapy, rationalization is considered counterproductive to deep exploration and confrontation of the client’s thoughts and feelings, and their effect on his behaviour.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> On the Mettavihari (died 2007) scandals, see: NL Times, <https://nltimes.nl/2015/05/25/buddhist-monks-sexual-abuse-revealed>; Dutch News, <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2015/05/dutch-buddhists-embroiled-in-sexual-abuse-scandal-nos/>; Open Buddhism blog, <https://openbuddhism.org/least-protected-of-all/>; European Academy of Religion and Society (EARS), <https://europeanacademyofreligionandsociety.com/news/power-and-abuse-in-dutch-buddhist-communities/>; Buddharama Temple official apology, <http://www.buddharama-waalwijk.nl/data/documents/Misbruik-Mettavihari.pdf>.

<sup>101</sup> APA *Dictionary of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015 sv.

**4.3.4.3** The Sinhala priest **W Ananda Mangala** was perhaps one of the most remarkable Vinayaless priests of Sri Lanka [4.4.1]. He was not only an accomplished singer, dancer, actor and stage director for Buddhist plays and vaudevilles [4.4.1.1], but he also smoked cigars; regularly read the papers, listened to the radio, watched TV; habitually, often intimately, socialized with women and girls; loved Coca-Cola (but hated the Americans); obtained free passes from the manager of the local Cathay (Malacca) cinema;<sup>102</sup> took “egg-flip” in his Nescafe in the evenings (he said that I made the best ones for him!); sent lawyer’s caveat to anyone who dared maliciously gossip about him, even made police reports.<sup>103</sup>

In a private moment, I once asked him how he could habitually behave in such unmonkly ways. His reply was that these were only “minor rules,” and that he was “not attached” to any of those pleasures. It seems like I had taken decades to see this as a psychological defence of **rationalization** [4.3.4.2]; to reply to him, posthumously—this is my response.

More importantly, these are lessons for we who are reading this: we get the Buddhism we deserve, and we deserve the best; but we must work for it. It behooves us to diligently plant the Bodhi tree now so that it will give shade and shelter to posterity. The Buddha Dharma is in us, and its quality or its lack depends significantly on how we practise and propagate it with right view.

**4.3.4.4** It is also a tacit fact that worldly priests who lacked Vinaya training, masturbated.<sup>104</sup> When a temple attendant asked a priest he was serving about this, the latter replied that he was “harming no one else” and that it also prevented him from being drawn to women. We call this kind of defensive reaction, **rationalization**.

Furthermore, during Buddhist world conferences, if we carefully observe, we may notice monks, especially the younger ones, fraternizing almost coquettishly with female renunciants or women in general, which seems quite opportune and respectable in the backdrop of a world conference! For such reasons, there are Vinaya rules prohibiting renunciants from socializing and being “socially engaged.”

**4.3.4.5** Monastics are supposed to live in a manner that avoids propinquity, simply meaning “social closeness that encourages friendship or intimacy,” which is sociologically defined as follows:

“**Propinquity** refers to the proximity or physical closeness of one person to another. The greater the degree of propinquity, the more likely that two people will be attracted to each other and become friends. Propinquity is usually thought of in terms of functional distance—that is, the likelihood of coming into contact with another person—rather than sheer physical distance.”<sup>105</sup>

Buddhists often form couples during Buddhist events, courses, retreats and gatherings, or when attending activities at the local temple or society. Understandably, young people in the Seck Kia Eenh [4.4.1.1] often become intimate with one another. One such young couple would often sit together at one of the long desks of the old SKE hall apparently watching TV, but were intimately touching one another!

Since it was an open hall, they could be seen in plain sight: the incident brought excited talk. When the matter was brought up by a colleague to AM [4.4.1], who called up the boy and questioned him, his reply

<sup>102</sup> AM brought me to watch a screening of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960, starring Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh). On other occasions, he brought a few Sunday school children (boys and girls) to see Hindi movies like *Waqt* (“Time,” a 1965 comedy-drama, starring Sunil Dutt, Raaj Kumar and Shashi Kapoor; songs sung by Mohammed Rafi, Asha Bhosle and Manna Dey) and *Teesri Manzil* (“The 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor,” a 1966 musical thriller starring Shammi Kapoor and Asha Parekh; songs by M Rafi and A Bhosle). Local parents and devotees probably acquiesced to AM’s good taste in movies.

<sup>103</sup> Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h:26 (repaged 35).

<sup>104</sup> This is a serious breach of the Vinaya, entailing the 1<sup>st</sup> rule after the 4 “defeat” (*pārājika*) rules, ie, Saṅghādisesa 1 (V 3:112,17 f).

<sup>105</sup> Harry T Reis in Baumeister & Vohs (eds), *Sage Ency of Social Psychology*, 2007:708 f, propinquity.

was sharp and memorable: “A monk can touch women, what! Why can’t a layman touch a girl?” I recall AM was, for once, speechless. A remarkable synchronicity<sup>106</sup> in karmic backlash?

**4.3.4.6** Monastics who reject the Vinaya, and who have large bank accounts often think of themselves as “professionals,” who provide specialized services to others who need them. Hence, by way of **rationalization**, they have the right to charge fees for certain services, like blessing prayers and other ceremonies. Buddhist temples and societies in Malaysia and Singapore, legally, had to sponsor foreign monks (pay them a salary) for them to be able to stay as “professionals” in the country. In other words, they are technically employees of the institution.

Over time, many of them have sufficient money of their own set up their own temple, or get the support of some rich or generous laity to donate land and property, and to raise funds to maintain them. In short, despite being renunciants, such monastics are involved with money just like any lay Buddhists. One such monk was known to have remarked, “**I only touch money with my hands, but not my heart!**” Ironically, this statement may reflect the real situation: that the money-handler actually lacks a heart for the Dharma-Vinaya!

### **4.3.5 Lust-rooted compensation**

**4.3.5.1** We see an interesting case of culturally conditioned **compensation** [3.5] amongst many Sinhala monks (especially those being employed overseas as temple priests or as Dharma teachers with their own mission houses) and those ordained this ethnic tradition. This is the popular notion of excelling as academic scholars and using such titles (which can easily be bought)<sup>107</sup> to boost their professional and market value. Here, “**lust**” refers to their general drive for a comfortable urban life with regular lay supporters, rich sponsors<sup>108</sup> and temple slaves.<sup>109</sup>

They often call themselves **priests** and **Chief High Priests**, rather than monks; this gives believers an impression that they are like an archbishop, even Pope, of some region or country. The reality is that this is merely the head of their own sect of a few monks present locally. Even when locals misconceive the title as referring to the “Chief High Priest of Malaysia” or of Singapore (there are not valid titles), these Priests do not make any effort to correct the misconception.

Ironically, these terms describe them quite appropriately since, as a rule, insofar as they have rejected or ignored the Vinaya, and are employed as priests. Furthermore, they neither observe the fortnightly Pātimokkha recital nor the rules of the rains-retreat. Technically, this disqualifies them from counting the years of seniority in the monastic sangha, which means that they are perpetually year 0 as “priests.”

Resorting to attaining academic titles, in this case, clearly suggests a compensation for their lack of faith or confidence in their renunciation, a rejection of the Vinaya, and a lack of mindfulness or meditation. As further *compensation*, they excel into chanting parittas, that is, suttas or their excerpts, for magical protection and material benefits of a market of clients, the mundane laity who are more concerned with needs and wants of a successful and happy worldly life, with practically no interest in the suttas or meditation. In this role, we can say that they are not only priests, but actually **brahminized priests**.

<sup>106</sup> “Synchronicity” was coined by Carl Jung (1875-1961) referring to the acausal connection of two or more psychic and physical phenomena: <https://www.carl-jung.net/synchronicity.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h:42 (repaged 57). The PDF version by the Buddha Dharma Education Assoc, Inc, made an unauthorized reformatting of the pages, with the chapter on Ananda Mangala (AM) as pages 27-57; the original correct paging is 20-42. The quotes here are given as the original paging (with the repaging within brackets).

<sup>108</sup> For a detailed sociological study of this, see, eg. H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings*, 1999.

<sup>109</sup> Temple slavery was common in Sinhala Buddhism; usually they were war prisoners. By “slave” here is meant one who serves unpaid a priest who provides food, even lodging, for them; a very common practice today locally. On the slave (*dāsa*) in early Buddhism, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,32 n), SD 4.1; SD 29.6b (6.4).

