



# QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE

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## **Article 68**

*The Buddhist Way to Happiness*

### **TO BE BLAMELESS IN ACTIONS**

[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 (17)**

##### **TO BE BLAMELESS IN ACTIONS**

Whatever things we do must not harm others or harm ourselves either. There are many harmful actions described in the teachings, and in addition, there are wholesome actions mentioned therein.

Unwholesome actions are enshrined in the eight precepts of livelihood. The bodily actions implied here include, the hurting, harming, giving fear to other beings and in killing or causing the killing of other beings. It also includes stealing or taking in whatever way the belongings of others. Chattels and properties are counted here. Thirdly, we need to refrain from interfering with marriage and other partnerships. All these cause harm to oneself and to others.

This behaviour is enhanced by the performance of wholesome actions. These include, generosity, the practice of virtue, development of the mind, attending on the sick, disabled and the elderly, conferring of merit to those who have passed away, and rejoicing in the good deeds of others. Learning the Dhamma and teaching the Dhamma are wholesome actions.

In modern society we have ample opportunities for providing services to others, expecting nothing in return. Social services, publishing services, educational services, helping religious institutions, volunteering, community development programs, contributing to local security initiatives, blood donation, donations to the needy, hunger alleviation, protection of the environment, development of habitat for animals, chaplaincy services and the like are commonly practised.

The question arises whether doing politics is a good action. If one engages in politics for the common good, and functions fairly and honestly, there is no harm. There are limitations imposed by party politics. One needs to apply moral principles and wisdom in these cases.

Only bodily actions were considered here. Verbal actions and mental actions can be added to this though these are covered in other pages.

### **Article 69**

*The Buddhist Way to Happiness*

## **AVOIDANCE OF EVIL BEHAVIOUR**

[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 (18)**

## **AVOIDANCE OF EVIL BEHAVIOUR (ARATI)**

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.

Another consideration is the availability or denial of opportunity. When the opportunity is there, avoidance is not easy.

For example, a person trying to keep the precept of celibacy, will keep away from the opposite sex. Usually, the premises are out of bounds for the opposite sex. This is a case of physical avoidance. All that is required is a rule.

Mental avoidance is more difficult. It can be achieved through long periods of practising precepts, and through meditation on the negative aspects (adinava) in a sustained manner. Previous associations and how involved they were before, may hinder this effort.

A man who wants to keep away from women, should select a lodging place reserved for men. If he chooses to live in a mixed lodging place, avoidance becomes a little harder.

A person who dislikes killing fish must not choose to live in a fishing village. One who does not want to drink, must not get employed in a bar. One who prefers to keep quiet, must not be visiting clubs.

Avoidance is facilitated by physical distancing. An arahant is reported to have asked a female deity who cleaned his residence in the early hours every morning as a meritorious act, to keep away. This was not in fear of being attracted to the deity (because that was not possible) but to prevent others misunderstanding.

In most cases an opportunity for wrongdoing is cut off by willpower. Practitioners of concentration meditation, try to cut off anything that might arouse the physical senses, so that they can pay full attention to the mind.

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

## **Article 70**

*The Path to Nibbana*

## **NOBLE 8-FOLD PATH LANE 2-RIGHT THOUGHT-NEGATIVELY STATED**

### **RIGHT THOUGHT (SAMMA SANKAPPA)-NEGATIVELY STATED**

Defining right thought based on negative statements is probably more familiar territory. The main script is based on positive statements that are not familiar to most of us.

In this presentation it is presumed that right view is already present. If right view is present, then wrong view is absent. In the set of ten unwholesome (Akusala) mental states, the mind based akusala cittas are of three kinds, namely (1) Abhijja (extreme greed) (2) Vyapada (hatred) and (3) Miccha Ditthi (Wrong views).

The practice here commences with right view (Samma Ditthi). Therefore, for us to have right thoughts we need to develop two other mental states. These are (A) Anabhijja (absence of extreme greed) and Avyapada (absence of hatred).

The approach here is negative but is easier to understand.

The other note placed below is based on positive statements and seems difficult to understand. That is because we are not familiar with it. Now we can go to the other statement.

## **Article 71**

*The Path to Nibbana*

# **NOBLE 8-FOLD PATH LANE 2-RIGHT THOUGHT-POSITIVELY STATED**

## **RIGHT THOUGHT (SAMMA SANKAPPA)**

LANE 2 OF THE NOBLE EIGHT-FOLD PATH

### **1 WHAT IS RIGHT THOUGHT?**

Right thought consists of three aspects:

- |   |                |           |
|---|----------------|-----------|
| 1 | Renunciation   | Nekkhamma |
| 2 | Non-hatred     | Avyapada  |
| 3 | Non-harassment | Avihimsa  |

#### **1.1 RENUNCIATION**

Renunciation means keeping away from what you like (kama). We need to examine what things we like. What things we dislike are also included in this lot. You dislike one thing because you like another thing.

