

The Basis of Goodness



Sila

Sīla is what the sages have accepted and practiced all throughout the ages and up to the present time.



Sīla

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Sīla, the Basis of Goodness

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First Edition 2015

ISBN 978-616-7200-74-3

Printed by OS Printing Co.,Ltd

Preface



The word “Sīla” (the Pali word for morality) is often used together with the word “practice”. Most people tend to assume that Sīla practice is difficult, since it involves the constant watch over one’s body and speech. Sīla practice is different from Dana (the Pali word for alms-giving), since Dana is easy to do. And as soon as one performs the act, the result is immediate in that one feels happy.

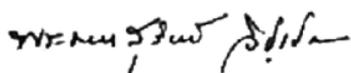
However, to refrain from Sīla practice just because one feels it may be a daunting task is the same thing as keeping goodness and decency at bay. Moreover, one is denying one’s self the tremendous benefits of Sīla practice. Most importantly, without

Sīla practice, one is inadvertently putting one's life in grave danger. Sīla practice acts like a fortress that protects us from evil. Without Sīla practice, peace and happiness will not be possible. Sīla practice provides the safe environment in which we can perform wholesome deeds and live happily.

Whoever has studied Sīla practice in-depth cannot help but be inspired to practice it. He will also want to encourage everyone around him to practice it. Sīla practice is the basis of individual and collective goodness and decency.

Out of my wish to communicate the value of Sīla practice to a wide audience, I have carried out an in-depth search in the Tipitaka on the subject of Sīla practice and its many fruits. The result of my effort has made this book possible. This book contains information about Sīla, its practice, as well as relevant case studies. Other details will be compiled as an appendix for those who are interested in learning more about this subject.

May the good that comes out of this book, "Sīla, the Basis of Goodness", inspire every reader to practice Sīla earnestly for the peace and happiness of one and all.



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February 28, 1999



**Everyone is invited to learn about Sīla practice,
for the Sīla that one earnestly practices is the
source of every kind of wealth.**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A life of goodness and decency is desired by all because such a life benefits one's self as well as other people. Goodness and decency begin with a clean and pure physical conduct, a clean and pure verbal conduct, and a clean and pure mental conduct. A good and decent person does not harm one's self or other people.

A good and decent life begins with Sīla practice.

It is written in the Khuddakanikaya Theragatha,

ādi sīlaṃ patitṭhā ca
 kalyāṇānañca mātukaṃ
 pamukhaṃ sabbadhamānaṃ
 tasmā sīlaṃ visodhaye.

which means that Sīla (or morality) is the beginning, the foundation, the mother that gives birth to all virtues. Sīla is the chief of all wholesomeness. Therefore, a person should earnestly practice Sīla.

Sīla is what the sages have accepted and practiced all throughout the ages and up to the present time.

Today, it is very important that one practices Sīla together with earning a living. Sīla is the foundation of all virtues and it provides the best assurance where safety is concerned.

A person, whose body and speech are guided by Sīla, has a bright and clear mind, the quality

that is conducive to meditation practice and meditative attainments. Such a person is certain to meet with only good things in life and will be able to easily accumulate greater and greater deeds of wholesomeness.

A person who practices Sīla earns genuine respect from other people. He is happy and content. It is the kind of happiness that spreads peace to society. This is possible because Sīla is the basis of goodness.





Chapter 2

What Is Sīla?

“**Sīla**” is a Pali word and it has several lovely and deep meanings.

The word “**Sīla**” is derived from the word “**Sira**” which means the head or the top. A top person is not defined by his material wealth, his power, his knowledge or his ability, but he is defined by the purity derived from his Sīla practice. It is said by the sages that **a person who practices Sīla is the most sublime person.**

The word “**Sīla**” **also means normalcy.** For example, it is normal for a person to cherish his life

and see the value in the life of another person. This feeling makes him glad to be practicing Sīla because he has no wish to harm any living being. Therefore, **Sīla practice is the norm that guides a person to be civilized and righteous, and it preserves the quality of being human.**

The word "**Sīla**" is derived from the word "**Sitala**" which means "**coolness**". The reason is that a person who practices Sīla experiences coolness physically and mentally like a person who has just taken a bath and is resting under a shady tree. This coolness can be sensed by those around him, making them feel safe and cool as well.

The word "**Sīla**" is derived from the word "**Siva**" which means **free**. A person who practices Sīla is pure in action because none of his actions brings about harm or trouble. Therefore, he lives a safe and free life.

Sīla practice makes one a top person, a whole person, a normal person whose body and

mind are marked by coolness and whose life is safe and free.

These are the different meanings of the word "**Sīla**".

The meaning of "Sīla" as appeared in the Patisambhidamagga is derived from Venerable Sariputra's comment. He said that **Sīla means intention**, that is, the intention to abstain from the three forms of physical dishonesty (no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct) and the four forms of verbal dishonesty (no lying, no offensive speech, no divisive speech, and no nonsensical speech).

Sīla means mental factors. It means abstaining from the three forms of mental dishonesty (no covetousness, no ill-will, and having Right View).

Sīla means being restrained and watchful; it means being removed from unwholesomeness.

Sīla means not transgressing the disciplinary rules.

Although the word “Sīla” may have different meanings, its most important meaning is “intention”. Therefore, it can be said that **“Sīla is the intention to abstain from all evil, all dishonesty, and all unwholesomeness.”**

Sīla practice is one of the ways of making merit because each time one intends to abstain from evil and from harming others, it means that one has love and kindness in his heart. Such a feeling gives rise to the current of goodness or **the current of merit**. The current of merit, in turn, cleanses one’s mind. Therefore, **Sīla practice works to improve the quality of one’s life and enables one’s mind to become increasingly pure.**

In addition, Sīla has two characteristics. Firstly, it is the virtue that safeguards one’s body and speech. Secondly, it is the virtue that leads to higher virtues, namely, Samadhi (one-pointedness of the mind) and Panna (supernormal insight as a result of elevated meditative attainments).



The scent of all the flora, which includes sandalwood, eaglewood, and jasmine, cannot withstand the wind, but the scent of a Sīla practitioner can blow against the wind and in all directions.



Chapter 3

Why Must One Practice Sīla?

We practice Sīla in order ...

1. To safeguard our life in the current existence, to protect it from the suffering, trouble, and harm that result from other people's misdeeds.
2. To safeguard our life in the next existence, to protect it from the suffering, trouble, and harm that result from other people's misdeeds.

3. To bless us with happiness.

4. To bless us, our family, and our society with peace and happiness.

5. To enable us to cultivate higher virtues, namely, Samadhi (one-pointedness of the mind) and Panna (supernormal insight as a result of elevated meditative attainments), which will lead us to attain the Path and Fruit of Nibbana.



Sīla serves as a very strong bridge.

Sīla has the most excellent fragrance.

Sīla can be compared to the most sublime cosmetics.

The redolece of a person who practices

Sīla permeates everywhere.



Chapter 4

The Types of Sīla

There are three types of Sīla as follows.

1. Sīla-5 or the Five Precepts

These are the basic precepts that preserves one's human quality and guides a person to be civilized and righteous. Therefore, every human being must observe at least these five precepts.

2. Sīla-8 or the Eight Precepts

These are the precepts that are observed on the Buddhist Holy Day or on special occasions in order to further elevate the quality of one's mind.

3. Parisuddhisīla

These are the precepts observed by the Buddhist monk and they consist of four parts as follows.

3.1 Patimokkhasamvarasīla

It includes the Buddhist monk's 227 Precepts. These precepts are successfully observed by the power of Saddha (or faith).

3.2 Indriyasamvarasīla

It means the restraint of the senses which include the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. It means taking neither pleasure nor displeasure in seeing a physical form, listening to a sound, smelling something, tasting something, touching something or feeling something. It means being restraint and watchful so as not to be dominated by unwholesomeness. This part of the Parisuddhisīla is successfully practiced by the power of Sati (or mindfulness).

3.3 Ajivaparisuddhisīla

It means conducting right livelihood. This part of the Parisuddhisīla is successfully practiced by the power of Viriya (or effort).

3.4 Paccayasannitasīla

It means considering the four requisites, namely, food, shelter, clothing, and medicine before consuming them. This part of the Parisuddhisīla is successfully practiced by the power of Panna (or insight).

These four parts of the Parisuddhisīla enable the Buddhist monk to live a life of clarity, purity, peace, and happiness at all times.

Sīla-5 or the Five Precepts

1. The intention to abstain from killing.
2. The intention to abstain from stealing.
3. The intention to abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. The intention to abstain from lying.
5. The intention to abstain from the consumption of alcohol and other addictive substances.



**The flawless moon orbiting in space
is brighter than all the stars.**

**A person replete with Sīla and Saddha
(or faith) is more glorious than all the
miserly people in the world.**



Chapter 5

Sīla-5 or the Five Precepts

It is because human beings live together as a community that they must have an agreement with each other in order to live together in peace and harmony. This agreement is called **human virtues** or **Sīla-5**.

Every living being on earth, be it human or animal, cherishes his life. Every living being wishes to live happily and safely.

Therefore, the first human virtue states that one must not end the life of another living being.

The love of life motivates every human being to earn a living and accumulate material wealth. The level of success and the amount of material wealth vary greatly from one person to another. It can be said that every human being cherishes his possessions and does not want anyone to take them away from him.

Therefore, the second human virtue states that one must not steal.

Every human being loves and cherishes his spouse and his family members. Every human being wishes to have a loving and warm family. Should his spouse or child be molested, he would become very troubled and sad.

Therefore, the third human virtue states that one must not commit sexual misconduct.

Honesty is what every human being needs because any decision-making process needs accurate information. Human relationship is based on trust. Human cooperation is based on trust. Every transaction is based on trust. Dishonesty brings about untold suffering and loss.

Therefore, the fourth human virtue states that one must not lie.

Peace and security are required by every human being. Peace and security are in turn based on heedfulness. A reckless person is capable of all kinds of unwholesomeness. A reckless person can do much harm not only to himself but to other people as well.

Therefore, the fifth human virtue states that one must not consume alcohol and other addictive substances, for such consumption is the source of recklessness.

Sīla-5 (or the Five Precepts) is derived from human commonsense and mutual love and understanding.

“To put oneself in another’s shoes” is the method used by the Lord Buddha to encourage people to practice Sīla. The following Dhamma lecture appears in the Sanyuttanikaya Mahavagga 19/1458.

The Lord Buddha teaches us to consider the fact that we do not want anyone to injure or kill us. Therefore, other people also do not want us to injure or kill them.

Sīla-5 has been practiced by human beings even during the time periods that the world is devoid of the Lord Buddha’s Teachings as attested by the Agganna Sutta and the Cakkavati Sutta as summarized below.

“Societal problems have always been with us even during the time periods when food is abundant and people can live comfortably and happily. These societal problems stem from the differences in skin color. Some people have very fine complexion while others do not. These differences give rise to the caste system.

The caste system breeds arrogance and prejudice. Arrogance and prejudice bring about moral decline. Moral decline, in turn, brings about deterioration in the environment and the atmosphere.

As a result, natural resources begin to suffer in both quantity and quality. There is fierce competition for the limited resources and some resort to stealing or some other ways of taking advantage of other people. Havoc is wrought and human beings begin to realize that their life conditions and their environment suffer as a result of their collective immoral conduct.

To remedy the situation, human beings came together to decree the Sila-5 (or the Five Precepts) which is to be practiced by every human being. At the same time, they also appoint a virtuous person to become their leader in order to ensure that everyone observes the Five Precepts. This is the origin of monarchy. During the reign of the Universal Monarch, it is he who ensures that every human being observes the Five Precepts.

Sīla-5 has been with us since the beginning of time because **human beings know the importance of cause and effect as well as self-control. Sīla-5 makes us true human beings.**

Virati **(The Three Abstinenances)**

Not committing a misdeed is not the same thing as observing the Five Precepts. For example, a prisoner, who is in prison, hence, prevented from committing a misdeed cannot be said to be observing the Five Precepts.

It takes commitment to observe the Five Precepts. Therefore, to observe the Five Precepts, one begins by having the intention to abstain from evil. The Pali word for "**abstinence**" is "**Veramani**" or "**Virati**".

A person can be said to be observing the Five Precepts only when he has practiced one of the three following abstinenances.

1. Samadanavirati
2. Sampattavirati
3. Samucchedavirati

1. Samadanavirati means **the intention to abstain from an unwholesome deed** because one has already pledged the Five Precepts: This is exemplified by the following story.

The Story of a Male Lay Devotee

This story took place in Sri Lanka. A male lay devotee had already pledged the Five Precepts in the presence of Venerable Pingalabuddharakkhita at the Ambariya Temple when he went out to work in the rice paddy. When it was time to take a break, he unyoked his team of oxen and allowed them to graze freely. Sometime later, he discovered that his oxen had disappeared. Therefore, he went out to look for them until he arrived at a mountain called "Dantaravaddhamana". There, he was attacked by a python. As he raised his sharp knife with the intention to kill the python, he thought to himself,

“I have already pledged the Five Precepts in the presence of the venerable monk; therefore, I should not transgress it by killing this python.”

He had wrestled with his conscience while raising the knife thrice and finally, he came to a decision.

“I would rather give up my life than to transgress the Precepts.”

He then threw the knife away. By the power of his resolution, the python released its grip on him and slithered away.

2. Sampattavirati means **the intention to abstain from an unwholesome deed** when confronted with a particular situation: A person may not have pledged the Five Precepts when he comes upon a challenging circumstance that may cause him to transgress them. But he is able to resist the temptation once he reminds himself of his family, education, goodness, etc. This is exemplified in the following story.

The Story of the Male Lay Devotee, Cakkana

When Cakkana was a young boy, his mother had fallen ill and the physician said that live rabbit meat was needed to cure his mother. His brother told him to catch a rabbit out in the rice paddy. Cakkana went out to the rice paddy and saw one rabbit munching on some rice saplings. It took off as soon as it spotted Cakkana, but it was trapped by some vines. It cried out with fear. Cakkana removed the rabbit and saw how it struggled to free itself. He thought,

“Should I take one life in order to help save my mother’s life?”

Cakkana released the rabbit and told it to eat and drink to its fill.

Upon returning home, he told his brother the whole story and he was thoroughly scolded by him. He did not say anything back. He went to his mother’s side and said these truthful words,

“Ever since I was born, I have never intentionally killed an animal. By the power of these truthful words, may my mother recover from her illness!”

In that instant, his mother was well again.

3. Samucchadavirati means **abstaining completely from all unwholesomeness**: It is the form of abstinence practiced by the Ariya personages who have been able to extinguish all defilements. Another name for it is Setughatavirati.

Virati or abstinence is a very important quality because without resoluteness, nothing good can be accomplished. To observe the Five Precepts, a person must first practice Virati.

Sīla Is a Sublime Gift

As soon as a person observes the Five Precepts, every living being stands to benefit instantly.

For example, when a person observes the First Precept, it means that he intentionally abstains from killing. By observing this precept, he is safeguarding the life of every living being. He is giving them safety where their lives are concerned.

When a person observes the Second Precept, it means that he intentionally abstains from stealing. By observing this precept, he is safeguarding the possessions of other people. He is giving them safety where their possessions are concerned.

When a person observes the Third Precept, it means that he intentionally abstains from sexual misconduct. By observing this precept, he is safeguarding the safety of other people's spouses and children. He is giving them safety where their families are concerned.

When a person observes the Fourth Precept, it means that he intentionally abstains from lying. By observing this precept, he is giving the gift of honesty to other people.

When a person observes the Fifth Precept, it means that he intentionally abstains from consuming alcohol and other addictive substances. By observing this precept, he is keeping everyone safe. A person whose awareness is impaired is capable of every form of unwholesomeness. He can kill. He can steal. He can commit sexual misconduct. And he can lie.

The observation of the Five Precepts is a sublime gift that helps preserve the earth and its environment. It is for this reason that the Lord Buddha calls it "**a great gift**". He also says in the Punnabhisanda Sutta that whoever gives this great gift will receive tremendous fruits.

"Behold, monks, there are eight sources of merit. Merit brings about happiness, rebirth in the Celestial Realm, and wish fulfillment.

