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Article 83

The Buddhist Way to Happiness

NOT TO NEGLECT MERITORIOUS ACTIVITIES

[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 (21)

TIMELY ATTENTION TO MERITORIOUS ACTS

Most people have plans or ideas as to what good things they will do in the future. This teaching emphasises the need to practise these right now or without delay. It is convenient to plan for the future, doing nothing right now. Buddha's admonition was to avoid delaying good things. A major activity will obviously need a lot of time. How about little valuable things we can do right now? We need to pay attention to them immediately. The last words of the Buddha were about the need to pay attention to the Dhamma immediately as we do not know what is in store for us tomorrow.

For example, one thing you can do with no money, house, job, business, or anything, is to do a little breathing meditation for five minutes. It does not cost anything, and it will give valuable returns. Reading a page from a Dhamma book is another easy thing to do. Saying something in kind words to another is also easy. If you are willing to take some action, here is plenty to do.

Our tendency is to create excuses for doing nothing meritorious. With that attitude we have a mountain of tasks in front of us. Let the mountain be there, but we can try to get over the little hills.

Being heedful is a significant teaching of the Buddha. Living as human beings we have a great opportunity to learn and practise the Dhamma. It is for us to lead a happy and successful life here and now, as well as in the future. No one knows how long we can live. Hence, we should be diligent in relation to the Dhamma.

Generosity, virtue, and the development of wisdom through meditation, are the main activities we need to focus on.

Article 84

The Buddhist Way to Happiness

BEING RESPECTFUL

[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 22

BEING RESPECTFUL

Being respectful is easy to practice, if only one has a good heart, a reasonably clean mind. This is related to being humble. That again is an attribute of the mind.

A natural question arising is who is worthy of our respect. The broad answer is that all living things and beings are worthy of our respect. We need to have a sense of respect for the environment, both physical and biological. We need to respect society in general, specifically the institutions of society including the government. It is necessary to show respect to animals we can see as well as little beings who are invisible to the naked eye. Microbes are such beings.

Different types of individuals are worthy of respect for different reasons. In top place is the Buddha. The Buddha is our spiritual teacher and guide, in all our spiritual pursuits. The Bodhisatta (aspirant to Buddhahood) made incredible sacrifices in his journey to become a Buddha. His teachings continue to illuminate our path to enlightenment. His attainments are unique. So, the Buddha needs to

be respected. It is not a casual attitude, but a sustained respect based on understanding and appreciation.

The Dhamma is an embodiment of Buddha which is still dynamic. Hence, we respect the Dhamma. Similarly, the Sangha including all who have attained enlightenment at any of the four stages, command our respect.

Our parents who sacrificed so much to nurture us need to be respected. They were our first teachers. Similarly, we need to respect our teachers and elders.

All persons who are more advanced than us, in discipline, and mental development through Dhamma learning and meditation ought to be respected.

There are factors that reduce or prevent our ability to show respect to others. One is our pride. In general people have too much of the ego and hold strong views about themselves and about other things find it difficult to show respect to others. They are enmeshed in their idea of their own greatness.

Article 85

*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. Parts 1 and 2 were published in the Dhamma Magazine for April 2022. Parts 3 to 8 appear here. That concludes this article on Mindfulness

PART (3) CONNECTION WITH RIGHT EFFORT

When right mindfulness works like a search light, the meditator comes to know where the mind is dwelling now. So, what then should the meditator do?

The meditator must discern where he wants the mind to be and help it to move there. That effort needs to be applied by the meditator. The knowledge of the Dhamma helps him to take correct action.

PART (4) MINDFULNESS, CONCENTRATION AND EFFORT TRIO

In the discourse on the great forty (Maha Cattarisaka Sutta), the Buddha says that this trio must work together like a machine each one pushing the others. This is an internal cleansing process of the mind. The process brightens right view, and the latter cleans up all the other lanes of the noble eight-fold path. This is how the progress on the path leads to enlightenment. The meditator must know this and tirelessly help advance this process.

This is akin to the rotation of helicopter blades, which in turns helps the helicopter to rise. The working of the trio over and over again results in lifting the quality of right view and through that the rest of the parts of the noble eight-fold path.

PART 5 KAMMA EFFECT OF RIGHT MINDFULNESS

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.

Right mindfulness helps the meditator to keep away unwholesome thoughts, words, and deeds. That results in avoiding bad kamma.

PART 6 INSTRUCTIONS TO DEVELOP RIGHT MINDFULNESS

The Buddha gives a prescriptive method to develop right mindfulness. It is through the provisions of the great discourse on the establishment of mindfulness (Maha sati Patthana sutta). This was detailed in part (1) of this article.

PART 7 CONNECTION WITH 37 FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

There are seven groups that together make this vital set of 37 factors. Right mindfulness is an element in each one of these. In terms of the seven groupings of the thirty-seven factors, the relevance and importance of right mindfulness are summarised here. For more details references are available on the internet.

The four groupings are:

Group 1 4 Foundations of mindfulness

Group 2 4 Great endeavours

Group 3 4 Psychic powers

Group 4 5 Faculties

Group 5 5 Powers

Group 6 7 Factors of awakening

Group 8 Aspects of the noble eight-fold path

The whole of group 1 is a description of methods of developing mindfulness.

