

## **AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON HOW MEDITATION CAN BE USED AS PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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### **Abstract**

The integration of meditation, particularly Buddhist meditation, into psychotherapy, highlighting its potential as a therapeutic tool within clinical and counseling contexts. The primary focus is on two major types of Buddhist meditation: Samatha (tranquility meditation) and Vipassanā (insight meditation). These practices, rooted in ancient texts like the Sutta Piṭaka, aim to cultivate mental clarity, emotional regulation, and ethical conduct. This research delves into the parallels between Buddhist meditation principles and psychotherapeutic approaches, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and psychodynamic therapy. This study underscores the therapeutic efficacy of meditation, citing evidence of its benefits in managing psychological conditions such as depression, anxiety, and stress. The study further examines the neurobiological effects of meditation, including increased brain density and enhanced emotional regulation, as supported by research from Hölzel and Kabat-Zinn. The integration of meditation into psychotherapy offers a holistic approach, addressing not just symptoms but also the underlying mental patterns rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, analogous to psychiatric concepts of behavior, cognition, and morality. The study concludes that meditation, when incorporated into psychotherapy, provides a comprehensive tool for mental health professionals. It enhances traditional therapeutic methods, fostering self-awareness, emotional resilience, and adaptive coping strategies. This approach promotes a balanced mental state, contributing to overall psychological well-being and growth. By merging Eastern meditative practices with Western psychological frameworks, the study advocates for a more integrated and holistic approach to mental health care. This convergence not only enriches the therapeutic process but also offers profound insights into the nature of mind and consciousness, potentially leading to more effective treatment outcomes.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Psychology, Meditation, Mental Health, Mindfulness, Psychotherapy

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## Introduction

Understanding how meditation can serve as a form of psychotherapy necessitates delving into the realms of Buddhist psychology, general psychological principles, and their intersection in psychiatric applications. Buddhist meditation, rooted in canonical texts, embodies various techniques aimed at mental cultivation and well-being. Simultaneously, psychology encompasses the scientific study of the mind and behavior, providing a framework for understanding mental health and therapy. The convergence of these disciplines presents a compelling avenue for exploring how meditation practices, often rooted in Buddhist traditions, can function as a form of psychotherapy. This analytical study aims to elucidate the efficacy, mechanisms, and potential applications of meditation as a therapeutic tool within the broader context of psychological interventions.

## Aim of the study

The primary aim of this study on "Making an analytical study on how meditation can be used as psychotherapy" is to explore the integration of meditative practices, primarily derived from Buddhist traditions, into the realm of psychotherapy. This study seeks to elucidate the underlying psychological mechanisms and therapeutic applications of various meditation techniques within clinical and counseling contexts. By examining the intersection between Buddhist psychology, general psychological principles, and psychiatric applications, the goal is to assess the potential benefits, limitations, and efficacy of utilizing meditation as an adjunct or standalone form of psychotherapeutic intervention. Additionally, the assignment aims to highlight the relevance of meditation in promoting mental well-being and its integration into conventional psychotherapeutic approaches for addressing various psychological conditions.

## Method

This study employs a comprehensive literature review methodology, systematically analyzing existing scholarly works that intersect Buddhist meditation and Western psychotherapy. The research involves:

- Selection of Primary Sources: Key Buddhist texts such as the Mahāli Sutta, Jāliya Sutta, Subhā Sutta, Mahārāhulovāda Sutta, and Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta are examined to extract foundational meditation practices and their intended psychological outcomes.
- Analysis of Psychotherapeutic Approaches: Contemporary psychotherapeutic methods, including behavioral, cognitive, and humanistic therapies, are reviewed to identify commonalities and points of integration with Buddhist meditation techniques.
- Evaluation of Clinical Studies: Empirical studies and clinical trials that investigate the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions in treating various mental health conditions are analyzed to assess their outcomes and implications.
- Comparative Analysis: The study juxtaposes the principles and practices of Buddhist meditation with those of Western psychotherapy to highlight synergistic potentials and areas of complementarity.

## Buddhist Meditation

There are two kinds of meditation in Buddhism, *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*. *Samatha* Meditation is known as *Citta* meditation or in English tranquility meditation. *Vipassanā* meditation is *paññā* or insight meditation. While *Vipassanā* meditation focuses on insight or clearing the mind, *Samatha* meditation is more concerned with mind calming. It can be used to achieve excellent states of calm and focus because it is specifically designed to quiet the mind. The goal of *Vipassanā* meditation is insight or mental clarity. It is especially intended to help someone see clearly and gradually purge any impurities or defilements from their mind.

