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Article 44

Path to Nibbana listing of topics-edition 2 -segment 2 item 3

THE NINE IDENTIFICATIONS OF UNSKILFUL (AKUSALA) MENTAL STATES

Based on Abhidhamma and related commentaries

Sub-topics 160 to 161

Sub-topic 160

INTRODUCTION

1 All unskillful mental states arise from the three roots, greed, aversion, and ignorance. However, these are only names that we can remember. The fact is that they come in so many different forms. Unless we can identify each form, or at least the common forms, and notice their connection to the three roots, there is little practical use in just knowing the three words greed, aversion, and ignorance.

2 One can argue that the number of forms in which the three roots appear is unlimited. If we take that position, again that assumption is useless. Hence it is sensible to focus on the nine forms that are mentioned in the Abhidhamma Pitaka. We may have heard about some of these nine such as the hindrances, fetters, and defilements, but it is useful for the practitioner to get a reasonable understanding of all nine of these.

3 So, in this study, we try to list the different forms in which the three roots appear, and understand them, in the expectation that, we can recognise them and deal with them as we encounter these. How to deal with them is a separate matter and that aspect is dealt with in the Sabbasava Sutta.

4 For this we will take the nine forms suggested in the Abhidhamma Pitaka (Akusala Sanghaha) and explained in the Visuddhi Magga. For more details the reader may refer to the book *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* by Venerable Narada Thero of Sri Lanka, the books on Buddhist Psychology by Professor Rhys Davids, and Buddhist Psychological Ethics by C.A.F Rhys Davids.

5 In the series called *A Guide to the study of Theravada Buddhism*, published by the Colombo YMBA, Book number 5 attempts to summarise the teachings on these facets for the use of diploma students reading for their examinations. This book might be available at Sri Lankan temples in Australia, too.

6 These are the nine forms in which the three roots of immorality get presented in life.

- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| (1) Taints | Asava |
| (2) Floods | Ogha |
| (3) Bonds | Yoga |
| (4) Bodily knots | Gantha |

(5) Clinging	Upadana
(6) Hindrances	Nivarana
(7) Latent dispositions	Anusaya
(8) Fetters	Samyojana
(9) Defilements	Kilesa

7 Once we develop a reasonable ability to recognise and identify these facets as they come, then we can develop the ability to take action to reduce them and ultimately eliminate them. If we do not learn to recognise them, it may become harder to eliminate them.

8 We are dealing with mental states in this discussion. However, we must not forget that the mind and body cannot be separated, as they work together each depending on the other. Hence, the body has a parallel movement whenever there is a movement of the mind. In this discussion we might not refer the body responses directly but these need to be recognised.

9 Note that not all unskillful acts bring demerit (papa). It denotes lack of skill in moving towards emancipation (nibbana). It is true that many unskillful acts also involve immorality and may lead to further suffering. Care should be taken to sort this out.

Sub-topic 161

TAINTS OR CANKERS (ASAVA)

1 In more familiar terms, taints are a class of defilements or impurities of the mind. We always have these and are eliminated only at the point of reaching the stage of a saint (Arahant). Kheenasava is a name for an Arahant because he has eliminated the cankers.

2 What is the nature of these cankers? Mental states (cetasika) rooted in greed, aversion and ignorance having lived in the mind for many lives in samsara (cycle of births), have now reached a fermented stage and these are able to flow in the mind freely. These cannot be easily seen but these do exist. The term asava is linked to fermentation. As cankers get activated, there can be noticeable responses of the body. This might help in recognising the activating canker.

3 These can also be called intoxicants as they intoxicate the mind. The intoxicated mind assumes that these constitute normal behaviour. So, it is hard to get rid of them. The reader can ask the mind whether these experiences are not assumed by the mind as being normal:

- (1) Sense desires (kama asava)
- (2) Desire for continued existence (bhava asava)

(3) Wrong views (ditthi asava)

(4) Ignorance (avijja asava)

4 Unskilful cankers if recognised as a category, can be observed faintly. However, when the required conditions arise, they produce visible results, and the wise person who has practiced meditation will notice them and try to evict them in the appropriate way.

