

Family Day By Day



Dhamma Talk by
Phrabhavanaviriyakhun

Translated by
The Dhammakaya Foundation English Translation Team

The Guide to a Successful Family Life

Family Day By Day



Love... the force behind a family.

Togetherness... the source of warmth.

Happiness... will surround your family 24 hours a day.

This book shares with you many wonderful stories that you may
not have heard of before.

Written by

The Dhammakaya Foundation English Translation Team

The Dhammakaya Foundation

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Dedication

May the fruit here ripened
Spread out to all beings
So that all may
Have great peace, wisdom, compassion, and truthfulness,
A happy, warm family life,
Diligently pursue perfections,
Experience the path and fruit of The Middle Way,
And share its blessings with others so that all may meet
World Peace through Inner Peace
Forevermore.

Forward

When we want to introduce a new food item to the population of a country, we have to adjust the seasoning to fit the general tastes and flavor of the country that the new food is for. It is not that we are trying to diminish its inherent value; we just want to make it more easily accessible to the local public. The original writings of this book are from the Thai Theravada Buddhist perspective on life; the original version of this book, *The Warm Hearted Family*, was written in Thai and was intended for a Thai audience. As time passed, the authors wanted to convey the wisdom in this book to people outside Thailand, so it has now been edited for western audiences. Just as anyone from any religion can eat pizza from a shop or restaurant, this book does not mean to suggest that people need to convert to Buddhism. Rather, it should be read as simple advice for people on how to improve one's self and their relationships within the family.

In translating this book, we strived to maintain the fundamental meaning and feel of the original version but also adapt it so that non-Thai's find the teachings more applicable to their own culture. No matter what religion a person is, the teachings in this book are meant to help people help themselves. In no way should they be viewed as dogmatic or doctrinaire. Thailand itself has a deep connection with Theravada Buddhism, heavily interlinked in culture and tradition. The Thai monastic way of teaching is generally

“this or that”, “black or white”, with no gray area, as the locals find this logic easy to grasp and put into practice. In addition, Thai culture and language has a relatively large amount of words and phrases that refer to the functions of the human mind, more so than most western languages. If there is anything dogmatic or in conflict with a peaceful global culture, it should not be assumed that these teachings are false or unusable. It is due to the differences in cultural understanding, logic, language, and the framing of teachings into practical delicacies of functional wisdom.

Terminology used in this book includes the Pali Sanskrit language. Words of this nature often have the problem of being associated with specific religions. Yes, these words are used when devout Buddhists speak to each other, but as a whole they should just be looked at as vocabulary. The topics that are discussed here can be put under the scope of science and, thus, we have to use original, scientific terms to contextually describe them, as the Pali Sanskrit language specifically and exactly defines the primary topics discussed. For example, many words referring to the mind or spirit cannot avoid being associated to religion. So why try to separate them? A true measure of a chef is how he seasons his dishes. A master is one who helps others understand the true essence of his teachings. Here we are going to look at the mind itself for what it is - outside the scope of religion in a non-religious, non-dogmatic point of view. The chef, the master of these teachings, the man whom we call the Buddha, discovered the essence of the mind and that it is the same in every sentient being. He postulated that *kilesa* (described in detail below) harmfully controls the mind and He figured

out how to remove it. We are trying to make this book as neutral as possible, because when one comes to understand the reality of these teachings and their applicability, you will find that they are neutral by nature. It just takes some adjusting of the seasoning to help others see them in their true light.

Two important Pali Sanskrit terms that are discussed in this book are *boonya* and *kilesa*. Both of these concepts may be difficult for the Western mind to grasp, but they are inherent to Eastern Buddhists. While other modern religions have similar philosophies, these two concepts are thoroughly explained here for the Western reader to understand the importance of the roles they play in the central teachings of life.

Boonya is a Pali Sanskrit word that is difficult for Buddhist's to define because "*Boonya* is *Boonya*"! ! ! The term is so ingrained in their local culture that there is no need for people to define it with prose or a formal definition. It is like asking an American teacher to define the word "the" or "blue" in words. However, for the benefit of non-Thai's, our definition of *Boonya* is "self-generating pure, perfect energy that accumulates as it is performed". [Note: Many people translate *boonya*, or *boon* (for short) to "merit", but merit does not communicate the importance, fluidity or vitality of the word, so we feel that it is important to adhere to the original Pali Sanskrit word for the reasons explained above.] *Boonya* acts as a magnet to attract positive things to our existing lives. There are three main actions that create *boonya*: (1) Give up bad habits, (2) Perform good deeds, and

(3) Meditate to purify the mind (meditation is simply the act of calming and clarifying the mind and it is not necessarily related to any religion). It is easy to see that anyone, anywhere can comfortably practice these three actions with dignity and confidence regardless of their religious affiliation, philosophy or life goals. There is no such thing as too much *boonya*. The more good deeds we perform, the more good energy we store up inside of ourselves and the more it will attract goodness, purity, stability, and comfort into our lives. In other words, “What goes around comes around.” The more good energy we release into our environment, the more good energy we receive. This does not suffice that giving to a charity, church, or being diligent with meditation will necessarily enable us to become materially rich or eternally happy. Intention plays a large part in the concept of *boonya*. For example, a teacher who teaches because s/he loves the act of teaching will generate great *boonya*, but the teacher who teaches solely for the salary will not. Yet teaching in itself is still a very good thing! Simply said, when we generate *boonya*, we will become rich with good energy that, in turn, will attract good energy towards us! This is how we become successful in life.

Kilesa can be a problematic topic to discuss because of the delicacy and the misperception that is generally attached to the word. *Kilesa* is generally defined as “defilement”, “sin”, “imperfection”, “hindrance”, “corruption” or “poison” that clouds the mind from acknowledging the right view, or truth. It is a poison that defiles mental states. Our human essence, however, is pure, and it is with this knowledge and the acceptance of our imperfections that we will be able to

learn how to improve and “win” the internal battle against our own *kilesa*. Although people generally recognize the fact that they acquire bad habits throughout their lives, they may not recognize that this accumulation of bad habits, according to Buddhist teachings, may have actually begun prior to their current life. Everyone knows that they have bad habits that should be improved to make their lives easier and happier. If you do not feel this way, then this book is probably going to be difficult reading for you, but it is you who would benefit the most from these teachings! In other words, it is okay not to be perfect as long as we recognize that we are imperfect and learn how to overcome these imperfections. We have to fully comprehend this reality of life. We are not perfect and that is okay. Once we realize that we are not perfect then we can begin to pave the way to a better future by practicing the teachings of the wise. In this book, we look at *kilesa* through a Buddhist lens, but its essence, its meaning, can be found in any religion. Therefore, when we refer to *kilesa*, we refer to the negative, immoral, and socially unacceptable tendencies and habits that we have accumulated and continue to accumulate.

Just as you plant seeds, nurture them in the right conditions and wait for them to blossom in your garden, we hope that you will also blossom by diligently persisting in the practice of the universal teachings found within your hands. Enjoy and Prosper.

The Editorial Board

The Dhammakaya Foundation English Translation Team

Preface

Why, since the existence of mankind, have we unceasingly put all of our resources in order to search for newer knowledge and technology? Taking this question back to its roots, we will eventually come across this answer:

Mankind was born with ignorance, suffering, and fear. Why are we ignorant? We do not know the answer to any of these following questions: where were we before we were born, why were we born, how long do we have left to live, and where will we go after death? Yet, we still become angry when people call us stupid! To complicate the matter, throughout life we are destined to encounter sufferings. This means that, at one time or another, we will feel the pains of hunger, sickness, aging and death. Suffering is a part of life.

The unpleasant consequence of suffering is fear. The more that we do not know, the more sufferings we experience. All because we do not know! Even worse, some of us begin to know but still make the same mistakes. The more sufferings we experience, the more we are confronted with fear. Therefore, the real knowledge that mankind needs to search for is that which will completely eradicate our ignorance, suffering and fear.

In simpler terms: “because we dislike pain and suffering, we need happiness. Because we need happiness we should be in search of something that can end all of our suffering and give us that everlasting happiness”. Through

this mode of thought mankind creates many different types of research. And, to our great disappointment, most fail to have lasting success.

The Dhammakaya Temple was established with the aim to make itself and the people therein develop into true and good people. The primary objective is to train people to truly understand the *Dhamma*, or “teachings” of the man whom we call Buddha, and enable those people to practice it so that they can prove the *Dhamma*’s existence and nature by themselves. These days the temple has expanded its branches to many countries around the world. The ever-increasing numbers of temple visitors practice the *Dhamma* with the aim to eradicate all *kilesa* in order to reach what we refer to as *Nibbana*, the destination point where suffering ceases to exist within us. They then decide to make the task of spreading this knowledge to others a major part of their lives. As a result, there has been a large increase of technical support and management to the comparatively much smaller congregations of the temple’s earlier years.

Nonetheless, the Dhammakaya Temple has never abandoned its main aim of developing its members into good people and teaching them to practice meditation. Furthermore, it has many large ceremonies throughout the year to celebrate world peace through inner peace. At various dates throughout the year, the temple gives an opportunity to those who want to fully ordain as monks and dedicate their lives in search for the ultimate truth.

Although this book is suitable for house-holders, its aim is the same for all who come across it: to help us be

good people. When applicable, it will also help those who want to dedicate their lives to Dhamma and be future true monks.

“Life Goals” can be condensed to three main levels - they are:

1) The worldly goal - to be a good and happy person in this present life.

2) The spiritual/worldly goal - to be a good person in this life and go to a fortunate realm after death.

3) The spiritual goal - for those who aim for the path and fruit of *Nibbana*.

For people in the first level, the man whom we call the Buddha gave this advice:

There are four teachings that make this present life a happy one to live in. They are: diligently earn your wealth, keep your wealth secure, associate with good friends, and manage your wealth wisely.

As wealth is an uncertain thing, it can easily be depleted or lost. Whether by natural disaster (flood or fire), theft, penalty, or confiscation money can quickly be out of our grasp and control. Therefore, as we earn our wealth we have to know how to keep it, without over-spending it. Moreover, associating with good friends that do not lead us down roads of ruin (such as habitual nightlife, gambling, drinking alcohol, associating with ruffians, etc.) is another way to help keep our wealth secure.

Concerning the second level, if our wish is indeed to go to a happy place after death, we can do so by learning and practicing the *Dhamma*. We will thus be taught to practice generosity, keep acts of self discipline, and meditate. Since good begets more good we will meet with a happy destination upon passing away.

Finally, regarding the highest and last life-goal, it is essential to practice the *Dhamma* in our everyday life. We must train ourselves to be free from carelessness, to continually recollect life's uncertainties, and to not absorb ourselves in sensual indulgence via the five senses. Through this path, we will eventually reach our destination: *Nibbana*.

For everyone who reads this book: May you to be blessed with the necessary wisdom to lead your life with care and mindfulness. May you be happy and prosperous. May you be complete with family and friends who help you to easily succeed in achieving all of the three life-goals in every lifetime until the complete end of suffering and the *Utmost Dhamma*.

Warmly,

Phrabhavanawiriyakhun (Phadet Dattajeevo)

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Part One

Family Life



Chapter 1

What is a Family?



Defining the “Modern Family” is challenging because ‘family’ is a word which carries various meanings for cultures throughout the world. There are, in fact, many types of families depending where in the world we happen to be! Regardless of the culture, however, the beat of the heart of a “happy” family is consistent: If the heartbeat dies, then the family dies too, even if everyone continues to physically live in the same house together.

In Diversity in America families, Zinn and Eitzen state:

“Contemporary society generally views family as a haven from the world, supplying absolute fulfillment. The family is considered to encourage intimacy, love and trust where individuals may escape the competition of dehumanizing forces in modern society from the rough and tumble industrialized world, and as a place where warmth, tenderness and understanding can be expected from a loving mother, and protection from the world can be expected from the father. However, the idea of protection is declining as civil society faces less internal conflict combined with increased civil rights and protection from the state. To many, the ideal of personal or family fulfillment has replaced protection as the major role of the family. The family now supplies what is ‘vitally needed but missing from other social arrangements’”.

In a modern, “perfect” arrangement, family members are looking for unconditional love, encouragement, support and a sense of belonging. When this happens, the family is a “unit” that gives confidence to each of its members. When this does not happen, issues arise that cause problems.

What are the biggest obstacles that people face when forming long-term relationships? What are some of the important factors that young people need to address when they consider marriage? What issues need to be resolved in order to live an emotionally healthy life with others? How can children be raised to be creative problem-solvers and leaders of the future?

Chapter 2

Thoughts Before Starting A Family



Regulating and controlling one's own emotions prior to marriage to another person is an important foundation for maintaining a healthy relationship and is the best way to prevent divorce. If partners do not learn to control their emotions, their marriage will inevitably concentrate on the negative habits of their spouse. Without some type of outside intervention or sophisticated insight, uncontrolled emotions will eventually lead to separation or divorce.

When life partners learn how to resolve their mental baggage and restrain their negative emotions, they will be able to maintain a sense of positive regard for one another. Partners who discard their poor habits and negative behavior will always bring about constructive bonds that build strong relationships. What characteristics should we possess before we marry?

1. Self-Reliance:

“Faulty expectations bring disappointment”

When we lack self-confidence, we rely on someone else to help us with the challenges in life. There are many people who marry because they want someone else to take care of all of their problems for them. Some people find a partner based solely on beauty. Unfortunately, this is short-lived and/or expensive to maintain. If the search for a life partner is based solely on ‘dependence’, then resentment or fighting will ensue whenever they no longer feel secure with one another.

The right frame of mind before marriage is “I must depend on myself!” Independence is a key factor in developing ourself before we decide on a partner! We should be responsible, truthful, self-disciplined, and generous. We must be able to understand the concept of self-sacrifice. By acquiring knowledge, life skills and ethical principles before marriage, we will be able to enhance the other person and the bond between you throughout the rest of your lives.

2. What is a Good Partner?

Initially, we usually can only observe someone's physical beauty, not the beauty of their mind. So let's look at four levels of beauty.

- a. Beauty of Appearance: Dress, makeup, hair style. All are external and will go out of season or fashion. This is the type of beauty that can be purchased.
- b. Beauty of Body: Face, figure, skin, finger, feet. This is individual beauty that cannot be purchased and will not last. It is not a true indication of whether or not the person is good or bad.
- c. Beauty of Manners: Appropriate speech and action toward other people. This includes being courteous, modest, respectful, polite and cheerful. If these manners are not from the heart, however, they would be considered insincere. There are many proverbs about this type of beauty: "Sweet words are more devastating", "Sweet beginning, bitter ending" and "Sweet mouth, sour bottom".
- d. Beauty of Mind: This is the beauty of the integrity within a person that can be expressed in how we live our lives. Our daily activities, our job responsibilities, and our financial responsibilities for clothing, food, shelter and health care are all indicators of the beauty of the mind.

3. “Backup”: We must have marriage guidance. Why? Because the beauty of the mind is so difficult to discern, we really need to speak with other wise people who have experienced married life. In other words, we need to have a teacher, or coach, who can advise us on marriage and family issues. A person who becomes our advisor must be ethical, observant, and have a great coach themselves! He or she is, in fact, a “pointer” in the right direction, mentor, and someone whose words we truly trust!

4. Meditation: We must meditate in order to purify our mind! Prior to marriage, it is ideal that we learn how to meditate to clear the impurities out of our mind, set worries aside, and ignore past conflicts. Meditation will foster peace within ourselves and our surroundings, and, in turn, whomever we encounter along the way. In finding a partner who also meditates, or is willing to learn meditation, we will only gain great strength and stability in our lives.

Chapter 3

The Four Problems In Marriage



For every person considering marriage, becoming independent before marriage is vital. All four factors discussed in Chapter Two provide us with a way to move forward in our lives, living successfully and honestly. Problems, of course, will always arise but we should be aware that there are four fundamental principles to follow when faced with unexpected circumstances stemming from defilements (*kilesa*) in another person's character. This is known as *Gharavas-dhamma*, in Pali Sanskrit, or “*Dhamma* for Householders”.

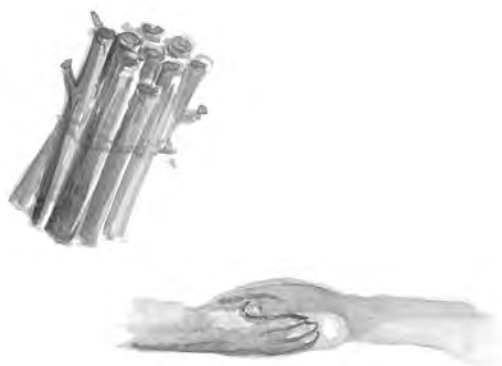
These are: Truthfulness (*Sacca*), Self-Control (*Dama*), Endurance (*Khanti*), and Sacrifice (*Caga*). When lacking in any of these principles, conflict or discord will arise in any human relationship, causing the following problems:

1. **Distrust:** Distrust is caused by a lack of truthfulness (*sacca*). This does not happen just between a husband and wife, but between siblings or between parents and children. Distrust sparks the many facets of suspicion and discord with others. Some cases are caused by jealousy, some by inequality, some by deceitfulness, and some by a lack of responsibility. No matter what source of suspicion there is, the longer the family members live with one another, the more suspicion will arise if it goes unchecked.
2. **Stagnation:** Stagnation occurs when people lose their motivation to improve their own intelligence, knowledge, or abilities. It is caused by a lack of self control (*dama*). Often, one spouse will feel stagnate while the other will strive for self-improvement. This problem is not due to rigidity per se, but because other family members are constantly adapting to new situations and those who lag behind refuse to adapt to changes or improvements. They languish and continue to do what they are accustomed to doing. These people have a difficult time changing and, likewise, others can have a difficult time pulling them along.

3. Disinterest or Disengagement: In modern society, many parents are becoming disinterested or disengaged in raising their own children and couples are becoming more disinterested in maintaining a vibrant relationship. If members of the family do something wrong, parents will say “Do whatever you like, I’m tired of telling you what to do! ” This has led us to a “Whatever! ” generation of young people who do not have firm rules to govern their behavior. This is due to a lack of endurance (*khanti*).

4. Selfishness: Living in an intimate group of people can be very difficult because everyone must learn to share their time, possessions, trust and responsibilities with each other on a daily basis. Sharing is complicated and challenging! Selfishness makes us not want to share anything with others. Because of a lack of sacrifice (*caga*), we want things for ourselves. We want to accumulate things in order to feel secure, successful, independent and unique, but we also need to share things with our family without a sense of loss or guilt.

These four problems, then, are opposites of the four qualities that we look for in the character traits of the people with whom we want to associate! When we specifically look around for a partner, or think about having a family, we must be prepared to meet all types of other people and look for qualities in a person that will lead to positive relationships. At the heart of establishing good relationships is the “*Dhamma* for Householders”. If we think of it in other terms, we can call it “Facts to Building Families”.