The *Sutta Piṭaka* provides a thorough explanation of the meditation doctrine, following the system's gradual development to its completion upon achieving *Nibbāna*. The *Dīgha Nikāya's* first thirteen discourses outline the disciple training program, treating the three divisions in the proper order: morality (*sīla*), which is the preliminary training; concentration (*samādhi*), which is the second division; and wisdom (*paññā*), which is the means of achieving *Nibbāna*, the desired goal. The *Brahmajāla Sutta* (The Complete Net of Views) (PTS DN. I 13) contains *ceto-samādhi*, a type of mental concentration meant to yield supernormal outcomes like the ability to recall previous lives, among other things. It lays out sixty-two fundamental points of false views about the soul and the universe. The second sutta, called the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (The Fruits of the Homeless Life) (PTS DN. I 47), describes true *samādhi*, that is, the kind recognized by Buddhism as right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Buddha demonstrates that the true value and benefit of a disciple's life is found in their threefold training: the first phase is morality (*sīla*), the second is concentration practice (*samādhi*), and the third is wisdom (*paññā*), which is the means of achieving ultimate liberation from mental taints (*āsavas*). As per the promise made to the conductor who undertakes such a course of training, the exposition of these three divisions is continued until the culmination, the point of attainment of *Nibbāna*.

This technique is mentioned in the *Mahāli Sutta* (Heavenly Sights, Soul, and Body) (PTS DN. I 153) when discussing concentration. It is said that, when partially practiced, it results in divine sight and divine hearing, as is the case in other systems. To achieve the desired outcomes from their religious pursuits, however, a Buddhist practitioner must cultivate *samādhi* in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path, which will destroy the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*). The candidate who has employed this technique also abandons the question of "whether life and body are different (*aññaṃ sarīraṃ, aññaṃ jīvaṃ*) or the same (*taṃ jīvaṃ, taṃ sarīraṃ*)." The same is repeated in the *Jāliya Sutta*, (PTS DN. I 160) as to the method, the fulfillment of which puts an end to all the wrong views concerning soul, life, and body.

Within the *Subha Sutta* (Morality, Concentration, Wisdom) (PTS DN. I 204), Venerable *Ānanda* elucidates this threefold training system to the youthful *Subha*, the Brahmin son of *Todeyya*. The training is organized under the headings of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, which are the primary groups of the noble doctrine (Dhamma). The terms employed in this system are nearly identical to those found in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*. This sutta explains how the Buddha instructs his followers to obtain *vimutti*, or deliverance, from suffering (*dukkha*).

The *Mahārāhulovāda Sutta* (The Greater Discourse of Advice to Rāhula) (PTS DN. I 62) recounts how the Buddha suggested to His son *Rāhula* a number of meditational topics, including the examination of the four elements (*dhātu*), lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), impureness (*asubha*), and transience (*anicca*). Additionally, *Rāhula's* own teacher, Venerable *Sāriputta*, suggested that he engage in mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). In the *Meghiya Sutta*, (PTS AN. VI 354-358) the Buddha suggests various meditation techniques to *Meghiya*, based on his personality, demonstrating the significant role played by a close friend.

The *Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta*, (PTS MN. I 1119) also known as the "Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness," is a key discourse in practicing mindfulness. As mentioned in this sutta that there are four kinds such as: Mindfulness of the Body (*kāyānupassanā*), Mindfulness of Feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), Mindfulness of Mind (*cittānupassanā*), and Mindfulness of Mental Objects (*dhammānupassanā*). Here, meditation is done independently and yields excellent results. First, the description says:

“How, Monks, should mindfulness of the body be developed, and how should it be practiced in order to yield great results, to be conducive to great benefit? Herein, a Monk, having gone to the forest or the foot of a tree or an empty house sits down cross-legged and upright, setting mindfulness before him... repeat...mindfulness of feelings, mind, and mental objects” (PTS MN. I 1119)

*Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* (PTS MN. III 78) is "mindfulness of breathing," is primarily related to mental training in Buddhism and is explained in the scriptures and Commentaries. The Buddha Himself refers to it as "the noble abode" (*ariyavihāra*), "the divine abode" (*brahmavihāra*), and "the *Tathāgata* abode" (*Tathāgatavihāra*) when endorsing it as a comprehensive approach to achieving *nibbana*. (PTS SN. V 326) To this end, the *Mahāsaccaka Sutt* (PTS MN. I 36) records that during his youth, *Prince Siddhattha* attained and resided in the state of the first absorption (*jhāna*). This attainment is attributed to the practice of this meditation. This meditation is included in the system of Samatha meditation as a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) which may be used in two stages,

At the first, it is used in conjunction with other exercises as a vital technique to achieve mental and physical calm.

Secondly, among the forty meditation subjects, only *ānāpānasati* is deemed appropriate for individuals with an imaginative disposition or those whose minds are persistently disrupted by sensory emotions. Shattock (1960), a naval officer, spent three weeks of meditation practice conducted by Buddhist temple in Rangoon, express his personal experience he faced while he was meditating. “Meditation, therefore, is a really practical occupation: it is in no sense necessarily a religious one, though it is usually thought of as such. It is itself basically academic, practical, and profitable. It is, I think, necessary to emphasize this point, because so many only associate meditations with holy or saintly people, and regard it as an advanced form of the pious life... This is not the tale of a conversion, but of an attempt to test the reaction of a well-tried Eastern system on a typical Western mind.”

### **Psychology and Psychotherapy**

Psychology is providing the scientific view to understand human behavior and mental process (it includes every aspect and experience from human birth till death). “Man is essentially a social animal by nature. (*Man as a social animal*, 2012) Why people act the way they do? For this, psychology can help large part to understand the human behavior and the emotional status. As per the Freudian psychology, human mind set up by two phenomenal conscious mind and unconscious mind, what you aware currently is based on conscious mind, your thoughts, feelings and emotions and what you don't aware is always in your hidden unconscious mind such as desires, habits, some bad memories and hates these two factors link and play the role of human mind. (Fell, 2022)

As psychiatrics, psychologist, or any other mental health professionals how they practice their professional and what are the tools that they use to improve positive changes in human is linked with psychotherapy. (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*, 2023) It is an important tool that they use to develop human activities to make positive changes in well-being. There are many more therapeutic methods that using by the professionals such as behavioral, cognitive and an interpersonal therapy including talk or relaxation therapies which are help clients or individuals to help them to work through their life issues and treat serious mental health conditions. according to one estimate by University of Scranton psychologist John Norcross at least there are more than 500 psychotherapies are existing and this indicated based on the most frequent used therapies. (Cooper et al., 2019)

Theories of psychotherapy act as a direct guideline for psychologist. As per the American Psychology Association there are different approach to psychotherapy for that you have trained and practice for long time in the field to work as a professional psychotherapist as well long-term dedication of service is not enough and it required academic qualification as well to play their role as most professional. (Pappas, 2022)

Without knowing theories professionals cannot work as they wish, that is the main tool and guideline they have to work as a professional. As psychotherapist you must have the academic knowledge of theories cater and understand human behavior in irreverent aspect. Theories act as a conceptual base for understanding human functions and guide to analyze any complicated behavior and thought patterns of human in any science. Theories are the tools to explain any phenomenon it provides simplified explanation on any complexity behavior.

As per the American Psychology Association (APA) explanation any approach to psychotherapy is falls under five broad categories. (*Different approaches to psychotherapy* 2009)

### **Behavior therapy.**

In this therapy learning is the main tool to change any complex normal or abnormal human behavior. This was identified by Ivan Pavlov, he cited learning that occurs when a neutral stimulus (e.g., a tone) becomes connected with a stimulus (e.g., food) that naturally produces a behavior. He had identified the fundamental associate learning process called classical learning condition.

Edward.L. Thorndike, he was the first to use psychological principles to the area of learning. He specially talks about law of effect is the greatest achievement. His theory associate with stimulus (S) and response (R) called Operate Conditional theory. As per his teaching any kind of learning relies on punishment or rewards to shape and modify human behavior.