The first source of merit is the Ariya disciples^[1] who take refuge in the Lord Buddha.

The second source of merit is the Ariya disciples who take refuge in the Dhamma.

The third source of merit is the Ariya disciples who take refuge in the Sangha.

Behold, monks, **these five gifts (The Five Precepts) are the great gifts** which the sages of old knew to be sublime.

[1]Ariya disciples or Ariya personages refer to the personages who have attained the different stages of Enlightenment, namely, the Fruit of Sotapanna, the Fruit of Sakadagami, the Fruit of Anagami, and Arahatsip.

What Are These Five Gifts?

Behold, monks, the Ariya disciples abstain from killing. They are completely harmless and they incur no retribution.

The fourth source of merit is the Ariya disciples who have abstained from killing.

The fifth source of merit is the Ariya disciples who have abstained from lying.

The sixth source of merit is the Ariya disciples who have abstained from sexual misconduct.

The seventh source of merit is the Ariya disciples who have abstained from lying.

The eighth source of merit is the Ariya disciples who have abstained from consuming alcohol and other addictive substances.

When a person observes the Five Precepts, he is doing so out of a generous heart. It is the generosity that is shown to every living being alike.

Sīla practice is the source of a special form of merit. The higher the number of Precepts observed by a person, the greater the amount of merit is earned. The merit earned by Sīla practice works to cleanse the mind of defilements.

Sīla practice further improves the quality of one's life above and beyond the practice of Dana (or alms-giving).





Chapter 6

Sīla-8 or the Eight Precepts

Advanced technology works to help improve the quality of one's daily life by making life easier in many ways.

But nothing can improve the quality of one's mind like Sīla practice, especially Sīla-8 or the observation of the Eight Precepts. It has been proven over and over again all throughout the ages how the observation of the Eight Precepts is a truly effective means to improve the quality of one's mind. **This practice is always effective, for it is timeless.**

Generally, the term *Sīla-8* refers to the observation of the Eight Precepts on special days or on special occasions; and the term *Uposathasīla* refers to the observation of the Eight Precepts on the Buddhist Holy Day. But both have similar meaning and they include:

1. *Panātipata Veramani*

The intention to abstain from killing

2. *Adinnadana Veramani*

The intention to abstain from stealing

3. *Abrahmacariya Veramami*

The intention to abstain from any action that threatens chastity practice

4. *Musavada Veramani*

The intention to abstain from lying

5. *Suramerayamajjapamadatthana Veramani*

The intention to abstain from the consumption of alcohol and other addictive substances

6. *Vikalabhajana Veramani*

The intention to abstain from food consumption from noon to dawn the next day

7. *Naccagitavaditavisukadassana Malagantha
vilepana Dharanamandana Vibhusanatthana
Veramani*

The intention to abstain from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, watching different forms of entertainment, decorating the body with flowers, scented items, and color cosmetics.

8. *Uccasayanamahasayana Veramani*

The intention to abstain from sleeping on a soft and thick mattress stuffed with kapok and cotton-wool.

Sīla-8 differ from Sīla-5 in the following ways.

- The Third Precept in Sīla-8 elevates the quality of one's mind through chastity practice.
- The Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Precepts promote chastity practice.

The Eight Precepts work very effectively in removing unwholesomeness from the mind. They can be observed at any time, especially during times of trouble as exemplified in the following story.

The Pancauposatha Jataka

In one of our Lord Buddha's previous existences while He was pursuing Perfections as a Bodhisatta, he was born into a wealthy Brahmin family living in the kingdom of Magadha. When he was grown up, he decided to take up the religious life as a Yogi living in a forest near the border of Magadha.

Not too far from the Yogi's ashram and in the bamboo clumps, there lived a pair of pigeons. There was a termite mound close by. It was the home of a snake. There were also foxes and bear in the area. These animals often came to listen to the Dhamma lectures from the Yogi. (It should be noted here that during certain periods on earth, humans and animals can communicate with each other.)

One day, the pair of pigeons went out to search for food as usual. Unfortunately, the female pigeon was snatched up by a hawk. The male pigeon felt keenly the sadness of its partner's death. It decided that for as long as it could not quell its love and longing, it would not go out to search for food.

It then flew to the Yogi's ashram. Upon its arrival, it proceeded to pledge the Eight Precepts.

On the part of the snake, one day it went out to search for food. When it came to the area where the oxen were grazing, the sound of their hoof-beat frightened it so it slithered quickly toward the termite mound. But an albino ox happened to be standing there. It was worshipped by the villagers who believed it to be a sacred ox. The ox was stomping the ground when it accidentally stepped on the snake. The snake was furious and bit the albino ox and caused it to die. The death of the ox so saddened the villagers that they came to mourn and worship it with flowers and scented items.

The snake felt remorseful thinking how its anger had caused the ox's death and the villager's sorrow. It decided that for as long as it could not quell its anger, it would not go out to feed.

It then went to the Yogi's ashram. Upon its arrival, it proceeded to pledge the Eight Precepts.

On the part of the fox, one day it found an elephant carcass and was glad to have found such a bountiful source of food. It tried to bite into the elephant but found it to be extremely tough. Finally, the only spot it could bite into was the elephant's anus. It started to feed on the elephant until it reached the elephant's abdomen. It had fed on the elephant's flesh and blood and lived inside the elephant carcass for a time.

With the passing of time, the carcass began to dry up and its anal opening was no longer there. The fox was trapped inside until it no longer had anything to eat or drink and became emaciated. It was not until one day that the rain came and caused the carcass to become soggy and soft. Still, by the time the fox could struggle itself free from the carcass, it had lost all of its fur. It decided that for as long as it could not quell its greed, it would not go out to search for food.

It then went to the Yogi's ashram. Upon its arrival, it proceeded to pledge the Eight Precepts.

On the part of the bear, its hunger drove it to invade a village in the kingdom of Malla and was later attacked by the villagers. They shot at it with arrows and beat it with a club until its head bled. It managed to escape and decided that for as long as it could not quell its craving, it would not go out to search for food.

It then went to the Yogi's ashram. Upon its arrival, it proceeded to pledge the Eight Precepts.

On the part of the Yogi, although he had lived the religious life for a very long time, he still could not achieve Jhana attainments because he was pre-occupied with his family background. At the time, there was a Paccekabuddha^[1] who knew with His supernatural insight that the Yogi was working toward Buddhahood. He also knew that the Yogi had an arrogant nature. He wished to help the Yogi quell his arrogance; therefore, He left the Himavanta Forest and came to sit on the Yogi's cushion.

[1] A Paccekabuddha attains Self-Enlightenment but He does not teach the enlightened knowledge to anyone.

When the Yogi saw the Paccekabuddha sitting on his cushion, he became so angry that he rushed toward the Paccekabuddha, clapped his hands and shouted,

“You lowly monk, how dare you sit on my cushion?”

The Paccekabuddha said, “I have already attained Self-Enlightenment and within this Kappa, you will become a Buddha by the name of Siddhattha. Why then should you still be dominated by arrogance and rudeness?”

Even so the Yogi could not bring himself to pay homage to the Pacekkabuddha. So the Pacekkabuddha said to the Yogi, “You have no idea how great my family background is and how I am replete with virtues. And if you are truly capable, I challenge you to come and fly in the air with me.”

The Paccekabuddha took off into the air and sprinkled dust from His feet onto the Yogi’s headdress.

It was only then that the Yogi realized that the monk was a Paccekabuddha and felt remorseful that he had not paid homage to Him or heeded His words.

The Yogi lamented his arrogance. He went inside his ashram and pledged the Eight Precepts. He then practiced meditation so earnestly that he finally achieved meditative attainments.

Soon afterward, the pigeon, the snake, the fox, and the bear came to pay respect to the Yogi. The Yogi asked the pigeon, "Why didn't you go out to search for food but are staying here to observe the Eight Precepts?"

The pigeon answered, "Because my wife was snatched by a hawk and my loss caused me to be grief-stricken. Therefore, I decided to come here to observe the Eight Precepts in order to quell the love in my heart."

The Yogi asked the snake, "Why didn't you go out to search for food but are staying here to observe the Eight Precepts?"

The snake answered, "My anger drove me to bite an albino ox. Its death caused the villagers to shed many tears. So I am here to observe the Eight Precepts in order to quell my anger."

The Yogi asked the fox, "Why didn't you go out to search for food but are staying here to observe the Eight Precepts?"

The fox answered, "Because greed nearly cost me my life so I am here to observe the Eight Precepts in order to quell my greed."

The Yogi asked the bear, "Why didn't you go out to search for food but are staying here to observe the Eight Precepts?"

The bear answered, "I had to suffer much as a result of my craving so I am here to observe the Eight Precepts in order to quell my craving."

Then the four animals asked the Yogi, "Why didn't you go out to search for fruits but are staying here to observe the Eight Precepts?"

The Yogi told the animals about his meeting with the Paccekabuddha and how he wanted to observe the Eight Precepts in order to quell his arrogance. He then advised the animals to practice wholesomeness for the rest of their lives.

On one occasion, some male lay devotees decided to observe the Eight Precepts.

The Lord Buddha asked them, "Are all of you observing the Eight Precepts?"

They answered, "We are, Most Exalted One."

The Lord Buddha said, "That is good because it was the practice of the sages of old."

Wise persons all throughout the ages have employed the Eight Precepts as a tool to quickly and effectively remove unwholesomeness from their minds.

Moreover, the observation of the Eight Precepts works in a miraculous way to bless the observer with good things and wish fulfillment as exemplified in the following story.

The Story of King Udaya

There was once a millionaire by the name of Suciparivara who lived in the city of Varanasi. His personal wealth was worth 800 million. He loved to make merit and he encouraged his wife, his children, and his retinue of attendants to observe the Five Precepts on regular days. And on the Buddhist Holy Day, he encouraged them to observe the Eight Precepts.

At one point, a poor man came to ask for work in the millionaire's residence. Normally, before hiring anyone, the millionaire would have him sign an agreement that he would observe the Precepts. But with this man, the millionaire merely said, "Do the work that you are hired to do," and no agreement was signed. This man happened to be a conscientious person. He went out to work at dawn and did not return until evening.

On the Buddhist Holy Day, the millionaire told his maid to prepare breakfast for all the workers

in his employ so that afterward, all of them could pledge the Eight Precepts.

Every worker had his breakfast and remained in his room to observe the Eight Precepts except for the new employee who had left the house very early to go to work. He returned after sundown, and a maid brought him his meal. He was surprised to see no one around. He learnt from the maid that everyone remained in his room in order to observe the Eight Precepts.

The man felt that it was not right for him to eat when everyone else in the house was observing the Eight Precepts. He decided not have his evening meal and went to ask the millionaire, "Sir, can I pledge the Eight Precepts at this hour?"

The millionaire said, "Since you did not pledge the Eight Precepts in the morning, I suppose if you pledge them now, it is considered to be half-a-day instead of an entire day." The new employee said, "That is enough for me, sir." He then pledged the Eight Precepts and returned to his own room.

In the middle of the night, the man began to feel very ill because he had had nothing to eat all day long. He refused to take the five kinds of medicinal food offered to him by the millionaire because he wanted to observe the Eight Precepts immaculately.

His condition had so worsened that he became delirious. His fellow workers believed that he would soon die and took him to the balcony to await his death.

At the time, the king of Varanasi happened to be circumambulating the city. The man saw the king and wished that he too could become king one day. It was his last thought before he died.

As a result of having observed the Eight Precepts for just half-a-day, he was immediately reborn in the womb of the chief wife of the king of Varanasi. After ten months in the womb, he was born. He was given the name "Udayakumara". When he was of age, he was schooled in all the arts. He happened to be able to recall his previous life. Each time he remembered it, he would exclaim,

“This is the fruit of such an insignificant deed.”

After his father’s death, he ascended the throne as King Udaya.

Observing the Eight Precepts for just half-a-day seems like an insignificant deed, but it became a turning point in this poor man’s life. The merit earned from his determination to observe the Eight Precepts immaculately and at the cost of his life was so great that it allowed his last wish to be fulfilled instantly.

The words exclaimed by King Udaya confirm that **the fruit of observing the Eight Precepts is never trivial.**





Chapter 7

Why Should One Practice Sīla?

If there was such a thing as a wishing tree, its reality could be realized by Sīla practice.

Sīla practice cleanses the mind of impurity. A pure mind is the source of incomparable power. The purer the mind, the more powerful it is. It is the kind of power that brings about success, prosperity, and wish fulfillment as exemplified in the following story.

Suparaka, the Sage

During the time that King Kuru ruled the kingdom of Kuru, our Bodhisatta was born the son of a marine navigator of the Bharukaccha Harbor. And he was given the name "Suparaka". His complexion was as lovely as pure gold. And he had many friends. He was learnt in the art of marine navigation since he was just sixteen years old. He also observed the Five Precepts regularly and flawlessly.

After his father's passing, Suparaka replaced his father as the marine navigator of the Bharukaccha Harbor. Given his talents and abilities, none of the ships navigated by him ever came to harm. Unfortunately, Suparaka had to eventually give up his work because his eyesight had been completely destroyed by the seawater.

Suparaka then had to go and ask for work from the king. The king gave him the job of setting a price for the things that had to be acquired for the royal household.

One day, a man wanted to sell a black elephant to the king, thinking it to be an auspicious elephant. The king told Suparaka to look it over. Suparaka felt the elephant all over before proclaiming that the elephant was not an auspicious elephant after all. The reason was that while it was being born, its dam did not receive it in time and it fell to the ground causing its legs to become too short. When the man who wanted to sell the elephant to the king was questioned, it turned out that things happened just the way Suparaka had described. The king was pleased with Suparaka's ability, but he was paid just eight pieces of money.

Sometime later, a person brought a horse to sell to the king, thinking it to be an auspicious horse. Suparaka felt the horse all over and knew the horse not to be an auspicious horse, since its dam died on the day that it was born. Without the benefit of its dam's milk, its body was not as fit as it could be. Upon interrogation, it turned out that what Suparaka had said was true. The king was very pleased but

once again Suparaka was paid just eight pieces of money.

Later still, a person wanted to sell a carriage to the king. Upon checking it, Suparaka said that the wood used to construct the carriage contained cavities. It turned out once again that Suparaka was correct. Once again, he was paid just eight pieces of money by the king.

One day, a person offered the king a very expensive piece of woolen cloth. Suparaka found that there was a rat-bite mark in the cloth. He was as usual paid just eight pieces of money by the king.

Suparaka felt that he received far too little money under the king's employ, and he decided to return to his birthplace.

Upon his return, the sea traders entreated him to be the navigator on their ship. They believed in his ability despite his blindness. Suparaka finally agreed to do it.

The ship navigated by Suparaka had sailed safely for four months even in the midst of strong waves. At one point, the ship arrived at a particular ocean and the sea traders saw a school of strange-looking fish, each looking like a man with a sharp nose.

The traders asked Suparaka what the name of the ocean was. Suparaka said that it was called Kharamali. But what he did not tell the traders was the fact that this particular ocean was replete with diamonds for fear that they would overload the ship with as many diamonds as they could and put their lives in danger.

Suparaka slowed the ship down and lowered a net as if he was about to catch some fish. He obtained an amount of diamonds and told his men to throw some cheap goods overboard to make room for the diamonds.

When the ship arrived at an ocean the color of fire, the traders asked Suparaka for the name of the ocean. Suparaka told them that it was called

Aggimali. But he did not tell them that this particular ocean was replete with gold. He lowered a net and obtained an amount of gold before continuing on with their journey.

When the ship arrived at an ocean the color of milk, the traders asked Suparaka for the name of the ocean. Suparaka told them that it was called Dathimali. But he did not tell them that the ocean was replete with silver. He did obtain an amount of silver before continuing on with their journey.

When the ship arrived at an ocean the color of grass, he told the traders that the ocean was called Kusamali. It was replete with rubies. Suparaka obtained an amount of rubies before continuing on with their journey.

When the ship arrived at an ocean that looked like a bamboo grove, he told the merchants that the ocean was called Nalamali. Suparaka obtained an amount of emeralds and chrysoberyl gems before continuing on with their journey.