**4.3.5.2** This **secularization** and **professionalization** (specialization in academic or priestly Buddhism) started and gained momentum in the last century. If any single “reformist” or renegade who was instrumental in this secularizing trend in Sinhala priesthood, it would be **Walpola Rāhula** (1907-1997). His book, *Bhikkhuvakage Urumaya* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1948), translated as *Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1974), was a loud voice in Sinhala racism and Buddhist nationalism, and led to the 1956 electoral victory of S Bandaranaike as prime minister. It significantly accelerated the secularization and decline of monastic Buddhism in the Sinhala tradition.

**S J Tambiah**, in *Buddhism Betrayed?*, notes that W Rahula, early in his priestly career, already had secularizing tendencies:

[I]n the 1950s, when he [W Rahula] conducted his research in Paris in association with Professor Demiéville, he devised a distinctive clothing of trousers and cap to withstand the cold and sometimes relaxed the rule regarding meals, thereby again demonstrating that he would not allow conventional rules to obstruct the pursuit of more worthwhile and serious goals. (1992:24)

Later, due to political differences with the government, Rahula moved to the West. In 1964, he became the Professor of History and Religions at Northwestern University (Evanston, IL, USA), thus becoming the first Buddhist priest to hold a salaried professorial chair in the West. Understandably, Rahula worked more closely with scholars and scholarly Buddhists than with Buddhist monastics and the laity interested in suttas and meditation.<sup>110</sup>

**4.3.5.3** Rahula’s audacity, even hubris, in living as a secular priest, and encouraging other Sinhala monks to do the same could not have been due to his social conditions alone. Clearly, like any unawakened person, he would have been driven by lust, hate and delusion. At this stage, we can safely surmise that his attitude is a good example of a psychological defence of **compensation**, rooted in any or all of the 3 unwholesome roots

One is reminded of the psychologist **Erik Erikson’s** *Young Man Luther: A study in psychoanalysis and history* (1958). Erikson sees Luther as a good model for a study in “identity crisis.”<sup>111</sup> This is not to compare the two figures, which would do great injustice to the powerful spiritual giant who brought a rebirth of modern Christianity.

Rahula, on the other hand, can be said to be instrumental in encouraging a secularizing tendency in Sinhala Buddhism that has effectively deprived it of spirituality, worsened by the nasty nepotic cloak-and-dagger Vihara intrigues of Sinhala lay Buddhists to promote their own priests locally and overseas. In the absence of spirituality, materialism clearly rule the day, especially for religious people. [4.1.1.3]

#### 4.3.6 Lust-rooted denial

**4.3.6.1** Around the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century (probably beginning in 2017), Sangharakshita’s Order Members, working on damage control over his disastrous sexual scandals of the 1970s [4.5.1], put together a huge archive called “Triratna Controversy FAQ” under the auspices of The Buddhist Centre. The various Q&A’s are quite elaborate and long-winded. We get the impression that they are trying to make sense of what had happened, and to explain them in some acceptable way. In other words, we see, psychologically, the

<sup>110</sup> On scholars’ criticisms of W Rahula, see, eg, S J Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?* 1992:22-29; H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings*, 1999 esp 186). Bh Sujato criticizes Rahula’s involvements in politics: *History of Mindfulness*, 2004b: 217 f). Further see SD 19.1 (6.4); SD 3.13 (1.3).

<sup>111</sup> Tom Butler-Bowdon, *50 Psychology Classics: Who We Are, How We Think, What We Do; Insight and Inspiration From 50 Key Books*. London & Boston: Nicholas Brealey, 2007: ch 14.

defence of **rationalization**, and, considering that much of the language is best understood only to FWBO Mitras and Friends, there is also the workings of **intellectualization**.<sup>112</sup>

Whatever “The Buddhist Centre” Archive [4.3.6.1] may say, the point remains that Sangharskahita had sexual relations with scores of young men, many of whom were teenagers, of his choice from the participants of regular courses and retreats held in the Centre where he resided. When asked about such affairs, Sangharakshita, as a rule, characteristically replied he did not know or recall any of them, such as noted by the OM Yashomitra [4.5.1], as a result of which he felt frustrated and abused.

Sangharakshita might have a darker shade in that he felt he was above everyone else, and he had no need of explaining himself, of showing his love for those fortunate young men. Those unenlightened worldlings would not be able to appreciate his position or understand his answers. This suggests self-deluded **narcissism**. Sadly, all guru-figures are blinded by a deep and destructive propensity for self-delusion that we mistake for charisma. We are irresistibly driven to shadow the guru and feed on other’s vulnerabilities so that we, too, become more Guru-like.

**4.3.6.2** Clearly, Sangharakshita was in **denial**. One might wonder, then, if he actually enjoyed those sessions, or that, to him, such a free access to desirable youths simply affirmed his authority over them: it was not about sex but power. Another interesting point worth considering is that he often spoke of “**Leaving Mother,**” which became the cult credo, that is:

“An initiation into manhood, then, is an experiential situation in which the false man dies in order that the true men may be born. The young man has to realise that he must submit and become totally passive to that which will liberate him from the domination of his mother.”<sup>113</sup>

If this points to childhood difficulties, even abuse, then, we may conclude that his recurrent sexual exploitation of those young men was a desperate, unconscious, effort at self-empowering. Every sexual act with a submissive young partner affirms that he was in charge. However, since this was not an effective solution, the process became ritualistic, unending, addictive.

**Transference** may also **be at work here**. [3.5.3.2]

**4.3.6.3** More manipulative and devious than any of the cult figures described here is **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi** (MMY) (1917-2008),<sup>114</sup> the Indian guru who propagated Transcendental Meditation (TM) around the world. He was a master motivator and manipulator of people. In the 1970s, he steadily removed all the brightest and most creative minds of the TMO and replaced them with those who simply followed without ever raising questions. One-time Mahesh concubine, Judith Bourque writes of her experiences of MMY in *Robes of Silk, Feet of Clay* (2018).<sup>115</sup> If we think that MMY used his power position to sexually exploit women is immoral, even more disturbing it is to read of his selfish manipulations of these women’s personal lives.

One of his former secretaries informed me that when one of MMY’s paramours left him, he **regressed** into the likes of a besotted teenager. When questioned about nasty details of his decisions in regards to his relations and decisions, he would simply **deny** them.<sup>116</sup>

Although our Buddhist Gurus were not as imaginative and unhinged as MMY, their effect on their devotees, on us, was similar, in encapsulating us in delusion, vampirizing on our youthful energies, best talents

<sup>112</sup> <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy>.

<sup>113</sup> The influential article, “Leaving Mother and Initiation into Manhood.” written by an Order Member, appeared in the FWBO magazine, *Mitrata*, in 1977. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/21/sangharakshita-guru-triratna-buddhist-dark-secrets>.

<sup>114</sup> His birthdate (not 1918) is according to his passport according to my informant, one of his former secretaries.

<sup>115</sup> *Robes of Silk, Feet of Clay: The true story of a love affair with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi the Beatles TM guru*, Cardiff by the Sea, CA: Waterside Productions, 2018; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2020; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed 2021.

<sup>116</sup> See eg <https://tmfree.blogspot.com/2010/07/judith-bourques-robles-of-silk-feet-of.html>.

and resources, but, worst of all, misguiding us down to their subhuman levels when we could rise well above him by our own efforts.

When we are swelled up to follow some inspiring or enlightened Buddhist teacher, it is wise to carefully study and follow the instructions of the Buddha and the arhats, for example, in **the Rūpa Sutta** (A 4.65), that is, not to follow a teacher's charisma, such as his look, voice, austerity or even teachings.<sup>117</sup> We can only awaken ourself, that is, through self-reliance.<sup>118</sup>

#### 4.4 AVOIDANCE AS PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE

##### 4.4.1 Hate-rooted aggression



Fig 4.4.1. W Ananda Mangala

**4.4.1.1** The most common manifestation of the defence of **aggression** [3.3] is that of anger. My best memory of this defence was that exhibited by **Wattala Ananda Mangala** (1917-1986)<sup>119</sup> which has been more fully documented elsewhere.<sup>120</sup> By any standard, AM (as he was popular called) was no Vinaya monk. As the first resident priest of the Seck Kia Eenh (SKE) (an eclectic Buddhist temple in Malacca, Malaysia), he taught its members (especially children) to perform on stage, to sing, dance and act (which he himself did)—and he often publicly vented his **anger** when things did not go his way.

During a Radio Ceylon interview, when he was asked: “Why are you called by some in Singapore the Nadagam [dancing] Monk?” He reasoned:

If an artist monk can paint pictures of “imaginary” Devas in transparent blouses; if a monk can engage in sculpture; the carpenter monk, and the tailor monk can enrich the “coffers of a temple” why can't I utilize my drama training to produce “Buddhist stories” communicating the Dhamma—Is it not an Audio-visual Sermon?

