



# QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE

*Sangha Samaggi Togetherness of the Buddhist Sangha*

Published by the Queensland Sangha Association Inc  
*An incorporated association of Buddhist monks and nuns in Queensland, Australia. Est. 2007*  
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15 APRIL 2022

NUMBER 020

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## **Article 76**

*The Buddhist Way to Happiness*

### **ABSTAINING FROM EVIL**

[Taken from the book titled *The Buddhist Way to Happiness* by Rahubadde and Tanuja Sarath-Chandra based on the Great Discourse on Blessings (Maha Mangala Sutta)]

#### **Factor (19)**

### **ABSTINENCES (VIRATI)**

As discussed before, the concepts of avoidance and abstinence are similar but somewhat different. One consideration is the proximity of the object, familiarity with the object, and the extent of involvement with the object in contact with the mind. Again, there is physical proximity and mental proximity.

Abstinence is much harder for many people than avoidance. In most situations, the objects that cause attraction or repulsion are at hand, very close, within touching distance, in a physical sense. In the mind too it would be at hand.

A firm refusal results in abstaining. An example is refusing to drink in a drink party.

A group of children walking around a lake, got a fish out of the water and kept it on the footpath. A passer-by tried to get the children to throw the fish back into the lake but failed. The fish struggled to live, and the children kept enjoying the scene. The passer by avoided the unwholesome act and went away. That person was on the brink of participating in an unwholesome act but abstained from it.

Unwholesome behaviour covers physical, verbal, and mental aspects. These are included in the ten types of unskillful actions, three physical, four verbal and three mental aspects. When we speak of avoidance, it is mostly a mental behaviour on the good side. When a possible weak behaviour comes up in the mind, we dispose of it as quickly as possible.

In a university a group celebrated an event with a drink party. One of the students in the group kept moving around talking to others but avoided drinking. The action was in his mind. That was an abstinence. The tempting was there.

Often people gather together and talk uttering falsehoods, slanders, and harsh words. If there is nothing else, they talk about meaningless, worthless things. You can stay mum and avoid all the gossip. Again, the action is in the mind.

In this world there is nowhere to hide or run into, but you can keep your mind out of unwholesomeness using the practice of abstinence.

In the same way, the mind can keep away, thoughts of lust and other desires, thoughts of ill-will, harming and cruelty, while being quiet.

Abstinence has more relevance when there is the opportunity for wrongful actions. Thoughts would be ripe to express them in words or actions. At that point, still a person can refrain from performing the action, using a determination to abstain.

You might be almost prompted to say something nasty, but you stop before saying anything.

Similarly, you might be tempted to do something with your body, because of a strong desire or a strong dislike, but you manage to avoid such action. You can come back from the brink if you are mindful and well-trained to summon the skill of abstinence when required.

This is abstinence (virati).

The distance between avoiding and abstinence might be very short or thin, but a good result is always possible.

## **Article 77**

*The Buddhist Way to Happiness*

### **ABSTENTION FROM INTOXICANTS**

[Taken from the book titled *The Buddhist Way to Happiness* by Rahubadde and Tanuja Sarath-Chandra based on the Great Discourse on Blessings (Maha Mangala Sutta)]

#### **Factor 20**

Possibly because of experiences in previous lives, a lot of people seek intoxicants. In society drinking is very common. In addition to intoxicating drinks, now there are intoxicating substances. The latter is a huge social problem.

The direct result of taking intoxicants is bad enough. The indirect results are much worse than that. Neglect of children, domestic violence, wasting money, bad companions, poor performance in employment, loss of social respect, are a few of the negative aspects of drinking. There is no apparent gain in drinking although, various excuses are given as to why a person drink.

The mind is what makes us superior to animals. Intoxicants render the mind ineffective. It becomes weak and unable to take the challenges of life. It is difficult to imagine why people are so attracted to intoxicants. The possibility of feeling free from all trouble for the time being at least, might be a reason.

Intoxicants also affects health, as various illnesses can result. Life gets cut short because of intoxicants. Physical weakness is likely to result.

Because of intoxicants people tend to do various things that cause harm to themselves and to others.

Like other abstinences, abstaining from intoxicants is hard. Government provides services to reduce the harm, but it is fighting a losing battle.

There is a suggestion that a person who is addicted to intoxicants, might lose general control of the mind, in this life and in any future life. No one would like to be reborn as a mad person or one with mental disablement.

There are many who have given up intoxicants by associating with good friends, and by learning the Dhamma.

It is a pity that some Buddhist people serve intoxicants, after performing an almsgiving.

Even in a country like Sri Lanka, despite the practice of Buddhism, consuming intoxicants is a serious problem. It is a shame, and a menace. Excessive persuasion to drink at parties is despicable.

Australia too has the bad fame for drinking. At least the respect shown to people who do not drink is commendable.

