

KONG MENG SAN PHOR KARK SEE MONASTERY

KMS Dharma School Admission



Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery has commenced KMS Dharma School registration, open to both existing students and prospective new students. The school has programmes aimed at instilling positive Buddhism values in students who are in Primary school (P1 to P6) and Secondary school (S1 to S4), and youths (aged 17 to 20 years old). For more information and registration, please visit <https://bit.ly/3u13qGf>.

SHARED BUDDHIST HERITAGE

Online Exhibition



The first ever Online Exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage of member countries of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is developed and curated by the National Museum, Ministry of Culture, New Delhi, India.



The exhibition showcases rare Buddhist treasures from the following countries and institutions: India (National Museum, New Delhi and Indian Museum, Kolkata), Kazakhstan (National Museum of Kazakhstan),

China (Dun Huang Academy China), Kyrgyzstan (National Historical Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic), Pakistan (Museums of Pakistan), Russia (State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow), Tajikistan (renowned archaeological sites of Uzbekistan). For more information, please visit <https://nmvirtual.in/SCO.php>.

THE BUDDHIST LIBRARY

Online Fundraising

The Buddhist Library Family Day Funfair has been the annual fundraising event that keeps their programmes and activities running. It also enables them to provide free Dharma courses for anyone who is willing to attend.



However, this annual funfair has pivoted online due to the COVID-19 Safe Management Measures, the online fundraising activities include offering of candles, flowers and also purchase of Thangka by the late Thangka Artist Tenzin Khedup.



Buddhism-Based Therapy

The Buddhist Library held the first session of Buddhism-Based Therapy online on 16 November 2021, 7.30-9pm. It was an introduction to enable attendees to focus on the intention to care for the body, with the right views based on the Buddha's essential teachings. A total of 8 sessions will be held, with the last on 25 January 2022. For more information and registration, please visit their website at <https://buddhlib.org.sg/>.

BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

HAPPY Workout

Buddhist Fellowship
HAPPY Workout
Every Saturday
Oct 2 to Dec 18, 2021
10:30 a.m. to noon (GMT+8)
The HAPPY Workout will be carried out via Zoom & On-site at BF West Centre.
Please register via Eventbrite:
<https://happyworkoutoct2021.eventbrite.sg>
For security reasons, only registered participants will be sent the Zoom link and allowed to enter.

Buddhist Fellowship held HAPPY workout sessions since 2 October 2021, and the last session of the year will be on 18 Dec, 1-30am-12pm. 'HAPPY' –Healthy Ageing Promotion Programme for YOU! – is a programme, designed in Nagoya, Japan to help that region cope with an increase in the number of seniors dealing with mental health problems ranging from depression to dementia and Alzheimer's. Dual-task exercises are activities where the individual performs a physical and a mental task. An example would be stepping on the spot and counting out loud. This stimulates the parts of the brain responsible for the physical movement coordination and the cognitive functions.

Evidence has shown that a dual-task exercise, such as the HAPPY programme, has a more beneficial effect than a single-task exercise. Though targeted at people above 50 years of age, everyone can participate and benefit from the programme. For more information and registration, please visit <https://happyworkoutoct2021.eventbrite.sg>.

FRIENDLY DEER PARC

Online Dharma Talk



Venerable Faxun gave a series of Dharma Talk on The Mangala Sutta 《吉祥经》 and 17 sessions of the online Dharma Talks have been compiled and made available for viewing. To view the recordings, visit https://youtu.be/D_XZBOjzvX0.

TEN WAYS OF MAKING MERITS

COMPILATION BY MAHINDA WIJESINGHE

- UNDER GUIDANCE & INSTRUCTIONS FROM VENERABLE NANADASSANA –

The general desire of all beings throughout life is to escape painful and undesirable experiences and seek circumstances giving rise to happiness. Many people ignorant of the true ways of gaining genuine happiness look for it only in the round of sensual pleasures. That only brings happiness in the short-term – at best – and suffering will follow sooner than later. Indulgence will not bring happiness nor will abstinence. But, happiness is available to a person who makes an effort with merit (*punna*) as the catalyst. From every human excellence, any delight in godly worlds, even *Nibbana's* excellence, all that is gotten by merit's grace.

take it away by levy of a tax. In other words, merit is indestructible by others.

