

Walking Meditations

The potential role and challenges of walking meditation for Buddhist
spiritual care

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Summary

Buddhist spiritual care (BSC) is being practiced in numerous domains and usually takes place in the form of sitting and talking, rituals, and seated meditation. Little research has been done on the effects, potential and challenges of walking meditation and mindful walking. Even though walking meditation is very present in many Buddhist traditions, literature into the role of walking meditation in BSC is scarce. The aim of this thesis is to understand the role of walking meditation for BSC. An analysis of literature on walking meditation in the Early Buddhist sources and selected contemporary practices has been conducted. The different applications of walking meditation have been assessed and insights into the opportunities and challenges of applying this practice in BSC have been provided.

Secondary research methods have been applied in this research. First, findings and theories from quality academic literature have been incorporated. Analysis of existing literature about walking meditation in different Buddhist traditions have been conducted. Furthermore, the role and potentiality of walking meditation for BSC, its opportunities and challenges and its applicability have been carried out by employing a systematic literature review methodology.

The results show that walking meditation could contribute to the cultivation of factors that according to the literature have the potential to eradicate craving, aversion, and delusion, and liberate one from suffering. Further, walking meditation includes significant aspects of contemplative care, which comprises contemplation with Buddhist teachings, the elements, nature, and the interconnectedness of life. At the same time, the analysis showed relevant health benefits as well as psychological effects such as ‘grounding’ and ‘decentering’ from walking meditation. Moreover, the analysis implies that when one is able to be ‘heartful’ and concentrated while walking, the factors of concentration, mindfulness, lovingkindness and compassion will not be lost in any other posture, and one can apply those qualities in all of life’s activities. Moreover, the interactional sphere generated during a mindful walk or a guidance of a walking meditation is an open space of trust and compassion. Lastly, literature on nature and outdoor therapies and walks showed to be a supportive environment to potentially consider for walking meditation in BSC.

All of the above findings call for further research into the relationship between walking meditation and BSC, and interfaith spiritual care. Equally significant for future research is the exploration of the effects of walking meditation on the psychological and spiritual processes in different domains such as prisons, hospitals, psychiatric centres, elderly homes, and the army. At the same time the effect of the outdoor/natural settings need further exploration. The major limitation in this thesis lies in the lack of focus on a specific group of people and/or institutions where walking meditation could be applied. This has to be considered in further research.

Key words

Buddhist Spiritual Care; Walking Meditation; Mindfulness; Contemplative Care.

Statement

STATEMENT 1

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original work. It is the result of my own research, and was written entirely by me, except where otherwise stated. Any information and ideas from other sources are explicitly and fully acknowledged in the text or the notes. A bibliography is appended.

Tilburg 2-7-2021



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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if acceptable, to be made publicly available as follows: for photocopying; for inter-library loans; and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations and to be published by VU University Amsterdam.

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Abbreviations

BSC: Buddhist Spiritual Care

BSCG(s): Buddhist Spiritual Caregiver(s)

CBT: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CP: Contemplative Practices

MBSR: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

MBCT: Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Introduction

Walking the path of this life can mean a billion things. Each and every being has its own way of walking through life. Walking the Buddhist path is one of them with again various pathways and practices. There is not one specific Buddhism but rather many 'Buddhisms'. Buddhist spiritual care (BSC) in the West is mainly taking place in the form of sitting and talking, and with various forms of meditations and rituals (Giles & Miller 2012). Particularly the meditation practices in hospitals, elderly homes, psychiatric centres, prisons, the army, and many more, take place in the form of sitting and talking, rituals, and seated meditation. In order to understand BSC, chapter 1 of this thesis will explore BSC and the role of the Buddhist spiritual caregiver (BSCG).

Moreover, Buddhism and mindfulness are easily discussed and practiced with little reference to walking meditation. Numerous books and articles about Buddhism and mindfulness emphasize their spiritual, psychological, therapeutic, and philosophical elements without any reference to the potential role and impact of walking meditation on the lives of the practitioners. In order to better understand walking meditation and mindful walking, this thesis will explore the meaning of Buddhist meditation and mindfulness in chapter 2.

Furthermore, this thesis will explore the role of walking meditation in BSC. Chapter 3 of this thesis will investigate the meaning of walking meditation in Early Buddhist sources and in several selected contemporary practices. Beside the Early Buddhist sources, six other contemporary practices have been chosen to explore and understand their meaning of walking meditation. They have been selected based on the presence of walking in their tradition and practices. For over more than two and a half millennia, different walking meditation forms and methods have evolved from Early Buddhist traditions. Various contemporary traditions and practices have been inspired by the Early Buddhist sources. Walking meditation can have different meanings due to the various views and practices. Walking meditation seems to have much potential to contribute in many ways to the spiritual, psychological and physical well-being of people. At the same time it could contribute to insight and wisdom.

With these insights and an overview of the different walking meditation practices and meanings, chapter 4 will attempt to list the opportunities and challenges of applying walking meditation in BSC. I will conclude this thesis with the potential of walking meditation and its contributions to BSC.

In the concluding chapter, I will highlight the main contributions of walking meditation for BSC while also sharing the limitations of this thesis and suggesting directions for future research.

Research Question

What could be the role of walking meditation for Buddhist spiritual care?

Sub-questions

- a. What is the meaning of walking meditation in Early Buddhist sources and selected contemporary practices?
- b. What are the opportunities and challenges of applying walking meditation in Buddhist spiritual care?
- c. What could walking meditation add to Buddhist spiritual care?

Relevance

There is a growing interest and longing for walking, and especially walking, mindfulness, and walking in nature, among urban residents while also medical specialists see the power walking and nature (Cooley et al. 2020). Clients suffering from any stress and difficulty rarely get a chance to practice walking meditation. However, the role of mindfulness and walking have not been studied as extensively as mindfulness-based interventions and programs have been. Both science and society can benefit from insights into the potential role of walking meditation for BSC. This research has the potential to move beyond the borders of BSC and is able to be integrated in interfaith spiritual care, and medical and therapeutic settings.

Furthermore, Buddhist practitioners, mindfulness practitioners, and any care provider could potentially benefit from this research by gaining insights into the potential of walking meditation. I will explore the link between Buddhism, BSC, and walking meditation, and provide insight into the challenges and opportunities that come along with this practice. In a world that is suffering from lifestyle-related illnesses and diseases (Vries and Weijer 2020), a physical practice like walking meditation might have more potential than a seated practice.

Positionality

“A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (Malterud 2001, 483-484).

The positions and views from which I am writing are coloured. It is unique yet it is a chain of experiences and knowledge that has reached me over the past thirty-two years of my life. I have seen many spiritual traditions practicing, writing and reflecting about meditation, particularly walking meditation. I have been practicing Buddhist meditation, both seated, in motion and walking, both indoors and outdoors in nature, for the past twelve years. The first Buddhist teachings I encountered were from the internationally known Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh. His ‘Order of Interbeing’ from the Vietnamese Chan tradition (known as *Thiền*) touched me with its emphasis on developing mindfulness in many different ways, including walking meditation. Further, its focus on ‘interconnectedness’ and how our actions impact this world resonates with my experience of life. At the same time, I explored different Theravāda Buddhist traditions. I have stayed in Buddhist monasteries and lay-centres in both the Burmese, Thai Forest, and Sri Lankan Theravāda tradition. The past five years I have been practicing with teachers like Ajahn Amaro, Christopher Titmuss, Paul van Hooydonck, and Upul Nishantha Gamage. The latter three teachers are all connected to lay Buddhist centres in both Europe and Upul in Sri Lanka. I do write from a point of interest; however, in this thesis I will emphasize my positionality in order to understand the context from which I will be writing. Neutrality from a hermeneutical point of view is impossible. I could not start from an empty book; as a human being I am inevitably influenced by the circumstances and conditions I grew up in and am situated in right now. The culture, traditions, birthplace, time, family; they all have shaped me. Ricoeur claims that there is no such thing as neutrality (Moyaert 2014, 27). His viewpoint is that context matters. According to him, we are always rooted in a certain context, place, culture and time and this creates our reality as human beings.

I am trained as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) trainer and assist a Mindfulness Teacher Training Course with more emphasis on the Dharma. In August I will start working as a spiritual caregiver in a hospital. Meditation will be one of the interventions I will undertake. Depending on the setting, I use different definitions of mindfulness.

I grew up as a Roman-Catholic yet with a lot of freedom to discover other ways of living. I felt the mystery of this religion, especially the mystic and devotion of a Benedictine monk friend of my parents, and a cousin of my mother working as a missionary in Brazil. They inspired me, however, I could not resonate with the texts, practices, and institutions. It was during that search when Buddhism entered. I consider myself rather interested in the Early Buddhist tradition and learn a lot from all other contemporary Buddhist traditions.

The particular angle I am writing from is male, white, and hetero who grew up in a multicultural neighbourhood in Tilburg, the Netherlands. I had the privilege to study, work, and travel around the world as a student, backpacker, and a spiritual seeker. Thanks to a variety of training and courses, but especially thanks to the diversity of places and people in the world from whom I have been privileged to learn from and with whom I have been privileged to work with, I am able to write this thesis and work in spiritual care.

My own position in this human-earth community is that each single action has an impact on this planet. I love to be surrounded by green, I have my own garden, and do my best to limit my environmental footprint on this earth. At the same time however, my consumption has an impact to keep certain modern slavery practices alive and therefore I try to inform myself and consume as consciously as I can.

The subjectivity that I am writing from, and from where the literature that I will work with is based upon, is a quality that makes human beings most interesting. The strength of qualitative research that I will use in this thesis is that it engages with people's subjectivity. Reducing subjectivity would be contrary to its purpose. Good qualitative research embraces subjectivities and seeks to understand why they occur. Most importantly in this research is the possible spiritual care intervention of walking in nature and mindfulness that deserves to be explored.

Methodology

Research Design

This thesis will be descriptive and evaluative. First of all, in order to understand walking meditation as a potential intervention for Buddhist spiritual care, the notions of BSC, Buddhist meditation, walking, mindful walking and walking meditation should be explored.

The research aims at understanding the role of walking meditation for BSC. Secondly, this research aims at understanding the meaning of walking meditation and its implications for Buddhist spiritual care. Consequently, another objective is to study current discourses, practices and complexities around the different Buddhist traditions and practices wherein walking meditation is being practiced and applied or could be applied. Eventually, in essence the research seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities of applying the form of walking meditation in Buddhist spiritual care settings.

This research will use a flexible design: first of all, a cross-sectional method will be used to study the existing trends in walking meditation and mindful walking in the Global North. The core features of a cross-sectional design are: “no time dimension; reliance on existing differences rather than change following intervention; and group based on existing differences rather than random allocation” (De Vaus 2001, 170). In addition, walking meditation and its challenges and opportunities in therapeutic and spiritual care settings will be studied. Therefore, qualitative research methods will be applied. This qualitative research will provide me with an in-depth understanding of various forms of walking meditation and the application of it within different healthcare settings. At the same time, the relevant literature will support this research through the analysis of the different Buddhist traditions, therapists and their understanding of walking meditation.

Research Methods

Secondary research methods will be applied in this research. First, findings and theories from quality academic literature will be incorporated. Analysis of existing literature about walking meditation in different Buddhist traditions will be conducted. Further the role and potentiality of walking meditation for BSC, its opportunities and challenges and its applicability will be carried out by employing a systematic literature review methodology. The method is centred on creating a “replicable, scientific and transparent process which aims to minimize bias through exhaustive literature search of published and unpublished studies” (Tranfield et al. 2003, 209). It will give the research a structured overview and reveal the different ways of practicing walking meditation. Additionally this method can help to identify mindfulness practices related to meditation in motion, or any other potential valuable insights into the potential extent of walking meditation and its applicability in Buddhist spiritual care.

“... the use of ideas in the literature to justify the particular approach to the topic, the selection of methods, and demonstration that this research contributes something new” (Hart 1999, 1)

Nonetheless, the searching procedure will be broad, and evidence will be searched for in diverse fields and from diverse sources. I will combine and include literature from fields of research such as humanities and medical and health sciences. The combination of qualitative and quantitative findings from schools of psychology, philosophy, Buddhism, spiritual care, counselling, well-being, and ecotherapy will provide a broad range of insights into this topic.

This wide range of insights will give this thesis the different colours that hopefully lead to a fruitful insight and understanding of mindful walking in nature and spiritual care.

Literature Selection

The objective is to describe and evaluate the different views and effects through an analysis of articles and books of relevant authors writing about Buddhist meditation, mindfulness, walking meditation and mindful walking. The selection requirements will be relatively broad as walking meditation is not yet a common practice in spiritual care. Therefore, also therapeutic and medical applications of walking meditation will be considered to include. In this way a comprehensive understanding and insights can be gained. This selection will help to explore different insights and views about the challenges and opportunities and the role of walking meditation for BSC. In addition, these different perspectives and insights may complement each other on spiritual care concerns that are not originally covered. A Buddhist magazine website, namely *Tricycle* and *Lion's Roar*, will support this research to explore published articles about Buddhist teachings, practices, and critique on walking meditation.

Data Collection

One type of data will be collected during the research, namely secondary data. The secondary data will be collected through literature review. Different data sources will be used to compose the literature review, amongst those mainly academic articles, journals and books. The existing academic literature on Buddhist spiritual care (Bein 2008; Bernhard 2010; Fisher 2013; Giles & Miller 2012; Halifax 2009; Maex 2011; Michon & Fisher 2013; Sanford 2017), walking meditation (Bodhi 2019; Chah 2018; Dhammajiva 2016; Hanh 2001; 2015; Nyanadhammo 2003; Riggs 2008; Sīlānanda 1996; Tan 2015; Thānissaro 1997), spirituality of walking (Ives 2018; Solnit 2001), Buddhism and nature (Snyder 1990), mindfulness (Bizzini 2013; Hickey 2020; Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015) and Buddhism and meditation (Conze 2003; Harvey 2013) will provide me with a foundation in the fields of BSC, Buddhist meditation and mindfulness, and walking meditation. Furthermore, these accumulated studies will provide me an extensive overview of challenges and opportunities involved in the application of walking meditation. The sources will be discovered unbiasedly by the researcher by using online search engines and browsing the exclusive (online) library of the Vrije Universiteit.

Limitations

The limits of the wide variety of selected articles related to walking meditation and BSC is the fact that it is secondary and not primary data. The lack of primary data in this research will miss out comprehensive and in-depth information about walking meditation in practice, in the field of therapeutic and spiritual care settings. The second limit is the timeframe of the research. A five month research will be conducted from which four months will be in combination with an internship and three courses. Therefore, interviews are not feasible. Consequently, the findings are not able to be generalizable with limited data.

This thesis does not specifically focus on a certain institution or category of clients due to the lack of research on meditation in spiritual care, and especially due to the lack of research on walking meditation in the spiritual care setting. However, most of the people that come in

contact with spiritual care do suffer from some form of stress and difficulty as a result of their disrupted or unexpected situation and/or disease.

Data Processing

The sources of the literature review will be gathered and processed with a systematic selection based on their relevance and quality. This quality and relevance ranking will be processed in an Excel sheet in order to be able to efficiently refer to and review the content. In order to easily process the secondary data, the articles and websites will be summarised. The data retrieved from websites and the literature review as a basis, an Excel file for evaluation and analysis will be created.

Ethical issues

This research will be likely to encounter a number of ethical issues. First of all, the focus on walking meditation practices excludes people that are not capable of walking. However, many other meditation practices are available for those not capable of walking.

1: Buddhist Spiritual Care

For this thesis I choose the term Buddhist spiritual care (BSC) instead of Buddhist chaplaincy, which is mostly used in the US and the UK. In the Netherlands, chaplaincy (Dutch *kapelaan*) is a spiritual caregiver attached to a chapel. I prefer to avoid associations and confusions, and therefore choose for BSC and the Buddhist Spiritual Caregiver (BSCG). At the same time I will make use of the word ‘client’ to describe the person(s) whom is worked with in BSC. This is for the reader’s convenience and simplicity.