### **Article 78**

*Taken from the QSA Dhamma Practice Training Academy (DPTA) lesson bank  
Lesson number 3070*

## **RIGHT MINDFULNESS**

### **RIGHT MINDFULNESS (SAMMA SATI)**

*Written by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra based on the Great Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness. Part of the analysis is taken from a teaching given by Ven.Kahagala Sarananda (10 Sep 2021)*

#### **PART 1 OUTLINE OF THE DISCOURSE ON ESTABLISHMENT OF MINDFULNESS**

The discourse consists of four major parts as follows:

- 1 Mindfulness of the body
- 2 Mindfulness of Sensations or feelings
- 3 Mindfulness of the mind
- 4 Mindfulness of selected mental states

Mindfulness of the body is treated under fourteen sections:

- 1 Breathing (Anapana Sati)
- 2 Four Postures (Iriyapatha)  
Sitting, standing, lying down, and walking
- 3 Four kinds of clear comprehensions (Catu Sampajanna)  
Investigation of activity  
Investigation of suitability of objects  
Vigilance as to possible disturbance  
Undeluded attention
- 4 Repulsive aspects of the body  
The 32-part analysis
- 5 Fundamental elements of materiality  
Earth, Water, Fire, Air  
These are also called solidity, fluidity, motion, and energy

6 to 14      Nine stages of deterioration of the cadaver  
                  Nine levels of disintegration of a dead body

In this group of 14, the commonly practised parts are 1 and 2. Breathing meditation is a separate topic by itself. Sitting and walking meditation are very popular and easy to practice. Walking meditation is known to give results in a short time. It also is known to lead to higher levels of mental states in a reasonable time. There are difficulties in trying parts 6 to 14.

The development of mindfulness is experienced in stages.

First, attention is brought to the body.

Then attention is drawn to a happening (say, breathing).

Then attention is drawn to an action (like walking or other posture).

Then attention is paid to an action combined with wisdom (like clear comprehension of a movement).

Initially it is (1) drawing attention, (2) secondly, attention and awareness, (3) thirdly, a combination of attention, awareness, and wisdom. Attention is a natural mental state which can be developed and energised. Awareness in addition includes knowledge.

In relation to Reminiscing the body the following observations are very useful. During say walking meditation one sees things. While the main object is the walking, the mind also dwells on what is around. The concentration is not on a still object but on a movement. The concentration moves from one foot to the other continually. This noticing is of two types:

Actually looking at an object (Alokita)

Seeing what happens (without actually looking) (Vilokita)

In both cases we need to apply Effort (Viriya), Mindfulness and Wisdom.

In this way we can take action regarding the appearance of what is unnecessary or unwholesome. It provides an opportunity.

It is also useful to note that observations are of two types:

Specific features (Lakkhana) of the object

General features of objects

Particular features are what we generally see in objects. For example, we see the colour, shape and beauty of men and women as a whole or in certain aspects. These lead us to attractions or repulsions.

General features are like, impermanence, cause, and effect, the three features of existence, arising and ceasing etc.

Mindfulness combined with effort and wisdom enables us to see both the particular features and the general features. That helps us to stay equanimous, without getting involved in either attractions or repulsions.

Here we distinguish between just seeing and seeing with understanding. Seeing with wisdom (Pacca Vekkhana) is this seeing with understanding. This practice can be applied to any type of sense object. The example we took was relating to Vision. It can apply to hearing, smelling, tasting, touching.

The other objects of meditation under body reflection suggested in the Sati Patthana Sutta are:

- 1 Patikula Manasikara (as against Anukula or common contact)
- 2 Dhatu Manasikara (reminiscing fundamentals of materiality)
- 3 Seevatika (dead body changing with time)

Under the first type, 32 samples from the body are suggested. We learn to view these in the light of reality checks (like not lasting or Anicca). The appearance or texture and so on are not important. The real nature needs to be seen. That is the purpose of the Mindfulness Meditation. The focus is not so much on the disgusting nature of the parts but the real nature of the parts.

This is Samma Sati (Right Mindfulness) mentioned in the Noble Eight-Fold Path. A reader may also refer to [accesstoinsight.org](http://accesstoinsight.org), [buddhanet.net](http://buddhanet.net), [metta.lk](http://metta.lk) and other websites on the internet for more information.

## **PART 2 VALUE OF LEARNING ABOUT RIGHT MINDFULNESS**

Learning about right mindfulness must not be treated as just learning a part of the Dhamma. In the introductory remarks of the discourse, it is mentioned that Right

Mindfulness is the one and only way to attain enlightenment. That does not mean that the rest of the teaching is not important. Right mindfulness serves as a key to final progress, and attainment.

When right mindfulness is well established, it becomes so sharp and luminous, that it can notice every thought that arises in the mind and what its origins are. With power of advanced mindfulness, one sees the arising of thoughts, their sources and the manner in which they can be made to disappear.