A treasure trove of merits acquired can satisfy every desire of god and man, no matter what they wish to have.¹ Merit or *punna* (in Pali) is that which purifies and cleanses the mind.²

Merit has the power of purifying the mind of greed, hatred and delusion. Thus, merit can be looked upon as those actions that improve the quality of the mind. They tend to raise the level on which the mind usually runs, refining and purifying it of grosser mental defilements. It is the making of merit that ensures one to lead a balanced and a harmonious life.

Another fruit of merit is that “merit opens doors everywhere”. The meritorious man generally finds his way unobstructed. Whatever work he takes up, he is able to bring it to a successful conclusion. Merit lubricates his progress. And the power of merit can be experienced in this very life and/or in the next. Therefore, the Buddha explained: Here he is glad, in the next life he is glad. The meritorious man is in both worlds glad. Thinking, ‘I have made merit’, he is glad. Still more glad is he when gone to the realms of bliss.³

So how does one acquire this merit? There are ten ways of making merit named *dasapunna-kiriya-vatthu*.

These are:

1. Giving or generosity (*Dana-mayan punna-kiriya-vatthu*)
2. Moral conduct or virtue (*Sila-mayan...*)
3. Meditation or mental development (*Bhavana-maya...*)
4. Respect or reverence (*Apaciti-sahagatan...*)
5. Service in helping others (*Veyyavacca-sahagatan...*)
6. Transference of merit (*Pattanuppadanan...*)
7. Rejoicing in other's merit (*Abbhanumodanan...*)
8. Expounding or teaching the Dhamma (*Desana-mayan...*)
9. Listening to the Dhamma (*Savana-mayan...*)
10. Correcting one's views (*Ditthijjukamman punna-kiriya-vatthu*)⁴

Of these ten ways of making merit, the merit in giving (*dana*) arises:



Should a person merit make
Let him do it time and again
And turn his heart to delight therein,
For happiness is the accumulation of merit

Dhammapada 118

Merit, the Buddha declared, is one thing that fire nor even an earthquake can destroy, nor can water drown its effect. Thieves cannot steal it nor can the State

¹ Please see e.g. *Khuddakapanha, Sutta 9*

² ‘Santanaj punati, visodheti’ti punnan.’ (e.g. *Vimanavatthu, Sutta 1.*)

³ *Dhammapada, v. 18*

- (a) when one thinks, 'I will give a gift';
- (b) when one gives the gift; and
- (c) when one reflects, 'I have given the gift'.

Thus, the three intentions – preliminary intention (*pubbacetana*), intention at the time of giving the gift (*muncana-cetana*), and subsequent intention after giving it (*aparacetana*) – become one and constitute the way of making merit in giving. The merit which consists of moral conduct or virtue (*sila*) arises also:

- (a) when one thinks, 'I will fulfil the precepts';
- (b) when one fulfils them; and
- (c) when one reflects 'I have fulfilled the precepts'.

All three intentions becoming one constitute the way of making merit in moral conduct. So, it is for the remaining eight. In the Suttas, there are only 'three ways of making merit' explicitly mentioned by the Buddha, namely,

1. Giving (*dana-mayan punna-kiriya-vatthu*),
2. Moral conduct (*sila-mayan punna-kiriya-vatthu*), and
3. Meditation (*bhavana-mayan punna-kiriya-vatthu*)

The other seven ways are also mentioned in the Suttas but not explicitly. An example would be the following stanza in a Sutta in the *Anguttara-nikaya*:

'When gifts are given to noble,
Upright and equipoised persons,
The merit thus acquired is pure,
And abundant alike. And they who rejoice in it
(*anumodanti*, by exclaiming "Sadhu!"),
Or render their service (*veyyavacca*) there,
They also receive that merit (*punna*),
And their merit is in no way smaller.'

Thus the seven ways of making merit, such as 'rejoicing in other's merit' (*abbhanumodana*) or service (*veyyavacca*) etc., should be understood as being included in the above three. They are judiciously highlighted by the commentaries in this way:

In 1. Giving (*dana*), it includes 6. Transference of merit, and 7. Rejoicing in other's merit. In 2. Moral conduct (*sila*), it includes: 4. Reverence, and 5. Service. In 3. Meditation (*bhavana*), it includes 8. Expounding the Dhamma and 9. Listening to the Dhamma. Correcting one's view (10), is included in all three (1,2,3). Thus, the ways of making merit in brief are three and in detail; ten.

