

THE STAGES OF MINDFULNESS MEDITATION: A VALIDATION STUDY*

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This is a preliminary report of the authors' study of contemporary indigenous Buddhist meditation practitioners and the

*a
preliminary
report*

"Two additional papers emphasizing different aspects of this research are in preparation: An outcome study of Intensive Mindfulness Meditation, *Journal for the Psychoanalytic Study of Society* (in press); a chapter in Shapiro, D. & Walsh, R. N. (Eds.), *The science of meditation: Research, theory and practice*. New York: Aldine, 1980 (in press).

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Interview and test data on the South Asian meditators was collected under a Fulbright Research Fellowship to India in 1976-77, through the University of

stage
models

authoritative textual traditions which are the recorded source of their practices. The major traditions we have studied in their original languages present an unfolding of meditation experiences in terms of a *stage model*: for example, the *Mahamudra* from the Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist tradition (Brown, 1977); the *Visuddhimagga* from the Pali Theravadin Buddhist tradition (Nyanamoli, 1976); and the *Yoga Sutras* from the Sanskrit Hindu tradition (Mishra, 1963). The models are sufficiently similar to suggest an underlying common invariant sequence of stages, despite vast cultural and linguistic differences as well as different styles of practice (Brown *et al.*, 1980). Although such a structural convergence remains to be established on empirical grounds, the conception of meditation in terms of a stage model is intuitively appealing. Further, the traditions themselves describe the practice in terms of classical metaphors which express the practice, e.g., references to the "path" (*magga*) and "development" (*bhavana*).

The current study is about one such stage model, the Theravadin Buddhist tradition of *Vipassanā* or mindfulness medita-

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don. According to this tradition there are three major divisions of the entire system of meditation: Preliminary Training, sometimes called Moral Training, Concentration Training, and Insight Training. The former is recommended for beginners, the *latter* two comprise meditation in its more restricted sense of formal sitting practice.

*Vipassana
stages*

Each of these divisions represents a very different set of practices and leads to a distinct goal. Each involves a very different kind of psychological transformation. The preliminary practices include the study of the teachings, following of ethical precepts, and training in basic awareness of one's daily activities as well as the flow of one's internal experience. These preliminaries may also include learning meditative postures, learning to sit quietly in order to observe and thereby calm one's thoughts, and learning to observe the flow of one's internal experience free from distraction. Concentration practice is defined in terms of one-pointed attention, the ability to hold attention steady on an object without distraction. This is said to result in a relative reduction in thinking and more complex perceptual processes. The fully concentrated meditator has learned to develop a deep concentrated state called *samadhi* in which awareness is held continuously and steadily upon very subtle activities of the mind, at a level simpler than that of thinking or perceptual pattern recognition.

*preliminary
practices*

*concentration
practice*

Insight practice is the most important, and all earlier stages are regarded as preparations. The meditator has trained his awareness to observe the subtle workings of his mind and is now in a position to genuinely know how the mind works at its most refined *levels*. There are a number of individual stages of insight, all of which are quite technically defined in the traditional literature. The meditator is said to learn fundamental truths regarding the operations of the mind. His awareness is said to become so refined that he begins to explore the interaction of mind and universe. He explores how events come into existence and how they pass away. In so doing, he learns that there is no real boundary between the mind-inside and the universe-outside. Eventually a fundamental non-dual awareness will intuitively and experientially understand the operations of the mind/universe, leading to a radical transformation of experience called enlightenment. Moreover, there may be several such transformations, more than one such enlightenment. Those readers who wish to study translations of the classical accounts of the stages of meditation in Theravadin Buddhism are referred elsewhere (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1965; Nyanamoli, 1976).

*insight
practice*

*determining
the validity
of
textual
accounts*

The traditional Buddhist accounts of the stages of meditation present a problem in regard to their status as subjective reports. These texts may contain archaic historical artifacts which have no validity in terms of describing the experience of contemporary meditators. Or, the texts may represent experiences very similar to those of present-day meditators, but both descriptions of experience may be the consequences of rigid belief systems, i.e., merely expectation effects. Then again, the texts may well be descriptions of stages of meditation experience that have external validity. The task of our current research is to determine just what sort of validity these textual accounts have.

In order to approach this issue, interviews were first conducted with contemporary indigenous practitioners to see if their experiences were consistent with those in the classical texts (Kornfield, 1976; Engler, 1980). A research questionnaire "A Profile of Meditative Experience" (POME) was also designed to quantify these descriptions (Brown *et al.*, 1978). Secondly, an attempt was made to compare the textual accounts to constructs drawn from specific traditions of Western psychology, particularly cognitive psychology. As described elsewhere (Brown, 1977) learning meditation was likened to the acquisition of a cognitive skill, specifically, skill in attention deployment and awareness training. Those who persist in the attention and awareness training seem to undergo a set of meditation experiences which unfold in a very orderly manner, perhaps in discernible stages. These stages may be viewed according to a cognitive/developmental stage model, i.e., one in which more complex thinking and perceptual processes are deconstructed during meditation so that more subtle levels of information-processing could be observed.

*independent
empirical
measures
and the
Rorschach*

The objective of a validation study is to establish independent empirical measures of the alleged cognitive changes described in the traditional texts and in the subjective reports and questionnaires of contemporary practitioners. The Rorschach may not seem to be a likely choice for such a validation study. In fact, the Rorschach was originally used as a personality measure. However, we began to notice that practitioners at different levels of the practice gave records that looked very distinct. In fact, the Rorschach records seemed to correlate with particular stages of meditation. Common features were more outstanding than individual differences at each level of practice. This unexpected observation raised the further question whether perhaps there were qualitative features (and

quantitative variables) on the Rorschach that discriminated between the major divisions or stages of the practice. If so, this would be an initial step toward establishing the possible validity of the stage-model of meditation. In the current study, the Rorschach is used as a measure of cognitive and perceptual change, not as a personality measure. Here it serves as a *stage-sensitive* validation instrument by administering it to criterion groups defined according to their level of practice.

THE POPULATION OF MEDITATORS

A fundamental problem with contemporary meditation research is the failure to use subjects who have acquired sufficient training in the cognitive skills specific to meditation. Most experiments use naive subjects, often college students, sometimes experienced meditators of a given discipline, e.g., Zen or Transcendental Meditation. Even these experienced meditators, by traditional criteria, are beginners. For example, Maupin (1965) conducted a Rorschach study of Zen meditators. He used naive college students who were given ten 45-minute sessions in breath concentration. It is very doubtful that these Ss perfected concentrative skills in ten sessions. Nevertheless, Maupin concluded that these Ss experienced an increase in primary process thinking along with a greater capacity to tolerate it. While this may indeed be an effect of meditation, it may very well be a beginner's effect. Inexperienced Ss manifest the general effects of a hypoaroused state of consciousness (Brown, 1977). Similar reports of increased primary process thinking have been reported for another hypoaroused state, hypnotic trance (Fromm, Oberlander & Grunewald, 1970). Effects such as increased primary process may have little to do with effects of meditation in more experienced Ss as defined by the tradition.

experienced
vs.
inexperienced
subjects

In one cross-sectional study which attempted to control for *level of meditation experience*, Davidson, Goleman & Schwartz (1976) segregated their Ss into beginning, short-term and long-term meditation groups. The criterion for the long-term group was two or more years of regular practice in either TM or Buddhist breath concentration. The problem, of course, is that *length of practice* need not strongly correlate with *acquisition of skill*. Such cross-sectional studies which have been attempted across criterion groups typically employ a purely temporal factor, length of time meditating, as a means to discriminate beginning, intermediate and advanced subjects. As all teachers of meditation and most students are painfully aware, however, length of time one has practiced is no index to

depth of practice. This relationship is highly variable and indeterminate. This kind of global and rather artificial tripartite grouping on the basis of time has been resorted to in the absence of more appropriate criterion measures derived from the practice itself.

*criterion
of subject
selection*

The current study does not rely on length of practice as the sole criterion of selection, although it does not abandon this. Initially, Ss were selected who had sufficient experience in intensive meditation in a well-defined tradition. Intensive practice served as the initial criterion. Moreover, teacher ratings and self reports on questionnaires were used as primary criteria to further delineate the level of experience of Ss from among this group of intensive meditators according to the textual model of stages of meditation. Presumably, the teachers are cognizant of the traditional accounts of the stages of meditation on the one hand, and are alleged to be capable of discerning through interview the type of experiences and level of skill a given Ss has achieved. Certain responses to cued items on the research questionnaire (POME) also disclose the level of skill.

*a
well-defined
tradition*

The present study in both its Asian and American components draws upon meditators in the context of a well-defined tradition, not a college population. It utilizes meditators who attend intensive retreats of several weeks or months duration. The daily routine involves a continuous alternation between periods of sitting and periods of walking meditation, usually one hour in length to start, over a span of 18 hours. There are two meals before noon and a one hour discourse in the evening. Subjects practice from 14-16 hours/day, continuously for the length of the retreat. They adopt traditional Buddhist precepts such as silence and abstinence from sex or substance use. They do not interact with other meditators. There is no eye contact. They do not write or talk except for a 15-minute interview with one of the teachers on alternate days. This routine is defined as *intensive meditation* and is the basic structure for both short-term and long-term retreats. During this time practitioners have the opportunity to work uninterruptedly toward the acquisition of meditative skills and to cultivate the kind of stage-specific training and mental development (*bhavana*) toward which this tradition of meditation aims.

The instructions for formal periods of sitting and walking meditation follow the traditional mindfulness instructions of one of the major Burmese teaching lineages, that of the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1972; Goldstein, 1976). The practice begins with an initial concentration exercise. Attention is focused on the in/out movement of the

breath at the tip of the nostrils or the rise and fall of the abdomen. After an initial period when some degree of concentration is developed, new classes of objects are then added in a series: bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts, images, memories, perceptions and the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral quality of each moment of experience. The meditator is instructed to become aware of any of these objects at the exact moment it occurs, for as long as it occurs, in his stream of consciousness. When no other object presents itself to awareness, attention is returned to the basic meditation object, the breath. It is mainly this extension of the range of attention to a variety of objects in their momentary arising and passing away that now converts this exercise from a concentrative to a mindfulness technique. The second core instruction in this tradition of practice is that attention should be "bare." Objects are to be attended to without reaction: without evaluation, judgment, selection, comment or any kind of cognitive or emotional elaboration. If any of these types of mental reaction occur over and above mere perception of the object, the student is instructed to make them in turn the object of "bare attention" or "choiceless awareness!" The specific object chosen is not nearly as important as this quality of detached observation with which it is registered in awareness. *Bare attention*, then, denotes a non-interpretive, non-judgmental awareness of one's predominant experience, moment by moment. Emphasis is on the *process* by which a particular event occurs, *not* on the individual *content* itself. Walking meditation is done in the same way, with the movement of the feet taken as the basic meditation object with awareness expanded to include all other events which occur, as they occur, during the walking. Equally important, the student is instructed to remain mindful of each and every other activity he engages in throughout the day, as he does it. In effect then, meditation is continuous and is ideally carried on without a break from rising to sleeping. This continuity in practice is the single most important factor in developing and maintaining that high degree of concentration which facilitates the development of insight.

