






Pages to Happiness



A detailed illustration of a branch with several pink cherry blossoms. The flowers have five petals and prominent red stamens. A small, striped caterpillar is visible on the right side of the branch. The background is a textured green.

Dhamma Talk by Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Phra Phadet Datta jeevo)
Compiled by S. Phongsawasdi

&
The Thinkers and Writers for World Peace Club, Exemplary Youth Development Foundation



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Dhamma Talk by Phrabhavanaviriyakhun

(Phra Phadet Datta jeevo)

Compiled by S. Phongsawasdi

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"Happiness" is the most preferred term to describe what all people are searching for. Whether or not they are children or adults, men or women, young or old, rich or poor; everyone searches for happiness. However, how many of these people know how to accumulate real happiness in their lives?

In either case, we are the ones who are ignorant of such knowledge. The happiness we have in our lives is of a temporary kind. That is, even though we have one thing, we are still greedy for more and more without end.

Fortunately, one day we had the chance to read the important script entitled "**The 38 Paths of the Blessings of Life.**" Written over twenty years ago by the Most Venerable Dattajeevo Bhikkhu, this teaching made us know the path to happiness.

Each page of the script seemed to open an increasingly intensified sense of happiness within us. Every word represented immeasurable virtue upon completing the book. We thought about how we could help others to have a chance to read it and be inspired to further investigate the teaching for their own benefit.

We then asked the Most Venerable Dattajeevo Bhikkhu for permission to make a copy of the more important and inspirational sections of the text for printing. We tried to make the text short, easy to understand and easy to remember so as not to spend too much time on reading. For further information, the audio CD/MP3 of "The 38 Paths of the Blessings of Life" by the Most Venerable Dattajeevo Bhikkhu (Thai version), and the book "A Manual of Peace: 38 Steps towards Enlightened Living" in English by Venerable Nicholas Thanissaro, a monk-disciple of the Most Venerable, are suggested as the supplements and are now available.

Lastly, we hope that the book "Pages to Happiness," a "pocket-book" for the family, will be one of the books that will radiate happiness and encourage all readers to perform better deeds. This is the pathway to happiness for everyone, in all walks of life.

Best Wishes,

The Thinkers and Writers for World Peace Club





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Compiler's Preface



Building up happiness for our lives is similar to going up stairs step by step.

Originally, we were born into the world with nothing, without even a piece of cloth. Whatever we have today came afterwards such as money, cars, housing, spouse, family, and children. Finally, we have to die and leave everything behind without the perception of anything that follows afterwards. All of the things we have ever had are only temporary sources of happiness for us.

Still there is another kind of happiness that is comprised of the inner peace collected by continuously performing virtuous actions. A metaphor for climbing up 38 stairs, step by step: each step makes us happier, that

is, the more stairs you can climb the more happiness will be occurrence on everyday in your life. This trail could begin with a peaceful happiness and progress all the way through to the most abundant happiness, as well as other external forms of happiness. These are the benefits accrued from climbing this ladder of happiness.

How could this inner peace, which is compared to going up the 38 stair steps, happen? And how much does this sort of happiness make our life and family more peaceful? I welcome all to discover the solutions from this book **"Pages to Happiness."**

S. Phongsawasdi





Gustavia augusta

Not Associating with the Fool

People aspire to be good and be recognized by those around them. However, not everyone will achieve this. The main cause for lacking such achievement is one's own failure to distinguish and judge each experience and situation in the world to be right or wrong, good or bad, wholesome or unwholesome, proper or improper. For instance, the acts of drinking alcohol, gambling, lying, adultery, are perceived as acceptable to do. In actuality, these acts are not acceptable at all, and therefore people suffer the repercussions without understanding the reason why. As a result, they continue on with these wrong acts in their lives. These types of people hardly achieve true accomplishments.

How does one learn to distinguish between good and bad judgements in life?

- 1) By learning through experience from one's family, friends, or acquaintances.
- 2) By one's own conscience.

If one is to associate with foolish friends who possess bad discretion, then our thinking, speech, and actions would be compromised throughout our whole life.

In monastic terms, all these foolish acts combine to become **"Evil"** and the person who follows such bad discretion becomes **"the Fool."** When associating with the fool, one can absorb their bad qualities and subsequently it can spread from one person to another.

In brief, the responsibility we have, to ourselves, is to recognize the people who are foolish and to not associate with them. Most importantly, if we scrutinize ourselves, and we still exert some characteristics of a fool, we should take the task to eliminate such wrongful qualities.





Phryganocydia corymbosa



Associating with the Wise



The general knowledge that is used to define a person who is "wise" is usually perceived as one who has graduated and received a degree.

However, even those who received degrees are still capable of making unwise judgements and can still do bad things that can put them in prison. This is an example of someone who may be considered "wise" according to their educational degrees, but not "wise" in their conscious actions and judgements.

Someone who is truly wise is one who has the good judgement to intentionally abstain from evil deeds and rejoice in practicing righteousness, moral conduct, and honesty. He will have the good conscience to discriminate what is right or wrong, good or evil, meritorious or unmeritorious, and proper or improper.



Furthermore, he can help others to possess the “**Right View.**”¹ This type of person places his faith into upholding values and life with wisdom.

A clear, purified, and peaceful mind brings about a truly wise individual. In other words, a well-controlled mind is conducive to happiness, good thoughts,² and peacefulness so that he is absent from resentment, anxiousness, misery, and restlessness. With such qualities of the mind, the wise man encompasses only good thoughts, speeches, and actions.

The characteristics of a truly wise individual are not restricted to one’s literacy or education attainment. The following qualities are examples that describe one who is wise:

Righteous Thoughts:

- 1) Being generous.
- 2) Wishing others well and forgiving at all times.
- 3) Absence of vengeful thoughts.

4) Having the correct understanding of the reality of good and bad. For example, acknowledging that good and evil deeds do exist and can come to pass, and that one does owe the debt of gratitude to one’s parents.

¹ The right understanding of how the world really works and the reality of life itself.

² Good thought and good views are interchangeable in this passage. Having good thoughts is equivalent to having humble and right perceptions or views.



Righteous Speeches:

- 1) Speaking only the truth.
- 2) Speaking words that encourage loving harmony among people.
- 3) Speaking words which are of use to others.
- 4) Speaking with kindness.
- 5) Speaking artfully and with tactfulness; appropriate to the occasion, place, and time.

Righteous Actions:

- 1) Offering loving kindness and compassion.
- 2) Earning an honest living.
- 3) Giving alms.
- 4) Practicing moral conduct and the Five Precepts.³
- 5) Meditating and being mindful.

Therefore, a genuinely wise individual is not necessarily just well educated but is complete with moral virtues, wisdom, a right way of living, and has a controlled mind. Furthermore, he is capable of teaching others close to him and can teach them to carefully consider their actions.

³ Abstaining from killing, stealing, adultery, lying, alcohol and intoxicants.





Vriesea ensiformis var. *bicolor*



Expressing Respect to Those Who Are Worthy of Our Respect



One of the most difficult jobs in the world to do is the job of teaching the idea of what is right and what is wrong. And because of that, whoever is able to teach us to see what is right should be someone we will always respect and pay homage to for our whole lives.

One can prevent from committing wrong judgement by not associating with those who are “Fools.” One is planted with the right view when associating with the wise. He is able to maintain this by showing his respect, high praises, and adoration to those whom are worthy of respect.

Those who are worthy of our respect are the ones whose qualities are those that we should aspire to do. They are not only able to be examples we can follow, but they are able to teach us to understand the following:



1. The giving of alms does bear fruit.
2. The giving of aid does bear fruit.
3. Respecting those who are worthy of our respect does bear fruit.
4. Good and evil deeds do bear fruit.
- 5-6 The reality of ‘this world’ and the ‘hereafter’ exists.
- 7-8 The debt of gratitude owed to one’s parents exists.
9. The reality of heaven and hell exists.
10. “Arahants”¹ do exist.

In other words, the ‘Right View’ is the truth of the world and life. This higher knowledge is harder to persuade because it is beyond our mundane thinking or comprehension. As a result, planting or training people the right view is more difficult than any other profession or training in the world.

The one who possesses and is able to train others in the right view habitually maintains precepts (silā), concentration (samādhi), wisdom ((pañña), and is considered more able than us. For example, such persons are the Lord Buddha or the Enlightened One, monks who are complete with precepts and virtues, kings who practice the

¹ The enlightened ones who have attained Nirvana (Nibbāna).



“10 Sovereign Virtues,”² as well as our teachers, leaders, parents, older relatives, or any other knowledgeable adults who perform acts of good moral conduct and are steadfast in their righteousness.