5 Category (1) sense desires arise in association with the six senses. The first five senses get excited with external objects and the sixth one from memories.

6 You can test your mind to observe the existence of desires for future existence. These are always there. This moment you are expecting to do something the next moment. That is laying the base for an existence in the future. That is in category (2) above.

7 We say that it is natural to have our own views about almost everything. Many of these create obstacles in the path of spirituality. When these wrong views are held for a long time, they become strong views. Strong views are usually wrong and unhelpful views. This is in category (3). If you have the view that you need to learn the whole Dhamma in full, probably it is a wrong view. The reason is that practice is more important. You need a balance. Dogmatic views are clearly wrong views. The mind needs to be soft enough to learn new ways. Dogmas prevent such learning. This comes in another sub-topic too.

8 Notice how the body responds to an activation of the canker of wrong view, when no one accepts your view. Your face changes, the mouth changes in disdain. With this you can see the canker which otherwise lays hidden. It could be easier to see this in others if you can learn a lesson from it.

9 Often, we do not see a way to clear a doubt. That is category (4), ignorance. Ignorance of the applicability of the four noble truths in every situation is the basic problem. Ignorance is also the basis for the growth of greed and aversion.

10 Doubts can arise regarding the nature of the Buddha, the validity of Dhamma or the value of the Sangha. Doubts often arise about the meaning of kamma, and the meaning of life itself and the value of meditation.

11 If an intoxicant (like beer or coconut toddy) is fermented in a vessel, the walls of the vessel absorb the fluid; when that happens scores of times, the walls become fermented. If water is poured into the vessel even long afterwards, it acquires the smell of the liquid. This is how fermentations of the mind arise. Having accepted the idea, we can observe how fermentations affect the mind.

12 Some say that they know that all these are greed, aversion and ignorance and dismiss it as things already understood. This is not correct. During a war, when missiles are fired, if soldiers who are hit say that they know who is firing, that is not enough. If you want to launch a counter-attack, this knowledge is

insufficient. You need to know the kind of uniform of the enemy, where they are staying and what strength they have. Then only the enemy can be taken to task.

13 The same is true in attacking cankers. One needs to understand where they are, how they behave, what appearance they have and so on. Then only will the attack, through learning, ethics and meditation succeed.

[Extracted from the script presented by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra and Jayantha Maharage at QSA Buddhist Forum 04 during October 2021]

Article 45

Path to Nibbana listing of topics-edition 2 -segment 2 item 3

THE NINE IDENTIFICATIONS OF UNSKILFUL (AKUSALA) MENTAL STATES

Based on Abhidhamma and related commentaries

Sub-topics 162 to 165

Sub-topic 162

FLOODS (OGHA)

1 Floods of mental states are also connected to the same types as mentioned before:

- (1) Sense desires (kama asava)
- (2) Desire for continued existence (bhava asava)
- (3) Wrong views (ditthi asava)
- (4) Ignorance (avijja asava)

2 What is the difference in the appearance of these mental states? In a flood there are two distinctive features:

- a) There is a gush or a rush of experiences
- b) The gush is so strong that it is difficult to cross

3 A few examples of a flood of mental states in our experience in the modern world are suggested here.

- (1) When radios became popular, everyone thought of acquiring one, whether they really wanted them or not. Some people went on to steal radios or to buy better and more beautiful

radios. Every child was screaming for one. Factories came up to manufacture radios. The mental state of acquiring one amounted to a flood. That class of greed was unstoppable, at that time.