*traditional
mindfulness
instructions*

The present study combines data from three independent projects: a *Three-Month Study* of intensive meditation students; data collection on *Advanced Western Students*; and a *South Asian Study* of enlightened masters. The first project used Western students. The research site was the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) center in Barre, Massachusetts. This center offers a series of two-week courses throughout the year and a three-month fall retreat annually. Data was collected at one of these three-month retreats. The second project also took

*combining
data
from
three
independent
projects*

place at IMS. In addition to the three-month meditators, data was also collected from the staff and teachers of the retreat center and from advanced meditators who visited the center throughout the year. The third project took place in South Asia. The subjects of this independent study included a number of well-known meditation masters in the same teaching lineage as those represented in the Western study. Thus data is available from meditators at nearly all levels of practice, from beginners to enlightened masters.

THE THREE-MONTH STUDY

*distinguishing
between
expectation
and
meditation
effects*

The design was intended to distinguish between expectation effects and meditation effects. In an excellent study, Smith (1976) demonstrated that most of the enthusiastic claims about meditation outcomes were largely instances of *expectation of change* and not due to the specific meditation skills, e.g., concentration on a mantra. In order to distinguish between meditation and expectation effects, the staff of the IMS center served as a control. The staff live in the same setting for the same length of time as the retreat meditators. They hold the same belief system and attend each of the evening discourses. They expect the meditation to work and they devote a minimum of two hours a day to meditation along with the retreat meditators. The main difference between the staff and retreat meditators is the amount of daily practice (2 hrs. vs. 14-16 hrs.). Differences between the groups presumably are suggestive of the treatment effect (intensive meditation) and not simply of expectation, assuming that both groups expect that the meditation they are practicing will result in some positive change. The unusual Rorschach findings reported in this study were found only in the meditation, not in the control group, thereby suggesting that the findings are not entirely attributable to expectation.

*instruments
used in
study*

The instruments used in the study were primarily the "Profile of Meditation Experience" (POME) and the Rorschach. The POME is a 600-item questionnaire designed to discriminate different types of meditation as well as different levels within the same type of meditation. It was administered together with a Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) and a demographic sheet. The Rorschach was administered individually in the traditional manner by a half-dozen Rorschach clinicians, only one of whom was familiar with the hypotheses of the experiment (thus minimizing experimenter bias).

The original design of the experiment called for a comparison of types of individuals, as measured by factor analytic ratings

of a personality rating scale for the Rorschach, with patterns of response on the POME. The intention was to find out whether different types of individuals had different experiences with the same instructions after the course of the three-month retreat. Post-Rorschach measures were included more out of curiosity. Much to our surprise, the post-Rorschach measures looked dramatically different. The Rorschachs were collected at the beginning and end of the three-month retreat. Since the meditators had not talked for the entire period, the concluding phase of the retreat was a 5-day transition period in which they were allowed to talk and interact with other meditators and staff, but were also expected to continue their meditation. The post-Rorschachs were collected between the first and second day of the transition period, i.e., after the retreatants became used to talking again, but before the state of consciousness accumulated from three months of continuous practice had been disrupted. Only the post-Rorschachs are reported for the current study. A total of 30 Ss on the same three-month retreat from mid-September to mid-December, 1978, were tested, and one dropped out. Six Ss had attended a previous three-month retreat, but it was the first intensive retreat of this length for 24.

*original
design*

THE ADVANCED WESTERN MEDITATORS

The teachers at IMS nominated a small group of Western students whom they felt had a "deep" practice. Whenever these Ss visited IMS, data was collected in the same manner as in the Three-Month Study.

THE SOUTH ASIAN STUDY

No such longitudinal *pre/post* design was possible in the South Asian study, nor was it possible to employ control groups. This study was conducted on the basis of two different assumptions: First, our meditation research in the Three-Month Study had not tested subjects whose experience could be classically defined by the experience of enlightenment. Second, the experience of enlightenment (determined by consensual teacher nomination) was used as the sole criterion of selection, a criterion which superseded length of practice or even teacher ratings of practice as in the Three-Month Study. According to the tradition of mindfulness meditation, enlightenment is said to result in permanent and irreversible changes in perception and experience. The tradition distinguishes between what in Western psychology might be called state and trait changes (Davidson, Goleman & Schwartz, 1976). In the tradition, trait effects are said to be the result *only* of enlightenment and not of

*enlightenment
as sole
criterion
of
selection*

*state
and
trait
changes*

prior stages of practice. Meditation can produce both state and trait changes, but these are not to be confounded. The tradition itself makes this distinction and forcibly emphasizes it in warning of the dangers of self-delusion. The meditator may mistake state effects for trait effects and suffer subsequent disillusionment and discouragement to the detriment of his/her practice (*Yoga Sutras* IV.27; *Visuddhimagga*, IV, 8M. xxiii,2). Likewise, if the researcher accepts this assumption, then enlightenment must be used as a criterion independent of level of skill or stage of practice.

*four
distinct
stages
of
enlightenment*

In this Theravadin Buddhist tradition there are four distinct stages of enlightenment. Since irreversible trait effects are said to occur at *each* of these four stages and only there, experience of one or more of the subsequent stages of enlightenment became a secondary criterion. As can be appreciated, this required a rather special group of subjects. At the time this study was conceived, such a group could only be found in Asia. These were understandably individuals who had already completed a certain course of training. No pre-test measures were available for them, nor were they tested just after a period of intensive meditation as in the Three-Month Study. In fact, this was the first time any such group of yogis had agreed to be subjects for research at all, in South Asia as well as in the West.

*an
individual
case
study
approach*

Because a longitudinal design was not possible under the circumstances, an individual case study approach was taken instead, based on precedents in ethnographic research using similar research instruments (Boyer, 1964). By an "ideographic" case study method as it has been employed in studies of child development (Flavell, 1963; Mahler, 1975), it was hoped to discover, in the individual case, examples of nomothetic principles. Eight subjects, including two teachers, were nominated by two masters. The masters themselves also agreed to participate in the study, making a total of $n = 10$: eight women, mostly mothers and housewives, and two men. AU were middle-aged. All practiced the same type of Burmese Satipatthana-vipassana or mindfulness meditation in the lineage of the Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw of Rangoon (Kornfield, 1977) on which the subsequent 3-month study of Western meditators at IMS was also based. According to teacher-rating, 5 subjects had attained first enlightenment, 4 had attained second, and I had attained third. In interesting contrast to the Western group of meditators, most of these Asian yogis had a minimum of prior retreat experience. Most of their practice was done at home in the context of daily family and vocational activities. In all but one case, the actual experience of enlightenment did occur during a retreat, but a

retreat of short duration and often the only retreat the individual had done. The length of time from first beginning practice to the experience of enlightenment ranged from six days to three years.

The instruments used in the South Asian Study included the same instruments used in the study of American meditators at IMS with some additions. First, a case history was obtained from each practitioner. Because married women in Asia will discuss certain subjects only with another married woman, to ensure completeness of data collection the case history interviews with the female subjects were conducted by Ms. Jellemeike Stauthamer, a clinical psychologist. For the same reason, a trilingual married woman, Ms. Maitri Chatterjee, was chosen from among many interviewed as interpreter. Next a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with each individual on their meditative experience. The attempt was made to obtain separate protocols of the meditative process and its experienced outcomes in the form of self-reports. The Rorschach was then administered by a colleague and Rorschach clinician from the host culture who was neither a Buddhist, nor familiar with this system of meditation and its claims, nor known to the subjects. This was followed by administration of the TAT in its Indian form (Chowdury, 1960) in a separate session. The interviewing and testing were carried out over a four-month period either in the rooms of two of the teachers or in the hall adjoining the nearby Buddhist temple. All interviews and tests were tape-recorded and translations subsequently checked for accuracy by an independent interpreter. Finally, the POME was translated into the language of the host culture, independently checked for accuracy, and administered.

*instruments
used*

THE CURRENT STUDY: CRITERION GROUPING

An attempt was made to establish clear criterion groups in order to see if the pattern of responses on the Rorschachs was different in each of the criterion groups. The five groups that were established followed the traditional divisions of the stages of practice: 1) beginners; 2) samadhi group; 3) insight group; 4) advanced insight group (attainment of at least first enlightenment); 5) masters (attainment of the higher stages of enlightenment as defined in Theravadin Buddhism, e.g., Nyana-moli, 1976). The criterion groups were established by two independent modes of assessment: objective ratings by four teachers for the Western group and by two masters for the Asian group; and patterns of response on the POMBoThe four

*the
five
groups*

the
scale

teachers rated each of the 30 Western Ss on the three-month retreat along three different scales: a) use of the practice to work on emotional problems; b) depth of concentration (proficiency in samadhi); c) depth of insight. The scale end-points were 1 and 10. A rating of 1 meant "little" and 10 meant "great." Anchor points were given a specific meaning. For example, 1 meant very little concentration; very little insight; and very little evidence for working on emotional problems. A rating of 5 meant moderate concentration (Beginner's Samadhi); moderate insight ("easy" insights such as perception of the constant change of mental events); and moderate evidence of working on emotional problems. A rating of 10 meant deep concentration (Access Samadhi); deep insight (realization of the stage of Arising and Passing Away, or the stage of Equanimity); and considerable evidence of working on emotional problems. Technical terms like "Access Samadhi," "Arising and Passing Away" and "Equanimity" refer to stages recognized by tradition (Nyanamoli, 1976) and adopted by the teachers (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1965) in their assessment of the student's progress. They will be discussed in some detail later in the text. In addition, certain key questions on the POME were used as an independent means to differentiate groups. The POME contains certain questions regarding types of insight. Several of these latter questions are worded such that they are only intelligible to those who have had the direct experience of the stage, such as the experience of the state called "Access" or the state called "Arising and Passing Away." Those students who answered these questions as "sometimes, often, usually or always," characteristic of their current practice (post-retreat), were sorted into groups. A given S had to meet *both* teacher rating and questionnaire criteria in order to be placed within a given group.

number
of
subjects
in each
group

The *beginner's group* consisted of 15 Ss who received a mean rating of 6 or more by the teachers on the scale of Emotional Problems. The *samadhi group* consisted of 13 Ss who met the dual criteria of receiving a mean rating of 6 or more by the teachers and a minimum self-report of "sometimes" or more on the POME questions concerning concentration and samadhi. These 13 Ss were defined as having accomplished some level of samadhi, from Beginner's Samadhi to Access Samadhi, but no attempt was made to ascertain the exact level of samadhi. Likewise, the *insight group* consisted of 3 Ss who met the dual criteria of a mean rating of 6 or more by the teachers and a minimum self-report of "sometimes" or more on the POME questions regarding levels of insight. There were some differences between the teacher and self-ratings of insight. The teachers were more liberal in their ratings. They included

relatively "easy" insights, such as perception of the constant change of events, in their high ratings. A total of 11 Ss were given a mean rating of 6 or more by the teachers. However, according to the POME, 8 of these Ss had only the "easier" insights. Only three had actually progressed to the more advanced Insight stages as classically defined.

Thus, in the Three-Month Study, using the very same instructions, Ss varied markedly at the end of their three months of practice. The great majority were still working through the problems of the beginning stage. About half had progressed to the next major stage of practice, the samadhi stage. These Ss had become genuine meditators by traditional standards. Some of these same Ss also began to experience pre-access levels of insight. Others, though relatively weak in their concentration, developed stronger mindfulness and insight. The reason for this variation is due at least in part to the dual set of instructions used: concentration on the breath and mindfulness of any or all categories of objects. It may also be partly due to the fact that a given meditation object like the breath can be used to develop either concentration or insight. Ss differed in their use of these instructions over the three months. Those who felt scattered tended to practice more concentration. Those who desired insight practiced mindfulness more. The reason why so many meditators achieved samadhi is explained by tradition: both concentrative skills and mindfulness can lead to the attainment of at least beginner's samadhi, although concentrative skills are necessary to deepen the samadhi state. The reasons why so few reached the Insight Series of meditations are also explained. These require considerable skill to master. In addition, they follow after attainment of Access Samadhi. This is supported by the strong positive correlations between concentration and insight on the POME. All 3 Ss in the Insight Group had at least five years of previous experience with the same instructions. All 3 had also received very high ratings on concentration by the teachers. Thus, it seems that those who practice mindfulness without achieving optimal concentration reach a plateau at the pre-access levels of insight, while those who practice concentration without sufficient mindfulness tend to lose their 'state effects' after the retreat ends. It is difficult for each student to find the optimal balance so the variation after three months is great.