(“Random thoughts—Reminiscences, *The Young Buddhist* 1978:185)

Like many modern Sinhala monks, AM clearly saw no place for the Vinaya in his priestly life. His answer clearly points to an occasion of the psychological defence of **rationalization**. [4.3.4]

This was the 1960s-1970s, which was well before suttas and the Vinaya were properly known or studied in local Buddhist temples or groups. It was a time when a Buddhist monastic or priest was perceived as a virtuoso, a shaman, highly regarded in his field, that is, chanting, blessing, healing, providing magical (apotropaic) services, and even believed to have some kind of magical or shamanic powers. Understandably, rumours of priestly improprieties about local priests, both Theravada and Mahayana, were rife then. Hence, AM, despite his notorious unrestrained anger and ways was tolerated as a respectable figure by most, mainly on account of his charismatic personality.

**4.4.1.2** Since I have already written a full sociological report about AM<sup>121</sup> [4.4.1.1], I shall only mention how his **anger** can be seen as a psychological defence, a “hate-rooted aggression.” AM's presence in Malay-

<sup>117</sup> A 4.65/2:71 (SD 19.2a (6.5)); also Pug 7, 53; Tha 469-472; DhA 1:114.

<sup>118</sup> See **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1 (3.2); SD 27.3 (3.1.1). On the internal locus of control, see SD 47.15 (2.1.3.4).

<sup>119</sup> Wattala (a large suburb, 9 km from Colombo city centre<sup>4</sup>) was his home-village name to disambiguate his name.

<sup>120</sup> I closely followed AM as a Buddhist student for most of the time he was in the Seck Kia Eenh during the 1960s, and spent 1964-66 as his personal attendant. See Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h:20-43 (ch II:6.4).

<sup>121</sup> See Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h:20-43 (repaged 27-57).

sia, simply put, was a thorn in the side for the profoundly ambitious K Sri Dhammananda, Chief High Priest of the Goyigama-caste Siyam Nikaya monks (of whom there were less than 5) in Malaysia then.<sup>122</sup>

AM was especially disliked, actually feared, by Dhammananda, because AM was not only from a different sect, the Amarapura Nikaya, but was simply outspoken about how Sinhala sangha politics operated in Sri Lanka, and the illegal dealings (such as smuggling of goods and currency) of Sinhala priests in Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>123</sup> AM was also outrageously critical of the caste discrimination by Dhammananda over the “Kathina Civara consecration” (a robe-offering affair following the rains-residence, an occasion for public fund-raising).<sup>124</sup>

Although, on 2 occasions, AM was invited by the Kathina sponsors to attend the ceremony in the Vihara in KL, Dhammananda did not invite him. Consequently, with a delegation of lay followers, AM confronted him, who then diplomatically gave assurance that there would be no repeat of the rebuff.<sup>125</sup> Such affront by AM on Dhammananda might have seem settled, but that was only because Dhammananda was skilled in diplomacy and putting a calm Machiavellian front that the local elders piously found mesmerizing, to say the least.

**4.4.1.3** Dhammananda’s approach was to let any controversy quickly pass, so that the laity would just as quickly forget that it ever happened, and his Temple affairs prospered on as before. He knew that the local lay leaders looked up to him as “the Chief” [4.4.1.2], and would consult him over any controversy. Such consultations were also convenient avenues for him to instil and foment anti-AM sentiments. The SKE elders of Malacca clearly hated AM for ousting them from the SKE Management Committee.<sup>126</sup> In the end, their common hatred of AM drove them to complain to the authorities regarding AM’s loose ways, scandals and political views. He was not allowed back into Malaysia after his return from Sri Lanka in 1967.<sup>127</sup>

**4.4.1.4** It is interesting to note that on AM’s side, his anger against Sinhala caste Buddhism in Malaysia was open and transparent, but the hatred of him by Dhammananda and the disgruntled local elders was tacit and subtle. While AM put up his psychological defence of **compensation** by his performing skills which brought him notoriety as the *nadagam himi* (“dancing priest”), Dhammananda and his pious minions excelled in presenting themselves as the self-proclaimed champions of English-speaking mainstream Buddhism in Malaysia. For us today, these are painful but valuable lessons to learn that Buddhism should always be about personal development and Buddha Dharma, and not be distracted by parochialism and worldliness.

#### **4.4.2 Hate-rooted isolation**

**4.4.2.1** The psychological defence of **isolation** [3.6], that of simply ignoring the source of our troubles or embarrassment, can manifest itself either as our own total ignoring or rejection of the person or group we see as the perpetrators, or we may ourselves attempt to isolate ourselves from those we see as causing us difficulties. Often, such an “isolation” is not merely that of keeping ourselves away from the source of difficulties, but serve also a kind of strategy to reinforce our own ideology of influence.

In the preceding sections, we have described defences as having arisen unconsciously to reaffirm or strengthen *our own* inner or psychical changes. Such defences, however, may also be extended to others.

<sup>122</sup> Piyasilo id 1992h:42 (57).

<sup>123</sup> Ananda Mangala, “Sri Lanka Monks in Malaysia and Singapore.” *The Young Buddhist*, Singapore, 1977:117-124.

<sup>124</sup> Not to mention was the irony that the Siyam Nikaya monks (in Malaysia anyway) neither held any fortnightly Pātimokkha recitation (Mv 2 = V 1:101-136) nor properly observed the rains residence (*vass’āvāsa*) (Mv 3 = V 1:137-156). For the Pātimokkha, see *The Pātimokkha*, ed W Pruitt, tr K R Norman, Oxford: PTS, 2001.

<sup>125</sup> Piyasilo id 1992h:40 (repaged 55).

<sup>126</sup> Piyasilo id 1992h:24-26 = §6.42 (repaged 33-36).

<sup>127</sup> id 1992h:27-30 (repaged 36-41).

In the following sections, we see a broader application of psychological defence, where aggression, isolation, denial and other unconscious defences arise in us, which are used by an authority-figure to control or manipulate another or the masses.

Such actions are called **psychosocial mechanisms of defence**. This may happen either by choosing the right partner with a complementary neurotic requirement or by authority, manipulation, seduction or influence on another or others in the desired direction. For example, parents can assign specific roles to their children or a High Priest may groom his minions in the expectation that they will fulfil their secret (that is, unknown to them) unsatisfied desires or habitual fears.

Such defences are very common in many interpersonal relations amongst local Buddhists. Hence, our careful study of them is vital for our mental health and development as persons, as groups, as families and as a community.<sup>128</sup>

**4.4.2.2** In happier times, during the December 1967 school holidays in between my “A” Levels (6<sup>th</sup> Form) years in the Malacca High School, I spent most of it as a **temporary novice** (*sāmaṇera*) under K Sri Dhammananda. Vinaya-wise I learned nothing; Dharma-wise I was on my own. In fact, I was more of a curiosity to local Buddhists, since it was rare that any English-speaking local Chinese would ordain in a Sinhala temple.<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, I was enthusiastically welcomed, even adulated, by local Buddhists in both Malaysia and Singapore. In fact, I spent most of the time travelling and meeting Buddhists, most of whom perceived me as a learned young novice. In an important way, these events made me realize that I should get ordained as a properly trained monk, so that I would be able to educate the enthusiastic local Buddhist community in our own faith.

Soon after I had returned to lay life, I discussed the idea of **renunciation** in Sri Lanka with AM, who was himself very happy with the idea of promoting “local vocations.” He communicated with the Sri Lankan prime minister, Mrs S Bandaranaike, who then arranged with the Dept of Buddhist Culture and the Faculty of Buddhism (Vidyalandara University of Ceylon, Kelaniya) to accept me for the 1972 intake. However, only a few years earlier, there were signs of political unrest in Sri Lanka.

**Plate 4.4.** Ordination as Piyasīlo by Somdet Phra Vanarat (the 17<sup>th</sup> Supreme Patriarch), Wat Srales Rājavaramahā Vihara, Bangkok, 24 June 1972.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piya\\_Tan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piya_Tan).



<sup>128</sup> See Gerlach, “The mechanisms of defence,” in Elzer & Gerlach (eds), *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 2014:74.

<sup>129</sup> We enjoyed some “good karma” being invited by Datuk Eddie Eu Eng Hock, of Chinese Burmese descent (1st Malaysian to qualify for the Olympics, 1932), who was also a short-term novice then, driving us around in his Silver Ghost Rolls Royce in Port Dickson, where we had a relaxing time with H Gunaratna in the Datuk’s beach resort, Blue Lagoon. The best moment was when we did some simple meditation together.