Chapter 4

Four Keys to Avoiding Marriage Problems



SACCA: Truthfulness

Sacca means truthfulness, sincerity, responsibility and a strong sense of trust toward one another. In analyzing household life, each member's sense of responsibility is the most important element. If we lack responsibility, the immediate result will be distrust within our family. By the same token, if we want to get married, the first characteristic that we should evaluate is our potential spouse's sense of responsibility. Both must recognize whether

or not each will be responsible enough to assist with another family member's life, death, success or failure.

A person who is truthful exhibits responsibility in many ways:

In speech, our words should always be truthful and, often even more importantly, kind. We should be careful with our speech, as even the hard truth can be unkind in certain situations. If the complete truth will hurt others and is unnecessary to disclose, then it is better to side with kindness rather than the whole truth. **At work**, for example, a person who is truthful always pays attention to responsibility by successfully completing the task and doing so to the best of his or her ability. If they need help to complete the task, they will ask for help from the appropriate supervisor with respect, humility and self-confidence. **In making and keeping friends**, we will be sincere and display no hidden agendas. We will be straightforward and unbiased. We will not show prejudice because of love, hate, stupidity or fear. **In moral standards**, we must have a “code that we can live by.” It also means that we will not want to intentionally do something wrong, against our religion, our culture, or against the laws of the country. Thus, we will naturally have a strong foundation in the *Dhamma* or Truth.

When we display truthfulness in these four areas, we will bring out the best in other people. *Big Boonya!*

DAMA: Self-Control

The practice of self-control means that the body and mind are alert to our knowledge, ability, and integrity every

day. Self-control can also be referred to as “loving to train our self”. In order to do this, we need a great mentor, or teacher. The problem, of course, is how to find one. Not only must our mentor be suitably wise and willing to train us, but we must listen, analyze and be willing to following their instructions. If we practice a wise mentor’s teachings, then we will only improve. We will learn how to question our own thinking and actions until we create virtuous habits and consistently perform good deeds that originate from the heart and a clear mind. It is only then that we will become the best possible person we can be.

KHANTI: Endurance

Endurance is necessary in order to change ourselves. What exactly do we need to endure? We must endure unfavorable conditions in our physical environment, such as excessive heat, cold, sun, wind, etc. We must also endure personal physical suffering (illness, pain, and old age) without excessively whining or complaining. We must endure interpersonal conflict, which means that we must endure the defilements of other people around us. We must accept the fact that we have weaknesses, as our unmet desires often lead to dissatisfaction, sadness, anger or loss. Weaknesses, both personal and interpersonal, create unavoidable conflict. If we always seek to avoid conflict with ourselves or with others, then we should analyze our own weaknesses and think twice before choosing a spouse. Without addressing our weaknesses, conflict can occur at any time. For example, pre-nuptial agreements can create stress and conflict because couples are pre-arranging a possible separation! Additionally,

if there are in-laws heavily involved in our relationship, we will have to endure conflicts from them as well. No matter how good a relationship is, we will inevitably encounter conflict. Of course, it is better to resolve any weakness we think we might have PRIOR to our marriage!

“It is like Tongue and Teeth - They always bump into each other!”

The real question that we and our partner have to ask each other is:

“Are we sure that we can tolerate each other in the long run?”

If we are not sure, then we should run - not walk - away. Do not ask how many carats there are in the engagement ring, how much money you will get, or how well your partner can cook. Instead, ask *“Are you sure you can tolerate me?”*

Endurance also means that we have to put up with our own ***kilesa*, or negative behavior**. *Kilesa* is dangerous to relationships because we allow these bad habits to control us so that we suffer and experience distress, leading us to feel guilty and self-critical. Some people are controlled by their bad habits, and consistently make wrong decisions. In the end, they will no longer have any sense of right or wrong (morality or ethics) and may continue their bad habits until they develop possible addictions which are even MORE difficult to correct. *Apayamukha* is the word for the roads that we use when we allow bad habits to rule our life. The people we know while we travel this “bad habit road” may not be healthy for us because they may be spreading their bad habits out to us as well. The *kilesa* in their own mind will

control them until they become slaves to it. Because *kilesa* affects good habits, our family's health and stability depends on training ourselves to:

1. Control the bad habits within ourselves and prevent them from influencing others;
2. Resist the temptations of drinking alcohol, gambling, lazy work habits, interpersonal power struggles, harmful night life and exotic entertainment.

If we practice self control in these areas, then our family's interpersonal relationships will be more stable, and our own personal minds will strengthen. By doing this, we will increase the chances of stabilizing our financial situation. If everyone in our family can teach themselves to have "endurance" in these areas, then everyone's individual habits will improve and the family's financial situation will stabilize. Good people will be in our life and unhealthy people will stay away!

CAGA: Sacrifice

Sacrifice means Charity and it means Compassion! We need to be willing to sacrifice material objects, comfort, and our own emotions. Sacrifice within the family means being generous and it means placing our own family ahead of ourselves. This is not an easy thing to do! Our marriage is dependent upon the sacrifice that we and our partner are willing to give to one another. If there is no sacrifice, then our family environment cannot be supportive. If our family does not practice charity and compassion for the benefit of one another and instead takes advantage of each another, our family will disintegrate. In other words, as a family, we

must think more about the overall happiness of each family member rather than our own individual happiness. Part of this sacrifice, and one of the most important factors that we need to be aware of, is how to budget finances for our family: what the family needs versus what our family wants. If we do not do this, then our family will disintegrate. In the end there will be feelings that someone was taken advantage of and that someone was selfish. For example, in a two person family with a limited budget, choosing between a bottle of perfume and a bottle of alcohol may cause conflict. A marriage is a life of budgets. Whenever we see luxurious items as necessities, our household budget will immediately suffer. This is exactly what selfishness is and how sacrifice needs to be implemented into our own family life. All that we need in order to sufficiently survive is found in the **four requisites (necessities) of life:**

- 1. Clothing**
- 2. Food**
- 3. Shelter; Housing**
- 4. Medicine; Health Care**

Anything outside of this can be considered a luxury. Through sacrifice, we develop the habit of living only on that which is necessary. We should let go of the things that we feel we “just need to have!”

When we are thinking about marrying someone, we should ask ourselves two questions:

1. Can we depend on this person when we are sick or in a life-threatening situation?

2. Does this person have the knowledge, the ability, and the good character to support our family so that it is happy - and can they help us raise our children to be respectful, moral, responsible people?

Today, people tend to marry for personal needs. This causes so many problems after the marriage papers are signed. Not paying attention to the character of a partner will lead to a variety of abuses in marital relationships and divorce will be inevitable. Marriage depends on individual sacrifice. Furthermore, when we have children, we must sacrifice even more because we must set aside time for our children. Thinking about this beforehand is vital because it is certainly too late to think about all of this AFTER marriage!

Marriage, then, is not just about physical enjoyment, having fun, external beauty or raising one's social status. It is about supporting our partner in mind and body. It is about character and sacrifice. Caring for each other physically (including wise financial spending on household necessities and sharing) and mentally (consideration, support in times of crisis, honesty) lead to a healthy marriage and family life.

Truthfulness, self-control, endurance and sacrifice are at the heart of a healthy family life. These characteristics are the vital essence that each member of the family must have in order to establish a stable and powerful foundation on which to build their individual lives together.



Chapter 5

Keeping the Family Alive



Living together as husband and wife can be either difficult or easy. If we ask any husband or wife how partners live together happily, no two answers will be the same. Some will say that it depends on their astrological fate and destiny. Cynics might say that it depends on the size of their financial portfolios. There is one word, however, that everyone agrees to: In order to live together successfully and happily, partners need to practice benevolence; benevolence, compassion, and generosity are all the same. There are **Four Universal Forms of Benevolence:**

1. **Giving** (*dana*): Loving and living together requires sharing. Where there is no giving, the atmosphere feels very unpleasant. Sharing encompasses sharing of problems, too. When we have a problem, we should share our problem and our partner should be willing to help.
2. **Polite speech** (*piyavaca*): Just because we are married does not mean that we should change the way we speak to one another. We should be kind in our discussions because we do not want to hurt the other person's sense of self worth.
3. **Loving Assistance** (*atthacariya*): When we talk about what is right or wrong based on mutual understanding and on the *Dhamma* (Pure Nature) that we have studied, then we benefit one another. But when we quarrel and place the blame on our partner, we are guilty of not finding appropriate ways to prevent conflicts.
4. **Open-mindedness** (*samanattata*): In traditional marriages, this means that the husband should be a good father and the wife should be a good mother. Each should assume responsibilities both inside and outside of the home. Meditation will enable partners to fully achieve this goal. In non-traditional families, partners should carefully discuss what roles they should play and then work together to make their plan successful.

Practicing these Four Universal Forms of Benevolence is really the same as practicing generosity, adhering to the five

rules for self-discipline (discussed later), and being diligent with meditation. All taken together, they will help us learn to share, improve our morality in speech and action, and clear our mind. With a clear mind we will open the doorway to wisdom which will show us the way to appropriate action. Amazing, no? ! JIn order to keep a marriage alive and healthy, we should thoroughly know the specific responsibilities that each partner shares.

There are also, of course, **general responsibilities of partners:**

1. Thoughtfulness and Appreciation: Both partners should openly respect each other; praise and compassion should be given to allow for open communication. Giving each other their own space is needed in all relationships, as well.
2. Equality: Both partners should regard one another as equals and consult one another on important financial matters.
3. Faithfulness: Both partners should have the integrity to be faithful to the other.
4. Authority: Trust that both can make good decisions.
5. Leadership: Both should know how to take care of the home, business, and any problem that may arise in the family although, on occasion, we may assign roles to one another.
6. Frugality: Neither should squander money nor spend it frivolously.
7. Diligence: Work hard on maintaining the relationship.

Despite the behavior of the other person, we should never waver from the truth. Occasionally, one partner will resort to behavior that is detrimental to the marriage. Try to use the list above to heal any problems that arise. It will improve our lives!

Chapter 6

Birth of a Child



Of course, everyone feels excited when there is a new addition to the family. While excitement is a natural reaction to an impending birth, it is also an opportunity to reflect upon important questions: Even though we are born human and are related to other humans, what makes us different? What determines our differences?

We are all born into the same world, yet we do not know how we came to be. We do not know where our planet

is situated in the universe. We do not even know where we will go after we die. Everywhere we turn there are so many questions and the answers are illusive.

Why do some people die in their mother's womb while others survive?

Why are some born strong while others are born with disabilities?

Why are some people born into a wealthy family while others are born so poor that they cannot even get a nutritious meal?

How is it possible that while two people who grew up in the same family with the same opportunities turn out to be so different?

How do we find the answers to these vital questions?

In *Dhamma* (Pure Nature), there are teachings that allow us to see the answers to these questions and enable us to understand the law that governs the world: The Law of Kamma.

The word *Kamma* is a neutral word that does not imply good or bad since *Kamma* means “action with intention”. An action always carries a consequence. Why do we feel full? It is because we have eaten. If we did not eat, we would be hungry. In physics, of course, there is the law that states that the energy of an action is equal to the energy of the opposite reaction. In terms of *Dhamma*, we can say that whatever our action, we will experience its consequence in return.

The differences found in our personal life are dependent on the previously performed *Kamma* of each individual.

The fact that people all are born humans, but vary in the amount of happiness or *dukkha* (suffering) is an indication that the fruits of Kamma exist and their retribution is derived from our distant past.

The man whom we call the Buddha discovered the Law of *Kamma* and taught it to the world over 2,500 years ago. He described what He had discovered in profound detail and insight, beyond the capabilities of modern technology. Scientists discovered the laws of the physical world which most people accepted only until about 300 years ago.

Social and physical differences between the people in this world result from our past and present *Kamma*. Although one part of this equation cannot be altered because of actions we have already performed, we always have a fresh opportunity to create a brighter future for ourselves. How?

1. *Avoid doing bad deeds*
2. *Perform only good deeds, and*
3. *Purify our mind until it is clear and bright.*

The best technique to keep our minds strong is nothing more than meditation. The more we meditate, the more strength we will acquire to perform more good deeds. When we look at the world and understand the effects of *Kamma*, we will be determined to lead our lives truthfully and fruitfully. The consequences of *Kamma* are real and they will bear fruit. If we perform good deeds, we will receive good consequences. If we perform bad deeds, bad consequences can be expected. Be aware of the differences that exist among people of the world. These are the conditions that we were born into and

they prove that the consequences from *Kamma* are real. This is why we must focus on doing good deeds.

From the Law of *Kamma*, we learn that:

1. *It is not the end of all things when we die.*
2. *When we perform good deeds, we will go to good destinations.*
3. *When we perform bad deeds, we will go to unfortunate destinations.*
4. *When we extinguish all our kilesa, we will go to Nibbana.*

If we believe in the reality of life that, if we are not careful, we are easily victim to the cycles of suffering and we must concentrate on avoiding bad deeds and accumulating good deeds. Purify the mind as much as possible everyday at every moment. The *boonya* that accrues from our good deeds will lead us to be reborn with a healthy physical form, wealth, and wisdom. In addition, we will be born into a family that values virtues. This will also provide us with the opportunity to be successful in this present life (and even after that) until we eradicate all *kilesa* in our mind.

At the same time, if we as a parent want to conceive a happy and healthy child, we must focus on performing good deeds and meditating until our mind is pure, clear, and bright. By accumulating *boonya* throughout our lifetime, we increase the chances of receiving a child who will bring happiness to our family. Although this idea is very different to most western ideology, understanding the principle of “like energy attracts like energy” is important in order to

properly get a grip around this theory. For example, if we are bad people and exhibit crude behavior on a regular basis without lending a helping hand to those around us, not even our parents want to be near us. Why then would a baby of good behavior and wholesomeness want to be in that type of womb? “Like attracts like”!

We should bear in mind that teaching a child begins before conception and requires us to constantly perform good deeds and maintain wholesomeness in body, speech, and mind. We and our partner should eliminate all poor behavior and diligently observe acts of self discipline to prepare for the conception of the child. At the very least, we and our partner, as potential parents, should begin training ourselves anyway. Focusing on the fetus, we must become more attentive to our own actions, whether it is walking, moving, consuming food and alcohol, taking medicine, or even displaying a bad temperament. All of these things, as we are well aware, affect the unborn child and his or her behavior.

Part Two

Raising Children



Chapter 7

Raising Children



Our increasingly globalized world is more interconnected with every passing day. Changes that occur on the other side of the world often have immediate effects on us locally in a variety of ways: social, economic, political, cultural, linguistic and even medical. Surprisingly, even with the large forces of global change at hand, it is the knowledge, ability and compassion of parents who raise intelligent and moral children that have the biggest impact on the local and global world today.

Learning the time-tested, proper methods to raise children is a vital task for all parents. A child who is smart but weak will probably not be successful with their personal goals, just as a child who is strong but not smart will not succeed either. A child must usually triumph in both areas in order to be personally successful. In some families, parents have intelligent children, but parents simply do not know anything about how to raise them to be strong, savvy, independent, and moral. As a result, children are more likely to cause trouble for themselves and for others - then the parents are puzzled over what went wrong with their parenting. In order for children to be smart, strong AND virtuous, parent must have available parenting resources, acquired knowledge, and adequate time to raise and teach their children how to be solid members of society. Since families interpret and implement their own parenting styles differently, there are essentially **four types of families existing in the world today:**

1. *A family that has time but no knowledge.*
2. *A family that has knowledge but no time.*
3. *A family that has no knowledge NOR time.*
4. *A family that has both knowledge AND time.*

In the first three types of families, children receive very little moral training. Some children are born into wealthy families and have every material possession that they want, yet they can receive little parental supervision (Group #2). These children have a high chance of becoming misled.

Children raised by parents who have both knowledge and time generally receive continuous

wisdom and moral training from their parents (Group #4). Even though they may not be wealthy, these children have the ability to develop into successful, wealthy and moral adults.

All parents should consider the following questions before having a child:

What qualities do we want our child to have?

How can we successfully cultivate good habits in our children?

In essence, children should have **Three “Supreme” Characteristics:**

- 1. Purity (clean, clear and complete)**
- 2. Wisdom (having great understanding and judgment)**
- 3. Compassion (desire to alleviate the suffering of others, mercy, tenderness, heart)**

A child who possesses these qualities, or supreme characteristics, is open to receiving useful knowledge and copying righteous behavior from parents, relatives, role models, teachers and mentors. Purity, Wisdom and Compassion form a platform from which additional characteristics can develop. It is similar to rich and fertile soil that allows a plant to develop healthfully. We, of course, must decide for ourselves what characteristics we want to emphasize most in our children.

After we consider the character traits that we want to develop in our children, the question becomes: How do I

cultivate these traits in my children? Answer: Through good habits. It's that simple! As we discussed earlier, **habits are developed with repetitive thoughts, speech, and actions. These repetitive activities, in turn, influence our learned behavior and continued development throughout our whole life.**

If we allow our children to repeatedly think, speak, and act unwholesomely, regardless of the scale, then they will become accustomed to behaving selfishly and uncontrollably while developing the bad habit of cultivating bad habits! Chances are that these children will age into individuals who are disinterested in being virtuous, successful and responsible adults. However, if we teach our children to repeatedly engage in wholesome thought, speech and activities, then they will become accustomed to doing the right thing until it becomes a habit. Thus, they will learn how to become successful individuals in the future.

Generally, habits develop from the way we utilize the **four requisites**: clothing, food, shelter and medicine. Here are three examples to illustrate this point:

- When we feed our children irregularly, they cry whenever they are hungry and not fed on time. They become easily irritated and scream when they need attention, developing a habit of using violence and aggression to get what they want. It is like we will be raising **baby tigers!**
- When we feed our children all the time, even when they are not hungry, they will become obese and dependent on the way food makes them feel. They

will develop a habit of sluggishness and indolence.
In this case, we will be raising **baby pigs!**

- When we feed our children on a schedule, they will develop a habit of punctuality and will be more likely to grow up to be healthy, strong, and easy to care for. In this case, we will be raising sages!

To repeat, good and bad habits come from repetition of thinking, speaking and acting.

Parents can instill wholesomeness, intelligence and compassion by teaching their children respect, discipline, and tolerance with regard to their use of the four requisites in their work and daily activities.

If we want to raise our children to be wise, then we should first teach them respect. Respect is a sign of one's appreciation toward the true virtue or benefit of a person or object. Wisdom can be divided into worldly wisdom and inner wisdom. Worldly wisdom is wisdom or knowledge acquired through education. It is required to make a living. However, without morality to curb knowledge, children can misuse it. Worldly wisdom, however, must work together with inner wisdom. Inner wisdom, or spiritual wisdom, is knowing what is right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate. Children gain this knowledge from moral and ethical education. In practice, parents must teach their children to respect and listen to their mentor's teachings, to learn from their own life experiences, and to study the truth about the ever-changing world and the people in it.