Even the Behavioral theories were developed in 1950s there are variations of the behavioral theory Albert Bandura's Social learning theory and Cognitive behavioral theory part of the behavioral school of psychology which focus on both thoughts and behavior. (McLeod, *Albert Bandura's social learning theory* 2023)

### **Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapies**

Psychoanalytical and psychodynamic therapies mainly focus on conscious and unconscious mind, thoughts, perceptions, and motivations developed throughout your childhood and how it affects the current behavior and thoughts. Unlike other therapies this theory mainly focusses on emotional changes of well-being client and the therapist having close interaction. Through this process the patient or the client understands and resolves their issues understanding their inner mind and its influences over the behavioral change both present and past. Mainly **Psychoanalysis focusses on id-ego-superego, unconscious mind and dreams psychodynamic concern with the human mind and personality as well.**

### **Cognitive therapy**

This therapy emphasizes what people think Aarone T. Beke developed this cognitive therapy. cognitive therapist believes that dysfunctional thinking that leads to dysfunctional behaviors or emotions and changing and modifying their thinking can change the person's behavior and the way of thinking change how they feel and what they do. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy mainly

use by cognitive behavioral therapist to help patient or client to overcome their psychological disorders and severe mental illness.

### **Humanistic therapy**

This therapy is mainly based on holistic views on human potential, free will, self-determination and self-discovery. Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Buber and Søren Kierkegaard influence this type of therapy. Client-centered therapy: mainly focus on the belief that client able to decide, do and how it does by himself. It helps to sense of self, what you do and understand your true feeling find solutions by focusing on your strength and capacity.

Gestalt therapy: is a form therapy that focuses on current situation or moment rather than thinking of past experiences. This therapy centered on self-awareness, self-direction and the freedoms client may have in this moment. This therapy believes that change of person's behavior current environment can influence.

### **Existential therapy**

This therapy based on the tensions that human is experiencing through the life cycle. death, meaninglessness, isolation, despair and freedom are ultimate concern in human mind and it create anxiety or fear of their future as it unpredicted and don't know what will comes next. Though this talking therapy client can understand the potential and capacity that they have to overcome and face their future with no hesitations by making active choice.

### **Integrative or holistic therapy**

**This therapy focusses on “whole” person, and it integrates mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional forms of well-being and it helps person to understand overall situation that person has.** For this professional therapist will use different approaches cater the client issue and treat them based on each client needs. (*Different approaches to psychotherapy 2009*)

### **Psychological approach and mindfulness therapy**

Mindfulness is used as a therapeutic tool in various therapies as a treatment component including cognitive therapies, evidence-based therapy, acceptance therapy and commitment therapy. Mindfulness therapy teaches let the feelings and thoughts arise and how to let them go. Mindfulness therapy can increase positive mental qualities including compassion and hope. Even psychologists are using mindfulness meditation as a tool for maintaining sensitivity in well-being.

People must be aware of themselves but unfortunately people around us don't understand what the concept of self-awareness is. Self-awareness is an essential tool to practice in every human being to understand their weaknesses and strengths. That's the only tool that you can use to mold your personality and understand every circumstance in your life. If you know more about yourself than others it is easy to manage our life without conflicts and confusion. To make yourself understand we can use mindfulness as a positive therapy to overcome our bad experiences and cope up with our life with an expected way without burdens. It mainly creates a positive outcome in well-being. Mindfulness is a skill that has to be practiced. It doesn't want any academic profile unless the client understands the concept and the methodology of mindfulness. Mindfulness is teaching to allow us to understand and react in a positive way with what is happening in our life in this moment. And it allows us to stay away from our overall suffering and increases the sense of well-being.

The integration of a psychological approach with mindfulness therapy harnesses the power of meditation, which activates brain regions associated with higher cognitive functions. Studies, such as Britta K. Hölzel's 2010 research in Psychiatric Research, demonstrate that meditation increases brain density in the cerebral cortex, leading to enhanced executive functioning, concentration, and emotional regulation. Moreover, as highlighted by Richard Davidson and Jon Kabat-Zinn's 2003 study in Psychosomatic Medicine, mindfulness-based meditation over eight weeks induces significant rises in left-sided anterior brain activity, linked to fostering positive emotional states. This synergy offers a behavioral and psychological alternative to the instinctive "fight or flight" response of the reptilian brain. (DeAngelis, 2014)