'Let therefore a man (advise the Buddha) train himself in merit-making that yields long-lasting happiness. Let him cultivate the practice of giving, virtuous conduct and a mind of *metta*. By cultivating these qualities the wise man arrives in untroubled and happy states. Hence, do not fear merit-making. 'Merit-making' is a term denoting happiness, and what is desirable, pleasant, dear and charming.'



The Seven Noble Riches (Satta Ariya Dhanani)

The Buddha preached that although material riches, such as gold, silver and property, can be destroyed by fire, floods, earthquakes and enemies, taxed by the State or stolen by thieves, the following riches do not suffer from any of these perils. These are:

1. Faith (*Saddha-dhanan*)
2. Virtue (*Sila-dhanan*)
3. Shame (*Hiri-dhanan*)
4. Fear of doing evil (*Ottappa-dhanan*)
5. Learning (*Suta-dhanan*)
6. Generosity (*Caga-dhanan*), and
7. Wisdom (*Panna-dhanan*)

He also stated that the life of a person who possesses these riches has not lived in vain, and he is invincible.

These seven spiritual riches are the essence (*sara*) of the Teaching of all Buddhas. Therefore, they are called 'noble riches' (*ariya-dhanani*) as these are the riches of noble persons (*ariyas*). They who possess them are called by The Buddhas as not being poor, because they are the ones who really prosper. Concerning *saddha* or faith, the person who has it (a) likes to meet virtuous ones, (b) wishes to hear the true Dhamma (*saddhamma*), and (c) lives at home with stinginess removed from his mind. Endowed with these three qualities, he indeed is called 'one who has faith'.

Photo and Information Credits: Buddha Image on Rock Formation by Victoria Borodinova via Pexels, Light Offering by Pema Rinchen Excerpt from *Ten Ways of Making Merit* is available via https://www.dhammatalks.net/Books8/Bhikkhu_Nyanadassana_n_Mahinda_Ten-ways-of-making-MERIT.pdf

SELF-COMPASSION

GENEROSITY TO ONESELF (PART 3)

- BEE LI TAN -

In the previous articles – Parts 1 and 2, we learnt that:

1. By being generous to others, we are inevitably practicing self-compassion because we set the conditions for a better future for ourselves too.
2. Keeping our five precepts is a gift because it gives limitless number of beings freedom from fear and suffering. As a result, we too experience the same freedom.
3. Although these are great gifts, the Dhamma is the *highest gift* we could offer ourselves and others. It does not only lead to a better future but also gives us the opportunity to find true peace.

You may now be convinced that practising the Dhamma is the way to self-compassion but wonder whether enlightenment is far-fetched especially if you aren't ready to renounce or have family responsibilities. You may also doubt your ability to attain Nibbana in this lifetime. So, then what can you reasonably aim to achieve this lifetime?

There are 4 levels of enlightenment. Each level is accompanied by the path and its result¹. The first level is stream-entry, and it is appealing to me for several reasons:

- It is the lowest hanging fruit.
- The wisdom you need is deep, but it is still accessible. It involves the arising of the Dhamma Eye: seeing that “whatever is subject to origination, is all subject to cessation”. That is, realising that whatever that has a cause, comes to an end when the supporting cause or condition ceases. This applies to both our internal (cognitive/emotional) and external (physical) worlds and explains the elusive and fleeting nature of happiness. For example, you like watching a particular Korean drama. When the series ends, your joy ends there too until you find something else to make you happy. Even the mighty physical world isn't free from this. There are certain conditions causing earth and the universe to be in their present states. One day, those conditions will change and with it, the end of earth and the universe as we know it. In essence, you need to realise that all conditioned things are impermanent.
- Once you have entered the path leading towards stream-entry, you will not die without attaining stream-entry.



- Having attained stream-entry, you will inevitably flow towards Nibbana within 7 lifetimes. In these lifetimes, you will never be reborn in the 3 woeful planes (i.e., animal, ghost, and hell). That means, you would have secured a life either as a human or a deva (heavenly being). Phew! How long you take to reach Nibbana depends on your effort and kamma but just like

¹ The four levels of enlightenment are: stream-entry, once-returner, non-returner, arahant.

how water in a stream is destined to flow towards the ocean, you are on a travelator towards Nibbana. This is because you would have realised things that will change your understanding of the world forever. Once you see the Dhamma, you will only continue to grow in virtue, mind, and wisdom.