Nevertheless, it was possible to establish strict criterion groups for the traditionally defined levels of samadhi and insight. Because of the small number of Ss in the insight group, these data were pooled with data from advanced Ss collected outside

*concentration
and
mindfulness
practices*

*establishing
strict
criterion
groups*

the retreat yet meeting the same strict criteria. This still only brought the total 'n' to 7, which suggests the difficulty of attaining the classical or post-access stages where the fundamental insights into the very workings of the mind are perceived during meditation in the Theravadin tradition.

*advanced
insight
group
and the
masters
group*

A fourth group was designated the *advanced insight group*. It consists of advanced Western meditators who have reached at least the first of the 4 stages of enlightenment as recognized by their Asian teachers. A fifth group was designated the *master's group*. The tradition recognizes a fundamental difference between the first two and the last two "Paths" or stages of enlightenment. This is based on qualitative differences in degree of difficulty in attainment, extent of trait change, expressed in terms of the 'fetters' or 'defilements' permanently eliminated from the personality, all of which are claimed to radically differentiate the second from the third Path. In accordance with this principle, the master's group is defined in this study as those who have attained either the third or fourth Path, either the penultimate or ultimate stage of enlightenment. This group is represented in the present study by a single individual. Contemporary Theravadin Buddhists recognize a number of such "ariyas" or "ones worthy of praise," but data is available for only one, an individual residing in South Asia and a subject in the South Asian Study. The following table summarizes the data:

	CRITERION GROUP				
	Beginner's Group	Samadhi Group	Insight Group	Advanced Insight	Master's Group
Three-Month Study	15*	13	3**		
Advanced IMS Study			4	4	
South Asian Study				(9)***	

*There is some overlap between the Beginner's and Samadhi Groups (5 Ss),

****There is some overlap between the Samadhi and Insight Groups (388). All 3 Ss in the Insight Group also met the criteria for the Samadhi Group, but are included only in the latter. This means that a total of 7 Ss did not meet the dual criteria for any group and are not included in this study.

***The enlightened Ss in the Advanced Insight Group are derived from the Advanced IMS and South Asian groups, pooled. A total of 9 more such Rorschachs have been collected. These have not been included however. Only Rorschachs from Westerners are included in order to circumvent the difficulties of cross-cultural Rorschach interpretation.

DATA ANALYSIS³

What follows is a preliminary report based on the work completed to date. The data reported are representative of the outstanding features on the Rorschachs in the respective criterion groups. By outstanding features is meant those *qualitative features* of Rorschachs which are characteristic of a given criterion group and relatively uncharacteristic of the remaining pool of Rorschachs. Clear-cut qualitative features are readily apparent for each group, so that in a pilot study clinicians and experimentalists were able to blindly sort these Rorschachs into the appropriate *a priori* groupings. What follows is a summary of these qualitative features.

*qualitative
features
of data*

RESULTS

Beginner's Group

The Beginner's Group consisted of 15 Rorschachs collected immediately after three months of intensive meditation. These Rorschachs were not especially different from the respective Rorschachs collected from the same subjects just prior to the meditation retreat. The only differences were a slight decrease in productivity across subjects and a noticeable increase in drive-dominated responses for some subjects (Holt & Havell, 1960).

Samadhi Group

The most outstanding characteristic of the samadhi Rorschach is its seeming *unproductivity* and *paucity of associative elaborations*. Recall that the test instructions are for the S to describe what the inkblot "looks like." Meditators in deep samadhi experience these instructions as being somewhat incongruous with the functioning of their altered state of consciousness. Many complained that it "took too much energy" to produce images and associations while perceiving the inkblot. When one S was asked if he could say what one of the inkblots "looked like" if he tried, he said that he could produce images;

*"unproductivity"
of
samadhi
group*

³A number of traditional and non-traditional procedures were used for scoring the Rorschach. These included scoring of: *determinants* (a version of the Exner system [Exner, 1974], modified in that it uses the Mayman system [Mayman, 1970] for scoring form-level and the Binder system [Binder, 1932] for shading); *formal variables* (Holt and Havel, 1960; Watkins & Stauffacher, 1975); and the *fabulization scale* (Mayman, 1960). Because of the unusualness of the post-Rorschachs, a non-traditional scoring manual was developed by the senior author, the Manual of Feature-Dominated Responses.

and indeed, he was able to produce a record not significantly less productive than his pre-test Rorschach. He added, however, that to generate such images required "go(ing) into the various levels of perceptual layering," that is, "breaking) down (perception) into its (perceptual) patterns and concepts." Like this S, all the Ss in the Samadhi Group showed a decrease in their overall productivity. Since the task demand was presumably contrary to the actual organization of their perceptual experience, their very accommodation to the instructions biased the results so that even this degree of productivity is probably inflated, a response to task requirements rather than to perceptual functioning.

*focus
on
perceptual
features
of inkblot*

What does the S experience? Subjects in the Samadhi Group distinguished between three levels of their perceptual processes: the *perceptual features* of the inkblot, *internal images* given in response to these features, i.e., the content applied to the inkblot, and *associative elaborations* of these images. During the samadhi state, Ss' focus of attention was primarily on the perceptual features of the inkblot and only secondarily on the images and associations that might follow from these features. Each Rorschach in the Samadhi Group was characterized by a mixture of responses in each of the three categories, though the overall tendency was to comment on the pure perceptual features of the inkblot. To them, the inkblot "looked like" an inkblot. The same subject says:

... the meditation has wiped out aUthe interpretive stuff on top of the raw perception ... like, there's this thing out here but then (when asked to make it look like something) I go into it, into the various levels of perceptual layering (IW)8⁴.

Those units of perception involving images and associations were often given some qualification, the kind of qualification not usually found in normal and pathological Rorschachs. For example, Ss were careful to distinguish images and associations from the raw perceptual features. Some distinguished their memory from perception with comments such as, "I remember it from last time, but I don't *really* see it there." Some distinguished their associative processes from perception with comments like, "My association to it is a bat, that was my first thought, and then I elaborated it." Many adopted a critical attitude toward their own image. They felt the image was non-veridical. Percepts, even those of good form-level, were often qualified with statements such as, "It doesn't *really*

The notation following each response indicates the card number and the specific location of the response on that card (following Exner, 1914).

look like that ... I'm just projecting." At times, Ss were unable to find words to label or describe a particular unit of an inkblot's features, even when their attention was fixed on it. Comments in such cases were similar: "I know what it is, but I can't put a name on it"; or, "It's real interesting but it's like nothing I've seen before."

Nevertheless, Ss were able to report specific images for the majority of the cards, though not for all of them. These images, however, were quite *fluidly perceived*. Ss complained, for instance, that the images "kept changing." While describing a particular image, it was not unusual for it to change into something else. Sometimes the image seemed to change so rapidly that it was difficult to specify a single image:

*fluid
perception*

It's becoming so many different things so quickly, they go before the words come out (HW).

Or Ss reported simultaneous images for the same areas of the blot:

It's a lot of things at once-could be a bat, a butterfly, a flying man (IW).

The focus of attention was less on the actual image and more on the *process* by which the image manifested itself in their stream of consciousness. For example, one S said, "It's just beginning to become something ... (pause) ... a bat."

The most unusual finding, yet characteristic of the entire Samadhi group, is the high incidence of comments on the *pure perceptual features* of the inkblot. In traditional scoring language, these Ss used a lot of pure determinants: form-dominance, *pure* color (chromatic and achromatic), pure shading, and pure inanimate movement. Form-dominated responses were those in which the Ss became fascinated with the various shapes and configurations of a given inkblot in their own right, without attempting to associate to them. Here is an example of a typical Rorschach response (VIII 23' 52"):

1. Well the color, all of it ... colors against the white color, they're striking ... (form?) all the different forms of the color, each shading of color has a certain form to it (what might it look like?). Nothing, nothing at all ... last time I was struck very much with this one I tried to find something, and turned it around and around once somebody told me that you were real bright if you turned it around ... I never forgot that. so I did (this time?). This time the colors were enough ... very pleasant. pretty, doesn't look like a thing to me ... but there is part of it that takes on a very distinct form

*typical
Rorschach
response*

2. Rodents climbing: They look exactly like rodents (how so?)
The shape ... the feeling I get of the way they're climbing,
moving their feet. tail, faces....

Again the main feature of this group of protocols is the unproductivity and relative paucity of associative process which characterizes the samadhi state. The 'animals' on card VI are one of the easiest and most popular responses on the entire test because the features of the card are closely representative of an animal form. Despite the strong stimulus-pull, the immediate impact of the card is *not* the obvious pattern, but rather the pure perceptual features of color and form.

The Insight Group

*insight
group's
increased
productivity*

The Rorschachs of the Insight Group point in a direction nearly opposite to that of the Samadhi Group. They are primarily characterized by *increased productivity* and *richness of associative elaborations*. These meditators experience the test instructions as an opportunity to exercise the apparently increased availability of their associative and imaginal processes, while keeping these closely and realistically attuned to the perceptual features of the inkblot.

Whereas repeated measures of normal and clinical Rorschachs evidence many of the same responses, the post-test responses in this group showed little overlap with pre-test responses. These meditators claimed that their productivity per card was unlimited, that their mind was constantly turning over. One said:

When I can't see anything else I hang out with it for a while ...
allow space ... I stay with my awareness of not seeing anything
... then, more images come ...

*openness
to
flow*

This openness to the flow of internal associations and images is characteristic of the Insight Rorschach. The experience may be likened to the extemporaneous music of a jazz musician.

Moreover, most of the associations are richly fabulized, with a great variability and intensity of affect. Color symbolism, or better, metaphoric use of color, abounds. The content shows great cultural diversity. One of the more unusual features of these long, elaborate associations, in light of their richness, is the relative absence of looseness. Subjects employ one of the two styles of elaboration, the empathetic and the creative. In the *empathetic style*, the S puts himself fully into his percept, especially the human movement percept. This is illustrated by

the slow unfolding of a single perception until the S gets a certain "feel" for it. In the *creative style*, the S also slowly unfolds his elaboration of a single percept but changes his perspective on the same image one or more times during the response. Often, the S ascribes several very different affective states to the same image. These protocols also contain a high incidence of original responses. Thus, the Ss are able to manifest a high degree of congruency between the flow of their internal world, moment-by-moment, and the changing demands of external reality. This *enhanced reality attunement* is clearly illustrated in the following response:

*enhanced
reality
attunement*

This is a wonderful one, too ... sideways this is again, the red figure is a 4-legged animal, like a mountain lion and now he's running, leaping over a real rocky and difficult terrain ... there's a sense of great energy and power in him, but the most wonderful thing of all is how sure-footed he is ... a great sense of flight he always lands on just the right crop of rock ... never misses ... always instinctively sure of his footing so he'll be able to go on like that, wonderful mastery and wonderful fit between the animal and his world, kind of perfect harmony between them, even though it's very dynamic, leaping, he always does it ... here, he's in flight ... just landed with the front paw and the back paw is still in the air and he's feeling, not very reflective, just doing it spontaneously. He's feeling the great energy and lightness and challenge. He *loves* the challenge because he's equal to it, but it's always keeping him out there on his limit ... with this is another wonderful thing. It has to do with the colors again, a progression in his progress from warm wonderful colors to colder, finally very cold colors; in other words, he started from a place of warmth and security and as he started from there, he can carry it out and conquer the cold, insecure place because he himself is the pink, the color of the heat, light, energy, warmth ... and so he can go out and master the cold of the world again ... (VIII, without inquiry DI).