- (2) A similar flood of mental states appeared when television came. It was worse when colour television arrived.
- (3) Currently everyone wants to acquire a new type of telephone, paying a lot of money. This flood causes secondary floods of sense desires. One example is the prevalence of frivolous talk, because when the telephone is cheap to use, the tendency is to talk a lot.
- (4) Another recent flood in sense desires is the use of social media like Facebook. You can easily spread lies, slanders, and abuse at will. It harms people and unwittingly harms the user. In the Covid 19 pandemic this flood is causing much damage. It is mostly unskilful and demeritorious.
- (5) In wealthy countries, recently there has been a craze for cruises. Earn a lot of money whether in a good way or a bad one, you need to go on a cruise, to become happy. In this search for happiness, in 2020, there was much suffering and deaths, due to the spread of Covid 19. There are many people who went on cruises every year, using hard-earned money. This economic sector experienced a flood, and the mental states of customers suffered a damaging flood.
- (6) During the Clinton era, rules regarding bank loans to buy property were relaxed in a big way, maybe with good intentions. The simple desire to acquire a property to live in became a craze and a rush, and a malaise in the whole of society. Many who were unable to buy a small house suddenly were able to buy mansions. Finally, a crisis started, and houses could not be sold even for one dollar. This was a flood in the minds of people, and they got washed away. It ended in suffering.
- (7) There are many stories like these. Are you caught in a flood like these?

4 In all these cases, stupidity is the ultimate causative factor. Sense desires are the more obvious causative factor.

5 Once the mental flood starts, it is hard to stop it. It is hard to cross it and get on to somethings more useful.

6 These desires also cause desire for becoming (bhava tanha). A continuation can result in the build-up of strong views (ditthi asava). When the best telephones are acquired, people would think that they have a higher status in society (and behave like common fools).

7 Modern marketing on television is aimed at causing social floods that start as mental states connected to greed in the minds of weak people. Initially it is flood in a mind, and later it turns into a social flood.

Sub-topic 163 **BONDS (YOGA)**

1 Bonds of mental states are also connected to the same types as mentioned before:

- (1) Sense desires (kama asava)
- (2) Desire for continued existence (bhava asava)
- (3) Wrong views (ditthi asava)
- (4) Ignorance (avijja asava)

2 Again, what is different is their power and strength of a bond. In the case of bonds people get bonded to sense objects or to persons. It could be to situations, positions, places and so on that generate desire and views.

3 In mundane life, bonds are often needed and are useful. For example, the bond of marriage is necessary and useful. Because of this bond both men and women try to maintain good character. It is believed that some spouses who remain in the bonds of marriage in this life are reborn to continue that relationship. It is said that Siddhartha and Yasodhara were spouses in very many lives.

4 So, the observance of the five precepts is facilitated by the bond of marriage, and that is useful

5 The bond of marriage should not be too strong and not too relaxed. If it is too strong, one party would get disgusted and try to go away. If it is too relaxed the stronger party might not be always faithful

6 Even for a person pursuing the spiritual path moderate bonds are necessary and useful up to a point. There is the story of a non-returner (anagamin) who looked after a family in the usual way. However, he wanted to be free from the bond. He asked the spouses (there were more than one) to stay in the home if they wished or they could get married to other individuals if that was their choice.

Note that a non-returner has terminated the mental states of greed and ill-will both.

7 For a person who wishes to attain sainthood (arahant), the bondage to a spouse could be a deterrent. That is why leave the household.

8 Attainment of enlightenment pre-supposes breaking of all bonds.

9 Subject to these considerations, in general, for a spiritual practitioner, it is part of the practice to reduce bondages and finally get fully released.

10 Even for people who believe in a happy mundane life, bonds need to be managed wisely. The owner of a business must have a retirement plan. Property needs to be given to children as early as possible. A person working for a salary needs to have a retirement plan. Positions of power and authority need to be relinquished sensibly and early. People who have children and grand children need to manage their connections wisely. As they grow old the bonds with descendants need to be reduced and given up reasonably early.

11 Freedom from bonds give rise to mundane happiness and additionally paves the way to spiritual attainments. Even on the death bed some people look for descendants to hug for the last time. Release from bondage allows a person to die peacefully.