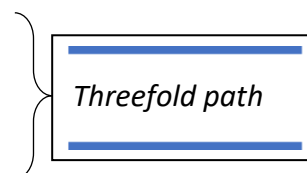
Since the 1970s, clinical psychology and psychiatry have cultivated numerous therapeutic approaches rooted in mindfulness to aid individuals grappling with diverse psychological conditions. (Harrington *et al*, 2015) Mindfulness techniques have been utilized effectively in mitigating depression, stress, anxiety, and addressing substance addiction. (Khoury *et al*, 2015) Implementing mindfulness-based programs has extended to various settings like schools, correctional facilities, medical centers, veteran support centers, and more. (Zhang *et al*, 2021) These programs, inspired by mindfulness models, have proven beneficial for an array of purposes, including promoting healthy aging, managing weight, enhancing athletic performance, supporting children with special needs, (Noetel *et al*, 2019) and serving as an intervention during the perinatal period.

### **Buddhist Meditation and Psychotherapy**

In contrast to Western psychotherapy that relies on methods such as medications, electric shocks, brain surgery, and pharmaceuticals (Nissanka, 2005: 7-8), there isn't an exact medical approach for addressing psychological well-being. Medications often don't yield the same effect for different patients, even when they share the same illness. While a medicine might be effective for some individuals, it can be ineffective or even hazardous for others. Buddha illustrated this with a simile involving three types of patients: The first group, referred to as *Padaparama*, represents patients who are destined to fail and succumb to their condition despite receiving specialized treatment. The second group, termed *Uggantitaññu*, denotes patients who will undoubtedly recover from their ailment regardless of the quality of treatment they receive. Lastly, the third group, labeled *Neyya*, includes patients who can recuperate if they receive the correct treatment, but if given the wrong medicine or treatment, they will face dire consequences, potentially leading to their demise (A.I.120-121, trans. Bodhi, 2012: 217, Ledi, 2007: 124).

*Lōba, Dōsa, Mōha* is the fundamental roots of arising mental disorder. Total eradication of these roots is Nibbana. So, how achieve Nibbana? For that, the one and only path leading to the cessation of suffering includes three main stages. The same facts can apply in psychotherapy process as well.

- *Sīla* – morality – behaviour therapy
- *Samādhi* – concentration – mental or psychotherapy
- *Paññā*- wisdom – cognitive therapy



Morality – restraintment of the external behavior viz. verbal and physical, concentration – restraintment of the mental behavior viz. unwholesome mental behavior based on greed, hatred, and delusion. There are unwholesome mental roots. Their evolution is in Table 1.

**Table 1. Unwholesome mental roots**

Normal	Middle – Mental	Final – Action
Like Dislikes } Useful to day-to-day	Lust	Covetousness
	Hatred	Ill-will
Unrest – stress	Delusion	Wrong view
Latent Dispositions	Mental disorders	Behavioral changes
Treatment – wisdom	Treatment – concentration	Treatment - morality
Anusaya – latent dispositions	Pariyutthāna – arising of latent dispositions	Vītikkama – acting according to latent dispositions

*Source from (Galmangoda,2022)*

Based on mindfulness, meditation can be applied to overcome mental disorders affect to the human mind. There are two categories in mental disorders: neurosis and psychosis. Obsessional compulsive disorders, anxiety, phobia, hysteria, stress, and depression belong to emotional disorders in neurosis category and affective disorders and schizophrenia are belong to cognitive in psychosis category.

Buddhist meditation is a profound practice that intertwines with psychiatric processes in its approach to mental well-being. The foundational aspects of Buddhist meditation align with the psychiatric concepts of morality, concentration, and the understanding of unwholesome mental behaviors based on greed, hatred, and delusion.

Morality in Buddhist meditation refers to the restraint of external behavior, encompassing verbal and physical actions. This concept is akin to certain psychiatric therapies that emphasize the significance of behavioral changes in mental health treatments. Encouraging patients to develop ethical and mindful behaviors helps in cultivating a more harmonious and balanced life. The focus on morality can be integrated into psychiatric treatments by fostering an environment that values ethical conduct and responsibility, contributing to a sense of well-being and social harmony.

Concentration, vital element in Buddhist meditation, involves the restraint of mental behavior, specifically by addressing unwholesome mental patterns rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion. This aligns with psychiatric processes that aim to mitigate and reframe negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Through techniques such as mindfulness meditation, individuals are guided to cultivate a focused awareness, redirecting the mind from unwholesome tendencies towards a more centered, tranquil state. In psychiatric practice, this aligns with cognitive-behavioral therapies or mindfulness-based interventions, where individuals are taught to observe and redirect their thoughts and emotions towards more positive and constructive patterns.