- Having gained such wisdom, you will no longer be fearful of death and would have accumulated great merit. The Buddha gave an analogy. Just as the water in the oceans is immeasurable, the merits you acquire from stream-entry is unfathomable. All we know is that a stream-enterer is endowed with a great bonanza of merits!



- You will have unshakeable confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and have virtue that is carried forward to future lifetimes. You realise the Triple Gem is the real deal and have no doubt of the awakening of the Buddha, the truth of the Dhamma, and the practice of the Noble Sangha. You finally come to an end of your lengthy existential search. Your faith and virtue are “locked in” and will not be influenced by the varied conditions you will be reborn into (e.g., born in a time when Dhamma is unknown, and humans are immoral).
- The amount of suffering you experience before attaining Nibbana will only be a fraction of the suffering you would have experienced otherwise from the repeated cycles of birth and death. It is analogous to comparing 2-3 droplets of water with the water in the great ocean.

For these reasons and perhaps more, the Buddha said this:

“Sole dominion over the earth, going to heaven, lordship over all worlds:
The fruit of stream-entry excels them” (*Dhammapada* 178)

Having learnt about stream-entry, I cannot imagine a more accessible, self-compassionate, and worthwhile pursuit for myself. It allows me to fulfil my responsibilities while I simultaneously work towards securing true peace. It is a path achievable by lay people like us. Many lay disciples of the Buddha were stream-enterers. These included the young, old, married, single, uneducated, and troubled.

The path towards stream-entry is the Noble Eightfold Path and the supporting factors are associating with people of integrity, listening to the Dhamma, appropriate attention, and practicing in accordance with the Dhamma. You may find more information on these in the book titled, *Into the Stream*, which is a compilation of suttas on the matter².

If this is something you want but doubt your abilities, let me tell you a story. There was once a monk named Cullapanthaka whose mind was so dull that he could not remember a single stanza even after learning for several months. Feeling discouraged, Cullapanthaka prepared to leave the Order. Fortunately, the Buddha knew this and instructed him to rub a cloth while repeating the word “taking on impurities”. Cullapanthaka started the exercise and noticed that the clean white cloth became dirty overtime. He then realised the impermanent nature of all conditioned things. With further guidance from the Buddha, he attained enlightenment.

There are many accounts of people who attain stream-entry despite their unfavourable conditions. You do not know the supporting conditions you have brought along with you to this lifetime. The Buddha may not be with us, but his teachings are more available to us now than ever before. With diligence and time, you may very well be on your way to securing true peace.

Photo Credits: Flowing Freshwater Stream and Pony in the Himalayan Mountains by Pema Rinchen

² <https://www.dhammatalks.org/books/IntoTheStream/Contents.html>

A WREATH OF BLUE LOTUSES

INCIDENTS FROM THE PALI CANON (Part 2)

- BY SANGHARAKSHITA -

This, then, is the episode with which we are concerned. This is our wreath of blue lotus. Clearly, it provides us with a good deal of material for reflection. I am going to concentrate on just one important part: the eight important rules. Why did they take the particular form that they did? And what are we to make of Mahaprajapati's response to them?

Before looking at the rules, however, we must briefly examine Mahaprajapati's behaviour after the Buddha's initial refusal. As we have seen, she gets her hair cut off, dons the saffron robes, and sets off for Vaisali with a number of Shakyan women. Finally, she stands outside the porch of the Hall of the Peaked Gable. In doing all this, she seems to be trying to force the Buddha's hand. We might even say that she is trying to present the Buddha with a *fait accompli*. After all, she has left home, shaved her head, and donned the saffron robes. She is in effect now a nun, so the Buddha might as well accept the situation, might as well permit her to do what she has in fact already done.