Additionally, the definitions for the profession of an interfaith spiritual caregiver are subject to an ongoing debate in the Netherlands. As a result, the spiritual care professional is sometimes referred to as ethicist. I will not dive into that discussion, but recent in-depth articles can be found in NVBe (2021). However, I do have to note that ethics are at the core of the spiritual care profession, and of the Buddhist teachings. Ethics in Buddhism however is very different from the understanding and definitions in the West. Ethics in Buddhism is defined in relation to suffering: “wholesome is what leads to wellbeing, unwholesome is what leads to suffering” (Maex 2011, 169). Buddhist ethics can be understood and applied in many ways, however, in the context of BSC and ethics, a significant aspect to consider is the ‘interconnectedness’ of all things (Lu 2015). This teaching teaches how each step and each action in life have an impact, and thus to take these steps and work with mindfulness, and the four *Brahmavihārās*: loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. From my view a conscious choice from the heart for the wellbeing of all life on earth. Ethics and Buddhism are not two separate things.

Literature

In the book ‘The Arts of Contemplative Care,’ Giles and Miller (2012) state that BSC is a new development in the West. This book shows a wide variety of concepts and models for BSC. An important difference they highlight is between Buddhist chaplains and Buddhist ministers, or dharma teachers. Buddhist ministers are rather responsible for the religious needs of a specific Buddhist community, while the BSCG offer “spiritual, pastoral, and emotional care to clients, their families, and staff in the domains such as health care, prison, and army” (Ganzevoort et al. 2014).

As Strong (2015) has written in his book ‘Buddhisms: an introduction’, there is not one Buddhism but many ‘Buddhisms’. All the traditions, sub-traditions and contemporary developments make it plural. Similarly, there is not one definition and model for BSC. BSCGs mainly operate in secular and interfaith settings (Keiman 2017). Judith Simmer-Brown wrote in the same book (Giles & Miller 2012, xiv) that most BSCGs consider themselves as “interfaith chaplains who do whatever is needed”. This plural complexity is even more complex in an interfaith setting.

Block (Giles & Miller 2012, 6) argued that BSCGs are skilled, reliable, balanced, and client ‘companions’ and ‘guides’ “who have investigated suffering through our own life experiences.” The spiritual support in BSC can according to the same author be defined as: “willingness to bear witness,” “willingness to help others discover their own truth,” “willingness to sit and listen to stories that have meaning and value,” “helping another to face life directly,” “welcoming paradox and ambiguity into care— and trusting that these will emerge into some degree of awakening,” and “creating opportunities for the people to awaken

to their True Nature” (Giles & Miller 2012, 7). Daijaku Judith Kinst wrote in another chapter of this book that the qualities of a BSCG are related to the qualities as presented in Buddhist teachings. Namely, “simplicity and depth of presence, the capacity to be still, to listen wholeheartedly and intelligently, and to respond appropriately” (Giles & Miller 2012, 12).

Furthermore, Wakoh Shannon Hickey argues that a BSCG needs to have a fundamental base of being present, which can be cultivated through the practice of meditation. This meditative tradition of care is therefore called ‘contemplative care’. They define it as “the art of providing spiritual, emotional, and pastoral support, in a way that is informed by a personal, consistent contemplative or meditation practice” (Giles & Miller 2012, xvii). I will nevertheless remain with ‘spiritual care’ to keep it more inclusive, open, and inspired by any form of practice and history, however, ‘contemplative care’ is a key aspect of BSC.

Sanford (2017) has written that there is a lack of basis, method, experiences, and literature on BSC and how to deal with theological questions and methods. Therefore, she created a model for BSC. This relates to the form of ‘companionship’ and serving as a ‘guide’ that Block referred to. Sanford (2017) developed the ‘Three Prajñās Framework for Reflection’: listening, contemplation and practice. This can be understood as a recurring process through four stages: me/self, student, BSCG, and spiritual friend. In the fourth stage, the BSCG acts as a spiritual friend, guiding the person seeking care by means of the guidance in the earlier stages. In this stage, the person listens to the wisdom of one’s own knowledge and traditions through dialogue with the BSCG. Further, the BSCG assists the person in reflecting meanings, values and goals, and exercises appropriate response and intervention to alleviate suffering and improve comfort and coping.

BSC is according to van der Braak (Ganzevoort et al. 2014, 188) a way to “come to terms with the three marks of existence”: impermanence, suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of existence, and no-self or the illusory nature of any sense of self. Van der Braak describes the BSCG as a “steady companion who has investigated suffering through his or her own life experiences and Buddhist practice.” A BSCG can support others to realize that “there can be beauty and safety in change” (Ganzevoort et al. 2014, 188). BSCGs provide a space that can encourage “an open attitude of letting go and nonattachment,” and can support the realization that there is nothing to hold on to as ‘I’, ‘me’, or ‘mine’. At the same time van der Braak added that the BSCG is inspired by the “Buddhist virtue of boundless compassion, as epitomized in the Mahayana Buddhist bodhisattva vow: ‘sentient beings are numberless; I vow to save them all’” (Ganzevoort et al. 2014, 188-189).

BSCGs need a “heart and mind that is relaxed and open to what is” (Giles & Miller 2012, 7). Block suggests that the meaning of BSC is to support and guide people in opening to their hearts that is filled with “stillness, clarity, and love” (Giles & Miller 2012, 7). This openness, this compassionate space that is provided, can support people to let all the pain, grief, misery, insight, and joy to happen. According to Maex (2011, 171) we need compassion, patience and kindness “to make it possible and bearable to have open, receptive attention”. In order to provide a compassionate presence and care, the BSCG can create a place of safety, trust, love and compassion. As mentioned by Block before (Giles & Miller 2012, 7), a client needs support to dare to open, allow and bear witness. More specifically, this presence BSCGs call “non-anxious presence” (Giles & Miller 2012, 22). According to Hickey this kind of presence is what suffering people need: “someone who can be with them compassionately in the midst

of their suffering” (22).

There are many aspects how the BSC has an added value in the interfaith settings of spiritual care. Zen priest and BSCG Trudi Jinpu Hirsch said in an interview with *Tricycle* that perhaps Buddhism’s unique contribution to spiritual care “is its embrace of doubt, of not knowing, of continually questioning the subtlest forms of conditioning, be they cultural or religious” (Kain 2005). According to Halifax (2009) the power of BSC can be found in the reduction of “fear, stress, the need for certain medications and expensive interventions, lawsuits, and the time doctors and nurses must spend reassuring people. It can also benefit professional and family caregivers in helping them to come to terms with suffering, death, loss, and grief” (179). ‘Openness’ seems to be one of the core aspects and qualities of BSC. Halifax (2009, 172) wrote that a BSCG “must look from a heart that is so big that it is open to everything, including freedom from suffering”. Can BSCGs see the suffering and this great heart as well? Can they see beyond the stories and labels, and see people’s true nature? It is an art of attending and listening deeply.

The core of BSC

For more than 2,500 years Buddhists have contemplated sickness, old age, and death to find a way out of suffering. This practice is continuing in elderly homes, hospitals, prisons, the army, hospices, and other services, supporting people “to reduce their pain and skilfully deal with what is happening to them, in the moment” (Giles & Miller 2012, 15). BSCGs support people in relating to what is present right now, whether that is pain, grief, joy, or love. One requires courage to open to the difficult, but also to the wonder. Each moment is a new one, and one does not know and has to trust in ‘not-knowing’.

Openness, attention, listening, and compassion are four key aspects and qualities that come to the forefront in most literature on BSC (Bein 2008; Bernhard 2010; Fisher 2013; Giles & Miller 2012; Halifax 2009; Maex 2011; Michon & Fisher 2013; Sanford 2017). Mindfulness is a quality and practice that encompass and cultivate those aspects. Chapter 2 will dive into this. Mindfulness meditation is not much different than the work of spiritual care. Both are ways of relating. In meditation one can work with ways of relating to the thoughts, feelings, and emotions, to pain, difficulty, and disabilities. Spiritual care professionals support people to relate, for example to their illness, frustrations, to the roles they play or can no longer play, to the inner and the outer world. Professor of spiritual care Martin Walton provided a catching definition of spiritual care. Spiritual care is according to him a ‘science of relating’ (Dutch *verhoudingskunde*) (Polak and Bohlmeijer 2020). Mindfully attending the person in need for care, a BSCG has to be open, attentively listening, and compassionate in order to allow the person to find and reconnect with their (new) story, meaning, strengths, and truth that can help them to live with and liberate from suffering.

An important point of Kinst (Giles & Miller 2012, 11), is the attunement (*upāya*) and added value that BSC can offer in an inter-religious setting. Both Buddhist and non-Buddhist care recipients can benefit from the way BSCGs work. An openness and flexibility to be able to adapt to the person's circumstances and situation. An “appropriate response,” relating from the qualities of the heart rather than reacting from our conditioning, that is the core of the Buddhist teachings (Giles and Miller 2012, 9).

2: Meditation

2.1 Introduction

There are many different understandings and practices of *walking meditation* and *mindful walking* in Buddhist traditions. One image which has had an enormous influence on the interest in Buddhism in the Global North is the well-known statue of the Buddha in the seated meditation posture, with the legs in a lotus position, palms facing upwards on the lap with the right hand held over the left. It might resonate something peaceful that inspired people to consider this type of practice. However, the living Buddhists can obviously be met while walking.

BSCG Cuong Lu, coming from the *Thiền* tradition, once said in a talk that while he was working in a prison he was often addressed by prisoners to ask who he is because they were somehow touched by *the way he walked*. From a Buddhist perspective, the meditation continues when the bell rang or when one leaves the meditation hall. However, one should be careful with judging a Buddhist chaplain by the way they walk. This can convey a distorted view of the essence of practice and of what really matters. A Buddhist can run meditatively too (Mipham 2013).

In the last thirty years, *meditation* was transformed into *mindfulness* and the terms have been used interchangeably. In this thesis I will mainly use *walking meditation* as an umbrella term wherein *mindful walking* is an aspect of this meditation. The word mindful or mindfulness, refers to a certain discernment and a state of mind attained through the practice of meditation. Mindfulness is now commonly used to mean meditation itself.

2.2 Buddhist Meditation

When we walk the paths of our life, from a Buddhist perspective most crucial is to walk it wisely. A fundamental quality to develop on the Buddhist path is understanding or wisdom (Pāli *paññā*). From an Early Buddhist perspective there are three ways to develop wisdom: (i) listening or reading teachings from the scriptures and teachers; (ii) reflection on these teachings; (iii) meditative “development” or “cultivation” (*bhāvanā*) (Harvey 2013, 318). *Bhāvanā* can mean both *cultivation*, *development* as well as *bringing into being* or *causing to be* (Olendzki 2009, 42). Whereas meditation is often assumed to be a hypnotic technique to vague spirituality or an escape from reality, in Buddhism it appears to be essential to mature true wisdom and “see things as they really are” (Harvey 2013, 318). *Bhāvanā* appears to relate and refer to the cultivation and development of *citta*. The function of *citta* can be translated as *mind*, however in the East Asian adaptation of *citta*, and its use in the West, it is mostly closely related with the *heart-mind* (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 39). Buddhist meditation can thus be understood as the *cultivation of heart-mind; citta bhāvanā*.

In essence, meditative practices are at the core in the Buddhist way of life (Conze 2003, 11). The ultimate goal of Buddhist meditations is the end of suffering (Pāli *dukkha*), “the cessation of the painful”, “freedom from anxiety and fear”; this is the realisation of *Nibbāna* (also translated as ‘liberation’ or ‘enlightenment’) (Conze 2003, 11-12). *Nibbāna* literally means ‘extinction’, as in the extinction of a fire. Harvey (2013, 73) refers to the *sutta* of the ‘Fire Sermon’ (SN 35.28) which teaches that everything inside and outside a person is burning with the “fires of attachment, hatred (*rāga*, *dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) and of birth, aging and death.” The destruction of these three fires (craving, aversion, and delusion) can

lead to *Nibbāna*.

Meditation promotes according to Conze (2003, 11) “spiritual development, to diminish the impact of suffering, to calm the mind and to reveal the true facts of existence. Increased gentleness and sympathy are among their by-products, together with an opening up to life’s message, and a feeling that death has lost its sting.” He continues by stating that eventually there is no ‘true self’ to be found in the conditioned and all that is changing and impermanent. No longer there would be a seek for becoming in sense objects because all that arises, passes again (Conze 2003, 12).

The aim and goal of Buddhist meditation are not so difficult to describe, however, when it comes to the objects and themes that are considered for meditation, things become complex. Especially when all Buddhist traditions are considered. An example of this complexity is apparent in influential compendium of meditation practices that was written in the fifth century BC by Buddhaghosa. It is called the *Visuddhimagga* (English: The Path of Purification) (Harvey 2013, 197). The *Visuddhimagga* contains 300 pages on the forty subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Next to these subjects the *Visuddhimagga* dedicated another 250 pages to the practice of meditation, understanding and wisdom through the five aggregates (*khandas*), dependent origination, and so on (Buddhaghosa 1956).

Meditation practices can focus on developing tranquillity and calmness or the focus can be on developing insight. According to Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh “the intentional cultivation of serenity emphasizes concentration while insight emphasizes mindfulness” (2015, 39). These two types can be distinguished in *samatha bhāvanā* (calmness meditation) and *vipassanā bhāvanā* (insight meditation). Calmness meditation practices can lead to stillness, one-pointedness, unified and quiet states of the heart-mind. Insight meditation cultivates insight and understanding about oneself and the world, the cause-effect relationships would be understood and the three characteristics of existence (impermanence, emptiness/no-self, and unreliability/suffering) can be seen clearly (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 42).

2.3 Mindfulness and meditation

In order to understand ‘mindful walking’ and ‘walking meditation’, the phenomenon of mindfulness first needs a closer look. Meditation—particularly mindfulness meditation—has gained immense popularity in western societies over the past few decades (Van Dam et al. 2018). Mindfulness has been moving through different contexts and cultures and therefore also its meanings and values have evolved over time and has been adapted to different situations. Defining mindfulness can therefore be challenging and should be treated heedfully. I will in this section zoom into the shift of mindfulness from its Buddhist origins to the contemporary understanding of mindfulness.

Mindfulness has become a booming business and tens of thousands publications about the benefits of mindfulness and meditation have reached the bookstores and universities (Hickey 2019, 1). The content varies from mindful eating, mindful business to mindful communication and mindful parenting. We can basically be mindful with all of life’s activities. The phenomenon of mindfulness is however a complex topic in the academic debate. On the one hand criticism evolves around mindfulness being “too religious” or “not secular enough” and on the other hand the “stealth Buddhism” critiques of modern mindfulness argues that it

downplays or even removes Buddhist moral teaching (Wilson 2014, 55). At the same time statements are made that mindfulness is being presented as “value-neutral” while it does promote Buddhist values (Stanley, Purser, and Singh 2018, 39). Even in medical and healthcare settings there are grounded normative values and philosophies present and thus being fully free from values can be challenging. I do agree that the mystification of the Buddhist history and values in modern mindfulness is problematic. The exchange of Buddhism between Asia and the West led to a so-called “Buddhist modernism” with a particular focus on mindfulness as “bare attention” (Sharf 2015, 472). This debate is not completely relevant for this thesis, however, its complexity and particularity should without doubt be considered when discussing mindfulness and can be further explored in this literature: Wilson 2014; Sharf 2015; Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015; Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017; Van Dam et al. 2018; Hickey 2019; Anālayo 2020.

Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh (2015) referred to Buddhist texts with regard to mindfulness, they have written: “when suitably developed, the concentration-regulating faculty of mindfulness: (i) gives rise to a pervasive and enduring feeling of calm and spiritual wellness, and (ii) brings the mind into a state of meditative focus that is conducive for examining and gaining insight into the nonself or empty nature of self and reality” (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 2).

