HAPPINESS THE BUDDHIST WAY



QSA

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QSA ZOOM CHANNEL FOR DHAMMA QUERIES

QSA has set up a ZOOM channel to answer questions on the Dhamma and queries regarding QSA and its activities. Please ask for a time slot that suits you. Channel time needs to be booked; bookings can be made by emailing QSA, via infoqsa@gmail.com

The link will be given to you when the time slot is decided.

When you are in the meeting room, please speak to the Buddhist Counsellor on duty for the information that you seek. In case of a difficulty, please email QSA via infoqsa@gmail., com

QSA CALENDAR FOR A FEW WEEKS

The Dhamma program Buddhist Education-Tertiary, first delivery, was concluded on 16 July 2023. Expressions of interest are invited for the following programs:

Family Peace
Applied Buddhist Psychology
Introduction to Buddhist Counselling (repeat 1)

Please note that meetings of ABC (Assembly of Buddhist Counsellors) will be held during the time available on Sunday evenings unless otherwise reserved.

DHAMMA ARTICLES

Article 215

EXTRACT FROM THE DHAMMA PRACTICE TRAINING ACADEMY (DPTA) LESSON BANK ON DISCOURSES-LESSON 0109

Edited by John A. Cartwright

BAD CONDUCT

There are people who do not care about morality. There are others who change their principles for convenience or advantage. If you are collecting wealth the collected wealth can easily get drained off due to immoral practices.

For example, if one moves to another country and secretly gets married for a second time there will be trouble with the police and in the courts. To pull out of the trouble one may need to spend all the money in the bank account. This way all the wealth acquired can be drained away.

It is an outlet drain.

A successful person will know his income and expenses. These two things keep varying all the time for various reasons. If a person ensures that he is not extravagant and not wasting money and resources that is obviously good.

It is not necessary to live as a miser, hiding one's income and wealth. When you try to hide wealth from others, you are hiding it from yourself too. There is no meaning in amassing wealth if you do not use it for reasonable purposes.

Wise people manage a balance in life, enjoying wealth and at the same time not wasting their wealth.

If the income is less than expenses, there is something wrong. That cannot be maintained.

If one is neither wasteful nor miserly, one is leading a balanced livelihood.

Observing balance is a fundamental teaching of the Buddha, found everywhere in our practice.

Article 216

EXTRACT FROM THE DHAMMA PRACTICE TRAINING ACADEMY (DPTA) LESSON BANK ON MEDITATION-LESSON 2110

Edited by Dayani de Silva

OBJECT-BASED MEDITATION

For most people, meditation simply means putting the mind on a selected object to the exclusion of all other objects. For example, if you decided to meditate on the flame of a candle, you would try to keep the mind on the flame and avoid paying any attention to other objects around or in the mind. It becomes a strenuous action involving the taming of the mind.

This type of object-based meditation had been practiced very effectively even before the Buddha. They had attained what are called absorptions or Jhana. The

best-known examples are the teachers of ascetic Siddhartha, *Alara Kalama* and *Uddaka Ramaputra*. They had attained the material Jhanas and the immaterial Jhanas. Material Jhanas emanated from matter and immaterial Jhanas emanated from the mind. There are four material Jhanas and four immaterial Jhanas.

These were treated as great attainments and there were many who had attained to these under the guidance of teachers.

In the famous treatise on deeper aspects of Buddhism called the Visuddhi Magga, the path of purity, many such objects of meditation are mentioned. Scholars of current times are critical of these presentations, arguing that these do not lead to enlightenment, but to birth in the higher celestial worlds (brahma worlds).

This matter will be dealt with briefly under mindfulness meditation. Here, it is proposed to list the recommended objects for information (see below).

Some say that they lack concentration, but the truth is that from birth, we do have concentration. It is an inherent feature of the mind; the level of concentration may be low, and it can be gradually improved with meditation.