Respecting those who are worthy of our respect does bear fruit. Paying homage to those high with virtue can lead us to notice their good characteristics and positive thinking. We should attempt to accrue these virtues as well. As a result, our mind will be clear, clean, and bright all the time. Thus practicing the path of accomplishment (iddhipāda) is unfolded.

Aspiration (Chanda) : We are inspired (by those worthy ones) to follow in their footsteps.

Exertion (Viriya) : We persevere (because of those worthy ones) to devote ourselves to do good deeds regardless of any hardship.

Dedication (Citta) : We are completely focused on our works and never leave them unfinished in between.

Examination (Vāmamsā) : We develop ourselves to be more virtuous through self- development.

In conclusion, respecting those who are worthy of our respect can lead to a life with greater virtue, benefit, and success.

² Giving, keeping the precepts, sacrifice, honesty, having a gentle disposition, rejecting indulgence through austerity, perseverance, no anger, no exploitation, and no mistakes.





Paphiopedilum Sukhakulii Schoser & Senghas

Living in a Suitable Environment

A Bodhi or Ficus tree¹ in soil full of nutrients with a spacious environment will grow to its full height of approximately 20 to 40 meters. However, if it is placed in a small pot, it will remain small, only able to grow to the size of its surroundings. Even if you were to raise it for a hundred years, it would always remain that size, being equal to a bonsai tree of a maximum height of 25 centimeters. Human beings are the exact same way. Even if they are intelligent, have a strong sense of commitment, and great abilities, if they are raised in the improper environment without support, no matter how intelligent they are, will not be capable of accomplishments.

¹ The Bodhi tree is a symbol of the Buddhist faith. It was under the Bodhi tree that Prince Siddhāttha reached enlightenment to become The Buddha. The Ficus tree is a large genus of a tropical tree.

According to Buddhist teachings, our surroundings and circumstances have a great impact on one's progress and life. The proper environment can deliver a life of good health, self-development, and spiritual progress. Favorable environment not only supports the improvements of our body and mind, but it also contributes to the progression of our careers. This environment also acts as encouragement to continue our virtuous conduct. Supportive and suitable environments are described as "Patirupadesvasa" by the Lord Buddha.

The Characteristics of a Suitable Environment

- 1) **Comfortable location.** This means one should choose a suitable area in which to live, study, and work. It should be conducive to learning and life accomplishments. For example, a house should have good public utilities with surrounding fauna. A school should have good ventilation, minimum noise, spaciousness, and sport fields. A business should be in a place in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the city or town. At the meteorological level, the city or state where one lives should have a good climate that is not too hot and not too cold.



- 2) **Comfortable means for food.** This means that one's house should be located close to the market or an area where food supplies may be produced.
- 3) **Suitable Neighbors.** The area in which one lives should not have gang members, ruffians, or thieves, but decent, morally disciplined people.
- 4) **Comfort in Dhamma.**² This means having virtue and being proper in two classifications:

Worldly Knowledge: interpreted as good education provided by schools and institutes. The schools themselves must have moral in governing principles when taking care of the students, teachers, and other employees.

Dhamma Knowledge: where the monks or wise people who possess Dhamma are able to educate or train the residents in the area. Otherwise, it can be interpreted as the lands where Buddhism is taught and can encourage individuals to give alms, keep the precepts, listen to Dhamma sermons, and practice meditation on a daily basis.

Thus, "Living in a Suitable Environment" can offer both worldly benefits and spiritual growth in one's life.

² Dharma (Buddhist teachings)





Heliconia spp.

Having Done Good Deeds in One's Past

Quality fruits carry quality seeds. Wherever they are planted, that same quality will mature into delicious fruit trees without the need for extra specific care. Likewise, the "seed of goodness"¹ or merit that one has accrued in one's past lives consists naturally of a clear mind, wisdom, radiant health and appearance, and will constantly have pleasant opportunities presented to him to do more meritorious deeds right from the moment of his birth.

What is "Merit"?

Merit is defined as goodness or happiness. It is a state of mind that is clean, and is exempt of sadness and

¹ When it compared to human genes, the effects of action (kamma) from our past lives directly correlate to one's appearance, characters, and livelihood in the present life.

confusion, leading the mind to a clearer and sharper state.

Even though merit cannot be seen, it is something that can be sensed; one can feel after he performs a meritorious deed that his mind is refreshed and full. The quality of merit can improve and develop one's state of mind; it becomes stable, pure, bright, boundless, unworried, full, and light. The mind graced with merit is responsible and reliable to perform work or any task of daily life. Beyond that, the merit collected in one's mind will continue to yield positive results in one's life.

Periods of Merit

Merit can be classified into two categories as follows.

- 1) **Merit in distant past.** This means the accrued merits we had performed from our past lives, up to the time we were born, bear the optimistic opportunities as aforementioned. As long as we are not careless and continue making merit, we will rapidly meet success and progress in life. On the contrary, if we are heedless in doing good deeds, our life can be compared to a tree with the peaks of its branches broken that can no longer grow taller.



- 2) **Merit in recent past.** This refers to all of the good deeds or merits which have been done from the time we were born up to today. Illustrative examples include paying attention to our studies, displaying perseverance, associating with the wise, and having a clear and controlled mind since childhood. These good acts thus influence our thinking, speech, capacity to become more efficient, advanced by comparison to others of the same age, and development in life and the future.

All the good deeds we have done bear the merits of good fruits for our lives. To easily correct these principles, the Lord Buddha concluded that there are three kinds of acts considered to be meritorious. These are: alms offering, observing the precepts, and practicing meditation. In brief, these are the ways by which merit can be performed, obtained, and accrued.





Ionopsis utricularioides

Properly Setting Oneself Up in Life

A merchant will be rich depending on good location, investment, and management.

A gardener will be rich depending on good soil, seedlings, and management.

A layperson who lives in a suitable environment, and has accrued merits in the past, but does not continue to do good deeds will lose his merit, no longer be supported by his environment, and will depart from this life early.

Therefore, before one uses up his previously accrued merit, one should work on accumulating new merit.

Life-Goal in Three Levels

The methods deemed necessary to properly establish oneself is to divide one's goal in life into three levels.

1. **One's life-goal at the primary or ground level.** This means one should be determined to establish himself financially by earning an honest living.
2. **One's life-goal at the secondary or sky level.** In preparation for the next world, one should be determined to do his best at accumulating merit. The fact is that as long as one's defilements remain, he must be reborn in the Round of Existence or Samsāra.¹ Merit, indeed, leads one to a better life and realm.
3. **One's life-goal at the tertiary or above-the-sky level.** In preparation for Nirvana,² one must aim to rest his life on the practice of meditation in order to eradicate all defilements and to follow the path of the Lord Buddha and His Teachings.

Any layperson that can hold fast to these three levels of life-goal throughout his life time will be known as the one who has established himself properly.

¹ The continual process of rebirth and death that all beings must undergo.

² The state of supreme bliss in which all defilements are eradicated and that one is no longer subject to Samsāra.



Wrightia religiosa Benth. & Hook.f.



Becoming a Person of Great Knowledge



We hate that we are surrounded by misery and decay from the moment we are born. Even so, we still desire happiness and prosperity which can only be achieved through wisdom.

When we lack true wisdom, our health declines, our wealth recedes, our relatives depart, and suffering begins to enter into our lives from all directions.

With wisdom, though in the midst of failure, we can achieve success.

With wisdom, though in the midst of misery, we can obtain happiness.

With wisdom, though in the midst of poverty, we can be wealthy.



With wisdom, though in the midst of enemies, we gain new fellowship.

With wisdom, though in the midst of decay, we can be prosperous.

And so, wisdom is something everyone seeks and should seek. A person who obtains wisdom from listening a lot and understanding what he has heard is known as **“A Person of Great Knowledge.”**







Nymphaea cyanea Roxb.



Artfulness in the Application of Knowledge



If you are to plant a mango tree, the benefit received depends entirely on the fruit it may eventually produce. In the beginning, the plant must grow a trunk from which come branches. Budding leaves are then formed and more time must pass before one can even harvest the fruit. It is true that at this time the tree produces no benefit to us. However, in order to reap in the tree's benefits which will come later, one must be properly prepared and this will lead to positive outcomes. In the same way, even though one may be learned, the knowledge is no more than a prerequisite to the benefits that can be accumulated when the knowledge is properly applied.



Therefore, one's knowledge can be genuinely applied to oneself as well as others when he is able to transform the theory into practical skills.