Mindfulness is often being understood as a non-judgemental awareness, or what some modern Buddhist meditation teacher call “bare attention” (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 31). ‘Bare attention’ might be an aspect of mindfulness, however, from traditional perspectives it is much more than that. Mindfulness (Pāli *sati*) is according to Harvey (2013) the process of bearing something in mind, be it remembered or present before the senses or mind, with clear awareness; “it keeps one connected to what is actual, and reminds one of what is skilful” (322). *Sati* literally means ‘memory’. It involves ‘remembering to be attentive’. According to texts on Buddhist psychology, *sati* is a form of “recollecting the mind,” or “bearing in mind” (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 31). When this remembering aspect of mindfulness is combined with the bare attention it can connect the experiences that supports understanding. Furthermore, *sati* is often joined with *sampajañña* as *sati-sampajañña*. This mental factor translates as “clear comprehension or introspection” (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 32). This factor can be understood as a meta-awareness and understanding of one’s experiences and actions.

The type of mindfulness that that leads to wisdom and liberation is called “right mindfulness” (*sammā sati*) (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 42). The mindful intentions and directions one takes will support the development of wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore wise and skilful discernment is a central aspect of mindfulness (Harvey 2013, 322). The opposite of mindfulness is ‘forgetfulness’ and this can lead to harmful actions and effects. Right mindfulness as a part of the Noble Eightfold Path has therefore an ethical quality that discerns what is skilful and what is not. Right mindfulness according to Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh (2015, 42) “grounds the practitioner in the present moment and it facilitates both serenity and insight.” *Samatha* and *vipassanā* can work together “to bring about a state in which direct knowledge can arise in a calm, clear and peaceful mind” (Harvey 2013, 324).

A significant aspect of the Buddhist meditation is ‘concentration’ or ‘one-pointedness’ (Pāli *samādhi*). It is a state in which the attention is focussed on a chosen calming object and

the mind becomes still or is in a state of “mental unification” (Harvey 2013, 323). It is a state of being concentrated and the process of concentrating is rather an aspect of effort and engagement. However, with too much or too little energy, or with no mindfulness, concentration can become ‘wrong mindfulness’ (Harvey 2013, 323). Therefore, with right effort and right mindfulness, the cultivation of concentration can be defined as a wholesome unification of the mind (Bodhi 2000). The Buddhist Pāli literature uses the term *samādhi* to refer to the high states of concentration called *jhānas* (Harvey 2013, 330). There are four stages. It is also sometimes called ‘absorption meditation’ in which the mind is absorbed in a blissful state while concentrated on an object. In these states “mental chatter falls away, as do the five hindrances: desire for sense-pleasures, aversion, dullness and lethargy, restlessness and worry, and vacillation. There is developed a state of gathered attentiveness and mental brightness, with qualities such as joy and easeful happiness arising which are later allowed to fall away as the mind becomes even stiller” (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 122). Further diving into those refined states of *jhānas* is not necessary here, however, further exploration can be found in Harvey (2018): *The Four Jhānas and their Qualities in the Pāli Tradition*.

There are different ways of *cultivating* qualities that support the way to liberation. From an Early Buddhist perspective next to *samatha bhāvanā*: the development of mental serenity with concentration, and *vipassanā bhāvanā*: realizing the three characteristics of being, *anicca*, *anatta*, and *dukkha*, by directly gaining insight, there is *mettā bhāvanā*. *Mettā bhāvanā* is the cultivation of benevolence and loving-kindness to all beings (Story 1995). The practice consists of developing a friendliness that is “warm, accepting, patient and unsentimental” (Harvey 2013, 327). This can be done through different techniques such as reciting the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* (Sn 1.8), repeated well-wishing for oneself and others, using beads in combination with well-wishing, and using walking meditation as a way to develop loving-kindness (Harvey 2013, 327).

From the different Buddhist perspectives, mindfulness has different meanings. Historian Rick Fields (1992, 370) identifies *samatha* as the basic Buddhist meditation practice and reports that nearly every lineage recommends beginning with some form of it. *Samatha*, *vipassanā*, *mettā* and *jhāna* do have place in Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Buddhism. However, it is not feasible for this thesis to touch upon the different techniques in all Buddhist traditions. It is important to mention that the practices in the different traditions are diverse. In *Chan* (Japanese: *zen*) they are concerned with meditation in a broader sense but also wrestle with enigmatic *kōans*, practice ‘Just Sitting’ (Jap. *Shikantaza*) with the body and in a non-dual way: nothing to become, ‘this is Buddha’ (Harvey 2013, 361-375). For the Mahāyāna, the development of the Bodhisattva perfections are at the core of the meditation practice. Also, ritual preparation and purification of a meditation hall, bowing, circumambulation of images of the *Lotus Sūtra*, repentance, vows, recitation, invocations, visualizations, and walking are meditative practices in the Mahāyāna tradition (more in: Jones and Kiyota 1991; Harvey 2013, 361-375). Visualisations are also used in Pure Land practices, Northern Buddhism, in Korean and Japanese forms of tantric Buddhism, and in modern Western Buddhism too. Furthermore *maṇḍalas*, *mantras*, *mudrās* and the *yidam* are meaningful meditative practices too (for further exploration see: Brauen 1997; Ray 2002; Kongtrul and Harding 2002). Even though meditation appears to play a significant role in the

Buddhist path, the relative importance of various types of meditation continues to be debated (Anālayo 2016).

One of the therapeutic perspectives that is related to mindfulness is the idea of ‘decentring’. This idea comes from the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and has the potential to support the establishment of distance from one’s negative thinking, views and ideas about oneself (Bizzini 2013). According to Bizzini (2013) one of the most effective strategies for treating for example depressive clients is “cognitive restructuring” (129). ‘Decentring’ is an ability with which one can shift the point of view and perspective. Usually it involves identifying automatic thought patterns that give rise to depressive thinking and reactivity, and shifting one’s attention away from identifying with those negative thoughts, emotions, and bodily feeling. Taking a distance and relating differently to these thoughts and sensations is a core aspect of the mindfulness practice according to Bizzini (2013). Mindfulness provides a space to step out of those patterns and relate differently: “to disengage from it if they choose, and to enter an alternative mode of mind characterized by prioritizing intentional and direct perception of moment-by-moment experience, in which thoughts are seen as mental events, and judgemental striving for goals is seen, accepted and ‘let go’” (Williams 2008, 721). This meta-awareness relates to the Buddhist clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). Studies on Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) suggest that this new relation to mental contents and physical sensations is a significant aspect of the development of this ability of ‘decentring’, “which allow clients to observe their thoughts and feelings as temporary, objective events in the mind instead of reflections that are true or descriptive of self” (Bieling et al. 2012, 366).

Mindful observation fosters a detachment from the contents of consciousness. This ‘decentring’ is an observer-based (i.e., third person) perspective of the self. Exactly this point of view is believed to diminish self-centredness. Golubickis et al. (2016) argue that “through a switch from first-person to third-person imagery, mindfulness-based meditation may provide a pathway through which egocentric judgments can be reduced” (522). The ‘decentring’ aspect of mindfulness could support people with a depression to move to a *Dharma*-centred (Pāli *Dhamma*) perspective. With *Dharma*-centeredness I refer to the Buddhist idea of the essence of our being: impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and not-self/selflessness (*anattā*). For example with the practice of mindfulness of the body we can see the ever-changing essence of sensations, and thus its impermanence. According to Kabat-Zinn (2011) this gives rise to the experience of for example ‘I am not my thoughts’ or ‘I am not my pain’ and thus the non-identification with thoughts, but also feelings, emotions, and physical sensations occurs. Further the ‘unsatisfactoriness’ and ‘stress’ (*dukkha*) around experiences can be understood better by moving to a third person perspective. When we would hold on or grasp our thoughts, feelings, and sensations, we would see that they constantly change and therefore there seems to be no way to find peace or happiness in that. Lastly the ‘not-self’ or ‘selflessness’ (*anattā*) aspect of life can be seen through taking a distance as well. By seeing its true essence, that is empty and at the same time interconnected with all of life, we become intimate with the essence of body, forests, rain, food, thoughts and we can realise that we are never separated from that essence and nature (*dhamma*).

3: Walking Meditations

3.1 Early Buddhist Sources on Walking Meditation

Traditional Buddhist teachings tell that there are “84.000 dharma doors” (Didonna 2009, 476). In essence, that means there are lots of ways to practice. Walking meditation is one, and includes another variety of ways to practice it. Walking meditation seems however not to be as familiar as the seated meditation. In this chapter I will first elaborate on the Early Buddhist tradition and the Early Buddhist texts with regards to walking meditation. In this way it can be understood how the walking meditation practice evolved out of that Early tradition in Buddhism.

I am using the term ‘walking’ over ‘movement’ because ‘movement’, which literally means ‘changing of place’, is a rather broad term. Walking is a physical activity, which can include transportation of the body from A to B, it can mean training or exercise, it can mean any walking movement from one activity to the other such as during work, householding, gardening, shopping, playing, and leisure. It can be done for economic, cultural, social, psychological, and spiritual purposes.

After the Early Buddhist sources I will dive into the Thai Forest Tradition, the Burmese Vipassanā Movement, Japanese Kinhin, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Western, therapeutic and medical perspectives on walking meditation.

Therāgathā

In one *sutta* the practice of walking meditation is specifically touched upon. In the *Therāgathā* 4.2, the eighth book of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, the early monks (*bhikkhus*) narrate their struggles and accomplishments along the path to liberation:

“I stepped up on the path for walking meditation.

I walked meditation up and down the path.” (Sujato & Walton 2014, 71)

In these lines the practice suggests to be on a path, while walking back and forth that path. That is often the way it is practiced in the Theravāda tradition today (Dhammajiva 2016). It is done in a line; you walk on that line in one direction and back on the same line in the other direction. This form of walking meditation makes things easy because one does not have to be distracted by obstacles on that way or with new unfamiliar ground. It makes it simple because the focus would be on the walking itself only. The physical act of walking is the object for meditation (Dhammajiva 2016, 3-5). The focus with this walking meditation is on the motion of the body, the actions of the body. However, according to Dhammajiva (2016, 7) when reaching the end of a line, one stands still and could practice standing meditation before turning around and walking back.

Caṅkama Sutta

In the third section of the *Pañcaka Nipāta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN 5:29) the *Caṅkama Sutta* can be found. In the *Caṅkama Sutta* there is a specific teaching about the benefits of *walking meditation*, it is called the “Discourse on Walking” (Bodhi 2019, 72):

“These are the five rewards for one who practices walking meditation. Which five?

He can endure traveling by foot; he can endure exertion; he becomes free from disease; whatever he has eaten & drunk, chewed & savoured, becomes well-digested; the concentration he wins while doing walking meditation lasts for a long time.

These are the five rewards for one who practices walking meditation”

Another translation sums up those benefits as: “One is fit for long journeys; one is fit for striving; one has little disease; that which is eaten, drunk, chewed, tasted, goes through proper digestion; the composure attained by walking up & down is long-lasting” (Aggacitta & Kumara 2012). Ānanda (2020) translated it slightly different: “One can patiently bear up with long travels, (2) One can patiently strive [in meditation], (3) One is healthy, (4) What one has eaten and consumed, is properly digested, (5) The samādhi attained while walking stands for a long time.”

The *Anguttara Commentary* (AA 3:236) added a note to the *Caṅkama Sutta*:

“*Cīraṭṭhitiko hoti*: “If one has acquired the mark [of concentration] while standing up, it is lost when one sits down. If one has acquired the mark while sitting, it is lost when one lies down. But for one who has resolved on walking up and down and acquired the mark in a moving object, it is not lost even when one stands still, sits down, and lies down”” (Tan 2015, 3; Bodhi 2012, 1725).

This indicates that walking meditation is actually much more powerful and long-lasting than the sitting, standing or lying down meditation practice. Fonsdale (2021) would agree as she wrote in a Buddhist magazine: “Walking meditation can serve as a powerful bridge between meditation practice and daily life, helping us be more present, mindful and concentrated in ordinary activities. It can reconnect us to a simplicity of being and the wakefulness that comes from it. Walking meditation, the bridge between your meditating mind and your everyday mind.”

Piya Tan, a Buddhist scholar and former Theravāda monk researched the Early Pāli texts on the occurrences of *walking* and *walking meditation* (2015). The section he wrote on walking meditation first analysed the meaning of the word *caṅkama*. The word *caṅkama* can according to Tan (2015, 1) mean “(1) the act of walking, walking about, walking up and down; or (2) a place for walking up and down, a raised walkway, a terrace (for walking)”. Tan (2015) does admit that the *Caṅkama Sutta* is about the act of walking and it does not explicitly refer to *walking meditation*, however, it “subsumes this sense” (1) and it “can refer to walking meditation” (3). Walking meditation seems according to the *Caṅkama Sutta* not to be overlooked. It is beneficial in many ways, including those five suggested benefits.

Walking and attainments

The *Anguttara Commentary* as written above implicates a significance of walking meditation. *Samādhi* can be cultivated with walking meditation and according to Tan’s (2015) translation of this commentary “a certain *samādhi* of the 8 attainments is attained”. According to him the eight attainments are the four form *jhānas* (*rūpa jhāna*) and the four formless *jhānas* (*arūpa jhāna*) and the “9 progressive abodes (*anupubba,-vihāra*)” (Tan 2015, 3-4).

Tan (2015) refers to the *Pacalā Sutta* (A 7.58) wherein walking is a method for overcoming drowsiness or torpor (*middha*) (1). In this *sutta* the elder Moggallāna is facing

difficulty with his meditation: “If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should, perceiving before and after, determine in walking back and forth, turning your senses inward, keeping your mind from straying outward” (Tan 2015, 1-2). This *sutta* also indicates that being mindful of walking, i.e. one walks to walk, has a certain potential and benefit for the concentration and attainments.

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Anālayo (2003) examined in his book ‘*Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*’, the instructions recorded in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10)¹. This is a famous Early Buddhist text talks about mindfulness wherein there is a reference to walking too. The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, collectively known as the ‘four foundations of mindfulness’, provides detailed instructions on how mindfulness can be cultivated so as to lead to the realization of *Nibbāna* (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 20). It suggests that mindfulness should be cultivated across the following four applications: (i) body, (ii) feelings, (iii) mind, and (iv) phenomena, “*dhammas*” (Anālayo 2003, 17) or “objects of mind” (Hanh 1990, iv).

Each of these applications include different aspects. Each application includes the Pāli word *anupassanā*. This Pāli word is according to Anālayo (2003, 23) often translated as “to repeatedly look at”, or “to closely observe.” With mindfulness it is written that one can attentively observe changing conditions of the body and mind and in this way would understand oneself. The first aspect, the ‘body’, refers to every part of the body. This is termed *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. The translation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* by Ṭhānissaro (2008) begins with the application of mindfulness with the ‘body’. This application has six sub-aspects: (i). *Mindfulness of breathing*, (ii). *Mindfulness of physical postures*, (iii). *Clear comprehension of actions (physical)*, (iv). *Mindfulness centered on the components of the body*, (v). *Contemplation on the natural qualities or elements of body*, (vi). *Mindfulness on the nine cemetery meditations* (Anālayo 2003, 118; Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 44).

The instructions in these early discourses in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* were addressed to “monks.” However, this does not indicate that mindfulness practices were only meant for male monastics, in fact, Anālayo (2003) writes that elsewhere the discourses refer to nuns as well as lay disciples who are familiar with *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation (275).

Mindfulness of breathing

The first sub-aspect of this *sutta* about the body is *mindfulness of breathing*. This section is translated by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu (2008) as: “Breathing in, the monk discerns, ‘I am breathing in’”; or “breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long’”, and “breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my body”. Many different ways of discerning and attentively being mindful of the breath is being suggested. In my interpretation this could be practiced too while walking. However, one is in that case not fully aware of the physical act of walking and thus does practice mindfulness of breathing instead of mindfulness of walking.

Furthermore, in this *sutta* it is also suggested to discern details such as the length of the breath, seeing its origination and passing away without any attachment to anything in the

¹ The Chinese Tripitaka also contains two parallels to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*: *Madhyama-āgama* and *Ekottarika-āgama*. Due to the size of this thesis I will not include analysis of these parallels. They can be found in Anālayo and Bucknell (2013; 2020).

body and the world (Bodhi 2019). This is suggested to be done with fully alert discernment and applies to the *four postures*: walking, standing, sitting or reclining.