Now the *fait accompli* is a very interesting phenomenon. Essentially, a *fait accompli* consists in creating a situation in which the other person is, in effect, deprived of their power of choice or decision. I say in effect because they are not literally deprived of it; nevertheless, a situation is created in which they can exercise that power only at the cost of a great deal of trouble and even a great deal of unpleasantness. The *fait accompli* involves an element of what we may describe as emotional

blackmail, and is thus a form of coercion. This of course means that it is a form of violence, and is hence completely out of place in the spiritual life. If you present someone with a *fait accompli* you are not treating them as an individual. But this is what Mahaprajapati did: she tried to force the Buddha's hand. Her desire to Go Forth was no doubt sincere but, in this connection, she did not treat the Buddha with very much respect.

We are also told that she stood outside the porch 'sad, sorrowful, weeping and wailing'. One can perhaps understand her being sad and sorrowful, but what about the weeping and wailing? It would seem that she was trying to get her way in a rather childish fashion. We can contrast this with Ananda's attitude. Ananda argued with the Buddha. He prepared his ground and gave reasons as to why women should be permitted to Go Forth-with the result that the Buddha was unable to resist his request; he was unable to resist reason, unable to resist argument.



This part of the episode is surely of some significance. The *fait accompli* in fact failed – as it always does in the long run. Emotional blackmail fails, attempted coercion fails. On the other hand, reason suffused with sympathy succeeds. Mahaprajapati herself failed to gain her point, but Ananda gained it for her.

It is now time that we moved on to the eight important rules themselves. Why did they take the particular form they did? Perhaps the first thing that strikes us about them is that they are quite severe, even quite harsh. We cannot quite help feeling that the Buddha is perhaps being rather unfair towards Mahaprajapati – though he no doubt knew her better than we do. Indeed, the Buddha seems to be being quite unjust to women in general.

The eight important rules would certainly make the blood of a modern feminist boil with rage, and they might even make some men a little uneasy. Let's go into the matter a little.

If we look at these rules, it is rather obvious that their main function is to subordinate the order of nuns to the order of monks, to make the bhikkhunis completely dependent on the bhikkhus. The bhikkhunis, the nuns, are to be kept in a state of perpetual pupilage. What could have been the reason for this?



One scholar has suggested that Mahaprajapati's request created an 'organisational problem' for the Buddha (it seems that even the Buddha had organisational problems!). By this time the order of monks had been in existence for about twenty years. Organisationally speaking, the Buddha was faced with three alternatives. He could admit women to the existing order of monks, thus creating a single unified order, he could create an entirely separate and independent order for women, or he could subordinate the order of nuns to the order of monks.

The first of these options was clearly out of the question. Both monks and nuns were expected to lead lives of celibacy and this would presumably have been rather difficult if they were living together as members of a single unified order. The second alternative was out of the question too. The Buddha could hardly be the head of two quite separate, independent, orders. In any case, he was – externally at least – a man, and a man could hardly be the head of an order of nuns. If it was really to be separate and independent, that order of nuns would have to be headed by a woman. That left only the third alternative, that of subordinating the order of nuns to the order of monks. This, according to the scholar, is the alternative that the Buddha adopted.

This explanation is certainly of interest. There may even be some truth in it. But it does not really suffice to explain the specific form in which the eight important rules were presented. Something more than organizational convenience seems to have been involved. Perhaps it would help if we tried to understand what it was that the rules were intended to prevent. To do this, however, we have to look at rules in general.

If we look at the *Vinaya Pitaka*, or *The Book of the Discipline*, we find that it contains many rules, of many different kinds. There are rules for monks, and rules for nuns. According to the Theravada tradition, there are, altogether, 227 rules for monks, and 311 rules for nuns. How did these rules come to be laid down? It is certain that the Buddha did not draw them all up in advance. He did not sit down under his Bodhi tree and think, 'What sort of Sangha would I like to have? And what sort of rules should it observe? How should it be constituted?'

The Buddha laid down rules in response to unskilful behaviour on the part of a member, or members, of the Sangha. So long as there was no unskilful behaviour there were no rules; the Buddha was not interested in laying down rules for their own sake. He was interested simply in the moral and spiritual development of the individual, and laid down rules only when 'forced' to do so.

These eight important rules, however, were laid down in advance of any offence actually committed by Mahaprajapati. But the same principle does perhaps apply. The effect of these rules is to subordinate the order of nuns to the order of monks. It is to make the bhikkhunis completely dependent, organizationally speaking, on the bhikkhus. So what kind of unskilful behaviour are the eight rules meant to prevent? To what kind of possible offences do they refer? Clearly they are meant to prevent the nuns claiming equality with, or superiority over, monks. That is to say, they are meant to prevent women claiming equality with, or superiority over, men. In other words, we could say that they are meant to prevent an eruption of feminism into the order.