In 1970, with AM's permission, I was initiated in Wat Anandametyaram, Singapore, as **Sāmaṇera Piya-sīlo** by Somdet Phra Vanarat (Poon Puṇṇasiri) of Wat Phra Jetubon, Thailand. The following year, I left for Wat Srales, Bangkok, for my monastic training. Due to the student unrest and 1971 riots in Sri Lanka, AM decided that I should remain in Thailand for my training. During the months after the rains retreat, I would visit Malacca, and also temples in Malaysia and Singapore.

**4.4.2.3** In 1972, I was ordained as a **bhikkhu** by the same Thai preceptor just before he was enthroned as the 17<sup>th</sup> Supreme Patriarch of the Thai order. Upon completing my 5 years of tutelage, studying the Dharma-Vinaya and attending the Mahachulalongkorn Monks' University, Bangkok, I returned to Malacca to be the resident monk there.

In 1978, Dhammananda decided to launch his **1<sup>st</sup> Buddhist novitiate programme**<sup>130</sup> in the Brickfields Buddhist Vihara,<sup>131</sup> KL, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> December [Fig 4.4.2]. I was invited to give a talk to the temporary novices of the programme. What better topic, I thought, than **the Vinaya**. After the talk, Dhammananda called me up and rebuked me to the effect: "Why did you talk about the Vinaya to these novices. If you do that none of them will want to become monks!" This faux pas of mine was the beginning of the growing **isolation** and blackballing from the Vihara that Dhammananda imposed on me over the coming years.



**Plate 4.4.2 The 1<sup>st</sup> Buddhist Novitiate Programme, Brickfields Buddhist Viharam 5-19 Dec 1978.** [In the front row, l-r, are Malaysian monks Mahinda, Piyasilo, Kia Jāvanapaññō, 2<sup>nd</sup> last Chamriang Candano; the rest are Sinhala priests. K Sri Dhammananda is the tallest middle figure, sitting in the front row.]

<sup>130</sup> A common practice with the Thai monks both in Thailand and Malaysia.

<sup>131</sup> The main reason for this novel practice in a Sinhala Vihara was to attract funds. On account of its numerous fund-raising projects, not surprising it has been called "the rich man's temple" (Vijaya Samaravickrama, 9 July 2010, to Jeffrey Samuels, "Forget not your old country," *South Asian Diaspora* 3,1, 2011:124).

### 4.4.3 Hate-rooted denial

**4.4.3.1** Dhammananda had disliked me from the time he knew I was close to AM in Malacca (1964-66) and in Singapore (1969-1970). When I spoke on the Vinaya to the temporary novices of the 1978 Novice Programme, it only drew us more apart. Dhammananda was, of course, relieved when AM had to leave Malaysia, too. In due course, I, too, left Malacca to stay and work in Wat Chetawan for a few years.

In 1979, I discussed with some lay Buddhist friends about setting up a registered Buddhist group called **the Saddhamma Buddhist Society (SBS)**, which will be the legal platform for a lay community of Dharma workers known as the Neo-Buddhists [4.4.3.2]. By 1981, we had set up our own centre to train the local young Buddhists to do full-time Dharma work.

We started off successfully, and apparently it was this growing independence as young local Buddhists that stoked the fear and ire of Dhammananda, whose title of “Chief High Priest” of all Malaysian Buddhism seemed threatened. We were mostly young local Buddhists then, naïve about religious politics and Tartuffism.<sup>132</sup> We were saddened by this development, and felt like disowned children of a Buddhist family. We began to feel the full impact of **denial** [3.7] of our work, our ideals, our existence.

**4.4.3.2** **The Neo-Buddhists** were a community of part-time and full-time lay Buddhist workers, inspired by the ideas and work of western Buddhists who dedicated themselves to full-time Buddhist work and supported themselves with right livelihood cooperative businesses. Our main model was the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) [4.4.3.4]. Working in this way, we would be gainfully employed, have financial independent to do Buddhist work and run our own centre with less dependence on donations from the Buddhist community.

Within a year of starting the Neo-Buddhists, but before we had registered ourselves as a religious society, I had a visit by a delegation of local elders from the Brickfields Buddhist Vihara. After praising the “good work” I had been doing and so on, their leader politely gave me this strange warning: “We cannot support you if you call yourselves the Neo-Buddhists!”

This warning came to me as a real shock, I had no idea why Dhammananda, their “Chief High Priest,” was alarmed enough to send a group of local elders whom I knew well, but were devoted elders of the Brickfields Vihara. Calmly, I replied to them that my only purpose was to have a legal platform to do Buddhist work, and had no plans to work against anyone or any group. Anyway, I stressed:

“Your support means little to us. You are all Brickfields Vihara workers. Isn’t it strange for a foreign missionary to send local Buddhist elders to stop the Dharma work of another local Buddhist monk? Anyway, since when have you ever supported our work?”

**4.4.3.3** Later, while still pondering on this development, I learned that “**the Neo-Buddhists**” was the name used by the Dalit Buddhist religious and sociopolitical movement in Maharashtra, India, started by B R Ambedkar. It radically re-interpreted Buddhism and created a new school of **Buddhism** called Navayana.

Perhaps this perception alarmed Dhammananda: he thought that we were becoming political Buddhists or that we would succeed to his disadvantage. The fact that the Dalits were outcastes (and they were from India, like the Tamils) might have also been another negative factor in the eyes of the high-caste Goyigama Chief High Priest. It seems that I had committed another faux pas to earn the Chief High Priest’s

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<sup>132</sup> On Tartuffism or Tartuffery (1851) refer to the vilely refined skill and cunning in hypocrisy, pretension, evasions, and face-saving absurdities by the use of religion; based on Tartuffe (the main character in French playwright, Molière’s comedy, *Tartuffe*.1688), a hypocritical pretender to religion, or, by extension, to excellence of any kind (OED). Similar to a Pecksniff (an unctuous architect in Dickens’ *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 1843-44), subtly vile hypocrite who affects benevolence or pretends to have high moral principles; one who interferes officiously in the business of others. See **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a (2.3.2).

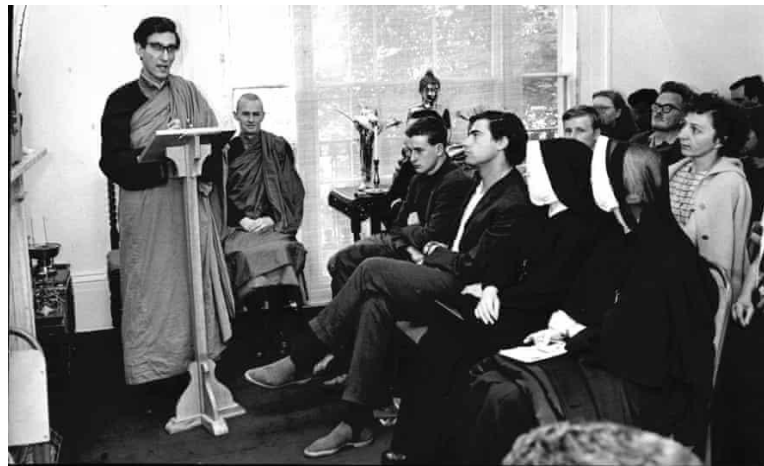
wrath again!<sup>133</sup> In fact, this warning from the local elders was the least subtle of Dhammananda’s attempts at trying to stymie our work at every major turn.

**4.4.3.4** In the early 1980s, we stopped using the label “Neo-Buddhists” and adopted a more traditional name, “**The Dharmafarers.**” Coincidentally, this name was similar to the Dharmacharis,<sup>134</sup> the full-time Order Members of **the Western Buddhist Order (WBO)**, started by the renegade priest, Sangharakshita (1925-2018), one of the most controversial cult figures in modern Buddhism, indeed, in religious history. But we did not know this until much later.

In the 1980s, I made a number of visits to the WBO to learn their ideas and methods full-time Buddhist workers, especially through their public arm, **the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO)**. The WBO was hugely successful on account of their modern Western approach to Buddhism, with many of their Order Members writing remarkably interesting articles in engagingly clear English on Buddhist teachings, interpreted in the light of literature (mostly English literature) and the Arts (painting, yoga, martial arts) and religious mythology. [4.4.3.5]

**4.4.3.5** That the WBO stressed commitment to Buddhism through refuge-going, spiritual friendship and financial independence through right livelihood projects were attractive ideas and practices. Although I made a few friends of the Dharmacharis, I found that the ordinary FWBO regulars were much more friendly. At that time, the WBO were led by mostly young idealist Buddhists who looked up to Sangharakshita as their cult Guru. They adopted a revisionist form of Buddhism (mainly Tibetan and Mahayana), and were fiercely anti-Theravada.