Finally, the ship arrived at a vast ocean where thunderous gale-force winds were blowing. The traders shook with fear and wanted to know the name of the ocean. Suparaka told them that it was called Balavamukhi. And it was an ocean filled with all forms of danger. The traders began to weep with fear of death. It then occurred to Suparaka that no one could help these men but him and his words of truth.

Suparaka then proclaimed these truthful words: Ever since I was born up until now, I have never killed an animal. I have never stolen anything. I have never touched another man's wife or even looked at her lustfully. I have never told a lie. And I have never drunk even just one drop of alcohol. By these truthful words, may the ship be safe from danger.

Suddenly, the ship that had been off course for the entire four months headed toward the Bharukaccha Harbor and arrived there within a day. Miraculously, the ship sailed ashore and came to stop at Suparaka's house.

Suparaka divided the diamonds, gold, silver, rubies, emeralds, and chrysoberyl gems among the sea traders and him said to them,

“These valuable items are sufficient for your need and want. Do not set sail again but be sure to make merit and give alms from now on.”

The sage, Suparaka, had done nothing but good deeds in his entire life. After his death, he was reborn in the Celestial Realm.

Suparaka believed in his Sila practice so much so that in times of real danger, he was able to cite his practice to help save his own as well as his companions’ lives.

Suparaka had practiced Sila all throughout his life. This caused his mind to be filled with the power of purity. And it is this power that attracted good things into his life including material wealth.

The story of Suparaka's life exemplifies the miraculous fruits of Sīla practice. On this subject, this is what the Lord Buddha has to say.

“Behold, men of wealth, what are the five fruits of Sīla practice?

The first fruit of Sīla practice is material wealth.

The second fruit of Sīla practice is a good reputation.

The third fruit of Sīla practice is boldness. The practitioner of Sīla is never awkward in the company of others whether they are royalties, Brahmins, millionaires or ascetics.

The fourth fruit of Sīla practice is mindfulness and self-possession at the moment of death.

And the fifth fruit of Sīla practice is rebirth in the Celestial Realm.

Behold, men of wealth, these are the five fruits of Sīla practice.”

It can be said that Sīla practice does not only bear fruits in the Human Realm, but they also bring its practitioner great celestial wealth in the hereafter.

For the practitioner of Sīla, death is not something to fear as exemplified in the following story.

The Story of 700 Sea Traders

A very long time ago, 700 sea traders set sail with their cargo for a foreign land. On the seventh day of their sea voyage, their ship encountered a bad storm and high waves with the result that it was wrecked. All of the traders except one feared for their lives and began to entreat their various deities to come to their rescue. This one particular trader felt no fear because all he could think about was how he had offered alms to the Buddhist monks on the day that they set sail. He also reflected on the virtues of the Triple Gem and his own Sīla practice. The rest of the traders wanted to know why he did not fear for his life. Upon receiving his answer, his fellow traders wanted him to teach them about Sīla practice.

This particular trader told his fellow traders to get in line so that each row consisted of 100 men. Altogether, seven rows were formed. He then went to the first row of men and had them pledge the Five Precepts. By then, the seawater was at the level of the men's ankles.

By the time the second row of men pledged the Five Precepts, the seawater was at the level of the men's knees.

By the time the third row of men pledged the Five Precepts, the seawater was at the level of the men's waist.

By the time the fourth row of men pledged the Five Precepts, the seawater was at the level of the men's navel.

By the time the fifth row of men pledged the Five Precepts, the seawater was at the level of the men's chest.

By the time the sixth row of men pledged the Five Precepts, the seawater was at the level of the men's neck.

By the time the seventh row of men pledged the Five Precepts, the seawater was at the level of the men's mouth. Having had all the men pledge the Five Precepts, this particular trader said in a loud voice,

“There is no other refuge, so think now only of your Sīla practice.” Eventually, all of the traders drowned.

This particular trader was reborn in the celestial realm of Tavatimsa. So did the rest of the traders. All of these celestial beings were called **“Yakasatapuruṣa”** because all of them were elevated by the Five Precepts pledged just before their death. Their celestial castles were arranged in seven respective tiers, in the middle of them was the celestial castle made of gold standing 1,600 kilometers high belonging to this particular trader. The rest of the celestial castles stood at different levels lower than the one in the middle. The celestial castles at the outermost tier were 192 kilometers high.

Realizing that their rebirth in the Celestial Realm and their celestial wealth were the results of their Sīla practice as taught by their leader, at midnight one night, they came to sing his praises in front of the Lord Buddha at the Jetavana Temple.

“One should associate with the wise. One should keep the company of the wise because the truth taught by the wise makes one better and never worse.”

Five other celestial beings also sang the praises of the wise. The Lord Buddha confirmed that the words of these celestial beings were true and said,

“One should associate with the wise. One should keep the company of the wise because the truth taught by the wise helps one to be emancipated from all suffering.”

Had it not been for the wise trader who had practiced Sīla all throughout his life, these traders would have died with deep fear in their hearts. To die with a sad and gloomy mind would not forebode well for them as far as their hereafter was concerned.

These traders realized that when they died, they could not take a thing with them **except for the Five Precepts pledged during their last moments on earth. And it was this very act that led them to be reborn in the Celestial Realm.**

Besides rebirth in the Celestial Realm, Sīla practice also enables one to be emancipated from the round of rebirth and attain the most sublime treasure of all which is Nibbana Wealth.

Nibbana Wealth is a mental treasure in that it arises when the mind becomes clear and pure as a result of earnest Sīla practice.

The attainment of Arahantship may be extremely difficult and beyond realization but not so for the person who has practiced Sīla to the fullest extent. For when such a person sits down to practice meditation, his mind would be free, expansive, and bright. It is the state of mind that allows him to attain Enlightenment easily as exemplified in the following story.

The Story of Venerable Sappadasa

A young man from a noble family living in the city of Savatthi decided to enter the monkhood after having heard the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture. As time went by, he began to pine for the householder's life.

Still, he reminded himself that having come from a family such as his, it would not be fitting for him to leave the monkhood. Therefore, he had to remain in the monkhood until he died. From then on, he began to think of a way to commit suicide.

One day, he heard that a fellow monk had caught a poisonous snake and kept it inside a pot. He thought that perhaps the snake would bite him and put an end to him. So he volunteered to release the snake from the pot in a suitable place.

Strangely enough, the snake refused to bite his hand even though he had put it inside the pot and even inserted a finger inside the snake's mouth. Therefore, he believed the snake to be non-poisonous and released it before returning to the temple.

When asked about the snake, the monk told his fellow monks that the snake was non-poisonous.

But they told him that the snake had spread its hood and hissed loudly at them. It had taken them a while to catch it. They asked him how he knew that the snake was non-poisonous.

He told them that he had tried to let the snake bite him to no avail. His fellow monks heard his answer but made no comment.

Sometime later, the monk found a razor left by the barber and thought that he could slit his throat with the razor. He then took the razor and went to stand by a tree. He leaned his head against the tree trunk and placed the razor against his throat. But before he pressed on it, he recalled how he had observed the Precepts immaculately since the day he entered the monkhood. As a result, he saw with his mind the Sīla Sphere as pure and bright as the moon. As he kept his mind on the Sīla Sphere, he was overwhelmed with joy. He did his best to contain

the joy and allow his mind to go deeper and deeper into meditation until he was able to attain Arahatsip, complete with the four kinds of Analytical Knowledge.

He returned to the temple with the razor in his hand. His fellow monks wanted to know where he had been.

He told them that he had meant to commit suicide by slitting his throat with the razor. But instead of committing suicide, he was able to extinguish all defilements with the sharpness of his supernormal insight. Therefore, he no longer had need of any weapon.

His fellow monks went to see the Lord Buddha and told Him about the monk who claimed to have attained Arahatsip.

The Lord Buddha confirmed that the monk had indeed attained Arahatsip. The monks wanted to know how a person who wanted to commit suicide should have the ability to attain Arahatsip and why was it that the poisonous snake did not bite this monk.

The Lord Buddha told them that three lifetimes ago, the snake had been the monk's slave. Therefore, it could not harm its former master. This monk was called Venerable Sappadasa because he used to have a snake for a slave.

The Lord Buddha then told the monks about one previous existence of Venerable Sappadasa which took place during the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha.

In that existence, Venerable Sappadasa was also a Buddhist monk. He had a fellow monk who was growing tired of the monastic life. Venerable Sappadasa kept reminding his fellow monk of the danger and suffering of the householder's life until his fellow monk felt inspired to remain in the monkhood. He then brought out his requisites and began to clean them after having neglected them for a while.

As he did so, he told Venerable Sappadasa that if he did disrobe, he was going to give his requisites to Venerable Sappadasa.

Suddenly, Venerable Sappadasa wanted his fellow monks' requisites and he said to his fellow monk that the monastic life was a real waste. One had to beg for alms. One did not have a wife or children to keep one company.

Moreover, he kept telling his fellow monk how the householder's life was good until his fellow monk began to fret. As he was once again contemplating leaving the monastic life, it occurred to him that Venerable Sappadasa had to have wanted his requisites for him to change his view that way. Having realized Venerable Sappadasa's ulterior motive, he decided not to leave the monkhood.

This past misdeed caused Venerable Sappadasa to fret to the point of wanting to commit suicide in this existence. But from the merit accumulated by having practiced righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya for close to 20,000 years, he was able to attain Arahathship in this existence. (It should be noted that during the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha, the average human lifespan was 20,000 years.)

The Buddhist monks still had a question about the manner in which Venerable Sappadasa attained Arahatship. They wondered if the attainment of Arahatship could occur instantly, that is, in the time it took for Venerable Sappadasa to place the razor blade against his throat.

The Lord Buddha told them that for the Buddhist monk who has practiced meditation diligently, Arahatship can be attained instantly. Therefore, it is better for a person who has practiced meditation diligently to live for a short while than for a lazy person to live for 100 years.

The Lord Buddha said to the monks,

“One day in the life of a person who has practiced meditation diligently is more sublime than a hundred years in the life of a lazy person.”

At the end of the Dhamma lecture, a large number of monks attained Ariyahood.

The story of Venerable Sappadasa shows clearly how Sīla practice has the power to overcome a past misdeed and allows one's accumulated merit to work in such a way that Arahatsip can be attained in an instant.

Sīla practice is the source of human wealth, celestial wealth, and Nibbana wealth. Therefore, Sīla practice is like a wishing tree that can bring about wish fulfillment at every level. It also follows its practitioner to bless him forever and ever until Nibbana can be attained.

It is said of Sīla practice that ...

Silena Sugatin Yanti: Sīla practice leads to the States of Happiness.

Silena Bhogasampada: Sīla practice is the source of material wealth.

Silena Nibbutin yanti: Sīla practice leads to the attainment of Nibbana.

The Fruits of Each Precept

It is no wonder that Sīla practice should be the source of so many good things, since the observation of just one Precept bears incalculable fruits. For example,

The Fruits of Not Killing include:

1. Being born complete with all of the body parts.
2. Having a tall and well-proportioned body.
3. Agility.
4. The soles of the feet being full.
5. Litheness.
6. Gentleness.
7. Cleanliness.
8. Boldness.
9. Great physical strength.
10. Being articulate.
11. Being endearing.
12. No divisiveness among the retinue of attendants.

13. Fearlessness.
 14. Indestructibility.
 15. Death not being caused by assault.
 16. Having a large retinue of attendants.
 17. Having a lovely complexion.
 18. Having a fine physique.
 19. Having few illnesses.
 20. Not being plagued by depression.
 21. Not being parted from the things and
the people that one loves.
 22. Longevity.
- Etc.

The Fruits of Not Stealing include:

1. Prosperity.
2. Plenty of money and food.
3. Great material wealth.
4. Attracting more and more material wealth.
5. Financial stability
6. Getting the material wealth one wants
quickly.

7. Material wealth not being threatened by any form of disaster.
 8. Receiving unique material wealth.
 9. Being a world-class person.
 10. Not knowing poverty.
 11. Having a comfortable lifestyle.
- Etc.

The Fruits of Not Committing Sexual Misconduct include:

1. Having no enemy.
2. Being endearing to everyone.
3. Receiving food and things.
4. Restful sleep.
5. Waking up feeling joyful.
6. Being far removed from the state of loss and woe.
7. Not being born a female or a hermaphrodite.
8. Not being quick to anger.
9. Having nothing to hide.
10. No disappointment or sadness.

11. Not having to hide from anyone.
 12. Having a faithful spouse.
 13. Having a good body.
 14. Having good physical attributes.
 15. Fearlessness.
 16. Not encountering disturbances of any kind.
 17. Having a comfortable lifestyle.
 18. Being a harmless person.
 19. Not being parted from the things and the people that one loves.
- Etc.

The Fruits of Not Lying include:

1. A bright and clear physique.
2. Words which are endearing yet sacred.
3. White, smooth teeth.
4. Not being too fat.
5. Not being too thin.
6. Not being too short.
7. Not being too tall.

8. A joyful sense of touch.
 9. Breath as sweet as the lotus flower.
 10. Having obedient attendants.
 11. Having credible words.
 12. Having a thin and red tongue the shape of a lotus petal.
 13. The mind being composed and not scattered.
 14. Imperturbability.
- Etc.

The Fruits of Not Consuming Alcohol and Other Addictive Substances include:

1. Knowing what one should do in the past, in the present and in the future.
2. Possessing full awareness.
3. Not suffering from insanity.
4. Being knowledgeable.
5. Not being lazy.
6. Not being stupid.
7. No deafness or muteness.

8. No drunkenness.
9. No recklessness.
10. No forgetfulness.
11. No fearfulness.
12. No need to compete with others.
13. No jealousy.
14. Having truthful words.
15. No divisive speech, no offensive speech,
and no nonsensical speech.
16. Being a grateful person.
17. A person who knows to repay those who
have been good to him.
18. No miserliness.
19. Being self-sacrificing.
20. Morality.
21. Impartiality.
22. Not being quick to anger.
23. Being ashamed of unwholesomeness.
24. Being fearful of the ill consequences of
unwholesome deeds.
25. Good judgement.

- 26. Great wisdom.
- 27. Sagacity.
- 28. Scholarliness.
- 29. Knowing what is useful and what is useless.
- Etc.

The Amazing Protective Power of Sīla Practice

The one thing that can ensure longevity and good health is Sīla practice.

This fact is exemplified in the following story.

The Mahadhammapala Jataka

At the time that King Brahmadata was the ruler of the city of Varanasi, there was a Brahmin by the name of Dhammapala. He was the head of the Dhammapala Village. This Brahmin observed the Five Precepts and practiced the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action. He had a son by the name of Dhammapalakumara.

When Dhammapalakumara was of age, he went to study with a famous teacher in the city of Taxila.

He was assigned as the head of the class of 500 students.

Sometime later, the teacher's son passed away and his death was grieved by everyone except for Dhammapalakumara. He was very surprised at the untimely death of the teacher's beloved son. He said to his fellow classmates,

"How is it possible that our teacher's son should die an untimely death? Isn't it impossible for young men and young women to die?"

One of his classmates asked, "Dhammapala, do you not know anything about death?"

"Of course, I do. I know that death only happens when one is old."

Another classmate said, "But death can come at any time."

"I only know that death is normal for elderly people."

One classmate asked, "Dhammapala, have you never seen anyone in your hometown die young?"

"Never! Only the elderly people die in my hometown."

"Has it always been so?"

"Yes, it has."

Dhammapala's classmates could not help but tell their teacher about their conversation with Dhammapala. The teacher went directly to talk to Dhammapala, "Is it true that no one in your family has ever died young?"

"It is true, sir."

The teacher wanted to find out from Dhammapala's father if what Dhammapala said was true.

After his son's funeral, the teacher said to Dhammapala,

"Dhammapala, I have some business to attend to in another town. I want you to teach in my place until my return."

The teacher had some goat bones cleaned and contained in a sack. He and the servant who

carried the sack of bones then set off together to the Dhammapala Village.

The slaves of the Brahmin, Dhammapala, saw the teacher approach and went to welcome him at the door. They took his umbrella and his shoes as well as the sack of bones from the servant. The slaves then went to inform the Brahmin of the teacher's visit.

