Chapter One:

GENERAL SURVEY OF BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY
AND FREUDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

1.1. Definition of psychology

The word Psychology originates from two Greek words: Psyche, which means the mind or the soul and logos, which means study. Psychology is the scientific study of the behavior of living organisms. This field owes its origin to the word “Psyche” which in itself deals with the essence of subject. Psyche is a name of Greek mythological origin whose roots lie in the Ancient Greek word for “to breathe” ultimately conveying a deeper meaning, with the etymology of “the soul”.¹

However, some dictionaries define psychology as the science of mind and behavior. Based on this definition, psychology is a science that deals with how people think and act. It’s a science because it uses scientific methods in observing and analyzing people’s behavior and helping them overcome any psychological issues that they may have.

Psychology is both an applied and academic field that studies the human mind and behavior. Research in psychology seeks to understand and explain thought, emotion and behavior. Applications of psychology include mental health treatment, performance enhancement, self-help, ergonomics and many other areas affecting health and daily life.

It is observed that Psychology does not study brain or nervous system as such but rather it is studied in terms of phenomenological or

information processing theories of mind. However, in the recent past psychology has included a deeper understanding of brain function both in psychological theory and practice, especially in the fields of cognitive neuroscience, neuropsychology and artificial intelligence.

The study of Psychology is conducted in a scientific as well as non-scientific manner. Psychology has an eclectic approach and it draws on scientific knowledge from diverse fields of knowledge in order to explain and understand behaviour. The mainstream psychology largely draws up on positivism and it derives data from quantitative studies and uses scientific methods to test in an experimental setting. Yet all psychological research methods don’t adhere to the classical scientific approach and method. The proponents of humanistic psychology completely reject a scientific approach while the mainstream psychology is biased towards the scientific methodology and it is dominated by cognitivism in its understanding of thought and behaviour.

Psychology has a different approach in comparison to anthropology, sociology, political science and economics in order to study behavior. While Psychology studies behaviour of individuals (alone or in groups), the other sciences confine themselves to the behaviour of groups or aggregates themselves.

Psychology is the study of the mind and mental states. Like philosophy, it has two aspects - pure psychology, which is the general study of mental phenomena, and psychotherapy, or applied psychology, which is the application of the study of mental phenomena to the problem of disease and cure, disturbance and adjustment.
1.2. Buddhist psychology

Various religions and philosophies have their particular starting points. The theistic religions begin with God. Ethical teachings like Confucianism begin with man as a social entity. Buddhism begins with the mind. It is therefore not surprising that we often choose to describe the Buddha’s teaching as a psychological one, and that we also describe it as psychotherapy, since the symbolism of disease and cure is prominent in the teaching of the Buddha. The Four Noble Truths are a reflection of the ancient scheme of disease, diagnosis, cure, and treatment used in early medical science, and we might also recall that the Buddha was called the king of physicians.

It can be said that Buddhism is a fully developed system of psychology even long before this branch of science was born. Many suttas from the Pāli Canon are examples of precise psychological descriptions and assumptions. Especially, the Abhidhamma Piṭaka contains a highly systematized psychological account of human mind (citta) and behavior (kamma). “It classifies consciousness into a variety of types, specifies the factors and functions of each type, correlates them with their objects and physiological bases, and shows how the different types of consciousness link up with each other and with material phenomena to constitute the ongoing process of experience.”

“Buddhist psychology does not belong to the tradition of pure scientific psychology. It is not a theoretical enterprise without any practical aim in view. On the other hand, it has been often called an ethico-psychology. A very important work on Buddhist psychology, a

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translation of the *Dhammasaṅganī*, is referred to as a work on psychological ethics. The Buddha pursued theoretical questions insofar as it helped him to diagnose the condition of suffering man and advocate a way out of this tragic dilemma. The Buddha was interested in the fundamental tragedy of man: the suffering individual. Thus it was an ethico-psychology with a therapeutic basis. Buddhism as a therapeutic system is based on a study of human psychology. But though it is a psychological theory, it has a practical aim. The Buddha makes a psychological analysis of mind and its states with a moral purpose, the purging of the mind of unwholesome states (*kilesa*). In its attempt to find therapeutic principles for this purpose, the Buddhist scriptures give us an insight into the instinctual and emotional forces that obstruct moral development. This accounts for the ethico-psychological scaffolding of motivational theory in Buddhism.3

The psychology of Buddhism is different from that of any field of psychological enquiry pursued for its own sake, for the Buddha pursued theoretical questions only when they had a bearing on the predicament of the suffering man. The psychology of Buddhism is primarily designed to answer the question “What are the causes of suffering (*dukkha*) and what is the way out of it?”