12 It is sensible to break mental bonds as early as possible. That might be a way to terminate all attachments and attain enlightenment. King Suddhodana became an arahant on his death bed. It might be that the Buddha helped his father to abandon all bonds at least at the last moment.

13 It is simply skillful to break as many bonds as possible as early as possible. The complications of not doing so are obvious. When one fails to do so, one will cling on to ignorance and becoming, thus seeking a new birth in an unknown place.

14 Educated, rich, and powerful people will not break any bonds due to strong views they hold. The stronger the views, the bonds will never break. Correction of views must never be postponed until death. Let the mind be as free as possible.

[Extracted from the script presented by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra and Jayantha Maharage at QSA Buddhist Forum 04 during October 2021]

Article 46

The Way to Happiness

HAVING GOOD SPEECH

[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 (10)

HAVING SPEECH THAT IS WELL SPOKEN

Well-spoken speech is indicated in the eight precepts of livelihood (Ajiva Atthamaka Sila). The four relevant precepts are:

- 1 Refraining from false speech
- 2 Refraining from slanderous speech
- 3 Refraining from harsh speech
- 4 Refraining from wasteful speech, frivolous speech

False speech has the effect of society treating the person as a liar and untrustworthy person. When this happens, it comes back to hurting oneself, and one gasps why did I tell this lie. Then it is an unpleasant feeling. It is good to prevent this happening.

Slander is even worse than false speech. In slander one spreads lies to cause damage to the reputation of another. If believed, this initially causes hurt to the victim. Eventually, people come to know the truth. That results in a backlash to the wrong doer. That is in turn hurtful. In false speech and slander both, the mouth uttering these, becomes a foul mouth, and is not pleasant to others. The wrong doer is despised.

Harsh speech causes hurt to the victim. The victim comes to sorrow. If one becomes famous for harsh speech most people will avoid such a person. That is hurtful to the wrong doer.

Frivolous speech is what causes most turmoil in society. Such a speaker talks a lot, mostly with no useful purpose. It can easily involve false speech, slander, and harsh words often uttered without adequate thinking.

In all these cases one incurs bad kamma, which eventually or immediately haunts the wrong doer, who thus comes to suffering.

These also cause turmoil in society, arguments, disputes and even fights. It is not useful to society, or the individuals concerned.

In modern society, the telephone, and the social media, have facilitated a vast proportion of poor speech, and we need to use these facilities with care.

In all these cases, lack of mindfulness is a major cause of wrongdoing. Those who learn and practise mindfulness, quickly get over these faults and become assets to society.

Think before you talk is the best dictum, in these cases.

You can utter words that are diplomatic, affectionate, soothing, pleasant, and meaningful to all. That is an indirect practice of loving kindness. It creates good kamma.

Good speech brings harmony in society. People get united and help one another.

A question that arises is whether it is always correct to speak the truth. It is a difficult point to understand.

We can learn a lesson from the Buddha. The Buddha will check whether the speech is true, correct, and beneficial, and whether it is welcome and agreeable to others, and whether this is the proper time to say it.

If these conditions not met, we can remain silent.

For scripture references please read the Abhayakumara Sutta, or see page 66 of the book Buddhist Chaplaincy by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra.

You can now understand, why the Buddha has the name Muni. It means the silent person. It is not that he was silent all the time. What he spoke can fill a library, but he spoke what should have been spoken, at the right time and place, in the right tone and language. There is a saying that silence is golden.

The writer suggests that if one factor is causative in messing up our lives here and now (and maybe in future births), it is our speech. Speech generates powerful kamma, and we reap the results.

A person of wholesome speech is endeared by associates, his fame spreads everywhere, like the sweet smell of the Jasmine flower. Such a person leads a happy, pleasant, and successful life. He may speak only a few words but will always have a sweet smile. Coming from his heart.

In the modern context, conversations and statements made in telephoning, writing, emailing, coded communications, and communications using signs, symbols, and other means, attract similar consequences as spoken words.