The Brahmin warmly welcomed the teacher and invited him inside the house. He had food brought for the teacher.

After the meal, the teacher said to the Brahmin, "Sir, your son, Dhammapalakumara, who was learnt in the Vedas and the eighteen branches of the arts, is now dead. He died of a terrible disease. I am terribly sorry to have to bring you this awful news."

The Brahmin clapped his hands and laughed loudly. The teacher wanted to know why the Brahmin was laughing.

"The dead person could not possibly be my son."

"Sir, I have brought you your son's bones in this sack."

"These are not my son's bones. My son is alive and well because for seven generations now, no one in my family has ever died young. You must be joking, surely."

The Brahmin and other family members now clapped and laughed loudly.

"Sir, there has to be a reason for your family's longevity. What virtuous practice has made it possible for your family to live to a ripe old age, pray tell?"

The Brahmin was only too happy to share with the teacher the virtues cultivated by his family.

"Everyone in my family practices wholesomeness and abstains from unwholesomeness."

We do not keep the company of fools. But we keep only the company of the wise.

We gladly give alms and we practice Sīla.

We are faithful to our spouse.

We do not kill, steal, consume alcohol, or lie.

Our wives practice Sīla and the children they bore are wise, clever, and sagacious.

Everyone in our family from parents, children, spouses, siblings, male and female slaves, servants, and other occupants practice wholesomeness. We aim for a good rebirth. This is the reason that no one in our family has ever died young.

My son is alive and well because those who practice wholesomeness are blessed with happiness and a long lifespan. My son has always practiced wholesomeness; therefore, he is happy and well."

The teacher said, "I have learnt so much from you today. I must apologize for having told you a lie earlier. Indeed, your son is alive and well and these are the bones of a goat. I just wanted to make sure that what your son had said was true. Now that I have learnt the truth, I too wish to practice wholesomeness after the manner of you and your family."

With the Brahmin's permission, the teacher wrote down every wholesome practice taught by the Brahmin before returning to Taxila.

After graduation, Dhammapalakumara returned home to his parents. He was accompanied by a large retinue of attendants.

Sīla Protects Those Who Practice It

Dhammapalakumara practiced Sīla all throughout his life. Sīla practice prevented him from harming anyone and from incurring harms from others. Sīla practice protects and safeguards its practitioner such that one can live a happy and long life.

The members of the Dhammapala Village were confident that **Sīla practice provided them with the best longevity insurance.**

An Economic Crisis Solved by the Power of Sīla Practice

The solution to an economic crisis exists and not in theory only. It has been proven to work over and over again all throughout the ages.

Humanity has experienced economic crises all throughout the ages as a result of natural disasters in the forms of drought, flood, etc., or man-made disasters in the forms of corruption, embezzlement, market manipulation, etc.

However, it has been proven over and over again all throughout the ages that **Sīla practice has the power to solve every economic crisis.**

The economic crisis in the kingdom of Kalinga was but one example of how the power of Sīla practice could end an economic crisis.

The Kurudhamma

At one point in the kingdom of Kalinga, prolonged drought had caused food shortage. As the situation worsened, an epidemic broke out. The situation proved so unbearable that the people had to come to the palace to ask for King Kalinga's help.

Initially, King Kalinga solved the crises by following the example of the previous king who had observed the Eight Precepts for seven consecutive days. Even then, there was still no sign of rain. The king learnt from his ministers that the kingdom of Kuru which was ruled by King Dananjaya was a land of abundance and peace. And the reason could be the presence of a sacred elephant, the color of the butterfly pea. King Kalinga sent a group of envoys to the kingdom of Kuru to ask for the sacred elephant from King Dananjaya.

It so happened that King Dananjaya delighted in giving alms. He had the elephant decorated in an elaborate manner before giving it to the kingdom of

Kalinga. Still, the presence of the sacred elephant could not bring rain to fall in the kingdom of Kalinga.

Upon further investigation, King Kalinga and his ministers learnt that the reason for the prosperity of the kingdom of Kuru was wholesomeness in that every inhabitant practiced the Kurudhamma. Once again, King Kalinga sent a group of envoys to the kingdom of Kuru to learn more about the Kurudhamma and to return the sacred elephant as well.

The envoys went to see King Dananjaya and asked the king to teach them the Kurudhamma. The king said to the envoys,

“It is true that we practice the Kurudhamma, but we are afraid our practice has since been tainted. At one point during the festival, we had dressed like a celestial being in order to practice archery. But one of our arrows fell into the water, and we were not sure if a fish had been hurt by the arrow. Therefore, it is better that you ask the queen mother to teach you the Kurudhamma.”

Upon hearing the king's words, the envoys said to the king,

"Since your majesty had no intention of killing any living being, your majesty's practice is still intact. Therefore, we entreat your majesty to teach us the Kurudhamma."

And the king said to them,

"Do not kill.

Do not steal.

Do not commit sexual misconduct.

Do not lie.

Do not drink alcohol."

Having inscribed the king's words on the gold sheet, the envoys went to see the queen mother. But she said to them,

"We are afraid our practice has been tainted, for on one occasion, we received the core of sandalwood worth 100,000 pieces and some flowers made of gold worth 1,000 pieces. We felt that our senior

daughter-in-law already had much material wealth, so we gave her the gold flowers. And we gave the core of sandalwood to the junior daughter-in-law whose material wealth was not yet great. We showed partiality because we felt sorry for her. We think you had better ask our senior daughter-in-law to teach you the Kurudhamma.”

The envoys said to the queen mother, “Your Majesty has the right to give whatever you want to whomever you want. Therefore, your practice has not been tainted.”

Having inscribed what the queen mother taught them on a gold sheet, the envoys went next to see the chief queen. But the queen said to them,

“On one occasion, we had the thought that should the king pass away, we could still maintain our position as queen if we could marry the viceroy. We believe our practice has been tainted. You should ask the viceroy to teach you the Kurudhamma instead.”

The envoys said to the queen, "It was just a fleeting thought; therefore, your majesty's practice has not been tainted."

Having inscribed the queen's words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, the envoys went to see the viceroy. He said to them,

"On one occasion, I went to the palace to see the king. Later, it rained very hard and my attendants had to stand in the rain for a long while. Because of their hardship, I am afraid that my practice has been tainted. It is better that you ask the court advisor to teach you the Kurudhamma."

The envoys told the viceroy that his practice had not been tainted in any way. Having inscribed the viceroy's words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they went next to see the court advisor. The court advisor said to them,

"I am afraid that my practice has been tainted because one day I saw a beautiful royal carriage and thought that if the king gave it to me, I would ride it

around for my pleasure. But when the king did give me the carriage, I did not dare accept it because I had had a greedy thought earlier. It is better that you ask the minister who is in charge of land survey to teach you the Kurudhamma.”

The envoys told the court advisor that his practice had not been tainted in any way. After having inscribed his words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they went to see the minister who was in charge of land survey. But the minister said to them,

“Once, I went to survey some rice paddies in the countryside. The measurement ended at a crab hole. If I placed the marking stick to the front of the hole, it would not be fair to the king. If I placed the marking stick to the back of the hole, it would not be fair to the merchant. I looked into the crab hole to make sure that there was not a crab in it before placing the marking stick inside the hole. Alas, I heard a sound as I did so. I am afraid that my practice has been tainted. And it is better for you to ask the driver to teach you about the Kurudhamma.”

The envoys told the minister that his practice had not been tainted in any way. Having inscribed his words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they went next to see the driver. But the driver said to them,

“One day, I was driving the king back to the palace. Dark clouds appeared and for fear that the king might get wet, I encouraged the horses to gallop. Ever since then, whenever we arrived at the area, the horses would gallop thinking that it was a place of danger. I caused them to be tired; therefore, my practice has been tainted. It is better that you ask the millionaire to teach you the Kurudhamma.”

The envoys told the driver that his practice had not been tainted in any way. Having inscribed his words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they went next to see the millionaire. But the millionaire said to them,

“On one occasion, I went to check on my wheat fields and told my servant to remove some wheat sheaf. It was not until later that I realized that I had not yet paid the tax on it. Therefore, I am afraid that my practice has been tainted and it is better that you ask the minister in charge of taxing rice crops to teach you the Kurudhamma.”

The envoys told the millionaire that his practice had not been tainted in any way. Having inscribed his words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they went next to see the minister. But the minister said to them,

“On one occasion while I was measuring the rice crop the rain came. In my haste, I made a mistake causing the owner to pay a higher tax. It is better that you ask the gatekeeper to teach you the Kurudhamma.

The envoys told the minister that his practice had not been tainted in any way. Having inscribed his words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they

went next to see the gatekeeper. But the gatekeeper said to them,

“One day, a man and a woman went outside the city to look for firewood and were late in returning to the city. So I said to the man, ‘You were too busily frolicking with your wife in the forest. Don’t you know that the gate is about to be closed for the night.’ The man told me that the woman was his sister and not his wife. I am afraid my practice has been tainted, and you should ask the woman, Vannadasi, to teach you the Kurudhamma.

The envoys told the gatekeeper that his practice had not been tainted in any way. Having inscribed his words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet, they went next to see Vannadasi. But she said to them,

“On one occasion, a young man came to me and paid for my service in advance saying that he would use my service at a later date. In the meantime, I did not entertain another man because I felt that I owed my service to this young man. I had waited for him for three years until all of my funds had been

depleted. Therefore, I went to see the judge to ask him for permission to resume my work. Having gained the judge's permission, I received a payment from a certain man. As I extended my hand to take the money, who should show up but the young man in question? I immediately withdrew my hand from taking the other man's payment. It turned out that the young man was King Sakka, the sovereign of the Tavatimsa Realm. He transformed himself into a young man those years ago in order to test my honesty. He was so pleased with my conduct that he gave me an enormous amount of precious gems. Anyhow, I feel that my Kurudhamma practice has been tainted."

The envoys told Vannadasi that her practice had not been tainted in any way. And they inscribed her words about the Kurudhamma on a gold sheet.

The Kurudhamma practiced by these eleven individuals were the same thing as the Five Precepts. The envoys returned to the kingdom of Kalinga and submitted the gold sheets to the king. They told the

king how earnestly the inhabitants of the kingdom of Kuru had observed the Five Precepts.

King Kalinga felt deeply inspired to observe the Five Precepts immaculately from that day onward. So did all of the high-ranking court officials and all of the inhabitants. Their collective wholesome conduct ended the prolonged drought and ushered in the rain. With seasonal rainfall, prosperity eventually returned to the kingdom of Kalinga.

Certain crises may require a heroic action, but an economic crisis is serious and its effect is widespread. It requires everyone concerned to act heroically by keeping his body, speech, and mind clean and pure. In other words, it requires that everyone concerned observe the Five Precepts immaculately.

The clean energy generated by the people's Sīla practice has the power to remove every calamitous situation and solve the worst economic crisis. It has the power to create a good and safe environment and ensure economic stability for everyone concerned.

Sīla practice is the very instrument needed to solve every economic crisis.

Transgression of the Precepts

In the story about the Kurudhamma, it is obvious how the inhabitants of Kuru had earnestly observed the Five Precepts. It was unfortunate, however, that they could not feel proud of their Sīla practice because they had no way of evaluating if and when they had actually transgressed the Precepts.

The same situation also applies today in that at times we have inadvertently caused the death of a certain animal or done something that should not have been done, and we wonder if our Sīla practice has been tainted in any way.

Therefore, it is important that we can tell for certain whether or not our action is causing us to transgress the Precepts.

The Components of Sīla

The act of killing consists of the following five components.

1. The animal is alive.
2. One knows that the animal is alive.
3. One thinks about killing the animal.
4. One tries to kill the animal.
5. The animal is dead as a result of one's effort.

The act of stealing consists of the following five components.

1. The object belongs to a possessive owner.
2. One knows that the object belongs to a possessive owner.
3. One thinks about stealing the object.
4. One tries to steal the object.
5. One succeeds in stealing the object.

Sexual misconduct consists of the following four components.

1. The person involved has already been spoken for.

2. One thinks about having sexual intercourse with the person.
3. Sexual activities have taken place.
4. Sexual intercourse has occurred.

The act of lying consists of the following four components.

1. The story is not true.
2. One has the intention to mislead others.
3. One tries to mislead others.
4. One succeeds in misleading others.

Alcohol consumption consists of the following four components.

1. It is an alcoholic drink.
2. One thinks about drinking it.
3. One tries to drink it.
4. One succeeds in drinking it.

The information above allows us to evaluate whether or not our action has caused us to transgress any of the Five Precepts.

For example, in chasing a mosquito, one inadvertently causes it to die. In this case, one has not transgressed the First Precept because all five components have not been met.

However, if four of the five components are met, it means that one's Sila practice has been pierced. If three components or less are met, it means that one's Sila practice has been discolored or tainted.

In the Commentary, it is said that the level of retribution for the transgression of each Precept depends on the following factors.

Killing: The level of the retribution for killing depends on...

1. Virtue: Killing a living being that possesses a greater level of virtue incurs a higher level of retribution than killing a living being that possesses a lower level of virtue. For example, killing an Arahant incurs a higher level of retribution than killing an ordinary person. Killing a working animal incurs a higher level of retribution than killing a ferocious animal. Etc.

2. Size: For all the animals which are devoid of virtue, killing a large animal incurs a higher level of retribution than killing a small animal.

3. Effort: The greater the effort spent in killing an animal, the higher the level of retribution is incurred.

4. Intention: A strong intention incurs a higher level of retribution than a weak intention. For example, killing a living being out of anger or hatred incurs a higher level of retribution than killing for self-defense.

Stealing: The level of the retribution for stealing depends on...

1. The value of the object.
2. The virtue of its owner.
3. The effort spent in stealing the object.

Sexual Misconduct: The level of the retribution for sexual misconduct depends on...

1. The virtue of the person being transgressed against.

2. The level of defilements involved.
3. The effort spent in committing sexual misconduct.

Lying: The severity of the retribution for lying depends on...

1. The level of the damage caused.
2. The virtue of the person being transgressed against.
3. The person who does the lying, for example,

- A householder that lies by saying, "No", because he does not want to share what he has incurs a low level of retribution. But bearing false witness incurs a high level of retribution.

- A Buddhist monk speaking in jest incurs a low level of retribution. But a Buddhist monk who boasts about supernatural insight when he does not actually possess it incurs a high level of retribution.

Alcohol Consumption: The level of the retribution for alcohol consumption depends on...

1. The desire to drink.
2. The amount consumed.
3. The misdeeds committed as a result of having consumed alcohol.

At whatever level of Sīla transgression, be it broken, pierced, discolored or tainted, the retribution incurred works to destroy the quality of our mind. When Sīla transgression gives rise to grave misdeeds, it causes the mind to become gloomy.

Therefore, it behooves every one of us to understand Sīla practice and to practice it in such a way as to keep our mind pure, clean, and happy.





Chapter 8

The Harm Wrought By Not Practicing Sīla

The fruits of Sīla practice are too numerous to enumerate. Likewise, the ill consequences wrought by Sīla transgression are also too numerous to enumerate. If only everyone on earth could truly know the calamitous results of Sīla transgression, no one would dare transgress it. **A person who transgresses the Sīla not only harms others but also commits the worst offence against himself.**

When one transgresses the Sīla, normalcy is destroyed. Sīla transgression turns a clear and clean mind into a sad and gloomy mind. The more one transgresses the Sīla, the more precipitously the quality of one's mind deteriorates. A sad and gloomy mind attracts every bad and undesirable thing into one's life. Moreover, the ill consequences of Sīla transgression go on to wreak havoc in one's future existences.

On the subject of Sīla transgression, this is what our Lord Buddha said to the villagers of the Patali Village.

“Behold, householders, a person who transgresses the Sīla will meet with the following five consequences.

Firstly, his material wealth will disappear as a result of his recklessness.

Secondly, his reputation will suffer.

Thirdly, he feels awkward and self-conscious in the company of royalties, Brahmins, millionaires, and ascetics.

Fourthly, he will be devoid of mindfulness and self-possession at the moment of death.

Lastly, he will be reborn in the state of loss and woe, the States of Unhappiness, the place of suffering, the Hell Realm.

