



QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE

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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.sanghaql.org

Article 37

From the Path to Nibbana Dhamma Topics Listing QSA October 2021

THE IDEA OF FEAR IN RELATION TO MEDITATION AS AN OBSTACLE TO SPIRITUAL PROGRESS AND MEDITATION

Fear in relation to meditation is an aspect of fearing the unknown. For a person who has not done meditation, but has heard various comments on meditation, fear is caused by such misleading information.

There are stories in society of people who went mad or suffered some derangement of mind after practising meditation. A leading monk once said that there is a tendency for people with deranged minds to try meditation as a cure. Naturally, such people might exhibit signs of derangement, and create bad publicity for meditation.

Meditation helps in purifying the mind. There are three types of poor behaviour:

- 1 Bodily behaviour
- 2 Verbal behaviour
- 3 Mental behaviour

A person who meditates has a chance of reducing all these types of behaviour. As the observance of precepts helps in controlling behaviour of body and word, mental behaviour is modulated or controlled by meditation.

Mental behaviour is partly related to thinking which a person can observe and partly due to hidden taints of the mind (anusaya Dhamma). Thinking can be observed in meditation but the thoughts arising from taints are harder to notice. Taints, when they get activated, first appear as thoughts.

Mindfulness meditation helps one to notice such occurrences. In deep meditation, the noticing has the result of vanquishing the taints. A taint might rise again, as if they are pasted in layers. This technique can be learnt from a teacher. Conviction can come only after practice.

Even at this stage there is no reason to fear. The Buddha, and his followers have practised meditation successfully. Others too have succeeded in some ways. There is no need to fear. We need to practice meditation under a meditation teacher, who would then help in difficulties.

It is worth noting that the mental state of sloth and torpor reduces the occurrence of fear but that is only for the time being.

Fear arises from craving and is accentuated by the self-idea (atta sankappa). Because we are accustomed to a belief in a self, and the self does not want to lose any possessions, we experience fear. The more you reduce the self-idea, the less becomes fear. Think of this in terms of pain, loss, illness, old age, threats, possibility of destruction, and death. We fear all these because of the strength of the self-idea.

Hatred too contributes to fear. You fear the happening of something you hate (like losing a job).

Focusing on the present moment eliminates fear. All those fears are either from the past or in the future. Whatever happens let it happen is a good dictum to follow.

Arahants do not have fear. They are not attached to anything or any person or any experience. So, they have nothing to lose and no fear to lose.

In the Dhammapada there is a saying that people feel safe when they have children and property. The Buddha asks the question, when you have no control over yourself, how can you rely on children and property. The more you have, the more you fear.

There is one type of fear it is useful to have. That is the fear of being born repeatedly. Even that must be taken lightly.

Warning:

Creating fear is the art of a politician. For him or her, the government is creating mayhem and the world will get destroyed. This way, the politician can come to power. The same thing is claimed by people in power, quoting events from the past.

In business too, doubts in products are publicised, so that a new product can capture the market. This may help in worldly success.

Article 38

From the path to Nibbana Dhamma Topics Listing QSA October 2021)

DOUBTS REGARDING THE METHOD OF MEDITATION BEING FOLLOWED AS AN OBSTACLE TO MEDITATION

There are many methods of meditation and there are as many methods of teaching meditation. Good kamma hopefully will bring to you a good teacher and a good method of meditation. There are people who run all over the world, to look for the best teachers. There is no need for that. In a simple way see whether a particular teacher, a particular method is good in your experience. Practise that and see.

Out of the few Theravada countries, Myanmar appears to have maintained a good record in meditation teachers and meditation methods. Many from several countries including Sri Lanka, visit Myanmar for short periods to learn from meditation masters.

The Goenka method of teaching Vipassana meditation has roots in Myanmar. It is practised worldwide and is organised in a big way.

Meditation methods taught in Sri Lankan forest monasteries such as the centre in Meethirigala have similar connections. These are well organised and patronised. Examples are Kanduboda centre, Meethirigala centre, Nilambe centre, and Dekanduwala centre.

Vipassana (Insight) meditation is the most common method used.

In insight meditation, two basic methods are used, one being breathing meditation and the other walking meditation. In both cases the practice is based on the great discourse on establishment of mindfulness (Sati Patthana Sutta). Learning the sutta in some detail will be very helpful. Otherwise one can learn from a meditation master.

The main mental state developed in these systems is mindfulness (sati). Developing mindfulness also involves the development of concentration (Samatha). The two mental states work together and seem to promote each other.

In samatha, the mind is brought to bear on a single object for a period of time. In Sati, the mind is made to move from one object to another, always aware of the process. In Sati, effort, wisdom, and active awareness work together.

There are four sections in the Sati Patthana. It is believed that the practice of bodi-based mindfulness (the first of the four), leads into the other three sections which are based on Feelings (vedana), the mind (citta), and Dhamma (a selection of mental states). It is not a recommendation to attempt the meditation on Vedana, Citta and Dhammas, separately. This could lead to the meditation being high-jacked by the mind-sense (mano vinnana) which could distract the practice to Samatha-Samadhi (absorptions). It may not lead to Nibbana.