A question can arise as to the difference between concentration and mindfulness. If we look at driving as an example, we concentrate on the position and movement of the vehicle, and at the same time, we are mindful of the surrounding. For example, we are mindful of the other vehicles, people nearby, the traffic lights, speed bumps and even police cameras. Concentration and mindfulness are both aspects of the mind called universal mental states, as they are present all the time with five other mental states (*cetasika*).

Both work on objects we confront through our senses, being the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. When one is studying, the mind sense is very active, and the mind can concentrate on information taken in. However, one is also mindful of the surroundings. Younger siblings coming into your room is one example. When learning music, the information one concentrates on is coming via the ears. When drawing or painting, the eyes receive the information, and one concentrates on that information.

The Pali term *Samatha* means calming, and *Samadhi* means high concentration. Good students have a high level of concentration. It can get disturbed and weak when disturbances occur.

If one is skilful, a low intensity disturbance in the background might help in developing concentration, as it tends to keep away a potential multitude of other disturbances. For example, older children sometimes listen to music while studying.

Staying in a frozen posture, such as standing on one leg, bending the body halfway or leaning to one side can be experimented on to notice a rise in the level of concentration. These need to be done under supervision only. Safety aspects must be considered before engaging in these types of exercises.

The chaplain or counsellor can guide a group in recognising and developing concentration using the following information:

USING THE EYE SENSE
Watching the rain falling
Watching a sunset
Reading a book
Watching the slow flickering of a candlelight

USING THE EAR SENSE Hearing a song Listening to the sound of rain falling Listening to the sound of the ocean Listening to a religious chanting Listening to a religious chanting with sober background music Listening to meditation music for calming

USING THE BODY SENSE Natural breathing Changing posture (sitting, standing, walking, reclining) Walking

USING THE MIND SENSE
Contemplating the foulness of the body
Reflecting on the deterioration of a dead body
Contemplating the negative aspects of certain types of greed
Contemplating the inevitability of death

EXTRACT FROM THE DHAMMA PRACTICE TRAINING ACADEMY (DPTA) LESSON BANK ON DHAMMA-LESSON 3011

Edited by Lyna Chen

WHOLESOME ACTIONS AND UNWHOLESOME ACTIONS (KUSALA AND AKUSALA)

The Dhamma teaches us what sort of actions are wholesome or unwholesome. Based on these teachings we can form a general idea of what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.

There are no definitions for these. However, sets of examples are given. The problems we experience are mostly connected to unwholesome actions. One set of examples is given here:

- 1 Killing living beings
- 2 Stealing
- 3 Wrongful conduct
- 4 False speech
- 5 Slander
- 6 Harsh speech
- 7 Meaningless speech
- 8 Extreme greed
- 9 Aversion
- 10 Wrong views

Killing includes hurting and causing harm to beings. Wrongful conduct includes interfering with the relationship between husband and wife. Slander includes making statements that cause enmities among people. Of these the most damaging item is meaningless speech. It leads towards the other types of poor speech and also may lead to hurting and killing, family disputes, and hatred.

Wrong views can emanate from strong views. If you think that people of a certain skin colour are foolish, it is obviously a wrong view. It is not supported by evidence. If you keep believing it for some time, it can become a strong view and difficult to control. Wrong views arise from ignorance. If you hold a few wrong views, it is likely to grow into a myriad of wrong views. That is a bad situation. Wrong views are easy to gather but difficult to control or eradicate.

Another common wrong view is that you are great. Many religious beliefs can be classified as wrong views.

The first three items above are based on bodily action, the next four on verbal action and the last three on mental actions. The last three are the most

difficult to eliminate. If you succeed in eradicating the roots of wrongful actions, you get close to enlightenment.

It is not enough to manage the actions, as the roots of these actions remain unnoticed in the mind. Techniques to reduce these are found in some discourses like Sabbasava sutta, and also in the Abhidhamma.

One set of wholesome actions popular in Sri Lanka is given below:

- 1 Charity
- 2 Virtue
- 3 Mind development
- 4 Reverence and respect
- 5 Caring for the needy
- 6 Conferment of merits
- 7 Rejoicing in the merits made by others
- 8 Teaching the Dhamma
- 9 Hearing the Dhamma
- 10 Straightening one's views

Perhaps the most valuable actions are in the last category. When views get corrected, many other good things happen. It is good to learn from the wise.