It is necessary to stress again that the Buddha does not pursue logical, metaphysical or psychological problems for their own sake. In the *Cula-Mahānāka Sutta* the Buddha compares the metaphysician to a person wounded by an arrow, who before being attended asks such questions as Who aimed the arrow? To what caste does he belong? Is he tall or short, dark or fair? What sort of arrow is that?, etc. if he went on raising

3 BFP., pp. 29-30
questions of that sort without attending to his wound, wounded man would die; and the man who wants to get rid of suffering is compared to the man who has to heal his wound.

In Buddhism, the root cause of human suffering, and other problems, is identified as the mind. It thus proposes to tap into this invaluable resource by transforming any unwholesomeness into wholesomeness. Buddhism instructs sentient beings on how to recognize the mind, calm the mind and handle the mind. The Buddha taught, in his life time, for forty-nine years. Whether his teachings were about the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, the Paramitas, or the four Immeasurables (Brahmavihāras) they invariably involved mind. In the Buddhist doctrine, mind is the starting point, the focal point, and also, as the liberated and purified mind of the Saint, the culminating point. The mind dictates a person’s behavior. If a person’s mind is pure, all his/her thoughts, speech and actions, will necessarily be pure. If a person’s mind is impure, what he/she hears and sees becomes impure just as stated in the Dhammapada:

“All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, “dukkha” follows him just as the wheel follows the hoofprint of the ox that draws the cart.

All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness (sukha) follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.”

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4 Dhp., verses 1-2
All the pain and suffering in this world are created by the mind. Our minds have wandered among the six realms in numberless lives. It seems that we are never in control. The mind always attaches to colorful external surroundings, seeking tirelessly for fame, fortune, power and love, constantly calculating and discriminating.

Buddhist Psychology shows us the meaning of life and guides all sentient beings in searching the deeper powers of mind through the elimination of greed, anger and ignorance from within. Its practice, if pursued freely and diligently, prevents any occurrence or reoccurrence of psychological illness. It aids people in creating both physical and mental health so they can lead both joyful and fulfilling lives.

It is quite clear that Buddhist psychology is concerned with the inner experience of the individual, as opposed to mainstream academic psychology which exclusively values empirical evidence. Here “empirical” contains “the implicit qualifications of repeatability by anyone with the minimum prerequisite of familiarity with the methods, and that the results of experiments can be published and read by anyone who wishes.” Verification of Buddhist methods can be obtained ultimately only through personal experience. However, the experiences and findings of Buddhism can be shared between people who have had similar experiences in the same way experiments can be replicated and publications understood by people in the scientific community who share similar training and experience. Likewise, in Buddhism those not as far along on the path look to the authority of teachers, just as the authority of peer reviewed journals is important to the scientist who, if only for
practical reasons of time and resources, does not replicate all the experiments he reads of so that he can see for himself.⁵

When we say that the Buddha makes an appeal to experience, it has to be clearly stated what the Buddha means by the term ‘experience’. “Apart from the information obtained by the avenues of the five senses—of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and bodily contact—the Buddha also considers ‘introspection’ as one of the most valuable techniques for acquiring knowledge and developing insight. Introspection itself is a whole dimension of experience, ranging from ‘looking into your own mind’ to the more penetrating insights that emerge at various levels of spiritual development. Thus it must be emphasized that the acceptance of such a technique would clearly differentiate the psychology of Buddhism from a behaviorist methodology which rejects introspection. But even psychologies in the west which accept ‘introspection’ as a viable method, will not fall in line with a technique of introspection which culminates in spiritual insight; nevertheless, the use of introspection at a more mundane level at least will be common to both Buddhism and its western counterpart.”⁶

In western psychology introspection is often considered an unreliable technique for studying mental phenomena, since our private experiences cannot be checked by others. According to the Buddha introspection can be cultivated methodically, biases can be eliminated and our powers of reflection refined. When the development of the mind is pursued in a methodical manner, it is possible to achieve extra-sensory powers such as telepathy and clairvoyance. The development of

⁵ Eric Pettifor, Ibid.
introspection at the higher levels of meditation is considered as the test of objectivity.