To say this does not mean that the Buddha did not believe in equal rights for women in the ordinary social sense. It does not mean that he did not believe that a woman could be spiritually superior to a man. After all, he had told Ananda quite categorically that women were capable of attaining the fruits of Stream Entry and so on, and, presumably, a woman who was a Stream Entrant was spiritually superior to a man who was still a worldling. So what the Buddha wanted to do, it seems, was to prevent women from Going Forth for the wrong reasons, that is, for social rather than for purely spiritual reasons.

This talk, "A Wreath of Blue Lotus" given by Sangharakshita is part of the series, Incidents from the Pali Canon and the audio recording and transcript can be found on Free Buddhist Audio at <https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/>.

FILIAL PIETY

A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE (Part 2)

- CHIN KEE THOU -

Gratitude and Respect for a Mother

The *Filial Piety Sutra* highlights the agony and sacrifice of a mother who bears the child for the full gestation, is told by the Buddha to Ananada, “Listen well, and I will explain it for you in detail. The foetus grows in its mother’s womb for ten lunar months. What bitterness she goes through while it dwells there!”

“In the first month of pregnancy, the life of the foetus is as precarious as a dewdrop on grass: how likely that it will not last from morning to evening but will evaporate by midday!

During the second lunar month, the embryo congeals like curds. In the third month, it is like coagulated blood. During the fourth month of pregnancy, the foetus begins to assume a slightly human form. During the fifth month in the womb, the child’s five limbs – two legs, two arms, and a head – start to take shape. In the sixth lunar month of pregnancy, the child begins to develop the essences of the six sense faculties: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. During the seventh month, the three hundred sixty bones and joints are formed, and the eighty-four thousand hair pores are also complete. In the eighth lunar month of the pregnancy, the intellect and the nine apertures are formed.

By the ninth month, the foetus has learned to assimilate the different

nutrients of the foods it eats. For example, it can assimilate the essence of peaches, pears, certain plant roots and the five kinds of grains.

Inside the mother’s body, the solid internal organs used for storing hang downward, while the hollow internal organs used for processing, spiral upward. These can be likened to three mountains, which arise from the face of the earth. We can call these mountains Mount Sumeru, Karma Mountain, and Blood Mountain. These analogous mountains come together and form a single range in a pattern of upward peaks and downward valleys. So too, the coagulation of the mother’s blood from her internal organs forms a single substance, which becomes the child’s food.



During the tenth month of pregnancy, the body of the foetus is completed and ready to be born. If the child is extremely filial, it will emerge with palms joined together in respect and the birth will be peaceful and auspicious. The mother will remain uninjured by the birth and will not suffer pain. However, if the child is extremely rebellious in nature, to the extent that it is capable of committing the five rebellious acts, then it will injure its mother’s womb, rip apart its mother’s heart and liver, or get entangled in its mother’s bones.

The birth will feel like the slices of a thousand knives or like ten thousand sharp swords stabbing her heart. Those are the agonies involved in the birth of a defiant and rebellious child.”

This *sutra* shows the importance of a mother’s role in child bearing and the respect and gratitude for her is immeasurable.

The unconditional love of a mother for her child is held in the highest regard in Buddhism and is used as an illustration of *metta* in the *Metta Sutta*: “Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.” (Sn. 149)

Thus, in the Pali Canon, there are also many *sutras* on showing respect to parents, citing mother and father in that order placing the mother preceding the father.

- (1) Bhikkhus, those families dwell with Brahma where at home, the mother and father are revered by their children.
- (2) Those families dwell with the first teachers where at home, the mother and father are revered by their children.
- (3) Those families dwell with the first deities where at home, the mother and father are revered by their children.
- (4) Those families dwell with the gift-worthy where at home, the mother and father are revered by their children.

“‘Brahma’ and ‘bhikkhus’ – designations for mother and father. ‘First teachers’ is a designation for mother and father. ‘First deities’ is a designation for mother and father. ‘Gift-worthy’ is a designation for mother and father. And why? Mother and father are very helpful to their children: they raise them, nurture them, and show them the world.”