The four postures

Walking is one of the four human postures. The other three are sitting, standing and lying down. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* it is suggested to be mindful of all these four postures.

“Furthermore, when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.” (Ṭhānissaro 2008)

The ‘discernment’ of walking is one way of translating it. Tan (2015) used the translation of “while walking, (one) understands, I am walking” (1). This is a significant finding because it indicates when a practitioner walks, and understands walking with this body, mindfulness and insight is being practiced. Walking meditation can therefore also be understood as *vipassanā bhāvanā*, the cultivation of insight into these three characteristics.

Satipaṭṭhāna refers to remembering to deliberately place close attention or turn the mind to what is happening, and that can be walking too. No matter where we are, when we are able to walk, one can practice mindfulness. When practicing according to the *satipaṭṭhāna* and I am walking to the kitchen, I know and am aware that I am walking to the kitchen. It is understandable that the *mindfulness of physical (four) postures* of the ‘body’ is coming after the first *mindfulness of breathing* as it is something that is always available.

The third sub-aspect, *clear comprehension of actions (physical)*, refers according to Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh (2015, 45) “to being aware of actions and doing them with clear understanding (*sampajañña*). Clear comprehension of actions is more refined than merely being aware of postures as it includes awareness of the greater context of our experience.” Practicing mindfulness from moment-to-moment while walking prevents the mind from being all over the place. According to Dhammajiva (2016, 6) practitioners that master walking meditation can maintain a state of *samādhi* much easier. The mind will be with the body and will not be lingering in the past, or fantasizing about the future, or think of certain persons and events. This is according to Dhammajiva (2016, 6) “clear comprehension of purpose” and it will energize the mind. Therefore, while walking we can be aware with clarity of the purpose and rightness of our actions.

The fourth sub-aspect is *mindfulness centered on the components of the body*. While walking, one can be aware of and “reflect on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things (i.e. the thirty-two body parts) (Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu 1997). These findings suggest that, one can reflect and be mindful of the different parts of the body and this has the potential to break down the identification with a body, or parts of it, and realize the non-self or emptiness of it.

The fifth sub-aspect is the *contemplation on the natural qualities or elements of body*. This contemplation of the elements (fire: qualities of temperature, earth: qualities of softness and hardness, air: qualities of movement, water: qualities of fluidity) can be practiced with walking meditation too. For example, “being aware of all the changing experiences at the base of the foot when walking may involve tracking the experience of hardness and softness (earth

element)” (Van Gordon, and Singh 2015, 45). The sixth sub-aspect of *mindfulness on the nine cemetery meditations* is from my understanding not applicable with walking meditation. However, contemplation of the body’s inevitable aging, decaying and dying can be done while walking.

Tan (2015) refers to both the *Maha Suññata Sutta* (MN 122), ‘The Greater Discourse on Emptiness’ and the *Samaññaphala Sutta* (DN 2), ‘The Fruits of the Contemplative Life’ wherein the four postures are highlighted in the context of mindfulness and alertness (Ṭhānissaro 1997; 2005): “While walking, standing, sitting, asleep, awake, talking, or remaining silent, he is clearly aware of what he is doing”. Ṭhānissaro (1997) translated it slightly different: “when walking, . . . , he acts with alertness. This is how a monk is possessed of mindfulness and alertness.” This is another suggestion where walking meditation can contribute to the cultivation of mindfulness, concentration and insight.

In the *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22), the mindfulness of the bodily movements, of the continuous changing elements and states of the mind, should be cultivated in order to understand their true nature. There is a freedom of identification with those physical and mental phenomena, and thus with a misguided sense of selfhood. One can see those phenomena “as they really are” (Harvey 2013, 318): movements of a physical body, a collective of the four elements (*mahābhūtas*), its “subject to physical laws of causality on the one hand, and on the other hand, a flux of successive phases of consciousness arising and passing away in response to external stimuli.” According to Story (1995) they are to be observed objectively, as if they were processes not associated with ourselves but belonging to another order of phenomena.

Anālayo (2003, 124) stated that the fact that a firm grounding of awareness of the body provides an important basis for the development of both calm and insight. This might be the reason why, of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, body contemplation has received the most extensive and detailed consideration in the discourses and commentaries.

The practice

According to Tan (2015) meditation in motion can mean that one is being mindfully aware of all four postures “as a continuous mindful flow of attention to every posture” (3). He does outline that *caṅkama* can refer to walking meditation. He specifies this as:

“keeping the mind in a smooth flow of mindfulness... Just as in breath meditation, we watch the breath in and out, and so on, so, too, in walking meditation, we watch the various aspects of our postures as each arises, changes, passes away, or flows into another posture. We are not watching anything fixed here; for, a posture is but a moment, as it were. So, we are actually watching impermanence in the arising, falling and changing of the postures. If our mind is fixed on this smooth flow of change, then mental calm will arise on due course. When we direct our mind to note the flow of rising, falling and changing of our postures, and we note their impermanence, we are then practising the perception of impermanence. This is what is known as “insight” (*vipassanā*) into the true nature of our body, that is, it is always changing. When such a noting is sustained, it leads to the arising of wisdom, an understanding of the true reality that is joyful and liberating” (Tan 2015, 3).

As can be read above, Tan (2015) considers the walking as the posture that encompasses all other four postures. He even suggests in that mindfully walking in meditation should include the postures of standing, sitting and lying down:

“...we should be aware of all the 4 postures as a continuous mindful flow of attention to every posture, When we step on the ground, it is like momentarily standing. When we stop for a moment, it is like sitting. When we stand mindfully a little longer, say to rest, it is like lying down” (Tan 2015, 3).

***Mettā bhāvanā* and walking meditation**

Another way of understanding walking meditation is to explore the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta*, the ‘Discourse on Loving-kindness’ (Sn 1.8). In this loving-kindness *sutta* it is mentioned that this goodwill, the well-wishing for others can also be practiced while walking. The advice in this *sutta* is to cultivate mindfulness and a heart of loving-kindness throughout all four postures. The recollection on loving-kindness can provide the opportunity to cultivate this loving and happy heart towards all living beings, and thus also while walking.

Ṭhānissaro (2004) translated the Pāli word *caram* in this *sutta* as “walking” while according to Tan (2015, 4) *caram* means “moving” and *caṅkama* means “walking.” Even though *caram* indicates a wider sense of moving, which can include walking as well, it suggests an action of movement that could include all postures. This appears to be a tiny detail, however, the *Aṅguttara Commentary* shows the significance of walking meditation that can serve as a bridge to integrate that mindfulness and concentration in all postures and movements between them. Tan (2015, 4) even argues that of all four the postures, “walking is the most comprehensive in that it encompasses all the other postures.” He continues writing that we can stand, sit and recline with loving-kindness, however, all these postures should “flow” into one another, that is, without any break (Tan 2015, 4). Tan (2015, 4) argued that “all the other three postures are subsumed in the walking meditation.” This latter statement requires a further explanation.

When one practices sitting meditation, one can be very mindful and concentrated, even with a quality of loving-kindness, in this posture and use any object for meditation (breath, body, elements, feelings, *dharmas*, *mettā*). However, once the posture changes into another posture, one has lost the mindful attention and concentration because it is incorporated and subsumed in this seated embodied posture. Sitting still already incorporates a certain calmness and stillness. The same with regard to the standing and lying down postures. Once the posture changes into another, these qualities and factors are ‘not lost’. When one is able to be mindful and concentrated, with a quality of loving-kindness, while walking, these factors will not be lost in any other posture. When one is able and skilled to be mindful of walking, and thus of movement, one is able to apply mindfulness in all activities of life.

According to Dhammajiva (2016) there is little awareness on the value of walking meditation, the meditation on the changing postures and “the impact they will have on facing challenges of day to day life” (5). The Pāli word *iriyāpatha* refer to the bodily postures, that is walking, standing, sitting, lying. It literally means “ways of movement” (Ṭhānissaro 2008). Dhammajiva (2016) admits too that when one masters walking meditation “it becomes easier for them to maintain a state of *samādhi*, moment-to-moment, with mindfulness as a preceding

factor” (6). When mindfulness is not interrupted when changing from sitting to standing and then to walking, this benefits a practitioner according to Dhammajiva (2016) much more than the mindfulness that is confined to the in- and out-breath. It supports the development of versatility and thereby increases its durability. Walking meditation can support the cultivation of loving-kindness, clarity of mind, and a concentration that can carry over into other meditation postures.

3.2 The Thai Forest Tradition

In the Thai Forest Tradition in Northeast Thailand, there is a great emphasis on walking meditation. Many monks walk for long hours as a way of developing concentration. They can walk up to ten or even fifteen hours a day (Nyanadhammo 2003, 3). The contemporary teacher Achaan Chah from the Thai Forest Tradition wrote the book ‘*A Still Forest Pool*’. In this book he described the main focus of his meditations on insight (*vipassanā*), calming (*samatha*) meditation, in which he also emphasised the cultivation through walking meditation. According to him with mindfulness your mind can become still in any surrounding, and in any activity. The mind can become clear like a forest pool, where all kinds of wonderful and strange animals can come to drink at the pool, and you will clearly see the nature of all things. They come and go, they flow like a river, but yet it is still. This is the way Chah often described meditation and the results that can come from it. One can become aware of the stillness while it is moving.

The same with regard to walking meditation. He wrote that the heart of the path is very simple (Chah 2018, 4). One has to rest with things as they are. No need to try to become anything, to not become a meditator and to not become enlightened. He wrote: “when you walk, let it be. Grasp at nothing. Resist nothing” (Chah 2018, 5). The key is according to him to get out of this battle to get somewhere and become somebody.

Chah (2018, 85-86) suggests to use a path on which one can walk from one predetermined point to another, fix the eyes about two meters in front of you and to fix the attention on the actual feeling of the body. His suggestion is to observe openly and carefully what is happening in the mind. The body moves with each step, but the awareness is on the movement of the mind without being carried away by likes and dislikes. In his walking meditation it is key to watch whatever arises in the mind and to know their nature. The truth is according to Chah (2018, 85) more than thought and feelings, so one should not believe and get caught by them. “See the whole process arising and ceasing. This understanding gives rise to wisdom” (Chah 2018, 86). If the mind wanders, he suggests to stand still and be mindful of the breath. He also suggests to use the mantra “Buddho”: “Bu” with one step and “ddho” with the other.

Preparation

Nyanadhammo (2003) wrote clear instructions in his book ‘*Walking Meditation: In The Thai Forest Tradition*’. Next to a part about the five benefits of walking (*Caṅkama Sutta*), he wrote a section on the preparation and the meditation objects for walking meditation.

The place can be either indoor or outdoor. When practicing outdoor one should find a secluded place which is free from distractions and disturbances. The walking path should be fifteen to thirty steps long. As walking is a stimulating posture, in the beginning it tends to wander away from the initial object. Therefore shorter walking paths can be helpful (Nyanadhammo 2003, 5-6).

Nyanadhammo (2003) suggests to start with standing upright with the right hand over the left in front of the body. The practice is firstly to develop *samadhi* and that requires effort. One has to “develop the mind to one-pointedness by gradual degrees of mindfulness and concentration” (6). His view is that this preparation created a physical composure, and therefore it supports the mind to compose. The next step is to put both hand in front of the heart in *añjali mudra*. Then one can close the eyes. This pose and hand gesture is a gesture of respect and it is suggested to “reflect for a few minutes on the qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha” (Nyanadhammo 2003, 6). He also suggests to determine the amount of time because this nurtures the mind with “zest, inspiration and confidence” and to focus the sight a meter and a half in front. The ultimate meaning of this type of walking meditation is to be bringing to heart-mind the qualities of the Buddha, to realise and cultivate the Dhamma, and be inspired by the Sangha who have realised this and kept this tradition alive. This kind of practice can be considered and seems to be applicable in the BSC.

Meditation object

The awareness should be kept on the soles of the feet and in this manner one cultivates a “refined attention, and clear knowing of walking while walking” (Nyanadhammo 2003, 6). The attention has to be on the sensations in the feet as they change. With lifting the foot and placing it on the ground, new sensations and feelings arise and cease. New feelings arise and old ones pass away: “these should be known with mindfulness” (Nyanadhammo 2003, 7). One knows the changing feelings (Pāli *vedanā*), whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral (neither pleasant nor unpleasant) while walking. In this way one can investigate impermanence (*anicca*) by noting the process of change and observing how all phenomena are subject to change. This is an investigation of the *Dhamma* or the “law of nature” (Nyanadhammo 2003, 9). In this way, according to Nyanadhammo (2003), one can also see the unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) of things and how all things are not self (*anattā*): “one can investigate these fundamental characteristics of nature on the walking meditation path” (9).

The pace of walking depends on the person, but Nyanadhammo (2003) refers to Achaan Chah who recommended not too fast and not too slow. One needs to be able to concentrate on the refined feelings. It is suggested that one can find its own speed.

Nyanadhammo suggested many other object for contemplation for the walking meditation. One can also use the meditation object of the four *Brahmavihārās*, recollect qualities such as generosity and virtue with support of questions around these themes. Furthermore, recollection of the nature of the body is a suggestion to use as a walking meditation. Breaking down the elements (water, earth, fire, and air) and understanding the selflessness in it can support insight.

Feeling the walking itself and understanding the characteristics of those feelings and sensations seem to be at the core of this walking practice. According to Nyanadhammo (2003) walking meditation is a way of simplifying what we are doing when we are doing it. We are bringing the mind to the present moment experience and “being one with walking when walking” (7). It is a way of quieting the mind by knowing the feelings as they arise and pass away. However, one has to choose a meditation object carefully. It is about the quality of mind rather than the quantity of minutes or meters.

The walking meditation is a convenient means to enhance the work of the heart-mind (8).

Nyanadhammo (2003) wrote that the development of this walking meditation practice can be integrated into our walks in daily lives: “going to the shops, walking from one room to the other or even walking to the bathroom we can use this activity of walking as meditation. We can be aware just of walking, simply being with that process” (8). He concluded with noting the opportunity for investigating reality in all processes of life. In the Thai Forest tradition, every aspect of life is seen as an opportunity for cultivating the heart-mind and “knowing things as they are” (11).

3.3 The Burmese *Vipassanā* Movement

Another contemporary teacher and global influencer of the insight meditation (*vipassanā*) movement has been the Burmese Buddhist scholar, teacher and meditation master Mahāsī Sayādaw (1904–1982) (Braun 2014). He was a student of played an important role in the creation of the insight practice and an opening to lay meditation worldwide. Mahāsī Sayādaw taught a technique that he had developed through his own renowned teacher U Nārada / Mīngun Jetawun Sayādaw (Bodhidhamma 2019).

Vipassanā was not originally a meditation practice in itself. *Vipassanā*, the Pāli word for “insight” or “seeing clearly,” has developed as a meditation movement and Buddhist teaching that established in Burma in the early 20th century and has spread globally ever since (Braun 2014). *Vipassanā* practice evolved as part of a Buddhist revival in response to the British colonization of Burma in the late 19th century and to political and social changes in the 20th century (Bodhidhamma 2019). *Vipassanā* is according Shonin, Van Gordon, and Singh (2015) “clear seeing of the nature of reality as a flow of interacting mental and physical processes that are impermanent, dukkha—physically or mentally painful, stressful (especially when grasped at), unsatisfactory—and impersonal” (120). Over time this can eradicate craving, aversion, and delusion through this understanding and direct experience.

The practice has three core characteristics: observation of the breath at the abdomen region, noting, and going very slowly. The magnum opus of Mahāsī Sayādaw is the ‘*Manual of Insight*’ (2016). This book with 744 pages is an in-depth exploration on the insight meditation practice. Walking meditation too is an important practice within this book, and tradition.

Walking

According to Mahāsī (2016, 182) noting each and every step as “walking, walking” or “stepping, stepping” or “right, left” or “lifting, moving, dropping” is significant for the development of concentration and mindfulness. Once this has been established one will be able to note the intention to walk, or the intention to move before starting to walk (182). When walking fast, one has to note ‘right step’, ‘left step’, and to note ‘raising or lifting, dropping or placing’ when walking slowly.