The concept of unwholesome mental roots in Buddhist meditation emphasizes the evolution of negative mental states. Greed, hatred, and delusion are regarded as the foundational roots of many mental afflictions. This understanding can be integrated into psychiatric processes to address the core causes of various mental health issues. By recognizing and addressing these roots, therapeutic approaches can be tailored to explore and resolve the deeper origins of psychological distress. Psychiatrists may employ mindfulness techniques, cognitive restructuring, and compassionate interventions to tackle these negative mental roots, aiming to transform them into healthier and more adaptive mental states.

By incorporating the principles of morality, concentration, and understanding unwholesome mental behaviors, psychiatric practices can draw significant insights from Buddhist meditation. Integrating these philosophies into therapeutic methodologies might enhance mental health treatments by addressing not only the symptoms but also the fundamental causes of mental distress, promoting lasting well-being and mental balance.

Mindfulness based on Ānāpānasati meditation by Griraldi (2019) has used successfully to depression patient. A large number of clinical trials were performed, later including mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) which was shown clinically effective for depressive conditions poorly responsive to the available treatments. Meanwhile a great research has done by Dakwar et al (2009) addressing meditation in addressing psychiatric illness with a focus on substance use disorders. He mentions that “meditation may have psychiatric benefits. Final results of his research can be shown as table 2 for the better understanding of psychiatric characteristics of Buddhist meditation.

**Table 2. Psychiatric characteristics of Buddhist meditation**

Treatment	Description	Mindfulness-based components	Applications
Mindfulness-based stress reduction	Manualized; class based and didact brief	Mindfulness training exercises, including meditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic pain</li> <li>• Stress management</li> <li>• Sadness and anxiety associated with chronic medical conditions</li> </ul>
Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy	Manualized; class based didactic , significant cognitive therapy component, brief or long term	Mindfulness training exercise, including meditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention of depression relapses</li> </ul>
Dialectical-behavioral therapy	Manualized; group and individual, psychotherapy based, brief or long term, significant cognitive – behavioural therapy component	Mindfulness training exercises, including meditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borderline personality disorder</li> <li>• Eating disorder</li> <li>• Substance use disorders associated with affective instability</li> </ul>
Relapse-prevention training	Manualized; brief or long term, psychotherapy-based individual	Mindfulness training exercise: “urge surfing”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substance use disorders</li> </ul>

Furthermore, Travis (2020) has used Buddhist meditation on Neurobiology he has investigate the comparison of three organizing strategies of brain patterns during meditation practice. Finally, he assesses that development of brain pave the way to live free from mental disorders. Person who has developed brain process is good enough to face the hardest emotional situation. So that they would not affect any kinds of mental disorders.

Above evidence prove that Buddhist meditation can use as a psychotherapeutic method to overcome the psychological issues.

To achieve a fulfilling outcome in meditation, individuals need to select a meditation subject that aligns with their personal characteristics. The Visuddhimagga outlines forty meditation subjects that possess the ability to gradually diminish unfavorable traits (Vism. III.110, trans. Ñāṇamoli, 2010: 104).

For example, meditation on the four sublime abodes (*Brahma Vihara*) - loving-kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*Muditā*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*) - along with contemplation on the Four kinds of colors (*Kasiṇā*) serve as suitable meditation subjects for individuals exhibiting traits of hostility. These practices aid in reducing feelings of anger, ill-will, cruelty, envy, jealousy, and aversion (Ediriweera, 2007: 38).

Individuals displaying tendencies of greed are advised to contemplate the impurities of the body or focus on the ten kinds of foulness (*Dasa Asubhā*) (Vism. III.110, trans. Ñāṇamoli, 2010: 105). As for those with deluded characteristics, the recommendation is to engage in mindfulness practices focused on observing the breath - known as mindfulness of in and out breathing (*Ānāpānasati*).