Behold, householders, these are the ill consequences of the person who transgresses the Sīla.”

The consequences of Sīla transgression are unimaginably cruel and frightening. Therefore, it behooves every one of us to learn as much about them as possible through the lives of those who had made the mistake of transgressing the Sīla as exemplified in the following stories.

The Ill Consequences of Killing

When a person makes the mistake of killing another living being, he will have to repeatedly pay for this retribution.

The Matakabhatta Jataka

At a time when King Brahmadata was the ruler of the city of Varanasi, one famous Brahmin teacher wanted to worship the souls of the deceased by sacrificing a goat.

He told his students to find him a suitable goat and to decorate it for the sacrificial offering.

Having chosen an appropriate goat, the students led it to the river in order to bathe it. Having bathed and decorated the goat, they allowed it to stand at the pier by the river.

While standing there, the goat recalled the past misdeed that had caused it to be reborn a goat. When it realized that on that very day, its suffering would come to an end, it felt so glad that it burst

out laughing. But when it thought about the Brahmin who wanted to have it killed as a sacrifice and the ill consequences that he would incur, it felt so sorry for him that it started to cry loudly.

The Brahmin's student asked the goat, (it needs to be mentioned here that according to the Lord Buddha, there are certain periods on earth where animals and human beings can communicate with each other.)

"Hey, why were you laughing and are now crying?"

The goat answered, "Ask me that question after we return to your school."

The student led the goat back to the school and recounted the entire incident to the Brahmin teacher.

The Brahmin asked the goat, "Hey, why did you laugh and then cry?"

The goat answered, "Sir, in one of my previous existences, I was a Brahmin just like yourself.

Unfortunately, I made the mistake of killing a goat as a sacrificial offering. As a result of having killed just one goat, I had been decapitated for the past 499 existences, and this is the last existence that I will be decapitated. That made me glad, so I burst out laughing. But then when I thought about how you would be decapitated for the next 500 existences, I cried because I felt so sorry for you."

The Brahmin then said to the goat,

"You have nothing to fear now, for I will not kill you."

But the goat said, "Whether or not you kill me, today is the day that I die."

The Brahmin said, "Fear not, I will be nearby to protect you."

"Sir, the retribution for my misdeed is far more powerful than your protection."

The Brahmin insisted that he would not allow anyone to kill the goat.

The Brahmin then released the goat; and he and his students followed the goat around to be its bodyguards.

Having been released, the goat then went toward a tree which grew behind a stone slab. While it was browsing, a lightning bolt struck the stone slab causing a shard to fly toward the goat and decapitated it.

The goat's death caused many people to come together to discuss the matter. Our Bodhisatta was reborn a wood nymph in that existence. He appeared to the people by standing in the air and said,

“When living beings learn about the retribution for killing, they would abstain from killing. Know that birth brings about suffering.

One living being should not kill another living being, for the one who kills will come to grief.”

The goat's laughing and crying on his last day on earth served to prevent many from transgressing

the Sīla. But still, the good-hearted and contrite goat had to pay for its misdeed and die prematurely.

One single act of killing causes the mind to deteriorate to the point where rebirth in the Human Realm is made impossible. One has to pay dearly for one's misdeed by being repeatedly reborn in the Animal Realm.

The Ill Consequences of Stealing

It is said that "A person of power and position cannot uphold power and position if he does not practice Sīla."

A Court Advisor's Experiment

At a time when King Brahmadata was the ruler of the city of Varanasi, one of the court advisors who has maintained his Sīla practice immaculately wanted to find out for himself what would happen if he transgressed the Sīla. Therefore, he began stealing one piece of money a day from the royal treasury.

On the first and second day, nothing happened because the officials had had a high regard for the

court advisor. But on the third day, the officials cried "Thief! Thief!" and arrested the court advisor.

As the court advisor was being escorted to the royal palace, he passed a snake charmer. Although everyone knew that the snake was poisonous, but it did not strike anyone because it was under the spell of the snake charmer, yet everyone marveled at how the snake was good and tame. The court advisor thought that if a snake could be admired for being good, how much better it would be for a human being like him to be admired for his Sila practice.

When the court advisor came before the king, he was asked the reason for his misbehavior.

The court advisor said, "I did it in order to find out what it would be like to transgress the Sila. I used to wonder why I was held in such a high regard by your majesty and the people. I wondered if it was due to my family, my knowledge, my position or my Sila practice. Now, I have found out that it was due to my Sila practice.

Your Majesty, the material wealth passed on to me by my father, the material wealth that I have gained on my own, and the material wealth given to me by your majesty are great indeed. I stole from the royal treasury in order to see what it is like to transgress the Sīla. As a result, I now realize that **Sīla practice is higher than family and lineage. It is above and beyond every kind of material wealth.**

The court advisor then asked the king for permission to take up the religious life. He then became a Yogi and went to live in the Himavanta Forest. He had practiced Sīla and meditation until he could achieve meditative attainments. And after he died, he was reborn in the Brahma Realm.

The wise court advisor discovered for himself that power, position, and material wealth cannot come to his aid when he was called a thief.

If the theft had been committed for real out of greed, the story would have definitely ended very differently. It would have ended in total disaster.

The worst consequence of stealing is not so much the damage done to the royal treasury or the punishment exacted by the rule of law, but it is the loss of humanity in the person who has committed the act.

The Ill Consequences of Sexual Misconduct

While our Lord Buddha was accumulating merit and pursuing Perfections as a Bodhisatta, He had to suffer the ill consequences of sexual misconduct for a very long time as shown in the following story.

The Story of a Young Goldsmith

In one existence, our Bodhisatta was born into a goldsmith family. He was endowed with tremendous good looks and he was also an expert in the craft. His reputation was such that he was commissioned by a millionaire to produce gold jewelry for his daughter who was about to be wed to the son of another millionaire.

Having seen the goldsmith's tremendous good looks, the millionaire was afraid that his beautiful daughter might fall for him should she see him. So he asked the goldsmith,

"Can you produce gold jewelry for my daughter if you see only her wrists and her ankles?"

"Yes, of course," was the goldsmith's answer.

The millionaire told his servants to create a partition between the goldsmith and his daughter with just enough spaces for the daughter to extend her hands and feet. The daughter was curious that such an elaborate partition had to be put in place when it had never been done before with other goldsmiths. She decided to take a peek and upon seeing the goldsmith, she immediately fell for him. So, she wrote him a message and threw it across the partition.

"Beloved goldsmith, please meet me at the large tree behind my house tonight."

The goldsmith was pleased to receive the message and went to wait for the millionaire's daughter at the appointed time. Since he had been working hard all day, he was overtaken by sleep.

After everyone in the house had gone to bed, the millionaire's daughter brought some food out for the goldsmith. She did not dare wake him because in those days it was believed that it was a grave sin to wake someone. She waited a while but eventually had to leave.

On the next day, the millionaire's daughter gave him another message urging him not to fall asleep. But once again, he did.

On the third day, the same thing happened. The millionaire's daughter was very disappointed and the goldsmith was very mad at himself.

The following day was the day that the millionaire's daughter was to be wed. But the goldsmith could not put her out of his mind. So he came up with an idea to produce an elaborate piece of gold jewelry for the

viceroys. The viceroy was very pleased with the gift and asked the goldsmith,

“Is there some favor you want to ask of me?”

The goldsmith told the viceroy of his plight. The viceroy told him to dress as a woman and took him to the millionaire’s house. He said to the millionaire,

“The king wishes me to visit the border, and I need to leave my sister with you under your daughter’s care until I come back.”

Even though the millionaire told the viceroy that his daughter had just gotten married and could not really oblige, the viceroy insisted that the millionaire’s daughter took good care of his sister. Moreover, no one including the husband, was to bother the millionaire’s daughter during his sister’s stay.

As a result, the goldsmith and the millionaire’s daughter had committed adultery for a period of three months. As a result of this grave misdeed, our Bodhisatta had to undergo the round of rebirth in the

States of Unhappiness for a total of fourteen Earth Ages.

Having been blessed with so many good attributes and instead of using what he had to accumulate merit and pursue Perfections, he chose to become the slave of lust. As a result, he had lost precious time in his pursuit of Perfections.

With hindsight, the goldsmith would probably never have done what he did. For just three months of lustful indulgence, he had to pay for it for Earth Ages in the States of Unhappiness.

Only Sīla practice can prevent one from falling prey to such wrong and lustful indulgence and protect one from its ill consequences.

The Ill Consequences of Lying

Before saying anything, we must make sure that what we are saying is true. **To tell a lie is to destroy one's worth as a human being** as shown in the following story.

The Kakkaru Jataka

At a time when King Brahmadata was the ruler of the city of Varanasi, a huge festival was organized. It was attended by a large number of human beings, Phya Nagas, Garudas, and earth sprites. The festival was also attended by four male celestial beings from the celestial realm of Tavatimsa. They wore garlands of celestial flowers on their heads. The gorgeous scent of celestial flowers pervaded the entire city. And the people wondered where the lovely scent was coming from.

These four celestial beings appeared in the air in front of the royal palace for all to see.

"From which celestial realm are you? And why are you here?" The people asked.

"We came from the Tavatimsa Realm and are here to attend the festival."

"What are the flowers on your heads called?"

The celestial beings told the people that they were called celestial winter melon flowers. The people

asked if they could wear them too. The celestial beings answered,

“These celestial flowers possess enormous supernatural powers and they are meant for celestial beings only. They are not meant for human beings who are immoral, devoid of insight, and have a penchant for lowly and evil deeds.”

Then the first celestial being said,

“Whoever does not steal, does not lie, does not become pompous as a result of title and position, is worthy of wearing this celestial garland on his head.”

The king’s court advisor knew that he had no such qualifications. But he thought that he would lie to the celestial being so that he could wear the celestial garland on his head and the masses would then think that he possessed the aforementioned virtues.

“I possess these qualifications, sir.”

The court advisor took the celestial garland from the first celestial being and put it on his head.

The second celestial being said,

“Whoever seeks material wealth by righteous means and does not become intoxicated with his material wealth is worthy of wearing this celestial garland on his head.

The court advisor once again lied to the second celestial being that he possessed such qualifications. Having received the celestial garland, he put it on his head.

The third celestial being said,

“Whoever has unshakable faith and shares delicious food with others, is worthy of wearing this celestial garland on his head.”

Again, the court advisor lied and put the third celestial garland on his head.

The fourth celestial being said,

“Whoever does not criticize a righteous man to his face or behind his back, but is true to his word, is worthy of wearing this celestial garland on his head.”

Again, the court advisor lied and put the fourth celestial garland on his head.

Having given the celestial garlands to the court advisor, all four celestial beings ascended to the Tavatimsa Realm.

As soon as they left, the court advisor began to feel piercing pain in his head. He felt as though his head was being pierced by a sharp knife and bound up tightly by a rope of iron. The tremendous pain caused him to drop to the floor, and he had to confess,

“I lied because I wanted to wear the celestial garlands on my head. Please help me to remove them from my head.”

The people tried to help but to no avail. They took the court advisor home and he had to suffer the tremendous pain for seven consecutive days.

The king did not want the immoral court advisor

to die and he asked his ministers how they could help the court advisor. The ministers suggested that a huge festival be organized once again so that hopefully the same four celestial beings would attend.

The king agreed and indeed the same four celestial beings did attend the festival. The court advisor entreated them to save his life.

The four celestial beings chastised the court advisor in front of the masses by saying, **“You are not worthy of these celestial flowers because you do not practice Sīla. You lied to us and have had therefore to suffer the consequences of your lying.”**

Having chastised the court advisor, they removed the celestial garlands from his head and advised the masses to practice Sīla before returning to the Tavatimsa Realm.

The physical pain endured by the court advisor could not be compared to the shame that was heaped upon him as a result of his immorality. But however

much he did suffer physically and mentally here on earth, the real punishment for his misconduct still awaits him in the hereafter.

A person that is a habitual liar destroys his own truthfulness. His lies do much more damage to his own mind than to whomever he lies to. The more lies he tells, the poorer the quality of his mind becomes.

Such are the true consequences of lying.

The III Consequences of Alcohol Consumption

During the Lord Buddha's time, there was a Buddhist monk who practiced righteousness according to the disciplinary rules. He also possessed great supernatural powers as a result of his Jhana attainments. But all the virtues he had possessed disappeared as a result of his alcohol consumption.

Venerable Sagata's Story

At the end of the Rains-Retreat spent in the city of Savatthi, our Lord Buddha decided to trek to the countryside of Cetiya. Upon arriving at the village of Bhaddavatika, the villagers said to the Lord Buddha,

"Most Exalted One, please do not trek to the quayside of Amba because a venomous Phya Naga is living there near the ashram of the fire-worshippers. If you go there, you may be harmed by the Phya Naga."

They told the Lord Buddha thus three times but the Lord Buddha said nothing to them in return. He continued to trek to the village of Bhaddatika.

On that occasion, Venerable Sagata, who had attained the mundane Jhana states, trekked to the fire-worshippers' ashram and went inside the fire-worshipping hall. He made a seat for himself by covering the ground with bunches of grass and went immediately into meditation.

The Phya Naga was furious to see Venerable Sagata there. It sprayed venom at Venerable Sagata. Venerable Sagata employed his supernatural powers to spray venom back at the Phya Naga. The Phya Naga then blew columns of fire at Venerable Sagata. Venerable Sagata entered into the Jhana state of Tejosamapatti and blew back columns of fire at the Phya Naga until he succeeded in quelling the Phya Naga. He then told the Phya Naga to believe in the Triple Gem before returning to report the success of his mission to the Lord Buddha at the village of Bhaddavatika.

Having stayed at the village for a time, the Lord Buddha decided to go to the city of Kosambi. All the city inhabitants came to welcome the Lord Buddha and His disciples. Somehow, the story of Venerable Sagata's victory over the Phya Naga became known to the people. And all of them wanted to know what rarity they could offer to the venerable monk as a show of their admiration.

It so happened that one Buddhist monk, who was jealous of Venerable Sagata's accomplishment, misled the people by advising them to offer alcohol, the color of a pigeon's feet, to Venerable Sagata.

When Venerable Sagata went on his alms-round in the morning, every household offered him the alcoholic drink. And he drank it from every household until eventually he fell down completely drunk at the city gate.

The Lord Buddha and many of His disciples were leaving the city at the time and they saw Venerable Sagata lying down at the city gate. He told His disciples to help Venerable Sagata up and lay him down with his head toward the Lord Buddha. But Venerable Sagata moved his body around so that his feet were toward the Lord Buddha.

The Lord Buddha said to His disciples,

"Behold, monks, isn't it true that Sagata held me in high regards before now?"

The monks answered, "It is true, Most Exalted One."

"But what about now? Does he still hold me in high regards?"

"Not at all, Most Exalted One."

"Isn't it true that Sagata had victory over the Phya Naya in the village of Bhaddavatika?"

"It is true, Most Exalted One."

"But now, Sagata cannot have victory even over a water snake."

"No, he cannot, Most Exalted One."

"Tell me, a drink that brings about unconsciousness, should it be drunk?"

"It should not, Most Exalted One."

"Behold, monks, Sagata's action is not befitting that of a Buddhist monk. He consumed an alcoholic drink. Therefore, his action cannot inspire non-believers to believe, nor can it inspire those who believe to develop a deeper faith."

Alcohol consumption caused Venerable Sagata's supernatural powers to disappear. His conduct brought shame upon himself. Alcohol had so easily turned him from a brave and virtuous person into a weak and despicable person.

It is bad enough that human beings have to cope with the vicissitudes of life. It takes every ounce of willpower and effort just to deal with all the problems in life. There is no need for human beings to add more misery to life by consuming alcohol, which will only cause the mind to deteriorate further and further.

We all know that a gloomy mind leads to rebirth in the States of Unhappiness.

Alcohol consumption has a disastrous effect on one's life.

Transgression of the Sila not only brings about misery and problems, but if the transgression violates the rule of law, one will also receive punishment according to the rule of law.

Every crime, however minor or serious, is caused by the transgression of the Sīla. Transgressors of the Sīla will receive punishment according to the rule of law. But whoever practices Sīla will never break the law.