It is also necessary to emphasize that the aim of Buddhism’s attempts to understand the workings of the human mind is not merely to understand the individual psyche, but through understanding the underlying principles to explain the patterns of social interaction. The social ethics of Buddhism is based on these wider dimensions of the psychology of human behaviour. Greed, hatred and delusion as roots of unwholesome actions have social dimensions. The evil impact of greed and hatred is not limited to cases where people become the passive victims of these impulses, rather they generate the climate which feeds the avaricious personality (rāga carita) and the aggressive personality (doṣa carita). If we are dominated by the craving to collect, hoard and possess things, we excite the same tendencies in others and unknowingly exalt this personality type as the most infectious social symbol. The evil generated by men with greedy dispositions is well described in the Buddhist scriptures as leading to passion, avarice, wickedness, quarrelling and strife.

Emotions like greed, envy, jealousy, pride and fear—all derive significance from an interpersonal context, and if we do not want to spread the seeds of discord, we have to begin with ourselves and then try to foster the same spirit in others. It is upon these foundations of healthy ethical values that meaningful social structures can be built. Thus, it may be said that, while presenting the necessary psychological foundations for the building of a healthy society, the Buddha cuts across the somewhat exaggerated dichotomy between the individual and society. It is said, ‘Protecting oneself one protects others, and protecting others one protects
oneself (attanam rakkhanto param rakkhati, param rakkhanto attanam rakkhati).\(^7\)

Buddhism is a liberation psychology. It does not lead us to enhance our sense of entitlement to an unhealthy level of selfishness. It rather shows us how to engage with the real world in a way that is respectful and kind, realistic and satisfying. This more objective - less subjective - approach to psychology is in accord with a social perspective that sees us as having important work to do to spread a more compassionate spirit on this planet. The purpose of psychotherapy is not to teach us how to accumulate pleasant feelings - it is to help us to learn how to live more creative and wholesome lives.

From a practical point of view, “Buddhist psychology has a lot to offer: a systematic training of perception, attention, and awareness. Freud suggested what we should do: the meditative tradition shows how non-selective and non-restrictive attention can be learned. One can probably only appreciate the value of this once one has experienced it. Concentration-meditation creates the conditions for listening with evenly hovering attention, mindfulness meditation helps to implement, cultivate, and refine this. Why not introduce the practice of mindfulness meditation in the training of psychoanalysis and psychotherapists?”\(^8\)

1.3. Freudian psychology or psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud, born Sigismund Schlomo Freud (6 May 1856 – 23 September 1939) was a physiologist, medical doctor, psychologist and father of psychoanalysis, and is generally recognized as one of the most

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\(^7\) S. V. 16
influential and authoritative thinkers of the twentieth century. Working initially in close collaboration with Joseph Breuer, Freud elaborated the theory that the mind is a complex energy-system, the structural investigation of which is proper province of psychology.

“With the German word Psychoanalyse, on the other hand, the accent is on the first syllable – on “psyche,” the soul. By coining the term “psychoanalysis” to describe his work, Freud wished to emphasize that by isolating and examining the neglected and hidden aspects of our souls we can acquaint ourselves with those aspects and understand the roles they play in our lives. It was Freud’s emphasis on the soul that made his analysis different from all others. What we think and feel about man’s soul – our own soul – is all-important in Freud’s view. Unfortunately, when we now use the word “psyche” in the compound word “psychoanalysis” or in other compound words, such as “psychology,” we no longer react to the words with the feelings that Freud intended to evoke. This was not true for his contemporaries in Vienna; for them, “psyche” used in any combination never lost its real meaning.”