The Majjhima Nikaya, a collection of discourses in the Pali Canon, holds a wealth of teachings integral to the practice of Buddhist meditation, particularly in addressing mental issues. Within these texts, specific discourses like the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, (PTS MN. I 55) Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta (PTS MN.I 118), Sabbāsava Sutta, (PTS MN. I 56) Dvedhāvitakka Sutta, (PTS M. I 118) and others serve as pivotal guides for the cultivation of mindfulness and the treatment of various mental challenges.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, for instance, offers a comprehensive framework for the practice of mindfulness in four main areas: mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena. It lays out a systematic approach to observing and understanding the nature of one's experiences, fostering a deeper awareness of thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and the nature of existence.

Similarly, the Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta addresses the management of distracting and unwholesome thoughts. It provides guidance on handling and redirecting these thoughts, ultimately aiming to bring about a more focused and tranquil state of mind.

The Sabbāsavasutta delves into the elimination of mental influxes or intoxicants that cloud the mind, fostering clarity and wisdom. This discourse emphasizes the eradication of various mental contaminants to achieve liberation.

Moreover, the Dvedhāvitakka Sutta explores the nature of thoughts in terms of their wholesome and unwholesome qualities. It delineates the process of recognizing and nurturing wholesome thoughts while discarding unwholesome ones, leading to mental purification.

All these discourses converge in their emphasis on the development of mindfulness. They serve as guideposts for practitioners to cultivate a heightened awareness and understanding of their mental processes, thereby addressing and mitigating various mental issues. By incorporating these teachings into meditation practice, individuals can develop a more profound awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, fostering mental well-being and ultimately leading towards greater insight and liberation.

### **Analysis**

The analysis focuses on delineating the parallels between Buddhist meditation and psychotherapeutic practices. Buddhist concepts of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are

compared with behavioral therapy, cognitive therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions, respectively. The examination reveals that both traditions emphasize the importance of ethical behavior, mental focus, and cognitive restructuring in promoting mental health. For instance, the restraint of external behaviors in Buddhism corresponds with behavior therapy's focus on modifying observable actions through reinforcement and punishment. Similarly, the cultivation of concentration in Buddhist meditation aligns with cognitive-behavioral techniques that aim to reframe negative thought patterns. Furthermore, empirical evidence from clinical studies underscores the effectiveness of mindfulness-based programs in enhancing emotional regulation, reducing stress, and alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety. The neurological studies by Hölzel (2010) and Davidson & Kabat-Zinn (2003) provide a biological basis for the observed psychological benefits, indicating increased brain density in regions associated with higher cognitive functions and positive emotional states. This convergence of spiritual and scientific perspectives supports the integration of Buddhist meditation into psychotherapeutic practices.

## **Results**

The integration of Buddhist meditation into psychotherapy demonstrates significant benefits across various psychological conditions. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have been effective in managing chronic pain, preventing depression relapses, and reducing anxiety (Cooper et al., 2019; Khoury et al., 2015). Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), which incorporates mindfulness exercises, has shown efficacy in treating borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, and affective instability associated with substance use disorders. Relapse-Prevention Training, utilizing "urge surfing" techniques, aids individuals in overcoming substance dependencies.

Neurological research indicates that meditation practices enhance brain plasticity, improve executive functioning, and foster emotional regulation (Hölzel, 2010; Davidson & Kabat-Zinn, 2003). These findings suggest that Buddhist meditation not only complements existing psychotherapeutic methods but also contributes to the development of new therapeutic strategies that address both the symptoms and underlying causes of mental distress.

## **Conclusion**

Meditation, when employed as a form of psychotherapy, offers a multifaceted approach to mental health and well-being. Its integration into psychotherapeutic practices has shown promise in addressing various psychological issues. Through mindfulness-based techniques, meditation provides a means to cultivate self-awareness, regulate emotions, and alleviate stress and anxiety. It encourages individuals to observe their thoughts and feelings without judgment, fostering a non-reactive and accepting stance towards internal experiences. This process can aid in reframing negative thought patterns and behaviors, promoting psychological resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms. Additionally, meditation as psychotherapy emphasizes a holistic approach, focusing on the interconnectedness of the mind and body. Its incorporation in therapy complements traditional therapeutic methods, enriching the treatment landscape by offering a pathway toward mental well-being that emphasizes self-empowerment and inner transformation. In conclusion, integrating meditation into psychotherapy expands the therapeutic toolkit, offering individuals an avenue to foster profound self-understanding, resilience, and a more balanced mental state, thereby contributing to their overall psychological health and growth.

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