EXTRACT FROM THE DHAMMA PRACTICE TRAINING ACADEMY (DPTA) LESSON BANK ON PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY-LESSON 5009

Edited by Janani Welgama

DEATH

As previously mentioned, the physical and mental processes which together comprise life change all the time. From that point of view, life begins and ends every moment. We do not notice this as we are accustomed to the process.

We only notice these changes when the mental aspects get separated from the physical aspects. We recognise this event as death. In fact, in Buddhist literature, the term 'kayassa bheda', is used in place of death. Kaya is the body. Bheda means separation.

Death means a lot for the government as it must correct various records such as the electoral register. For the individual, it should not be so significant.

No one is able to predict the time of death, place of death or manner of death. The only thing we know is that death will certainly occur sometime. It is a natural event. There is no need to lament but it is something to be understood. A lack of understanding brings sorrow.

It is useful to see the passing away of a person, without becoming emotional.

It is important to reflect on death and gradually get used to it as a natural occurrence. It is useful to prepare for death rather than to panic about what needs to be done in the short time left. The world will go on even after we die.

We need not bother about what happens to our children, relatives, friends, and organisations we loved. Be less attached. Never worry about enmities. They are meaningless after death. Learn to die peacefully when it happens.

Old and sick bodies are best abandoned. At least we can expect a new body in a new place. Thinking this way, we can die without worries.

EXTRACT FROM THE DHAMMA PRACTICE TRAINING ACADEMY (DPTA) LESSON BANK ON DHAMMA PRACTICE-LESSON 6010

ERADICATING UNWHOLESOME BEHAVIOUR

Unwholesome (akusala) behaviour is discussed in the lessons relating to ethics. In general, unwholesomeness means that it is not conducive to spiritual progress, or not directed towards the attainment of enlightenment.

It is very important to learn what is unwholesome and try to clip them off from your behaviour. For example, telling lies is unwholesome behaviour. It is prompted by some craving or desire, some anger or ill will, or by ignorance embedded in the mind.

Good practice requires that such behaviour must be scrutinised, the roots discovered, and the behaviour eradicated.

Unwholesomeness is widely distributed and entrenched that it is impossible to tackle this problem in a day or two. Examine the whole field and identify where the attack should begin. Begin at that point. Destroying at that point has the ability to make other points loose and slippery. The also tend to get destroyed automatically, making the task of the practitioner easy as times goes on.

In paying homage to the Buddha, the second term is an indication that the Buddha has succeeded in eradicating all unwholesomeness. Hence, this is a key aspect of our practice. It relatively easy to master and it is far-reaching.

Article 220

EXRACT FROM THE QSA BOOK TITLED INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST COUNSELLING-SECTION B-CHAPTER 9

MOMENTARY AND CONTINUOUS DEATH

INTRODUCTION

Death is commonly regarded as a momentary occurrence that happens to a person once in a lifetime. Is this a correct assumption? Probably not so, according to the ideas presented in Buddha Dhamma.

The human being is a combination of a mind and body. The mind itself cannot be called a thing as it arises and ceases every moment. There is no THING to be called the mind. We can notice thoughts arising and ceasing only to give way to another thought and so on. There is no entity as such. At best we can call the mind a continually changing process. The correct word to use here is *citta*.

In Abhidhamma a citta comes into being whenever an object, a sense and consciousness (*vinnana*) come into being at one time. As every moment passes, the so-called citta also passes. It comes into being and then passes away. We can say that the mind arises at a moment and dies the next moment.

What about the body?

Science as well as Buddhism tell us that the body consists of a mass of cells that arise and pass away every moment. Hence, the body can be viewed as a continuing process of arising and passing away.