Sati Patthana is considered to be the leading method taking the meditator directly to enlightenment,

This point in the Dhamma is not easy to grasp. It is important to learn it, discuss it and be thorough with it. For more details one needs to study the discourse on the establishment of mindfulness.

The initial experience with meditation for many is in Samatha or calming concentration. On that training one can proceed to Sati Bhavana (mindfulness meditation).

Students need to learn samatha (calming) for success in studies, and learn mindfulness (sati) for overall success.

We need to know that we are born with both mental states of concentration and mindfulness at an elementary level. In life we try to develop both.

Warning:

Doubting the efficacy of a discovery or current practice, is considered necessary to venture on a research for new ways. If we believe in all current things, we may never see new things. Some people know the art of creating doubt so that they can justify their actions. This is worldly experience.

That is part of worldly life. Again, it is a duality we need to cope with.

[Written by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra for the QSA Buddhist Forum 04]

Securing Happiness-From the Great discourse on Blessings-factor 8

Article 39

BEING SKILLED IN THE CRAFTS

AS A WAY TO HAPPINESS

Academic education is always useful, but to be skilled in various crafts or trades has its own values. In the same way academic learning can ensure a capacity to earn a living, learning various skills such as arts and crafts can also be made a way of earning a living. In certain cases, academic learning has contributed to the learning of crafts, and vice versa, the creativity in skills have prompted academic learning.

In fact, monumental achievements in the world in the field of skills, far outweigh the achievements of academics. Consider creations like, the great wall of China, the Ajanta frescoes in India, and the Sigiriya frescoes in Sri Lanka, the creations of Leonardo da Vinci, the pyramids in Egypt, the Buddhist reliquaries like Ruvan Veli Maha Seya in Sri Lanka, the golden Buddha in Myanmar, the Taj Mahal in India, the Angkor Wat in Cambodia, cave paintings in many countries, and many more are convincing examples.

The blessing here is that skills provide an opportunity for a harmless way of living promoting economic attainments as well as improved health.

How are skilled professions connected to spirituality?

Many skills cause no harm to oneself or any others. Usually skilled work does not require speaking or the requirement is minimal. This affords a way of practising the precepts relating to speech. Telling lies, spreading slanders, harsh speech a, frivolous speech, are all controlled with little effort. Similarly, in practising a skill, it does not lead a person to cause harm to others by limbs and body.

The aspect of control of the mind is even more important. While practicing a skill one needs to practise concentration and mindfulness. If concentration is lost, the products are bound to have defects and the value is partly lost. If mindfulness is ignored, the person is likely to sustain injuries. It can be very damaging. Practising a skill requires unfailing attention, generally and specifically to details of the creation.

The ability regarding concentration, mindfulness and attention are all valuable elements in the practice of meditation, an essential element in spiritual practice.

For all these, proper training is vital.

It is worth looking at art, crafts, trade skills, and other skills such as, carpentry, building work, painting, architecture, electrical work, plumbing, surveying, decoration, internal décor, masonry, engineering, manufacture, orthopedics, medical equipment, information technology, computer science, tele-communications, rocket science, astronomy, software development and so on.

Excellent opportunities are available for the development of the mind. The skills so developed can be applied to progressing on the path of spirituality.

[An extract from the book titled The Buddhist Way to Happiness being published by the Queensland Sangha Association Inc]

BEING WELL-TRAINED IN MORAL CONDUCT

AS A WAY TO HAPPINESS

Most religions and ethical systems provide for the proper conduct of a person. In Buddhism proper conduct has one of two main targets, the first being the achievement of a happy worldly life here and now as well as in future births. The second target is the attainment of enlightenment or Nibbana.

A system of moral conduct needs to be for the well-being of the practitioner as well as for the well-being of others.

The first such code is the five precepts. Primarily it is for one's own benefit, and also, it assures major benefits for society as a whole. It benefits all living beings in the same way.

The five precepts are worded as things to avoid. These can be extended in a positive sense too. For example, the first precept of not killing other beings can be extended to cover positive action to protect the lives of others. A good example is the life-savers' organisations. These are volunteers, offering to save the others engaged in swimming. The second precept of not stealing, is extended to cover protection of others' properties. There are volunteer suburban organisations providing vigilance.

There are social actions to prevent harassment of women and children. This is like an extension of the third precept of respecting relationships. There are organisations to save people from intoxicants and drugs.

While moral conduct is essentially avoidance of unwholesome behaviour, it also promotes wholesome behaviour.