In totality, inner wisdom is born in the respect of seven sources:

1. Respect for The Wise (Enlightened Beings)
2. Respect for *Dhamma*; Truth, Nature
3. Respect for Those Who Seek Truth
4. Respect for Education
5. Respect for Meditation
6. Respect for Non-Recklessness
7. Respect for Hospitality

The more we teach our children to see the virtues of these seven sources, the more respect they will have for them and the more inner wisdom our children will gain. They will be fortunate indeed if we pass down this wisdom before they, themselves, get married and raise their own children. Balanced, rational and level-headed young people have parents who have taught them to have discipline in both their outer and inner lives. Discipline is taught in conjunction with their use of the four requisites, work, and daily routine. We set examples through our own behavior. **There are four areas in which we can set beneficial examples for our children:**

1. **Speech.** We can teach our children to cultivate excellent speech by speaking politely, truthfully, and with good intentions ourselves. Lead by example. Speak with general acquaintances just as we would our friends, relatives, and partners - with respect and patience. Also, we should point out the negative consequences of lying!
2. **Time.** Teaching our child to be disciplined with time is to teach them to wake up, eat, and sleep on time.

Getting up early in the morning is an important habit to be aware of and will serve our child well both in school and at work. Going to sleep earlier in the evening is important because if they go to sleep late, they will not want to get up early. When we wake them up, they will bargain for more sleep, starting their day with an argument. And who wants that?

- 3. Cleanliness.** For our own health, as well as social acceptability, we have to teach our children how to maintain cleanliness: bathing, hair care, dental care, and washing of hands. It should all be done with the utmost care and consideration for the sake of the children (i. e. “I want to look nice”) as well as others (i. e. “They look and smell clean”).
- 4. Organization.** Children who lack organizational skills tend to have conflicts when they work with others. They will not be able to follow outlined procedures or prepare and complete their work efficiently, resulting in increased difficulty in achieving success.

Initially, it may seem that it is enough for children to be wholesome and smart, but the truth is that it is not. We must first teach them how to take care of themselves. Second, we must teach them how and why to care for others. To achieve the goal of being a compassionate person, children need to build endurance (*khanti*). **We can teach our children to have endurance on four levels:**

- 1. Physical Hardship:** Children need to learn how to work hard without being afraid of physical or mental hardship.

- 2. Pain and Suffering:** Children should be aware of the need to care for their own health, though they should never be deceptive nor pretend to be sick in order to get out of going to school!
- 3. Conflict:** Children should learn how to be a team player without feeling superior or inferior to other peers, though they should not consider themselves equal to adults. It is beneficial to understand and appreciate their social role when interacting with others.
- 4. Stimulants of *Kilesa* (Impurities):** Our child should be wise enough not to become involved with others who promote alcohol and drugs, sexual misconduct, misuse of money, etc. These ‘stimulants’ and misdeeds only cause problems.

All children really want to be “good”. You can see it in their face whenever they hear praise from an adult whom they respect. This gives us more fuel to instill proper teachings. Therefore, we must be aware that it is our job - our responsibility - to place our children into the best social, educational and physical environments possible. We must set examples for our children: help them find quality friendships, initially choosing great literature and music for them to read and listen to, and provide them with a first-rate education with responsible mentors who can guide them throughout their formative years. Consciously and unconsciously, children will always use their parents as their prime example in life. This said, we will always need to examine and re-examine our own habits in regard to work, time management and approach to

using the four requisites. We will need to ask ourselves if we have the ability to maintain quality (always delivering our best); ability to manage our time (seeing all the steps ahead and following through on them); and ability to manage a budget (planning ahead to yield the highest return).

Our children will absorb our best and worst character traits, so be sure that we consistently provide them with the best. They will learn our skills with managing quality, time and financial budgets. Seeing and eventually practicing the good habits of their parents, the children will effectively complete any assigned project using minimal time and resources - a great asset in any environment! This is how virtue translates into intelligence: it is through the examples set by people around them - and that means US!

To summarize, we must pass on the proper knowledge, ability and compassion to our children until they develop the intelligence and compassion that will guide them to personal success. Therefore, we must always be aware of new information that will assist us in their upbringing so that they will understand modern society and the challenges that they will have to face ahead. Additionally, we actively teach them what is moral and ethical in their dealings with friends, relatives, and teachers/mentors.

If we can do these things, then our children will be aware of the purities and impurities of their own thoughts, speech, and actions. Awareness spawns correction. After all, when we teach our children how to grow up to be wise and moral, we feel good about contributing to their long-term well being.



Chapter 8

Building Good Habits



It is a serious mistake if parents always take their children's side when they have misbehaved or done something wrong. The children will eventually believe "when I misbehave, then I will receive good in return". When these children grow up, they will tend to do bad things, thinking that it is ok to do so. "My parents will always agree with me, so why not do whatever I want? !" We must acknowledge the consequences of providing misguided support to our children. Do not show them love through indulgence. If they make a mistake, then discipline is the only answer.

In order to develop good habits, we must understand two things:

(1) **Heredity** plays an important part in developing virtuous habits. If the parents practice good habits, even before conception, and continue these good habits throughout the pregnancy, the chances are that the child will develop good habits as well.

(2) **Environment and discipline** are also vital in developing virtuous habits. We should start teaching our baby from the day of his/her birth. Do not think that children are too young to learn. Breast feeding on time is one way to teach a baby about punctuality. Changing his/her diaper immediately when it is soiled can build the habit of cleanliness. Finally, speaking with sweet and gentle words will encourage courtesy in our children.

Although a newborn child comes into the world with no prior habits, s/he needs a model for his/her thoughts, speech and actions. Whatever action or speech that comes to the baby first will be the first model. Therefore, if the baby receives things which are wholesome and good, s/he will have the opportunity to mimic the wholesomeness and goodness. This solid foundation of what is good and wholesome will withstand any misconduct that might occur in their later years, thus allowing him/her to be able to look after him/herself with independence and responsibility.

The baby's first few mistakes are usually very obvious and detectable. A thrown cup. Pinching a buddy's arm. Angry shouts at nursery school. These mistakes prompt us

to find a way to correct the behavior immediately. However, through ignorance or neglect, we allow the baby to become accustomed to certain behaviors. These will later develop into bad habits that will be harder to overcome than if they were addressed in the beginning. Habits are repeated because the actions and/or consequences go undetected. We must be vigilant! Look! Listen! Act! Teach!



Chapter 9

Roles of a Parent



We, along with most other parents, want our children to have successful futures. We want well-behaved, respectful, moral children who will help the advancement of society. But in order to do that, we have to lay down a basic foundation for their success and we must understand our role in their development. In becoming good role models for our children, we must therefore understand our children's personality and be aware of how their outlooks and attitudes change with their age and environment.

When our children are young, we are everything to them. As they grow older, friends will influence their thoughts and attitudes more and more. In the teenage years, they will pay less attention to us, though we will remain as important role models for them. When they become adults, they will be independent and will rely on their own intelligence and reasoning. Throughout their lives, it will be necessary for us to adjust ourselves to be consistently sympathetic and empathetic with their changing perspectives.

In addition to performing parental duties, we must assume other roles as well:

- **Teacher:** We must teach our children to discern what is right and wrong, and what they should and should not do. If our children are too young to learn about cause and effect, we must be excellent role models for them. Our efforts must be gentle and warm. Do not teach them with poor judgment or a bad temper! Punishment should be utilized only when it is absolutely necessary and should not involve any physical harm. Cleanliness should be encouraged while they are still very young by involving them in chores like washing clothes and cleaning. Regular bathing, brushing their teeth and eating properly should be taught as early as possible. Do not assume that these lessons are insignificant. Since we are our children's first teacher, we must instill what is right in them. We build the foundation for their good character and help them to have the right outlook on life. As children grow up, this foundation will help them integrate good behavior into their natural habits.

- **Moral Guide:** Parents should build a solid foundation of moral development and *Dhamma* (Pure Nature) in order to teach children about the good energy created by *boonya* and the bad energy of *kilesa*. Traditionally, this is accomplished by readings from wise sages (such as the *Buddha*), the regular practice of prayer, and the practice of generosity. How we accomplish this in our own culture or religion is up to us, as long as we establish the habit of doing good deeds regularly. We should not forget to caution and help children avoid doing bad deeds, as there are always negative consequences for both themselves and others. Our children will learn to refrain from bad actions based on our good examples!
- **Nurturer:** We must provide love and warmth to encourage a nurturing family environment. If our children make mistakes, we must teach them what is right and what is wrong. We must teach them how to forgive. When they perform good deeds, we must praise and applaud them. We must provide them with an education and nurse them when they are sick. When they are grown and ready to leave the family to start their own independent lives, we must accept this and not hold them back. However, we should still offer them advice, be their counsel, and give them encouragement. Most importantly, we must be neutral and not take their side if they have done something wrong! If they develop into adults who disregard the law, they must be punished. We must, in turn, accept the fact that they are going to be punished. Do not demonstrate our “love” for our children incorrectly by committing

perjury. We should help them as much as possible, but all within the boundaries of the laws that govern us.

- **Guru:** We must practice a high level of morality in order to be well-respected in our community. We must be a wise counsel for the family and respected by our children and grandchildren. We must maintain our dignity in order to preserve family unity. Our children will respect us, listen to us and follow our teachings to live in an ethical way, thereby becoming responsible adults.

Once we are able to practice these four roles, family life will be incredibly happy. There will be peace of mind that will expand outward to support the community in which we live.

Chapter 10

Good Children and How to Raise Them



In a society saturated with media that is harmful, biased and controversial, we are easily worried that our children will succumb to negative influences at every corner. How do we protect our children from these influences? How do we instill conscience and morality? To answer to these questions, we depend upon four simple points:

- 1. Be a Good Role Model.** This is difficult for many of us to fully comprehend because we do not always

realize just how influential we are to our children. Before we can begin to be good role models, we need to take a look at our own qualities. Do we lie, steal or treat others unkindly? If our children accumulate bad habits, then we must reflect upon ourselves as the possible reason why. Children are like clean slates when they are born - they must be taught what is correct. When children speak impolitely, it is often because they remember from us! If we want good children, we must create a good moral foundation by maintaining moral behavior and serving as a good role model.

2. Find Quality Reading and Entertainment. One of the most intriguing yet obvious social problems of today is the proliferation of violent video and computer games. What our children do, see, smell, taste, and hear affects their outlook and understanding of life. We need to be vigilant and spend time with our children, giving them love and affection. If we say we do not have the time, then our life is only half-lived. Our life was not meant only for working; we must have time for ourselves and our family. “If you love your cows, tie them. If you love your children, spend time with them.” Teaching your child to read is one of the best things you can do as a parent. We must set aside time to go to the book store with our children and help them select their own entertainment; observing their behavior from a distance. Sometimes we have to provide them with information to help in the decision-making process. If they want to read

funny comics, short stories, Shakespeare's plays or even biology formulas, then we should read along with them. As they grow older, the healthy choices children make will help them in selecting quality books, music and entertainment that support their own moral development.

- 3. Find Good Teachers.** Teachers are extremely important because these people are the strongest influence outside the home that promote morality in children. Since we are not with the teachers at school all day, we need to be able to assess them and know what they are teaching. We do not necessarily need to send them to a world-renowned school; we just need them to be in a positive academic environment.
- 4. Find Good Friends.** Clearly, we do not want our children to associate with fools. It is obvious that if our children associate with bad people, they will be influenced to do bad things. Misguided behavior will become less apparent when our children do not live with us, so we must be able to recognize the signs and give sound advice while they are with us at home. Reprimands should not be the first and only reaction. Raising children requires us to have tactics and strategies similar to that of a business. Rewards and praise should be given when children do good deeds, though they should be kept in moderation. We are trying to build their capabilities to choose and associate with good people. We want them to grow up to be adults who think, speak, and act morally, instilled with a sense of right and wrong.



Chapter 11

Economics, Entertainment and the Internet



Economics: Our children's future financial security can be measured by their understanding of economy. We can cultivate the foundation of this understanding in our children by teaching them habits of putting aside money every week for savings and being frugal with their savings. When children ask for money, we must first ask them what they will do with it and why it is necessary. If they lack a good reason, we should withhold the money and let them know why. Even if they are unhappy, we must not waver. They have to understand the

principles and consequences of over-spending. Do not give them money just to end their annoyance or their tantrums. Do not let them think that money is easy to earn. It is not! It does not grow on trees! They must learn that money - every single dollar - is hard-earned. Giving them allowances can ease some of their requests, but they should be earning their allowances by doing additional chores around the house or by being creative in starting their own businesses: lemonade stands, book shops, and babysitting, for example. When we are buying items for our children, we should first window-shop to compare prices and quality, purchasing the item that has the best “bang for the buck”. Find a way to explain to them that good things do not necessarily cost more. Teach them to always look for the true value of things and to use their belongings in a proper manner. We should also try to teach them how to repair damaged items so that they can be reused. If broken items cannot be repaired, then our children should be taught to give these items to charity or a recycling center.

When our children are taught how to do things themselves, they develop independence and wisdom. If we allow our children to create their own toys to play with, or to assemble their toy parts together, then they will learn to help themselves and they will be proud of their successes. They will also be developing mental acuity. In this way, they will also be learning to save money and even perhaps how to make money themselves! “Piggy banks” are an easy and fun way for children to save their leftover allowances. Additionally, we may even take them to the bank to deposit their money into their own account. Encourage them to deposit any money they receive on special occasions, like birthdays

or holidays, to help with their own educational fund. While we are encouraging our child to save money, also encourage them to have friends who spend their money wisely, and who know the value of saving. They will have a good influence on one another.

Entertainment: One of the major concerns facing parents today is not having enough time to spend with their children. So much time is spent every day earning a living to support the family. Where is the time for our kids? If this is happening to our family, we may somehow improperly rationalize that sometimes the best solution is to allow our children to spend more time watching television. In other words, we may say: “There’s nothing wrong with letting the television baby-sit the children. ”

This solution is, of course, unstable and risky. The consequence of this decision may leave us distressed if we see negative changes in our children’s behavior. Children may become more aggressive, offensive and perverse while using more profanity, but these adverse changes in their behavior should not leave us dumbfounded as to the root cause. This behavior stems from letting them watch inappropriate television programs when they are not yet mature enough to discern right from wrong, good from bad, and appropriate from inappropriate. But sometimes, if we let them watch too much TV, it is already too late. Children often absorb bad behavior they see on TV and adopt it as their own - like mimes or copy-cats. We end up miserable when we realize that all of our hard work earning money for the well-being and happiness our family has been negated with the negative influences of TV and movies.

Keep in mind that, if we do not spend enough time with our children, they can develop poor judgment. Why? Many media-based programs revolve around sex. Children exposed to these programs become sexually active at an early age because they think that sexual conduct seen on TV is actually real or based on reality. Sole responsibility does not rest with the child. Really, they are just doing what mass popular culture and commercialism is telling them to do. However, we should still check for television programs that are educational and allow them the appropriate amount of time to watch those programs. Better yet, we can lay down some rules:

- 1. Television time must not interfere with school and/or household chores.** We must not let them watch television whenever they want. They must have a set time for homework, reviewing lessons, reading and helping with household chores. We must set proper schedules and never allow them to watch television until late at night. Otherwise, children will not get sufficient rest. Lack of sleep can result in the development of bad habits like waking up late, deceitfulness, and lying. Children who do not get enough sleep or do not finish their homework will not want to go to school or excel in their classes. They will tell their parents that they do not feel well or try to come up with excuses to get out of going to school.
- 2. Television programs must not lack morality:** They must promote healthy virtues. TV programs that we allow our children to watch should contain subjects pertaining to ideas and practices that set a priority

with morality. Programs that are scary, frightening, sexual, or that deal with revenge and killing should not be watched. We should select the television programs that promote virtue and intellectual development (i. e. programs about sharing, loving, kindness and devotion.) They can watch programs on science and technology, or art and culture. This enables them to learn more about their country, culture and background. Virtuous knowledge found in education TV programs can serve as a foundation for vision and wisdom in their future.

Remember, it always comes back to us, the parents, to be a good example for our children! If we are addicted to television, it will be a difficult challenge to prevent our children from becoming addicted, too. Therefore, between the choices of fostering good habits in our children and allowing the children to watch their favorite television programs, we should choose what is in their best interest as the main priority.

The same goes for “gaming”. Since the video game industry has been allowing more violent games to be produced and marketed each year to young people, it is more likely that children will be exposed to violence at an increasingly earlier age. As always, be careful of the games we allow our children to play. If there are excellent educational video games available: Choose them!

Internet: Today we live in the era of the “information superhighway”. Children are addicted to television, DVD’s, cell phones and especially the internet. We must accept the

fact that these types of media have both positive and negative consequences, depending on how they are used. If we do not know how to control them, then we become slaves to technology. When it comes to teenagers, the more we prohibit the use of technology, the more interest it stirs in them. We should allow them some use of these Medias, but we must designate when is the right time and what is the right amount of time. For example, we should set a schedule as to when they can use the internet, study, sleep, and meditate! Even though technology is so prevalent in modern society, the ancient art and science of meditation is as valid as ever. To find true self-sustaining happiness, we all must look within ourselves (via meditation) instead of browsing through an endless sea of internet sites.

It can be of great benefit for children to learn how to use great techno-devices, but also it is important not let them sleep too late. Everyone needs their sleep. If children go to bed too late, they will not want to get up in the morning, causing the parents additional problems. A tired, cranky child can really disrupt the harmony of your day. It can all result in an exchange of harsh words early in the morning. This, in turn, may teach the children that it is acceptable or common to argue with parents. How untrue this is! Of course, this is not acceptable at all. Teaching children how to manage their time will have a direct connection with how well they perform in school, organize and compartmentalize their life, and learn the value of each component within their lives. When they grow up, they will be more efficient, rational, and positive, even in difficult circumstances.

Families that have house rules regarding time management will be able to teach the children how to make right decisions and not to succumb to “whims”, or ‘spur of the moment’ decisions. This training will foster a foundation that enables them to make decisions based on thorough reasoning, sound principles, accurate information, and systematic examination. Time management = Better Decision Making. As a result, they will be intelligent and diligent in any kind of work they perform.

Part Three

Problems Within the Family



Chapter 12

What's Wrong With My Children?



The love we have for our children motivates us to work hard so that we earn money for not only the four requisites, but also comforts like a quality education, toys, technology, transportation and clothes. We also work hard, however, so that they will not be embarrassed by signs of poverty. We love them so much that sometimes we blur the line between properly nurturing them and improperly spoiling them. Even if we have the noble intentions of devoting all of our efforts

towards their happiness, spoiling our children neglects their important emotional and spiritual growth. Spoiled children usually end up more unhappy in the long-term because they suffer when they cannot always get what they want. We are then surprised and saddened when they are caught doing drugs, drinking alcohol, and otherwise behaving outrageously.