Perhaps the most significant contribution Freud made to Western thought was his argument for the existence of an unconscious mind. During the 19th century, the dominant trend in Western thought was positivism, which subscribed to the belief that people could ascertain real knowledge concerning themselves and their environment and judiciously exercise control over both. Freud, however, suggested that such declarations of free will are in fact delusions; that we are not entirely aware of what we think and often act for reasons that have little to do with our conscious thoughts.

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The concept of the unconscious as proposed by Freud was considered by some to be groundbreaking in that he proposed that awareness existed in layers and that some thoughts occurred “below the surface.” Nevertheless, as psychologist Jacques Van Rillaer, among others, pointed out, “contrary to what most people believe, the unconscious was not discovered by Freud. In 1890, when psychoanalysis was still unheard of, William James, in his monumental treatise on psychology, examined the way Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, Janet, Binet and others had used the term ‘unconscious’ and ‘subconscious’“.

Crucial to the operation of the unconscious is “repression.” According to Freud, people often experience thoughts and feelings that are so painful that they cannot bear them. Such thoughts and feelings—and associated memories—could not, Freud argued, be banished from the mind, but could be banished from consciousness. Thus they come to constitute the unconscious. Although Freud later attempted to find patterns of repression among his patients in order to derive a general model of the mind, he also observed that individual patients repress different things. Moreover, Freud observed that the process of repression is itself a non-conscious act (in other words, it did not occur through people willing away certain thoughts or feelings). Freud supposed that what people repressed was in part determined by their unconscious. In other words, the unconscious was for Freud both a cause and effect of repression.

Later, Freud distinguished between three concepts of the unconscious: the descriptive unconscious, the dynamic unconscious, and the system unconscious. The descriptive unconscious referred to all those features of mental life of which people are not subjectively aware. The
dynamic unconscious, a more specific construct, referred to mental processes and contents which are defensively removed from consciousness as a result of conflicting attitudes. The system unconscious denoted the idea that when mental processes are repressed, they become organized by principles different from those of the conscious mind, such as condensation and displacement.

In his later work, Freud proposed that the psyche could be divided into three parts: Ego, super-ego, and id. Freud discussed this structural model of the mind in the 1920 essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and fully elaborated it in The Ego and The Id (1923), where he developed it as an alternative to his previous topographic schema (conscious, unconscious, preconscious).

“When Dr. Freud detailed his model of the thinking mind, he was surprisingly parallel to the Buddhist understanding of the mind. While much of Freud’s work has been reworked because science has come a far way, the origins of psychodynamic theory have held up pretty well.”

According to Freud, we are born with our Id. The Id is an important part of our personality because as newborns, it allows us to get our basic needs met. Freud believed that the Id is based on our pleasure principle. In other words, the Id wants whatever feels good at the time, with no consideration for the reality of the situation.

In a healthy person, according to Freud, the ego is the strongest so that it can satisfy the needs of the Id, not upset the superego, and still take into consideration the reality of every situation. Not an easy job by any

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means, but if the *Id* gets too strong, impulses and self gratification take over the person’s life. If the superego becomes too strong, the person would be driven by rigid morals, would be judgmental and unbending in his or her interactions with the world.

Freud believed that the majority of what we experience in our lives, the underlying emotions, beliefs, feelings, and impulses are not available to us at a conscious level. He believed that most of what drives us is buried in our unconscious. In Oedipus and Electra Complex, they were both pushed down into the unconscious, out of our awareness due to the extreme anxiety they caused. While buried there, however, they continue to impact us dramatically according to Freud.

The role of the unconscious is only one part of the model. Freud also believed that everything we are aware of is stored in our conscious. Our conscious makes up a very small part of who we are. In other words, at any given time, we are only aware of a very small part of what makes up our personality; most of what we are is buried and inaccessible.

“The only trustworthy antithesis is between conscious and unconscious. But it would be a serious mistake to think that this antithesis coincides with the distinction between ego and id ... All that is true is that everything that happens in the id is and remains unconscious, and that processes in the ego, and they alone, can become conscious. But not all of them are, nor always, nor necessarily; and large portions of the ego can remain permanently unconscious.”