Mother and father are called ‘Brahma’, and also ‘first teachers’. They are worthy of gifts from their children, for they have compassion for their offspring. Therefore, a wise person should revere them and treat them with honour.

One should serve them with food and drink, with clothes and bedding, by massaging and bathing them, and by washing their feet. Because of that service to mother and father, the wise praise one in this world and after death one rejoices in heaven.” (AN.II, 71)

“Bhikkhus, behaving rightly towards four persons, the wise, competent, good person preserves himself unmaimed and uninjured; he is blameless and beyond reproach by the wise; and he generates much merit.

*Mother and father are called
“Brahmas”, “early teachers”
And “worthy of veneration,”
Being compassionate towards
Their family of children.
Thus, the wise should venerate them,
Pay them due honour,
Provide them with food and drink,
Give them clothing and a bed,
Anoint and bathe them,
And also wash their feet.*

*When he performs such service
For his mother and his father,
They praise that wise person even here
And hereafter, he rejoices in heaven.*

(It. 7-13); (AN.I, 133)

What four?

- (1) Behaving rightly towards his mother...
- (2) Behaving rightly towards his father...
- (3) Behaving rightly towards the Tathagata...
- (4) Behaving rightly towards a disciple of the Tathagata...

A person who behaves rightly towards his mother and father, towards the enlightened *Tathagata*, or towards his disciple, generates much merit. Because of that righteous conduct towards his mother and father, the wise praises one in this world and after death one rejoices in heaven.” (AN.II, 4)

“Bhikkhus, considering five prospects, mother and father wish for a son to be born in their family.

What five?

1. Having been supported by us, he will support us.
2. Or he will do work for us.
3. Our family lineage will be extended.
4. He will manage the inheritance.
5. Or else, when we have passed on, he will give an offering on our behalf.” (AN.III, 43)

The *Dhammika Sutta* 2/14 expounds: “One should righteously support one’s mother and father, and also engage in righteous livelihood. A heedful layperson, observing this practice diligently is reborn in the sphere of *devas* called self-luminous.” (Sn. 404)

In the *Sigalovada Sutta*, which is an advice to a young layman Sigalka on morality, relating to the four quarters, zenith and nadir which, in the memory of his father, he had been worshipping.

“In five ways a child should minister to his parents, as the eastern quarter [i.e., the direction of the rising sun or birth]:

Once supported by them, I will now be their support; I will perform duties incumbent on them; I will keep up the lineage and tradition of my family; I will make myself worthy of my heritage; I will give alms on their behalf when they are dead. In five ways, do the parents, thus ministered to as the eastern quarter by their child, act in sympathy with him: they restrain him from vice, they exhort him to virtue, they train him to a profession, they contract a suitable marriage for him, and in due time they hand over his inheritance.” (D.III.192)

INVESTIGATING PAIN

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART (PART 3)

- BY AJAAN MAHA BOOWA NANASAMPANNO -

As for the mind, know that it's the 'knower' we have to test and comprehend in the same way as the elements and *khandhas* so that we won't grab hold of it as the self or as belonging to the self, which would simply be creating a heavier burden. We must investigate it with discernment so as to see it for what it truly is, in just the same way. But as I've explained the investigation of the mind in a number of talks already, you should have a fair understanding of the matter by now.

In particular, when a pain arises in the body, we should know distinctly that, 'This is a feeling'. That's all. Don't go labelling or interpreting it, saying that the feeling is us, the feeling is ours, or that anything is ours, for that would simply foster more and more defilements and bring more and more pain in to smother the heart. Then when the feeling doesn't vanish, that would cause even more pain in the heart, and what could we possibly find to bear it?