There are also some remarkably life-affirming insights contained within these fabulized human movement percepts:

*life-
affirming
insights*

I see 2, I see 2 heads. *It's* like a large being, a tall person and a shorter person ... a tall rather massive person and a smaller ... could be an adult and a child ... a father and a son or probably a father and a son ... that's what it reminds me of and they're just sitting quietly together looking off into the distance ... very at ease with each other ... and there's a lot of real warmth between them, just a real feeling of connectedness ... the feeling of knowing the limitations of the communication that can come between them ... accepting those limits, not finding them painful, and just being real happy with what is there ... and the limits are really the limits that are ... not like generational, but the limits like that are there between any two people whatever their relationship might be ... the limits of two people trying to communicate to each other

, , . there's a certain place where that breaks down and you just can't get any closer, where you can't bridge the gap anymore, and yet you can come to a real deep acceptance of that limitation (IV, without inquiry, Dd at base of D2),

conflicts Nevertheless, these insight Rorschachs are not without conflicts, such as the fusion of sexual and aggressive impulses in this response by the same S who gave the mountain lion:

... and this which I first saw as just the two trunks of the elephant, this I see as a circumcised penis; at first I saw it very solitary, just sort of proud of itself to be there, but now I'm beginning to see it in connection with the two red spaces above as though it's thrusting up through, between them, but they seem a little threatened as though they could damage it, could hurt it, as though they were two twin creatures with little paws, little legs outstretched wanting to pounce on it, maybe claw it ... the feeling it seems to have, flinches a little anticipating that but it's going to keep on moving, thrusting, moving upward anyway and finally the two little creatures will withdraw their paws and snuggle against it because their shapes will fit right down in here, see the contours match here, and this will come up and it will fit snug and come together (fits red into white spaces) and it will be all right, it will be a very nice experience and a feeling of real union and sharing and closeness (II, without inquiry, D4).

Advanced Insight Group

The advanced insight group consisted of four Rorschachs collected from Western-born students of mindfulness meditation. These advanced practitioners are alleged to have achieved at least the first stage of enlightenment as defined by the tradition. Unlike the previous groups, these Rorschachs were *not* collected after a period of intensive meditation. One might think that few valid statements could be made from only four such protocols. Nevertheless, three of the four Rorschach protocols showed remarkable consistency, enough consistency to warrant a preliminary statement regarding Rorschachs from enlightened practitioners.

Rorschachs of the advanced insight group These Rorschachs do not evidence the same outstanding qualitative features as found in the Samadhi and Insight Groups. They appear, at first glance, to be more like the Rorschachs of the Beginner's Group. The range of content is quite varied. Responses are nearly always images with brief associative elaborations. Responses are seldom dominated by the pure perceptual features of the inkblots, as was true for the Samadhi Group. Responses also lack the richness of associative elaboration so characteristic of the Insight Group.

Nevertheless, there do appear to be certain qualitative features which distinguish this group of protocols which we are calling 'residual effects'. We hypothesize them to be the consequences of having previously mastered both the samadhi and insight practices. Like the Rorschachs of the Samadhi Group, these Rorschachs contain occasional but less frequent references to the perceptual features of the inkblots, notably the shapes, symmetry, color, and variations in shading. Responsivity to achromatic color and shading variations is also quite high, as was true for the Samadhi Group. Such responses are, however, seldom pure shading responses. Instead, the shading is more likely to be interpreted as a certain *quality* or *state of mind* such as "pain ... beauty," "dark and heavy," "unpleasantness," to draw examples from Rorschachs of the respective advanced practitioners. The use of inanimate movement responses, alone and in conjunction with color and shading, is also quite high, much higher in fact than in any other group. At least 10-20% of the total responses were inanimate movement responses for each of the four Ss. No S's record contained less than a raw count of 8 such responses. Compared to norms, this is extraordinarily high. Furthermore, these Rorschachs evidence residual effects akin to the effects in the Insight Group. Productivity was high for each of the Ss (total number of responses ranged from 55 to over 100). These responses, in contrast to those of the Insight Group, showed less variation in subsequent testing.

*'residual
effects'*

If these Rorschachs are not so strikingly different from those of the previous criterion groups, especially the Beginner's Group, what then is distinctive about them? The most unusual feature, clearly present in a number of responses on three of the four Rorschachs, is the degree to which they perceive the inkblots as an *interaction of form and energy* or *form and space*. That is, *each* of the Ss, in several responses, perceived the inkblot primarily as *energy-in-motion* or as *empty space*. Such responses were, of course, distributed among the variety of specific images on all the cards. However, the Ss saw the specific images (content) and the energy-in-motion (process) as distinct but interrelated "levels" of perception.

*the
most
unusual
feature*

A range of 5-20% of the content for each of the protocols referred specifically to various perceptions of energy. For example:

... movies that I saw in science class which were talked about ... let's see ... talked about organism ... um ... atoms and molecules, and kind of a changing energy, changing energy (IX. shading in D.I.).

Most often content was given in conjunction with inanimate movement or inanimate movement/shading responses. In this respect, the S's sensitivity to inanimate movement and shading was somewhat different from comparable responses in the Samadhi Group. Whereas meditators during samadhi are likely to see the shapes themselves (or shading itself) moving on the card, these Ss seldom saw this. Instead, the movement and shading was usually "interpreted," i.e., it was given content, and usually the content referred to some manifestation of energy.

*various
'levels'
of
energy
organization*

These energy responses might best be seen as representing various "levels" of energy organization. On the simplest level are responses referring to pure space from which energy unfolded. For example:

The space between each form serves a purpose, not too compressed, and yet gives enough space for each quality to be its own and yet have enough room to exchange its own individual energy; however, it's a natural source of energy, unfolding and extending to take certain forms, urn ... almost feels more explosive ... I don't know if explosive is the right word. Let's say, such a strong source that it could come from that center core, that central orange, and go up into the blue and just push off just a little so that it could have its definite, urn, shape and function ... (VIII Dds 28).

On the next level are responses depicting the activity of the molecules of the universe or the primal elements within the body.

At still another level are responses indicating the types of energy organization within the human body, as conceptualized by anyone of traditional Eastern systems of energy yoga (Avalon, 1931; Dasgupta, 1946; Eliade, 1969; Varenne, 1976). Such responses include diffuse body energies such as a "life-force" (X), as well as energies that have specific directions to the body (III). According to the yogic physiology, the body is said to contain both diffuse and specific energy. The latter is said to flow through invisible channels. Note that the organization of energy into specific currents represents a more complex form of energy than that of the primal elements. *All* of the Ss also made references to the main "centers" of energy within the body. Again according to yogic physiology, the body energies are said to be concentrated in specific centers called "chakras" within the body. Here we note an even further organization of energy, now into specific, quasi-stable locations.

I see the different colors... going up the different energy centers of the body, starting with the whole pelvic region ... the abdomen,

chest, and head, and each color representing the different energy in that part of the body (VIIIW).

In addition to these more common references to internal 'yogic' anatomy, two of the Ss also made reference to a type of energy more akin to Western physiological processes, such as the energy of cell division (VI) or that of chromosomes dividing. Even more common were responses akin to what in Western psychology has been called "drive energy":

I see a vagina (D12) and ovaries or some kind of organs (D11), internal organs ... internal organs ... I see (something) very phallic (D2) ... a lot of thrusting energy I get from it ... I see like an energy flow (shading D 12) between like, ah, the vagina and the penis ... it's like one continuum, the flow of energy between them, sexual energy ... (VI).

Such direct references to sexual energy were found on all four protocols; one also made comparable references to aggressive energy. Finally, there were a number of responses depicting the type of energy that is bound up within inanimate objects, thereby causing them to move, e.g., spinning tops.

What is implicit in such responses is an understanding of the *interrelationship of form and energy/space*. The most striking feature of *all* these Ss' Rorschachs is the extent to which they view their own internal imagery, in response to the shapes on the inkblots, as merely manifestations or *emanations of energy/space*. Here is a typical but especially clear example:

*understanding
the
interrelationship
of form
and
energy! space*

I feel the energy coming from that, the whole energy of the picture ... there's an intensity, a certain power of it, and everything else is just a dancing manifestation of that energy coming out (VIIWV).

Here we see that the advanced practitioners have a perspective that is quite unlike that of the previous groups. They see all of their percepts as merely emanations of energy, as part of the "dance of the mind." In fact, the Ss sometimes reported that such a transformation from energy/space into form actually took place before their eyes during the test. Although responses pertaining to mind-states are rare, it is important to point out that they hardly ever occur in the records of the beginner's samadhi or insight groups. They occur occasionally in the protocols of these advanced practitioners and will become even more important in records of the master's group.

While the Ss more often comment on the actual process by which forms and images come into existence, they also often comment, though less often, on the reverse process, namely, how forms and images dissolve into space. For example, one S

*figure
ground
reversals
and
movement
toward
the center*

saw a number of typical images on Card X, such as dancing insects. Then there followed a distinct shift of perception. She began to see the card as mere color and form and noticed that the colors and forms seemed to move inward, concentrating themselves at the center blue region of the card. She explained that all the forms and colors were connected by a "unifying force" by which the seemingly separate images on the card tended to "flow" back into the center region of "localized energy." Upon their return, the subject noted another perceptual shift, namely a figure-ground reversal. She ended up seeing only the white (former background) of the card, as if all the colors and forms had become absorbed into it. Such figure-ground reversals and movement toward the central unifying point were other distinctive features of these Rorschachs.

*an
example*

In sum, the most distinctive feature of these Ss' Rorschachs is their unique perspective in which they actually witness energy/space in the moment-by-moment process of arising and organizing into forms and images; and conversely, witness the forms and images becoming absorbed back into energy/space. Here is one response which stands out as a particularly clear example of an advanced practitioner's perception of the momentary arising and passing away of phenomena:

sort of like just energy forces and urn like molecules ... something like the energy of molecules ... very much like a microscopic view ... in some way there are more patterns of energy ... there are different energies in the different colors ... it looks like it's a view into the body where there's energy, there's movement, but it's steady because it's guided by a life-force ... there is arising and passing away of these different elements. Inquiry: the colors seemed very alive and suggested life and they seemed very basic or elemental-both the shapes and size, They don't have heavy substance, you know; they each, urn, are relatively fragile (different colors suggested different elements?) yeah ... and then it started to seem just like a vibration, really not a swelling movement but a pulsation, just a coming and going of urn kind of elemental bits (laughs because of word choice) of life (laughs) (arising and passing away of elements?) It was very far out when it happened ... I can't um . . . , some of that was because of the suggestion of the spinal column (previous response) ... 'um it reminded me somewhat of those electron microscope pictures of the body and I just had this sense of movement of it all (XW).