When all roots of unwholesome thoughts are thereby eliminated, there is no more craving and becoming. That means enlightenment.

*[This article is continuing with a few more parts]*

## Article 79

### Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 2 February 2021]*

### Dukkha—Suffering

"Any place you don't want to be is your prison. Contentment is the secret to the end of suffering.

Life has many prisons for you.

If you are in a marriage and you don't want to be there, then your marriage is a prison for you.

If you are a monk but you'd rather be somewhere else, then being a monk is a prison for you.

If you're sick with cancer and you don't want to be sick, then your body becomes a prison for you.

The Buddha understood that, and he talked about how to escape from the prisons of life. You don't need to change your job, to change your partner, or change your body. That is not how you escape from prison.



The only way to escape prison is changing your attitude: from 'not wanting to be here' to 'wanting to be here'.

When you want to be here, you are ending craving.

If you want to be here 'This is good enough', then you'll find contentment, the secret to the end of suffering."

**Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm**

## **Article 80**

### **Ajahn Brahm's Quote:**

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 9 February 2022]*

### **Dukkha—Suffering**

"All desires are unfaithful to you.

They promise you happiness. But once you get what you desire, it doesn't give you happiness after all.

Whatever you've got is good enough. When you have this beautiful 'good enough' attitude, then You are content and be happy with it. . It doesn't mean you're lazy and don't work hard.

Too many people work hard to get something back, but real effort, real love is

not to get but to give. How can I help the company? How can I help my family? How can I help my society? This is the meaning of life.

Real love is to give.

This kind of craving becomes impersonal, and it does not lead to suffering. When you want to get something, thinking that you will then become happy, that is suffering. When you work very hard, expecting nothing back, that's happiness.

In the meantime, see how you can contribute to your family, your friends, and society because that is the secret to happiness. There is just beautiful joy!"

**Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm**

## **Article 81**

### **Ajahn Brahm's Quote:**

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 23 February 2022]*

### **Anatta—Nobody There**

"It's having a big ego that causes pride.

Why are people proud? It's because they are attached to their idea of who they are.

Forgiveness is much easier when you have a small ego.

People with big ego find it difficult to forgive.

The more we understand the teachings of non-self, the easier it is to forgive others as well as ourselves and to have a much happier life. The egos make us worry about what others think about us.

Everybody is thinking about themselves! Everybody is concerned about themselves.

You don't have to worry what people think of you. Just be yourself—whatever that happens to be. When you don't have to be concerned what other people think of you, you don't have to defend your ego and yourself. And who are you anyway?

When you haven't got a fixed idea about who you are, you can be anyone you want to be.

When you understand the teaching of non-self, when you know there's no one in here, no fixed entity, you are always able to change."

**Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm**

## **Article 82**

### **Ajahn Brahm's Quote:**

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 09 March 2022]*

### **Anatta—Nobody There**

"The less the self, the happier you are.

There are two parts of the self or the thing you call 'you'. The first part of the

self is the one in charge, the Will, which I call the Doer. The second part of the self is what we call the one who knows, the Knower or Consciousness.

The first is the active part of the mind, the second is the passive part. Now when you investigate deeper: what is this will or this doer?

Life is like a driverless bus journey.

Sometimes on your journey through life, you have a wonderful time. And other times your bus journey passes through some distressing territory, and you experience lots of pain, difficulty, and stress.

The trouble is that you have to find that bus driver—the will—to teach them how to drive the bus better. You have to find out who is in control.

Where do you think your will resides? It resides deep inside of you. When you are deep in your meditation, you'll find that the bus driver's seat is empty.

It's also like flying on an aircraft which is completely out of your control. In this situation, you sit in your seat and just enjoy the 'insight' service. The 'insight', not the inflight. That's what you do in life. You sit down and enjoy the "insight service".

What I mean is: when you see no self, you stop complaining.

We always think that if we can control things a bit more or if we can get this self in line so that it's wise, then we won't need to suffer anymore.

What you think is 'free will' may not be free will after all. Sometimes the will which we think is free is actually just the process of conditioning, the process of cause and effect. Your will is conditioned. It is dependently originated.

Then there's another part of the self: the knower. That too is empty, just a process.

The main message of the teachings on non-self is that inside of the so called "You and the Doer or Knower mind", there is nothing.

Once you see that there's no one there, you will be free."

Source: *Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm*

## COMMENTS ON ARTICLES AND YOUR DHAMMA QUESTIONS

*Articles, Comments and Questions are requested. These can be taken up in future Buddhist Forums conducted by QSA. Forums 3 and 4 are now proceeding. For how to join these forums, please see a recent QSA newsletter. Ask for a copy from [infoqsa@gmail.com](mailto:infoqsa@gmail.com) or see under current activities in the QSA website [www.sanghaql.org](http://www.sanghaql.org)*

THE END OF THE 13 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE 15 APRIL 2022

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

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