At the core of Buddhism, "artfulness in application" means "being wise in application." However, no matter how learned a person is, he can hardly meet success in life if his actions are without the artful application of his knowledge. Take this proverb as an example, "Overwhelmed with knowledge, one still does not survive." It means a scholar is not always a capable person because artfulness in application of one's knowledge takes true determination and skill.

The Characteristics of Artfulness in Application

1. To believe in what one does.
2. To safeguard one's health.
3. To avoid flaunting one's self in order to gain more knowledge.
4. To avoid laziness and display perseverance.
5. To cultivate wisdom under a wise teacher with good consideration.

Caution: Ones should remember to refrain from only finding faults in others. Otherwise, one becomes what is



known as the “**faultfinder.**” This negative habit will inhibit one from achieving success because one becomes, in a sense, a coward who is critical of others. He himself fears criticism from those around him. As a result, this type of person cannot achieve anything and finally, through his cowardice, will lack the skills to perform any kind of work at all.





Plumeria acutifolia Poir.



Artfulness in Conduct (Discipline)



A sharp sword without a sheath, or a hand-grenade without a firing pin; both can be equally advantageous or disadvantageous to the handler. This is due to the lack of a controlling mechanism or safe-guard. Likewise, wisdom and ability of oneself can help to subdue all obstacles and also shape one to be a highly creative person. For those who lack discipline, disaster will be the only outcome.

To safeguard oneself or others from troubles, both qualities of wisdom and ability must be artfully applied with discipline. A person who lacks discipline would not be able to consider what is proper or improper, what should be said or left unsaid, what should be seen or not seen. As a result, he is prone to choose or engage himself in the wrong acts which lead to destruction.



Discipline can be acquired by regularly keeping the Five Precepts and following the customs of society and the law. Such practices ensure peace and harmony in society and protect many from harm.







Unknown plant



Artfulness in Speech



In order to do good deeds to one's best ability, one must prepare ourselves as follows:

- 1) Seeking and acquiring more knowledge.
- 2) Training oneself to be a capable individual (Artfulness).
- 3) One's wisdom and ability must be supervised by discipline.

Physical ability to perform any task can be described as "handicraft." Another, more refined, ability is known as "artful speech."

Whoever can develop artful speech has the potential to do more good deeds for the benefits of the world than one with only physical ability.



For instance, Buddhism has been verbally passed down for over 2,500 years. This is due to the artful speech of virtuous people from the past. Their verbal ability has transformed society by training people to be good, moral citizens. This kind of speech is called the artfulness in speech.





Memora schomburgkii Miers



Cherishing One's Parents



A tree that is nourished with water, fertilizer, and air to fully mature, but is unable to flower or bear fruit, will eventually have to be disposed of. In the same manner, a scholar who is full of knowledge and ability but does nothing beneficial for himself and society is a worthless and unwelcome individual.

A good starting point for doing good deeds begins with our parents. An ancient proverb says that in order to prove whether something is pure gold or not is to burn it with fire or put it in acid. In the same way, when observing whether an individual is genuinely good or not, one finds the answer in how grateful the individual is towards their parents and how well they look after their parents. If they are ungrateful, they can be compared to false gold. In short, if a person is genuinely good, he or



she will look after his or her parents.

Why should our parents be the first subject for performing good deeds before others? The Lord Buddha stated that parents provided us with a physical existence and therefore we are overwhelmingly indebted to them throughout the whole of our life. To repay them with care and kindness is our never ceasing responsibility. An illustrative example can be found in the proverb:

“Even if we were to carry our parents, one on each shoulder, for a hundred years, feeding and also allowing them to excrete on our shoulders, it would still be insufficient to repay our debt of gratitude to them.”

Thus, we have to learn how we can do our best to cherish our parents and actively display our gratitude towards them. The best way to do this lies in the teachings of the Lord Buddha.





Zygosepalum labiosum



Bringing Up Our Children



One day we must grow old and die. We should cherish each moment of our lives with delight or joy (of merit) to clean and refresh our minds.

Delight will arise in our minds when our good deeds or accomplishments bring forth their results. The more we express good actions, the more we become delightful. This quality of mind can possibly extend our lifespan and also promote good health.

For meditators, the greatest achievement is to extinguish defilements from the mind. For wise people, the greatest achievement is to raise good and virtuous children for the world.





Oncidium lanceanum Lindl.



Cherishing One's Spouse*



A husband means the leader and supporter.

A wife means the one who should be supported.

Both words are positive ones and are paired together.

A man is regarded as a husband because he supports his wife.

A woman is regarded as a wife because she is easily supported.

In Buddhism, in a married life, "Being able to cherish one's spouse" is a true blessing.

* Generally, this blessing is meant to have both husband and wife support each other. As a term "husband" means a married man and "wife" means a married woman. Both word are paired together. Therefore, they should support each other not to part from one another. Thus, a married life should be cherished and is one of the blessing in life.





Goniiothalamus giganteus Hook. f. & Th.



Not Leaving One's Work Undone



All people are born with inescapable duties to perform. We have the duty to be a daughter or son, brother or sister, a student, a husband, a wife, a monk, or servant, etc.

Each status has its own responsibility that needs to be fulfilled during that particular stage of life. If individuals do not take on their responsibilities, they are considered to be deficient or irresponsible. Illustrative examples include some may have done their work but left it incomplete. Some completed their work, but the work is not well done. Some completed their work with full capability but worked illegally. Such tasks will only lead to devastation.



Hence, we must make sure that we fulfill our task to the best of our ability, doing it with right view, right understanding, and in accordance to what is required. By having our work done completely and successfully, we can improve ourselves and our environment.





Mormodes buccinator

Why we should practice generosity or giving, with high priority?

It is mainly due to these following four factors.

- 1) Giving (Dāna) is a foundation and a basic virtue of doing good deeds. It can be compared to the first step on the stairway to heaven and is generally the easiest method of performing a good deed and gaining merit.
- 2) Dāna is something we can carry with us like a provision to save us from danger. It will also provide comfort for those who still remain in the continuing round of rebirth (Samsāra).
- 3) Dāna is the direct path to Nirvana because it supports other perfection to be achieved more easily.

- 4) Dāna is a noble means for escaping the round of rebirth.

Two important elements that construct a firm foundation of mind for those who will go beyond Samsāra are faith and supreme wisdom. In reference from above to the uncomplicated and rapid outcomes of giving (i.e. happiness or joy), such moral action would develop one's faith to a firm foundation which allows him to step forward to a higher virtue and wisdom.

In brief, poverty can lead us to illness and ignorance. However, the fruition of Dāna can prevent us from being poor, sickness, and ignorance. Therefore, we should study how to practice generosity.





Rothmannia sootepensis Craib Bremek.



Dhamma Practice



Before we come to know what is good or bad, meritorious or unmeritorious, we have already committed evil deeds. Once the retribution of these negative actions manifests itself, it is almost too late to perform acts of penance and reform ourselves. But even if we could promptly correct ourselves, the seed of the bad actions that still remains can cause obstacles in our lives. On the other side, one who has never performed evil deeds will live out his life peacefully.

Therefore, the way to prevent bad fruit and undo the pattern of negative occurrences in life is to practice Dhamma and know the **"Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness."** These ten steps are:



- 1) To absolutely abstain from killing or taking the lives of other beings.
- 2) To absolutely abstain from stealing.
- 3) To absolutely abstain from adultery.
- 4) To absolutely abstain from false speech.
- 5) To absolutely abstain from making sarcastic remarks; instead, use words that are conducive to harmony.
- 6) To absolutely abstain from using foul language; instead, use words that are kind, gentle, and encouraging.
- 7) To absolutely abstain from telling tales and slandering; instead, use words that are of use to others, rational, dependable on, and appropriate to the occasion.
- 8) To absolutely abstain from covetous thoughts.
- 9) To absolutely abstain from vengeful thoughts.
- 10) Cultivate the 'Right View' in regards to how the world works and the reality of life.

One, who achieves the "Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness," purifies his physical, verbal, and mental means. As a result, his body and mind are always clear and bright.







Clusia grandifolia Engl.

Looking After One's Extended Family

The trees that stand together in the forest will help each other by mutually giving support from gales and storms. On the other hand, a lone tree will have to endure the strong winds alone and is more likely to collapse from lack of support.

Relatives can be defined as ones who are close and reliable to us. Looking after one's extended family is to give aid to our relatives when in need.

There are four calamities in human life: birth, old age, illness, and death. Although we may be wealthy, if we do not utilize our wealth by helping our relatives, it is of no value or meaning to anyone. Eventually, the property or wealth will lose its value and usefulness and finally return to the earth from where it came.