One might expect certain consequences from seeing form as a manifestation of energy, from seeing the world as not particularly solid and durable. According to Mayman (1970), vaguely and amorphously perceived responses are interpreted as a non-committal hold on reality. These data suggest a rather different interpretation, what might be called the *relativization*

of perception. No particular feature on an inkblot, or aspect of external reality, is compelling enough to suggest perception of solid and durable forms.

While emphasizing the distinctive features of these Rorschachs, it is important to keep in mind that the responses discussed above constitute only a small proportion of the total Rorschach record for each advanced practitioner. The remainder of the imagery is quite varied. Examination of this imagery reveals that these allegedly enlightened advanced practitioners are not without intrapsychic conflict. Using the Holt system for scoring drive-dominated content, there is a consistently low but scorable number of aggression-related responses in the protocols of 3 of the 4 advanced practitioners. Overall, however, there appears to be an intensification of other drive states, e.g., sexual, relative to beginners and insight practitioners, even though the experience of aggression seems to diminish for *most*. Concern with the awareness and management of impulses was characteristic for all the advanced practitioners to some degree.

In addition, each of these Rorschachs evidenced idiosyncratic conflictual themes such as fear of rejection; struggles with dependency and needs for nurturance; fear and doubt regarding heterosexual relationships; fear of destructiveness. All of these issues are related to intimacy. They may reflect the peculiar role of an enlightened person in the context of modern Western culture where the struggle to uphold the ethical standards of the Buddhist teachings in a non-monastic culture makes intimate relationships more problematic. In any case, the unusual feature of these Rorschachs is *not* that these people are without conflict, but rather their *non-defensiveness in experiencing such conflicts*. Vivid drive-dominated content was often present while employing minimal or no defense against it (using Holt defense scoring criteria). This empirical finding is supported by the directness and matter-of-factness with which these advanced practitioners talked about personal problems during a follow-up interview. They tended to see their own sexual and aggressive drives, as well as their individual dynamics, as intense mind-states which could be experienced and acted on with awareness, but not necessarily invested in to any great degree.

*idiosyncratic
conflictual
themes*

*71071-
defensiveness*

The Master's Group

The single Rorschach in this group is included because of its unusualness. It is the only data available on the final stages of

*extraordinary
uniqueness
of data*

"development" (*bhavana*), that is, from someone who attained all or all but one of the 4 levels of enlightenment and has allegedly undergone a cognitive-emotional restructuring that has completely or almost completely eliminated suffering from their human experience. It should not be necessary to emphasize the extraordinary uniqueness and potential significance of data from this range of experience. This Rorschach was collected in South Asia, and for reasons of confidentiality cannot be further identified. Analysis of this Rorschach re-opens all the complicated problems of cross-cultural Rorschach interpretation. Nevertheless, several features are so striking that they are worthy of comment. First is its notable *shift in perspective*. Of the 32 total number of responses, 13 pertain to specific states of mind (41%) and 3 to states of the ordinary and non-ordinary world (9%). Whereas most "normal" Rorschach subjects unquestioningly accept the physical "reality" of an inkblot and then project their imagings onto it, this master sees an inkblot itself as a projection of the mind. All the various states of the mind and the world that might be articulated are themselves a kind of immediate reality. So also, the testing situation is a projection of the mind in a certain sense. The master, therefore, uses the situation as an occasion to teach about the various states of the mind and cosmos, especially those that enable others to alleviate their suffering.

*integrative
style*

The second unusual feature of the protocol is its *integrative style*. Each of the 10 cards, as it is presented, is utilized in the service of a systematic discourse on the Buddhist teachings pertaining to the alleviation of human suffering. Thus, Card I sets the stage with four images of humans and beasts in their everyday life of suffering. Card II depicts a picture of the mind in its angered state, and Card III depicts the creatures of hell, the hellish state of mind produced by anger in this life, or the plane on which an angry person is believed to take birth in a future life, both in accordance with the Buddhist teachings on karmic action based on hatred. Cards IV-V depict the ignorance and craving of the mind, believed to be the two root causes of suffering in Buddhist psychology. So far, the master has set forth the traditional doctrine of the Three Poisons: anger, craving and ignorance. Card VI illustrates how the same mind and body can be used to gain liberation:

1. A pillar. It has taken the form of truth. This pillar reminds me of a process of getting at or discovering the human mind (D 5).
2. Inside there is envy, disease, sorrow, and hatred in the form of black shapes (W).
3. A human torso (Dd 25).
4. After conquering truth, the mind has become clean and white (D 11).

Card VII gives the results of the practice:

1. I see a body (here, which reminds me of) a temple (D 6). The mind, here, like a cavern. I can also call this (with the portion identified as 'mind' inside it) the physical body (term used implies a sense of lack of respect in the original language).
2. From it, wings have spread-the impulses (D 10).
3. Ultimately, this body has gone up to the temple (identifies a second temple, D 8). At the end of spiritual practice, the mind can travel in two temples (i.e., the first is the human body, once the source of the impulses but now the master of them; the second is the temple at the end of spiritual practice).

The remainder of the cards depict the enjoyment of the perfected practice, as well as the consequences of not perfecting practice.

Integrating all ten cards into a single associative theme is an extremely rare finding. Note that the master achieves this without any significant departure from reality testing and without ignoring the realistic features of the inkblot, though there is considerable reliance on shading responses and vague and amorphously perceived form.

*rare
finding*

DISCUSSION

In each of the criterion groups, there are unique qualitative features in the Rorschachs which are distinctly different from those of the other groups. This finding in itself suggests that there are indeed different stages of the practice. Even more interesting is the fact that the specific qualitative features of the Rorschachs for each group are consistent with the classical descriptions of the psychological changes most characteristic of that stage of practice. Thus, the Beginner's Rorschach is understandable in light of the classical descriptions of the preliminary stage of moral training; the Samadhi Rorschach, in terms of the classical descriptions of the stages of concentration leading to access concentration and samadhi; the Insight Rorschachs, in terms of the classical stages of insight; and the Advanced and Masters Rorschachs in terms of enduring trait changes upon attainment of the classical stages of enlightenment. The classical descriptions used in this study are those found in the *Visuddhimagga* (Nyanamoli, 1976) and in the *Progress of Insight* (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1965). Such convergence of the Rorschach qualitative features on the one hand, and the classical descriptions on the other, may be an important step toward establishing the cross-cultural validation of

*important
step
in
establishing
cross-
cultural
validation*

the psychological changes at each major stage of the practice. What follows is a brief discussion of the convergence in each instance.

The Beginners' Group

The qualitative features of the post-Rorschachs of the 15 Ss in the Beginners' Group were not especially different from the pre-Rorschachs, with one important exception. The Rorschachs of a significant number of these Ss manifested an increased incidence of drive-dominated content as well as significant changes in the formal aspects of their verbalizations (Holt & Havel, 1960; Watkins & Stauffacher, 1975).

These findings are consistent with those of Maupin (1965). Using the Rorschach, Maupin reported an increase in primary process thinking and tolerance for unrealistic experience for beginning Zen students. Maupin also found that such an increase in primary process thinking and tolerance predicted successful response to meditation while attentional measures did not. Maupin concludes:

Capacity for regression and tolerance for unrealistic experience significantly predicted response to meditation, while attention measures did not. Once issues related to comfort in the face of strange inner experience are resolved, attention functions necessary to the exercise probably become available.

*characteristic
beginner's
experience*

Thus, at the start of meditation practice, the naive S is introduced, perhaps for the first time, to the vast world of his internal experience. Maupin correctly points out that, whereas the beginning meditator's task may be to train attention, most are readily distracted from that task by the very strangeness of their internal world.

There is a characteristic storminess to the beginner's experience. Subjective reports of an increased awareness of fantasy and daydreaming, of incessant thinking, and of lability of affect abound in the literature (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1965; Walsh, 1977, 1978). Objective measures such as primary process scores on the Rorschach lend some validity to these reports. Likewise, Davidson, Goleman & Schwartz (1976) have reported an increase in state-anxiety for the beginning meditator, in contrast to a decrease for the advanced meditator. Overall, the beginner's experience is largely a matter of *adaptation to the flow of internal experience*, an adaptation perhaps understandably necessary and anxiety-producing in a culture that lays so much stress on external adaptation and reality-boundness at

the expense of imaginative involvement (Hilgard, 1970). What is necessary to keep in mind is that this phase of adaptation, though necessary, has very little to do directly with meditation in the formal sense.

The beginning meditator's introduction to his internal world is not essentially different from the naive S's who begins exploration of other hypoaroused states, e.g., self-hypnosis, reverie, and free association. For example, using the Rorschach, a similar increase in primary process thinking has been reported for hypnotized Ss (Fromm, Oberlander & Gruenewald, 1970) and for patients who had undergone psychoanalysis (Rehyer, 1969). Using questionnaires, an increased awareness of imagery was reported for self-hypnosis (Fromm *et al.*, 1981). According to these findings, adaptation to the internal milieu may be a common feature of *any* hypoaroused state of consciousness and may have little to do with the "specificity" of meditation per se (Tart, 1975).

The implication is that beginners, in a strict sense, are not necessarily "meditating" even when they appear to be sitting in a meditation posture for some period of time. What, then, are they doing? This question was recently put to an esteemed Asian Buddhist teacher of this practice. He was asked why only a very few of the, say, 60 students who meditate intensively for three months in this country reach the more advanced stages of concentration and insight according to classical criteria; whereas the majority of students who meditate the same way for a comparable length of time in certain meditation centers in South Asia are alleged to reach these advanced stages. He attributed the difference in part to a difference in cultural beliefs and to the degree of conviction and understanding the students bring to the practice. In addition, he said, "Many Western students do not meditate. They do therapy ... they do not go deep with the mindfulness." The answer is to the point. It suggests a difference between adaptation and attentional training, mindfulness in this case. Much in line with Maupin's findings, it seems that many Westerners become so fascinated with the content of their internal world, understandably perhaps since it is often their first real conscious encounter with it -fantasies, personal problems, emotional reactions, thoughts -that they become preoccupied with an exploration of this content. In effect, they fail to go beyond the content and proceed to the necessary task of training concentration, mindfulness and related processes of attention. This form of *self-exploratory therapy* often gets confounded in both practice and in the theoretical and research literature with *formal meditation*, defined in terms of the specific training of attentional skills.

*confusion
between
self-exploratory
therapy
and
formal
meditation*

*role of
preliminary
practices*

In order to avoid such confusion, many Eastern systems have devised a more or less elaborate system of "preliminary practices" to be done before formal meditation. These practices are often referred to as the stage of Moral Training. They consist of an often elaborate set of instructions for: changing attitudes about self and world; thorough exploration of internal states; and the regulation of external behavior through precepts. They demand nothing less than a radical change in one's view of oneself, an exploration of and working through of qualities of one's internal milieu, and a thorough behavioral change. Considerable time may be spent in these practices—several years is not uncommon in some traditional systems—before formal training in meditation is begun.

It is indeed remarkable that formal meditation has become so popular in this country while the preliminary moral training has been largely ignored. The psychological changes characteristic of the preliminary practices are the necessary precondition to formal meditation. What happens when they are skipped over? One can predict that the beginner is destined to "work through" these changes during meditation itself. Consequently the preliminary therapeutic change and the stages of formal meditation become confounded. In this country, meditation is indeed a form of "therapy" for many.