On one occasion, the Lord Buddha said to His disciples,

“Behold, monks, have you ever heard of a person who has abstained from killing be executed, imprisoned, banished from the kingdom or punished for the very reason that he has abstained from killing?”

“Never, Most Exalted One.”

“Neither have I. I have only heard and seen that a person who has killed someone be executed, imprisoned, banished from the kingdom or punished for the very reason that he has killed someone.”

“That is so, Most Exalted One.”

“Behold, monks, have you ever heard or seen that a person who has abstained from stealing,

sexual misconduct, lying and alcohol consumption be executed, imprisoned, banished from the kingdom or punished for the very reason that he has abstained from stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and alcohol consumption?”

“Never, Most Exalted One.”

“Neither have I. I have only heard that such a person stole things from a house or the forest; such a person molested someone’s wife or daughter; such a person bore false witness and caused others to suffer; such a person was drunk and killed another person; such a person was drunk and stole things from someone’s house or the forest; such a person was drunk and molested someone’s wife or daughter; such a person was drunk and lied and caused others to suffer. Such a person is then executed, imprisoned, banished from the kingdom or punished as result of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and alcohol consumption.

“That is so, Most Exalted One.”

In the **Sabbalahusa Sutta**, the Lord Buddha teaches us the unimaginable consequences of Sīla transgression as follows.

“Behold, monks, whoever makes it a habit to kill other living beings will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, and the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for killing when reborn in the Human Realm is a short lifespan.”

“Behold, monks, whoever makes it a habit to steal will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for stealing when reborn in the Human Realm is financial disaster.”

“Behold, monks, whoever makes it a habit to commit sexual misconduct will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for sexual misconduct when reborn in the Human Realm is vindictive enemy.”

“Behold, monks, whoever makes it a habit to lie will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm,

the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for lying when reborn in the Human Realm is false accusation.”

“Behold, monks, a person who makes it a habit to practice divisive speech will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for practicing divisive speech when reborn in the Human Realm is falling out with friends.”

“Behold, monks, a person who makes it a habit to practice offensive speech will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for practicing offensive speech when reborn in the Human Realm is hearing what is displeasing.”

“Behold, monks, a person who makes it a habit to practice nonsensical speech will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm. The lightest retribution for practicing nonsensical speech when reborn in the Human Realm is causing others to doubt one’s words.”

“Behold, monks, a person who makes it a habit to consume alcohol and/or other addictive substances will be reborn in the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Animal Realm. The lightest retribution for the consumption of alcohol and/or other addictive substances when reborn in the Human Realm is insanity.”

Sila transgression causes one to incur grave and light retribution respectively, namely, rebirth in the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, and the Animal Realm.

The lightest retribution for killing when reborn in the Human Realm is a short lifespan and many illnesses.

The lightest retribution for stealing when reborn in the Human Realm is poverty and destitution. If one had accumulated merit by giving alms in one’s previous existence(s), one will be reborn in a wealthy family. But eventually, one’s material wealth will be destroyed as a result of water, fire, robbery or embezzlement.

The lightest retribution for sexual misconduct when reborn in the Human Realm is encountering many vindictive enemies.

The lightest retribution for lying when reborn in the Human Realm is encountering false accusation or defamation to the point of committing suicide in some cases.

The lightest retribution for divisive speech when reborn in the Human Realm is falling out with friends, being involved in frequent arguments and fights.

The lightest retribution for offensive speech when reborn in the Human Realm is hearing what is displeasing and disturbing on a regular basis wherever one is.

The lightest retribution for nonsensical speech is having one's words doubted by others and having difficulty in meeting with success in life.

The lightest retribution for the consumption of alcohol and/or other addictive substances when reborn in the Human Realm is absentmindedness or insanity.

The lightest retribution for a past misdeed when reborn in the Human Realm is enough to make one's life miserable and difficult. Still, such hardship can never be compared to rebirth in the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, and the Animal Realm.





Chapter 9

Pledging the Precepts

In the past, one may have thought, said, or done things that one may not feel too proud of.

But today and at this very minute, one can start anew by making up one's mind to practice Sīla.

Sīla practice begins with the intention to abstain from unwholesomeness. One can go over each Precept with the intention to observe it as earnestly as possible. That is all it takes to begin Sīla practice.

Whenever one has time, one can then go over each Precept leisurely to see how well one is observing it. The Precept that one has observed immaculately should be a source of one's pride and joy as one continues to observe it flawlessly in the future. For the Precept that one has not been able to observe impeccably, one should begin anew and endeavor to observe it as immaculately as possible.

One pledges the Precepts with the intention to observe them immaculately. Often times one is better inspired if one pledges the Precepts in the presence of the Buddhist monks.

One can pledge the Precepts out loud in front of the Buddhist monks as one prepares one's body, speech, and mind to observe the Precepts immaculately.

Sīla practice begins with an intention and it is supported by a commitment.

Requesting the Five Precepts

*Mayaṃ bhante, visuṃ visuṃ rakkhaṇatthāya
tisaraṇena saha, pañca sīlāni yācāma.*

*Dutiyampi mayaṃ bhante, visuṃ visuṃ
rakkhaṇatthāya tisaraṇena saha, pañca sīlāni
yācāma.*

*Tatīyampi mayaṃ bhante, visuṃ visuṃ
rakkhaṇatthāya tisaraṇena saha, pañca sīlāni
yācāma.*

Pledging the Five Precepts

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
(*three times*)

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(*I seek refuge in the Lord Buddha.*)

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(*I seek refuge in the Dhamma.*)

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(*I seek refuge in the Sangha.*)

- Dutiyampi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(For the second time, I seek refuge in the Lord Buddha.)
- Dutiyampi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(For the second time, I seek refuge in the Dhamma.)
- Dutiyampi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(For the second time, I seek refuge in the Sangha.)
- Tatiyampi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(For the third time, I seek refuge in the Lord Buddha.)
- Tatiyampi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(For the third time, I seek refuge in the Dhamma.)
- Tatiyampi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
(For the third time, I seek refuge in the Sangha.)

The Five Precepts

1. Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī,
 sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from killing living beings.)
2. Adinnādānā veramaṇī,
 sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from taking that which is not given.)

3. Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī,
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from sexual misconduct.)
4. Musāvādā veramaṇī,
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from telling lies.)
5. Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī,
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from consuming alcohol or substances that lead to recklessness.)

Requesting the Eight Precepts

*Mayaṃ bhante, tisaraṇena saha,
aṭṭha sīlāni yācāma.*

*Dutiyaṃpi mayaṃ bhante, tisaraṇena saha,
aṭṭha sīlāni yācāma.*

*Tatiyaṃpi mayaṃ bhante, tisaraṇena saha,
aṭṭha sīlāni yācāma.*

The Eight Precepts

1. Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī, sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from killing living beings.)
2. Adinnādānā veramaṇī, sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from taking that which is not given.)
3. Abrahmacariyā veramaṇī
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of completely refraining from all sexual conduct.)
4. Musāvādā veramaṇī, sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from telling lies.)
5. Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī,
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from consuming alcohol or substances that lead to recklessness.)
6. Vikālabhojanā veramaṇī,
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from eating a meal at the inappropriate time (after midday.))

7. Naccagītavādita-visūkadassana-mālāgandha-vilepana -dhāraṇa-maṇḍana- vibhūsanatṭhānā veramaṇī, sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from dancing, singing or playing romantic music, or attending entertainment, wearing perfume, cosmetics or flower-garlands.)

8. Uccāsayana - mahāsayanā veramaṇī, sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

(I vow to undertake the training of refraining from sleeping on a high or large (luxurious) bed.)





Chapter 10

How to Observe the Precepts Immaculately

One may wonder how it is possible for an ordinary person to observe the Precepts immaculately amidst temptations or scarcity or when no one else is watching.

The answer is, it is possible. Sīla practice can be aided by cultivating the two virtues called Hiri and Ottappa. **Hiri means feeling ashamed of unwholesomeness.** Whatever is unwholesome or

evil, one dares not think, say, or do it because one is repulsed by unwholesomeness the way one is repulsed by filth. **Ottappa means feeling fearful of the ill consequences of unwholesomeness** the way one is fearful of a poisonous snake.

A person who has cultivated Hiri and Ottappa can observe the Precepts immaculately wherever he may be and whether or not anyone is watching.

During the time that the Lord Buddha was staying at the Jetavana Temple, 500 Buddhist monks became fretful during the night thinking about the happiness derived from physical form, taste, smell, sound, and touch that they had experienced before entering the monkhood. With supernormal insight, the Lord Buddha saw how the 500 monks were fretting so and could see that they would come to harm. Therefore, He told Venerable Ananda to fetch all 500 monks and said to them,

“Behold, monks, there are no secrets in this world. One particular sage in the past knew this so he refused to commit an unwholesome deed.”

And then the Lord Buddha told them the following story.

The Sīlavimansa Jataka

At the time that King Brahmadata was the ruler of the city of Varanasi, our Bodhisatta was born in a Brahmin family. When he was of age, he went to study the arts with a famous teacher in Varanasi. In time, he became the head of the class of 500 students.

The teacher had a daughter who was of age and he wanted her to marry one of his students who could observe the Precepts immaculately. Therefore, he wanted to put all of his students to a test.

The teacher called his students together and said to them,

“Now that my daughter is of age, I wish for her to marry. She has need of cloths and jewelry. I want all of you to steal cloths and jewelry from your families. I will accept only the cloths and jewelry that you can steal without being seen by anyone.”

All the young men went home and did what their teacher told them to do. They returned with stolen things for the teacher. Our Bodhisatta was the only one who returned empty-handed. The teacher asked our Bodhisatta,

“You’ve brought nothing for me.”

“No, sir, you specifically said that you would accept only the things that I could steal without being seen by anyone. I happen to believe that an unwholesome deed can never be kept a secret.”

Then our Bodhisatta said,

“There is no place on earth for an evildoer to hide.

A tree grown in the forest, someone can come across it.

A fool makes the mistake of thinking that evil can be hidden.

I see no hiding places, I see no empty space.

I may not see anyone,

But I most certainly see myself.”

Our Bodhisatta's answer was beyond the teacher's expectation, and he said,

"Son, in my house there is nothing of any value except for my daughter. I have put all of you to a test and you are the only one who passes it. Therefore, you are worthy of my daughter."

Having arranged for his daughter to marry our Bodhisatta, the teacher told his students to return all of the things that they had stolen to their families.

At the end of the story, all of the Buddhist monks came to know Hiri and Ottappa. They were able to keep their minds still as the Lord Buddha taught them the Four Noble Truths. At the end of which, all 500 Buddhist monks were able to attain Arahatsip.

In this story, our Bodhisatta was just a young man and yet he was able to observe the Precepts immaculately. He possessed Hiri and Ottappa; therefore, he refused to commit an unwholesome deed even when no one was watching. He resisted the pressure from his teacher and held firmly to his belief in Sila practice.

Hiri and Ottappa are the two virtues that enable one to practice Sīla earnestly.

Without Hiri and Ottappa, it is not possible for one to practice Sīla earnestly.

It is said that ...

“With Hiri and Ottappa, Sīla practice is made possible. Without Hiri and Ottappa, Sīla practice is made impossible.”

Therefore, Hiri and Ottappa are the virtues that make possible a society where its members can live together in peace and harmony. The persons who possess Hiri and Ottappa will meet with good things now and in the hereafter.

As noble as Hiri and Ottappa may be, they can be easily cultivated. **Hiri means feeling ashamed of unwholesomeness.** It can be cultivated by contemplating the following four factors.

1. By contemplating one’s birth in that one was born in a family that earns right livelihood.

Therefore, to earn wrong livelihood will damage the family's reputation.

2. By contemplating one's age in that one is old enough to know better. Therefore, one would not transgress the Sīla because one has the ability to remind oneself.

3. By contemplating one's courage in that one should have the courage to be virtuous and altruistic. One should not transgress the Sīla by falling prey to one's defilements and causing problems for others.

4. By contemplating one's scholarliness in that one is learnt in the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Therefore, one should practice the Lord Buddha's Teachings by practicing Sīla.

Ottappa means feeling fearful of the ill consequences of an unwholesome deed. It can be cultivated by contemplating the following four factors.

1. By contemplating the harm wrought by self-blame in that when one transgresses the Sīla,

one will feel anxious and worried. And one will incur self-blame for having done what is shameful.

2. By contemplating the harm wrought by criticism in that when others learn about one's transgression of the Sīla, one will be called a fool, an evil-doer who brings harm to one's self and others.

3. By contemplating the harm wrought by punishment in that Sīla transgression will cause one to receive punishment according to the rule of law.

4. By contemplating the harm wrought by the States of Unhappiness in that when one is reborn in the Hell Realm, the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm, or the Asurakaya Realm, one will meet with untold suffering and for an unimaginably long time.

Such earnest contemplation will enable one to successfully cultivate Hiri and Ottappa. And then Sīla practice will no longer be such a difficult feat.



One day in the life of a person who practices Sīla and meditation is better than 100 years in the life of a person who practices neither Sīla nor meditation.



Chapter 11

Sīla Parami

One may be just a living being in the vast universe and still fraught with flaws. But one can count oneself most fortunate to be a follower of the Lord Buddha, the Perfect Man, for no living beings can be compared to the Lord Buddha.

Our Lord Buddha's attainment of Buddhahood is most definitely not a coincidence but it happens as a matter of course. It happens because He had spent countless existences accumulating merit and pursuing Perfections to the fullest extent. It can

be said that His pursuit of Sīla Parami (or Morality Perfection) forms the foundation for the attainment of Buddhahood.

Sīla practice can give rise to Parami (or Perfection). Each time that one practices Sīla, it gives rise to the current of wholesomeness called the **Current of Merit**. This shows up as a joyful feeling. The merit accumulated from Sīla practice works to cleanse one's mind. It has the appearance of a clear and bright sphere called "**the Sīla Sphere**". When more and more merit is accumulated through Sīla practice, the Sīla Sphere will eventually give rise to Parami. Parami is the path toward excellence.

As a Bodhisatta, our Lord Buddha had spent countless existences pursuing Sīla Parami (or Morality Perfection). The pursuit requires the utmost patience and perseverance and at times at the cost of His life. There are three levels of Sīla Parami as follows.

1. Sīla Parami: It is the pursuit of Sīla Parami at the basic level. It requires that our Bodhisatta be

willing to sacrifice all of his material wealth for the sake of his Sīla practice.

2. Sīla Upaparami: It is the pursuit of Sīla Parami at the intermediate level. It requires that our Bodhisatta be willing to donate his flesh, organ, and blood for the sake of his Sīla practice.

3. Sīla Paramatthaparami: It is the pursuit of Sīla Parami at the ultimate level. It requires that our Bodhisatta be willing to give up his life for the sake of his Sīla practice.

If one studies how our Bodhisatta had pursued Sīla Parami at all three levels, one will not be at all surprised how our Bodhisatta could attain Self-Enlightenment and became the most perfect living being as the Lord Buddha in His final existence.

Sīla Parami

The following story exemplifies how our Bodhisatta endeavored to pursue Sīla Parami or Morality Perfection at the basic level.

The Story of Culabodhi

In one of our Bodhisatta's previous existences, he had ceased to be from the Brahma Realm and was reborn in a Brahmin family. His parents named him "Culabodhikumara". When he was of age, he went to study the arts at the city of Taxila. After his graduation, he returned home and his parents arranged for him to marry a Brahmin lady of equal status who had also spent her previous life in the Brahma Realm. (It should be noted that all living beings in the Brahma Realm practice chastity)

But our Bodhisatta and the Brahmin lady had no wish to marry at all. They had never even looked at each other with a lustful thought. And they observed the Precepts immaculately as they lived together as husband and wife in name only.

After the parents had passed away and the cremation had been arranged, our Bodhisatta said to his wife,

“Dear, I wish to give you 800 million because I want to take up the religious life.” The Brahmin lady asked,

“Should not a woman take up the religious life?”

“Of course, she should.”

“If that is the case, I have no wish for material wealth because I too wish to take up the religious life.”