The fact that I was still a Theravada monk then did not help. During one of the Dharma lessons led by a Dharmachari, I expressed my understanding of the 4 noble truths which most of the study group members found interesting. However, after the class, the study leader privately chided me and said: “Piya, could you please keep to the group discussion!”



**Plate 4.4.3.** Sangharakshita, born Dennis Lingwood, giving a talk at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, 1966, before setting up his own Western Buddhist Order. Photograph: John Twine/Rex.

<sup>133</sup> The only Tamils I knew who frequented the Brickfields Vihara in my time in Malaysia was one Dr Lingam and his family, who were devout Buddhists. He felt so discriminated by the Sinhala there that he left and set up his own retreat centre outside KL. See Piyasilo 1992h:46-49 = §6.51 (repaged 61-64).

<sup>134</sup> Both “Dharmafarer” and “Dharmachari” come from the Pali *dhamma,cārī*, one who lives the (Buddha’s) Dharma: Dh 169).

My refusal to renounce Theravada (at that time) was the main reason for the WBO's refusal to accept me beyond being a Mitra, a Friend who has taken refuge in the 3 jewels. Furthermore, two Malaysians, a young man and a young woman, whom I had later sponsored, were almost at once admitted as Order Members, but, strangely, they lost touch with me after that. That I was still a Theravada monk—and a not skinny young “chink” at that—also prevented me from being close to Sangharakshita (to my benefit).<sup>135</sup>

**4.4.3.6** When Dhammananda learned of my involvement with the Western Buddhist Order (and thus with Sangharakshita), and that I was trying to use their ideas in our lay Buddhist ministry, he had even more reason to disapprove of my work. By then, I was already blackballed by him. At that time, Sangharakshita's openly homosexual lifestyle, was unknown to the Buddhist public in Malaysia and Singapore, but tacitly well known amongst the traditional sangha members who characteristically kept the fact to themselves.

Undoubtedly, I had great difficulties in accepting Sangharakshita's anti-mainstream Buddhist ideas and personal inclinations. The fact remains that I had some contact with the WBO and this was another faux pas in Dhammananda's eye.<sup>136</sup>

**4.4.3.7** My precious protracted lesson in *dukkha* apparently started with my naively promoting the Vinaya to some part-time novices, for which I was reprimanded by the Chief High Priest [4.4.2.3]. And when I was with Sangharakshita's FWBO, I was sniffed at as a “Dark Age” Theravada monk who refused to denounce the old tradition [4.4.3.5]. On the Malaysian side, the Chief High Priest saw me as a saboteur trying to import the teachings and practices of a Western cult guru.

Thus I was caught like a mousedeer right in the midst of two battling elephants, as the Malay saying goes, which left me badly injured. I had to gingerly hobble out of the jungle for safety. On the bright side, what I learned from my monk years in **Thailand** has kept me alive in the Buddha Dharma, and being invited to move to Singapore in 2001 brought me back to the start of the journey: early Buddhism, and the work I have been doing for the last 2 decades here.

**4.4.3.8** Dhammananda's most serious weakness was not only a disregard for the Vinaya and non-interest in the suttas as a means of Dharma-training (“so that they will remain monks!”). As he became more successful, popular and wealthy through his Buddhist charisma, he noticed that there were amazingly wealthy people out there who were very generous to those doing Buddhist work. He wanted to be sure that he and his Temple received the lion's share.

However, I did recall once, only once, in the good old days, for some strange reason, he took out a 10-ringgit bill from his drawer and pushed it across his desk to me.<sup>137</sup> It is a heart of **charity** that makes a monk,

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<sup>135</sup> After the disastrous Sangharakshita scandal broke out in 1997, the mass media covered it regularly with a vengeance. In spring 2010, Sangharakshita renamed his groups (the FWBO and the WBO) as the Triratna Buddhist Community and the Triratna Buddhist Order respectively. On the scandal, see (4.5.1).

<sup>136</sup> The above was, in fact, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of my 3 major faux pas (pl, pronounced *foh pahz*) in the eye of Dhammananda. For the other 2, see sections 4.4.2.3 and 4.4.3.2. By this time, I basically felt alienated from most of the local English-speaking Buddhists on account of Dhammananda's blackballing of me. Yet, he often appropriated our works, such as Puja tapes, study notes and the Integrated Syllabus (which I prepared for SKE Dhamma School), and used them in his Vihara, minus the author's name: see “A wishing cow,” R521 2017: <https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/R521-171011-A-wishing-cow-RB192.pdf>. This finally led to my resigning as a Theravada monk, and, in due course, to turn to full-time lay Dharma work on the suttas, which was to the credit of the Singapore Buddhists.

<sup>137</sup> However, a friend of mine who was a teller in the bank where Dhammananda had his account, told me once wide-eyed that the Chief High Priests himself regularly went to the bank with huge wads of cash to be banked it!

a person, good and great—that one is charitable, and works to inspire goodness in others, too. It’s not about the money.<sup>138</sup>

There was an event that shocked local Buddhists at that time. Some pious local Buddhists had raised some funds and printed W Rahula’s *What the Buddha Taught* (1959) for free distribution. When informed of this, Dhammananda was very angry about it and wrote a letter to the lay publisher to stop distributing them since they were “copyrighted.” Knowing him, I would imagine that he would have confiscated the remaining stock and sold them in his Temple Bookshop. Plutocracy is not deed amongst clerics with their iron hands in velvet gloves.

#### 4.5 INSENSITIVITY AS PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE

##### 4.5.1 Delusion-rooted denial

In 1997, an article appeared in a British newspaper, *The Guardian* (27 Oct 1997), entitled, “The dark side of enlightenment.” It was the first of numerous series of public media reports, with a full report annually in the mass media, on **the Sangharakshita scandals** right down to recent times.<sup>139</sup> It was as if there was a mass mourning of the suicides of those tormented by the inducted cultish sexuality, and those who still lived, the best part of their youth lost to an unrepentant Guru blinded by denial.

Psychologically, this is a painfully valuable study in the nature of sexual exploitation by a cult guru of his vulnerable young disciples. Of the scores of young men, Sangharakshita had exploited, one of them, a teenage male Order Member (OM) Yashomitra wrote this first-hand report of his ordeal in an in-house OM-only circulated newssheet, *Shabda*, thus:

A couple of years ago [from 2003] I spoke to Sangharakshita about my [sexual] experiences with him. I wanted to talk it through with him and ask what he thought of it now. The first thing that made this problematic was that he said he had no memory of anything like this taking place between us. ...

This is the man who is my Preceptor! I am by no means alone in feeling misused and disillusioned in the way I have described. I think it is impossible to calculate the effect this could have on someone’s relationship to the Order and to the Dharma.

(Yashomitra’s *Shabda* article, March 2003) (emphasis added)<sup>140</sup>

Described here is clearly a case of the psychological defence of **denial** [3.7], that is, if Sangharakshita had genuinely forgotten the incident since it was only one of numerous, and Yashomitra was “obviously no longer flavour of the month.”<sup>141</sup>

##### 4.5.2 Delusion-rooted intellectualization

**4.5.2.1** Before we close this study, we should mention the defence of **intellectualization**, which, like rationalization, is a form of the defence of compartmentalization [3.6.1.2]. In psychoanalysis, intellectualiz-

<sup>138</sup> On account of Buddhist monastics becoming wealthy today, it’s time they habitually donate to the needy laity, or even set up foundations for buying suttas books or other charitable projects (like successful Buddhist translator Bh Bodhi and his Foundation). A time will come perhaps when such monastics may dress more simply like the laity so that they are capable of more good works so that the robes no more get in their way. The Buddha speaks of the “yellow-necks” (*kāsāva, kaṇṭha*) in **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,8), SD 1.9; Dh 307a (SD 19.1(6.3)); SD 49.3a(2.1.3); SD 28.9b.

<sup>139</sup> <http://www.ex-cult.org/fwbo/Guardian.htm>. See also SD 34.5 (1.2.2).

<sup>140</sup> On Yashomitra’s *Shabda* article, see <http://www.ex-cult.org/fwbo/Yashomitra.htm>.

<sup>141</sup> On the Sangharakshita scandals, see <http://www.ex-cult.org/fwbo/fwbofiles.htm>. For recent reports: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/21/sangharakshita-guru-triratna-buddhist-dark-secrets>.

ation is a defense mechanism in which conflicts or emotional problems are dealt with abstractly or concealed by excessive intellectual talks and postures.<sup>142</sup>

Technically, it is the use of the intellect to defend against instinctual impulses. Obsessive neurotics use intellectualization in an effort to master obsessive representations and exhaust themselves in an intellectual activity that is as intense as it is empty, forcing themselves against their will to scrutinize and speculate as if the most important and vital personal issues were at stake.<sup>143</sup>

**4.5.2.2** For example, I can myself ask; Is my exercise in writing this study a defence of **intellectualization** of all that I have myself gone through? Perhaps, but since I am aware of its nature, it is no more a defence, since I have come to terms with it. After all, I am happily and regularly working with the suttas and teaching them. There is no denying of what I had gone through. Indeed, what is described here are only symptoms of a larger and living reality, not in any singly person, but a kind of shared consciousness that must be examined, upgraded and uplifted in according with the Buddha's teaching of love, ruth joy and peace. We need to work to grow the Bodhi tree in our midst and let it flourish and reach our skies [4.1.3.6].