According to Mahāsī (2016) walking consists of a sequence of the separate physical movements (182). All separate movement arise and disappear one after the other. As a follow up of his explanation he refers to the *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna sutta* and *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*: “when walking, one know “I am walking”” (182). According to Mahāsī (2016) there is not one flow of the walking movement but rather “separate units of little movements... and intention” (184). The mental process of intention and the bodily movement are to be understood as different processes. Therefore, Mahāsī argues, the knowing of “I am walking” is

conventional knowledge. The ultimate knowledge and understanding according to Mahāṣī (2016) is that there is no individual who walks; “there is only the intention, followed by the movement of a collection of physical phenomena. No physical phenomenon lasts even for the twinkling of an eye” (184). Here he points out that everything is subject to impermanence, and because it is coming and going, it is unsatisfactory. There is no ‘I’, ‘me’, or ‘mine’ to be found in these on-going arising and disappearing mental and physical phenomena (Mahāṣī 2016, 185).

The elements

Mahāṣī (2016, 186) refers to the *Atthasālinī* (*Dhammasaṅgaṇī* commentary) by Buddhaghosa when talking about the elements in walking meditation. According to Mahāṣī (2016) the lifting and moving the foot consists of the fire and air element, and releasing consists of the water and earth element:

“Thus when we are aware of lifting, the fire element is understood; when we are aware of moving forward and pushing, the air element is understood; when we are aware of releasing, the water element is understood; and when we are aware of dropping and pressing, the earth element is understood” (Mahāṣī 2016, 186).

These descriptions and practices are ways to clearly comprehend the “ultimate sense” of walking. As written before there are only “separate units of little movements,” and thus with regard to the elements only “selfless elements go forward, only elements stand” (Mahāṣī 2016, 187). The insight meditation method intends that one experiences the “ultimate characteristics of tension or pressure, its function of motion, or its manifestation as conveyance” (Mahāṣī 2016, 188). This supports the practitioner to understand the phenomena beyond mere concepts of the elements but as actual processes.

Furthermore a single footstep can be comprehended in six stages: heel up, lifting, moving it forward, lowering, touching the ground, placing or pressing (343). Each stage, and thus physical phenomenon in that very moment, will disappear after the other. Therefore, Mahāṣī (2016, 343) argues “they are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self”. This is a subtle and refined contemplation of the body. In this way one stage of the insight knowledge can be reached, namely “the insight knowledge of arising and passing away”. This insight knowledge leads to equanimity (356)

There is also the awareness of walking and the physical movement involved with walking. According to Sīlānanda (1996) the moments of awareness are called, in Pāli, *nāma*, name identity, and the movement of the foot is called *rūpa*, matter or form identity. Practitioners will perceive name and matter arising and disappearing at each moment. For example “at one moment there is the lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting, and at the next moment there is the movement forward and the awareness of that movement, and so on” (Sīlānanda 1996). These can be understood as a pair, name and matter identity, which arise and disappear at every moment.

The role of intention during walking meditation is according to Sīlānanda (1996) important too. One has to understand that an intention precedes every movement. For example after the intention to lift the heel, the lifting occurs. In this way the conditionality of all of the different manifestations with walking cannot occur without conditions and a cause (Sīlānanda 1996). In this manner the relationship of cause and effect, ‘conditioning’ and ‘conditioned’ can be

understood, and thus one can understand that name (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*) identity do not manifest without conditions. According to Sīlānanda (1996) the stage of a ‘lesser stream-enterer’ (*sotāpanna*) can be reached.

3.4 Japanese *Kinhin*

Kinhin (Jap.; Chin., pinyin jingxing) is a Chan and zen practice, “to walk slowly and mindfully between sessions of meditation in order to restore circulation and feeling to the legs and clear the mind of drowsiness” (Keown 2004). In the Sōtō school of Japanese Zen, *kinhin* is being practiced between periods of zazen and the practitioners walk clockwise around a room, in a specific posture. It entails “an exceptionally slow pace of walking in order to coordinate each step with a full cycle of respiration” (Riggs 2008, 224). The outstanding characteristic is the slow pace of this walk. Riggs (2008) notes that the slowness of the walk almost appears to be standing still or “frozen in mid-step” (224).

This practice is usually accredited to Dōgen (1200-1253), however, Riggs (2008) attributed this practice to a much later Sōtō Zen monastic-scholar Menzan Zuihō (1683–1769). The details on the discussion on the origination of *kinhin* can be found in Riggs (2008). In the Zen tradition, there is according to Riggs (2008) nothing to be found about *kinhin* before Dōgen. It is worthwhile to note the historical foundation of *kinhin* qua Zen practice which might be traced to two texts by Menzan Zuiho (1683–1769): the *Kinhinki* (“Standards for Walking Meditation”); and the *Kinhikimonge* (“An Explanation of the Standards of Walking Meditation”). The latter is a commentary that intends to establish *kinhin*’s canonicity all the way back to early texts like Dogen’s *Shōbōgenzō*, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, and the *Lotus Sūtra* (Teng-Kuan Ng 2018, 3).

The most detailed description in the early texts is found in the *Hsiu-ch'an yao-chüeh* (Xiuchan yaojue, Jap. Shuzen yoketsu). It implicates to be a question and answer session with Buddhapālita, an Indian monk, and the details do not differ from the early *Therāgathā* text about walking up and down. Riggs (2008, 244) analysed eight characters from Yijing’s *Record of the Southern Countries* (*Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan*, *Nanhai jigui neifa yun*) which states: “In India, both lay and clerics often do *kinhin*. They go straight ahead and return straight, following just one way.” Further there are few more details about the position of hands and arms, focus of eyes, speed (“neither very fast not very slow”), distance (fourteen to twenty-two paces), and the time of the day (daytime) (Riggs 2008, 230).

There are several forms in which *kinhin* takes place. In most Zen monasteries, the master, followed by his students, walks several circles in the meditation room and sometimes outdoor walks are done (Riggs 2008). This walking can be seen as zazen in motion and can be done with the counting of the breath or working with a *kōan*. The Rinzai and Sōtō schools of Japanese Zen differ considerably in their way of practicing *kinhin*. The most common methods of *kinhin* are the slow (Soto) and fast form (Rinzai), walking-*kinhin* and hiking-*kinhin*. Both differ also in ways of placing the hands (Chah et al. 1996).

Another Japanese Zen master Hakuun Yastani Roshi wrote that he is applying a method somewhere in between these latter two methods. He does apply the use of counting the inhalations and exhalations while walking slowly around the room (Chah et al. 1996). His way of practicing is as follow:

“Continue to count inhalations and exhalations as you walk slowly around the room. Begin walking with the left foot and walk in such a way that the foot sinks into the floor, first the heel and then the toes. Walk calmly and steadily, with poise and dignity. The walking must not be done absent-mindedly, and the mind must be taut as you concentrate on the counting. It is advisable to practice walking this way for at least five minutes after each sitting period of twenty to thirty minutes” (Chah et al. 1996).

Robert Aitken (1982) notes that *kinhin* literally means “sutra-walking” and suggests that “our everyday actions are themselves sutras” and have a liberative potential for ourselves and others (Aitken 1982, 36).

Riggs had a remarkable note on the new application of *kinhin*.

“The new use of “kinhin” to mean any kind of quiet walking is a recent Western innovation, but this popular usage is much closer to the general Buddhist usage, wherein the same word (which is pronounced *kyōgō* in other Japanese Buddhist schools) simply refers to one of the four possible postures of the Buddha and his followers: sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. Of course, the walking posture should be dignified and collected, but there is nothing in the mainstream texts prescribing the slow creep of Sōtō Zen” (Riggs 2008, 224).

Teng-Kuan Ng (2018) notes that for Menzan, “the act of walking becomes the chief performative embodiment of Buddha nature” (8). In Mahāyāna Buddhism, awakening or liberation is ever-present in oneself (Buddha-nature), an expression of awakening that one already possesses (Van der Braak 2011, 164). For Dōgen sitting like a Buddha is the expression of a Buddha, so if I would translate that to meditation in any of the four postures, then walking can be seen as an expression of the Buddha-nature. From this perspective, we can walk like a Buddha too.

The act of slow walking meditation brings according to Menzan physical and spiritual benefits. Riggs (2008, 244) refers to his statement that “kinhin serves to “revive one’s spirit [and] to revitalize,” and brings increased energy, stamina, digestive and overall health, and in and through all these, *samadhi* or single-pointed meditative absorption.” These statements resonate well with, and might originate from, the *Caṅkama Sutta*.

3.5 The Vietnamese *Thiền* Tradition: Thich Nhat Hanh

‘We can walk to walk,’ the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in his famous book ‘Peace is Every Step’ (1991, 37). Hanh writes that walking meditation is about ‘really enjoying the walk’ and to ‘not going somewhere or to arrive somewhere’ (1991, 37). At the same time, Hanh (2015) wrote about mindful walking as a way to water and cultivate seeds of peace that are already within us.

To practice mindfulness in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh (*Thiền*) means to practice in the four postures (Lu 2015). Mindfulness of breathing in the seated posture is not enough for Thich Nhat Hanh (Lu 2015, 15). With every step we take, we walk with mindfulness. His approach is to combine the breath with the footsteps (Lu 2015, 40). One can be aware of the breath and every step, and there is according to Hanh (1991) no other purpose than being in the moment and enjoy every step (37).

“We can release all of our worries and don’t think about the future or the past; we enjoy the present and walk as if we are the happiest human beings on Earth” (Hanh 1991, 37).

Hanh (1991) suggests being aware of the feet touching the ground below and to walk as if we were giving peace and ease to the earth instead of our sadness and anxiety. “We walk all the time,” Hanh writes in another book, “but usually it is more like running. Our hurried steps print anxiety and sorrow on the Earth” (Hanh 2001, 33). He seems to offer walking meditation as an antidote for the modernity’s hasty and restless lifestyle. In his book ‘*How to Walk*’ he wrote that there is no need to struggle to arrive somewhere else. According to him we know our final destination and will go back into the earth so why would we hurry to get somewhere (Hanh 2015, 14)? For him being in the present moment means stepping in the direction of life. A mind that is focussed on breathing and walking, then one is “unifying body, speech, and mind, and we are already home” (Hanh 2015, 27). Walking meditation is a “revolution against busyness” and an opening up to the wonders of life (Hanh 2015, 69).

Hanh teaches different walking meditation methods. One way is as following:

“The first thing to do is to lift your foot. Breathe in. Put your foot down in front of you, first your heel and then your toes. Breathe out. Feel your feet solid on the Earth. You have already arrived” (Hanh 2015, 7)

Another walking meditation practice is to adjust the walking to the rhythm of the breath. For example, one can take two steps with the inhalation and three steps with the exhalation. The amount of steps can be determined by the natural pace of the breath.

Furthermore Hanh (2015) also uses the recitation of “short practice poems”, so-called “gāthās” (104). One has to stay with the breath and footsteps, and additionally mentally (not aloud) repeats a word, poem or sentence on the in- or out-breath, such as: “in”, “out”, “calm”, “ease”, “smile”, “release” (104-105), or “I go back (in). Taking refuge (out)” (106), or “arrived (in), home (out)” (110). The sentence can be adjusted according to the wish or need of a person.

The main purpose of this practice according to Hanh (2015, 105) is concentration. This can enforce peace, joy and “cause a stream of calm energy to flow through us” (112). With walking meditations one can “undergo a deep transformation and learn how to enjoy peace in each moment” (Hanh 2015, 14). In this *Thiền* tradition, the action of each step is a possibility of mindfulness, concentration, and insight, and a practice of joy, and compassion (Hanh 2015, 19). This tradition (so-called ‘Order of Interbeing’) is known for its understanding that all of life is ‘interconnected’. Therefore, from the perspective of this tradition one would never walk alone. One is according to Hanh always filled with the presence of the parents and ancestors in every cell of the body (2015, 86). Also all plants, animals, and minerals are considered to be part of the ancestors within one’s body. This insight has the potential to open a person’s narrow view and transform it into an open and all-interconnected web of life.

The practice of appreciation of nature seems to also have a strong place in their walking meditation. According to Nhat Hanh (1991), by giving our peace and love to the surface of the earth, we learn to open to the love it gives us. At the same time he suggests to sometimes stop and watch the beauty of a tree or a flower and meanwhile stay connected with the breath. The walk is slow, “but not so slowly that you draw too much attention to yourself” (Hanh 2015, 26). In this approach to walking meditation there seems to be a more open awareness in which one can also enjoy the nature around and shift between the focus on nature, the breath, and footsteps. His view is that thoughts disturb the present moment and therefore the nature

around will disappear. This tradition portrays the earth as not merely a sacred matter to walk on, but as a sacred spirit to walk on (Hanh 2015, 117). The training here is to take every step on earth with connection by feeling the touch and all the wonders of the earth, taking every step with love and tenderness.

Hanh wrote that in their practice centre Plum Village, when they walk, they walk in silence (2015, 29). This supports them to “fully enjoy walking one hundred percent” (29). Joy and insight according to him come from this mindfulness practice in silence. Each step can in this way be experienced deeply. At the same time walking in silence with others can be very powerful too (45).

3.6 Pilgrimage as a Walking Meditation

There are many more Buddhist ways to practice walking meditation. Due to the focus of this thesis, I will not be able to dive into other walking practices except the one from Ives (2018). However, I will name the ones for those who wish to investigate further. There is the *kaihōgyō*, circling the mountain, which is practiced by Japanese Tendai Buddhist monks. In Tibet they practice the *khora*. This is a meditative practice and type of pilgrimage in which the practitioner is making a circumambulation around a mountain, sacred place, or object. There is also the use of a full body prostrations as a pilgrimage. Further, in Thai Buddhism there is the *thudong* (Pāli *dhutaṅga*), another form of pilgrimage (Shaw 2020).

Simply going out for a walk is for many of us a form of pilgrimage. Ives’ (2018) book ‘Zen on the Trail’ is a reflection on hiking as a form of pilgrimage, with particular focus on the spirituality of hiking. Ives (2018) refers to the ‘The Ritual Process’ of Victor Turner wherein rites of passage move through three stages, similar to what happens when one would go on pilgrimage. In an essay I wrote for the course Mindfulness at the Vrije Universiteit, I applied this ‘ritual process’ to a person suffering from a depression and would practice mindful walking. You can find a part of the essay with the ‘ritual process’ in Appendix I.

3.7 Modern Mindful Walking

“Walking meditation is another door into the same room as sitting, lying down, or standing meditation” (Kabat-Zinn 2017, 250).

Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005) wrote the book ‘*Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*’. This title and the content of the book indicates that with the mindfulness practice, which can be done in any posture, walking and traveling, the journey, is the arrival itself. This zen Buddhist perspective, wherein the Dharma is seen as an expression, the path of perfection (awakening is here), is included in most of his teachings in the MBSR programs that he has developed.

The MBSR and MBCT mindfulness programs have been the most researched mindfulness intervention. There is plenty of literature and evidence that mindfulness practices are helpful in reducing stress, anxiety, depression and negative mood conditions (eg., Tickell et al. 2020). Only few studies touch upon the topic of walking meditation practices.

Walking can be a practice of ‘grounding’. The physical experience of walking enables people to feel “grounded” in the present moment (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale 2002). Clinical psychologist Bates (2013) has been running a mindfulness programs in a hospice with the main focus on “grounding” (145). ‘Grounding’ is one of the ways they support

clients to be present by engaging with their bodies, a way of reconnecting to something they have neglected and avoided due to the medical treatments. They learn to “reengage” the contact with their bodies by providing the mind this place of the body (Bates 2013, 145). This ‘reengaging’ with the body is identical to ‘decentring’, however, instead of taking a step back one moves the attention and rather ‘recentres’ and ‘reconnects’ to that which is forgotten and/or neglected. ‘Decentring’ is according to Bates (2013) necessary to not be overwhelmed by depressive and anxious thinking. Subsequently grounding provides a way to ‘recentre’ one’s attention to something that supports an embodied presence. Moreover, the results from Bates’ (2013) study showed that ‘attention’ and ‘kindness’ were effective ‘coping tools’ (158). Their clients gained the courage to turn “toward difficulty, opening, sharing, reducing avoidance, and replacing old stories and ruminations with new stories— some sadder, but all more connected” (Bates 2013, 158). A reconnection with the present moment, which is sometimes referred to as ‘being at home’.