Hence the human being passes away every moment. Death occurs every moment. We do not see it as such as the process is very fast. Now and then, we do observe that the original being is not there now. Quantitative changes are usually not visible though qualitative changes are observable. Youth, and the old are distinguishable.

WHY IS THAT WE HAVE DIFFICULTY IS SEEING THIS PROCESS?

Because of the self-view or the identity-view, that we all have, we see ourselves as an unchanging person. We see others also as unchanging entities. We do not see impermanence on a running basis. So, we see an old person as the same person we met long ago. Actually, he is very different now.

WHY DO WE ATTACH SO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO CONVENTIONAL DEATH?

At conventional death, the physical body and the mind seem to separate. We cannot put them together now. The government now says that the person is dead. We have no alternative but to follow the decision of government. Hence death becomes a significant issue.

If only we were able to notice continuous death, conventional death has much less meaning. Then there is no need for sorrow and lamentation. The world would be very different and more peaceful, if only we understood this little truth.

ILLUSTRATIONS

When Maha Pajapati (Buddha's stepmother) informed the Buddha that the time had come for her to pass away, and she walked out of the building for the last time, everyone got up and followed her out of respect. They witnessed the cremation and left.

There are similar stories about many Arahants.

The Buddha himself predicted that he would pass away after three months. He invited monks to ask him questions and get answers while he was alive. Death was treated as a matter of fact.

In Buddhism, conventional death is referred to as the separation of the body from the mind. When separated the body has no usefulness.

Some who do not understand this try to cling on to the body or at least the ashes after cremation. What is the point?

There are many people who understand this and donate their body for the use of medical students and researchers. This is laudable. The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) had received more than 100 such donations in 2022. Other universities too receive these donations. These donations help others to live. In Sri Lanka this has been a practice for a long time.

As Buddhists we need to develop our wisdom, to help us understand the meaning of death, and reduce emotions and cultural practices relating to death.

INTRODUCTION

Our experiences in life are highly variable. This is illustrated in the Dhamma by four common sets of opposites we experience a lot of the time. These are:

Gain and loss

Pleasure and pain

Praise and blame

Status and disgrace

These things happen and we need to accept that fact. We need to stay equanimous despite the constant changes that occur. Breathing meditation is a good remedy for these. The mind keeps following the breath while the world runs through turmoil. Insight meditation is also helpful.

If you attain an absorption, it is so much the better. Then the mind stays still without being thrown into pain and suffering.

Why do we get kicked around when changes occur? Why do we become anxious about the next disaster that might happen? Why do we jump up too much when things go well for us? Why do we get angry with those who do not sympathise with us?

This is because we tend to be greedy for some experiences and hate the opposites. Hence, the remedy is within.

Change is part of existence; so is suffering. When these come, we should say "here they come".

Naturally we are happy when things go well for us. If we train ourselves to be overly happy, when the opposite happens, the pain will also be extreme. Observing a balance helps both ways.

Try not to be carried away too much when our team is winning. That helps us to get over the unpleasant situation that arises when we are losing.

ILLUSTRATIONS

It is useful to observe how people who have developed equanimity cope with changing situations such as the following.

- 1 A student fell ill during an examination
- 2 The only source of our family income got destroyed in a heavy storm
- 3 In a company re-structure I lost my job
- 4 A parent in reasonable health died after a heart attack
- 5 A close friendship was broken due to a misunderstanding
- 6 Our family business broke down after six months of Covid
- A bystander got injured when a brawl broke out in a night club
- 8 A successful sportsman became disabled due to an accident

EXRACT FROM THE QSA BOOK TITLED INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST COUNSELLING SECTION C CHAPTER 9

MULTIPLE FEEDERS BUT ONE FINAL CHANNEL

INTRODUCTION

When a river reaches the ocean, we see one big channel taking the water to the ocean. However, there can be a number of feeders to the river, some big and some small. Regardless of size, they all lead to the river.