**4.5.2.3** The defence of intellectualization also applies to the theoretical study of **the Abhidhamma** with neither a sutta grounding nor for a better understanding of the suttas. We may try to master the Abhidhamma; yet, we still know little about the suttas, even less about how our own mind really works. We may think we know how many thought-moments there are in a thought-process at the sense-door, but better it is to notice our own thoughts, calm the mind, free it.

We should not merely use our knowledge **intellectualizing** real-life experiences, without feeling them, without really knowing them, without ever knowing oneself. Or, worse, we fancy that "powerful" wisdom will attract charisma for us and earn us a guru's respect and adulation from others, when we should be cultivating friendliness and warmth to others in our daily lives. If the Abhidhamma is to be useful, as it was originally intended, it should help us understand the suttas better, and to explain *why we behave in the way we do, how we think, how we feel, and to rise above them in growing wisdom*.

**4.5.2.4 Scholars and nominal Buddhists** often see Dharma teachings, including those in the suttas, like a comprehension study or a field of facts to be understood at the word level. This understanding is then discussed in terms of their own discipline (such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, literature or law) or their own religion (including sectarian forms of Buddhism). Useful as this may be to the scholar, impressive as it is to the professional, it is unlikely to have any real significance for our personal practice or progress on the path of awakening.

Merely collecting or numbering events, actions, items, even people, will never teach us the living truth and beauty of watching these things in real life, in their living context. Our mind cannot really be numbered; it is an on-going, unique, "now" process that we must live in order to know oneself, tame the mind, free it. We may make a colourful 3-D widescreen movie of the full moon, but it is not still the moon itself in its heavenly space. We do not merely see with the eyes, but we must also feel with our heart: this is fully living and learning.<sup>144</sup> [3.5.3.1]

### **4.5.3 The time traveller**

**4.5.3.1** In this study of **the Khaluṅka Sutta**, I have explained the nature of the offences listed therein, that their purpose is simply that a renunciant should be mindful of his lapses in the Dharma-Vinaya, get the

<sup>142</sup> APA *Dictionary of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2015 sv.

<sup>143</sup> See Mijolla (ed), *Macmillan International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 2005 sv.

<sup>144</sup> See also SD 40a.10 (2.2.4.2).

benefit of the doubt, and turn to the sangha for instruction and healing so that he is able to effectively progress in his Dharma training. We have also looked at these offences from a modern psychological angle, seeing them as cases of psychological defence.

At this point, we have seen how these defences arise, rooted in any or all of the 3 unwholesome roots [3.6.3.3]. Before any of these defences can be corrected, they need to be raised into the light of the conscious mind of wisdom. We must see and acknowledge them, the way we expose Māra by simply calling out his name: “I know you, Māra!” [3.4.3.4]. This may be difficult, even unlikely, by most of the local Buddhist crowd drowned in commercial and professional Buddhisms. We start to be free by willfully leaving that crowd so that we are no more burdened or fettered on its account. [4.1.1.2]

**4.5.3.2** We can learn something enlightening and liberating about our present Buddhist conditions from British science-fiction writer H G Wells’ *The Time Machine* (1895). The Buddhist masses are like the Eloi and our leaders and teachers, the foreign missionaries, are like the Morlocks. **The Eloi** live a banal life of ease on the Earth’s surface while **the Morlocks** live underground, tending machinery, and providing food, clothing, shelter and other needs for the Eloi. The blissfully compliant **Eloi** are then herded, bred and maintained by the **Morlocks** as food supply, much like cows, sheep and pigs are today.

In the story, the Morlocks dwell underground whose only access to the surface world is through a network of well-like structures. In their dark subterranean hell-like realm, they maintain ancient machines as they have done for generations. After thousands of generations of living without sunlight, the Morlocks have dull grey-to-white skin, flaxen hair on the head and back. Their faces are chinless with large greyish-red cat-like eyes that reflect light.

They are smaller than humans (the same height as the Eloi). Like the Eloi, they are significantly weaker than the average human (the Time Traveller hurt or killed some barehandedly with relative ease), but a large swarm of them can be a serious threat for a lone man, especially unarmed without any portable light source. Their sensitivity to light usually prevents them from emerging during the day.

The Time Traveler perceives the seemingly symbiotic relationship between the Eloi and the Morlock, and reflects that the Eloi-Morlock relationship developed from a class distinction present in his own time: the Morlocks are the working class who were relegated to working and living underground so that the rich upper class could live in luxury on the surface. Over time, the situation changed: the comfortable surface people no longer dominate the underground dwellers, but instead become their livestock.

Good literature presents us with virtual imaginative visions that are based on true realities that seem to transcend time. It teaches us to look deep into our own situation to recognize those familiar insidious habits and patterns of ours. When we see and accept these realities, we began to outgrow and rise out of them. But we first need the vision and wisdom to do so. This comes from our understanding of the liberating teachings of the suttas applied to our own lives.

**4.5.3.3** The huge majority of our local Buddhist leaders, teachers and followers live—like the Eloi and the Morlocks [4.5.3.2]—in our own Lala-land of pious devotion to authority and huge buildings. A local Buddhist group rallies, like the Eloi, around its leader, often a man of means (usually it’s a man) who uses his means and titles to hold together Brahma-like his concrete hive of agenda and activities, while he sits spider-like in his web’s centre. His followers are faithfully stuck to the webbed world.

Similarly, most local English-speaking ethnic Buddhists are stuck in their ways, dependent on the web of instructions, rituals, and calendar of lamp-lightings and fund-raising for their favoured centre. As members of this network (the word “individual Buddhists” clearly does not apply here), they may be best characterized as the butler Stevens in Nobel Prize author Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* (1989).<sup>145</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, London: Faber & Faber, 1989.

Stevens is the classic English butler, unquestioningly dedicated to serve his master to the best of his ability, right to the end and, in his case, beyond, into “the remains of the day.” In the story, Steven reflects on his unshakable loyalty to his recently deceased master, Lord Darlington, who had hosted lavish meetings between German sympathizers and English aristocrats in an effort to influence international affairs in the years leading up to World War 2.

He ponders on the meaning of “dignity” and what constitutes a great butler; and on his relationship with his late father, who also dedicated his life to serving a master. Ultimately, Stevens is forced to ponder Lord Darlington’s dubious character and reputation, as well as the true nature of his relationship with Miss Kenton (a skilled housekeeper whose services he needs), with whom he is almost intimate but always professional: it is not in his butler nature to express love.

In due course, he meets a stranger who suggests to him that it is better to enjoy the present moment than to dwell on the past, as “the evening” is, after all, the best part of the day. At the end of the story, Stevens seems to have taken this to heart *as he understands it*: he focuses on the “remains of the day,” referring to his future butler service with Mr Farraday (his new employer) and what is left of his own life.

**4.5.3.4** The prevalent situation today is mainly due to a century of religious conditioning by the Sinhala missionary presence in Malaysia and Singapore amongst their English-speaking Buddhists. As a group, the mindset of these Buddhists, led by teachers and professionals looking up to a Sinhala Chief High Priest, an authority figure. This situation is similar to that of the Borg of the Star Trek science fiction TV series.

**The Borg** (singular and collective plural) are a fictional alien “race” that appear as recurring antagonists to the *Star Trek* teams. They are a collection of species that have been turned into cybernetic organisms functioning as drones in a hive-mind or group consciousness called “the Collective” or “the Hive.” This is a sophisticated subspace network to which every Borg is linked, and thus ensured of constant supervision and guidance. They are driven by a need for “perfection” and to assimilate members of other species to further that goal.

An individual Borg rarely speaks but sends a collective audio message to the targets, ominously chanting, “Resistance is futile.” The exact phrasing of this prerecorded-sounding statement varies and evolves over the various episodes and film. One phrase, from *The Next Generation*,<sup>146</sup> is:

“We are the Borg. Your biological and technological distinctiveness will be added to our own. Resistance is futile.” **We are the Buddhist Borg.**<sup>147</sup>

It is unlikely that any local Buddhist would right now (in the remains of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century) understand, much less accept, any of this writing, if they are ever inclined to even read it. Take this as a kind of therapeutic process aimed at **loosening our fixations**, freeing our minds, brightening our hearts with love, ruth, joy and peace. Hence, hope lies in the remains of the day, perhaps the evening, but surely the dawn.