Article 47

The Way to Happiness

CARING FOR MOTHER AND FATHER

[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 (11)

CARING FOR MOTHER AND FATHER

Next to the Buddha, show respect and regard for your mother and father; that is what the Buddha taught. We were all born as babies unable to do anything for ourselves and we survived because of what the mother did for us, and the support

given by the father to the mother. I need to remember that throughout my life and act accordingly, with great respect and a sense of gratitude.

The Buddha says that even if you carried your parents on the shoulders, and served them all your life, still the debt owing to them cannot be paid back. The best way is to help the parents to practice morality, concentration, and the development of wisdom, for their own salvation. Stated in another way, they need to be supported to develop their faith in the triple gem, moral practice, generosity, and wisdom. The latter is mentioned in Katannu Sutta.

So long as they live, one must care for the parents. That care should not be based on any conditions; they did not look after us on conditions. They made incredible sacrifices to bring us up. Some children expect the parents to transfer their property, to the children. That is not fair.

The duties of a child towards parents are mentioned in a discourse called Sigalovada Sutta. These are:

- 1 Supporting the parents
- 2 Help them in their work
- 3 Keep the family tradition
- 4 Become worthy of inheritance
- 5 After their death, offer alms in their honour

Most children might be unable to support the parents, but they can help them in the work they do. Even small children can help by keeping the house clean, using toilets with care, washing utensils, keeping things in the proper places, and above all asking whether they need help and listening to them.

Being obedient is a big help you can give to parents, whatever your age. Seeking permission, is another way of helping.

Young adults can do a lot more. They need to be vigilant to notice anything they can do to relieve the burden on parents.

When children young or old do things that are unwholesome, they cause pain of mind to parents. That is not fair. Parents suffer a lot because of wrongful conduct of children.

Siddhartha when he left the palace in search of the truth about life, consulted his parents, relatives, and spouse; he did not abandon them but wished to help all of them with his intended discoveries. He did that successfully. The scriptures say that he his mother Maha Maya, who was living in a heaven at that time, and taught the Dhamma to her.

Sri Lankan commentaries are very brief in describing these things, while Chinese commentaries are full of detail, and praise for Siddhartha.

A birth story (Jataka) describes how the Bodhisatta carried his mother and swam in the ocean with great difficulty to save her life.

Article 48

METTA-CAN BE EXTENDED TO INANIMATE OBJECTS

Extract from the Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria taken gratefully with approval



Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

“Metta to the Past

Sometimes people think that metta must be only to human beings or animals. But you can have metta to inanimate things as well, including to situations in your life, to diseases in your body, or to experiences, especially in your past.

When looking at the past, pick out the good stuff, and you’ll find your happiness levels increase.

You become a better person not by looking at your faults but by remembering all the good things which happened. Also, you don’t get a big head—you get a big heart. This is what we’re supposed to be doing in life: to get big hearts.

Only when you allow everything in, with beautiful all-embracing metta, can you find peace with yourself.

“Whatever has happened to me in the past, whatever I have done, whatever has occurred, the door of my heart is open to all of that.”

As you allow the past to come in and as you embrace everything which has ever happened to you, there is forgiveness.

Until you can forgive the past you’re still being tortured by it.

What this means is that you don’t need to be the punisher, that you can forgive and that the whole process will work its way out without you. So it’s important to have metta and forgiveness of the past, to forgive your enemies and not to linger with anger.

All anger, according to the Buddha, is temporary insanity. So when we understand the reason why people say or do things that may harm us physically or verbally, it’s easy to forgive.

Metta enables us to understand that we’re not perfect and that we all suffer temporary insanity from time to time. We may not hit our head, but we get bumped and bruised by some of the experiences we have. Sometimes we take that out on other people, especially those we love.

Only when you forgive can you be free.

Only when you embrace the past does the process of healing begin. Only when you are truthful rather than hiding things away, can there be a sense of integration, growth and then freedom.