The world will be worth living when we treat all other beings as our own relatives. We should, at least, support our actual relatives for their continued well-being. Upon completing this we can expand our hearts to others and treat all people as our extensive family. As a result, the earth will be more calm and peaceful.







Catasetum punctatum Rolfe



Couroupita subsessilis

3. Contentment with what is appropriate for one-self to have. Consider what you currently have and what you will receive in the future. If the possessions are too abundant for one's status, he should not take it, and vice versa.



possessed by discontentment, a good individual can become bad.

Being discontent is a condition that can perpetuate one's mind. It can develop from something as insignificant as desiring another's possessions, or desiring a higher status or position, to actually engaging in unscrupulous actions like prostitution, unnecessary begging, taking advantage of others, or selling drugs. Such dishonest actions bring about restlessness and anxiety to the doer.

Therefore, we should cultivate contentment with whatever we have, in other words, knowing enough or knowing moderation.

Types of Contentment

Contentment is divided into three different characteristics. They are:

1. Contentment with what one already has and does not have a mind to possess things that belong to others.
2. Contentment with what one receives. Sometimes you do not get the desired effect from reaching your goals; even so, you should be happy with the resulting outcome.



Contentment



A hungry dog gets to eat gruel for seven days, and then on the 8th day, it has a craving for rice. After having eaten rice for another seven days, the next following day it craves for food with more substance; then it had food with more substance for another seven days.

After that it was discontent with gruel, rice, and even better food that it had received, it started looking forward to eat at the same table as the owner. This kind of dog is unworthy of being taken care of, and should be chased away.

Not knowing moderation can be compared to a disease which can occur in both the human and animal race. No matter whom the individuals are, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, male or female, when one habitually is





Heliconia spp.

Metaphorically, an arrogant person or one without humility, is like one who cannot be united with others, like the rigidly cracked clod or deadwood.

The word “humility” derives from “nivāta” in Pali language. This is translated to mean “without air” or “not inflated with air.”

Humility means humbleness with the absence of self-importance, rebelliousness, arrogance, and insult. And without conduct similar to those who act with superiority, haughtiness, and arrogance towards others.





Humility



Sandy soil becomes broken into individual clods during the drought of the dry season – but even when the rains come, although the ground is moistened, the soil will still remain rigidly cracked in its clod.

Deadwood is tough and brittle. It will not yield to the wind. If the wind gets stronger, it will remain unmoved. However, if there is a gale, it will break in two. Pushed to its limits, the damage to deadwood is irreparable. No matter how much more water or fertilizer you give it, it will not come back to life.

By contrast, greenwood is soft and flexible. In a breeze, it will bend and twist with the wind. If the wind gets strong, then it will double over – and even become parallel with the ground (A manual of peace 266).





Cirrhopetalum lepidum (Bl.) Schltr.

worse, he might disregard others and display his stubbornness towards them. With this impurity of mind, he misses all opportunities to learn to absorb virtues and goodness from the good. It means that he has lost the benefits that he was supposed to have gained by associating with them. From this, disharmony in the group will follow.

For one who truly realizes and respects on other's virtue and goodness, he is considered to be an extraordinary person. His uplifting mind sees this truth. He extensively opens to accept the other's virtue into his mind. With his positive mental attributes and pure mind, he has respect for others and is morally abiding.





Respect



Every object or material on earth has its own specific property. Whoever knows their purpose, effect, and quality will be capable of making the most out of them. For instance, a scientist who discovers the properties of metal can use it to conduct electricity or use its various atomic elements in radiation treatment for cancer.

When we recognize the characteristics of each substance, it becomes easier for us to properly select and apply them. It is difficult for us to entirely understand all of the characteristics of all substances. This excludes the wise, who are the ones qualified to assess them.

Beyond that, to recognize the virtues and goodness in others is almost impossible for the one who possesses an impure mind, as his ego blinds him to the truth. Even





Magnolia x soulangiana soul.-Bod

- 1) One does not maintain perseverance in his task.
- 2) One lacks respect in his work.
- 3) One lacks full attention while performing his work duty and is discouraged.
- 4) One is no longer satisfied with his work.
- 5) One lacks responsibility and deserts his work.
- 6) One lacks mindfulness.
- 7) One lacks skills in his work.
- 8) One lacks heedfulness.
- 9) One lacks earnestness.
- 10) Finally, one lacks the intention to do good deeds.

All are illustrative examples that demonstrate one's inattentiveness and recklessness.



Non-Recklessness in the Dhamma



The nature of the mind is to constantly remain in a state of thinking and wandering. Normally, one's mind is often unfocused and indulgent in the five forms of sensual desire, namely: visual images, melodious sounds, tasty food, perfumes, and things that are soft to the touch. These sensual pleasures always tempt one to perform dishonest acts, words, and thoughts.

When one's thoughts are indulgent in the five forms of sensual desire, the wholesome thoughts will disappear. The following result is that one's responsibilities at the workplace and monastery, which require heedfulness and earnestness, can be lost because of the following causes:





Encyclia randii (Barb. Rodr.)



Restraining from Alcohol and Intoxicants



A human mind is something subtle, hard to be seen, and always immersed in cravings. Such cravings include:

- 1) Struggling to satisfy lust.
- 2) To be cunning.
- 3) Struggling to maintain one's self.
- 4) Struggling to restrain and control one's self.

Though one does not smoke, drink, or is addicted to drugs, he is still drunk on life. One can be heavily drunk with the infatuation of youth, good health, and life. Attachment with such infatuations cannot attain genuine bliss. The more one intoxicates himself with alcohol or addiction to drugs, the more likely one is to perform evil deeds. Therefore, one should refrain from using alcohol and intoxicants in order to have a better health and virtuous living.





Dendrobium cariniferum Rchb. f.

Mind is the fore-runner of everything. Mind is chief; and everything is completed with the mind. If a person has an evil mind, then his speech and action are the same as his evil mind as well. Evil speech and actions are paid back with suffering. A metaphor exemplifying this fact is, **"Ox foot prints are always followed by cart wheels."** If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, then happiness follows him even as the shadow that never leaves his side (The Buddha's Words in the Dhammapada 1).

It can be concluded that if we wish for happiness, then we must abstain from unwholesomeness.



Abstaining from Unwholesomeness



It is certain that all living beings are, in the end, sentenced to die. If a prisoner were to go to his execution with joy, he would be accused of insanity.

Even though we all know that one day we will die, we are still careless and continue to conduct evil deeds. We are the ones who should ask ourselves: how much more of this insanity will we continue to carry out? People fight each other for power and selfish gain. They behave the same as quarrelling chickens in a coop. Such unmeritorious acts should cease.

Humans are composed of body and mind. The body is controlled by the mind, which is the most significant component according to the words given by the Lord Buddha:





Gardenia obtusifolia Roxb.

Blameless work is the work that does not break any of the Five Precepts, any rule of moral conduct, the law, or local custom and tradition.

In addition, it should be the kind of work that can expand and provide the giving of aid to benefit society.





Blameless Work



"If sweat does not perspire, it will be trapped, flown back inside, and changed into tears." This saying refers to the truth that although perseverance is hard, bitter work, its fruit is sweet.

Hence, after being born as a human, one must work hard and place his hope in the future generations to follow. He will then be worthy of respect as a teacher.

Buddhism is against laziness and promotes diligence. It offers praise to the diligent person. It teaches people to initially work harder for himself, then for his parents, family, religion, and close relatives, as well as the more distant ones.





Gratitude



If rain were to fall continuously and there was no evaporation to produce clouds to make rain to fall back to earth, sooner or later there would be a drought, causing the earth to turn into a desert. Similarly, we need to rely on each other's support and exchange services and goods with each other.

The causes of living happily and peacefully with all beings are:

- 1) **Upakara**, which means supporting others with goodwill.
- 2) **Patikara**, which means to give back to our benefactor's kindness. For instance, a son expresses his gratitude to his parents in their old age, or a student who pays respect to his teacher.



These two causes of good living can help foster progress in the world. On the contrary, if a son is ungrateful to his old parents and abandons them, or a student does not pay respect to his teacher, the world would be unfavorable.

Thus, gratefulness makes the world survives. Returning a benefactor's kindness by gratefully doing favors is known as "Katavedi" which is conducive to "Katannu" or honoring the person who has done the favor by being grateful.





Cattleya violacea



Listening Regularly to Dhamma Teaching



Listening regularly to Dhamma teaching means to seek out opportunities to hear Buddhist teachings on an appropriate basis. This requires finding time to listen to Dhamma teachings as often as possible to uplift one's mind and increase one's intellect to be in the right view [Sammaditthi].