Self-destructive behavior is just as detrimental to a child's future as lack of education or lack of food. If allowed to continue along this path, they will destroy their own future. How, then, can we prevent our children from going down this path?

The first thing we need to realize is that we are our children's teacher. If no poor behavior has developed, then we can simply teach them about ethics, what is right and wrong behavior, and how they can demonstrate self-discipline. However, if they have already begun to develop self-destructive behavior then we need to address the problem immediately.

FUN FACT: There are five criteria that need to be met for children to be assured a bright future and find success in both their professional and personal life:

1. Teach them to refrain from bad deeds;
2. Teach them to do good deeds;
3. Provide them with a good education so they will have knowledge to follow a career and learn responsibility;
4. Help the children select a life partner and explain to them what they need to do in order to prepare for

family life and their responsibilities that they will have;

5. Bequeath them our wealth and assets. Give them an inheritance in order for them to start their own legacy.

Very simply, children behave badly because they do not mimic or follow the words of good role models. Let us examine our own behavior: do we know how to discern right from wrong, good from bad? Do we engage in poor behavior in front of our own children for them to see? Do not leave the moral teaching to the school teachers! We should be the person teaching them moral development. Do not rely on the school or university to do this. When our children are at home, our first focus should be on developing their ethical behavior so that, when they are away from home and need to make decisions by themselves, they will have sound judgment about drinking, drugs, money and sex.

Although it is time-consuming to impart our knowledge to our children, do not forget that the time we spend with them is perhaps the most important work we have. Additionally, do not be over-protective. Instead of forbidding them from going anywhere or doing anything, realize that as our children grow, they need to accept some of the responsibility of becoming an adult. Instead of saying, “NO! ” immediately, say “Please let me think about it”. If we have taught them about good and bad, right and wrong, and planning ahead for how situations will play themselves out, then we should try to encourage them to begin making some of their own decisions, little by little.

When it comes to children's education, most parents are supportive, but some have too high of an expectation. For the sake of your children, do not be one of those parents! Every child has a gift or a talent. Sometimes that talent is not a traditional "academic" one, but one that should be pursued outside of the classroom environment: athletics, music, art or public speaking, for example, are amazing examples. There are many talented athletes who are not brilliant academicians, but they would make excellent sports announcers, sports trainers, or coaches.

Do NOT send the child to a "famous" university ONLY because we went there, one of our friend's children went there, or because it is "the chic place to go!" This thinking is severely flawed. Examine what our child is talented in and where their true interests lie, so that when they have to study at the appropriate learning institution and subsequently make an income, they will happily do so because they were a part in shaping their own future.

If our children are already using drugs or alcohol, or are addicted to any type of illegal substance, we should approach them for a discussion without anger. Let them know of our concern. Allow them to come to their own conclusions about their behavior once they understand that our concern comes from the love that we have for them. Often they make choices without understanding why their decisions are wrong. Sometimes they do not even realize that they were worrying or hurting us! Among the many topics that need to be discussed with children, there are some main points of importance:

- 1. Money comes from hard work!** We can explain that going out at night is a waste of money. People need to work hard to be able to purchase food, shelter and clothing, and save money for the security and well being of the family. To do this responsibly, people need to be discerning with their money and look for the best values. Wasting money on a few hours of entertainment is like wanting our future to evaporate into the air. Not everyone goes out to clubs or consumes alcohol. In fact, there are many people who engage in more worthwhile pursuits, like volunteering to help the homeless or reading to the blind. Community service or volunteer activities are much more fulfilling than clubbing!
- 2. Peer Pressure influences behavior!** Although it is difficult for some people to say “NO! ” to friends, our children need to find appropriate answers when their friends ask them to drink or try drugs. Because they are inexperienced with these harmful substances, youth will sometimes want to try new things despite knowing the legal consequences. Unfortunately, they do not always know the moral consequences of such behavior. A great resource for families to learn more about peer pressure and illegal intoxicants is the website www.fcd.org, where there are excellent services and advice for us and our children.
- 3. Dangerous living has real consequences.** We have to explain the pitfalls of a dangerous lifestyle to our children. Being around intoxicated people or being intoxicated ourselves has so many terrible

potential outcomes such as getting involved in fights, getting arrested, contracting HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, and even getting killed. Children need to hear that they are our most precious treasure and that the thought of losing them is our worst nightmare. All parents want their children to live up to their potential. We want them to associate with good people whose example will inspire them to improve. Before problems arise in your children, discuss “difficult” topics with them lovingly and rationally. If they understand the immense sense of responsibility that we feel for them and their behavior, then this can be the starting point for them to think and act more responsibly and learn how to discern good friends from poor acquaintances. They may also find more constructive activities with which to occupy themselves!

For families that are already in crisis, work on effect solutions together and remember this: “Parent’s love for their children is not enough - reason and understanding must accompany it! ” With hard work, we can retrieve the loving relationship with our children that lead to harmony and happiness in the family.

Chapter 13

Husbands and Wives



When a life partner is unfaithful or has a problem with addiction, they can cause the family to fall apart. How can a marriage survive when “mistakes” happen that continue to hurt a relationship? Can a marriage be saved from such incidents? A great Buddhist monk, Luang Phaw Dattajevro of the Dhammakaya Temple, explained that:

“In choosing one’s life partner, we need to observe existing married couples and analyze their experiences. If we did this, we would find that before couples are

married, both are confident that they selected the life partner best suited for them. They had imagined that, once married, their life would be blissful. They imagined that any conflict would be minor and resolved amicably, and that they would never abandon each other. However, once they lived together for some length of time, the initial infatuation dissipated and they saw their husbands/wives sometimes at their worst. They realized that there would always be issues with which to deal. In the end, the magical happiness they once anticipated from their married life was erased by the reality. ”

So, a person needs to choose an ideal partner based on the following:

1. Understanding and confidence (Law of *Kamma*);
2. Observation of acts of self discipline (precepts);
3. Willingness to help others;
4. Wisdom to discern between good and bad

Because we are responsible for developing these traits ourselves, we are also responsible for seeking them in our partners as well! Difficulties in marriage, however well we plan, will naturally arise. One common problem in today's world is adultery, or unfaithfulness. Why does this happen?

One factor that leads to us being unfaithful is that we are looking for something that we sense is lacking in our partner. Fortunately, there is a quick solution to this problem: both partners should meditate regularly together each day. This practice helps us to calm our mind. Because even the smallest

flaw can be perceived as enormous in others, we tend not to recognize our own flaws, no matter how big they may be. When we close our eyes to meditate, we will see ourselves for who we truly are. The beauty of our true inner self will slowly arise. Then, slowly, our flaws will become known and made clear. The calmer our minds become, the more we will see. If we can begin to see our own flaws, a way to remedy them will also emerge.

A second factor might be that our partner is adulterous by habit! This is difficult to remedy. We will have to endure it and realize that this is a very sad consequence of not assessing people well. We can only control our own behavior and it is best to retain our dignity by not retaliating in kind. Changing an adulterous partner requires time. And we are the only person who can determine how much time it will require before we should consider other options.

Alcohol

It is better to be single than to marry an alcoholic! Not only is it detrimental to us, but also to our children. Before we marry someone who drinks, think again. Keep in mind that partners who completely abstain from alcohol are hard to find. Therefore, it is better to be single because it is a wiser choice.

If, however, we find ourselves in an unfortunate situation (i. e. already married to a person who drinks excessively) it is important to keep up our spirit. We should continue to attend our religious venues: church, synagogue, mosque or temple. Continue to accrue *boonya*. Continue teaching our children ethics and morals and help them to make it part of their lives. Chanting and meditating together will help to

improve people's behavior and help bring the family back together again.

Many children have faced the problem of seeing a parent drunk and/or belligerent. Once drunk, a parent is likely to yell at the neighbor, lie to their spouse or instigate a fight with their children. This behavior, of course, aggravates everyone in the family. However, because of the love that children have for their parent(s), they want to help them stop such a detrimental habit. Unfortunately, many children do not know what to do. They want to respect their parents, but they realize how detrimental drinking is to their health. Perhaps one way to remedy the drinking is by refusing to buy the alcohol! But in order for children to be successful in helping their parents quit drinking, or smoking for that manner, they themselves have to be wholesome role models for their parents! If our parents acknowledge that we are smart and proficient, then they will always look up to us, even if they don't express this sentiment. Then, perhaps we can find an appropriate time and method to approach them with what is respectful and suitable for the problem.

Money

Money can be a problematic issue for all couples, both young and old. When we are young graduates from university, we are diligent and focused in starting our first jobs. We work overtime with the hope of getting bigger and better salaries each year. As we get older and become more proficient in our work, we believe that we should receive the appropriate monetary compensation. In the end, however, if we end up living paycheck to paycheck, then we will wonder how we could have worked

so hard but don't have anything to show for it. So how is it that some people manage to squander their incomes?

“It is not important how much you earn. It is important how you spend the money you have and it is important how much you save.”

Earning a lot but having little left is the same as using a fishing net to collect water. The net may have touched an ocean's amount of water, but it could not save a drop for the future. On the other hand, earning little and saving a lot is like using a clay pot to collect water! If we earn a lot but spend it on alcohol, then we are choosing to use a fishing net to collect our water. Same goes for gambling. Going out to a bar, or a club, every night for a drink applies to this as well. We can avoid all of these pitfalls by simply not doing the behavior that leads to them. Drinking, smoking, gambling all require enormous amounts of money. If we do any of these things, then we cannot blame society or someone else for our own behavior. And we cannot blame anyone else for not saving our money for us. The blame lies solely with us. Therefore, life partners should often discuss the virtues of catching money with clay pots instead of fish nets, as both people need to use them for a prosperous future.

Sex

In this modern age with our preventative medicines, many people believe that soliciting sex is okay. By soliciting, we mean seeking, requesting and/or paying for it! No, this is not okay. Think again. As our children grow, we need to help them understand that there is a natural tendency to think about sex partners. Help them discern who the “good” partners

are. Help them discern how they need to think about where they spend their money, and who they spend their money on. Any person who does not have a healthy attitude toward the opposite sex needs to be avoided. What is healthy? Respectful, responsible, and caring! Help them learn that when a person says “NO! ” they mean “NO! ”

Any person, then, who solicits sex, no matter what the circumstance, has their appearance, reputation and inner self worth tainted with desire, deterioration, disaster and damage. From the moment they begin to behave inappropriately, people around them will view them with ever increasing suspicions. So many things go through people’s minds. They could very well ask themselves: Does that person have AIDS? Do they have STD’s? What kind of attitude toward women/men do they really have? Why would I want to hang out with them? A potential partner of someone who solicits sex must totally want to waste their money on supporting their negative behavior! As parents, if we support such negative behavior in our children, there is no hope that sexual misconduct, rape and physical abuse caused by sexual desires will ever stop ruling their lives!

Gambling

Even before the first whistle in an athletic contest is blown, many people have already placed their bets on a winning team using borrowed money, their own salaries, their children’s school tuition and their personal allowances. Bookies are filled with joy when they see the amounts of how much money they will collect. Most people do not think about this when they watch a sporting match, but such gambling has tremendous effects on the entire family.



If we work hard at making an honest living, then gambling is a terrible trap to be caught in. Bookies make their money simply because we do not know how to spend ours. If we have lost all of our money on gambling, then we will then turn to bookies for loans. If we cannot come up with money to repay our debt, then we will resort to criminal activities, corruption and/or prostitution in order to repay the debt. The idea of working in an honorable profession disappears from our mind as we bury ourselves deeper and deeper in the addiction of gambling or other roads to ruin. This addiction is difficult to break because our only agenda is to get back the money that we have lost.

Gambling destroys our honesty because the more we gamble, the more deceit and suspicion arises.

Gambling destroys our wisdom when we perceive that “money is GOD” which can provide us with everything. We forget that there are many things that money cannot buy. When we have money, we will spend it on useless things or lose it to more gambling. We become wasteful and do not know the true worth of money. We view money as only a piece of paper. Once we spend it, we crave more and more of it. This cycle continues around itself endlessly. Instead of using the wisdom we possess in a beneficial way, we use it to devise ways to cheat others.

Gambling wastes our time because once we start, we can very easily forget everything else. Even when we win, we forget everything. When we lose, we try even harder to find ways to get our money back!

Finally, **gambling destroys our health.** When we gamble, we neglect and sacrifice our rest and sleep, eating at odd hours and compromising our health. The best interventions to help those with a gambling addiction are as follows:

1. Do not involve ourselves with gambling
2. Explain to our children how harmful and dangerous it is to gamble
3. Do not promote or encourage gambling at home, work or school

Explain to anyone we love how destructive gambling actually is!

Part Four

Harmony Within the Family



Chapter 14

Creating Harmony Within the Family



A lack of family unity is at the core of many problems. It all seems to begin when each member of the family has a different schedule resulting in little or no interaction between each other. As each member becomes more distant, the family eventually falls apart.

One of the primary causes of a family's rapid deterioration is the failure to have dinner together.

In a large family, when people do not eat dinner together, there is a tendency toward disassociation and disagreement. For example, one day we cook a delicious meal that everyone enjoys and everyone eats more than their usual portion. In this situation, if we all sit down and have dinner together, the only problem could be a shortage of food. In such a case, if everyone eats at different times, those eating last will not have enough food. The child who eats last will be left feeling hurt and neglected. If that particular child helps out around the house, and this is the reason they were the last to eat, they will feel additionally hurt, neglected, or jealous.

The lazy child can usually be found hanging around the kitchen close to dinner time, complimenting the chef on cooking delicious meals. Even before setting the table, they will take and sample the best parts first. They also tend to be the ones who eat the most! These chubby children are adored because they know what sweet things to say.

The diligent children, whose work usually takes them past dinner time, end up being the last ones to eat. They are the most tired, yet sometimes they get to eat only the leftovers. Not only that, sometimes they end up washing the dishes, too. All this can affect their emotions. The more these situations occur, the more hurt they will feel. Minor disputes with siblings are followed by major arguments.

If we do not understand these dynamics but simply pacify the situation, we are not addressing the actual problem. Anger will linger. If similar incidents occur regularly, we could misinterpret such situations and blame the misunderstood child. It is easy to be oblivious to rising

resentment and conflict. This problem usually occurs in a family where everyone is busy with their own activities and do not have time for one another. No one knows what could be bothering the other person. This is why a family should regularly eat dinner together. Eating together allows family members the opportunity to voice their concerns and to give advice to others because people are often in a better mood when they are full. We can use this time to demonstrate good habits and etiquette to our children. Dinner is an important meal that should always be reserved for the family.

Another situation that leads to disunity in the family is food preparation. Many times, today's married couples argue over food. If they only make an effort to order out, eating while their eyes are glued to the television set, their mind easily wanders outside their body. Perhaps they might even start thinking about how the characters on television are much more attractive than our own spouses! Married couples should also consider visiting their in-laws together to share family time. Do we accompany our spouses or let them go alone? If they go alone, we know that neglect can quickly lead to a failed marriage. Engaging in activities as a family builds strong bonds.

In conclusion, creating harmony in a family is easy. It starts with an activity where all members can be involved. Dinner is the easiest and best activity. Family members should come together to talk about various issues. Talk to one other with reason, even though everyone may not share the same view. Doing things together has benefits that will create warmth and unity within the whole family.



Chapter 15

Sharing Responsibility



Unless we are wealthy, housework has to be done by one or more members of the family. Sharing is the only way to go. Parents need to assign tasks to everyone in the family (including themselves), tighten the financial budget, and discipline everyone's work!

One of the first things we need to consider is the limit of our household budget. Do not allow too much cash for everyone in the household. If we limit the amount of allowance, we create an equal workload and force everyone

to help one another. Ideally, our children will not stay angry at each other for very long because, when their pockets are empty, they will have to help each other with their work.

In order for children to communicate with us, and with one another, they should be assigned tasks together in order to get the job done. The communication will loosen any tension and ill feelings that they may have toward one another which will always bring about good results.

If we have a hired maid, s/he can do the main household chores. However, children should always be responsible to do their own personal chores. This will give the siblings a chance to openly discuss the best ways to complete their tasks and instill a proper sense of work ethic and family bond. This technique must be used when children are still young. If we spoil our children, they will grow up to be choosy and complaining adults! Thus when society suffers from a surplus of unwholesome people, we first need to address the problem by reflecting on the sharing responsibility that we are instituting in our own home!

Chapter 16

The Neighbors



Ok. We are in a great home, great family, great relationship. . . perfect, right? We all know that a positive, healthy environment sets the right conditions to promote good habits in children. So what happens when our neighbors who share common ground with us start to fight? If our neighbors noisily argue every day using profanity, our children will continue to hear these arguments and it will have a negative impact on their development. This will lead our children to speak impolitely and/or offensively. What should we do? How can we remedy the situation?

Option 1: Move Away Or Endure It. If we are able, we should move. Period. But if we cannot, we must endure it. We can set a good example for our children by speaking politely with the neighbors. Offer them some cookies and leave a note saying “Have a good day! ” But, if we take drastic action, it may lead to a quarrel and/or injury. Our poor behavior may create additional problems.

Option 2: Fight With Kindness. If we are new to the neighborhood, we should try to be friendly. The neighbors may become more conscious of their behavior and argue less. If we are older, have stable careers, and are well-respected in the neighborhood, it will be easier to initiate dialogue with the neighbors directly who are causing concern.

If we, ourselves, are selfless and giving, we will be loved and appreciated. This occurs naturally. Try it! It really works. If we are able to help our neighbors, we should offer our assistance in any way that is appropriate and kind. Even if we do not know what to offer, we can offer our support and encouragement with kind words. If we do not have anything special to say, we can at least give a warm-hearted smile. If we behave appropriately towards our neighbors, we will be loved and respected. It is when there is an openness in any relationship that one can help others with their inappropriate behavior. What we really need to build is social solidarity between neighbors. Start with an offering of good old fashioned home cooking and a smile and go from there.

In discussing social solidarity (*sangahavatthu*), we refer to the principle of aiding people in order to develop a unified society. As we discussed earlier, in order to do this we need:

1. *Dana*: offering material things when needed;
2. *Piyavaca*: kindness, and speaking truthfully and honestly;
3. *Atthacariya*: helpfulness in aiding others, like helping them at work when we can; and
4. *Samanattata*: impartiality in being consistently friendly to everyone.

If we can practice these four virtues, we will be highly regarded by our neighbors and will be able to provide guidance for our neighborhood.

If we are going to speak with our neighbors about their behavior, we must already practice high moral standards. No one likes hypocrites. Only when we can genuinely practice good manners and understand personal ethics are we capable of approaching and addressing a disgruntled situation. If we still lack personal virtue, then we should not directly approach others about their behavior.