#### 4.5.4 Epilogue

**4.5.4.1** Looking back over the decades, I must say that my life is best seen as a tragicomedy, one filled with the pain of experience and the joy of learning, but both to be laughed at because I took so long to learn from them. Dhammananda rejected me basically because he thought I knew too much, I was teaching others to live the Dharma-spirited life self-reliantly. Ananda Mangala rejected me (despite everything) be-

<sup>146</sup> Star Trek series, 1987-94, Seasons 2-3.

<sup>147</sup> See “I, Borg,” R477, *Revisioning Buddhism* 168, 2016. <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/R477-161130-I-Borg-RB168.pdf>. In *The Star Trek: Picard* (2020-present) we see retired Picard some 3 decades after being converted in a Borg, has recovered his humanity (end of 24<sup>th</sup> cent). The Romulans have captured and imprisoned some Borgs in their own space-cube, and whom they have rehabilitated or “de-Borg-ed.”



cause I did not dance, sing or act, but was “mad with Dhamma, Dhamma, Dhamma” (as he put it); Sangharakshita rejected me because I was neither handsome nor sexually desirable. I am unreservedly thankful for all this.

It took me more than 3 decades to write this psychological analysis of some spiritual highlights of my life. I was hesitant to write it earlier for various reasons. Firstly, the key actors in this personal drama were still alive, but with their deaths, some sense of **closure** started for me. Secondly, from decades of living the Dharma, I have learned that our suffering is our best teacher. I wrote this as a **lesson** for you, so that you will be able to recognize the signs of charisma and scandal before they happen to you.

**4.5.4.2** This is no sure immunization against such devastating storms, from which many may never survive; their emotional and spiritual growth may be stunted or distorted for life. This is the price of *blind faith, youthful folly and traditional obsequiousness*. I was fortunate to have the natural qualities, encouraged by a few good teachers in school and college, to be *curious, independent and resilient* intellectually and emotionally. These are unique and vital lessons from which I am confident you will learn some valuable lessons.

This is not really about people, but about our nasty nefarious habits on account of our own lack of mindfulness and awakening. We may be drawn to a disarming charismatic, or an inimitable Admirable Crichton, or a brilliant Renaissance Man: these may be only symptoms of *Machiavellianism, of narcissism, or psychopathy*. When we meet a Guru in any such a guise, our animal lust and crowd instinct drive us inexorably like insects in the night into their blazing flames.

**4.5.4.3** You may learn nothing from these accounts, you may even find them intriguing to try them for yourself. But once you catch even a glint of the Guru’s clay feet, these accounts will, hopefully, arouse some familiarity in you, so that you will at once move away out of the Guru’s reach. If this is unlikely, then, you must learn from your own mistakes. Just remember you are not alone. This document may well heal you. It will help empower you again, to regain your sanity.

To be truly **Buddhist**, then, is to know oneself, tame oneself, free oneself, and, as teachers, to teach others something about this. The kind of teachers we learn from may have been karmically connected with us before. Yet, we must form present Dharma-spirited links so that our learning broadens and deepens, so that we become self-reliant, self-knowing, and in the end, self-awakening, as taught by the Buddha.

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## (Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka Sutta

### The (Eights) Discourse on the Restive

A 8.14

**1** Bhikshus, I will teach you regarding **8 kinds of restive [unbroken]<sup>148</sup> horses** and the 8 faults in a horse,<sup>149</sup> and 8 types of restive persons and the 8 faults in a person.

Listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the bhikshus answered the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

#### The 8 kinds of horses

**2** “And what, bhikshus, are **the 8 kinds of restive [inferior] horses** and the 8 faults in a horse?

(1) Here, bhikshus, a certain restive horse is told,

‘**Go forward!**<sup>150</sup> while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, instead **it backs<sup>151</sup> [191]** and twists the chariot around its hindquarters.<sup>152</sup>

Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.

This, bhikshus, is the 1<sup>st</sup> fault in a horse.

**3** (2) Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told,

‘**Go forward!**’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, instead it **jumps back** [lifting its hind legs], damages the carriage railing and breaks the triple bar.<sup>153</sup>

Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.

This, bhikshus, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> fault in a horse.

**4** (3) Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told,

‘**Go forward!**’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, instead [it bows its head so that the yoke falls to the ground,] **freeing its thigh<sup>154</sup> from the chariot pole,** and tramples on it.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>148</sup> “Restive,” *khaluṅka*. The Pali word has 2 senses: it connotes (as direct meaning) “restive, excitable, shaking, agitated” and denotes (as derived meaning) “unbroken, inferior” as regards horses here. While the horses in the first 6 similes are “excitable” [2-7], the last 2 are simply unmoving [8 f]. Cf **Ass’ājāniya S** (A 8.14/ 2:250), where the qualities of thoroughbreds are listed; **Sandha S** (A 9.10/5:322-326) uses these 2 kinds of horses as similes; **(Ti,assa) Khaluṅka S** (A 9.22/4:397), where 3 kinds of restive horses are mentioned.

<sup>149</sup> “Faults in a horse,” *assa,dose*. The word *dosa* (Skt *doṣa*) in the sense of “fault, defect” is rarely found in the Nikāyas, where it (as Skt *dveṣa*) is usually used to mean “anger, ill will, hate” often in combination with *rāga* (lust) and *moha* (delusion) (eg V 1:183; D 3:146, 159, 182, 214, 270; M 1:15, 47, 96 f, 250 f, 395, 489; S 1:13, 15, 70, 98, 5:34 f; A 1:134, 187, 201, 2:172, 191, 203, 3:181, 338; Dh 20; Sn 270, 506, 631; It 2=6, 45, 57).

<sup>150</sup> “Go forward!” *pehīti*, which Comy glosses as *gacchāti* (AA 4:104).

<sup>151</sup> “Moves back,” *paṭisakkati*.

<sup>152</sup> *Piṭṭhito ratharū pavatteti*. Comy: Pushing the yoke up with its shoulder-bone, it retreats, turning the chariot around with its hindquarters (AA 4:104,8).

<sup>153</sup> *Pacchā laṅghati* [Be Ce so; Ee *pacchālarū khipati*; Ke Se *pacchā laṅghipati*], *kubbararū hanati*, *ti,daṅḍarū bhañjati*. Comy: It kicks up its hind (legs), strikes the chariot’s railing (damaging it); breaks the triple bar (AA 4:104,10).

<sup>154</sup> “With its thigh,” *satthirū*, lit “thigh”.

<sup>155</sup> (This + prec line) *rath’īsāya satthirū ussajjitvā rath’īsarū yeva ajjhomaddati*. Comy: Having lowered its head, it throws the yoke on the ground and strikes the chariot pole with its thighs, tramples it with its front feet, and stands (there) (AA 4:104,14-17).

Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.  
This, bhikshus, is the 3<sup>rd</sup> fault in a horse.

5 (4) *Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told, 'Go forward!' while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, instead it goes the wrong way and runs the chariot off the road.*  
Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.  
This, bhikshus, is the 4<sup>th</sup> fault in a horse.

6 (5) *Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told, 'Go forward!' while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, instead it rears up its front quarters and paws the air with its front feet.*<sup>156</sup>  
Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.  
This, bhikshus, is the 5<sup>th</sup> fault in a horse.

7 (6) *Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told, 'Go forward!' while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, but ignoring him, ignoring his goad,*<sup>157</sup> *it gnashes the bit [192] free*<sup>158</sup> *and wanders about where it wishes.*  
Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.  
This, bhikshus, is the 6<sup>th</sup> fault in a horse.

8 (7) *Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told, 'Go forward!' while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, it neither moves forward nor back, but stands right there like a post.*  
Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.  
This, bhikshus, is the 7<sup>th</sup> fault in a horse.

9 (8) *Again, bhikshus, here a certain restive horse is told, 'Go forward!' while being beaten and goaded by the trainer, it folds its forelegs and hind legs together and just sits right there on its four legs.*  
Even so, bhikshus, here a certain horse is restive.  
This, bhikshus, is the 8<sup>th</sup> fault in a horse.  
These, bhikshus, are the 8 kinds of restive [inferior] horses and the 8 faults in a horse.