*the
role of
expectations*

Unfortunately, this makes it more difficult for even the most sincere students of meditation to advance in the more formal practice. Outcome studies have shown that expectations play a significant role, whether in therapeutic outcomes (Frank, 1962) or meditation outcomes (Smith, 1976). Once the cultural belief that formal meditation is a form of therapy is firmly entrenched, students are likely to engage the content of their internal milieu at the expense of attentional training, even during intensive practice. Such students are unlikely to advance in the more characteristic features of formal meditation at a very rapid rate. This is perhaps one reason why over half of the experimental Ss were still exploring emotional issues after three months of continuous 16 hr./day practice. Some, however, who become less distracted by the content and proceed to train their attention may advance. The self-reports and Rorschachs of the Samadhi Group are illustrative of such advance.

The Samadhi Group

The Rorschach data of the Samadhi Group might be considered in light of the classical descriptions of the psychological

changes occurring in the first set of formal meditations: the stages of concentration. These classical stages have been described in detail elsewhere, along with comparisons to constructs from Western cognitive and perceptual psychology (Brown, 1977). Briefly, according to the tradition the formal meditation begins when the yogi trains his posture and learns to quiet his mind so that internal events, such as thoughts and imagery, and external events such as sights and sounds, no longer distract the meditator from an ongoing awareness of the internal milieu. The meditator begins by concentrating on some object, such as the breath. As his concentration becomes more steady, with fewer lapses in attention, the meditator slowly and systematically expands the range of his awareness to the moment-by-moment recognition of the changing events in the internal milieu. As he becomes more skilled, he is able to become aware of events very quickly, so quickly that he is aware not so much of the content but of the very *process* of moment-by-moment change itself. At times he may experience a relative cessation of specific visual, auditory and other perceptual patterns during the meditation while remaining uninterruptedly aware of the process of moment-by-moment change in the flux of stimuli prior to their coalescence into particular patterns of objects. These changes mark the onset of samadhi,

There are different stages or refinements of samadhi. *Beginner's Samadhi* is here defined according to two criteria: the object of awareness and the quality of that awareness. With respect to the object of awareness, a Beginner's Samadhi is characterized by relative freedom from distracting thoughts. If thoughts occur, they are recognized immediately after their occurrence and subside upon being noticed. As with thoughts, the yogi is struck by the immediate awareness of all forms of sense data. Though specific gross perceptual patterns may occur, e.g., a sight or sound, emphasis is on registration of the impact, not on the pattern. For example, in glancing at a specific object like one's hand or hearing a specific sound like a bell, the yogi is more aware that he has glanced at something or that a sound has occurred than he is of the content of the sight or sound. Nevertheless, in Beginner's Samadhi there is a strong tendency to become lost in a given thought or in the interpretation of a moment of sense data and to thereby lose awareness of the immediate sensory impact. Second, with respect to the quality of awareness, Beginner's Samadhi is characterized by a relative steadiness. The yogi's awareness is relatively continuous. During each sitting period, there are fewer periods of non-awareness, that is, of becoming distracted by or lost in the content.

*beginner's
samadhi
characterized*

*access
samadhi
characterized*

The next stage of samadhi in this system is *Access Samadhi*. With respect to the object of awareness, Access is characterized by a distinct lack of thinking and recognizable perceptual patterns. The yogi has "stopped the mind," at least in the sense of its so-called "higher operations": thinking and pattern recognition. The yogi keeps his awareness at the more subtle level of the *actual moment of occurrence or immediate impact* of a thought or of a sensory stimulus. Thus, instead of recognizing specific thoughts, images or perceptual patterns (as still occurs in Beginner's Samadhi), the yogi is more aware of their moment of impact only. Each discrete event is experienced more as a subtle movement, vibration, at the very onset of its occurrence. Although the yogi is aware of a myriad of discrete events, happening moment-by-moment, he no longer elaborates the cognitive or perceptual content of such events. The meditation period is experienced as a succession of discrete events: pulses, flashes, vibrations, or movements without specific pattern or form. With respect to awareness itself, Access is now characterized by completely stable and steady attention. Though mental and bodily events occur moment-by-moment in uninterrupted succession, attention remains fixed on each discrete moment. Awareness of one event is immediately followed by awareness of another without break for the duration of the sitting period, or for as long as this level of concentration remains. This succession of moments of awareness is called "momentary concentration" (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1965).

The essential distinction between these levels of Samadhi, however, is the grossness or subtleness of the object of awareness on the one hand, and the degree of uninterrupted awareness on the other. Steadiness is most important. Once stabilized, the more advanced yogi can hold his samadhi at different levels, from gross to subtle, for the purpose of insight at each level. He may, for example, purposely allow the gross content of the mind to return in full force, especially thoughts, feelings and meaningful perceptual patterns, in order to deepen insight into the nature of mental and bodily processes. However, this skilled yogi's steady awareness continues in the midst of the various content. Now, there is little problem with the distraction which was such a problem for the beginning meditator.

*Rorschach
data's
consistency
with
classical
description*

The Rorschach data from the samadhi group are consistent with these classical descriptions of samadhi. Recall that these Rorschachs were characterized by: a) a paucity of associative elaborations; b) a significant decrease in the production of internal images; c) a concentration on the pure perceptual features of the inkblot. Despite the experimenter's demand to

produce images and associations, the Ss are believed to have partially maintained their state of samadhi during the testing. This is hypothesized to account for the marked reduction in the availability of ideational and pattern recognition components of perception, concomitant with an increased awareness of the immediate impact of the inkblot. Thus, the yogis were primarily attentive to, and occasionally absorbed in, the pure perceptual features, e.g., outlines, colors, shades, and inanimate movement.

It is at least clear from the data that the yogis' awareness in this group is at the level of the immediate perceptual impact of the inkblot, not at the level of an elaboration or interpretation of that sensory impact. Because such pure determinant Rorschach responses are highly atypical of either normal or clinical Rorschachs, and are uncharacteristic of both the pre-test Rorschachs of the same Ss and the Rorschachs of the control group as well, these Rorschach responses may be seen as evidence validating the classical description and existence of the state of samadhi as a definite kind of perceptual event or level of perceptual experience.

The Insight Group

In the classical stages of meditation, Access Samadhi is merely a prerequisite for Insight Meditation. Just as a scientist may painstakingly construct a sensitive electronic instrument to measure some process, likewise the meditator has carefully prepared himself through the refinement and steadying of attention with its accompanying shifts in levels of perception in order to gain insight into the fundamental workings of the mind. The meditator is now ready to proceed to the Stages of Insight. Because the descriptions of these stages are technical, the reader is referred elsewhere (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1965; Nyanamoli, 1976). Suffice it to say that the foundation of all insight in Buddhism is understanding of the three "laksanas" or "marks" of existence: impermanence, suffering, and selflessness or nonsubstantiality. According to the tradition, a genuine experiential understanding of these is possible only after having achieved Access Samadhi,

*the
stages
of insight*

In each discrete moment of awareness the meditator concomitantly notices both the mental or bodily event and his awareness of that event. In a single meditation session he is likely to experience thousands of such discrete moments of awareness because his attention is now refined enough to

*impermanence
and the
suffering
of the
reactive
mind*

perceive increasingly discrete and rapidly changing mind-moments. When this level of moment-to-moment change is actually experienced, the meditator is led to a profound and radical understanding of the impermanence (*anicca*) of all events. He may also notice a tendency to react to the events, to prefer some or to reject others. This reactive tendency disrupts the clear perception of the moment-by-moment flow and in fact has the effect of blocking the flow itself in an attempt to resist it-to hold on, or push away. The continual experience of this with clear awareness eventually leads to an understanding of the suffering (*dukkha*) inherent in the normal reactive mind and its relationship to its experience in terms of liking and disliking, attraction and aversion. Furthermore, as discrete events/moments of awareness arise and cease in rapid succession, the yogi finds it increasingly difficult to locate anything or anyone that could be either the agent of these events or the recipient of their effects. He cannot find any enduring or substantial agent behind the events to which they could be attributed. The only observable reality at this level is the flow of events themselves. From this perspective of constant change, what was once a solid body, a durable perceptual object such as a tree, a fixed idea, or even a fixed point of observation, no longer appears substantial, durable or existent in its own right. By viewing this changing process, the yogi comes to understand the lack of intrinsic durable nature or the selflessness (*anatta*) of mind, body and external perceptions. These insights into the fundamental operations of the mind and its "marks" result in a profound reorganization of the meditator's experience called, in the *Visuddhimagga*, "Purification of View."

*knowledge
of arising
and
passing
away*

At first it is easier to obtain these insights by holding awareness at the level of Access, i.e., at the level of the subtle moment-by-moment pulsation of events. Eventually, the meditator is able to sustain the same insights even when allowing his awareness to return to the ordinary gross content of experience such as specific thoughts, bodily sensations, or perceptual patterns. With perfectly uninterrupted and steady awareness he observes this various content moment-by-moment and thereby deepens his insight into the 3 characteristics of all mental and bodily processes. This is called, again in the terminology of the *Visuddhimagga*, "Overcoming Doubt." Eventually, the very way that these events are perceived to arise undergoes a series of significant shifts, both in duration as well as in vividness. Regardless of the content, the events flash very quickly, like pulses of light, moment-by-moment. The beginning and ending of each event is clearly perceived. This is called "Knowl-

edge of the Arising and Passing Away" of events and is a key stage in Insight Meditation (Nyanamoli, 1976).

The moment-by-moment arising and passing away of bodily and mental events and their concomitant awareness eventually "break up." This is called the experience of "Dissolution:' Only the rapid and successive passing away of discrete events and their awareness are perceived. Their arising is no longer noticeable. Events and awareness of them seem to vanish and disappear together moment-by-moment. The net effect of this level of perception is either to experience reality as a state of continual and ongoing dissolution, moment-by-moment; or to experience forms and percepts as literally void-to have no perception, for instance, of a form like one's arm or leg or even one's entire body, or of an external object like a tree in front of one, at all,

The first reaction to this experience is often one of exhilaration or ecstasy. If so, it is usually short-lived. It is soon followed in subsequent stages of practice by states of fear and terror, misery and disgust as the implications of this discovery become apparent and sink in. These are affective reactions to the experience of reality as a condition of continual dissolution or radical impermanence, but they are not affective states in the normal sense. The yogi's awareness remains steady and balanced behind these affects. They are experienced fully and observed as mind-states, but without further reaction. They in turn become objects of bare attention and continue to be observed with uninterrupted mindfulness towards further insight. They are technically described as "knowledges" (*nanas*) rather than affects and are considered separate stages in the insight series.

*reality
experienced
as
continual
dissolution*

In subsequent meditation, events reoccur. The yogi is not only aware of each event which occurs within consciousness but is also aware of its context, i.e., he is aware that each event is located within the entire fabric of a cosmos comprised of infinite potential interactions. From this wider perspective, called "dependent origination," all potential events are again seen to break up rapidly. The yogi however has changed his attitude toward these dissolving events. He has come to realize that no event could possibly serve as an object of satisfaction or fulfillment. Precisely for this reason, he experiences a profound desire for deliverance from them, from which this stage derives its technical name, "Desire For Deliverance." He subsequently begins to re-examine these events with renewed effort and dedication: the stage of "Re-Observation For the

*'desire
for
deliverance'*

*effortless
and non-
reactive
awareness*

Purpose of Deliverance." With continued practice he next realizes what is called "Equanimity About Formations": a perfectly balanced, *effortless* and *non-reactive awareness* of each rapidly changing and vanishing event moment-by-moment, with a clear perception of their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonsubstantiality. Despite great individual variation at the level of gross content, there is no difference at the subtlest level of awareness or reaction to any events. Awareness proceeds spontaneously, without any referent to an individual self or personal history. A fundamental shift in time/space organization has occurred so that the yogi is now aware of the continuous occurrence of all the potential events of the mind/ cosmos.