We should, on the whole, be considerate of our community. When we maintain high moral standards, we will have the affection and respect of others. The most effective way to generate solutions for the community is through giving (as in community service activities) because when we do this with a pure heart, people will love and look upon us with dignity.

A GOOD PRACTICE: Learn your neighborhood. Join a neighborhood club or group so you can become familiar with the people who live around you and whose children go to school with your children. When you have the time, grab

a broom and sweep the street leading to our house, from beginning to end. When home, make a habit of sweeping the street. Try to sweep at least once a week. Maybe even try sweeping the whole street. If we keep doing this, our neighbors will come to know us. By getting outside the house a little, we show our face to the community. Any negative suspicions will then disappear. Offer them flowers or cookies every now and again. Suggest a book that they might enjoy reading. In this way, you will become a good neighbor and one whom others will help when you need it. They may not love us, but they will not hate us either! If we practice giving and observing good manners and morals, our children will learn how to deal with conflict at home as well as in school and the work place. Then we will not have to worry about moving anywhere!

Chapter 17

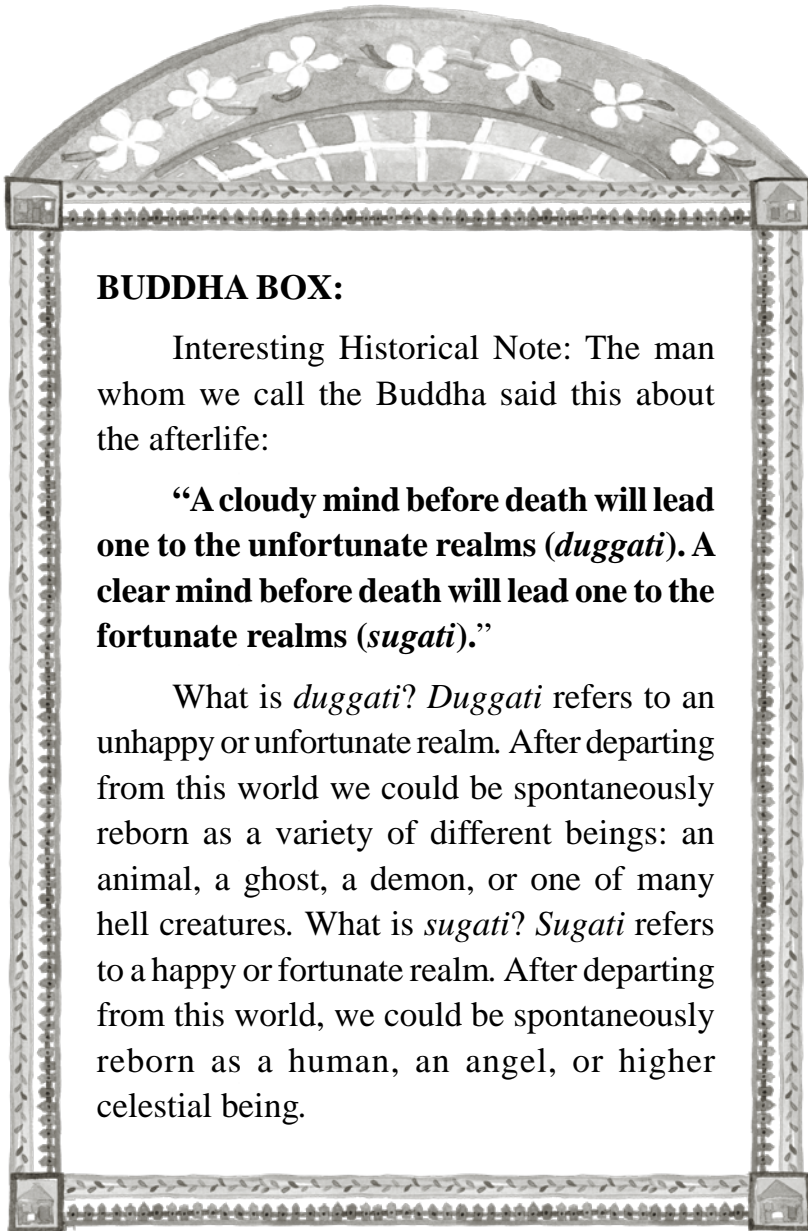
Caring for Critically Ill Relatives



Whether we like it or not, all who live in flesh will one day die. However, before our departure from this world, we often find people who are ill or lying in a hospital bed. By nature, bodies and organs slowly deteriorate as they are being consumed by age and disease. At the same time, the cells in our bodies slowly die, losing their ability to function. This causes tremendous pain and suffering for both the sufferer and their family and friends.

Therefore, it is crucial that we learn how to care for those whom we love when they are sick. Caring for our relatives happens on two levels: physically and mentally. Learning how to properly care for our loved ones will teach us how to care for their minds while they are fighting with pain. By showing our children how to take care of those in poor health, we also show them how able to care for us in the future. How, then, should we care for people we love when they are critically ill? We need to care for them both physically (finding the best doctors who can provide proper treatment according to our financial situation) and mentally (determining their psychological needs, encouraging them to focus on their prior good deeds, reminding them that they are loved, etc.).

What brings us to these places? Like attracts like! *Sugati* and *Duggati* are destinations where those who pass away must face the consequences of their actions on Earth. The final destination depends on the individual's state of mind in their last moment, which could be clouded or clear. This is referred to as "The War of Existence", the precarious battle of going to *sugati* or *duggati*. (See heaven and hell in glossary) Regardless of the results of any medical treatment, we must care for our beloved ones mental state so that his or her mind is clear and content at all times. This will give them hope and courage to fight their ailments with dignity and strength. There are, of course, various ways in which we can give them patience and courage:



BUDDHA BOX:

Interesting Historical Note: The man whom we call the Buddha said this about the afterlife:

“A cloudy mind before death will lead one to the unfortunate realms (*duggati*). A clear mind before death will lead one to the fortunate realms (*sugati*).”

What is *duggati*? *Duggati* refers to an unhappy or unfortunate realm. After departing from this world we could be spontaneously reborn as a variety of different beings: an animal, a ghost, a demon, or one of many hell creatures. What is *sugati*? *Sugati* refers to a happy or fortunate realm. After departing from this world, we could be spontaneously reborn as a human, an angel, or higher celestial being.

- 1. Keep them away from worries.** Do not let them hear about problems at home, their children's problems, or anything that might cause them to become unnecessarily distracted.
- 2. Bring their mind to a state of happiness** by reminding them of the *boonya* they have made in the past. Talk about the virtuous deeds that they have performed, including community service and the aid they gave to others.
- 3. Encourage them to perform new *boonya*** depending on their capability. Invite them to be generous by giving aid to social service institutions or community service organizations. If they cannot get up, invite friendly and kind visitors in. If this is not convenient, then perhaps it may be suitable for you to give aid on their behalf.
- 4. Persuade them to observe as many of the universally good deeds as they can.** They should not lie, steal, kill, or commit any sexual misconduct.
- 5. Invite them to meditate!** This is very important. We could also have the patient listen to chanting or scriptures of wise ones. We could invite someone that our beloved one respects to talk to them about *Dhamma*. We can read books to them.
- 6. Talk to them about their final thoughts.** What are their wishes? What are their needs? Be certain that all family members know of them.

In short, the final seconds in a patient's life are significant because that is when we can help them win the "War of Existence". Winning is accomplished by having a clear mind before departing. This is absolutely necessary.

Therefore, when our relatives are ill, regardless of our closeness to them or the severity of their illness, we should be able to take good care of them physically and psychologically. When our own children are mature enough, we should teach them to look after their own health and sympathize with their older relatives. Teaching them to care for others will help them realize the truth that everybody must die. Furthermore, when it is our time to go, they can help us to win our own "War of Existence."



Chapter 18

In Their Final Days



Regardless of the current relationship we have with our parents, we should remember that, when caring for them as they die, their state of mind will determine their future destination.

Even if we were neglected by our parents in the past, we still owe them a debt of gratitude. Parents, after all, served as our physical mold. They gave us a physical form as a human, suitable for performing our own good deeds. Even if they may not have raised us well, we still owe them a debt of gratitude. If they were good parents, we are greatly indebted to them. Additionally, parents typically forgive us without being resentful. Even if they scold us, or punish us,

they do it out of their deep love and concern for us. It hurts their hearts when they have to give us a spanking. They are the best friends we can ever find in this world and we should trust them wholeheartedly.

We can see how our debt of gratitude to our parents is much more than we can ever repay. But, we can try to repay them by caring for them in their old age. Use the family wealth responsibly, continue to do the good work that they have started, and inspire them to have faith in the Truth, nurturing them to be generous and maintain their own moral standards.

It is our responsibility to help them have the best possible opportunity to go to a favorable place, staying close to them as they are dying. Help them develop a clear and bright mind, listen to *Dhamma*, help them meditate and be patient with them!

When our parents have died, we need to take the responsibility for organizing a fitting funeral and regularly dedicate the results of our good deeds to our parents. While bringing up our own child to be a good person, do not forget to show appreciation towards our parents and grandparents. In this way, we give examples of how we should be cared for when we reach old age; especially during our final moments. Our children should know how to make our mind bright and clear which will help themselves to have a good future, too. In the end, all of these good teachings, inspiration and *boonya* will return to us.

“What goes around, comes around”. “You reap what you sow”.

Unfortunately, there is an increasing trend, particularly in the United States, for the elderly to be placed in retirement homes and then forgotten and/or neglected by their families. With inflation and very expensive health care costs, much of western society does not make caring for the elderly any easier. Also, because there is a rapid increase in the size of the elderly population, the parents who are neglected have become a major concern for modern society.

In some cultures, we are taught that our own success depends upon how well we treat our parents. Because our parent's kindness cannot be compared to others, if we do not understand and appreciate this fact, we will not be treated courteously by others. In most societies, it is the parents who take care of us while we are infants. They warmly accepted us into their lives, gave us the necessities of life, nurtured us, struggled in every way to help us develop and succeed, and loved us much as they were able to. Eventually, we will become old and succumb to some form of degeneration. Without our children's gratitude and love for us, we ourselves may become neglected. How can we prevent this from happening?

Somehow, we have to prepare ourselves for old age. Not doing so will bring trouble later because we may be unable to adjust when our physical body becomes weaker. In addition, there may be pressures as a result of our lack of preparation in dealing with these problems. We must help our children recognize how they can be helpful in caring for us. We should teach our children when they are little how to help our aging grandparents. As a result, they will automatically bear witness to our teaching and example. Later in life, they will treat us in the same manner as we did with our parents. It is also

important to effectively instill gratefulness in our children so that they will behave in that manner to us. We should instill our parent's virtues into our own children, so that they will learn from their acts of kindness and generosity. They will then know that a grateful person must treat his parents with respect, care, and love.

How, then, do we prepare ourselves to be parents worthy of our children's respect? We have diligently earned our livelihood and are well-prepared for our elderly years so that we can depend on ourselves without help from others. Our behavior and manners are well-adjusted; we know that we will not be a burden to our children. We have been generous, kind, and have practiced meditation, for example. We have always tried to raise our children with a sense of morality and we have read and told them both spiritual and worldly stories that were valuable and useful. We have helped them lead their lives in an honest and responsible way, not interfering in their lives because we have assumed that they know how to handle responsibility in their own family.

Later, when we fall ill and die, we will trust that our children will be excellent caretakers of our estates, both small and large. They will prepare for their own funerals with accumulated savings, performing their own *boonya*-making activities before they die. They, too, will lead their lives mindfully every day. And when that last day comes, they will look back and be proud of what they have accomplished. We can clearly see that knowledge, integrity, and wisdom will help us lead a productive, happy life so that we are readily prepared for old age.

Chapter 19

The Unconditional Love of Parents



In a modern world driven by economy, it is difficult for us to find enough time away from work to spend with our children. Sometimes, they are “raised” by television sets or video consoles as we are making a living. Many children grow up practically without any parental guidance or instruction, not knowing the causes and consequences of things, the difference between moral and immoral behavior, or how to control their emotions. They do not know the value of

having parents. They might even despise them. They cannot appreciate all the hardships and sacrifices that parents have endured for them. They think that it is the parent's duty to raise them and give them everything they desire since we brought them into the world. In the end, it is us, the parents, who feel the heartaches and disappointments. If we are not wealthy enough to satisfy our children's every whim, then children who were raised without learning gratitude will openly disparage us. They will complain about being embarrassed by our thriftiness. Sometimes they will bully us or throw tantrums to get their way. They are, in fact, accumulating bad *kamma* without even realizing it! These problems do not occur only in middle class or poor families, but in wealthy families as well. Remember, then, that we need only to do the best that we can in the manner that we feel will help to make them good, respectful and responsible adults. We love our children unconditionally; just as it should be. But we also need to have rules that we can all live by.

Listen to them. Learn from them. Be open to new themes as they grow and mature. Say "NO!" when the situation requires it. Say "YES!" and rejoice with them. Love them unconditionally.

This is mostly due to the belief that parents and grandparents do not hold enough spiritual authority to properly give a "blessing." However, when we talk about giving a blessing, we mean to say the act of giving the very best. A blessing is called *vara* in Pali Sanskrit, meaning progress and happiness. Therefore, when the elderly give a blessing to their loved ones and descendants, it is equivalent to wishing them the very best.

In Southeast Asia, it is routine that a family practices this before going to sleep. Parents would bring their children to pay respect to the grandparents every night. Then the grandparents would summarize all the good deeds they had done that day in a blessing for their grandchildren. In doing so, the children would be instilled with morals and would learn from their grandparents' virtues. Such acts transfer good deeds and virtues to the children as they learn about the Law of *Kamma*.

The elderly represent the heart of the whole family. If their speech is not instilled with *Dhamma*, encouragement, or caution, then it would seem as if the family's heart had stopped functioning. At the same time, the family would not be united and the family's warmth would gradually fall away and come to an end.

Children who understand the importance of a daily blessing by the elderly will be well acquainted with paying respect to parents and grandparents every night before bed. Nowadays, however, this routine has departed from most families; it has become a factor for family problems such as the increasing rate of divorce, the neglect of elderly parents, etc. In addition, some problems are caused by couples who separate themselves from their extended family to live apart.

Part Five

Truth for the Family



Chapter 20

Family Wisdom



One day, a family invited guests to their home for a religious rite for the grandparents. After the ceremony, when all of the guests had left, the son asked his father,

“Dad, since everyone has to die like our grandparents, what is the purpose of life?”

The father replied: “Deep down inside, everybody has asked what we are doing here and what the true purpose of life really is. Even I used to wonder about that. And this very question prompted me to study the *Dhamma* seriously, and

has given me an understanding of life in a new way. **Firstly, death is not the end.** We still have to be reborn as long as we have not gotten rid of our own *kilesa*. **Secondly, all good deeds and all bad deeds have consequences.** They can bear fruit in this life or in the next. We can see that some people are born smart, some are not. Some are good looking and some are not. All of these factors are the product of their *kamma*. **Thirdly, that Heaven and Hell do exist!** Hell is punishment for those who have committed sinful deeds, and heaven is the home to those who have performed virtuous deeds.

If we look closely at the births of all living creatures, we will see that they are different. Some are born from the womb, other species are born from the egg, and still others are born from filthy water. But there are species which we have not laid eyes on, but we have heard about them: celestial beings and internal degenerates. They are born fully grown and parent-less, an autonomous and spontaneous birth. The knowledge of these three subject matters I acquired from the man whom we call the Buddha. They have influenced me to improve myself, to elevate my morals, and to accumulate *boonya*. I am hoping that in my future life, when my *boonya* is perfected, and all my *kilesa* crushed, I will attain *Nirvana*.

After I finished my studies, the first thing that came to my mind was how to steer myself, my parents, your mother, and all my children away from misdeeds. And furthermore, I wanted to ensure that all of our grandparents would go to heaven. Once I had set this goal, I took a good look at myself. I still had to make a living, to provide for your mother and all of you, as well as your grandparents. So I sought a way for my family to gain *boonya* at the same time. I learned more

about *Dhamma* and learned that there was a **set of teachings specifically tailored for householders. They include four main virtues, which are:**

- 1. Truthfulness (*sacca*):** This first virtue taught me to be sincere, straight-forward, and honest. Remember that most people will resort to lying to get off the hook. You must not do that. You should be held accountable for your actions, to your profession, punctual with your commitments, and honest to everyone. Most of all, you must abide by ethics such as the Five Precepts. Then you will not be the subject of mistrust. You will walk proudly with respect all your life, and this is what I have acquired.
- 2. Self-Improvement (*dama*):** The second virtue is to continually improve one's self. I have continued improving myself professionally. From an ignorant person, I kept advancing myself until I was able to be a good provider, own my own business, become proficient in my career, and keep abreast of people around me and world events. I was able to control myself not to succumb to vices, to refrain from imbibing, smoking, lying and cheating. These are the values that I have acquired that lead to wisdom.
- 3. Physical and mental endurance (*khanti*):** Enduring physical and mental hardships is the third virtue. No matter what the root causes were, I was able to endure physical hardships, weariness, pain, and mistreatment. On top of this, I was able to resist temptations. A holy man once said to me that whoever

is able to endure these hardships will be strong, charismatic, and successful. And this is how I have acquired my wealth.

4. Elimination of negative emotions and stinginess

(*caga*): The fourth virtue teaches us to rid ourselves of bad tempers and stinginess. I always maintained a good mood and tried to lend a helping hand to others. These qualities have made me endearing to my relatives, neighbors, superiors, and subordinates. And when I started my own business, they were ready to return the favor and warned me of the pitfalls. This is how I have acquired my good friends.

Adhering to these four virtues has enabled me to advance my career, to elevate my status, to provide for my family, and to take care of our grandparents. And when they were alive, I made sure that they offered food to those in need, especially to the practicing spiritual people of our community, every day to ensure their passages to heaven. Now that they are gone, I will keep sending *boonya* to them until I am no longer capable of doing so. And if you intend to improve yourself morally, as well as your level of aptitude, in the way that I have been doing all of my life, then you will stop wondering what the purpose of life is. We are here to shut the door to hell, to keep bettering ourselves, and to perform only good deeds until we are rid of all *kilesa* and can finally go to *Nibbana*!”

Chapter 21

A True Mentor



A good person has to be a logical. By nature he is NOT gullible or easily deluded. Thus, we should attempt to follow good role models in the following way:

1. The mentor should have an unambiguous biography. There must be proof of his life history; it cannot be patched, vague, and unreliable.

2. Ideally, he/she should be extremely intelligent, exceptionally virtuous, exceedingly knowledgeable of the truths about life (be enlightened), and all his knowledge must be acquired through his own experience. Thus, he will not plagiarize these insights from someone else.