There is an extension to the five precepts that can also be practised by lay persons. These are called the ten demeritorious behaviours and the set includes most of the five precepts. Pali terms are in italics:

- 1 Refraining from killing living beings
Panatipata
- 2 Refraining from stealing
Adinnadana
- 3 Refraining from sexual misconduct
Kamesu Miccha Cara
- 4 Refraining from false speech
Musavada
- 5 Refraining from slanderous speech
Pisuna Vaca
- 6 Refraining from harsh speech
Parusha Vaca
- 7 Refraining from idle chatter (frivolous, meaningless speech)
Samphappalapa
- 8 Refraining from thoughts of covetousness (extreme greed)
Abhijja
- 9 Refraining from thoughts of ill-will
Vyapada
- 10 Refraining from holding wrong views
Miccha Ditthi

The first three relate to the behaviour of the body. Items 4 to 7 relate to verbal action. Items 8 to 10 relate to mental action. At a high level of practice, these become items 3 to 5 in the Noble Eight-fold Path.

Items 8, 9 and 10 relate to what is going on in the mind. These in a way contribute to the other behaviours.

The first seven items are relatively easy to practice. It is worth applying effort to practise the three mind-based actions, as you notice these. However, these can be

reduced and ultimately eliminated only by practising meditation. The roots of these three are deep in the mind and difficult to see or deal with.

Devotees who wish to be reborn in the heavens, must practise generosity coupled with moral conduct. Even otherwise these practices ensure good births.

In this context we can also examine the following:

- 1 The eight precepts
- 2 The eight precepts of livelihood
- 3 The ten precepts for householders
- 4 The ten precepts for novice monks and nuns
- 5 The precepts for ordained Sangha

Individuals may select a set of precepts that they wish to observe, as there is no religious restriction regarding this matter. Precepts for the Sangha, however, must be in accordance with provisions in the scriptures.

Moral codes in Buddhism are not commands as in other religions. But choices made by individuals.

[Extract from the book titled The Buddhist Way to Happiness being published by the Queensland Sangha Association Inc]

Article 41

THE IDEA OF KINNDFULNESS

Ajahn Brahm's Quote:

“Kindfulness - Compassion together with Mindfulness.

With Kindfulness, it's so easy to have discipline.

Everyone has to have some form of discipline but how do you get that discipline?

Self-discipline—you can't force it, but through Kindfulness, everything just comes out naturally; you're aware of what is needed at this particular time and also have compassion to do what you should do.

Kindfulness is Mindfulness and Kindness coming together.

If you're working, what does Kindfulness mean?

When you think 'I don't feel like working!' and you know how you're feeling, that's awareness. But kindness and compassion is what is needed for you to do things for yourself, for the company in which you work, for your family and everybody else. So out of Kindfulness, you're going to do this work.

If you are just aware without kindness, you get negative. Instead of having negativity, you are mindful that this thought is not going to be productive at all for anybody; it is hurting yourselves and others. So you're aware of that, and you change it to Kindfulness to think what a wonderful thing it is to help other people, inspire people, solve problems and create a happier world. That's compassion. That's kindness.

So whatever you're doing in your life, if it's something good and positive and inspiring, which is making people happy and which isn't doing anybody any harm, please enjoy the moment.

That's Mindfulness and Compassion all working together.

With mindfulness, you have to have kindness as well; otherwise, you can't stay here in this present moment.”

Source: Opening up to Kindfulness by Ajahn Brahm

[Gratefully copied from the newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria]

Article 42

**PATH TO NIBBANA-A LISTING OF DHAMMA TOPICS-
EDITION 2**

An occasional publication of QSA

The second edition of this publication was issued in October 2021. The purpose is to provide a list of Dhamma topics for the use of monks, nuns, and lay teachers, in giving sermons and lectures, and in leading Dhamma discussions.

The first part of the list suggests topics that are useful in daily life but also leading to spirituality. The middle section deals with topics that are of interest to those who are committed to the path to enlightenment.

The finishing section are a collection of topics of interest generally to spiritually inclined practitioners.

The list is about 30 pages and is too long to be an article in this magazine. However, any reader can obtain a copy by sending QSA an email via infoqsa@gmail.com

[Contributed by the QSA Buddhist Publications Division]

Article 43

PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING THE DHAMMA TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Relates to a book to be published by QSA

As adults we learn the Dhamma and we find it beneficial to practice the Dhamma. We also have a duty to impart Dhamma Knowledge to young people, not merely for their development but also for the good of society.

It is not easy to teach Dhamma to young people. There are two categories of people in consideration here. One is students in high school and the other is tertiary students and young adults about to start life.

In some temples, high school students are trained for Dhamma Examinations in classrooms. Some parents are not happy with this arrangement. QSA has considered developing new techniques of imparting Dhamma knowledge to young people.

QSA is developing a new book for monks, nuns, and lay Dhamma teachers to help solve this problem. It is about novel teaching techniques with an element of counselling. It is expected that young people will enjoy learning the Dhamma in this way. The possible benefits are very real.

The book is now in preparation. Progress will be reported in the QSA monthly Newsletter.

[Contributed by the QSA Buddhist Publications Division]

COMMENTS ON ARTICLES AND YOUR DHAMMA QUESTIONS

Readers are invited to send any comments on articles or Dhamma questions to QSA via infoqsa@gmail.com. It is possible to arrange for discussions in the future pertaining to your questions or comments.

THE END OF THE 14 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR OCTOBER 2021

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

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