*classical
insight
stages
and
Rorschach
results*

These classical descriptions of the stages of insight in Theravadin Buddhism can be compared to the Rorschachs produced by the Insight Group. Recall that the insight Rorschachs were characterized by: a) increased productivity; b) richness of associative elaboration with shifts in affect; c) realistic attunement of the image and the blot. These Rorschachs are strikingly different from those of the Samadhi group. In fact in some respects they are nearly opposite. In interpreting these data, we assume that a meditator skilled in insight is likely to allow a very great variety of content to pass through his mind during a single meditation session. With uninterrupted and steady awareness and without reaction he simply notices the great richness of the unfolding mind states. He notices the play of mental events from all the sensory and cognitive modes moment-by-moment, all dependently arising according to their respective causes and conditions. In a test situation like the Rorschach, one would predict this state of non-reactive moment-to-moment awareness to affect Rorschach performance. According to our understanding of the insight stages, the striking increase in productivity as well as its richness is not at all surprising. In response to a given inkblot one would expect a great richness of content arises moment-by-moment. The unfolding of such rich content would be seemingly endless with nothing experienced as especially durable or lasting. Nevertheless, just as the Buddhist texts claim that such events arise by causes and conditions, so also the meditators were sensitive to and aware of the relative stimulus-pull of each Rorschach card. In the same way, they were finely attuned to the reality features of the blots. Moreover, during the Insight Stages the yogi is less likely to be restricted by any form of reaction to these subtle events, by any selection or rejection of them. Thus it is not surprising to find a distinct *quality of non-defensiveness* in Rorschachs of such practitioners. There is

a distinct acceptance and matter-of-factness even of what would normally be conflictual sexual and aggressive material. Furthermore, the experienced absence of any solid or durable self behind the flow of mental and physical events is consistent with these yogis' flexibility in switching perspectives on the same response, a pattern atypical of normal and clinical Rorschachs. Nevertheless, despite the impersonal nature of the experience of insights such as insubstantiality, these Rorschachs, contrary to the stereotypical and erroneous notions of insubstantiality as a void state, are deeply human and fraught with the richness of the living process. One need only quickly scan the Rorschachs of these Ss to see that we are dealing with a very unusual quality and richness of life experience.

*acceptance
and
matter-
of-
factness*

Advanced Insight Group

At a specifiable point-when the mind is perfectly balanced and insight into the "three marks of existence" (impermanence, suffering, and selflessness or nonsubstantiality) is clear in each moment of perception and all forms of desire consequently cease-the most fundamental shift of all occurs. Awareness, previously tied to each momentary event, now passes beyond these events. During this moment all conceptual distinctions and ordinary understandings of the "mind" fall away. All objects of awareness and individual acts of awareness cease. There is only stillness and vastness, "the Supreme Silence" as one Asian teacher described it, without disturbance by any event whatsoever but with pure awareness. This profound shift is called the Cessation Experience (*nirodha*) and is the First or Basic Moment of Enlightenment. It is immediately followed by another shift, also a Cessation Experience, technically called "Entering the Path (*magga*)" or Stream (to Nirvana). When this Path-Moment (lit. *sotapatti* or "stream-entry") is experienced, certain erroneous conceptions about the nature of reality and certain emotional defilements are eradicated. This moment is followed by yet another shift, called Fruition (*phala*), in which the "fruit" of Path-entry is experienced; mind remains silent and at peace. This is followed in quick succession by a moment of Reviewing in which awareness of the content of the meditator's individual experience returns and he becomes reflexively aware of the extraordinary thing that has happened to him, As ordinary mental events pass through awareness, the meditator simply lets this relative content run its own course while his awareness is no longer bound to it. The state immediately following Path-Fruition-Reviewing is typically one of great lightness

*"the
Supreme
Silence"
and the
First Moment
of
Enlightenment*

and joy which may last several days. The important fact, however, is that enduring trait changes are said to occur upon enlightenment.

*post-
enlightenment
options*

Several options are available to the meditator at this point. He may simply return to his daily affairs. If he does, he may or may not continue formal practice. Whether he does or not, however, the gains of this experience of First Path are thought to be permanent. If the meditator continues practice, either in the context of his daily life or in further intensive retreat settings, two courses are open to him. He may remain on the level attained at First Path and practice to develop what is technically termed the "Maturity of Fruition." This refers to the ability to enter into the state of awareness he experienced at the initial moments of both Path and Fruition. Both these moments are moments of Cessation in which all ordinary perceptual, cognitive, affective and motivational activity ceases. They each last only a brief moment before ordinary consciousness and mental activity resumes. Phenomenologically they are both experienced as a state of supreme silence. The difference between them lies in the power of the Path-moment preceding Fruition. It is at that moment that the fundamental and irreversible shift or change in the meditator takes place. This is expressed as a "change-of-lineage" (*gotrabhu*) and is traditionally defined in terms of the specific "fettors" (*samyojanas*) or perceptual-cognitive and affective modalities that are permanently eliminated at that stage of enlightenment (Nyanamoli, 1976). The experience of Path and the changes associated with it are accordingly said to occur only once at each stage of enlightenment, four times in all. The silent and peaceful mental state of Fruition, on the other hand, can be re-experienced, in principle, indefinitely. This is termed "entering the Fruition state." With practice, the meditator can learn to re-experience the Fruition state at will for extended periods of time.

*returning
to
daily
affairs*

*continuing
practice*

The other course open to the individual who wants to continue meditation is to practice for a subsequent Path experience, which defines the advanced enlightenment experiences. There are three further Paths or stages of enlightenment in this tradition. Each is attained in the same way. If the yogi chooses to work for Second Path, for instance, he must begin by formally and deliberately renouncing the Fruition-state of the First Path. This is a consequential decision. According to tradition and confirmed by self-reports in the South Asian study, once having made this renunciation he will never experience the Fruition of First Path again, whether or not he is successful in attaining Second Path. Attainment of a prior Path does not

guarantee attainment of the succeeding Path. After making this renunciation, he returns to the stage of Arising and Passing Away. He must then pass through all the subsequent stages of insight a second time until he once more experiences a Path-moment at their conclusion. Again stage-specific changes will occur; additional and different emotional defilements permanently disappear from his psychic organization. Again this Path-moment will be followed by moments of Fruition and Reviewing and again he may discontinue practice or, choosing to continue, either cultivate Fruition or practice for the Third and finally the Fourth Path which is said to produce a final state of perfect wisdom and compassion and freedom from any kind of suffering. Each stage of enlightenment is more difficult to attain than the previous one. The yogi passes through the same stages of practice prior to the experience of Path each time; but each time the experience is more intense, the suffering greater, as more deeply rooted fetters are extinguished and insight into the nature of reality grows. Though possible in principle, as all the advanced practitioners and masters in this study maintain, our research in the Buddhist cultures of Asia, where a higher incidence of such attainments is still to be expected, disclosed that few meditators attain all four Paths.

The Rorschachs of the Advanced Insight Group can be interpreted by considering the consequences of enlightenment specified by the tradition. Enlightenment is said to be followed by a return to ordinary mental experience, though one's perspective is radically altered. One might expect such Rorschachs to reflect the idiosyncrasies of character and mental content for each of the respective practitioners. One would also expect such Rorschachs to retain some of the features of enlightenment specified by tradition. These features are: a) changes in the conception of reality, following the Cessation experience; b) eradication of certain defilements upon Path experience. The four Rorschachs, though a small sample, are consistent with the classical accounts of the trait changes said to follow the enlightenment experience.

Recall that these enlightenment Rorschachs did not evidence a high degree of the unusual qualitative features of the samadhi and insight Rorschachs. They are not especially distinct from the Rorschachs of the pre-test population of the Three-Month Study. Their lack of immediate distinctiveness poses some interesting issues for interpretation. One might conclude either that the outcomes of long-term meditation are psychologically insignificant or a function of unstable state changes. Or, one might conclude that the Rorschach is unable to measure those

*Rorschachs
of the
advanced
insight
group*

*issues
for
interpretation*

psychological outcomes, whatever they may be. From another standpoint, the very mundaneness of these Rorschachs could be interpreted as a highly significant finding. Consistent with the classical descriptions of enlightenment, especially the Review following enlightenment, the practitioner is said to retain his ordinary mind. Though his perspective is radically different, nevertheless, the content of his experience is just as it was prior to meditation, though he may no longer react to it with the usual emotional attitudes of attraction, aversion or indifference. There is a famous Zen saying which speaks directly to this point:

Before I began meditating, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers. After I began meditating, mountains were no longer mountains and rivers were no longer rivers. Once I finished meditating, mountains were once again mountains, and rivers were once again rivers.

In the language of the present tests from the advanced practitioners, "Rorschachs are once again Rorschachs." The advanced practitioner lives out his or her idiosyncratic life history, though in the context of a relativized perception of self and object world.

*perceiving
a relative
reality*

Though, for the most part, these are seemingly mundane Rorschachs, each contains evidence that the enlightened practitioner perceives reality differently. An enlightened person is said to manifest awareness on different levels. On the mundane level, such a person continues to perceive solid and enduring forms in the external world as well as habitual mind-states such as emotions and attitudes. To the extent that perception has been relativized by enlightenment, on an absolute level these external forms and mental states are no longer viewed as solid and durable. They exist only in a relative sense.

These alleged changes may be reflected in the Rorschachs. For enlightened subjects, the inkblots do indeed "look like" specific images such as butterflies, bats, etc.; and yet these images, as well as mind-states like pain and pleasure, are perceived as merely manifestations of energy/space. Such Ss perceive content, but also energy processes, in the inkblots. One possible interpretation is that the enlightened practitioner has come to understand something fundamental about the process by which this perceived world comes into existence in our ordinary awareness.

While retaining an ability to perceive external forms and ordinary mental experience on both these levels-as rela-

tively real but ultimately mere configurations of changing energy/space-vthe enlightened practitioner becomes free of the constraints of non-veridical perception or attachment to external forms or internal mind-states. One alleged outcome is that the enlightened person sees that man's place in the universe is not self-contained but is located within a fabric of many other modes of existence and potential interactions, all of which are interrelated, and mutually conditioned. Life becomes multi-dimensional and multi-determined in its dynamism and manifestation. This mode of perception leads to a deeper acceptance of human life and death, now set within the context of an unfolding universe in which there is both form and emptiness. Here is an example of a Rorschach response which illustrates this *non-attached, contextualist* mode of perception:

*non-attached
contextualist
mode of
perception*

It looks like a combination caterpillar-butterfly. It seems to be in motion. It gives me the feeling of this creature, this being, walking through the meadow or through a field of grass. It has the feeling of being at home with what it's doing ... simple and right, at one with what it's doing. It's just its movement (I, W).

The Rorschachs also contain evidence that the enlightened practitioner may experience conflict differently. One very important discovery from these Rorschachs is that the enlightened practitioners are *not* without conflict, in a clinical sense. They show evidence for the experience of drive states and conflictual themes such as fears, dependency struggles and so forth. They are, however, less defensive in their awareness of and presentation of such conflicts. Enlightenment does not mean a person becomes conflict-free.

*enlightened
practitioner
not
without
conflict*

According to the tradition, personal conflicts are actually likely to intensify between the second and third experience of enlightenment. This contradicts one major misconception in both Western and Eastern cultures. It is often mistakenly assumed by Western students of meditation that enlightenment solves all of one's problems. Asian teachers know this is not so. But they in turn point almost exclusively to the remaining "fetters" or "defilements" that will be eliminated only with the attainment of further degrees of enlightenment.