Lifestyle medicine is an evidence-based approach to prevent and treat diseases (Vries and Weijer 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) states the increase of physical activity (more movement) as one of the four main goals to fight chronic diseases (WHO 2018). A lot of research has been done on the effect of physical activity on health and disease. Research showed strong evidence on the effect of physical activity on the blood pressure, lipid profile, glucose metabolism, weight and obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, cancer, COPD, and more (Vries and Weijer 2020, 222). It also has a positive effect on psychological functioning and can reduce depressive symptoms (Nabkasorn et al. 2006; Salmon 2001; Scully et al. 1998), and there are positive effects on morbidity and mortality (Vries and Weijer 2020, 222).

Researchers found that walking has several positive effect, including enhanced psychological processing (Hays 1999), enhanced self-confidence and mood (Barton et al. 2009), and the mitigation of depressive symptoms (Pickett et al. 2012). In several studies, mindfulness training and physical exercise have demonstrated effects in reducing symptoms of psychological distress (Chiesa and Serretti 2009; Gerber and Puhse 2009). Results of Teut et al. (2013) show that a 4-week mindful walking program is supportive to reduce psychological distress. Gainey et al. (2016) researched the effect of Buddhist walking meditation on patients with diabetes 2. The results showed that it has a positive effect on the reduction of the blood glucose concentration, improving ‘aerobic fitness level’ as well as reducing stress. Gotink et al. (2016) showed that “mindful walking resulted in significant improvements of both mood and mindfulness skills” (1118). Walking meditation can be considered to be a Contemplative Practice (CP). Results from scientific research on CP, a term used for “mind–body approaches aimed at psychological transformation through the training of self-regulation, self-awareness, and self-inquiry”, and Buddhist techniques showed “an improvement in a number of somatic and psychiatric conditions” (Gamaiunova, Brandt, and Kliegel 2021, 1). The latter evidence seems to be in line with what has been stated in the Early Buddhist *Caṅkama Sutta* which suggested that mindful walking keeps one fit and healthy.

The effects of walking have given rise to various practices such as walking therapy. ‘Walk and talk’ is one of those methods (Revell & McLeod 2016). Further support for walk and talk can be found in research that highlighted the benefits gained through spending time outdoors

and in nature (Cooley et al. 2020). One example of the latter research showed that both the therapist and the patient came more “in tune with their bodies, emotions and behaviours, and also more connected with the practitioner at a deeper holistic level” (Cooley et al. 2020, 10). Lord (2005) worked with so-called “meditative dialogue” which according to her creates “a deep trust and love that allows for safe and healing interactions that encourage patients to face challenges and increase their capacities to bring more life to their life” (282).

Mindfulness is not only a powerful tool for clients but also for healthcare workers, including spiritual care professionals. Mindfulness courses showed to be effective in improving the wellbeing of healthcare workers, increasing their quality of life and their productivity outcomes (Chiappetta et al. 2018).

Complementary practices

There is much overlap in all different traditions and practices. The Burmese tradition together with the Thai Forest tradition, focus both on attentively observing bodily movements as ways to gain insight into the nature of phenomena. Even though the Burmese tradition seems to zoom more into the tiny details of the movements and elements, however, mindfulness of walking, the direct experience of it, is for both essential for the insight knowledge and wisdom.

Likewise, the Vietnamese *Thiền* tradition’s main purpose is concentration and insight, and this does not differ from the Burmese and Thai tradition. Equally do the Early Buddhist sources indicate that the ‘mark’ of concentration is essential in the walking practice. At the same time does the Thai Forest tradition use the four *Brahmavihārās* as a walking meditation object, the Early Buddhist sources mention *mettā bhāvanā* as a component of the walking meditation, and so does Thich Nhat Hanh suggest to take every step with love and tenderness. Also Bates (2013) showed that ‘kindness’ and ‘attention’ was a useful approach for clients to cope with difficulty.

Realizing ‘things as they really are’ appear to be at the centre of the walking meditation in the Early texts, the Thai, and the Burmese tradition. Also the ‘mark’ and attainments seem to be of more importance in the Early texts and the Burmese tradition, not in the Thai Forest, *Thiền*, or Japanese *Kinhin*. It is became clear that the *kinhin* has a different approach than all other traditions. However, there are references that interrelate with the Early sources such as the health benefits. Further, the *kinhin* does interrelate with the *Thiền* tradition in the sense of the coordination of the steps with a cycle of the breath.

Moreover, the feeling of walking, the touch of the soles of the feet with the ground is present in both the Early sources, the Thai Forest, Burmese, and *Thiền* tradition, and modern applications of walking meditation. Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2002) and Bates (2013) have recognized the benefits of these practices as a way to ‘ground’ oneself in this moment, a direct experience that has overlap all traditions. Likewise did Kabat-Zinn integrate elements from the Early traditions, as well as the Mahāyāna traditions, and he combined this with therapeutic and medical elements. The ‘decentering’ element, for example ‘I am not my thoughts’, as mentioned in chapter 2.3, is at the centre of all traditions. ‘Decentering’ as well as ‘recentering’ are ways to understand for example the body as not-self, empty, or as part of a causal interconnected web of life. Despite all differences and overlap, all of those approaches, perspectives, methods, and practices could contribute in many ways to the work of BSC. The

relevance of the different walking meditations rests mainly in the cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samadhi*), calm (*samatha*), the four *Brahmavihārās*, insight (*vipassanā*), and understanding and wisdom of the nature of things, including the self. These factors have the potential to eradicate craving, aversion, and delusion, and liberate one from suffering. The walking meditation in the different traditions complement each other. In this way the different practices can be adjusted to the needs and wishes of a client. This can be of great support in the care and guidance from BSCGs.

4: Contemplative Mindful Walking & Care

“A young student of mine from Nepal had never practiced walking meditation before, though he had lived in a monastery since he was six years old. It really surprised him that the practice was so refreshing. I sometimes encourage doctors and nurses to use this as a way to help them transform the often rushed or hurried way they move through the hospital. I’ve also found the practice to be a wonderful gift to give an old person, or someone who is sick and needs to move. Walking along with the elderly and frail brings you together in a new and intimate way that can engender deep trust” (Halifax 2009, 152).

The previous chapters showed what the different walking meditations mean in several traditions and contemporary practices. In this chapter, I will bring together the insights from the findings on walking meditation and BSC. The quote above from Halifax (2009) beautifully illustrates the meaningful role and contribution of the walking meditation practice in spiritual care. I assume that especially BSCGs have the experience and proficiency with walking meditation in a certain tradition. If not, this practice must be a part of their BSC curriculum and personal practice. This foundation can play a major role in the work as a BSCG as well as for the people they work with, including their colleagues. What walking could mean to us can vary a lot. It can be a transport, a ritual, an investigation, or a meditation. A physical action that can have various meanings and purposes. This chapter will first explore the opportunities that come along with the potential application of walking meditation in BSC, and then it will explore some of the challenges.

4.1 Opportunities

4.1.1 Openness and care

“If all this were nonempty, as in your view,
There would be no arising and ceasing” (Nāgārjuna 1995, 70).

We need mindfulness and compassion to be able to open. It is like the front and back foot in walking. They go together. We need both for moving forward. At the same time there is an openness in between those two feet. Our nature is openness because if we were not open, nothing would be able to come in. We cannot be perplex and full of wonder all the time. In that way we would get lost. We have to eat, live, and we have responsibilities. This is also our nature, and the openness too. The one is not more natural than the other. That is how I understand the front foot and back foot, we need them. The ability to live with those two ways. To do things and remain with openness. Those two together: to actively care with compassion and mindfulness, and to be presently open. “Strong back, and soft front,” this is how Halifax (2009, 35) would phrase this. The openness between the front foot and the back also serves a function. Openness serves a function. It can allow clients a space to be, with whatever difficulty or beauty there may be. Openness can allow us to ‘decentre’ and take a distance from certain patterns of thinking, views and ideas about oneself (Bizzini 2013). In Buddhism this openness can allow the mind to open to the space beyond the ‘self’, ‘me’, ‘I’, or ‘mine’. Openness has the ability to move one from self-centredness to Dharma-centredness, and walking meditation is one of the many practices that can support this realization.

Openness is also used in the Buddhist literature as a synonym for emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Nāgārjuna was one of the Buddhist monks and philosophers that used the sky (*ākāśa*) as a metaphor for *śūnyatā* (McCagney 1997, 35). One can be open as the sky, spacious, phenomena arise and pass, and free from grasping. As the quote above from Nāgārjuna indicates, things have to be open or empty because the world is in a continuous change in which nothing is to crave for and nothing is worth hold on to. One can find an exploration of *śūnyatā* in the work of McCagney (1997).

However, according to Bodhi (1998) one has to be cautious with the seemingly colourless term of ‘openness’. The philosophy of openness indicates to drop our limits, judgments, and discriminations in order to plunge ourselves in the flow of immediate open experience. Bodhi (1998) adds a note to this openness by referring to heedfulness (*appamāda*). Heedfulness is a moral caution and care to be aware of what leads to (more) suffering and what leads to the freedom from suffering. This is an important note for BSCGs.

The compassionate non-self or non-personal openness that the BSCG practices can radiate in their work. Both Edel Maex (2011), André van der Braak (in Ganzevoort et al. 2014), and Giles and Miller (2012) referred to that openness. Especially the latter two sources relate it to qualities of the BSCG. Block described the core of qualities that a BSCG need: “a heart and mind that is relaxed and open to what is” (Giles & Miller 2012, 7). The BSCG does not only practice and encourage an openness within themselves, they surely also provide this space which can encourage open attitudes of ‘letting go’, ‘non-attachment’, and ‘no-self’.

The walking meditation can be seen as a practice and an expression of openness and inspiration. As Halifax (2009) wrote, the walking together can create this deep trust. Walking meditation can be both a support for the BSCG’s practice as well as for the client. That openness, which supports to naturally radiate qualities of the heart, can inspire clients. One of those qualities is the patience that a client receives from a deep and openly listening BSCG. This can inspire the client too, to be patient, and patiently be with what is there. The Early Buddhist text showed that *mettā bhāvanā* can be practiced in walking meditation too. Griffing (2021) wrote a *Tricycle* article that “*mettā* (lovingkindness) is that sense of openness when we feel connected to everyone and everything in the world. In some ways, it’s a natural outgrowth of mindfulness practice and just the general cultivation of happiness in our lives.” This kind openness can support the shift of focus from a narrow self-centredness to all the loved ones around us—friends, family, relatives, partner, colleagues, and any other fellow being. According to Griffing (2021), the heart tends to open more easily with this practice.

The caring space that is created in the meeting has to be a space that feels safe and trustful. This depends very much on the openness and safety that the BSCG creates. It is the space and energy that is created when two people meet. In the spiritual care interaction, within this relationship, there is a co-created space which I would call a ‘sacred space of care’. This is something to be safeguarded, and it is a space where one can simply be, and thus also allow oneself and the other to be a vulnerable human being. It is an interactional sphere between one and the other. An open space of trust and compassion that can be generated during a mindful walk (Revell & McLeod 2016; Cooley et al. 2020). At the same time this open space has the potential for realizations, insights, and to generate wisdom (Lord 2010). Revell & McLeod (2016) found in their research on outdoor ‘walk and talk therapy’ that practitioners experienced walking side by side helpful. They found that their clients in this way would

“open up, enhancing overall well-being, and that walk and talk promoted a holistic approach for client self-discovery” (Revell & McLeod 2016, 38).

The reconnection with the quality of compassionate openness can be guided and supported by the BSCG while walking. For a client, each step, with uttermost care, is an opportunity for insight and opening to qualities of the heart. One can walk side-by-side and enjoy this walking practice of the heart.

4.1.2 Clarity

Block suggests that the meaning of BSC is to support and guide people in opening to their hearts that is filled with “stillness, clarity, and love” (Giles & Miller 2012, 7). With the support of mindfulness, walking meditation in BSC has the potential to create clarity. Taking a distance (‘decentering’) and relating differently and wisely to negative and depressive thinking, difficulty, and reactivity is according to Bizzini (2013) as core aspect of mindfulness. Mindfulness means that one is vigilant, fully present with what is there, attentively alert, a mental clarity, open and awake. Walking meditation has this potential. Dhammajiva (2016, 12) too wrote in his book ‘*Caṅkama: Book on Walking Meditation*’ clarity of mind is one of the results of the walking meditation practice, as well as the Early text showed with regard to ‘clear comprehension’ (*sampajañña*).

4.1.3 Qualities of the Heart

The practice of walking meditation can support both the BSCG and the client to connect with qualities of the heart. Walking meditation can support the cultivation of mindfulness, kindness, compassion, and wisdom for both practitioners. As the early sources showed, mindfulness meditation can be practiced standing, walking, sitting, or lying down. Mindfulness supports both practitioners to be “fully present and listen attentively in deeply silent open and compassionate ways to themselves, to others, and to the wisdom that exists in the universe and is cultivated in the space in between” (Lord 2010, 273). According to Lord (2010), the space between, in this case between the therapist and the client, has the capacity to attract the spiritual and has the potential to generate wisdom. *Paññā*, understanding and wisdom, are the central qualities to develop on the Buddhist path (Harvey 2013).

In the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* (Sn. 1.8), the ‘Discourse on Loving-kindness’, it is suggested to cultivate mindfulness and a heart of loving-kindness throughout all four postures. This recollection can provide the opportunity to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion towards all living beings while walking.

From the Thai Forest perspective, Nyanadhammo (2003) suggested that one can also use the meditation object of the four *Brahmavihārās*: loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. While walking, wishes from the heart can be recited, for example: “may all beings be happy, may all beings be at peace, may all beings be free from all suffering” (8-9). Likewise, Thich Nhat Hanh instructed to use recitation of poems, words, and sentences of compassion and/or loving-kindness with each step.

Comparable to mindfulness, compassion and self-compassion practices, which originate from Buddhism (Shonin et al. 2014, Jinpa 2016), have been introduced in western clinical settings (Gilbert 2010; 2014, van den Brink and Koster 2012). Much scientific research has been done on the effects of compassion and self-compassion on the mental and physical well-

being. An overview of research on compassion and self-compassion can be found in Khoury (2019) and van der Meulen et al. (2020). What stands out is that no research on compassion touched upon the practice of walking meditation as a way to cultivate compassion.

Anālayo and Dhammadinnā (2021) provide a thorough insight in the Early Buddhist view on compassion. No walking is mentioned, however, suggestions from the sources in this thesis showed that the cultivation of compassion can be done in walking too. Earliest Buddhist sources, such as the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* (Sn. 1.8) and the *Brahmavihāra Sutta* (AN 10:196) (Bodhi 2001, 2012) do provide a basis for the cultivation of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* suggested to be mindful of all four postures and discern when one is walking (Ṭhānissaro 2008). From that perspective I argue that one can discern too when the heart-mind is filled with loving-kindness, compassion, or with craving, aversion, and delusion. One can consciously cultivate the four *Brahmavihārās* while mindfully walking.

Also Maex (2011, 171) argued that we need compassion, patience and kindness and meet with the world and all its suffering. This is what a BSCG as well as a client needs. As Hickey wrote that such qualities of the heart and presence is what suffering people need: “someone who can be with them compassionately in the midst of their suffering” (Giles & Miller 2012, 22). Other qualities of BSCGs that have been mentioned in the literature were kindness, compassion, courage and willingness to listen, care, simplicity, calmness, stillness, clarity, attention, and love.