### The 8 kinds of restive persons

10 And, bhikshus, what are the 8 types of restive persons and the 8 faults in a person?

(1) Here, bhikshus, the monks accuse a monk of an offence.<sup>159</sup>  
That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, **strongly objects,**<sup>160</sup>  
(and) pleads forgetfulness, "I do not remember! I do not remember!"<sup>161</sup>

<sup>156</sup> *Laṅghati* [Be Ce so; Ee Se *laṅgheti*] *purimamam kāyam, paggaṅhāti purime pāde.*

<sup>157</sup> "Ignoring him ... the goad," *sārathinā anādiyivā, sārathim anādiyivā patodam*. Throughout: Be *patoda, laṅṅhi*, "goad and whip"; Ce Ee *patodam*; Se *patoda, yaṅṅhim*, "goad-stick."

<sup>158</sup> "Gnashes the bit free," *dantehi mukhādhānam vidhamṣitvā*, lit "having destroyed the bit with its teeth."

<sup>159</sup> "Offence," *āpatti*, ie an infringement of a monastic rule.

<sup>160</sup> "Strongly objects," *paṭippharati*. The Pali word has two senses: it connotes "to effulge, shine forth, stream out, emit," and figuratively denotes "to splurt out, bring against, object" (PED).

Bhikshus, just as a restive horse is told,  
**“Go forward!”** while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,  
 instead **it backs** and twists the chariot around its hindquarters—  
 even so, bhikshus, is this person like that, I say.

Such, bhikshus, a certain one here, bhikshus, is a restive person.  
 This, bhikshus, is the 1<sup>st</sup> fault in a person.

**11** (2) Again, *bhikshus*, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.  
 That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, strongly objects, **[193]**  
 thus to the accusers,

‘What is there to **your foolish and ignorant talk?** Think about what you should say!’<sup>162</sup>

Bhikshus, just as a certain restive horse is told,  
 ‘Go forward!’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,  
 instead it **jumps back** [lifting its hind legs], damages the carriage railing and breaks the triple bar—  
 even so, *bhikshus*, is this person like that, I say.

Such, *bhikshus*, is this certain person with a fault here.  
 This, bhikshus, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> fault in a person.

**12** (3) Again, *bhikshus*, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.  
 That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, strongly objects,  
 (and) retorts to his accusers,

‘You, too, have committed such and such an offence! **You make amends for yours first!**’<sup>163</sup>

Bhikshus, just as a restive horse is told,  
 ‘Go forward!’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,  
 instead [it bows its head so that the yoke falls to the ground,] **freeing its thigh from the chariot pole,**  
 and tramples on it—  
 even so, *bhikshus*, is this person like that, I say.

Such, *bhikshus*, is this certain person with a fault here.  
 This, bhikshus, is the 3<sup>rd</sup> fault in a person.

**13** (4) Again, *bhikshus*, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.  
 That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, strongly objecting,  
**evades the issue with various others,**<sup>164</sup> raises unrelated matters,<sup>165</sup>  
 and **shows anger, hate and bitterness.**<sup>166</sup>

Bhikshus, just as a certain restive horse is told,  
 ‘Go forward!’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,

<sup>161</sup> *Na sarāmi na sarāmī ti asatiyā ‘va nibbeṭheti.* On **repression**, see (3.1).

<sup>162</sup> *Codakaṃ yeva paṭippharati ‘kin nu kho tuyhaṃ bālassa avyattassa bhaṇitena, tvam pi nāma bhaṇitabbaṃ mañ-  
 ñasī ti,* lit “What is there by speaking with your foolishness and ignorance? Think about what should be said!”; alt tr:  
 “What right have you to talk, an ignorant fool? Why do you think you must speak?” “This is evidently a case of **aggres-  
 sion**, ie, the most original and ‘natural’ way of reacting to frustration.” (Johansson 1983:18).

<sup>163</sup> *Tvam pi kho ‘si itthan, nāmam āpattim āpanno, tvam tāva paṭhamaṃ paṭikarohī ti.* This is a case of **projection:**  
 [3.4].

<sup>164</sup> “Evades the issue with various others,” *aññen’aññam paṭicarati,* or “counters with some other issuers.” This is an  
 example of **isolation** [3.6]. Cf **Anumāna S** (M 15,5(10)), SD 59.3.

<sup>165</sup> “Raises unrelated matters,” *bahiddhā kathaṃ apanāmeti:* this is a case of the defence of **regression** [3.2]; also  
 seen in §16.

<sup>166</sup> “Shows anger, hate and bitterness,” *kopañ ca dosañ ca appaccayā pātukaroti:* this is a case of the defence of  
**aggression** [3.3].

instead it **goes the wrong way** and runs the chariot off the road—  
*even so, bhikshus, is this person like that, I say.*

*Such, bhikshus, is this certain person with a fault here.*

This, bhikshus, is the 4<sup>th</sup> fault in a person.

**14** (5) *Again, bhikshus, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.*

*That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, strongly objecting, speaks before the sangha, **gesticulating his arms**.*<sup>167</sup>

Bhikshus, just as a [193] restive horse is told,

‘Go forward!’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,

instead it **rears up its front quarters** and paws the air with its front feet—  
*even so, bhikshus, is this person like that, I say.*

*Such, bhikshus, is this certain person with a fault here.*

This, bhikshus, is the 5<sup>th</sup> fault in a person.

**15** (6) *Again, bhikshus, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.*

*That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, strongly objects,*

(and) **ignores the sangha, ignores his accusers, wanders about as he wishes as an offender.**<sup>168</sup>

Bhikshus, just as a certain restive horse is told,

‘Go forward!’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,

instead ignoring him, ignoring the goad, it gnashes the bit free<sup>169</sup> and wanders about where it wishes,

*even so, bhikshus, is this person like that, I say.*

*Such, bhikshus, is this certain person with a fault here.*

This, bhikshus, is the 6<sup>th</sup> fault in a person.

**16** (7) *Again, bhikshus, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.*

*That monk, being thus accused of an offence by the monks, strongly objects,*

(and) says, ‘**But I have not committed any offence!** I have not committed any offence!’<sup>170</sup>

**And by his silence, he vexes the sangha.**<sup>171</sup>

Bhikshus, just as a certain restive horse is told,

‘Go forward!’ while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,

it neither moves forward nor back, but **stands right there like a post,**  
*even so, bhikshus, is this person like that, I say.*

*Such, bhikshus, is this certain person with a fault here.*

This, bhikshus, is the 7<sup>th</sup> fault in a person.

**17** (8) *Again, bhikshus, here the monks accuse a monk of an offence.*

*That monk, being thus accused [195] of an offence by the monks, strongly objects,*

Let me now give up the training and **return to the low life [to life as a layman]!**

Having given up the training and returned to the low life, he says thus,

<sup>167</sup> *Saṅgha, majjhe bāhu, vikkhepaṃ bhaṇati.* Johansson follows Hare’s mistranslation of *bāhu, vikkhepaṃ* (*bāhu*, “arm” + *vikkhepaṃ*) reading it as *bahu* (much) + *vikkhepaṃ*. This is a case of the defence of **compensation**: [3.5].

<sup>168</sup> *Anādiyitvā saṅghaṃ ānādiyitvā codakaṃ sāpattiko va yena, kāmaṃ pakkamati.* This is a case of the defence of **isolation**: [3.6].

<sup>169</sup> “Gnashes the bit free,” *dantehi mukhādhānaṃ vidhamsitvā*, lit “having destroyed the bit with its teeth.”

<sup>170</sup> This defensive reaction is that of **denial**: [3.7].

<sup>171</sup> *N’evāhaṃ āpanno ‘mhi, na panāhaṃ āpanno ‘mhi ti.* So *tunhī, bhāvena saṅghaṃ viheseti.* This, according to Johansson, is a case of the defence of **regression**, which is also seen in §10. On **regression**, see (3.2).

**'Now, bhante, are you satisfied?'<sup>172</sup>**

Bhikshus, just as a certain restive horse is told,  
 'Go forward!' while being beaten and goaded by the trainer,  
 it folds its forelegs and hind legs together and **just sits right there on its four legs—**  
*even so, bhikshus, is this person like that, I say.*

*Such, bhikshus, is this certain person with a fault here.*

This, bhikshus, is the 8<sup>th</sup> fault in a person.

These, bhikshus, are the 8 kinds of restive persons and the 8 faults in a person.

— evaṃ —

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<sup>172</sup> "Kin nu kho tumhe āyasmanto atibālham mayi vyāvaṭṭhā yāva idānāham sikkham paccakkhāya hīnāyāvattissāmī ti, So sikkham paccakkhāya hīnāyāvattitvā evaṃ āha, "Idāni kho tumhe āyasmanto attamanā hothā ti. "Now ... are you satisfied?" *idāni kho tumhe āyasmanto attamanā hothā ti*, lit, "Now bhante be satisfied!" This is a case of **isolation**: [3.6].