The right view is the intellect that has correct understanding about the reality of the world and life. What is right and wrong, good and evil, meritorious and unmeritorious, proper and improper. The right view is the origin of the other virtues.

A person who is full of knowledge and potential but has wrong view will not be able to survive. However, a person who has appropriate knowledge and right view will be blessed with prosperity.



Right view can be classified into two sources:

- 1) Listening to the Dhamma from a good friend (kalyānamitta). This friend should be capable of giving good advice such as knowledge of what is right and wrong, good and evil, meritorious and unmeritorious, proper and improper.
- 2) Developing the ability to be a good teacher to oneself (yonisomanasikāra). This means one has good consideration and view.

Therefore, whoever wants to possess the right view must learn to listen regularly to Dhamma teaching.





Aechmea fosteriana



Patience



Khanti means patience or maintaining one's normal state of mind. Whether or not he is shaken by temptation or an unpleasant stimulus, he remains steadfast.

No matter what duty one undertakes, his success relies not only upon his level of wisdom, but also his patience to apply his wisdom to its intended purpose.

Without patience, the duty is never completed. Patience is the virtue allowing us to overcome discouragement and to become diligent. Instead of seeing obstacles with trepidation, with patience we welcome them as challenges (A manual of peace 303).

It can be concluded that every success, both in worldly and spiritual manners, is a monument to the virtue of patience.





Polyalthia sp.



Openness to Criticism



Some people in the world are qualified in the four levels of patience. They are:

- 1) **Patience in the face of physical hardship:** working on as if everything is normal despite any weather conditions.
- 2) **Patience in the face of physical suffering:** working on as if everything is normal despite illness or pain.
- 3) **Patience in the face of conflict:** working on as if everything is normal despite having to endure caustic remarks.



- 4) **Patience in the face of temptation:** working on as if everything is normal despite the ever-present temptation of defilements, no matter how strong they may be.

However, those who are impatient are not tolerant when taught or given advice by others. They resent the person who gives them advice and immediately wants to criticize them for doing so. The reason is that this type of person is stubborn, and resists learning and changing. As a result, self-improvement is impossible.

For people who are stubborn because of stupidity, it is useless to train them in patience and openness towards criticism. However, people who are stubborn because of false views are even worse. These people are categorized as those who are paralyzed by their own stubbornness and lack the ability to see the picture as a whole.

For example, a stubborn person who has been paralyzed, although there may be many useful things all around him, because that person is unable to pick them up, they are all useless to him. Likewise, if a person is paralyzed by stubbornness, even though he may have a wise teacher, he is unable to absorb any of the goodness of that person (A manual of peace 318).

And so, we should all become someone who is open to criticism.





Strophanthus gratus (Wall. & Hook.) Baill.



The Sight of a True Monk



It is true that all people hate suffering and aspire to happiness.

Happiness can be divided into two main kinds:

- 1) Happiness that relies on or attaches to external objects and sensuality.
- 2) Happiness that originates from within, unattached to the external objects and sensuality, and derives from a deep and peaceful mind due to meditation. At this pure state of mind, wisdom and genuine bliss will rise to these attainers of Dhamma.



When comparing both kinds of happiness, the happiness that comes from within, from inner peace, is for the best and incomparable to the others.

Some people who are not accustomed to meditation might find it hard to understand. Even though they have read about it from many books, it is still difficult for them to comprehend. However, such happiness is beyond our worldly thinking; it requires individual experience. As long as they associate with the ones who have attained happiness from within, they will come to understand the idea of following that person's practice.

The only type of person who can teach laypeople how to meditate and attain happiness from within is a "Samana" or a monk.

Who is a monk?

Monk means peace. He is the person whose physical, verbal, and mental actions are completely free from unwholesomeness and are in accordance to the 227 precepts and Dhamma disciplines of the monk's life.

Upon seeing a monk, one will be inspired by the Dhamma, the Buddha's teaching. A metaphor for this definition is that a bomb when lit will explode and show its colossal power. In the same way, one's inherent

intellect and ability would be stimulated and put into application by his association with a monk. For instance, even Prince Siddhartha who possessed outstanding wisdom had to initially see a monk before he was inspired to search for Dhamma. Eventually, he attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.





Artabotrys siamensis Miq.



Regular Discussion of Dhamma



It is a fact that humans have to face many problems in life. These problems must be solved with wisdom (pañña). Because of this, many people wish to acquire it. One who is full of wisdom is like having a wishing crystal that makes it easy for him to overcome problems and difficulties.

Two main sources of acquiring wisdom are:

- 1) By listening to the wise ones who are enlightened.
- 2) By thoroughly reflecting on what one has heard (of Dhamma).

In addition, another shortcut to rapidly possess wisdom is to regularly discuss Dhamma. In this way, it drives a person to interact two ways when Dhamma is



being communicated: by talking and listening to others. In Dhamma discussions, he would be simultaneously listening and thoroughly reflecting on them with carefulness. Otherwise, the result would yield more disadvantages rather than advantages.

What is regular discussion of Dhamma?

It means the discussion and questioning of Dhamma between at least two people. It is constructive to helping one to recognize what is good, so as to do more, and what is evil so that one can cease doing it. As a result, he will be reminded of accumulating good deeds and abstaining from the bad ones. Moreover, he will recognize what is indeterminate (Abyākata-Dhamma); a fact of nature that is neither good nor bad. However, he must be able to ascertain how it works in order to protect his right view from misunderstanding which leads to suffering. Instead, he must be a recipient of joyfulness, happiness, and prosperity as fruitful merit in return for opening his mind. Knowing when to choose and manage time is a key factor in accumulating merit.







Phalaenopsis cornucervi (Breda) Blume & Rchb. f.



The Practice of Austerities



After having passed the 30 steps of life, we find that there are still many bad habits, such as improper manners, that we display and are much in need of improvement. Some of them were already adjusted, better improved, and have been eliminated. These include hatred, selfishness, envy, arrogance, etc.

However, there are some habits we have attempted to correct but still remain; these may include lust, desiring fame, drowsiness, wandering mind, etc. We must remove them in a careful way. Either way, there are a couple things we should know and remember:

- 1) The source of all bad conduct comes from defilements hidden in our minds.
- 2) The extinction of defilements are hindered for these reasons:



- i) Most people cannot see the defilements that reside in the mind.
- ii) We take our defilements for granted; our mind is so used to being bathed in them as a fish is so used to water.
- iii) The way to remove defilements is elusive.

In the 31st step, the Lord Buddha taught an appropriate way of how to get rid of defilements that bear immediate and absolute results to the doer. The doer must hold fast to the following expression – “take a hair of the dog that bit you” or “like cures like.”

The mentioned expression can be applied in this way; as our mind is burning and suffering due to defilements, we should in turn burn them back by practicing austerities.¹ The Pali term is **“tapa,”** which means to make something hot or to burn. In order to remove our bad habits and desires as aforementioned, the austere practice of self-control is a solution which is consisted of keeping the precepts, meditation, and so forth.

¹ To uproot the defilements in the mind.







Catasetum appendiculatum



Conducting Celibacy



After the farmers pulled out and burned up weeds in the field, they have to be quick to plough as soon as all the weeds are gone. As soon as rain falls, they have to be quick to sow their crops. If they are slow in doing so, they will find that the weeds will grow up again worse than before (A manual of peace 357).

Likewise, once we have burned up the defilements in our mind by practicing austerity, (keeping the Five or Eight Precepts, studying the Lord Buddha's Words, controlling the internal sense-fields,¹ diligently practicing meditation, or the use of patience) we can find that our mind starts to become detached of sensual

1 The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind



indulgence and laziness. Then, we may be able to ascend towards that attainment we seek. However, if we are slow or too lazy, our old bad habits can come back, and can be worse than before.

The next virtue after the diligent practicing of austerities is the conduct of celibacy. It means to be free from sensual indulgence and to elevate our state of mind and behavior for ultimate liberation, Nirvana (Nibbāna).







Heterostemon mimosoides



Seeing the Four Noble Truths



The Lord Buddha discovered the key to the nature of reality of human beings. It can be said that everyone in the world is ill with the disease of suffering, but it is as if no one really knows it. As a metaphor, all human beings have defects or imperfection as their norm. Thus, they do not know what a perfect person or a great man is like.

Nevertheless, for a wise man, he realizes that the older he gets the more miseries he will encounter in life. He perceives it but is unable to see it and does not know the solution to the miseries that will come.



There are two characteristics of suffering.