The man whom we call the Buddha gave up being the crowned prince of his kingdom to meet with hardship and toil in order to find the truths of life so that he may become enlightened. All of His teachings derive from His enlightenment. He did not claim the teaching of others as His own, nor did He say that He received them from a heavenly being. The Buddha made it clear that He attained enlightenment by Himself. Most of all, and most importantly, He never forced or persuaded anyone to believe in His teachings.

3. All of the mentor's teachings, when adhered to, will be beneficial and produce happiness. If not, then those instructions are useless. All of the *Dhamma* are universal truths and are therefore timeless. If a person practices true *Dhamma*, that person will gain great benefit. Adversely, if that person acts against the *Dhamma*, s/he will receive calamitous consequences. *Dhamma* is timeless. It was true when discovered and expounded by a man who became the Buddha more than 2500 years ago and they are still true today. They are not subject to change over time. In the attempt to enable humankind to benefit from *Dhamma*, the man whom we call the Buddha endured numerous hardships such as extreme physical exertion and

physical attempts upon His life. However, they had no effect on His strong determination. Furthermore, none of His actions were for personal gain. When offered valuables, He would emphasize that the amount of *boonya* derived from the offering is less than putting *Dhamma* into practice. Those who practice *Dhamma* conscientiously, whether they live an ascetic life or at home, can also rid themselves of *kilesa* and attain *Nibbana*, the immortal happiness, just as the man whom we call the Buddha did Himself.

The most incredible thing about the *Dhamma* is that the teachings are beneficial and accessible by followers of all religions! Those who adhere to them will obtain the exact same benefits that the “Discoverer” obtained, and there have been millions of people from various faiths who have experienced the success and benefits of the practice.



Chapter 22

Good Deeds and Their Outcomes



Whenever someone is facing a situation that s/he considers unfair, s/he will start to think, “There is no such thing as good deeds bringing favorable outcomes; bad deeds can also bring favorable outcomes, too.” The fallacy of this notion stems from the expectation that good deeds will produce immediate outcomes and that someone can be rewarded for bad conduct. On the surface, that may seem to

be true in some cases. But look closely at people's enjoyment of their 'reward'; they are probably worried about how to keep the reward, what others may think of them or how they can always get more rewards in the future (i.e. : greed). The gratification is temporary, but the fear and greed stays with them.

It is important to teach our children to believe that good deeds always bring favorable outcomes, and vice versa. Otherwise they will doubt this principle and may think that doing good is only for fools.

Here is an example: If we plant a seedling from a banana tree today, can we expect to eat bananas from that seedling today? Of course not! We will have to wait for almost a year and, while waiting, we have to water it, turn over the soil, and take good care of it. Otherwise, after a year, we may end up eating scrawny bananas. And, when asked if we get anything out of waiting, the answer is YES! Once we have planted the offshoot, we can take satisfaction in knowing that we have done it for good reasons and at a reasonable time. We can have banana leaves for wrapping desserts or banana blossoms to eat with condiments. And yet we still have to wait a full year for the fruit. This teaches us: "Haste makes waste". Most people expect their good deeds to bear fruit right away, but this is erroneous. And when we do good deeds, we should not expect favorable outcomes immediately. We should be impartial in order to achieve this. How? Consistent meditation is key. Good deeds have to be the right deeds performed to the fullest extent of our ability and done in the right measure in order for them to be effective. We can set an example for our children by making them firmly believe

that good deeds will always bring favorable outcomes and vice versa.

Important to Remember:

1. The first stage of good deeds: When we have done something good, even if no one sees it, the first thing we get is self-satisfaction.
2. The second stage of good deeds: When we keep doing good deeds, the second thing we get is the development of an upright personality.
3. The third stage of good deeds: When we continue doing good deeds for long periods of time, the fruit of the good deeds will start to show as fortune and success. We will begin to see that our life becomes agreeable and our efforts become fruitful. We feel good about ourselves; this is comparable to enjoying the banana blossoms.
4. The fourth stage of good deeds: As our good deeds become habits, we will be highly regarded by our community and peers.



Chapter 23

The Law of *Kamma*



Throughout time, it has always been a great challenge to develop human beings to

- resist the temptations to do bad deeds, and
- to do good deeds wholeheartedly without any expectation of reward or recognition.

If we can teach our children to be good people through and through, then we will not worry because our children will always be on the right path and they will not cause trouble for themselves and for others.

However, it is rather difficult to train children to love to do good deeds and hate to do bad deeds because it is hard to resist temptations. Besides, it is impossible for us to keep an eye on our children all of the time. At some point children must be able to govern themselves.

In order to completely and responsibly control their own behavior, they must fully understand the Law of *Kamma*.

Then, when there is the opportunity to commit bad deeds, and nobody is watching, they will be able to control their urges. And when occasions for good deeds arise, they will perform them quickly, not caring if anyone is there to offer praise.

How to Understand the Law of *Kamma*

First of all, we must remember that good deeds always bring good results. Then we must realize that there are two sets of conditions regarding *kamma*:

1. The conditions inside ourselves.
2. The conditions outside ourselves.

The conditions inside ourselves:

1. **Know the Objective.** Our effort has to be expended for the correct objective. Simply put, before plunging into any work, we have to know what the objective of that endeavor is. While doing it, we must make a full effort to achieve it. For example, clothes will get stained around the collar and the cuffs. So if we scrub the whole shirt except for these two areas, the shirt will not be clean. Since effort was not

directed to the right areas, the complete objective of washing the whole shirt was not met - the shirt remains dirty. The failure to meet this objective is like a person who is diligent but ignorant. We can work very hard, but our blinded efforts will achieve little, if anything. Sometimes our efforts can bring about more problems. To reach our goal, we must be fully aware and understand the objective AND know how to accomplish all of the necessary tasks of that undertaking before we start.

2. **Right Effort.** We must put our full effort into any project to obtain the best outcome. Knowing the objective of an undertaking is not enough to guarantee the quality of that effort. If a person stops short of a wholehearted attempt, the objective may be realized, but the quality will probably be poor.

For example, let's take the dirty shirt scenario again: we know that we have to pay attention to the collar and the cuffs, and we also know that it will take about 30 scrubs to get rid of the stains. Unfortunately, if we stop at just 10 scrubs, the stain will be lessened but the shirt will still be dirty. This rule is applicable to any task. Acting with the right objective, but not to the fullest extent, will only bring a second-rate result. The failure to exert ourselves to the highest potential is like a smart but lazy person. We know the objective, and we know what it takes to reach it with flying colors. Yet halfway through, we lose motivation and resort to shortcuts. Therefore, knowing the objective and pursuing it to the fullest extent are the only ways

to achieve the best result possible. We must not be lazy, procrastinate, or be discouraged by obstacles.

3. **Natural Limitations.** Unfortunately, acting on the right objective to the fullest possible extent does not always guarantee success. We should apply the appropriate degree of effort, - not too much and not too little - so that the effort does not cause any harm. Once more, if we scrub the collar and cuffs 100 times, we may in fact put holes in that shirt.

Another example: Some people extend themselves too far by working too hard without getting enough rest, thereby ruining their health. Long hours at the office with no time to rest or meditate are a recipe for pending doom. On top of this, they may work on borrowed funds, risking their own future and someone else's money. Their hard work may hurt them physically and financially, as they are not considering their own limitations properly. Therefore, to achieve the right outcome, we must meet the three criteria:

- a.) Know the objective,
- b.) Put forth the right effort, and
- c.) Realize your natural limitations.

The conditions outside of ourselves: Even when are able to focus on our objective, give it our full effort, and stay within our limitations, there are still two outside conditions that can influence the outcome.

1. **Timing.** If we plant a banana seedling today, can we expect to eat the banana tomorrow? Of course not!

But does that mean that we should not put in the effort? Not exactly. It just means that it may take time to bear fruit someday. After three or four months, although there is still no banana to consume, there will be banana leaves that we can use for wrapping. After eight or nine months, there is yet no banana to eat, but there will be banana blossoms to eat with condiments. After we have been watering and turning the soil for a year, then we get to enjoy bananas. Ah - The Sweet taste of success! A banana plant is one of the easiest plants to grow, and yet it takes 12 months before we can enjoy the yield. Similarly, favorable outcomes of good deeds also take time to come to fruition. So when someone complains that he has pursued the right objective, exerted the fullest effort, and kept within bounds, and yet has not seen the fruit of his good deeds, then he must be told to be more patient.

2. **Locality.** If we plant two banana trees, one next to a big watering area and the other inside a dry room, the seedling that gets the water will be much more productive. The one next to the watering area will receive water each morning as people wake up, wash their face, take a drink, water the flowers, or wash clothes. Whenever the water is dumped on the ground, the tree benefits. It will grow faster than others since it happens to be near a water source. It is the same when we carry out good deeds. If the locality is conducive, then the outcome will materialize sooner than somewhere else less favorable. But here is a word of

caution: We should know the mentality of the people around us! Initially, they may give us moral support. But once we advance too far and too fast, they may become antagonistic and try to bring us down. So, when we are doing something worthwhile, we have to pay attention to timing and locality and adjust our actions accordingly. If we believe in the Law of *Kamma*, we will withhold ourselves from doing bad deeds - even when there is no one watching!

Why Some People Doubt that Good Deeds bring Good Outcomes

We know that when someone performs good deeds while meeting the full criteria for success, good outcomes will result. This will encourage us to perform even more good deeds. However, if we do something bad even while meeting the three criteria, it is certain that we will receive bad results. If we look closely, we will realize that we often have not kept a full account of the bad deeds that we have committed in the past. So when we perform good deeds, we can suddenly be hit with a bad outcome (i.e. : the result of the bad deeds that you forgot about in your past). By the same token, sometimes we see somebody doing something bad, but they surprisingly find good results! Why? It looks as though bad deeds are being rewarded. The answer: **Since positive and negative outcomes are not always instantaneous, some people begin to doubt the effectiveness of the Law of *Kamma*.** This can really mislead us into thinking that good deeds do not bring about good results. Then we may go so far as to abandon all good behavior. But sooner or later, the fruit of bad actions will

ripen and that person will be punished. The Law of *Kamma* is universal! We are all heir to our *kamma*.

Kamma and Promotion The concept of having the right objective and exerting a full effort while staying within properly set boundaries can be used when considering a promotion. For example, a banker was sent anonymous and hostile notes by his subordinates. This was due to the fact that the employees received different levels of promotion. Some received one level up, some two, and some three. The employees, of course, had a very natural human reaction to this differentiation, rooted in defilements, or *kilesa*. If there had not been a promotion, there would not be any problem. Antagonism and jealousy arise when rewards are different.

Therefore, there must be some clear-cut guidelines for promotions:

1. If a particular person did not receive a promotion, he probably missed the objective. He might have worked hard, but achieved nothing. The success of a company does not come from hard work alone. Moreover, missing the objective of any endeavor can bring about monetary loss to the company. He is lucky to keep his job!
2. Another employee might have hit the nail on the head, but he did not hammer the nail all the way down, though he claimed that he did. He might have moved forward an inch, but he would brag that he had gone a yard. This kind of person may have worked hard, but he did not have as much to show for his performance as he claimed. Therefore, if we

have this kind of person as a subordinate, s/he should be ready to prove his actual accomplishments. This person may deserve a single level promotion.

3. If a person has fulfilled all requirements, s/he deserves a two-leveled promotion.

*Note: For those who have worked hard but caused more damage than good, they should be taught to work less and think more!

The Law of *Kamma* is natural and absolute. Right action, thorough and unexaggerated, will bring favorable outcomes at the right time and at the right place.

Chapter 24

Criteria for Giving and *Boonya*



Today, people are inclined to put their faith in science above anything else. However, there are many things of which science has yet to prove the existence. For example, our mind and the physical brain are two different entities. Similarly, the mind and the heart are also completely separate. To take this one step further, the physical heart and the ‘ethereal heart’ are also very different entities. When we feel sad or glad, these feelings are not from the physical heart, but from our ethereal heart. Science still cannot describe what the ethereal heart

looks like or where it resides, but we do know that this is from where feelings come. On the other hand, the physical heart is an organ. Nowadays, doctors are able to stop the beating of a physical heart while operating on a patient and are able to restart the beating once the operation is finished. If the physical heart and the ethereal heart are the same, then the patient would have died. This helps prove that the physical and ethereal heart are two different things.

In the 2000+ year-old compilation of teachings known as the Tripitaka, the Pali Sanskrit Canon, it is written that the man whom we call the Buddha spoke on a number of subjects that were unknown to science at the time. He said that there was more than one universe. Moreover, he said that there were an infinite number of universes. Scientists have only recently discovered the truth of this fact within the last few hundred years. The man whom we call the Buddha also explored the concept of *boonya*. Although we cannot see it, we can feel it within us. What, then, is *boonya* and how does it apply to our lives?

Boonya is self-generating, pure, perfect energy. It strengthens when we perform good actions. Wholesome deeds can be categorized into three main methods:

1. Generosity. We share useful things with those who deserve it. Here there are four criteria which determine the amount of *boonya* generated in the act of giving:

a. Wholesomeness of the object. The object to be given must be obtained legitimately and morally, not through fraudulent means.

- b. Upright intention. The objective of giving is to say goodbye to misery, selfishness, and greed. It is not done to gain riches, fame, or recognition. The true intent is to share and gain *boonya*. Gaining *boonya* is not greed because *boonya* consists of pure energy and can only arise with wholesome deeds. It is actually replacing greed with generosity.
 - c. Conscientious donor. Ideally the donor will at least abide by the Five Precepts (described later). It is important that s/he should be joyful before, during, and after the offering. It is also important to not feel any regret afterwards.
 - d. Virtuous recipient. If the recipient is an enlightened being, the *boonya* is enormous and instantaneous; the effects of that *boonya* will be realized rapidly. But if the recipient is not yet enlightened, s/he should at least be striving toward that goal. If s/he is a householder, then they should adhere to the precepts.
- 2. Adherence to Self Discipline.** This means to keep our actions and speech under control so that we do not injure ourselves and others. We should observe at least the Five Precepts. When special opportunities arise to create extra energy, such as the day before a holy day or during meditation retreats, we can choose to observe the Eight Precepts to gain additional

boonya. Many people choose to observe the Eight Precepts one day (or even seven days) a week on a regular long-term basis.

- 3. Meditation.** This is the best way to purify the mind. We should make a habit of studying the *Dhamma* and reciting scripture or chanting to calm and purify the mind every night before bedtime for at least twenty minutes to one hour.

Some people establish routines to ensure they accumulate *boonya* using all three methods in the same day. For example:

1. In the morning, I will not eat before I have been generous to others;
2. Today, I will not leave the house before I have resolved to observe the precepts;
3. Tonight, I will not go to bed before I have meditated for twenty minutes.

That's big boonya!

If a person can follow this routine consistently over the long-term, they can be sure that his/her life will never lead to despair. The future will be so bright, they will need to wear sunglasses! All three *boonya*-making activities will gradually advance the purification of the mind to a purer level. If our mind is clear and bright, we will feel joyful. In a happy mindset, we will think properly, speak clearly and truthfully, and vow to always do the right thing. At the end of our lives, no matter how educated we are or how much money we have, only our *boonya* will help us. *Boonya* is not

for sale. We cannot trade it at the New York Stock Exchange. If we want it, we will have to acquire it by ourselves and through our own actions.



Chapter 25

Acts of Self-Discipline



What are the five precepts and why are they important?

“The rules to live by” that good people universally adhere to are known in as the Five Precepts. Unfortunately, most young people today do not see the value of following codes of ethical conduct. So when someone does act virtuously, she is often regarded as strange or quaint.

Because young people often do not receive sufficient guidance from their parents, they are unable to resist the temptations thrown at them by society. This has led to a

stockpile of behavioral (social, emotional and spiritual) problems, creating a generation of people who are only interested in themselves. Ignorance is the force behind so many social ills. Parents are ready to point fingers, punish their children, and blame society for their bouts of depression and angst, concluding that the cure must also be external, a mysterious antidote hidden somewhere in the outside world. If we fail to get to the root of the problem, that is, the failure to help instill a moral code in our children, how can we break the cycle of global anguish? Teaching our children to abide by a moral code is the most important responsibility we have to help counteract social and moral deterioration.

What is a Precept? The word precept (*sila* in the ancient Pali language) means nature. Everything has its own nature. The rain will fall during the rainy season. If it does not, then it is not natural. The horse always stays on its feet even while sleeping. If it lies down, then it is sick and not in its natural state.

Therefore, the applicable meaning of the word precept for us is:

To preserve the nature of our humanity, and

To refrain from bringing trouble to ourselves and to others

What is the Nature of Human Beings? The true nature of human beings consists of five characteristics:

- 1. By nature, humans will not kill.** A human who takes life has deviated from the nature of humankind. He has turned animalistic, like tigers, bears, or crocodiles

that have to kill to survive. All lives, whether human or not, are precious to us. No one should take the life of another creature. Therefore, the first precept reminds human beings not to kill so as to keep our basic nature.

2. By nature, humans will not steal. It is the nature of animals to fight for and steal food. But people do not have to do that. We are able to produce our own food and/or trade for our sustenance. In order to survive, we need clothing, food, shelter, and medicine. If someone takes these things, then we will have great difficulty surviving. People might not kill us, but if they steal or take away any of these things, then we do not have the resources on which we can survive! Hence, the second precept reminds us not to steal, act corruptly, and embezzle so as to keep our true nature.

3. By nature, humans will not commit adultery. Many animals, which by nature cannot control themselves in being content with one mate, will fight each year to mate with another's partner. Some even fight to the death to satisfy this sexual instinct during the mating season. But it is not human nature to do this, because we are beings not governed by instincts alone - a person can be content with one spouse. If someone takes away what we love most: our husbands, wives, sons and/or daughters, we will suffer great sadness. Hence, the third Precept reminds us not to commit adultery in order to maintain our true nature.

4. By nature, humans will not lie. People should always speak the truth. They should always be honest and sincere to one another. Imagine if we find out that the people whom we love are not honest with us. How would we feel? So we need to remember that if we lie to someone, they will feel less love for us, and vice versa. No one likes dishonesty, so we should not lie to anyone. Hence, the fourth Precept reminds us not to lie and to stay in keeping with our true nature.

5. By nature, humans will not consume intoxicants. Many animals are physically stronger than people, but they lack the faculty to turn their strengths toward meaningful purposes. They possess little or no conscience and therefore act only in accordance to their instincts. Our conscience can also be powerless. For example, a student who has an examination might feel very sick the day before he has to take it. But if he takes some medicine, he feels a little bit better. He is then able to bring himself to finish all the lessons needed for the exam because his conscience to remedy himself was strong. However, if that same person consumes alcohol, amphetamines, or beer and then tries to study, the results will be completely different.