The final part is the preconscious or subconscious. This is the part of us that we can access if prompted, but is not in our active conscious.

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Its right below the surface, but still buried somewhat unless we search for it. Information such as our telephone number, some childhood memories, or the name of your best childhood friend is stored in the preconscious.

Because the unconscious is so large, and because we are only aware of the very small conscious at any given time, this theory has been likened to an iceberg, where the vast majority is buried beneath the water’s surface. The water, by the way, would represent everything that we are not aware of, have not experienced, and that has not been integrated into our personalities, referred to as the non-conscious.

“We call the unconscious which is only latent, and thus easily becomes conscious, the ‘preconscious’ and retain the term ‘unconscious’ for the other.”

Freud professed that it was only by making the unconscious conscious that the individual could become psychologically happy and mature. He said, “The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious; what I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious mind can be studied.” This was to be done, using the technique of free association, self-analysis, and work with slips and symbols, etc. with the guidance of a psychoanalyst.

Classically, the bringing of unconscious thoughts and feelings to consciousness is brought about by encouraging the patient to talk in free association and to talk about dreams. Another important element of psychoanalysis is a relative lack of direct involvement on the part of the analyst, which is meant to encourage the patient to project thoughts and feelings onto the analyst. Through this process, transference, the patient

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can reenact and resolve repressed conflicts, especially childhood conflicts with (or about) parents.

Dreams, which he called the “royal road to the unconscious,” provided the best access to our unconscious life and the best illustration of its “logic,” which was different from the logic of conscious thought.

In Freud’s view Dream is product of unconscious psychic primal process, or the fulfillment of a repressed wish. Dreams are made by latent thoughts and manifest content. Freud developed his first topology of the psyche in The Interpretation of Dreams (1899) in which he proposed the argument that the unconscious exists and described a method for gaining access to it. The preconscious was described as a layer between conscious and unconscious thought—that which we could access with a little effort. Thus for Freud, the ideals of the Enlightenment, positivism and rationalism, could be achieved through understanding, transforming, and mastering the unconscious, rather than through denying or repressing it.

“Freud’s contributions can be grouped into three categories. First, his descriptions of the oceanic feeling as the apotheosis of the religious experience have influenced the ways in which generations of psychotherapists have interpreted spirituality. His equation of this oceanic feeling with the bliss of primary narcissism, the unambivalent union of infant and mother at the breast, has served as the gold standard for psychological explanations of meditative or mystical attainments. Second, his exploration of voluntary manipulations of attention – first in hypnosis, then in free association, and finally in evenly suspended attention – prefigured later interest on the part of the
therapeutic community in meditation and sensory awareness. Freud’s effort was pioneering from a transpersonal perspective in that they opened up awareness as a therapeutic tool. Third, some of Freud’s most important conceptual contributions – of the pleasure principle as the source of suffering in life and his ideas of going beyond it through sublimation – echo the teachings of the Buddha and prefigure transpersonal themes.”

1.4. The relation of Buddhist psychology and Freudian psychology

Both psychoanalysis and Buddhism concern themselves with dissatisfaction, human suffering, and its alleviation; both offer a kind of ‘diagnosis’ and a ‘treatment plan’. They both take place within an important personal emotional relationship: the relationship of therapist-client, and the relationship of teacher-student. They emphasize the importance of comparable experiential processes: in analysis evenly hovering attention and free association, in Buddhism the method of meditation. The obstacles in these processes are recognized and have an important function in the transformation-process: defence and resistance in psychoanalysis and what are called ‘hindrances’ in Buddhism.14

Each tradition has something unique to offer and limitations to overcome. Psychoanalysis has been extremely useful in helping people understand how their earliest experience of relationship influences their sense of self and their approach to interpersonal relationships. It has respected the importance of early childhood and the particular ways in which each individual will respond to his or her caretakers. “The

14 Polly Young-Eisendrath and Shoji Muramoto, op. cit. p. 93.
downside of this self-centric process, say its critics, is the solipsism that can result from too many years of parsing personal struggles.”

