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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. n 4. For how to join these forums, please see QSA newsletter for June 2021. Ask for a copy from infoqsa@gmail.com or see under current activities in the QSA website www.sanghaql.org

Article 25

The Path to Nibbana-a document published by QSA (as updated in 2020)

SELECTED TOPIC 151-SENSE DESIRES (KAMA RAGA) AS AN OBSTACLE TO MEDITATION

In general, desires arising through the six senses are obstacles to meditation. Having said that, we need to look at some facts about sense desires, and find a way to practise meditation despite the obstructions, which arise naturally in most cases.

Sense desires are part of nature and in a way, it is not possible to escape from them. People who try to develop Calm-based concentration (Samatha Samadhi) try to shut out sense desires. For this they need to shut the five physical sense doors. Eyes can be closed. Ears cannot be closed and other four also cannot be closed. This effort is massive and involves major sacrifices.

If you are trying insight-seeking concentration, based on the body, then you do not need to eliminate all sense objects or close all the senses. In either case it is impossible to close the mind sense.

The technique is learning how to deal with sense desires. The main technique is to note them as they arise and let them pass. The trouble arises when you get involved in them. For example, if you hear a sound, note that it is a sound. The meditation might break for a moment and then you continue. Consult the meditation teacher when sense-desires cause continuing disturbances. With steadfast practice, noting and passing becomes easy.

It is beneficial for a newcomer to initially practise calming by reducing the disturbance caused by the environment. Sitting meditation is helpful in calming the mind. With more practice, this dependency is likely to cease. The method described in the discourse on establishment of mindfulness (Sati Patthana Sutta) is recommended.

This is the method called mindfulness development. In the second part of the discourse, we practice mindfulness of the mind (citta). When a citta loaded or coloured by desires sets in, you acknowledge that it is a cetasika (mental state) of desire and let it pass. In this noting process, you may also notice the origins of that desire. That could make the passing action easier.

At this stage please avoid analysing the origins and hating the occurrence, as those actions tend to weaken the meditation. Leave it for another time and come

back to the object of the meditation (which could be walking or sitting observing the breath). The Kammatthana (object of meditation) must not get abandoned.

As one gets used to meditation, one learns how to cut off information through the senses before the thinking process starts. Even if the thinking process starts, there is a chance to guide the mind to wholesome thought. This causes less harm than when unwholesome thoughts are pursued.

Never give up meditation simply because it is hard to get into but persevere with the faith that you will succeed as many others have, in the past.

Scheduled for 23 July

There is however no denying that sense desires help us to progress in most worldly things. Without the desire to study no student will pass any examination. There will be no jobs to take, no money to earn, no houses to build, no marriages, no sons, or daughters. There will be no desire to get out of the cycle of births. This, duality must be understood. We must do all these things to keep happy in worldly life.

The above discussion about obstacles to meditation. That is a separate matter.

There is no contradiction here, but a duality applicable in two different circumstances. In the discourse on the Great Forty (Maha Cattarika Sutta), the Buddha observes that there are two streams of followers. Those in the first group are doing good things to remain happy in Samsara (birth after birth). The second group are trying their best to tread a path that leads them to ending of Samsara, that is Nibbana (enlightenment).

[This article is an extract from a presentation by Tanuja Sarath-Chandra at the QSA Dhamma Forum 04 Session 4 scheduled for 23 July 2021 on ZOOM. To register for the forum, please email infoqsa@gmail.com]

Article 26

Securing Worldly Happiness-based on the Great discourse on Blessings

SELECTED TOPIC 03-HONOURING THOSE WORTHY OF HONOUR

Those who are worthy of honour must be venerated, honoured, and respected. They need to be held in high regard in society. Such behaviour creates merit for the doer, and contributes to the wellbeing, and advancement of society. The question is who should be so respected and what is the indication, measurement, or yardstick in this process.

The main indicator is the attainments of the person in spirituality. Spirituality is manifested in the level of discipline (Sila), the level of mental settlement (Samadhi) and the level of wisdom (Panna).

The Buddha excelled in all these aspects and so he is worthy of respect and honour. Although the Buddha is not living today, the concept of a Buddha and his teaching pervade the world with great intensity. That is why we need to participate in making offerings to the Buddha, and by contemplating the virtues of the Buddha. This is done regularly in all temples. Everyone can join in such activities, by offering flowers, incense, and lights, and in paying homage or worshipping the Buddha. When you pay homage to the Buddha, you can make it an opportunity to feel your humility, and the possibility of cultivating it further.

Next to the Buddha, the Dhamma (the Buddha's teaching) needs to be honoured. Then the great disciples of the Buddha from Sariputta and Moggalana and all saints (Arahants) need to be honoured.

The Maha Sangha (monks and nuns) who lived before and are living now who tread the path laid out by the Buddha, need to be honoured. They protect the Dhamma for the good of generations to come.

Then we need to have a sense of gratitude to all who have done so much to enable us to live today, with reasonable comfort. The father and mother must be

regularly honoured. One way of honouring is to listen to them, and to avoid causing pain of mind to them through misbehaviour. Even when we get older, we need to show respect to our parents, and elder siblings.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our teachers, in schools and in other educational institutions. At least we must remember them with a sense of gratitude and show respect when we can. The institutions also need to be respected.

Showing reverence where it is due is a meritorious act. As such one earns good kamma.

The good kamma brings returns as you would be rewarded with respect and honour by the rest of society. In the negative, if you feel that you are not respected by society, it might be because in the past you have not respected others. It is then time to take corrective action.

Showing respect is a part of a good society. It enables the functioning of government and other social institutions, which in return keep us going. It is good to keep in mind, that things that we enjoy just happen to be there. Far from it, someone has worked hard to leave the legacy for us.

We do not need to show respect to officials and politicians out of fear or expecting advantages, but rather because they are performing functions necessary for our very existence.

A pandemic such as the spread of Covid 19 in 2020 and 2021, has opened the eyes of people who condemn everyone in power and despise the prevailing systems. Without these systems, where would we be today?

In this context, social destruction and violence cannot be condoned. It amounts to self-destruction. Young people must learn to respect others. If we do not like them, there are ways to seek change.

[This article was written by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra. Comments and questions can be sent via infoqsa@gmail.com. A discussion on this and connected topics can be arranged].

COMMENTS ON ARTICLES AND 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.

THE END OF THE 6 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR JULY 2021

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

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