The practice of the Dhamma leads to emancipation and the practice itself can begin in more than one way. Ultimately, it is mindfulness that appears to deliver. Having accepted that, it would be incorrect to say that mindfulness is the only thing to develop for attaining Nibbana. Like the many rivulets, there are many lines of practice to begin with.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DHAMMA TEACHER

This educational principle must be borne in mind when someone teaches the Dhamma to another. Otherwise, a student of the Dhamma can get misled.

ILLUTRATIONS

For example, the path to enlightenment according to the Buddha is the Noble Eight-Fold Path. It is not only mindfulness.

It is true that in the Great Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness (Maha Satipatthana Sutta), the Buddha uses the term, one and only way. Some Dhamma teachers emphasise this so much as to imply that all the other seven items of the Path can be discarded. That is simply wrong.

All items of the path are important. All supportive actions are useful too. A teacher must be careful in the choice of his words.

Among the eight items in the path, stillness of mind, is the basis of the practice. That needs to be recognised. It gives a basis for mindfulness to grow. If stillness (samadhi) is compared to a tree, mindfulness (sati) can be compared to a creeper. The creeper rises with the help of the tree. At the top, the creeper can

reach higher. That is true. Similarly, mindfulness ultimately delivers the result expected. But how did it rise so high?

The Buddha confirms this in the Great Discourse on the forty. He says that when mindfulness and stillness are developed with ever increasing effort, like a turning machine with three parts (effort, mindfulness, and stillness) the being gets purified, and the rest follows.

Right view develops causing right thoughts, words, actions, and livelihood to get purified. That purification adds to the energy of the trio of effort, mindfulness, and stillness. It is like a spiral information.

WARNING

If one gets stuck in the development of stillness alone, ignoring mindfulness, one can easily go astray. It does not bring emancipation.

ADDED NOTES

Some people have genuine skills in solving problems. Very quickly they can see through and work out a solution to the problem.

How quicky the problem is solved is not the main issue. Speed aside, one needs to examine the suitability of several methods of solving the problem. This is true in industry and agriculture. It is also true in practising the Dhamma.

For example, some children have difficulties in concentration. A common solution is to force the child to do studies all the time. This might have negative effects. What should the parent do?

They need to find out why the child is not progressing and whether there are other ways to prompt the child to do normal work.

The presumption suggested is that there are many ways to solve a problem, not only one way.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1 In Dhamma study, it is not necessary for everyone to read all the scriptures. Researchers have already done that work. We can use their findings.

- 2 Some people complain that they cannot meditate. Ask them what methods they have used. The usual answer is one method. There are many methods available. A teacher must be consulted to discover other methods.
- After many years of practising meditation, some complain that they have never reached an absorption (Jhana). The fact is that there are many pathways to solve this problem.

EXRACT FROM THE QSA BOOK TITLED INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST COUNSELLING SECTION D CHAPTER 9

SIMPLE CALMING MEDITATIONS FOR A BEGINNER

INTRODUCTION

First, we must develop our ability to notice the difference between calm and disturbance in a physical setting and then gradually apply the same idea to the mind. Examples of disturbed situations can be the following: a choppy sea with fast rising and falling of waves, heavy rain with gusty winds, a river flowing down through a rocky stretch, traffic in the city, an artificial fountain, boiling water, a football match, and a drink being poured into a glass.

Think of these things one after the other, slowly.

Then think of a few situations of calm. Examples are a very gently flowing river, a flat sea, the perfectly still water of a lake reflecting the surrounding landscape, a gentle breeze, or a moving ship far in the distance.

Now we can start thinking of what goes on in the mind. Sometimes it is calm, as it happens just before one falls asleep. At other times, it is agitated, when one is unable to fall asleep, or during the morning rush in preparing for school or work.

We can ask ourselves the question whether you prefer the mind to be calm or agitated. How does each one feel?