Metta does lead to freedom. It doesn’t obliterate the past or neglect it; it makes use of it to grow, and in that growth arises this freedom and compassion.”

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

Article 49

METTA TO THE PAST

Extract from the Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria taken gratefully with approval



BUDDHIST SOCIETY
OF VICTORIA

Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

“Metta to the Past

Beyond reason, metta comes from the heart. And it heals.

In our modern world, people are just consumed by guilt; they just cannot let go the mistakes of their past. The issue is not that mistakes should just be obliterated and not be dealt with, but that mistakes are dealt with in the wrong way: whenever we make a mistake, we want to be punished.

Why is it that we want to punish ourselves? Does it really help at all? Punishing ourselves is what guilt is all about.

All that we actually learn from the punishments is to be cleverer so that we don't get caught. We never realise why it's wrong. That's why sometimes punishment doesn't work. Sometimes it's much better to have understanding. Especially to yourself.

When we punish ourselves, what we're really doing is denying ourselves happiness.

We think we don't deserve to be happy and seek punishment for the mistake made. Many of the illnesses which people have are guilt-related—something you've done in the past which you've pushed deep under your mind so that you can't see it now but which is a cause for not allowing yourself to be happy. It comes out in stress that causes diseases.

When you can say to yourself that you're only a human being who makes mistakes - and is allowed to make mistakes, the door of your heart is open to you no matter what you've done in the past, then something changes in your mind and even in your body. You become free.

Forgiveness leads to healing, happiness, and freedom.

So when you look into the past, you give it metta and compassion so that you can get rid of all the guilt and suffering. And don't forget that if you need some punishment, go and find a cat or a dog and stroke until you've got no guilt



left.

When you remember the past, remember all the wonderful things which have happened to you. If you can do that, you know how to have metta towards the past, and guilt or anger will disappear and you can grow wonderfully well in inspiration, repeating all the successes and the beautiful things which make you a wonderful human being.

Through metta towards the past, you embrace both the good and the bad of the past, and wonderful things can happen.”

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

Article 50

METTA TO THE FUTURE

Extract from the Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria taken gratefully with approval



Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

“Metta to the Future

One of the biggest problems of human suffering is anxiety or panic attacks about the future, which happens when we worry about what is going to happen next.

One of the advantages of metta meditation is that we can apply loving kindness to our future, as well, by saying:

“The door of my heart is open to the future no matter what it brings.”

And that, by itself, will make us relax and be confident that whatever happens to us next, we can always deal with it in a positive way.

This positive attitude towards the future is realistic, inspiring and empowering.

The time when I first learnt to have a positive attitude towards the future was when I was sick in the hospital in the northeast of Thailand 30 years ago. The northeast was the backwaters of this then third-world country. I had a fever for about three to four weeks, but they didn’t know what that was at that time, so they just injected me with antibiotics twice a day.

There I was, suffering with a fever and my buttocks aching. I felt so terrible—a Western monk a long way from home... I felt so lonely, so depressed, so awful...

And one day my teacher Ajahn Chah walked in to see me. This great monk came to visit me, a little monk! Straightaway I was so uplifted! I was so honoured! I was so inspired but only for a few seconds until Ajahn Chah opened his mouth. I always remember what he said.

“Brahmavamso, either you’ll get better, or you’ll die.” And then he left!

The trouble with Ajahn Chah is that you can’t argue with him. It was true. What

he was saying was true. It didn't matter what happened, the fever wouldn't last.



Either I'd get better or I'd die. Fortunately, I got better.

So why worry about the future? Whatever happens it is not going to last. This positive attitude towards the future has helped me so many times.

If you cultivate loving kindness: no matter what happens, you'll always be able to do something about it. If you die young, you don't have to worry about



going to an old people's home. ”

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

COMMENTS ON ARTICLES AND YOUR DHAMMA QUESTIONS

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

THE END OF THE 18 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR NOVEMBER 2021

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

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