They are:

- 1) **Inevitable Suffering.** According to the Lord Buddha, birth is suffering. It is the starting point for all the other sorts of suffering. All beings cannot escape from the nature of reality of life associated with birth, old age, illness, and death.
- 2) **Miscellaneous Suffering.** This kind of suffering is caused from the mind is lacking in quality; it is the type of suffering which we can escape. However, for people who do not make effort to escape, they can meet the following types of suffering:
 - 2.1) **Sorrow (soka):** The dry-minded suffering.
 - 2.2) **Lamentation (parideva):** Sorrow that drives one to tears.
 - 2.3) **Pain (dukkha):** The physical suffering.
 - 2.4) **Feeling slighted (domanassa):** One who is aggressively sensitive about a particular thing or bears a grudge.
 - 2.5) **Despair (upāyāssa):** Giving up any hope of success in something.





Nelumbo nucifera

as being ignorant. Although a person is abundant in knowledge and technology, if he does not educate himself in his conscience and of what is merit or demerit, he is categorized as being ignorant.

The differences in the damage caused by desire, hatred, and ignorance are as followings:

Desire – although not very damaging it requires a long time to recover from its negative effects.

Hatred – being very damaging but not taking long to recover from its negative effects.

Ignorance – being very damaging and also taking a long time to remedy.



evident or subtle. As a result, the mind becomes fresh, bright, and ready to work (thinking is the mind's duty). Such quality of the mind is the case for the mind of an *Arahant*.¹

The subtle defilements in the mind are consisted of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

Desire (rāga) is lust or passion. This subtle defilement deeply adheres to our mind. It is composed of sensual pleasures, namely: form, sound, scent, taste, touch, and mind/mental objects. The characteristics of desire are not very damaging or unwholesome to ordinary people. But for the uncontrolled mind, desire will worsen and develop to a state of gross defilements. With its effect, it drives one to commit unwholesome acts.

Hatred (dosa) is ill-will which is very damaging. Examples include thoughts of scolding, thoughts of killing, thoughts of kicking something, thoughts to set a house on fire, thoughts to make others feel ashamed, etc.

Ignorance (moha) is delusion. One's mind becomes darkened, losses conscience, and does not recognize what is merit and demerit. Being uneducated is not the same

1 The Enlightened One.





Freedom from Subtle Defilements



"Defilements are like litters that have gross and subtle forms. The gross litter can be picked up while the subtle one is more difficult to detect" (A manual of peace 411).

Fine dust is like a subtle form of litter which cannot be seen with the naked eye unless it clings to something clean like a mirror, making it dull and only then can we see it. But if it is only a small quantity of fine dust on the mirror, we will barely notice it.

A mind of subtle defilements is a mind that is penetrated and infiltrated by impurities or pollutants making it lose its radiance and efficiency in thinking, as in the case of a mind that thinks slowly and negatively.

The mind which is free from subtle defilements is indeed free from all defilements, whether they are





Paphiopedilum hirsutissimum (Lindl. & Hook.) Stein

grief, and must moan. He feels burnt out and helpless inside.

A mind of sorrow is not a good state nor is suitable for responsibilities. The one whose mind is sorrowful cannot perform work efficiently – metaphorically, his state of mind is like a terminally ill patient whose health condition is not good for any kind of work at all.



All three mentioned are opposite to Nirvana which is permanence, happiness, and true self.

However, there is a sort of suffering which is avoidable – but ironically, people tend to seek this kind of suffering because it is so desirable to them. They become like a fish baited to a hook, they become possessive of this object. They find it refreshing and delightful, but it only leads to the conditions of the Three Characteristics; impermanence, suffering, and not-self. Consequently, when it is gone, the owner's mind becomes dry or sorrowful. This sort of suffering refers to love. On the contrary, the enlightened ones are beyond the worldly conditions, they pay it no attention. Therefore, they do not become dry, and sorrowful, nothing and no one can cause them sorrow regarding the possession of love.¹ They do not need to nor feel love for anything, except for their love of Nirvana.

A mind of sorrow is a mind that feels dry and cracked like the earth in a land suffering from drought. It is like a leaf that has become so dry that it has lost its life and freshness (A manual of peace 403).

Sorrow arises when one encounters an undesirable situation which makes one feel as if torn by dryness,

¹ It refers to people and anything to the point one becomes attached.



Mind Free of Sorrow



The eight types of worldly vicissitudes are inevitable to all; however, the enlightened ones are aware of this timeless truth. Even though they are in face of them, they are invulnerable. They know their nature or the Three Universal Characteristics as follows.

- 1) **Impermanence** (aniccatā). All conditioned states consist of impermanence and instability.
- 2) **Suffering** (dukkhatā). Things have decay as their nature. All living beings have to die sooner or later. Nothing can prolong eternally.
- 3) **Not-self** (anattatā). Nothing in the world has implicit identity and is uncontrollable and discontented.





Pristomeris tetrandra (Roxb.) K. Schum.

eventually drawn into misery. The noble ones see Dhammakāya inside which is composed of **Permanence** (niccatā), **Happiness** (sukkatā), and **True-self** (attatā), all of which are beyond the Three Characteristics. They are the characteristics of Nirvana. As a result, the noble ones are invulnerable to worldly vicissitudes, not infatuate with them, but focus and touch their minds upon Nirvana as a state of mind inside the body at all times.

Hence, the eight types of worldly vicissitudes are inevitable for all; no matter if they are ordinary persons or noble ones. The only difference between them is that the mind of the ordinary persons is vulnerable to worldly vicissitudes because of their ignorance. The mind of the noble ones is invulnerable to the worldly vicissitudes because they are aware of these truths.

afraid of the bad consequences which may occur. Although some have experienced, through hardship, these undesirable vicissitudes, they are still vulnerable because of the ability of the vicissitudes to reoccur.

Nevertheless, the Eight of Loka-Dhamma includes all things in the world comprising the “**Three Universal Characteristics**” (Tilakkhana) which are:

- 1) **Impermanence** (aniccatā). All conditioned states are impermanent regardless of whether they are occupied by spirit or not. Everything is in a flux; there is degradation and deterioration built into everything around us.
- 2) **Suffering** (dukkhatā). Things decay as is their nature. All living beings have to die. Nothing prolongs eternally.
- 3) **Not-Self** (anattatā). Not being able to find the true self of anything. Nothing in the world has implicit identity, everything is uncontrollable and discontented.

Not knowing the “Three Universal Characteristics” can cause people to become infatuated with worldly vicissitudes, become vulnerable to them, and are



A mind invulnerable to worldly vicissitudes means the quality of the mind that is not affected by the fluctuations, desirable or undesirable consequences. The mind establishes equanimity and mindfulness properly. In brief, one knows the ways of the world or norms of the world.

Worldly vicissitudes (The Eight of Loka-Dhamma)
can be divided into two groups.

- 1) **The first group of desirable vicissitudes which can make the mind elated is consisted of gain, repute, praise, and happiness.** These four worldly vicissitudes are pleasant, favorable, and desirable to ordinary people without knowing their ever-changing conditions in life within the world. As a result, people go in search of them. Once they have achieved them, they become possessive and scared that they will lose them.
- 2) **The second group of undesirable vicissitudes is consisted of loss, dispute, blame, and suffering.** These four worldly vicissitudes are unpleasant, unfavorable, and undesirable to ordinary people. They are afraid of facing them. Or some have encountered them, and are



A Mind Invulnerable to Worldly Vicissitudes



The mind is the nature of thought inside our body and can collect and assimilate all kinds of mental sense objects.

Vulnerability means being worried, being apprehensive regarding undesirable consequences. On the other hand, it can be translated as desires and wishes for desirable consequences. It can be deduced that one's mind is affected in either of the two ways mentioned, and thus, it is vulnerable.

Vicissitudes of the world are features of life in the world which are fraught with uncertainty and changes, and no one can avoid them for as long as they live in the world.





Psittacanthus cinctus

or everything that is not rebirth, aging, sickness or death, but true enlightenment and happiness. Only Dhammakāya (the body of enlightenment) can enter thereon (A manual of peace 388).

Back to the question: Where is Nirvana?

It is in the human body, there is Dhammakaya within.

In Dhammakaya, there is Nirvana or Nibbāna.



The main two definitions of Nirvana are as follows:

- 1) **Nirvana as a state of mind** (sa-upādisesa – nibbāna): Sa-upādisesa – Nirvana is attained by noble ones (monks) who are able to forsake all defilements. This means that they touch upon Nirvana in their experiences when they have purified their minds from all defilements but their Five Aggregates² (Khandha) have not yet broken up. Thus, they are still alive to help all living beings.
- 2) **Nirvana as a realm of existence** (anupādisesa – nibbāna): Anupādisesa – Nirvana is attained by the noble ones (monks) who completely extinguish all defilements. It is also the realm outside our body and mind. It is thus sometimes called “posthumous” Nirvana; one can only go there after the breaking up of their Five Aggregates for the last time (one will not be reborn ever again after attaining such state). This place consists of only Dhamma-Aggregates³

² Corporeality, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

³ The enlightenment- being that made up of 84,000 number of teachings attributed to the Buddha.