Both husband and wife gave away all of their material wealth, severed all family ties and went from village to village until they arrived at the city of Varanasi. They went to practice meditation in solitude inside the royal park.

One day, the king came to the royal park and saw the Brahmin lady. He instantly fell in love with her beauty and asked our Bodhisatta, “What is this lady to you?”

Our Bodhisatta said, “As householders, she was my wife. But now, we are merely fellow ascetics.”

The king desired the Brahmin lady and commanded his soldiers to take her to the city. The king's action angered our Bodhisatta. But as soon as he felt the anger arising, he recalled his Sīla practice and was able to quell his anger.

“Even if the Brahmin lady was pierced by a sharp lance, I cannot sully my Sīla practice. It is not that I do not love her. It is not that I have no physical strength. But it is for the sake of Buddhahood that I must keep my Sīla practice intact.”

The king had the Brahmin lady fetched and bestowed upon her a lofty position. She told him about the harm of position and the virtue of the religious life. She told the king how she and our Bodhisatta had given away all of their enormous wealth. She felt saddened by the king's conduct.

However the king tried to seduce the Brahmin lady, she refused to change her mind.

The king thought to himself, “This Brahmin lady is a person of morality and virtue. Her husband must be one as well, for he showed no anger even when

she was being taken away against her will. Perhaps I should not be treating such virtuous persons this way. I should return her to the royal park and offer them an apology.”

Upon returning the Brahmin lady to the royal park, the king went to talk to our Bodhisatta.

“Venerable sir, when I took the Brahmin lady away, did you feel any anger?”

“I did but I managed to quell it instantly the way the rain can instantly stop the dust from blowing.”

The king asked,

“How did you quell your anger in an instant?”

Our Bodhisatta answered,

*“Anger is the emotion of a person
devoid of insight.*

*Whoever is dominated by anger
Will abandon wholesomeness
and hurt others.*

Anger is like fire.

I will not allow it to escape.”

The king asked both our Bodhisatta and the Brahmin lady for their forgiveness and said to them,

“May both of you remain here at the royal park. I shall provide both of you with protection.” Having paid his respect, the king returned to the palace.

Our Bodhisatta and the Brahmin lady stayed in the royal park until the Brahmin lady passed away. Then our Bodhisatta went to live in the Himavanta Forest. There, he was able to attain the Jhanas. After he died, he was once again reborn in the Brahma Realm.

This true story shows how our Bodhisatta loved his Sīla practice more than material wealth and his own wife.

Our Bodhisatta was not only aided by Hiri and Ottappa, but also by his patience and effort in being able to quell his anger instantly.

The effort needed to quell anger is like the rain that cleanses the mind from gloominess and anxiety.

Our Bodhisatta refused to let anger taint his mind, his Sīla practice, and the pursuit of Sīla Parami.

Sīla Upaparami

The following story exemplifies how our Bodhisatta endeavored to pursue Sīla Upaparami or Morality Perfection at the Intermediate Level.

The Elephant King's Story

At one point, our Bodhisatta was reborn in the Animal Realm as dictated by the Law of Kamma. He was born an elephant king by the name of Chaddanta. He had two cow elephants as his mates by the names of "Mahasubhadda" and "Culasubhadda". He was the head of a herd of a large number of elephants living in the Himavanta Forest. These elephants often went to pay homage to the Paccekabuddhas who were dwelling in the area.

One day, the elephant king led his herd to admire the blooms of the Burmese sal tree. Upon seeing the glorious blooms, the elephant king shook

the tree so that some of the blooms would drop to the ground. It so happened that Mahasubhadda was standing downwind such that the blooms fell on her back. But Culasubhadda was standing upwind under a dry branch filled with ants. As a result, she was covered with ants. She thought that the elephant king covered her with ants on purpose.

“My husband is biased. He caused the blooms to fall on his beloved wife but covered me with ants instead.”

Sometime later, the elephant king went into a large pond to bathe. Two young elephants scrubbed his body with bunches of grass. After the elephant king got out of the pond, it was time for both cow elephants to bathe themselves. Later, they came to stand by his side. Then all the other elephants went into the pond to bathe. They brought flowers for the elephant king and his two cow elephants.

On that particular day, a white elephant found a large lotus bloom with seven layers of petals so he

brought it for his master. The elephant king took the large lotus bloom and knocked it lightly against his cheek so that it will give up its pollen. He then gave the pollen to his cow elephant, Mahasubhadda. His action once again caused Culasubhadda to feel very hurt.

One day, the elephant king offered the mahua fruits and taro roots prepared with honey to a Paccekabuddha. Culasubhadda also made an offering of fruits to Him and she made the following wish.

“By the power of this alms-offering, may I be reborn the daughter of King Madda and may I be called “Subhadda”. When I am of age, may I become the chief queen and the favorite of another king. May he grant me every wish and may I be able to ask him to send a hunter to kill the elephant king and bring me his glorious tusks.”

After the food-offering, Culasubhadda decided to starve herself to death. She was indeed reborn in a royal family and when she was of age, she did

become the chief queen of the king of Varanasi. She was also the king's favorite. And she was able to recall her previous life.

She knew that it was time for her to have her revenge.

She pretended to suffer from morning sickness and said to her husband,

"I wish for something extremely rare. I will not be able to continue living if I do not have it."

The king told her to obtain whatever it was that she wished for.

Having been granted royal permission, the queen had all the hunters fetched and said to them,

"I dreamt that I saw this glorious white elephant whose tusks glowed with six different colored lights. You are to bring back to me these tusks."

The hunters told the queen that neither their fathers nor their grandfathers had ever heard of such an elephant king.

The queen took a good look at the hunters and saw that there was one hunter who appeared particularly cruel in that he had big feet, big knees, a red beard and yellow eyes. She believed that he could accomplish the task for her. So she said to him,

“Go north and across seven mountains until you reach the highest one where there are many different kinds of flowers. Climb up to the top of the mountain and look down, you will see a huge banyan tree the color of clouds. Beneath that tree lives the elephant king with gloriously white skin and radiant tusks. He is the head of 8,000 elephants. These elephants can run like the wind. They will stamp a human being to death in order to protect the elephant king.”

The hunter feared for his life and said, “Your majesty already has so many wonderful pieces of jewelry, why do you need to add ivory to them?”

The queen answered, “This matter has to do with my previous life. Just do as I ask and I will grant you the taxes of five sub-districts.”

Finally, the hunter agreed to take the job. The queen gave him a large sum of money and equipped him with all the weapons and food he needed for the hunting trip.

The hunter spent seven years traveling in the forest before finding the elephant king and his herd. He found himself a hiding place as he thought of the way to kill the elephant king.

Soon afterward, the hunter was able to inflict a serious injury on the elephant king by shooting at his abdomen.

The elephant king trumpeted thrice to warn his herd. They came to him immediately and when they saw that their master had been injured, they went out to look for the culprit. His cow elephant, Mahasubhadda, stood beside him crying as she tried to comfort him. The elephant king knew that the culprit was close by but he did not want the hunter to be hurt by Mahasubhadda. So he told her to go away and look for the culprit.

Once the cow elephant was gone, the elephant king stamped on the ground to cause the board to spring up and reveal his assailant. He asked the hunter for the reason of his attack. When the hunter told the elephant king that he had come for his tusks, the elephant king wanted to kill the hunter. He used his trunk to search the hole where the hunter was hiding.

In that instant, the elephant king was reminded of his Sīla practice and the desire to kill his assailant simply vanished. He did not want to fight the hunter in order to protect his tusks either so he said to the hunter,

“I give you permission to saw off my tusks.”

The elephant king bent his head down so that the hunter could saw off his tusks. The hunter did his best to saw off as much of the tusks as possible. The elephant king’s mouth bled as a result but still the hunter could not saw them off completely.

Finally, the elephant king tried to quell his pain and used his trunk to hold the saw to saw off his own tusks. He then said to the hunter,

“It is not that I do not love my tusks, but Buddhahood is what I love more a thousand-fold. It is for that reason that I did not harm you.”

The elephant king told the hunter to leave immediately before his cow elephant and the rest of the herd returned.

By the time the cow elephant and the rest of the herd returned, the elephant king had already died. All the elephants mourned his passing.

When the Paccekabuddhas heard of the elephant king's death, they flew to the forest and arranged for him a fitting cremation. The cow elephant, Mahasubhadda, was appointed the next head of the herd.

The hunter brought the glorious tusks back to the palace and presented them to the queen.

When the queen saw the elephant king's tusks, she was so overwhelmed with such extreme grief that she expired instantly.

It would have been very easy for the elephant king to kill the hunter, but when he had to choose between his Sīla practice and his tusks, he chose to keep his Sīla practice intact. He knew how important Sīla practice was to the attainment of Buddhahood.

Having been willing to give up his tusks for the sake of his Sīla practice, the elephant king succeeded in pursuing Sīla Upaparami or Morality Perfection at an intermediate level.

Morality Perfection at the Ultimate Level (Sīla Paramatthaparami)

Our Bodhisatta's pursuit of Morality Perfection at the ultimate level is exemplified in the following story.

The Story of the Phya Naga, Sankhapala

In one previous existence, our Bodhisatta was born the son of the ruler of the city of Rajagarh in the kingdom of Magadha.

Once our Bodhisatta was of age and properly educated, the king allowed him to accede to the throne so that he could take up the religious life as a Yogi. The Yogi built an ashram for himself near the Kanavena River, which was one of the entrances to the Naga Realm. There was at the time a Phya Naga king who was becoming bored with life in the Naga Realm. He came often with his attendants to listen to the Dhamma lectures from the Yogi. (It should be noted that Phya Nagas can assume the guise of a human being when they so wish.)

On one occasion when our Bodhisatta came to visit the Yogi, he met the Phya Naga king who was resplendent in every kind of wealth, physical, material, and mental. Our Bodhisatta wished for such wealth as that of the Phya Naga king. Upon returning

to the city, our Bodhisatta gave alms, observed the Precepts, practiced meditation and made a resolute wish for rebirth in the Naga Realm after he died.

By the power of his accumulated merit, our Bodhisatta's wish came true and he was indeed reborn in the Phya Naga Realm as a Phya Naga king by the name of "Sankhapala". But soon afterward, our Bodhisatta grew tired of life in the Phya Naga Realm. He wanted to observe the Eight Precepts so that he could be reborn in the Human Realm. Unfortunately, the Phya Naga Realm was the realm of sensual lust and sensual gratification, hence, unsuitable as a place to observe the Eight Precepts.

Therefore, on every fourteenth or fifteenth day of the waxing moon, the Phya Naga king would come up to the Human Realm to observe the Eight Precepts by lying down on top of a termite mound.

One day, a group of sixteen hunters from Varanasi went out hunting in the forest. All day long, they did not catch anything. On their way out of the

forest, they saw our Bodhisatta lying on the termite mound. The hunters were happy to see such a huge and beautiful snake, thinking its meat to be delicious. They surrounded our Bodhisatta with a thorny net made of rattan. They pulled our Bodhisatta down to the ground and pierced him with a lance over and over again. They then pierced his nose with a spear and thread a rope through it. They bound our Bodhisatta up with vines and carried him on a shoulder pole as they struggled with his enormous weight.

At the time, the caravan of the merchant, "Alara", from the city of Mithila was passing by. Alara saw the huge snake and felt a deep pity for it. So he gave the hunters a large sum of money in exchange for the snake.

Having thus been freed from captivity, our Bodhisatta later returned with his attendants to the residence of Alara and invited him to spend some time in the Phya Naga Realm.

Alara said to our Bodhisatta, "Great Phya Naga king, you possess such material wealth and

supernormal powers, why did you allow the hunters to catch you? Was it because you were frightened?"

Our Bodhisatta answered, "I was not in the least bit frightened and the hunters could not diminish my supernormal powers. But it was because I was observing the Eight Precepts that **I did not do them any harm and allowed them to catch me. I knew that they intended to kill me and eat me, but I was willing to give up my life rather than transgressing the Precepts.**"

"Why must you put up with such cruel treatment when you have every desirable thing here?"

"I did what I did because I wish to be reborn in the Human Realm."

"But how can life as a human being be compared to all of this?"

"Now, Alara, the Human Realm is the only plane of existence where one can practice self-restraint and purify one's mind. If I can be reborn in the Human Realm, I will be able to work toward being emancipated from birth, aging, sickness, and death."

Having spent one year in the Phya Naga Realm, Alara became bored with the celestial wealth there and bid our Bodhisatta farewell. He took up the religious life as a Yogi and trekked everywhere to teach the Dhamma to the masses.

Although reborn in the Animal Realm, the Phya Naga king, "Sankhapala", **valued Sīla practice more than his own life.**

As a rule, every Bodhisatta is willing to give up his life in order to pursue Perfections and advance to the sublime state that is beyond the reach of defilements in order to lead other living beings out of the round of rebirth. It is because our Bodhisatta had been willing to give up his life for the sake of Buddhahood lifetime after lifetime that He could eventually attain Self-Enlightenment and became the Lord Gotama Buddha. Countless living beings have been able to benefit from His Teachings since His arising. And countless more will be able to benefit from His Teachings in the future.

Everyone must encounter the vicissitudes of life but whenever one thinks of the Lord Buddha, one feels secure and one is inspired to continue performing wholesome deeds and following in His footsteps.





Chapter 12

Conclusion

Sīla (or morality) is synonymous with human virtues. Sīla practice allows human beings to live together in peace and happiness.

Sīla practice is the lasting source of wish fulfilment and goodness. It is the kind of goodness that can spread to create peace on earth.

Sīla practice enables one to solve every problem in life whether it is economic or social, individual or

collective. **It may be said that there is no problem on earth that cannot be solved by Sīla practice.**

But it is truly unfortunate that the majority of human beings do not know about Sīla and do not realize the value of Sīla practice. This is the reason for the ever present mayhem and confusion on earth.

Sīla practice does not require any investment in terms of money or knowledge. All it requires is a good and willing heart.

Sīla practice allows one to earn merit with one's mind. It is the mind that is resolute, patient and considerate. It is the mind that has a high regard for one's self and other living beings. Such a mind is the basis of wholesomeness. Therefore, whoever practices Sīla stands to earn enormous merit.

Up to this point, it is hoped that the reader has come to appreciate that no matter how much knowledge one may have about Sīla, **it is pointless unless one makes up one's mind to practice it. Therefore, let the reader make up his mind now to practice Sīla.**

Once we find out for our self how beneficial Sīla practice is, we will be able to encourage others around us to practice Sīla as well. And the people around us can in turn encourage the people around them to practice Sīla. When the number of people who practice Sīla reaches a critical mass, there will be peace and happiness for all.

When it comes to Sīla practice, now is the time to get started. No one can afford to let more days go by without practicing Sīla.





Appendix



More Interesting Facts about Sīla Practice

Sīla practice is not only about not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying, and not consuming alcohol and other addictive substances, but it is also about not harming or exploiting other living beings.

1. The Intention to Abstain from Killing

It means the intention to abstain from the following forms of unwholesomeness.

a. Killing

This pertains to all living beings which include human beings, animals, and fetuses.

b. Inflicting Injury

Here, it means not causing another human being

- To become physically impaired.
- To become physically marred.
- To become wounded.

c. Torture

Here, it means the different forms of animal mistreatment and include:

- Overworking an animal, not allowing it to get enough rest or food.
- Confining an animal to a small area such that it cannot move around.

- Delivering an animal by tying it and causing it to suffer hardship.
- Abusing an animal for one's entertainment.
- Bringing animals together for the specific purpose of having them fight each other as in cockfighting, etc.

2. The Intention to Abstain from Stealing

It means the intention to abstain from the following forms of unwholesomeness.

a. Thievery: It includes:

- Burglary
- Snatching
- Extortion
- Robbery
- Making a false claim of ownership.
- Embezzlement
- Swindling
- Cheating
- Counterfeit goods

- Claiming ownership of a borrowed item.
- Pilferage
- Exchanging one's inferior item for another person's superior item.
- Skimming, selling illegal goods
- Hiding the possessions about to be confiscated.

b. Indirect Thievery: It includes:

- Lending support to theft such as buying stolen goods, giving shelter, food, and water to a thief, etc.
- Fleecing someone.
- Acts of corruption.

c. Other Forms of Indirect Thievery: They include:

- Vandalism such as setting someone's house on fire, etc.
- Taking liberty with other people's things.