4.1.4 Science of Relating (Dutch *verhoudingskunde*)

As Martin Walton suggested that spiritual care is the ‘science of relating’ (Dutch *verhoudingskunde*) (Polak and Bohlmeijer 2020), so too has mindfulness the potential to enable one to relate wisely and compassionately to what is present. This is being confirmed by Bingeman (2011):

“Mindfulness meditation is more fundamentally a form of healthy relationship with oneself.[...]To be mindfully aware and spiritually centered, through the ongoing practice of contemplative prayer and meditation, is good not only for our spiritual health but also for the mental processes that ‘affect the brain and body-for good or ill’” (480).

Bizzini (2013) also argued that mindfulness provides a space to step out of certain patterns and relate differently. Siegel (2007) characterized mindfulness as a way and a process of developing an “attuned relationship with oneself” (1). People in tragic situations or in unexpected physical and mental pain and disease have to somehow deal with this. The way they relate to difficulty, pain, illness, or a disability is key for their well-being. Therefore the spiritual practice of mindfulness has the potential to support a healthy way of relating. With walking meditation, one can step out of the negative circle and connect with for example the direct physical sensations as suggested by the Early texts, the Thai, Burmese, and Vietnamese *Thiền* tradition, and the therapeutic and medical ‘grounding’ practice (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale 2002; Bates 2013). This practice has the potential to understand the three characteristics (*anicca, anattā, dukkha*), and thus also seeing the true nature of that pain and difficulty without neglecting it.

At the same time, when walking with mindfulness, one walks with ‘heartfulness’ (van den

Brink and Koster 2012). Relating to pain, difficulty and disease with aversion and aggression could be logical, but not a wise approach. A kind and compassionate heart-mind could create more softness around the uninvited pain and difficulty. Thai Forest monk Ajahn Brahm (2005) offered a relating story to this, the story of the ‘anger-eating monster’. The story is about an invited guest in a palace, which was an ugly monster and who grew bigger and uglier with every unwelcoming word and thought of the other guests. When the king entered and offered a cup of tea and spoke kind welcoming words, with every kind word, deed or thought, the monster grew smaller and less ugly. Mindfulness offers a way to relate differently, also while walking we can ‘decentre’ and see our thinking and habits clearly. When we would think with anger to for example a pain, we say ‘Pain, go away, you don't belong here!’. As Brahm (2005, 33-34) said that in this way the “pain grows an inch bigger and worse in other ways. It is difficult to be kind to something so ugly and offensive as pain”. I am not arguing that kindness is the solution to pain and difficulty, however, I do argue that mindfulness, and especially ‘heartfulness’, offers the possibility to relate to that which is painful, difficult or worrisome with a compassionate and kind heart-mind. To soften the resistance towards that which is difficult, one may notice how the experience of that difficulty is, from a Burmese Theravāda perspective, a constantly changing phenomena of different sensations; rising and passing away moment by moment. The *Sallatha Sutta*, The Arrow (SN 36.6), can offer useful insight into this theme as well (Ṭhānissaro 1997).

4.1.5 Co-Meditation

Walking as a BSCG with a client can be very transformative. As Halifax (2009) wrote, walking along the elderly and fragile human beings is a gift and “brings you together in a new and intimate way that can engender deep trust” (152). Walking mindfully in silence has according to Thich Nhat Hanh a powerful quality. Taking each step mindfully, one has the potential to create joy and insight. Walking in silence with others can accordingly be very powerful too.

The BSCG can also make use of the ‘Walk and talk’ methods (Revell & McLeod 2016). According to Cooley et al. (2020) clients experience walking and talking outdoors with their therapist more “meaningful” and they experienced greater “interconnectivity” (10). Further support for walk and talk can be found in research that highlighted the benefits gained through spending time outdoors and in nature (Cooley et al. 2020). As mentioned in 3.7, the mutual attentiveness in the ‘meditative dialogue’ is worthwhile considering when practicing walking meditation with a client (Lord 2005).

4.1.6 Quietude

A calm mind can be very helpful for both the BSCGs, their colleagues, and the clients. Conze (2003, 11) wrote that meditation promotes a calming mind. Walking meditation too has the potential to bring calmness and tranquillity. In the Thai Forest tradition one of the main focusses of walking meditation is calming meditation; *samatha bhāvanā*. From their perspective walking can create a mind that is still, despite the surrounding one is in. Tan (2015) wrote that with walking meditation, when “our mind is fixed on this smooth flow of change, then mental calm will arise on due course” (3). Whether one is practicing the slow or fast *kinhin*, walking up and down as suggested in the *Therāgathā*, in line with Thich Nhat

Hanh's approach, the Burmese vipassanā or the Thai forest style of walking meditation, all of these practices do create serenity, calmness, and stillness. Solnit (2001, 27) carefully noted in her book on the philosophical history of walking that the mind, like the feet, functions with a pace of 5 kilometres per hour. If that would be the case, then modern life moves faster than the pace of our thinking. This could be one of the many causes for stress and suffering. Hanh's approach of walking meditation is an antidote for the modernity's hasty and restless lifestyle. Walking meditation seems to offer people a peaceful foundation to not be carried away and burn-out from the fast-paced culture of modernity.

A part in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu (2008) translated as "breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my body." I would adjust this to a walking version: 'Left foot, I calm my body, right foot, I calm my mind'. This is an adjustment that could potentially support people to relax their body and mind to create clarity and peace. As mentioned in 2.1: *samatha* and *vipassanā* can work together to create a state in which insight and wisdom can arise in a peaceful, strong, and clear mind.

The simple act of bringing the mind in the present moment, and thus not occupied in ruminative thinking and stressful thoughts about future or past, can bring a sense of ease and quietude. This is also important for the BSCG. As they walk through the halls of hospitals and prisons, they inspire. As Teng-Kuan (2018, 8) wrote beautifully about the short film *Walker* wherein a monk slowly walked through a busy city: "the walker brings an oasis of quietude into the restive clamour of the city, grounding each shot with a still, meditative presence." I am arguing that the walker (the BSCG) can bring an oasis of quietude into the restive clamour of for example the hospital. Grounding each step with a still and meditative presence. Especially Hanh promotes that walking with mindfulness is an opportunity to radiate the peace and compassion (2015, 73). He stated in the same book that by bringing the attention to the feet and the contact with the ground below, it is already enough for healing (60). This can support insight into the true nature of our being.

The pace of walking too can help the wandering mind to ease. In the Thai Forest tradition Nyanadhammo (2003) wrote that by knowing the rising and passing feelings, it will quiet the mind. Furthermore, Nyanadhammo suggested when the mindfulness is not so strong and there is lots of wandering or emotions, it could help to start walking very slowly until one can be mindful of each step again. One can always ask the question: 'where is the mind right now?' Or, 'what is happening right now?' This will bring the attention immediately in the present moment experience. Both the Burmese vipassana and the Japanese *kinhin* have a fast and slow practice, depending on the specific tradition's teaching or the practitioner's needs.

4.1.7 Concentration

The Early Buddhist sources use the term *samādhi* to refer to high states of concentration, or one-pointedness, and can generate the state which is called *jhānas* (Harvey 2013, 330). Mahāsi (2016, 182) wrote that the noting of each movement in the mind and body is significant for the development of concentration and mindfulness. The *Caṅkama Sutta* confirms the importance of walking meditation for the development of concentration, it will last for a long time (Bodhi 2019, 72). The *Ānguttara Commentary* on the *Caṅkama Sutta* showed that the concentration gained with walking meditation is much more powerful and integrable in daily life than for example sitting meditation.

The main purpose of the walking meditation practice according to Hanh (2015, 105) is concentration. This can accordingly generate peace, joy and calmness. Concentration is a significant aspect in the Buddhist meditation because it is key in the cultivation for insight and wisdom. Also Riggs (2008) referred to Menzan's note on the spiritual benefits of walking meditation (*kinhin*), with a specific emphasis on the results for one-pointedness in walking meditation.

The Early practice as stated in the *Therāgathā*, walking back and forth, is definitely a source for concentrating one's mind. Likewise the *Pacalā Sutta* (A 7.58) wherein walking meditation is suggested as a way to focus the mind and to overcome drowsiness or torpor.

4.1.8 Realization

We often think of our home where we live, or where our heart is. Titmuss (2015) wrote in his book 'The Mindfulness Manual': "our home is where we place our feet" (40). Mindful and meditative walking can according to Titmuss (2015) support a grounded feeling, an inner steadiness, and "an ongoing expression of devotion to each moment" (40). When we walk from A to B, fast and intense, we can be aware of what is going on within. Titmuss (2015) wrote that there is a link between the feet and the mind which provides an opportunity for insight. We have a choice to stop or slow down in the middle of ruminative thinking and "bringing recollection to our whole manner of walking" (Titmuss 2015, 40).

As mentioned in 3.1, walking meditation can be understood as *vipassanā bhāvanā*, the cultivation of insight into these three characteristics (*anicca, anattā, and dukkha*). Tan (2015,3) wrote that when one notes "the flow of rising, falling and changing of our postures, and we note their impermanence, we are then practising the perception of impermanence." Walking can support the insight into a continuous ever-present flow of life, changingness, and impermanence. Walking can be seen as a way in which the continuity of 'self' can be experienced in a moving stream of the world and the relationship with the inner and the outer world. Walking meditation is an opportunity for insight in both the Early Buddhist tradition, Thai Forest, Burmese, and the *Thiền* tradition. As mentioned in chapter 1, a BSCG can support others to realize the beauty of change and provide a space that can encourage openness, nonattachment, and the realization of no-self (Ganzevoort et al. 2014, 188).

One would think that the realization of for example impermanence is actually a sad thing. Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (2018) wrote in an article in *Tricycle* that the understanding of the impermanent nature of all phenomena can support the opening up to the world around us. He refers to opening up to the pain and suffering of others. This is how love and compassion accordingly become warm and genuine. The sadness that can overwhelm both the client as well as the BSCG can be a trigger for insight and realization.

Gamaiunova, Brandt, and Kliegel (2021) wrote that "emphasizing temporality of the current experience may serve as a potent regulatory strategy, as it has already been demonstrated in earlier research: the idea of impermanence was used by Sri Lankan tsunami survivors as a coping strategy and reported as one of the main strategies for coping with stressful situations in American Buddhists" (12). The opportunity in realizing the three characteristics through walking meditation for opening, compassion, and as a way for coping in BSC could potentially contribute to the spiritual development as well as the overall well-being. From a Buddhist perspective, especially the understanding that there is really nothing

to crave for, nothing to hold on to in the entire world of phenomena can lead to the freedom from suffering.

4.1.9 Movement and elements

“The whole of the body wants to keep moving—not even a single little part left out, everything in motion, just like the universe. Stillness in meditation refers to the mind, not a rigidly stiff body” (Johnson 2018).

Walking we do physiologically the same as every other walking human being, however, the composition is never the same and each moment is a new one in a continuous flux. In each moment our body is in a renewing composition of elements: we breath in different air, ate something else, the weather is in a certain way, and have different thoughts, emotions and feelings that might affect the quality of walking. Biologically, each cell in our body is moving and renewing in every moment. Thich Nhat Hanh promotes the realization of interconnectedness. Walking and contemplating the elements has the potential to open up to the movement of these elements. It could support people to realize that there is no self to be found in those elements. We depend on the sun, rain, wind, animals, plants, oxygen, in order to live. They move through us. The last outbreak of some great masters still move around in this planet and through us. This interwovenness can be contemplated upon with walking.

The fifth sub-aspect of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Ṭhānissaro 2008) is related to the contemplation of the elements (fire: qualities of temperature, earth: qualities of softness and hardness, air: qualities of movement, water: qualities of fluidity) which can be practiced with walking meditation too. In the *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22), the mindfulness of the bodily movements and its continuously changing elements and states of the mind has to be cultivated in order to understand things ‘as they really are’. Thai forest monk Nyanadhammo (2003) suggested to break down the elements (water, earth, fire, and air) in order to understand the selflessness in it. Similarly, the Burmese Mahāsī (2016) suggests working with the elements as part of the walking meditation. His descriptions and practices are ways to clearly comprehend the “ultimate sense” of walking.

The mindfulness and concentration that are gained with walking meditation will according to the *Caṅkama Sutta* and Tan (2015) last much longer than when it would be gained with a seated meditation. The analysis of the different perspectives imply that when one is able to be ‘heartful’ and concentrated while walking, the factors of concentration, mindfulness, lovingkindness and compassion will not be lost in any other posture, and can apply those heartful and mindful qualities in all of life’s activities.

4.1.10 Health

It should not be neglected that the physical activity of walking influences health. Several Early Buddhist texts emphasized the benefits of walking meditation on health. In the *Caṅkama Sutta*, three of the five benefits are associated with health. In the Japanese *kinhin*, Menzan stressed that next to the spiritual, the physical benefits of *kinhin* serves to “revive one’s spirit [and] to revitalize, and brings increased energy, stamina, digestive and overall health” (Riggs 2008, 244).

Chapter 3.7 showed that walking in combination with mindfulness has a positive impact of the psychological state of people. Walking implies to improve one’s self-confidence, mood

and mindfulness skills (Barton et al. 2009; Gotink et al. 2016) and it works against diseases, stress and depressions (Chiesa and Serretti 2009; Gainey et al. 2016; Gerber and Puhse 2009; Nabkasorn et al. 2006; Pickett et al. 2012; Salmon 2001; Scully et al. 1998; Teut et al. 2013; Vries and Weijer 2020). I am not suggesting a role for BSCG as a wellness trainer, however, I do suggest that walking meditation includes a package of positive side effects that can contribute to the holistic cure and wellbeing of a client.

The five benefits as mentioned in the *Caṅkama Sutta* can support both the health and concentration that can be cultivated with this practice. A healthy physical state seems to be more obvious for us to live, however, a concentrated mind is from the perspective of BSC significant to be able to openly listen and be present with what is there. A clear and sensitive mind can be much more supportive for the other to be heard, and to be inspired.

4.1.11 Contemplation

Contemplation is a way of meditating and can be practiced walking. One of the many etymologies of the word ‘religion’ derives from the Latin *religāre* – “to reconnect” (Tessier 2014, 14). From the perspective of Hanh, one can reconnect for example with the wonder of nature through walking meditation. Hanh (2015) also suggests to mindfully walk as a way to reconnect with seeds of peace that are already within us. From many other Buddhist perspectives, with walking meditation, one can reconnect with one’s true nature of changingness, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness. From a Mahāyāna Buddhist standpoint, one could reconnect with the inherent ‘Buddha-nature’. Whether the Buddha-nature is the potentiality to be developed or already present but covered by our delusions. This analysis does show that this can be realized and experienced through for example walking practice. As mentioned in 3.4, for Menzan became the walking itself the embodiment of Buddha-nature.

Tessier (2014) referred to another proposed etymology of the word ‘religion’, which derives from the Latin *relegere*. This is being translated as to “reread...go over again or consider carefully” (Tessier 2014, 14). The activity of reflection and contemplation can be considered as another object of meditation. While walking, one can for example contemplate the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the (six and ten) Perfections (*pāramī*), precepts, *suttas*, recite, and chant whatever is meaningful and valuable for that specific person and at that specific moment.

4.1.12 Nature

It is important to choose a space where one can walk without being disturbed. This depends on the institution where one is in. The BSCG has the responsibility to organise a space to walk together and/or where the client can practice alone or together with others. Outdoors and in nature can be an option to consider.

Nature, forests, and outdoors have held a particular place in Buddhist history. The Buddha practiced and attained enlightenment under a tree, he taught outdoors in forests and he chose to die in a quiet forest. Many spiritual traditions, including Buddhist monastics and lay communities, chose for living simple lifestyles in the forests. Also Thich Nhat Hanh emphasized nature as an inspiration and meditation object during walking meditations. He suggested several forms with slow walking meditation with an open awareness. The different forms include the appreciation for the wonders of the earth, the use of senses during a walk

(hearing, seeing, smelling, touch of the feet on the earth, taste of a fruit), and contemplating the appreciation for the interconnectedness and dependence on all elements and life on this earth.

