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ARTICLE NUMBER

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| 1 | The mind losing malleability |
| 2 | Retaining memories of embarrassments |
| 3 | Focusing too much on the self |
| 4 | Lost Decision making skill |

Article 1

WHEN THE MIND LOSES ITS NATURAL MALLEABILITY

In science we talk about some materials like clay having a property called malleability. The mind too has a similar property. There are occasions when that property is lost. When it is lost, a person can lose his balance and efficiency.

Why does that happen and how can we prevent it?

Part of a person's ability to progress depends on the ability of the mind to pick up new ideas. New ideas do not come when the mind is stuck in a particular view.

Right view (Samma Ditthi) is an important element in the Noble Eight-Fold Path. It seems to be at the top of the list. According to the Dhamma a strong view is usually a wrong view. Also, any type of view, once established in the mind, narrows the mind to only that view. This hinders the development of true wisdom as the mind discards all other views which are opposing the view already embedded in the mind. So, we need to be malleable and ductile in the mind. That way we can accommodate a mental correction and seek progress.

Because of the rarity of noble friends, we tend to become subservient to strong views and hold on to them as if these are our belongings. That is part of the ego. It is wiser to be flexible and to have an open mind.

This is not a simple matter. Right view seems to be the base upon which our path to enlightenment gets established.

If you cannot find many noble friends, never forget that the Buddha is always there through the Dhamma. We can check our views in comparison with parallel ideas used by the Buddha.

Venerable Thubten Chokyi mentioned that a person who cannot absorb new ideas is more like a pot kept upside down. You are wasting what you pour on it.

Reverend James Wilson pointed out that age does not always solve this problem. There are old people who have failed to learn through experience and continue to suffer.

(This article is based on the QSA Buddhist Forum 2 Session 3 discussion on case 11 of the forum presented by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra, Buddhist Chaplain.)

Article 2

THE MIND DWELLS ON EMBARRASSING SITUATIONS FOR TOO LONG

We have heard about the general mental problem of going to a past occurrence and being around it for no real purpose. This is a special case of that type of experience caused by an embarrassing occurrence in the past.

Firstly, it has happened already and no amount of thinking will erase it away. The best thing is to forget about it.

Secondly, the embarrassment was your own ego, and ideas about how you need to present yourself. It is a creation of your own mind and not necessarily contributed by others witnessing the event. “They must be thinking like this” is what was going on in your mind. So, you are concerned about an imagination. It is a subjective assessment. It is worth getting rid of. Even if others ridicule you, it is still worth noting that even that is a subjective assessment in the mind of others. Try saying “who cares”.

A useful improvement is possible, if you focus on the **present moment**. There is no room for this type of thought to arise or continue.

Other solutions are available. **The world is so large and complex that the event you are concerned about is relatively trivial.**

Reverend James Wilson stated that mindfulness can correct this deficiency and it can be learned through meditation.

Rangika Sellahewa stated that firstly this condition of the mind might be due to past Kamma and secondly it is good that eventually as all other things this defect too might go away.

Venerable Chokyi said that though the condition is bad enough, as in the case of a person in prison, in general such a person has a chance of becoming better. There is no need to feel bad.

(This article is based on the QSA Buddhist Forum 2 Session 3 discussion on case 12 of the forum presented by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra, Buddhist Chaplain.)

Article 3

THE MIND ALWAYS TRIES TO FOCUS ON THE SELF NO MATTER WHO OR WHAT IS AROUND

We have an endless series of ideas and concepts. We have the tendency to feel that these ideas belong to us. The idea of the self is one of them. It is indeed, a very strong one. Everybody without exception holds on to the idea of the self. It

may be useful in many ways. We will not criticise the idea but examine its consequences when it hardens unnoticed.

In life awareness of the surrounding is important, at least for safety purposes. Suppose you move the mind to think of yourself, how nice you are looking. If you get engulfed in it, you will lose your picture of what is going on around you. Then your safety will be lost.

When you are in an important conversation you might stop hearing what the other person is saying, partly because you are then thinking of your relative status or your importance.

When the other person gives you a business card you might not see the contents, because your mind gets concerned that the other person is superior to you.

It is hard to open yourself to others because of your continuing efforts to protect and promote yourself.

Reverend Wilson stated that in the modern world it is hard to avoid promoting oneself. That has its limits.

Venerable Chokyi observed that, what is harmful is the constant reference to the idea of “my, mine”.

Rahu felt that a good balance is necessary as the self-idea is useful but needs to be reduced as spiritual progress is made.

Rangika felt that the need was to be presentable while being aware of impermanence.

(This article is based on the QSA Buddhist Forum 2 Session 3 discussion on case 13 of the forum presented by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra, Buddhist Chaplain.)

Article 4

THE MIND CONTINUOUSLY AND INCESSANTLY JUMPS FROM ONE THING TO ANOTHER (LIKE A MONKEY

This may happen to some people and then will become a problem. It can also happen to many people in certain situations.

Decision-making is a recognised ability of the mind but some people do not use that ability often enough and particularly when problems arise. To use this ability, one needs to be well-informed and trained to some extent.

When a proper decision is required if a person fails to take one, the mind will take you everywhere available. A monkey cannot stay in one place and will jump somewhere. The mind that is not trained will always need to jump somewhere. Hence training of the mind can alleviate the problem.

Training may also lead to planning. Planning itself will support the making of decisions. That reduces the need for meaningless jumps.

Purpose in life needs to be understood and determined. That too imports many decisions.

Another type of training is to select what is necessary to do and refuse to be just a busy-body.

Rangika Sellaheva said that Right Effort needs to be applied.

Rahu mentioned that unlike say mindfulness, decision-ability is not constantly present in the mind according to Abhidhamma. Hence when needed that ability must be brought to mind and energised. Constant practice is useful. In management this is essential. In spiritual practice one cannot do without decision-making. Choice of thought is an unending need.

(This article is based on the QSA Buddhist Forum 2 Session 3 discussion on case 14 of the forum presented by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra, Buddhist Chaplain.)

TAKING CONTROL OF THE MIND REPORT ON BUDDHIST FORUM (2) SESSION (3) HELD ON 30 AUGUST 2020 ON ZOOM

The Siddhartha Institute of Buddhism, the education division of the Queensland Sangha Association Inc has conducted various educational programs related to Buddhism for many years. Buddhist Forums were started in June 2020. Sessions 1,2 and 3 have been completed to date.

This is report on Session (3) held on 30 August 2020.

A list of 20 types of common experience were announced in June. At Session (3) Cases 11 to 14 were discussed. The following contributed to the discussion:

Reverend James Wilson, President of QSA

Venerable Thubten Chokyi, Dhamma Teacher, Cherezig Institute, Eudlo

Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra, Buddhist Chaplain, Dhamma Teacher QSA

Tanuja Sarath-Chandra, Buddhist Chaplain, QSA (presenter)

Rangika Sellahewa, Sydney

A few others attended. A recording was sent to one who was unable to attend.

You are welcome to ask for a copy of the script to be sent to you by email.

INFORMATION ON FUTURE ARTICLES

The fourth session on *Control of the Mind* is planned to be held at 10.00 am on Saturday 10 October 2020 again on ZOOM. Please indicate your interest by emailing QSA on infoqsa@gmail.com

A report on proceedings will be published in this magazine.

**THE END OF THE 6 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR THE PERIOD
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Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

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