Conscience is enduring. It can withstand starvation, exhaustion, and sickness. But intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs can destroy all of these qualities. Consuming intoxicants can destroy our conscience. And without our conscience, we would be capable

of infringing upon all the other precepts. Hence, the Fifth Precept reminds us not to consume intoxicants to maintain our true nature.

Thus the *Five Precepts* are:

1. Do not kill;
2. Do not steal;
3. Do not commit adultery;
4. Do not lie, utter profanity, speak nonsense, or use divisive words;
5. Do not consume intoxicants such as addictive drugs and alcohol.

These precepts may seem very direct and regimented, so here is another way of looking at it:

1. Save the life of other people and living beings.
2. Respect the belongings of others; do not take what is not given.
3. Control emotions and physical desires.
4. Give out positive and honest energy through speech; turn negatives into positives.
5. Abstain from using all intoxicating substances.

These five precepts are universal and show us how to lead an ethical life. The more we observe these, the more “human” we feel. If we do not observe any of them, we no longer feel “human” because we do not feel any lasting peace or happiness. We end up feeling more like animals than humans. In the end, we seem to only produce trouble for

ourselves and the society in which we live. If we do not care to teach our children to abide by the Five Precepts, there is no hope that society will improve. The hope that our children will grow up to be responsible adults is fleeting and intangible. Teaching our children to live their lives every day by these Five Precepts will brighten their future, health, peace and happiness, as well as benefit society as a whole.

Chapter 26

Meditation and Family



Meditation is the most effective way to train the mind to focus and gain clarity. Consistent practice strengthens the mind so that it will not be easily diverted. Children, who have been well taught in ethics, but lack training in meditation, are still susceptible to temptations because they lack that extra defense that meditation provides them.

We should inspire our children to love to meditate at an early age. When their minds are focused, they will be

able to absorb guidance readily. The ethics instilled in them will flourish and they will be better able to deal more clearly with uncertainties. There are, of course, people who believe that children should be left free to think for themselves and that training them to meditate is too restrictive. In reality, however, because we want our children to grow up to be good people, we cannot leave them to their own devices, hoping that they will naturally grow up to be good. We have to set good examples while teaching them, for instance: using polite speech, showing humility, and respecting everyone in the family.

Initially, children may not understand the reasons why they have to be respectful, but at least they are being shown good manners. When they are old enough to understand, we should explain to them why they should be respectful to parents, grandparents, and teachers. They may know that it is a good thing to do, but they may be too embarrassed to do it. Some adults who have never been taught to pay respect to their parents will feel very uncomfortable doing it, and even the parents are too embarrassed because they are not used to it. If we are not trained to be respectful from a young age, we will grow up to be self-centered, and then we will not even be able to recognize goodness in other people.

These days, we can see that many people possess negative attitudes, always searching for defects in other people, students with their teachers, supervisors with their subordinates, colleagues amongst one another. The sense of community and harmony deteriorates. The only way to reverse this trend is to teach respect and responsibility; and to see goodness in other people. If we want our children to grow up

to be good people, we need to start the training process early. As soon as they learn to talk, they should be taught to say only “good” (genuine, kind, pure, exemplary) words. They should learn to meditate because then, as they grow up, they will be strong enough to stay cool, calm, and collected.

Remember: Meditation helps us to see ourselves clearly and purely. When we open our eyes, we see other people but not so much ourselves. If we want to see ourselves, we have to look inside ourselves, inside our mind. If we know how to meditate and are able to still our minds, we will know what is right or wrong. Instead of wasting time criticizing others, we will scrutinize ourselves and try to improve our own deficiencies, consequently improving the overall state of our lives.



Chapter 27

The Value of Life



Although we realize that our life will not last forever, sometimes we still let ourselves drift into doing things that cause suffering. Sometimes we do things that we regret.

Socrates, the famous Greek philosopher, once said that “philosophy is preparation for death.” If indeed this is the case, then we should ask ourselves, “How do I live my life to the fullest? How do I live every minute of my life with full consciousness?” In living our life, then, we should reflect on our own death in order to live a better life!

Even though we may dislike difficulties and seek only happiness, there is no way to avoid suffering because life is a mixture of suffering and happiness. Instead, we should prepare for the inevitable suffering with a steady mind. Human beings are born with built-in forms of suffering, including aging, sickness and death. Everyday these forms of suffering, in varying degrees, have degenerative effects on our lives. Instead of realizing and being aware of this suffering, we blind ourselves even further with trivial and insignificant things.

For example, we will trouble ourselves when we desire to, let's say, have a spouse and children. We expect these things will bring us happiness. All of us are burdened with these same inherent sufferings. Thus, once we marry, instead of being happy, we are taking on the burdens, pains, and troubles of our loved ones. If we are married or have our own children, there is no need to describe and explain the hardships that will come with those responsibilities - the hardships are quite obvious! Even by remaining single, having to make a living and take care of our parents, we barely have enough time to take care of ourselves. After marriage, we must play the role of spouse and parent to our children. Each role takes a tremendous amount of work, discipline and patience. Thus, every day it is easy for family life to become more easily filled with attachment and worry.

If we are tactful, patient and insightful, we may be able to find a level of happiness in marriage. Yet, we still cannot break free from the suffering of death when it arrives. Being separated from loved ones is inevitable and renders us great grief. If we want to live a happy life, then we must learn to be tolerant of others and not burden ourselves with unnecessary

suffering. Some people criticize this teaching, labeling it “pessimistic”. The truth is that it is reality. It is a realistic teaching that tells us how to deal with life’s many different situations in order to live more happily and freely.



Chapter 28

A Journey's Preparation



The man whom we call the Buddha was able to conquer all sufferings. He taught that we can cope with unexpected suffering by mindfully preparing ourselves to confront aging, sickness, and death. We should constantly reflect on the following:

1. **Knowing the purpose of life:** Know that we were not born to live only for enjoyment. In fact, we were born to pursue perfections by cultivating *boonya* in order to break free from the sufferings of life. In other words, we are to follow the ultimate Truth in order to reach complete liberation, or *Nibbana*.

2. Self-realization: Habitually reflect on the fact that it is natural for us to die. We have not yet gone beyond dying. We do not know when we are going to die. We must sooner or later be separated from all of our loved ones and treasured possessions.

Knowing this, how can we think about death? We can think about death as inevitable. We can wait for death to come for us, yet without cultivating *boonya* or doing anything good, it is a waste of a precious human life. But, since death is unavoidable, we can make the most of our physical existence by cultivating the maximum number of good deeds.

All physical life ends at death. Yet, death could never be the purpose of life. The purpose of life is to cultivate *boonya* and purify ourselves from *kilesa* in order to attain inner happiness. Since *kilesa* will still remain after the death of our body, we should never stop doing good deeds, even when our last day arrives. This is the best recommendation that anyone can offer us.

Daily reflection on death and the separation from all loved ones and treasure things helps develop consciousness and progress in meditation. If we perform this reflection, we will live our life with prudence and preparation. We tend not to seek any extra attachment to animate or inanimate things, focusing instead on the performance of good deeds. We are unafraid of any hardship. We realize that death is creeping ever closer, like a shadow that has followed us from birth and is ready to assault us in moments of weakness.

In considering death, we should also think about how we can cultivate the greatest amount of *boonya*. The objective

in our life is to live with purpose or meaning. The more we perform deeds that are purposeful and good, the more our life can be considered meaningful. To get the very best out of our life, then, we need to perform three vitally important things:

1. **Avoid doing evil things:** Cast off past bad habits and avoid starting new ones that give negative consequences.
2. **Do good deeds to the utmost extent:** Attempt to perform all good deeds we have never performed and increase the effort devoted to those good deeds that we have already performed.
3. **Meditate to purify the mind:** Keep our mind bright and clear all the time, while inhaling and exhaling. If we inhale and do not exhale, our life comes to an end. Death bears no sign of warning.

REMEMBER! The brightness or cloudiness of our mind at death will help decide our future.

A bright and clear mind resulting from the recollection of past good *boonya* will lead us to happiness. The force of good *kamma* based on the good *boonya* that we have done on earth will effectively lead us to a happy place and future. Conversely, a cloudy mind resulting from the recollection of past evil deeds will lead us to an unfortunate future. The force of bad *kamma* will lead to painful experiences.

How, then, can we become a person who generates *boonya*? There are ten paths, or bases, for doing so:

1. **Generosity (*danamaya*)** - Acquire *boonya* by giving objects and necessities to an appropriate recipient.

- 2. Moral Discipline** (*silamaya*) - Observing moral behavior by restraining our speech and actions to do only good; not causing turmoil for others.
- 3. Meditation Practice** (*bhavanamaya*) - Mental development through meditation.
- 4. Humility** (*apacayanamaya*) - Reverence and humility towards others with virtue.
- 5. Aiding Others** (*veyyavaccamaya*) - Assisting others without breaking the law, tradition, or morals.
- 6. Transferring Boonya** (*pattidanamaya*) - Sharing accumulated *boonya* with others.
- 7. Rejoicing in Boonya** (*pattanumodanamaya*) - Rejoicing in other people's *boonya*.
- 8. Listening to Dhamma Sermons** (*dhammassavanamaya*) - Listening to doctrines or teachings that form the right outlook on life.
- 9. Giving Dhamma Sermons** (*dhammadesanamaya*) - Teaching the doctrine or showing truth.
- 10. Forming the Right Outlook** (*Ditthujukamma*) - Strengthening our views or forming correct views.

These ten actions can be simply categorized into three larger umbrella groups:

1. Generosity (*dana*)
2. Moral Discipline (*sila*)
3. Meditation practice (*bhavana*).

A person who understands the purpose of life, habitually contemplates the reality of death, and makes an effort to cultivate good deeds will have the right view of the world. His/her mind will be unmoved by worldly sufferings.



Chapter 29

Creating Inner Quality



From birth to death, we want to be the best that we can be, not only for our children and parents, but also to help them become the best that they can be. How can we do this? First, we have to believe that we, as humans, have particular characteristics that differ from other living things. Secondly, we must understand that these characteristic differences are:

1. Our mind can reach a higher quality than it currently does;
2. We can rid ourselves of negative influences;

3. We can achieve a higher state of purity. If we seriously concentrate on attracting goodness to us, we will become happier individuals who will be powerful magnets to like-minded individuals.

We need to correct ourselves by eliminating certain behaviors. These behaviors are greed, anger and ignorance.

By eliminating greed, we end the cycle of selfishness and stinginess. We end our thoughts of coveting other people's possessions. We end our thoughts of stealing something that does not belong to us. And we do this by actively seeking ways to be generous. Wake up in the morning with thoughts of "Today is a great day to help others. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to do something fantastic for someone else!" Teach children to do this as well, because through generosity, our very best can be created.

By eliminating anger, we end the cycle of conflict that is created by thoughtless hostilities. When we rush through our day, only thinking about ourselves and what is good for us, and we encounter other people's thoughtlessness, we become angry. This anger erupts spontaneously and we begin to seek revenge on those people who (we think) are out to cause us harm. This leads to endless hatred. However, when we relax and concentrate on having control over our emotions, having been taught generosity and observance of moral codes, we understand that refraining from retaliation creates a better "us"!

By eliminating ignorance, we end the cycle of constant involvement in sensual addictions. We eliminate ignorance

through mindfulness. Mindfulness is being aware of what we are doing at the present moment, and being able to differentiate, or make a judgment, about what is right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate. Mindfulness protects us from recklessness. The best way to practice mindfulness is through meditation.

REMEMBER: Meditation is the method to eliminate a wrong view. By training our mind to come to a standstill until it becomes clear, pure, and radiant, meditation enables us to be firm in righteousness and the right view.

Meditation may be the single most important “action” that we can practice and teach our children. When we meditate, we learn non-recklessness which means that we learn how to possess the carefulness that leads to morality. When we are reckless, chances for misconduct through physical, verbal, and mental means will be high. If we are careful, we can train ourselves to be mindful all of the time.

In training ourselves to be mindful, we are constantly immersed in *boonya*, the self-generating, pure, perfect energy!

After learning this through experience, we will all agree that immersing ourselves throughout our life in *boonya* is the happiest and most reliable state that we can depend upon.

Part Six

Meditation Technique and Tips



Chapter 30

The Universal Meditation Technique of Relaxation and Joy



Meditation is not difficult. Close your eyes and clear the mind. Imagine that you are lying down on the grass and looking up at the stars at night. You feel relaxed and comfortable. Just close your eyes and rest your focus at the centre of your abdomen. But instead of looking at the sky, you are gazing upon a star in your body.

You may visualize an apple, an orange or a grapefruit in the center of your body. You can visualize any neutral object as it becomes clearer and evolves on its own accord. Visualize the object easily and gently. Just give it a try. Meditate as if you are resting. You have worked so hard all day long and it is time to take a break and give yourself a reward. Just still your mind and relax. Within a few minutes of finding your focus, something miraculous will happen. Find that innocent self that is still inside you. Meditate with an open mind.

When you meditate, you should feel comfortable. Banish all negative emotions. In your daily lives, to accomplish something, you have to pursue it with all your strength. You will be under pressure; you will need to think, analyze, criticize, and follow certain procedures. In meditation, there is no need for that. **Feel at ease.** If you do it right, your body and mind shall be rewarded.

In time, your body will become relaxed, expanding and disappearing into the atmosphere. It is a rewarding experience that encourages us to increasingly pursue meditation. You will have the desire to meditate and will feel that time goes by very quickly. Through this simple technique, you can attain inner happiness. You may think that it cannot possibly be this simple, but all you need to do is to meditate and relax. If you try to make it complicated and difficult, you will find yourself stressed and frustrated. Embrace the simple relaxed technique which can be used by people of all faiths, regardless of nationality or race to attain inner happiness.

When you attain true bliss and happiness inside yourself through meditation, you will feel so overwhelmed with joy

that you will not be able to adequately find words to describe it. No one can do this for you, you have to attain it yourself in order to understand how it feels. For example, when you eat a chili others may ask you how it tastes, but you can only tell them that it is spicy. They do not really know what spicy means until they try it for themselves. Thus, you cannot describe inner happiness to others. You cannot attain inner peace for others and others cannot attain it for you. This is the truth of life. It must be done on your own.

The place for meditation can be at your home, at a meditation centre, or at any place that is quiet and calm: a porch, park, lake. It should be well ventilated and have just the right temperature, neither too hot nor too cold, so that you will not feel uncomfortable.

Finally, for the meditation posture, you should sit cross-legged with your right foot on your left leg. You can use a cushion or pillow to make your position more comfortable and help you to sit for a longer period of time. If you cannot sit cross-legged, you can sit on a chair or sofa or wherever you are comfortable and can sit for a long time. But you should not feel too relaxed or comfortable because it can cause you to fall asleep.



Chapter 31

Basic Meditation Technique for Inner Peace



(#1) Start by adjusting your sitting position. If you sit on the floor, sit cross-legged, right leg over the left, right hand over the left hand, palms up, your right index finger gently touching your left thumb. Place both hands on your lap comfortably, your head and back erect. If you feel uncomfortable in this position, you may sit on a chair or sofa. **Adjust your position until you feel completely comfortable**, so that the blood will circulate freely and you will breathe naturally.

Gently close your eyes, as if you were going to sleep. Do not squeeze your eyelids and do not shut them forcefully. Close them slightly. **Do not close them tightly.** Sit with a smile on your face.

Next, take a deep breath. Inhale and exhale a few times. Breathe in deeply until you feel the air pass through your lungs and reach the middle of your abdomen. Imagine that each cell in your body is fully taking in the feeling of happiness and joyfulness. Then slowly breathe out through your nostrils. Breathe out all your worries, stress, tension and negative feelings. Take a moment to let go of all the responsibilities related to work, loved ones, family, study, and everything else.

(#2) Let everything go. Let your mind be joyful, relaxed and free from all worry. Then, breathe normally. **Relax every muscle in your body.** Start to relax from the top of your head down to your forehead. Relax the muscles in your face, eyelids, neck, and muscles in your shoulders, arms, and down to the tips of your fingers. Relax the muscles of your back, your chest, your legs, and all the way down to the tip of your toes. Let every part of your body relax. Don't let any part of your body contract, tighten, or become tense.

Continue to relax until you feel that every part of your body, every cell in your body, is completely relaxed. **You are now in a state of complete relaxation whereby you can feel an emptiness, transparency, and lightness.** Now, make your mind joyful, cheerful, clear, pure, and bright. Release and let go. Empty your mind.



Make your mind clear, pure, and free from all thoughts. Imagine you are sitting alone in a vast, open space. One that is **full of freedom and peacefulness** as if you never had any attachment in life, never had any problems and never knew anyone before.

Then, imagine that your body has no organs, assuming that it is a tube, a hole, a hollow vacuum, an inflated balloon or a diamond cylinder that is bright and clear. Let it be an open space - empty and hollow inside. You may feel your body get lighter and lighter, as if it were becoming weightless, gradually melting away and becoming one with nature.

Let yourself **enjoy this feeling of peacefulness.**

(#3) Now, bring your mind to focus to the center of your body, in the middle of your abdomen, two finger widths above the navel level. For new practitioners, do not worry too much about the exact point of center of the body. Simply maintain your mind, softly and gently, in the middle of your abdomen. The way that you focus your mind at the center of the body is by comparing it to the lightness and gentleness of a bird's feather floating down from the sky and touching the calm surface of the water.

Imagine the soft touch of a bird's feather when it touches the surface of the water. Focus your mind at the centre of the body with this feeling. **Maintain the feeling of relaxation in your body and mind continuously**, keeping your mind focused at the center of the body (in the middle of your abdomen). After you have found the starting point to focus your mind, softly imagine a neutral object of choice so that the mind can have something to focus on and not wander. You

could imagine a shining sun, of any size that you like, bright like the midday sun but clean and soothing as the moonlight on a full moon night. You can choose any object that you like as long as it makes you feel calm, pure, and content. Some people visualize candle flames, crystal balls, the moon, etc.

To imagine an object in the center of your body, you need to know the method. Slowly imagine the object with ease. Relax. **Keep it simple.** As simple as it would be to think of a football, a car, a house, or anything that is familiar. Do not force your mind to think of the object to a point that it makes you feel tense. Do not use too much effort or stare at it, as staring will deter you from allowing better feelings from arising. Gently imagine the object, and relax. It does not matter if it is not clear. **Be satisfied** with however clear it is. Maintain your mind calmly, let it stop and be still. Think of that mental object continuously. Do not let your mind wander. If you do think of something else, you can maintain your stillness of mind and concentration by reciting a short, soothing phrase.

Recite the word phrase of choice in your mind softly, as if the soft sounds were coming from the center of the mental object in the middle of your abdomen. Recite the word phrase of choice continuously, whilst thinking of the bright mental object, **gently and comfortably** floating in your center. Focus your mind to be still at the center of the bright mental object within. Maintain your mind on the object and phrase in the center of your body continuously, softly, and comfortably until your mind is still.