There are many interventions and methods to be explored for the BSC. The focus of this research is not on walking meditation in nature, green environment and outdoors, however, I would like to give a brief insight into this opportunity to combine nature with BSC and walking meditation. Recent studies have shown the power of mindfulness and nature (Nisbet et al., 2019; Choe et al., 2020), however, little research has been done on mindful walking in nature. Nature exposure in combination with physical movement does seem to imply the potential to reduce negative emotions, stress, anxiety, and depression (Bodin & Hartig, 2003; Machay & Neill, 2010). Also research has shown the potential of talking therapy in natural outdoor spaces (Cooley et al. 2020). Walking meditation in the outdoor space has only been researched by Teut et al. (2013). It did show that a mindful walking program is supportive to reduce psychological distress. Revell & McLeod (2016, 39) showed that a therapy in nature can allow clients to be in touch with something “other-than-human and more than-human can and be transformative in many ways.” Nakau et al. (2013) found in their research that a green environment has potential benefits for the emotional and spiritual well-being of cancer patients. There is potential, however, further research on the different forms of walking meditation in nature should be considered. More insight can be found in the Buddhist ‘meditative hiking’ in nature (Snyder 1990; Ives 2018), in a Buddhist model for ‘ecotherapy’ (Brazier 2018), and Japanese Shinrin-Yoku or the so-called ‘forest bathing’ (Hansen, Jones, and Tocchini 2017).

One of the concluding remarks of Revell & McLeod (2016) was that outdoor and nature based therapy settings were considered “to offer healing and restoration through a sense of freedom, space and openness” (39). Cooley et al. (2020) additionally noted in their research in outdoor walking therapy that clients reported that not being centred around daily norms and diagnoses, provided a “freedom for emotional expression, which helped some to detach and open up in a way they did not experience in a counselling office” (10).

Nature can help us to step out of our little world of ‘self’ and open up to a vast and wide space. As Gary Snyder wrote: “inspiration, exaltation, and insight do not end when one steps outside the doors of the church” (Snyder 1990, 101). He refers to nature as a “sacred place” or “temple” where one can gain similar insights as on the meditation cushion (101).

The complexity of nature in Buddhism should not be underestimated. For example in Japanese Buddhism nature can mean much more than the Western idea of nature. One can say that emptiness is “the nature of the nature of nature” (Snyder 1990, 110). Tollini (2017) can be supportive if one wishes to explore this topic

4.2 Challenges

4.2.1 Location and Conditions

Stress and anxiety have a great connection with our Western culture. This culture is fed by busyness and distraction and is focussed on striving and production which causes stress and anxiety. Likewise in healthcare institutions this culture can be present. The healthcare sector is nowadays a market-oriented sector, “where effectivity and efficiency are leading norms” (Zock 2014, 6). New technologies make the employees more productive, not freer. Efficient

and fast, and something that cannot be expressed and examined by numbers cannot be valued. Contemplation and meditation on the other hand are rather part of the category useless, inefficient and 'doing nothing' through the eyes of this culture. In the Netherlands we even have words for this 'doing-nothing': 'niksen', 'nietsdoen', and 'duimdraaien'. These Dutch words have a negative connotation, unfortunately. 'Doing-nothing' can be something very meditative depending on how one understands 'doing-nothing'. Jon Kabat-Zinn distinguished the mode of 'doing' and 'being' or 'non-doing' (1990). Kabat-Zinn compared this difference to that of a tourist and a pilgrim. A tourist would run from A to B ('doing') without noticing anything on the way. For a pilgrim the way is the goal ('being'). The 'being-mode' is the mindful and attentive one, aware and present of the moment-to-moment experiences. I do see walking as a 'doing nothing' in disguise, or rather as an opportunity to be, even when working and going from A to B. Solnit described walking as a 'delicate balance between work and doing nothing' (2001, 21).

Furthermore, the conditions in meditation centres and monasteries are rather artificial in the sense that one can more easily focus and feel peaceful with all supportive conditions being in place. To name a few of these conditions: the kind and compassionate community, teachers, silence, often nourishing food, and the simplicity of daily life. These conditions are not necessarily present in prisons, hospitals, the army, and other institutions where BSCG would operate. However, BSC does have the potential to provide such conditions, even when provided briefly. A retreat for healthcare workers (Altounji D. et al. 2013), prisoners (Ronel, Frid, and Timor 2013), prison guards, clients, or in any other situation could be considered as part of the spiritual care work.

Finding nature can be a challenge depending on where one is based. Finding suitable green areas to walk is in most urban places not easy. However, Nakau et al. (2013) showed that it is possible to combine urban green spaces with spiritual care. Further research is required to understand the potential of spiritual care and walking meditation in nature.

4.2.2 Evidence-based Spiritual Care

Creating an evidence-based spiritual care profession has often been a challenge (Fitchett 2011). Fitchett (2011, 4) does argue for evidence-based research that can inform the spiritual care. The arguments are to show that spiritual care is a productive member of the team, communicate effectively with colleagues, and show it is not harmful or ineffective (Fitchett 2011, 4).

There is no research on applying walking meditation as an intervention of spiritual care in prisons, army, or healthcare institutions. Research on the application of walking meditation in BSC needs to be there in order to inform and align the profession in the sector where people want to see the effect and result of a certain intervention. This is not an easy task. Fitchett (2011) suggested that this profession needs good case studies to provide detailed information about three things that are part of research: "1) descriptions of the client (or family) to whom we provided care, 2) descriptions of the spiritual care that was provided, and 3) descriptions of the changes that occurred as a result of that spiritual care" (5). This might be challenging with diverse motives for practicing walking meditation. One might want to reduce stress and anxiety, while others want to free themselves from suffering, or they want to relax, or to relate differently to their difficulty or disability. Despite the challenge, case studies can definitely

give insight in the qualitative contribution of BSC and walking meditation as an intervention. I do agree that BSC has to provide evidence in order improve their spiritual care, and to be more welcomed and provide the needed spiritual care in a wide variety of institutions where people face difficulty and suffer.

4.2.3 Physical Condition

The physical activity of walking is not feasible to be done by everybody. Especially in some healthcare institutions, clients are unable or incapable of walking. For them I would suggest other forms of meditation than walking. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* mentioned that one can practice meditation and mindfulness in all four postures. BSCG need to be well-experienced in order to guide and provide this type of spiritual care as clients can face severe pains, stress, and feelings of hopelessness and despair

Conclusion/Discussion

From the Early Buddhist sources and the other selected contemporary practices, including scientific views, it becomes clear that walking meditation is not to be generalised or simplified. It is a complex practice with various developed understandings, forms, methods, and rituals. The role of walking meditation is an important practice for Buddhist practitioners, however, it also enters therapeutic and medical domains. The literature shows that walking meditation as part of spiritual care has a potential role to play in these domains.

Walking can be very easy when one has the physical and mental ability to do so. It does not require expensive accessory or major changes in one's daily schedule. Walking is a basic activity that one does throughout the day, however, walking meditation does require more effort than walking alone. Walking meditation is a delicate practice and the compassionate and caring guidance from BSCGs is significant. Their role is not depending on the purpose or intended goal for practicing walking meditation. This analysis has shown that the BSCG's guidance requires openness, mindfulness, deep listening, and compassion. This gentle support can be the foundation for clients to be able to 'ground' and 'reconnect' with the walking itself, with their bodies, and to anything they have neglected and avoided due to the medical treatments, traumas, or a busy life. Kindly reengaging in this way with walking provides a refuge, with which they can connect in any moment of walking. With this compassionate base, and with mindfulness, one can learn to 'decentre' and find a way to create a kind and healthy relationship with oneself, including the difficulties, suffering, disabilities, and so on. Therefore, walking meditation is a 'science of relating' for the client.

At the same time, walking meditation can be beneficial to both BSCGs and their colleagues. Walking meditation is an opportunity for them to stay attentively present, open, and connected with their qualities of compassion and care. The caring job can require a lot from people. Compassion fatigue and burn-outs are not uncommon among spiritual care and healthcare professionals, and walking meditation can therefore be a useful intervention to practice, even when simply walking from one task to another.

The different traditions and forms of walking meditation can provide BSCGs with a rich package of interventions they may apply in their work, whether as a meditation, a ritual, or a way to 'walk and talk'. The opportunities that crystalized during the analysis show the potential contributions to BSC, and potentially interfaith spiritual care as well. There are many benefits that come along with the practice of walking meditation which have not yet been considered by BSCGs. BSCGs are no wellness instructors, however, the practice of walking meditation does include a comprehensive bundle of benefits that contributes to more areas than the spiritual alone. The heart-mind and physical are not two separate things. Also Slatman (2017) argues that body-mind dualism is outdated. I argue that walking meditation is a holistic approach that has the potential to support the spiritual, physical, and psychological care.

Thich Nhat Hanh provides a shift of attention, similar to the functioning of 'decentering' as found by Bates (2013). According to the Early Buddhist tradition, the Burmese, Thai, and the *Thiền* tradition, walking meditation can be a practice for insight and to realize one's true nature. This is a form of meditation that can be done in any informal moment. As suggested in chapter 3.1, when practicing according to the *satipaṭṭhāna* and one is walking, one knows that

one is walking from A to B. At the same time *anicca*, *anattā*, and *dukkha* can be comprehended while walking mindfully, even if informally. Walking meditation can serve as a powerful bridge between the formal meditation practice and daily life. The *Āṅguttara Commentary* note to the *Caṅkama Sutta* shows that the benefits gained during walking meditation last longer than the sitting, standing or reclining meditation do and can extend to any moment of walking.

In addition, the analysis has shown that walking meditation can contribute to the cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*), clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), concentration (*samadhi*), calmness (*samatha*), the four *Brahmavihārās*, insight (*vipassanā*), and understanding and wisdom (*paññā*) of the nature of things ‘as they really are’. All these factors have, according to the literature, the potential to eradicate craving, aversion, and delusion, and liberate one from suffering. Therefore, meditation has been subjected to therapeutic understandings concerning its rightfulness in contributing to profound insight into the meaning of a client’s existence and difficulties in relation to the human condition, as well as refining an understanding of the ‘self’. Further, an embodied meditation is an opportunity for insight and wisdom, it has the potential to take the self out of the depressive or hopeless state. Walking meditation can therefore be seen as a significant aspect of contemplative care, which includes contemplation with Buddhist teachings, the elements, nature, and the interconnectedness of life.

Another contribution of walking meditation to BSC is the benefit of openness. Walking meditation creates openness and space for things to arise and pass again, so life moves more freely. When one gets too occupied with a certain thought or emotion, it is given value and can therefore grow (see story of the ‘anger-eating monster’ in 4.1.4). In the open atmosphere created by walking meditation, clients have the opportunity to reconnect with new meaning and insights, and potentially with the true nature of phenomena, which is selfless and empty/open. Walking meditation can be ‘refreshing’ (Halifax 2009, 152) for both the clients, BSCGs, and colleagues.

BSCGs can cultivate a ‘sacred space of care’ in all of their activities, including their walks with clients and colleagues. Each step can be done with mindfulness, compassion, and care. As Thich Nhat Hanh writes, ‘peace is every step’ (1994). Each step can encompass our intentions, ethics, and our qualities of the heart. This analysis implied that the most sustainable way to still the mind and cultivate qualities of the heart is to move the body.

This thesis concludes that walking meditation can contribute to many aspects of the spiritual development in BSC. Walking meditation in BSC has the potential to support the alignment of BSC at the centre of care – yet always in support of psychological and medical care. This thesis showed me that the power of walking meditation, in combination with the skills and qualities of a BSCG, should not be overlooked. On the contrary, for spiritual care to innovate and progress, ancient forms such as walking meditation should be further explored and examined. There seems to be potential in this practice, however, due to the lack of research, no recommendations can be provided for spiritual care professionals.

Further, I understood the relevance of considering the Early Buddhist sources in research on BSC and meditative practices. There is a great depth to be found in the extensive variety of those early teachings and practices. By getting involved with those texts, I got unexpectedly enthusiastic and eager to proceed using Early Buddhist sources in future work. I have been

especially astonished by what all has been written and taught about walking meditation in those texts. Buddhist teachers and places I got to know over the past 12 years never extensively emphasised the meaning and purpose of walking meditation. Providing clear and detailed content on this theme could possibly stimulate people to consider this complementary practice.

The largest limitation in this thesis lies in the lack of focus on a specific group of people and/or institutions where walking meditation could be applied. Therefore it would be significant to consider a specific group or domain of spiritual care in future research. Equally significant for future research is the exploration of the relationship between walking meditation and BSC, and interfaith spiritual care. This can be fruitful for both spiritual care professionals and their colleagues. At the same time the effect of the outdoor/natural settings needs further exploration, with a specific focus on the way walking meditation interacts and contributes to psychological and spiritual well-being. It is also necessary to further research the long-term effects of walking meditation on the overall well-being of an individual. The findings in this thesis are a call for further exploration into the effects of walking meditation on the psychological and spiritual processes in different settings such as prisons, hospitals, psychiatric centres, elderly homes, and the army. It might be worthwhile for me to consider writing an in-depth publication about walking meditation from a Buddhist perspective in order to fill that gap.

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Appendix I

The first stage of this ritual activity is separation. The walker will go outside and steps out of all the roles and worries, a sort of ‘decentering’ step; they unplug. They move to the mode of ‘being’ instead of ‘doing’ (Kabat-Zinn 1990). Kabat-Zinn compared this difference to that of a tourist and a pilgrim. A tourist would run from A to B (‘doing’) without noticing anything on the way. For a pilgrim the way is the goal (‘being’). The ‘being-mode’ is the mindful and attentive one, aware and present of the moment-to-moment experiences.

The second stage of the ritual is when the person enters “liminality” (Ives 2018, 14). That is a time or place that is ‘decentered’ from the normal life. This is a transitional phase where one moves from first-person to third-person and thus disconnects with that which is known. One brings in the spirit of the beginner’s mind. One step at a time with a completely unknown body and in an unknown place and time. A fresh and new way of connecting with the moment that is unknown. There is an absence of daily and habitual structures and reactions. A simple walk where one disconnects his/herself from shopping, work and technology. One opens for what is there. In this stage, when walked mindfully, one can see the interdependent essence of life both in the inner and outer world. Thich Nhat Hanh often used the illustration: “in a sheet of paper are the tree its fibres came from, the sun and rain that sustained this, the logger that cut it down and all he depended on, and ourselves as part of a deeply interdependent world in which all items ‘inter-are’ with all others” (Harvey 2013, 149). Ives (2018) refers to Phil Cousineau who wrote “what matters most on your journey is how deeply you see, how attentively you hear, how richly the encounters are felt in your heart and soul” (Ives 2018, 16). The essence of a pilgrimage is described in three words: “openness, attentiveness and responsiveness” (Ives, 2018, p. 16). The latter three words are the core of the mindfulness practice and are equally the core of how BSC is being described in chapter 1.

The third and last stage of the ritual process is called “reaggregation” (Ives 2018, 16). It is the stage the walker is refreshed and will return to ordinary life with new insights and views.

The traditional pilgrimage is often experienced as something sacred, in this ‘decentered’ space they have found or touched something that cannot be found in ordinary life. However, we can come closer to the sacred, or power spots, when we walk in nature Ives (2018) argues. Nature itself can become a sacred place, or just a powerful ritual. A beautiful initiative in the United States is ‘Nature Sacred’. This is a network of green urban sanctuaries created to reduce stress, improve health and strengthen the community. They intend to “infuse nearby nature into places where healing is often needed most: distressed urban neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, prisons and more” (Nature Sacred, 2020). Walking mindfully in the sacred place of nature can be a way to ‘decentre’ and to stand outside ourselves. We may even feel the wonder of life or find ourselves in ecstasy – from the Ancient Greek word *ekstasis*, ‘to be or stand outside oneself, a removal to elsewhere’. Ives (2018) compares a hiker in nature with a religious pilgrim on the path that connects with something greater than oneself. It is an intimacy with life. For Snyder (1990) nature can be a place in which one can be “more easily be touched by a larger-than-human, larger-than-personal, view” (100). Mindful walking can be like a pilgrimage, even when it is brief. Knowing that you are truly walking and breathing, and tuning in with ‘being’, so that one then can learn to let go.