The Attainment of Nirvana (Nibbāna)



Is there any place in the world where suffering cannot reach? The answer is "No."

Why did Prince Siddhartha become ordained? He was seeking for the place where suffering could not reach.

Did he find it? Yes, he did.

Where was the place? It was Nirvana.

Where is Nirvana? That's a good question, so let's study this subject matter.

Nirvana (Nibbāna) has a variety of meanings. It can be translated as 'extinguishing', like extinguishing evil and suffering; or 'escaping', like escaping from suffering and escaping from the Three Cycles of Existence.¹ There are so many more definitions of Nirvana.

¹ The Sense-Sphere, Fine-Material Sphere, and Immaterial Sphere.





Galeandra devoniana

see the Noble Truths. Then, once his suffering comes to an end, he attains a true (permanent) happiness, the path the Lord Buddha entered.

The Noble Truths (Ariyasacca) can be variously termed as follows:

- 1) The great noble truths.
- 2) The truths of one who is noble.
- 3) The truths that make one noble.

Seeing these truths means discovering the key to the truths that can liberate a person from suffering, namely:

- 1) The Noble Truth of Suffering (dukkha-ariyasacca).
- 2) The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (samudaya-ariyasacca).
- 3) The Noble Truth to the Cessation of Suffering (nirodha-ariyasacca).
- 4) The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (magga-ariyasacca).

Therefore, the Four Noble Truths are the keys or main principles of Buddhism. They act like a blueprint for all other subsequent knowledge.



2.6) Exposure to hateful things (apiyehi sampayoga): The sort that clouds the mind, like grief and averseness.

2.7) Separation from all that is loved and dear (piyehi vipayoga): The heartbreak of separating from such sources of pleasure like our loss of loved one, possessions, fame, etc.

2.8) Disappointment (alābha): It could be physical or spiritual disappointment.

The Lord Buddha knew how to extinguish all kinds of suffering. Hence, He taught, cultivated, and urged people to follow each step of the “Blessings of Life” in order to subsequently eradicate them.

The outcome of a person who is earnest in practicing austerity is that he has the ability to control his senses. He is able to train himself in moral conduct such as conducting celibacy (abstaining from sensuality), entering monkhood, diligently practicing meditation throughout the whole of his life, and following the Eightfold Path.¹ With his effort, he will be finally able to

¹ Right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.





The Blissful Mind



From the moment we are born, we have to confront dangers in life which are ready to take our lives away in any second. It is as if we are swimming in the mist of a dark dangerous ocean at all times.

Dangers in this world can be divided into two main categories:

- 1) **Built-in Dangers:** Those that cannot be avoided.

To the front: the danger of death awaits.

To the back: the danger of birth awaits.

To the left: the danger of old age awaits.

To the right: the danger of illness awaits.



2) **External Dangers:** There are countless numbers of them. A few illustrative dangers might come from:

People: e.g., malevolent husbands, exploitative wives, bad children, unkind bosses, and false friends.

Natural disasters: e.g., flooding, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, and earthquakes.

Evil retribution: e.g., when the retribution of evil deeds we have done in our past eventually catches up with us, we feel as if it is destroying us in every way.

Until we can completely perform the 38 Steps of the Blessings of Life to extinguish all defilements, these two main categories of dangers are tackling us even after our passing. Only then can we truly be safe from all kinds of dangers in life and attain a deeper happiness with a blissful mind.

A blissful mind refers to safety, escaping from dangers, extinction of defilements, and Nirvana.

In other words, a blissful mind means a sense of relief and liberation, being free from the control of all dangers and fetters previously mentioned, so that the mind can attain a state of genuine bliss.



The reason why we do not acquire a blissful mind is because we are shackled by bonds of defilements, life after life, in the round of rebirth. The bonds which imprison us are known as “**fetters**.”

These fetters are the binders which consist of the defilements that bind living beings to the cycle of existences and sufferings. In metaphor, the fetters are like the ropes that bind animals to a chariot.

There are ten fetters that are classified into two large groups. The first group is called the “**lower fetters**,” which are divided into five kinds of gross defilements, namely:

- 1) **Self-illusion** (sakkāyaditthi): This refers to the false view of (“self”) individuality where it is believed that our body belongs to us. This view is formed because we do not know about the inner bodies that reside inside us, especially, the Dhamma-Aggregates (the Dhammakāya) within. Ignorance of this natural fact leads to false view of self and delusion sticks strongly to our minds. We cannot see in accordance to the truth of life. What we see is the result of a combination of all components, all of which makes a person selfish, puts him



in a roughened state, stirs up his feelings, makes him become forceful and agonized. All because of the wrong view of self.

- 2) **Doubt** (*vicikicchā*): This refers to questioning the truth of the Triple Gem that leads us to the path of Nirvana, and doubting the wheel of rebirth because of our ignorance in attaining Dhamma-Aggregates. Therefore, we lose confidence in following the Eightfold Path.
- 3) **Adherence to mere superstitious, rules, and rituals** (*silabbataparāmāsa*): Having the wrong view that one can extinguish all defilements by following other teachings outside of Buddhism such as through blind faith or by magic and mysticism.
- 4) **Grasping for the Sensual Realms** (*kāmarāga*): This is when you still have an attraction for the five sensual pleasures which are form, sound, scent, taste, and touch.
- 5) **Irritability** (*patigha*): The feeling of friction in one's mind when there is aversion present.

"Higher fetters" are the second group. There are five of them, namely:



- 6) **Grasping for the Realms of Form (ruparāga):** For example, when one meditates and attains a certain degree of happiness, he becomes attached to this state of happiness. Therefore, he does not try to make any further progress and is stuck at this attainment, and desires to remain in this absorption of the form sphere, the Fine-Material Sphere.
- 7) **Grasping for the Formless Realms (aruparāga):** This is greed for the Immaterial Sphere such as attachment to absorptions of the formless sphere. If one was attached to and satisfied with this stage of happiness, instead of training himself further to attain Dhamma-Aggregates, he remains stuck in this attainment, the formless sphere. It is because his mind cannot truly standstill at the center of his body.
- 8) **Conceit (māna):** This fetter refers to too much pride in oneself and causes disdain such as assuming oneself to be superior or inferior to others.
- 9) **Absent-mindedness (uddhacca):** The distraction of the mind with regards to this fetter is the



incapacity to completely control one's thoughts because of the ignorance that remains in the mind. This distracted mind is affected very little in comparison to the five hindrances that affect the mind to a much greater extent.

- 10) **Ignorance** (avijjā): This reflects an ignorance that is utter darkness, where one does not know the facts of the nature of life, does not see through conditions, and does not completely comprehend the cycle of rebirth. This fetter represents total ignorance to the Four Noble Truths.

The Lord Buddha did not explain all of these following questions:

Who had created the world?

Who was the first person in the world?

When was our first life as a human?

And who created the defilements?

The Lord Buddha said: "One who is shot by an arrow does not waste time to ask – who shot the arrow? What direction was the arrow shot from? How far did it travel? Was it a man or a woman who shot it, etc? He must first treat his wound, and then he might discuss or contemplate on the details later."

Vice versa, all humans occupied by defilements are not safe. It is best to extinguish them first to be safe. After we have extinguished them, then all problems that arise will not be difficult to solve any more.

It is not only in this life but also the next that we must work at extinguishing all defilements. The easy way to achieve complete extinguishment is to earnestly practice the 37 Blessing Steps as aforementioned until becoming a noble person and attaining a blissful mind (the 38th Step). This will help us to then be liberated from the Round of Existence and Suffering.

The Enlightened Ones are classified by four stages:

1) **Sotāpanna:** or the Stream-Enterer. One who is determined in extinguishing the defilements in the mind and has attained the first stage of holiness and the Seven-Times-At-Most for exertion (referring to seven more lifetimes left before reaching enlightenment) and be an Arahant.

2) **Sakādagami:** or the Once-Returner. One who is determined in eradicating the defilements and has attained the second stage of the Path will be reborn on the earth only once more before attaining the final emancipation and becomes an Arahant.