At an early age, Freud knew the pain of loneliness and struggle and went on to suffer the traumas of anti-semitism, two world wars and the loss of a child. It is not surprising that his approach to healing would posit a basic conflict inherent to the human condition. Freud believed that much like the warring world that raged around him, within our own psyches was another kind of battlefield of raging instincts that constantly seek expression. His was a more pessimistic view: that the best we can do is find ways to sublimate our sexual and aggressive urges and settle for “common unhappiness.” Yet, he brought to light the impact of the unconscious, and the ways in which we can live with less suffering and more integrity if we accept the truth of what is in our unconscious.

Theorists interested in how Buddhism and psychotherapy might work together, have suggested that this very solipsism is powerfully challenged in Buddhist practice. Buddhism takes a more universal view of our human struggles, suggesting that all of us, regardless of our caretakers or personal traumas, can be helped by remembering that everything changes, including our most entrenched struggles and vexing relationships. It’s simply the nature of reality. So too, we depend upon each other for everything - our food, education, healthcare, companionship. According to Buddhist thought, none of us can get through this life, or achieve abiding happiness, alone. So it makes sense to treat each other with genuine care, knowing that we share the same wish to be happy and free from suffering.

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If Freud traces most of the repression or psychical problems to childhood, in Early Buddhism man is considered a “psycho-physical unit whose “psyche” is not a changeless soul but a dynamic continuum composed of a conscious mind as well as an unconscious in which is stored the residue of emotionally charged memories going back to childhood as well as into past lives.\textsuperscript{16}

One aspect of early Buddhism that should attract the Freudian is its interest in dynamic and motivational psychology. What is called “dynamic psychology” is often considered as the psychology of motivation. A recent psychologist defined the term dynamic psychology thus: “Dynamic psychology is concerned with the various psychological and related factors which drive, steer, integrate and sometimes disintegrate the mental life. Dynamic psychology aims to explain mental life causally, to find laws which may be used in controlling mental life.”\textsuperscript{17}

“Dynamic psychology implies the complex interplay of forces both at the conscious and the unconscious level.”\textsuperscript{18}

Rieff points out that Freud’s dictum that “we are all somewhat hysterical” and the Freudian claim that the difference between so-called normality and neurosis is only a matter of degree is a key statement.\textsuperscript{19} This position resembles the Buddhist axiom “All worldlings are deranged” (\textit{sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā}). Diseases have been classified into bodily disease (\textit{kāyiko rogo}) and mental disease (\textit{cetasiko rogo}). A person suffers from bodily disease from time to time, but psychological ailments continue until the final state of sainthood is attained.” Fromm

\textsuperscript{16} BFP, p.8
\textsuperscript{18} BFP, p.31.
s says that it is only at the superficial level that Freud appears as a creator of a new therapy for mental illness. He says that Freud’s own system transcended the traditional concept of illness and cure, and thus he was concerned “with the “salvation” of man, rather than only with the therapy for mentally sick patients.”

“So the Buddha taught that our liberation from suffering needs to come from our removal of the three poisons of aversion, clinging, and ignorance. However, it was Freud who observed how they psychologically develop in our world. Perhaps the understanding of both truths will bring the wisdom to observe ourselves and develop the wisdom to bring a touch of enlightenment in our daily lives.”

Freud does not belong to that class of philosophers or psychologists who dwell academically on the profundities of life but leave them severely alone in their private lives. He was deeply involved and immersed in everything he wrote and he himself underwent a vigorous process of self-analysis before he worked out his final psychoanalytic theories. This vigour and inner seriousness are manifest in his relationship with his patients. He was averse to moralizing and preaching to his patients, but he was prepared to analyze a patient for a prolonged period of time. As Fromm says, Freud considered the emancipation, the well-being and the enlightenment of even one individual a matter of concern in the final analysis. He did not measure his results in term of money and time.

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20 BFP, p.32
21 Rev. Sumita Hudson, ibid.
22 BFP, p.32
Today, Buddhism and Freudian psychology are mixing minds and ideas through an expanding population of Westerners who want to understand the influence of their own personal history, while not getting too caught up in it. In this way, Buddhism and psychoanalysis have begun to cultivate a true partnership that seems to be ushering in wellness on a new scale.