Some simple calming techniques are as follows:

1 Count backwards, say, from 20 to 1, and then forward

- 2 Say aloud the letters in the alphabet, first forward, and then backward
- 3 Call out the colours in the rainbow (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red) forward for a few times, and then in the reverse order
- 4 Check the pulse for a minute or two
- 5 Check how many pulses occur in one breath, inward, then outward
- 6 Watch a line of ants moving in a line
- 7 In light rain, watch the raindrops falling on a pool of water, and the little circles formed and how they vanish in a second
- 8 Watch a train moving far away
- 9 Watch the cars moving on the highway far away
- 10 Watch how you are falling asleep

More formal calming meditations are in the next section.

METHODS OF PRACTICE

Many methods are available. Breathing meditation, walking meditation, goodwill meditation and mindfulness of the senses are easy to practice once you learn them.

In addition, reminiscence meditations such as attributes of the Buddha are also helpful.

Please refer to notes 1.3, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, and 5.3 for relevant methods.

WARNING

Please note that calming meditations alone may not help a practitioner to develop mindfulness. A teacher or a noble friend would be able to help in developing both stillness and mindfulness.

FREE DHAMMA BOOKS AND DHAMMA LESSONS

PRINTED BOOKS (small stocks now available in some temples)

1 Buddhist Chaplaincy, 182 Pages in size A4(about 285 copies available)

- 2 Buddhist Psychology-the building blocks, First edition, 168 pages in size A5 (only 35 copies left)
- 3 School year 8 textbook (used in Queensland)(a couple of copies left)

ELECTRONIC BOOKS (that can be emailed on request)

- The Buddhist Way to Happiness (English) (Maha Mangala Sutta),85 pages a4
- The Buddhist Way to Happiness (Sinhala) (Maha Mangala Sutta), 91 pages A4
- 3 Practical Techniques of Teaching Buddhism to Youth, 185 pages A4
- 4 Basic Buddhist Psychology-second revised edition, 152 pages A5
- 5 Buddhist Chaplaincy, 182 pages A4
- 6 Q and A for students in years 11 and 12, 55 pages A4

ELECTRONIC DHAMMA LESSONS BOOKS (in 5 banks)

(that are in website sanghaqld.org or can be emailed on request)

- 1 Lessons Bank 1, on selected Discourses, 130 Pages A4
- 2 Lessons Bank 2, on Meditation, 50 pages A4
- 3 Lessons Bank 3 on Buddha Dhamma, 105 pages A4
- 4 Lessons Bank 4, on Buddhist Psychology and Philosophy, 58 pages A4
- 5 Lessons Bank 5, on Dhamma Practice, 48 pages A4

RELATEDSUPPORT DOCUMENTS (not on website as yet)

Alphabetical Index to all 5 lesson banks (not on website yet)

Curriculum related to the lesson banks (not on website yet)

Teaching Techniques suggested (not on website yet)

BOOKS IN PREPARATION

- 1 An introductory Course in Buddhist Counselling (about 157 pages A4)
- 2 Family Peace-the Buddhist Way (about 70 pages A4)
- 3 Primary Level Dhamma books Grades 1 to 6 (about 80 pages A4 each book)

An exposure draft of the Grade 1 book is available to any monk or nun, or a Buddhist centre, for one month to submit criticisms. Thank you to all temples and Dhamma Schools that have already replied.

U-TUBE VIDEO RECODS ON DHAMMA

The production of video records of Dhamma Lessons and Dhamma discussions has commenced. The plan is to create videos in the following seven categories:

- 1 Family Peace
- 2 A general framework for happiness
- 3 How the mind works
- 4 Buddhist Education-primary
- 5 Buddhist Education-secondary
- 6 Buddhist Education-tertiary
- 7 Buddhist Education-research and practice

At the time of writing, three videos in category 6 are in U-tube. To access these please use the following link:

facebook.com/happiness.the.buddhist.way

Please email Queensland Sangha Association via email infoqsa@gmail.com for more information.

The end of the QSA Dhamma Magazine for the period October 2023

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

You are welcome to forward this to a friend who is likely to benefit from this magazine. It is not for public circulation but for the information of members of QSA or for their friends. Past copies of the magazine are held on the current page the QSA website

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If you want a friend to see this newsletter, please let us know the email address.