3) **Anāgāmi:** or the Non-Returner. One who is a Non-Returner will not be reborn but will have to continue extinguishing the defilements in the fine-material and immaterial worlds of the Pancasuddhāvasa level. The Anāgāmi will then experience a complete extinction of all passions. When being a part of the laity, he will not indulge in the pleasures of sensual objects such as lust and will always be observing the Eight Precepts.

4) **Arahant:** or the Worthy One. This refers to the one who is established in the Fruition of Arahant-ship. This person completed the extinction of all passions and sufferings and is free from the Round of Existence (Samsāra). After extinction of the Five Aggregates, Dhamma-Aggregates will appear in Nirvāna, the same as the Lord Buddha's Nirvāna, and are in a state of infinite happiness.

Being an Arahant is the same as attaining Vijjā 3, which can completely extinguish the lower and higher fetters that bind all living beings to the cycle of rebirth. This leads to having a blissful mind, and includes eternal safety due to the permanent absence of defilements.

The word "Vijjā" is not like any subject taught in school.

The expression "Vijjā 3" that represents the Threefold Knowledge is a technical term of religious origin. "Vijjā 3" is in reference to Enlightenment. It is comprehensive wisdom, called "Nana" or "Insight," that arises through advanced meditation until attaining "Inner Dhammakāya" by the following:

- 1) **Pubbenivāsānusati-nāna:** Insight of the recollection of past lives.
- 2) **Cutupapāta-nāna:** Knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings, regarded as "Clairvoyance" of the cycle of existence.
- 3) **Asavakkhaya-nāna:** Knowledge of the destruction of the mental intoxication of defilements known as Enlightenment.

Hence, to completely extinguish all our passions, to be free of defilements, to have a blissful mind where we possess true happiness with life, and to be out of the Round of Existence in order to enter Nirvana, we need to apply exertion through meditation until we attain inner peace or true happiness with Vijjā 3, all of which are the highest blessings of life as an Arahant.





Urospatha sagittifolia

Those who wish happiness in this life, the next life and the most happiness, have to develop themselves by following these steps to happiness to extinguish all the defilements to reach Nirvana:

- 1) Do not associate with the Fool but associate with the Wise. Pay respect to those worthy of our respect and depend on their suggestions for the best ways of life.
- 2) Living in a suitable location and having performed good deeds in the past should help to remind us to take pleasure in doing good deeds and properly setting ourselves up in life.
- 3) Keeping in mind that we should learn to be 'learned', use artfulness for the application of knowledge, as well as in conduct and in speech, and be proper with regards to discipline.

- 4) When being a laity, we have to pay old debts by cherishing our parents, pay new debts by cherishing our children and spouses, and establishing good status in life by not leaving our work undone.
- 5) Working to gain merit by generosity, taking refuge, practicing righteousness, acquiring knowledge, developing the capacity of looking after our extended family, and helping others with blameless work.
- 6) Refraining from harming others by the avoidance of all evil. Refraining from harming ourselves with the avoidance of drinking alcohol, while enhancing good deeds with carefulness in all Dhamma.
- 7) Developing ourselves to fulfill our responsibilities, paying respect to those worthy ones, and practicing humility. Establishing ourselves with dignity, and being righteous people with gratitude. Avoiding sloth and apathy by listening to Dhamma in the right occasion.
- 8) Preventing, ridding, and controlling all disasters with patience. Having self-reliance with a kind, docile personality. Following the path by meeting monks and being free from



doubt with Dhamma conversation.

- 9) Attainment of the Four Noble Truths and Nirvana by purifying ourselves, practicing the precepts with religious austerity, engaging in ascetic practice that includes retreating and controlling of the senses, and purifying the mind with celibacy conduct which is one of the required monastic observances.
- 10 After attaining Enlightenment, the mind will not be preoccupied by worldly vicissitudes, not stuck in grief; the mind will be liberated from all passions. Then, the mind can experience true happiness.

One who is jubilant will not lose anywhere but will get luck everywhere. In case we do not attain Enlightenment, we can always make merit by performing good deeds so that they will carry over the next life. At that time, we will be happy and have a virtuous life until we will meet the most eternal happiness which is beyond the Three Universal Characteristics: Impermanence, Suffering, and Not-Self. This true happiness is known as Nirvana.






The End



“Pages to Happiness” may not be what your first expect when you start reading it. The theme of this book is to explain the reality of the world and life. It tells us that no matter how long we have remained in the Round of Rebirth, we can know what we have to do in order to attain real happiness.



Point of View



Every minute of life has been counted down
since our birth.

Thus life is a sort of misery. The way to
decrease suffering

And to attain happiness is to learn
What real happiness is and how to attain it.

If one does not know where to get the first,
start to learn,

You're welcome to start with the 38 Paths
of the Blessings of Life

Since, for Buddhists, it is the 38 Steps to Happiness.







Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Phra Phadet Datta jeevo)



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Meditation for Beginners



Meditation is something which we already do in everyday life allowing us to focus on the task at hand – but the depth of meditation is superficial.

The events around us in the world soon rob us of our attention and our concentration is gone. The mind that wanders outside our own body is the source of all types of suffering.

By deepening our meditation until our mind comes to a standstill we can unlock the potential and unused ability within.

We maintain a balance of mindfulness and happiness for ourselves bringing contentment and direction to life in a way not possible through any other technique.

Step-by-Step Instructions for the Meditation Technique

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 and spine 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 are 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 the muscles of 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 and stop thinking about the things of the world. Feel as if you are 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 Seven Bases of the Mind

- 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 bridge of the nose 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** is at the roof of the mouth.
- The **fifth** is at the center of the throat above the Adam's apple.
- The **sixth** base is at a point in the center of the body at 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' breadths above the sixth base. 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 empty space, without organs, muscles or tissues. Gently and contentedly rest your attention at a point near to the seventh base of the mind – at the center of the body. Whatever experience arises in the mind, simply observe without attempting to interfere. In 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 ball, the size of the tip of your little finger,** is located inside at the center of the body. Maybe you'll find you can imagine nothing, but later you'll be able to see a crystal ball of increasing clarity. Allow your mind to come to rest at the very center of the crystal ball. Use the subtlest of effort and you'll find that the crystal ball becomes brighter and clearer. If you see too much effort you will find that it gives you a headache.

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-Araham**" (pronounced Sa-Ma-Ah-Ra-Hung) 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 the standstill – that's all you need to do. If you find that you can imagine nothing, then repeat the mantra, "Samma-Araham" silently and continuously in the mind. If you find that you're not sure about the location of the center of the body, anywhere in the area of the



stomach will do. Persevere because today's day-dream is tomorrow's still mind, today's darkness is tomorrow's inner brightness, today's perseverance is tomorrow's fulfillment.

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 your goal.

8. Keep repeating the *mantra* and eventually the sound of the words will die away. At that point a new bright, clear, crystal ball will arise in the mind of its own accord. The crystal ball will sparkle like a diamond.

This stage is called *pathama magga (primary path)*. At this stage the shining crystal ball is connected firmly to the mind, and is seated at the center of the body. You will experience happiness, With continuous observation at the center of this crystal ball, it will give way to a succession of increasingly purer bodily sheaths until it reaches the ultimate one called "Dhammakaya," the highest level of attainment of supreme happiness.





Worldwide Centers



If you would like to learn the meditation, please come to visit the Dhammakaya International Meditation Center near your home.

Dhammakaya Temple and Dhammakaya Foundation have set up local branch centers both in Thailand and abroad. Each center is staffed by qualified teachers of meditation from the Dhammakaya Foundation headquarters in Thailand, and offers a range of activities for training for all ages.

In 2005, there are 28 local centers in Thailand. The first international branch was established on January 1, 1992 as a meditation center in California, U.S.A. Subsequently, branches were opened around the world in Asia, The Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America, Oceania. Currently, there are over 50 branch centers.

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When we look at the world and life correctly ... and see things as they really are,

The season of happiness ... will arrive like a fresh wind blowing through our garden,

Carrying the faint tinkle of wind chimes to enliven ... and refresh our hearts and minds.

All kinds of flowers would bloom and paint the world anew as a multi-hued peace park.

With butterflies attending flowers; Little bees buzzing busily; Birds singing, soaring and swooping; Squirrels climbing and jumping from tree to tree.

A photographer would click click away to catch these impressions ... to collect and recollect them.

A little child would keenly jot down a little note in her diary to fondly re-read ... when she's older.

People are curious and wait to read about these wonderful memories with smiling faces.

Everyone happily sharing their happiness with each other feeling that their creation would always be beautiful ...

Life would be like a 'Sun' shining happiness into our minds, illuminating them.

Thus, everything inside this book came from the wishful feeling to share true happiness to everyone ...
"Pages to Happiness."



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