Some of these are objects and others are actions. These are linked to the five senses, eye, ear, nose, tongue, and touch (body) and the mind. A beautiful flower is an object of desire. Participating in interesting activities is an action of desire.

Hearing a song and playing a tape with the song are desirable.

It is hard to avoid all these. The important question is how best we manage these. If we manage these experiences in such a way that it does not cause harm to us or to others, then it is properly managed.

Where I am concerned, the association with objects of desire, inevitably causes depletion of energy, continuation of thirst, the arising of desire for more of it, non-satisfaction and so on. Inherently, these cause suffering (dukkha) in varying degrees and forms.

We can minimise the suffering by limiting the association. For example, the time taken to watch television can be kept within limits.

If our sense interests tend to or might harm others, then certain precepts come into play. The third of the five precepts is an illustration. Our association with the object or activity of desire, needs to conform to a rule. Here, we can avoid wrongful conduct.

Modern marketing techniques usually promote sense desires. Advertising generally is like this.

Some discourses illustrate how attachments entail suffering now or eventually.

1 The story about a dog licking thrown away bones shows how the desire to enjoy food, which is actually not there, causes loss of vitality, in place of building vitality.

2 The story of the bird carrying a piece of meat and being pursued by other birds shows how even life is at risk in the attempt to satisfy basic desires.

3 The story of the person who gets burnt by carrying the grass torch in front of him against the wind, also shows how mishandling of desires can cause self-destruction.

The mundane techniques to counter suffering from seeking worldly satisfactions, are limiting the enjoyment within reasonable bounds, and obeying the rules of engagement, where others are affected. Training to notice the negative effects of enjoyment can be applied here.

Higher techniques involving meditation are also available. Wrong thoughts are prompted by wrong view or understanding.

In insight meditation, the destructive aspects of sense enjoyment can be seen. Noticing them helps to reduce or eliminate them. Teachings in the Sabbasava Sutta and the Satipatthana Sutta can be applied here.

## **1.2 NON-HATRED**

This is the second type of practice that contributes to Right Thought. It implies avoidance of hatred, greed, and ignorance. It is staying in the middle, which is a type of equanimity (upekkha). That needs to be cultivated.

If we accept that greed has the effect of continuing the birth cycle, hatred too has the same effect. It means suffering.

Entertaining thoughts of hatred results in harming oneself and possibly harming others. Hatred implies burning within, one form of suffering (dukkha). Actions in pursuit of hatred are unskillful actions and firstly these can be outright wrongful and take one away from the path to enlightenment and the way to happiness in general.

People imbued with hatred are considered unsuitable to associate with and need to be avoided at most times. A hateful person is likely to become a lonely person. That is suffering in itself.

### **1.3 NON-HARRASSMENT**

All people like to remain peaceful and free of fear of being mishandled or pushed around by others. No one wants to be constantly concerned about the possibility of being harassed by another. We have no right to force that unpleasant situation on another.

Those who have Right Thoughts will not cause harassment to others, by thought, by words or by deeds.

Harassment of poor people, weaker persons, young people, and animals must be avoided.

## **2 DOWNWARD (RIVER) EFFECT ON RIGHT THOUGHT**

If one has Right View, then right thoughts naturally flow from it. Right View derives strength from wisdom. Wisdom is inherent in the second of the seven factors of awakening (Dhamma Vicaya). One can see through things when there is wisdom. It is a penetrative skill. Thoughts that arise then become skillful. Those thoughts are not about accumulation of sense objects but renouncing them. They are not about aversion either.

## **3 UPWARD (VAPOUR) EFFECT OF RIGHT THOUGHT**

In reverse, when there are right thoughts, the mind is clear, peaceful, and wholesome. There is increased room for the mental states of wisdom to grow and sharpen with the support of noble friends. Hence in return Right View (samma ditthi) rises to a higher level. The lanes in the path are not entirely independent.



#### **4 MUTUAL EFFECTS OF ALL LANES**

Further, right thought will contribute to the growth of all the other lanes in the Noble Eight-fold Path. It is a mutually strengthening process.

#### **5 KAMMA EFFECT OF RIGHT THOUGHT**

Will thought by itself cause Kamma? Yes, it does. However, the intensity of the thought determines the intensity of the kamma. Many casual thoughts are of low intensity and therefore probably cause weak results.

Compare this with the gravity of speech, bodily action, and livelihood. The intensity of the actions here are probably stronger and the resulting Kamma is similarly stronger.

#### **6 WHERE EFFORT IS APPLIED IN RIGHT THOUGHT?**

When one needs to arrest a bad thought or needs to prevent the arising of a bad thought, one needs to make a mental effort for that. That is where Right Effort comes in.