According to the tradition, only certain defilements are removed upon the experience of First Path. What changes is not so much the amount or nature of conflict but the awareness of it. During enlightenment, the locus of awareness, in a manner of speaking, transcends conflict. Awareness "goes to the other shore" so that it is no longer influenced by any mental content. After enlightenment, the content, including conflictual issues,

returns. In this sense, enlightenment provides sufficient distance, or better, a vastly different perspective, while one continues to play out the repetitive dynamic themes of life history. There is greater awareness of and openness to conflict but paradoxically less reaction at the same time in an impulsive, identificatory and therefore painful way. Awareness is less caught up in the relative play of conflictual content or indeed any kind of content at this stage. For example, problems concerning sexual intimacy are more likely to be seen as "states of mind." The individual may observe these clearly for what they are and thereby have more freedom in his/her possible reactions to such states. He/she may note the intense desire until it passes, like every other transient mental state; or he/she may act on it, but with full awareness.

*immediate
awareness
of
'unwholesome'
mental
states*

One reported effect of first enlightenment is said to be immediate awareness of any "unwholesome" mental state. Mindfulness is said to automatically intervene between impulse or thought and action in such cases. This mechanism of delay, combined with clear and impartial observation, allows a new freedom from drive and a new freedom for well-considered and appropriate action. In this sense, suffering diminishes while conflictual content nevertheless recurs as long as one is alive and has not yet attained the subsequent enlightenments.

*'seeingthrough'
vs.
'letting go'*

If these traditional accounts of the effects of enlightenment are considered in dynamic terms, one might say that such enlightened individuals exhibit a loosening of defense with a decreased susceptibility to the usual effects of unbound drive energy or the lifting of repression because they no longer have the power to compel reaction, i.e., to produce an affective or drive state which must be acted upon or defended against. The model of defense seems, then, not well suited to explain these processes. Likewise, the notion of insight. Enlightened practitioners do not necessarily have greater psychological insight into the specific nature of conflicts. Many may tolerate and naturally let conflictual mind states pass. The degree to which enlightened persons achieve psychological insight varies according to the degree of psychological sophistication of the individual (cf. also Carrington & Ephron, 1975). There is apparently less need to "see through" on the level of content what can be "let go of" on the level of process.

Our finding for this group then is complex. On the one hand, enlightenment at this level at least does not necessarily eliminate intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict, though the possibility of this occurring at higher levels of enlightenment is not foreclosed. On the other hand, enlightenment does enable

the individual to suffer less from its effects. This suggests a rethinking of current models of the relative position of meditation and normal adult development, or meditation and psychotherapy insofar as therapy reinstates the normal developmental process (Blanck & Blanck, 1974). First, meditation is both different from normal development and/or psychotherapy, and something more. While meditation apparently parallels some of the processes and accomplishes some of the goals of conventional therapies in alleviating intrapsychic conflict and facilitating mature object relations, it aims at a perceptual shift and a goal-state which is not aimed at or even envisaged in most psychotherapeutic models of mental health and development. However, meditation and psychotherapy cannot be positioned on a continuum in any mutually exclusive way as though both simply pointed to a different range of human development (Rama *et al.*, 1976). Not only do post-enlightenment stages of meditation apparently affect the manifestation and management of neurotic and even borderline conditions, but this type of conflict continues to be experienced after enlightenment. This suggests either that psychological maturity and the path to enlightenment are perhaps two complementary but not entirely unrelated lines of growth; or that indeed they do represent different 'levels' or ranges of health/growth along a continuum, but with much more complex relationships between them than have previously been imagined. It may be, for instance, that still higher stages of enlightenment may indirectly affect the intrapsychic structural foundations of neurotic or borderline level conflict and so resolve it, even though this is not their main intent. This will be an issue for the next group of protocols. It is also one of the most important issues for future empirical research.

*rethinking
current
models*

*future
empirical
research*

The Masters Group

Masters at the third stage of enlightenment are alleged to no longer be subject to sexual or aggressive impulses and painful affects. The fully enlightened master (fourth path) is alleged to have perfected the mind and to be free of any kind of conflict or suffering. These two types of "ariyas" or "worthy ones" constitute a unique group according to past tradition and current practice. The single Rorschach of the master representing this group' is certainly unusual, The interpretive question

*the
master's
Rorschach*

"Though the author was not allowed to ask the question of attainment directly, data from the case history interview, corroborated by the Rorschach and the additional TAT protocols which were administered in the South Asian study, permits this classification.

*interpretive
questions*

however is whether this protocol can be distinguished from the dogmatic opinions of a religious fundamentalist or the fixed delusions of the paranoid schizophrenic where one might also expect attempts to relate the various test cards into a single theme. There are differences. The decision to use the testing situation as an occasion to teach stands in direct contrast to the guardedness and constrictedness of a paranoid record. The personalized nature of paranoid delusion contrasts with the systematic presentation of a consensual body of teaching established by a cultural tradition. These are culture-dominated, not drive-dominated, percepts. The associations are consistent and integrated across all ten cards rather than being loosely related from card to card. We know of no paranoid record that compares with its level of consistency and integration. It is a considerable feat to integrate all ten cards into a single body of teaching over and against the varied stimulus-pull of ten very different cards, and to do so without significant departure in reality testing.

*the
integrative
style*

One additional piece of evidence that might speak to the validity of the integrative style is its documentation in other field work. Though to our knowledge there are no other Rorschachs reported for meditation masters, Rorschachs have been reported for advanced teachers from other spiritual traditions. For example, Boyer *et al.* (1964) administered the Rorschach to Apache shamans. He also collected indigenous ratings on the authenticity of the shamans by having the Indians themselves rate whether they felt a given shaman was real or fake. The Rorschachs of the pseudoshamans looked like pathological records. The records of the shamans rated authentic were atypical. In a separate paper, Klopfer & Boyer (1961) published the protocol of a "real" shaman. It is surprisingly similar to our master's Rorschach. There also the shaman used the ten cards as an occasion to teach the examiner about his lived world-view-in that case, about his ecstatic flights through the universe. There also the shaman relied heavily upon shading and amorphously used form. Boyer was unclear as to the significance of the shading and saw it as pathological. We are not so sure, especially in light of the high use of shading by our Ss during samadhi. Shading in very high incidence for practitioners of altered states may be a valid indicator of the awareness of subtle internal and external nuances in stimuli that is a result of disciplined exploration of these states. The integrative style is perhaps an additional feature of those individuals who have carried their skill to its completion. One possible implication of such cross-cultural similarities is that this style may be suggestive of a "master's

Rorschach" regardless of the spiritual tradition. The master is not at all interested in expressing the individual content of his/her mind to an examiner. It appears that, out of compassion, the master is only interested in pointing a way for others to "see" reality more clearly in such a way that it alleviates their suffering. The test situation becomes a teaching situation whereby the examiner becomes a witness to a guided exploration of the transpersonal level of the mind/universe.

*turning
the test
situation
into a
teaching
situation*

A second possible inference from the master's protocol is that intrapsychic structure has undergone a radical enduring reorganization. The protocol shows no evidence of sexual or aggressive drive conflicts, or indeed any evidence of instinctually based drive at all. Remarkable though it may seem, there may be no endopsychic structure in the sense of permanently opposed drives and controls. We assume that "a perfectly mature person" would be "a whole unified person whose internal psychic differentiation and organization would simply represent his diversified interests and abilities, within an overall good ego development and good object-relationships" (Guntrip, 1969).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to illustrate an approach to the empirical validation of the classical scriptural accounts and current reports of meditation attainments using a single instrument, the Rorschach. The Rorschachs in the respective criterion groups were so obviously different as to merit this preliminary report, even without completion of the quantitative data analysis. These Rorschachs illustrate that the classical subjective reports of meditation stages are more than religious belief systems; they are valid accounts of the perceptual changes that occur with intensive meditation toward the goal of understanding perception and alleviating suffering.

As it happens, the Rorschach, in addition to being a personality test, is an excellent measure of perception for such an investigation. Ducey (1975) has argued that the Rorschach is a measure of "self-created reality." The task requires a subject to attribute meaning to a set of ambiguous stimuli. In so doing, the experimenter learns something of how the subject constructs an inner representation of the world. This task is congruent with the meditator's own practice, namely, to analyze the process by which his mind works in creating the internal

*value
of the
Rorschach
for
such
investigations*

and external world. Much to our surprise, the unusual performance on these Rorschachs for most subjects seemed to give a clear indication of the most important changes in mental functioning that occur during the major stages of the meditative path.

*caution
in
interpretation*

These findings must be interpreted with some caution due to the influence of expectation effects. An attempt was made to control for such effects in the data of the Three-Month study alone. There a staff control group was used, based on the assumption that both meditators and staff expect their meditation to work. Differences between the meditators and staff controls could not be attributed to expectation alone, but more likely to differences in the amount of daily practice. Though such differences were confirmed, they were limited to the Three-Month study; this includes all the Ss in the Beginners' group, the Samadhi group, and part of the subjects in the Insight group. It does not include Ss in the more interesting Advanced Insight group and Masters' group. Thus, because of the limits of data collection it is virtually impossible to rule out the operation of expectation effects in these latter enlightened individuals.

*realistic
expectations
for
meditation
progress*

To the extent that these findings are valid, the prospect of quick advance along the path of meditation is not realistic. Note that after three months of continuous intensive daily practice, about half the Ss have shown very little change, at least as defined in terms of formal meditation. The other half achieved some proficiency in concentration. Only three perfected access concentration and began to have insights similar to those described in the classical accounts of the insight series of meditations. Only one of these, in turn, advanced in the insight series to the stage of Equanimity, a stage short of enlightenment. This slow rate of progress, at least for Western students, is humbling, but it is also consistent with general patterns of growth. It should also inspire confidence. Such unusual and far-reaching transformations of perceptual organization and character structure could not possibly be the work of three months or a year, nor could they be attained by short-cuts without an adequate foundation being laid first. Patience, forbearance and a long-enduring mind, or what one master has called "constancy" (Suzuki Roshi, 1970), is listed among the traditional "paramis" or perfections required of practitioners. On the other hand, both the self-reports as well as the test data from both the South Asian and the American study seem to validate the hypothesis that meditation is something very much more than stress-reduction and psycho-

therapy, and that its apparent goal-states are commensurate with the effort and perseverance they undoubtedly require.

Meditation, then, is not exactly a form of therapy but a soteriology, i.e., a means of liberation. It is said to be an extensive path of development that leads to a particular end: total liberation from the experience of ordinary human suffering and genuine wisdom that comes from true perception of the nature of mind and its construction of reality. Western therapy utilizes ideational and affective processes as its vehicle of treatment toward the end of behavioral and affective change. This is *not* so of formal meditation. As seen in the Rorschachs, ideational and affective processes do not even occur to any significant extent in the initial development of samadhi, though they re-occur much later as objects of, not vehicles for, insight. Though meditation concerns itself with a thorough analysis of all mental operations-ideational, affective and perceptual -yet meditation is primarily an analysis of perception of the world and how ignorance of perceptual processes contributes to human suffering. Trait transformations are indeed very difficult to achieve. Meditation may provide enduring and radical trait benefits only to a very few who attempt to practice. Yet, for those of us who have had occasion to come in contact with and study the few masters, like the one whose Rorschach is given here, they are indeed unusual and deeply compassionate individuals who stand as rare living examples of an ideal: civilization beyond discontent.

*differences
between
meditation
and
therapy*

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