3. The Intention to Abstain from Sexual Misconduct

The following persons are considered to be forbidden and must never be transgressed against sexually.

Forbidden women include:

- A married woman
- An underage female
- A female ascetic

Forbidden men include:

- Other men besides one's husband
- A male ascetic

Sexual misconduct is considered to be more damaging to a woman than a man.

4. The Intention to Abstain from Lying

It means the intention to abstain from the following forms of unwholesomeness.

a. False Speech: It includes

- Telling a lie.

- Swearing to tell the truth despite the fact that one is lying.

- Boasting about one's supernatural powers when one does not really possess them.

- Being deliberately misleading.

- Using words that can be misleading.

- Embellishing the facts.

- Cutting out certain parts of a document or a story with the intention to mislead.

b. Telling an Untrue Story but without the intention to mislead others. It includes:

- Using words to make someone feel hurt or embarrassed.

- Using false speech for fun.

c. Not Honoring One's Word: It includes:

- Not honoring one's part in an agreement.

- Not honoring one's promise.

- Not doing what one has agreed to do.

Note : There are other forms of lying that incur no retribution and they include:

- The use of salutation as when writing a letter, words like “respectfully yours”, etc.
- Fictional writing.
- Misunderstanding what one has heard and telling others about it without realizing one’s misunderstanding.
- The words exclaimed out loud when startled.

5. The Intention to Abstain from the Consumption of Alcohol and Other Addictive Substances

Alcohol and addictive substances are the sources of recklessness and they include:

- **Alcohol:** It includes hard liquor, beer and other alcoholic beverages.
- **Addictive Substances:** They include non-distilled alcoholic preparations, opium, marijuana, heroin, amphetamine, and every substance that causes one to lose control of one’s behavior.

The Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action

The Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action includes:

1. The intention to abstain from killing
2. The intention to abstain from stealing
3. The intention to abstain from sexual misconduct
4. The intention to abstain from false speech
5. The intention to abstain from divisive speech
6. The intention to abstain from offensive speech
7. The intention to abstain from nonsensical speech
8. Non-covetousness
9. Non-ill will
10. Having Right View

The first three concern physical honesty. The fourth to the seventh concern verbal honesty. And the eighth to the tenth concern mental honesty. On the contrary, the Tenfold Unwholesome Course of Action includes three forms of physical dishonesty, four forms of verbal dishonesty, and three forms of mental dishonesty.

It can be seen that the first to the seventh parts of the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action correspond to the first four Precepts. As for the fifth Precept, the Lord Buddha categorizes it as part of the Six Causes of Ruin.

Both the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action and the Five Precepts are the human virtues that have always been the mark of humanity. For this reason, the Lord Buddha has incorporated them into His teachings.

The Importance of Sīla Practice

Sīla Is Like the Ground

On one occasion when our Lord Buddha was staying at the Jetavana Temple in the city of Savatthi, He said to the His disciples,

“Behold, monks, whatever one has to undertake, one is enabled to do it because one has the ground to stand on. Likewise, it is because of his Sīla practice that the Buddhist monk can be well trained in the Noble Eightfold Path.

It is because of his Sīla practice that he can cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration to the extent that detachment, the absence of lust, and the cessation of suffering can be brought about.”

Sīla and Panna Are the Foremost Virtues

On one occasion, our Lord Buddha trekked in the company of a large number of His disciples to the city of Campa. They went to stay by the bank of the Gaggara River.

At the time, the Brahmin by the name of Sonadanda, who was the ruler of Campa City, came to see the Lord Buddha. In the Lord Buddha's presence, he became worried that he might not be able to ask an intelligent question or answer the Lord Buddha's question in a satisfactory manner. He did not want to be thought of as a stupid person, which would cause him to lose position and material wealth. Therefore, he felt inclined to leave.

The Lord Buddha knew the Brahmin's thought and made sure to ask the Brahmin about the Vedas at which he was an expert. The Lord Buddha asked him what qualified someone as a Brahmin.

The Brahmin answered that to qualify as a Brahmin, one has to possess the following five attributes.

1. One must be born in a family where both parents are descended from seven generations of Brahmins.
2. One must be able to memorize the Vedas.
3. One must have a good complexion.
4. One must practice Sila.
5. One must possess Panna (or insight).

The Lord Buddha asked the Brahmin if one could still qualify as a Brahmin if one possessed just four of such attributes. And if so, what attribute could be forgone. The Brahmin said that having a good complexion could be omitted.

The Lord Buddha asked the Brahmin if one could still qualify as a Brahmin if one possessed just three attributes. And if so, what other attribute could be forgone. The Brahmin said that memorizing the Vedas could be omitted.

The Lord Buddha asked the Brahmin if one could still qualify as a Brahmin if one possessed just

three attributes. And if so, what attribute could be forgone. The Brahmin said that having Brahmin parents could be omitted.

At this point, all the other Brahmins present at the congregation began to fret and they entreated Sonadanda not to say such things because what he was saying had an impact on the Brahmin caste.

But Sonadanda was adamant and said that my grandson, Angaka, who is also sitting among us, possesses a good complexion, can memorize the Vedas, and was born of parents who are descended from seven generations of Brahmins, and yet he kills, he steals, he commits sexual misconduct, he lies, and he drinks. It only goes to show that his good complexion, his good memory, and his good lineage cannot help him. Therefore, a person who practices Sila and possesses Panna (insight) can call himself a Brahmin.

The Lord Buddha asked Sonadanda if one more attribute could be omitted, but Sonadanda answered

in the negative. He said that Sīla practice gives rise to Panna and Panna gives rise to Sīla. Within Sīla, there is Panna. Within Panna, there is Sīla. Sīla and Panna are the foremost virtues. It is like using one hand to wash another hand and using one foot to wash another foot. Sīla and Panna must go hand-in-hand.

The Lord Buddha confirmed that what Sonadanda said was correct.

Sīla Practice Leads to Supernormal Insight

On one occasion while our Lord Buddha was staying at the Jetavana Temple in the city of Savatthi, a Buddhist monk came to see Him. He entreated the Lord Buddha to give him a short lesson which would inspire him to go in search of solitude and endeavor to practice meditation until he could gain supernormal insight.

The Lord Buddha said to him, "Behold, monk, the first thing you must do is to observe the Precepts immaculately by practicing the Tenfold Wholesome

Course of Action and cultivating Right View. Once you have observed the Precepts immaculately and have cultivated Right View, you will then be ready to practice meditation according to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Once you have performed these things, you will certainly grow in wholesomeness all day and all night long.”

The Buddhist monk was so inspired by the Lord Buddha’s words that he arose to pay homage to the Lord Buddha and went in search of solitude where he could practice according to the Lord Buddha’s advice in earnest. Soon afterward, he was able to attain Arahatsip.

The Benefits of Sīla Practice

A Buddhist monk, who has observed the Precepts immaculately together with the manner in which he holds his alms-bowl and puts on his robe, is an image of inspiration.

The mind of a Buddhist monk who has observed the Precepts immaculately will not wander into a dangerous zone. He is like the sun that does not wander into darkness.

A Buddhist monk practicing religious austerity in the forest is beautiful because of his earnest Sīla practice. He is like the moon that shines gloriously in the night sky.

The scent of a Buddhist monk who observes the Precepts immaculately spreads far and wide giving joy to the celestial beings. The scent of Sīla overpowers the scent of all the flowers. It pervades everywhere with and against the wind.

The small number of alms offered to a person who practices Sīla bears many fruits. The person who practices Sīla is like a vessel used to contain articles of worship.

The corruption of this world cannot taint a person who practices Sīla.

A person who practices Sīla removes the root of suffering inherent in the hereafter.

Whatever wealth in the Human Realm and the Celestial Realm can be obtained by the person who practices Sīla if he so desires. The mind of a person who practices Sīla is pure and is attracted by the wealth of Nibbana which is lasting bliss.

These are but a few sayings about Sīla practice mentioned in the Tipitaka. Nonetheless, they should serve to inspire the reader to have confidence in the incomparable value of Sīla practice.



THE SEVEN BASES OF THE MIND



How to Meditate

Dhammakaya Meditation Tradition

The Dhammakaya Meditation method was initiated in Thailand 60 years ago by the Great Master Phra Mongkolthepmuni, famously known as Luang Pu Wat Paknam. It is one of the most popular meditation techniques practiced by Buddhists and non-Buddhists around the world. The method is simple, easy, and effective. Everyone can learn how to do it and can achieve inner peace and happiness that you may never know existed.

“Dhammakaya” is a Pali word which means **“Body of Enlightenment”**. The term appears in many places in the Buddhist scriptures of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tibetan) schools. The uniqueness of the Dhammakaya Meditation is that it teaches about the center of the body as the natural home of the human mind as well as the inner gateway to enlightenment. The stiller the mind is at its natural home, the deeper the happiness one experiences.

Dhammakaya Meditation also has a moral impact on the mind. A person who meditates regularly will become gentler, kinder, and more peaceful.

Step-by-Step Instruction

1. The sitting posture, which has been found to be the most conducive for meditation, is the half-lotus position. Sit upright with your back straight, cross-legged with your right leg over the left one. You can sit on a cushion or pillow to make your position more comfortable. Nothing should impede your breathing or circulation. Your hands should rest palms-up on your lap, and the tip of your right index finger should touch your left thumb. Feel as if you were one with the ground on which you sit. Feel that you could sit happily for as long as you like.

2. Softly close your eyes as if you were falling asleep. Relax every part of your body, beginning with the muscles in your face, then relax your face, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, trunk and legs. Make sure there are no signs of tension on your forehead or across your shoulders.

3. Close your eyes gently but not completely. Stop thinking about any worldly things. Feel as if you were sitting alone; around you is nothing and no one. Create a feeling of happiness and spaciousness in your mind.

Before starting, it is necessary to acquaint yourself with the various resting points or bases of the mind inside the body.

- The first base is at the rim of the nostril, on the right side for men and on the left side for women.

- The second base is at the corner of the eye, on the right side for men and on the left side for women.

- The third base is at the center of the head.

- The fourth base is at the roof of the mouth.

- The fifth base is at the upper center of the throat.

- The sixth base is at a point in the middle of your abdomen, the meeting point of an imaginary line between the navel through the back and the line between the two sides.

- The seventh base of the mind is two fingers' breadth above the navel. This base is the most important point in the body. It is the very center of the body and the point where the mind can come to a standstill.

4. Feel that your body is an empty space, without organs, muscles or tissues. Gently and contentedly rest your attention at a point near the seventh base of the mind at the center of the body. Whatever experience arises in the mind, simply observe without attempting to interfere with it. This way, your mind will become gradually purer and inner experience will unfold.

5. If you find that you cannot dissuade the mind from wandering, then your mind needs an inner object as a focus for attention. Gently imagine that a bright, clear, crystal sphere, about the size of the tip of your little finger, is located inside at the center of the body. Maybe, you cannot imagine anything, but later, you'll be able to see a crystal ball with increasing clarity. Allow your mind to come to rest at the center of the crystal ball. Use the subtlest of effort and you'll find that the crystal ball becomes brighter and clearer.

6. If you find that your mind still wanders from the crystal ball, you can bring the mind back to a standstill by repeating the mantra, "Samma-arahang" silently, as if the sound of the mantra is coming from the center of the crystal ball. Repeat the mantra over and over again without counting.

7. Don't entertain thoughts in your mind. Don't analyze what's going on in the meditation. Allow the mind to come to a standstill. That is all that you need to do. If you find that you cannot imagine anything, repeat the mantra "Samma-arahang", silently and continuously in the mind. If you are not sure about the location of the center of the body, just know that anywhere in the area of your abdomen will do. Don't be disappointed if you find your mind wandering. It is only natural for beginners. Make effort continuously, keep your mind bright, clear and pure, and in the end, you will achieve success.

8. Keep repeating the mantra. Eventually the sound of the mantra will fade away. At that point a new bright, clear, crystal sphere will arise of its own accord. This stage is called "pathama magga" (primary path). At this stage the shining crystal sphere is connected firmly to the mind, and is seated at the center of the body. You will experience a great happiness that you have never known before. With a perfectly still mind focused at the center of the crystal sphere, it will give way to a succession of increasingly purer transcendental inner bodies, until it reaches the "**Body of Enlightenment**" known as "Dhammakaya". This is the highest meditative attainment which enables the practitioner to achieve super knowledge and supreme happiness.



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สมาชิกอาศรมอุบาสง

เจ้าภาพอุปถัมภ์

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 ครอบครัวยาระสุขวัฒน์-ครอบครัวยะเลศปัญญาพรสกุล-ครอบครัวยะรักษศรี
 โครงการอาสาพันธู์ตะวัน
 จำนงค์-นงลักษณ์-ณัฐชัย พัดเยี่ยม
 จินตนา-จิระชัย-อัญชลี-อัจฉรา ปลอดท่วง
 โจเซฟ-ฐีร์วัฒนา-มาร์เซลล่า ซาวาลโลนี่
 ขวลิต-ทองวัน วีระศิริวัฒน์ พร้อมครอบครัว
 ฐนปกรณ์ เซาว์ช่วงโชติ, วรรณนภา สุภวัน
 ธนวัฒน์-มนัญสิริกา อนันตภาควุฒิ
 นพ.ประกิตพันธู์-ประภัสสร-ธรรม ทมทิตชงค์
 ปวันรัตน์-สุชาติ-สุนันทา-ธนกร-ลัดดาวัลย์ จันทรวงานต์โกศล
 วัดพระธรรมกายบุงโรส
 พระภิกษุรุ่น 20
 พระอานาจ วีระมโฆ
 พระณัฐวุฒิ อธิวุฒิ และคณะญาติมิตร
 พระภีร์พัฒน์ อคคจิตโต และครอบครัวพิทักษ์ปิติเลิศ
 พระมหาอริยะ อริยชัย-คุณประจักษ์-คุณเฉิดฉาย ธิรทินรัตน์
 พระปราณีต ปณีตธมโม,แม่คล้าย-พ่อน้อม-บุตร ธิดา,กรกมล เหลาสีทธิ
 พระสุวัฒน์ กิตติรัตน,พระวรุฒม์ ธณญวโร,คุณสุจรรยา-คุณวริศา เพชราริรัชต์
 พระนิตติ จิตตพนโต,คุณพิชัย-สุนีร์-รศ.ดร.กาญจนา-วชิราภรณ์-อมรรัตน์ เศรษฐนันท์

เจ้าภาพอุปถัมภ์

ภักดิ์ บุญสูง, ทิววรรณ ตติยเจริญสุข และคณะ

ฤดีวรรณ-พนมพร ช่างผาสวย

ลัดดา ชื่นชูเหลืออม และครอบครัว

ศูนย์ประสานงานโซนเหนือล่าง 1

อำนวยการเพื่อพรรณ นิจการพิศิษฐ์

อาจารย์สำรวย-ผศ.ทพ.ญ.ดร.นภา สุขใจ

ประกอบ ไทธงชัย-ศิริจันทร์-กัญญา-กมลรัตน์-ปณิตน์ภัทร์ ได้ธงชัย และครอบครัว

อภิชา-โกษม-ฉนกร-จิตาภา-ภัคกร-ชยุต-กฤตยา-ชา-ใหม่-ปิติพัฒน์-เมธาพันธ์

-บุษิตา แจ่มจันทร์ชนก

อุทัย-สุชาดา-ชูชัย-ศิริเพ็ญ-ศิริพร-ชูเกษ-ศิริลักษณ์ อุ๋นจิตติ, อาม่าคาล้ง, TS และ

ญาติมิตร



Whoever has studied Sīla practice in-depth cannot help but be inspired to practice it. He will also want to encourage everyone around him to practice it. Sīla practice is the basis of individual and collective goodness and decency.

Sīla (or morality) is synonymous with human virtues. Sīla practice allows human beings to live together in peace and happiness.

Sīla practice is the lasting source of wish fulfilment and goodness. It is the kind of goodness that can spread to create peace on earth.



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