#### **7 WHERE IS MINDFULNESS APPLIED IN RIGHT THOUGHT?**

When one needs to abandon a bad thought or needs to prevent a bad thought coming in, one needs to be mindful of its existence. With that mindfulness, effort can be applied. If one is not mindful, then there is no way effort can be applied.

So, mindfulness is a crucial factor, in trying to keep thoughts clean.

#### **8 WHERE IS CONCENTRATION APPLIED IN RIGHT THOUGHT?**

When mindfulness is applied in the above manner, the mind must be calm and concentrated on the thought that is in point at that time. Otherwise, mindfulness cannot get a foothold on the thought. This is where Right Concentration comes in.

Note that this is a running process. Concentration and mindfulness grow together. One cannot function effectively without the help of the other.

## **9 TRIGGER (HELICOPTER) EFFECT OF EFFORT, MINDFULNESS AND CONCENTRATION AS A TRIAD COMBINATION**

In the Discourse on the Great Forty, Maha Cattarisaka Sutta, it is clearly mentioned that at an advanced level of spiritual practice, effort, mindfulness, and concentration propel one another with increasing vigour and speed in such a way that this turning machine effect causes a trigger on all the other five lanes. Then all eight lanes get activated and rise in intensity.

It is like the rotation of the blades of a helicopter that eventually makes it to rise in the air without any external support, or propulsion.

This makes all the difference between a person who is happy to stay in the cycle births and a person who is determined to attain enlightenment.

Attainment of enlightenment is some mystical experience. It is a thing within the reach of every person. Learning the Dhamma and practising the teachings is of course helpful

### **Article 72**

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

Anicca—Nothing Lasts

"Sometimes I wonder about the happiest moments in people's lives.

From my reflection on some incidents, I realised that their happiness is a measure of the suffering they have gone through before.

Happiness is a pause between two moments of suffering. And suffering is a pause between two moments of happiness."

Source: *Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm*

## Article 73

### Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 30 December 2021]*

#### Anicca—Nothing Lasts

"This too will pass' gave us hope.  
And hope gave us inspiration to work and to endeavour."

This is the simile of our lives. We are the ruler of our body, our family, and our surroundings.

Sometimes we experience difficulties and suffering. What do some people do? They get depressed and sulk. As they don't do anything, it means the bad times last longer than they should.

So whenever there's any difficulty, always remember that this too will pass. But when things are going well, always remember this too will pass. Remembering that fact of life, you can put all the energy you can into this moment because this moment is valuable, and you won't let it pass without enjoying it. If things get difficult, it doesn't matter—this too will pass.

'This too will pass' gives us hope, gives us energy, gives us a way of looking forward.

The truth of the fact is: Whatever is happening now will not last."

Source: *Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm*

## Article 74

### Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 01 December 2021]*

#### Anicca—Nothing Lasts

"How can you have a heaven realm if it is always beautiful and nice? You wouldn't notice it anymore because the nature of our consciousness is always to compare.

If you have beautiful food every day, you won't notice it. If you have air-conditioning every day, it is only when it doesn't work that you notice it.

Even if you're in heaven, after a while it would not be much happiness anymore. You'll take it for granted.

By its very nature, heaven has to be impermanent and by its very nature, hell has to be impermanent; otherwise, you would get used to it.

You find that within happiness and pain, it is the contrast which is important. Even in pain or in hell you don't notice it until every now and again there is some happiness. The point is this:

*Without comparison, you would not understand what happiness and pain truly is.*

Once we understand the impermanence of things, it helps us understand the reality of life and learn how to deal with things. We can enjoy things as long as we understand that pleasure is here now, but it is not going to be here forever."

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

## Article 75

### Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

*[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 01 December 2021]*

#### Anicca—Nothing Lasts

"The more you contemplate the ephemeral nature of all things, the more compassionate you become.

Understanding impermanence makes you enjoy life more.

Anicca teaches us how to care when we have things we enjoy and how to let them go when they crack, and not with grief or too many tears. Because some day we are going to die, the most important thing to do is to care.

The importance of the teaching of anicca is for us to realise it is necessary not to waste time. Whatever you need to do, do it now. Do the most important things first; otherwise, you will not have time to do them. If you love your family, you should care for them now, knowing that they could be gone any day. What more could you have done? You're only sad when they die if you've wasted your time. That's the only sadness in life. Wasting time.

This is a different way of understanding anicca; all things disappear and fade away. All our possessions will be gone. Great monuments in this world or monasteries which we've built are only bricks or concrete and steel, and they will fade away. What doesn't fade away is our karma, our goodness, our kindness. ...

That's why one of my favourite sayings is:

People are much more important than things."

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)*

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