In group 2, we see the four ways of applying effort to increase wholesomeness and decrease unwholesomeness of thoughts. One can apply effort only if one is able to recognise the existence of an existing thought. Mindfulness enables one to recognise existing thoughts.

In group 3, one needs to recognise the nature of the mind at a given time and step it up in the required way. The recognition is enabled by mindfulness.

In group 4, the current mental state is raised to the level of a faculty (Indriya) that enables one to distinguish between an ordinary mental state from a faculty mental state. Recognising the difference is enabled by mindfulness.

In group 5, it is a further rise in the mental state and the relevance of mindfulness is similar but operates at a still higher level.

The mental states rise to a still higher level in group 6. Again, mindfulness enables one to notice the current levels in every aspect so that effort can be applied to enhance it in purity.

In group 7, the noble eight-fold path, mindfulness enables one to observe the level of operation, the adequacy of knowledge and practice, so that these mental states can be brought up to perfection.

There is no factor in advanced practice that enables further progress than the single factor of mindfulness. This is probably why the Buddha called mindfulness the one and only way to enlightenment.

PART 8 MINDFULNESS AS MENTIONED IN IN ABHIDHAMMA

According to abhidhamma (philosophy and psychology) texts, mindfulness is listed as one of the seven mental states that exist in the mind of a new-born. As the child grows up, the energy levels of this mental state and its nature grow up and diversify. Diversification is by

way of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness. Many believe quite rightly that the original mental state of mindfulness is wholesome, and that the child picks up unwholesomeness from the environment.

The training and practice in mindfulness is aimed at enhancing the level of wholesomeness in the mind.

Article 86

Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 24 March 2022]

Karma Without Belief

"There's nothing wrong with being sick, and there is nothing wrong with having problems in life.

Don't think that there's something wrong, that we're being punished for a bad thing we did in the past, and that it was karma. This is part of a human life.

Have no guilt or anger and say: "What is happening to me right now is part of life.

Taking the law of karma to see it in a far deeper way is much better. We aren't blaming ourselves, when we say: "There's nothing wrong with me that I'm having a problem in my life," it takes away the guilt and the anger.

And why is it right to think that way?

Because it gives you the opportunity to embrace it, to learn from it, and to grow from it.

Also, when you're having a good time, enjoy it. There's nothing wrong with enjoying yourself and being happy.

Both happiness and problems are part of this thing called life.”

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

Article 87

Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 6 April 2022]

Karma without Belief

"Karma means making things happen. And you can do anything with what you've got right now.

Karma is what I am doing right now about my future.

If I'm being negative now, blaming and being angry at people, and keep moaning 'Why me?' or looking at the future with dark glasses, I'm ruining the present moment and creating a terrible future for myself.

Now is the only time I've got, so I'm going to let go of the past and forgive so as to be free and happy. So, I'm going to be peaceful, kind, caring and compassionate.

And once you walk out of the jail of the past, you're free forever. So, get out of jail right now.

When you learn how to do this, your future gets happier and happier. When a problem comes or whatever happens in your life, instead of saying there's something wrong and getting negative, please think: "This is great! Let's learn from this."

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

Article 88

Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 12 April 2022]

Karma Without Belief

"It's not what you're experiencing.

It's how you're experiencing it!

Getting angry, getting guilty, and blaming is bad karma.

Accepting, embracing, compassion, and learning is good karma.

You don't need to have faith in that. You can try it out yourself. Always remember that it's not what you're experiencing— no matter whether it's a problem or happiness, it's how you're experiencing it that is the source of karma. That is where karma lives.

Going through a problem in life, a cancer, or a divorce, is not bad karma, but if you really get into grief about it, into denial, into anger, looking for somebody to blame, that's bad karma.

Karma is the way you relate to life, not life itself.

Karma is happening right now. You are making your future right now by the attitude you have towards what's happening in your life.

Good karma is when you say, ‘How can I learn from this?’ with what is happening now.”

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

Article 89

Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

[Gratefully extracted from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria 21April 2022]

Karma Without Belief

"Life is work in progress.

To become wiser and kinder— That’s the meaning of life.

A very beautiful old Chinese saying ‘It’s better to light a candle than curse the darkness’. So whenever you want to complain about something in life—your partner or your job, instead of complaining, please light a candle. There are always many candles around to light. There’s always something positive you can do—sometimes it is just to embrace and learn.

Sometimes people ask: ‘What is the meaning of life?’ A simple answer to a very deep question is to learn.

In the past year how much have you learnt? How much wiser and kinder have you become? That’s the meaning of life.

So how do you become wise and kind? Right now is where you do this, as well as building happiness and health. Now is where karma is made.

Now you know not only the meaning of life but also the secret of life. The secret is in this moment, absolutely for free.

Question: How do you motivate people who have no will to live?
Ajahn Brahm: Instead of having the will to live, just have the will to be compassionate, to be kind. Losing the will to live is the fear of the future. They feel they've had enough when they can't see any positivity or any hope.

But life has always been like this and the world will never change. We can change our attitude towards our life. Just take away the will to live, the will to die or the will to go anywhere, and just be."

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 or see under current activities in the QSA website www.sanghaqld.org

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