(#4) Once your mind is completely still, it will drop the word phrase by itself, as if you are forgetting to recite it (if you simply do not want to recite it anymore, then that is ok). You may just want to be still without your mind wandering or thinking about anything. There should only the **picture of the mental object appearing clearly at the center of your body**. If you feel like this, you do not have to go back to reciting the word phrase again. Let your awareness maintain the vision of the mental object gently and comfortably. Only do this from this point onwards, with a still mind, softly, gently, constantly, and continuously. Do not do anything beyond this.

If you see or feel any experiences at the center of your body which are different from the mental object that you originally started imagining, do not be excited. Let your mind be neutral to it. Observe the experiences that occur with a calm mind and remember to relax. **Be neutral**. Your mind will be completely focused, pure, still, and feel like nothingness. This moment is very important so do not neglect it, pay attention because all new experiences from within will progress even further to what you are not expecting. Your role at this time is to be an observer, not a director. **Just keep observing and just relax**. Do not think of anything. Do all of this, only this, and that is all.

If you do this correctly, meditation will feel easy and comfortable. Your mind will then become still, easily and effortlessly. Do not analyze and comment on your inner experiences as they are happening. Your mind would not be calm and all your good experiences would go away. So instead, adhere only to these instructions. Eventually, your mind will be refined and completely focused at the centre of

the body. The mind will deepen, entering into clarity, purity, brightness, true happiness, and true inner knowledge. **This is inner wisdom.** Finally, you will **behold the universal truth which lies within you** and everyone else in this world. So enjoy your meditation one step at a time.

Meditation brings our mind back to its original pure state. Furnish others with the ability to incorporate attained happiness into their daily lives. The lives they lead will therefore prove beneficial for themselves and others.

Chapter 32

Spreading the LOVE



(#5) The sharing of loving kindness is something we can do every day, both before and after daily meditation. A brief period before meditating softens and broadens our minds. The sharing of loving kindness as such helps improve our meditation experience. Sharing loving kindness after meditation spreads the purity of our meditated minds throughout ourselves first, then subsequently towards others.

The benefits of sharing loving kindness everyday include radiating a happy feeling when we are awake and asleep. If we have dreams, they will be sweet and meaningful.

We will rid ourselves of anger and we will be positive thinkers. Most importantly, it will greatly help to improve our meditation.

We can share loving kindness simply by doing the following:

Before ending our meditation session, once our minds come to a standstill and are hence filled with happiness, we can actually share loving-kindness, good wishes, and peace with all other people in the world. We can start by focusing our stilled mind at the center of our body where we feel true love and good wishes for everyone condensing these feelings into a bright sphere. Without any effort, **imagine that this sphere of love and good wishes is expanding in all directions** from your body's center towards all beings. Wish everyone freedom from suffering and the attainment of extreme happiness.

Feel the expansion of our bright sphere all around us, spreading out towards the people in our surroundings regardless of whether they are near or far. Expand our minds continually outwards to cover our room, then our building, then our town, then our country, then our continent, then our planet. **Feel unlimited love and kindness towards all people of the world**, irrespective of their nationalities, religions, and ethnicities.

Let our minds connect with all other minds. Wish them happiness; wish every country prosperity and hope, that the world will be filled with only good people who bring true happiness to humankind. Let the purity of our still minds expand from the center of our body towards other people of

the world who are suffering as a result of war and conflict. Wish that everyone will stop taking advantage of one another in the name of greed, anger and ignorance.

The purity of our minds during meditation radiates silently outwards into the atmosphere. This purity cleanses the defilements and darkness from our minds and other's minds, cleaning them so that we can live with the right view and in the right direction. This direction is towards happiness, peace, and virtue. Eventually, **we will change the world and bring it true peace through the limitless powers of meditation.**

Summary of Meditation Steps:

1. Assuming “peace position” meditation posture on floor, chair, or sofa.
2. Relaxation of body and then mind.
3. Consistent gentle “Interiorization” of awareness and concentration to a comfortable point in central area of the body; Can then use a mental object in the center.
4. Complete stillness and equanimity of mind in the center. Observation from this moment onward with neutrality and detachment to whatever may arise or occur; If thoughts arise, combine mental object with a word phrase (i.e. “Clear and Bright”).
5. Before getting up: Spread the LOVE to all beings.
6. Recite a prepared resolution or prayer.

Things to Prepare and Select Before Starting the Meditation Session:

1. Seat for meditation with necessary amount of cushion.
2. Mind free from expectation, worry, thought, tension, and excitement.
3. Before sitting down, select an initial “Inner Meditation Object” of choice to begin the meditation with (i.e. Sun, Moon, Star, Ping Pong Ball, Tennis Ball, etc.) for the purpose of making the mind calm, pure, and content so that when meditating, feelings of discontent, inconsistency or boredom with the meditation object will be avoided.
4. Word Phrase, or “*Mantra*”, of choice (i.e. “Clear and Bright, Clear and Bright, Clear and Bright”) to aid in stabilizing a wandering mind.
5. Resolution prayer for reciting after the meditation is over (i.e. for dedication, help with the various aspects of life, blueprint/plan for the future, etc.).

Chapter 33

The Ten Homework Assignments for Meditation Practitioners



To improve our meditation experience, we must always observe how well we meditate every day. We should figure out the cause of both good and bad meditation experiences each day. For example, some days you might be able to still your mind very well because you had a good rest the night before, or you may feel refreshed due to a short exercise

session. On other days, you may feel tense and have poor meditation experience because of stress from work.

We should observe how daily activities affect meditation experiences. Thus, we can learn and correct the causes of poor meditation and resolve to get involved in activities that have a history of resulting in good meditation.

Here are some guidelines which can be followed in conjunction with your daily activities, from the time you wake up until the time you go to sleep. When followed, these guidelines generate a refreshing and relaxing feeling all day long. Additionally, when it is time for us to meditate, our minds will be able to readily come to a standstill.

Ten Homework Assignments:

1. Upon waking, immediately reconnect your attention with the center of the body;
2. Before getting up, take a minute to recollect that you are lucky to be alive and remind yourself that you will surely die one day in the unknown future. Spread love and kindness to all living beings throughout the world;
3. Throughout the day, create a feeling that you are united with the mental meditation object at the center of the body;
4. Take one minute of every hour to still your mind and think of the mental object at the center of the body;
5. Recollect the mental object at the center of the body while conducting other activities throughout the day;

whether that be brushing your teeth, standing around, showering, driving, exercising, etc.;

6. Smile and speak in an endearing way;
7. Make the effort to see the virtues in yourself and others. Congratulate others on their virtues and give them the opportunity to congratulate yours;
8. Keep daily notes of your meditation experiences in a diary;
9. Before going to sleep, recollect the good deeds you have done throughout the day;
10. Center your mind before falling asleep.

At all times, you can try to imagine the meditation object at your center. Keep at it without any expectations; it does not matter if the object appears clearly in your mind or not. The purpose is to get your mind accustomed to remain at the center. Thus, when you close your eyes to meditate, you will be able to position your mind very easily. If you can do this all day, your mind would become still - easily, softly, and gently.

Part Seven

Appendixes



Glossary

Anattata: Non-self; nothing in the world has implicit identity

“There is nothing out there, not even our bodies, which we can control. Thus, it is not distinctly ours. For example, if we really analyze our body, it is nothing but blood, flesh, and bones. We cannot find the real ‘self’ from it alone.”

Aniccata: Impermanence; “Nothing is more constant than change! ”

Apacayanamaya: humility

Apayamukha: see Roads to Ruin

Atthacariya: loving assistance; mutual benefit; useful conduct; when we talk about what is right or wrong based on mutual understanding and on the Dhamma we have studied, we benefit one another

Baap: impure energy that arises as a result of unwholesome actions; evil; wickedness

Bhavana: the practice of Meditation; also refers to repetition of a word phrase or “mantra”

Bhavanamaya: See Bhavana

Boonya: pure energy that arises as a result of wholesome or meritorious deeds; righteousness

Caga: sacrifice

Dama: self-control

Dana: the act of giving; Generosity

Danamaya: see *Dana*

Dhamma: split into three main meanings: First: “Pure Nature” within existence and our relationship to it; Second: the teachings of how to get to our “Pure Nature”; Third: the practice of the teachings which lead to the development of good habits

Dhammadesanamaya: giving sermons of *Dhamma*

Dhammassavanamaya: the act of listening to *Dhamma*
Sermons

Ditthujukamma: the process one undertakes when forming the right outlook on life

Duggati: places or realms of existence that are unhappy and unfortunate

Dukkata: suffering; refers to the quality of things that cannot keep their own condition by nature and have to decay until they are fully gone

Eight Precepts: eight rules of conduct that we can choose to live by which build character and produce large amounts of *boonya*;

They include: not killing any living creature, not stealing, no sexual misconduct or adultery; no lying; abstaining from the use of intoxicants; not wearing any make-up, jewelry, perfume, garlands, cologne, or fashionable and revealing clothing while refraining from dancing, singing, listening to music, or involving one’s self in entertainment outside of which promotes *Dhamma*; sleeping on a mattress that is not higher than four inches off the floor; not eating after noontime.

All of these precepts are meant to decrease *kilesa*, especially sexual desire and allow us to focus on spiritual cultivation.

Five Precepts: five rules of conduct that we can choose to live by which build character and produce *boonya*;

They include: not killing any living creature, not stealing, no sexual misconduct or adultery; no lying; abstaining from the use of intoxicants.

A more positive way of looking at this is as follows: Save the life of other people and living beings; Respect the belongings of others and not take what is not given; Control the emotions and physical desires; Give out positive and honest vibes through speech, turn negatives into positives; Abstain from using all intoxicating substances.

Four Requisites: the four things that we need in order to survive: clothing, food, shelter, medicine

Four Universal Forms of Benevolence: four virtues that assist in giving a successful relationship: Generosity, Right Speech, Loving Assistance, and Right Roles

Gharavas-dhamma: the set of four Dhammas for householders

Heaven and Hell:

“One can understand that life after death exists from the principle of *boonya*. Nearly every religion considers heaven to be a place that is pure and filled with light. Let’s consider the attractive power of magnets: it takes two energies of compatible magnetic qualities to harmonize and combine with each other. Likewise, if we want to get to a heavenly

realm, we ourselves need to be pure. When we are pure, our accumulated amount of *boonya* energy will refine our mind to a certain degree and automatically bring us to that realm of heaven. The more *boonya* we have, the more refined our mind will become and the better our destination will be. Heaven then is like a holiday and our vacation money is determined by how much *boonya* we have accumulated throughout our lives.

Who created heaven? Don't know! The man Gautama whom we call the Buddha just saw heaven and told us about its existence and how people get to it. He just gave us the answers to our problems in the present situation, because that is what is most important. Once we completely purify ourselves, then we can go find out the deeper answers of life, but not beforehand.

On the flip side, if we create *baap*, then our mind will be heavy, dirty, and we will sink down to the hell realms after death. Who created the hells? We don't know, but the Buddha said that they exist. He did not say we have to believe, He told us to go find out for ourselves just as He did. There is a story of two people discussing hell: The first person argued, "I don't believe in hell". The second person smiled and said, "Well, it believes in you!" Seeing this, in life, we thus have two choices: do good and get *boonya*, or do evil and get *baap*. It is up to us and nobody else. "

Hiri: shame of performing unwholesome actions

Kalayanamitra: a good companion; a true friend; one who guides us along the path towards having the right outlook in life

Kamma (Sanskrit: Karma): neutral word meaning action with intention; action

Khanti: endurance

Kilesa (also spelled Gilesa): the impure element to our mind; i. e. passion, lust, anger, depravity, delusion; that which dirties the mind and makes it coarse, unmovable, stubborn, and hard to deal with

Law of Kamma: the natural law that governs all beings in existence; based on the interrelationship of cause and effect

Nibbana (Sanskrit: Nirvana): the place where those who have attained ultimate understanding of the world and universe and have completely purified themselves reside

Ottappa: fear of the fruit of unwholesome deeds

Parami: high quality energy that is a result of offering one's life when performing wholesome actions; perfection, completeness

Pattanumodanamaya: rejoicing in the wholesome deeds of others and the *boonya* that comes as a result

Pattidanamaya: the transference and dedication of *boonya*

Piyavaca: pleasant, kind Speech; we should be kind in our discussions because we do not want to hurt the other person's sense of worth

Pursuit of Perfection: refers to the path that people decide to walk upon when dedicating their life towards performing good deeds and eradicating *kilesa* from their mind and that of others; when pursuing perfection, one sacrifices his life

to perform good deeds and this results in parami formation within the mind

Roads to Ruin: any of the paths, professions, or actions that eventually lead to destruction; they include: Consumption and Distribution of Liquor; Nightlife and Partying; Indulgence in sensual pleasures, such as frequenting lounges, theatres, entertainment saloons, etc. ; Gambling; Associating with “fools”; Laziness

Sacca: truthfulness

Sagati: the happy and fortunate realms of existence; heavens

Samanattata: right roles; even and impartial treatment; each member should assume responsibilities both inside and outside of the house:

“In traditional marriages, this means that the husband should be a good father, and the wife should be a good mother. In non-traditional families, partners should carefully discuss what roles they should play and work together to make it successful.”

Samma Ditti: having the correct outlook on life; first of the eightfold noble path

Sammatha: calm; tranquil; the initial step of meditation to calm and still the mind so that it can then purify and attain true insight; without *sammatha* one cannot move onto *vipassana* (insight) meditation where one investigates and discovers the truth

Sangahavatthu: The **Four Universal Forms of Benevolence**: Giving, Pleasant speech, Mutual Benefit,

Right Roles; refers to the principle of aiding people in order to develop a unified society

Sangha: an assemblage; a community of people who have completely dedicated their lives to directly experiencing *Dhamma*, and the path and fruit of *Nibbana*

Satti: mindfulness; awareness of what you are doing and what is happening around you

Sila: moral discipline; restraint regarding one's physical, mental, and bodily actions

Silamaya: see *Sila*

Spontaneously-Born Beings:

“On the “good” side, when some beings die they are then born into a level of heaven as an angel. This angel is already developed, to a certain degree, and does not need a mother to be born. They are born out of the force and intensity of their *boonya*. *Boonya* is their “food for existence” in that realm.

On the “bad” side, when one dies they are born as a hell being in one of Hell's different levels. They go to be tortured right away and it is a result of the baap that they have accumulated throughout their lives.

The Buddha discussed heaven, hell, and spontaneously-born beings for this reason: so that we will not be careless with our actions. How can we see whether or not we live in accordance or discord with the *Dhamma*? Either meditate until we can see it ourselves or die and find out the hard way. This is yet another reason why we must be grateful towards our parents. They teach us the truth of this knowledge and how to use it in life.”

Theravada: “the Doctrine of the Elders”; considered as “Orthodox” Buddhism

Tripitaka: The Pali Canon; Source of Buddhist Scriptures dating back to the time of the Buddha

Tilakkhaa: the Three Universal Characteristics: Impermanence, Suffering, and Non-self

Vara: progress and happiness; equivalent to wishing someone the very best; a blessing

Veyyavaccamaya: giving aid to others

Vipassana: insight meditation; clear, deep, and insightful meditation which is the result of a practitioner developing a stable foundation in *sammatha* meditation

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Sourced Teachings

Grouped *Dhamma* Teachings in Numerical Order:

Groups of Four:

Four Actions that Lead to Spiritual Growth (*Vuddhi*):

1. Search for a good teacher; role-model (*Sappuri-sasamseva*)
2. Listen to the teachings of an holy person until you understand and can define it (*Sahhammasavana*)
3. Reflect and consider the teachings; decipher what is good and bad in them while taking the best and leaving the not-so-good behind (*Yonisomanasikāra*)
4. Put the teachings into practice so that they are useful and of value; practice the teachings so that we develop good habits quickly (*Dhammānudhammapaṭipatti*)

Four Beneficial Examples to Set for Others:

1. Speech
2. Timing
3. Cleanliness
4. Organization

Four *Dhammas* for Householders (*Gharāvāsa-dhamma*):

1. Truthfulness and honesty (*Sacca*)
2. Knowing how to restrain one's own heart (*Dama*)

3. Tolerance; putting up with adversity; patience (*Khanti*)
4. Being able to part with possessions and give them to the proper people who will care for them well; renunciation (*Cāga*)

Four Kinds of Roads that Lead to Ruin (*Apāyamukha*):

1. To be a playboy or playgirl; to seduce others
2. To be a drunkard
3. To be a gambler
4. To associate and “hang out” with unwholesome people

Four Prejudices based on (*Agati*):

1. Love (*Chandāgati*)
2. Anger (*Dosāgati*)
3. Delusion or stupidity (*Mohāgati*)
4. Prejudice because of fear (*Bhayāgati*)

Four Universal Forms of Benevolence (*Sagahavatthu*):

1. Generosity (*Dāna*)
2. Polite and pleasant speech (*Piyavācā*)
3. Giving loving assistance and usefulness; doing good (*Atthacariyā*)
4. Impartial treatment done without pride; open-mindedness; in the context of the family, it refers to everyone knowing what roles they must play as

a member of the family and doing it with integrity
(*Samānattatā*)

Four Valuable Tools Which Enable us to Reach our Goals
(*Iddhipāda*):

1. Satisfaction and joy in the thing concerned (*Chanda*)
2. Diligent effort in doing the thing concerned (*Viriya*)
3. Attending wholeheartedly to the thing concerned without letting go of it (*Citta*)
4. Diligently researching, thinking about, and investigating the thing concerned (*Vimamsā*)

Groups of Five:

Five Precepts (*sila*):

1. Abstaining from killing any living being (*Pānātipātā veramani*)
2. Abstaining from stealing; taking that which is not given (*Adinnādānā veramani*)
3. Abstaining from adultery and sexual misconduct (*Kāmesumicchācārā veramani*)
4. Abstaining from false speech (*Musāvādā veramani*)
5. Abstaining for consuming any type of intoxicant (*Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramani*)

Groups of Six:

Six Roads to Ruin (*Apāyamukha*):

1. Drinking intoxicating liquors
2. Wandering abroad at night; nightlife
3. Indulging in entertainment: theatres, saloons, bars, etc.
4. Gambling
5. Having bad people as friends and partners
6. Laziness

Six Directions Worthy of Respect:

1. Forward direction signifying parents (*Puratthima-disā*)
2. Right direction signifying teachers (*Dakkhiṇa-disā*)
3. Behind signifying one's own family (*Pacchima-disā*)
4. Left direction signifying friends (*Uttara-disā*)
5. Downwards direction signifying servants (*Heṭṭhima-disā*)
6. Upwards direction signifying holy and pious beings (*Uparima-disā*)

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