Pains arise in the body. They've been arising ever since the day we were born. The moment we came from our mother's womb, the pain was excruciating. Only by surviving this death, did we become human



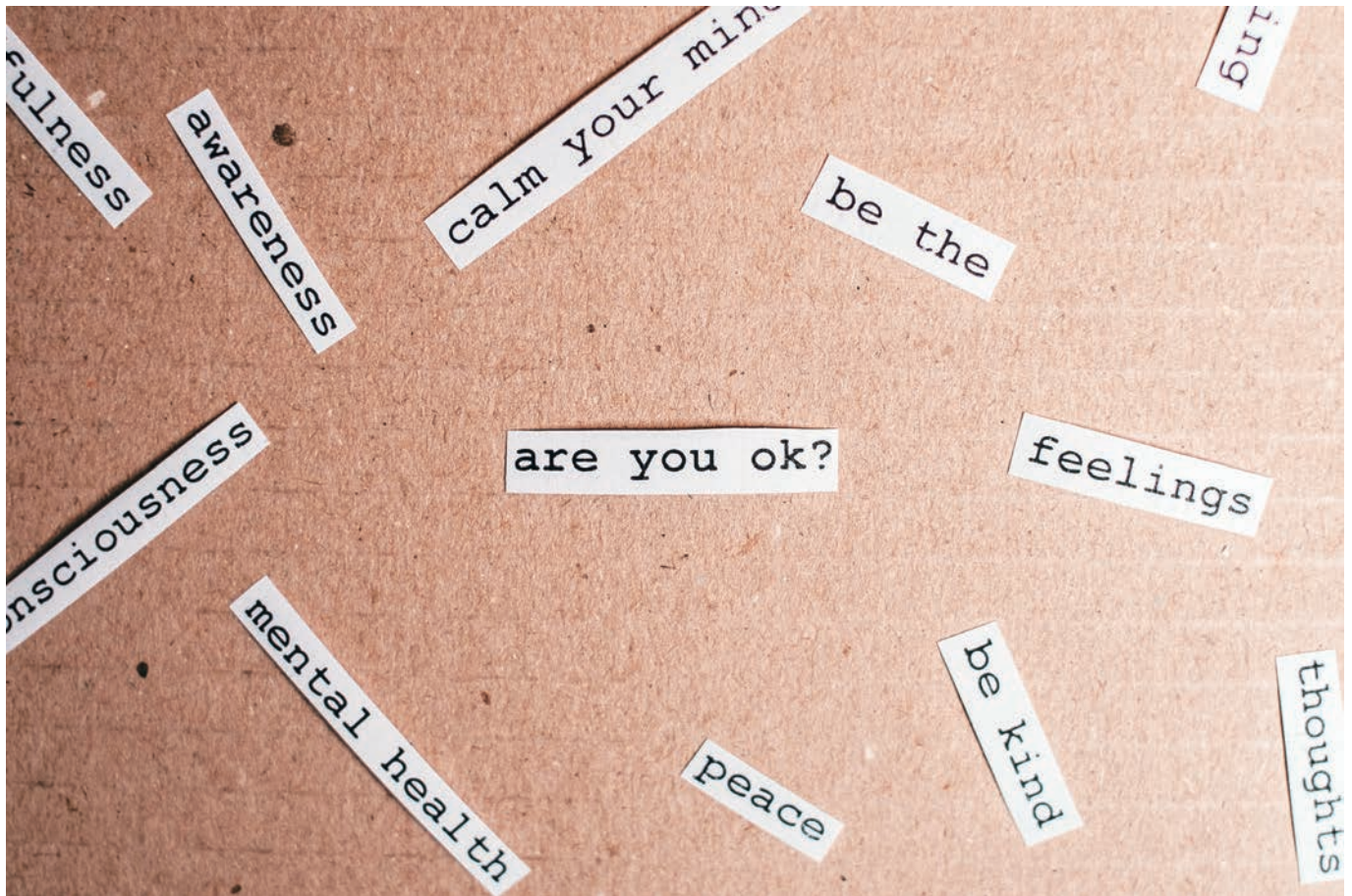
beings. If you don't call that pain, what will you call it? Pains have existed ever since way back. You can't force them to change their ways. The way of pain in the body is that it continually has to show itself. Once it arises, it remains and then vanishes. That's all there is to it — arises, remains, vanishes — regardless of whether it's an external feeling or an internal feeling, namely a feeling or mood in the mind.

In particular, for feelings in the body: Investigate them so as to see them clearly. The body is the body. We've seen it clearly, known it clearly ever since the day we were born. We can conjure it into anything — us, ours, a prince, a king, nobility, whatever, however we want to conjure it — but its truth is simply a truth, fixed and unalterable. It doesn't change in line with what we conjure it up to be. The body is simply the physical *khandha*. It has four elements — earth, water, wind, and fire — gathered together and called a person, a woman, a man, classified in endless ways, given this name and that, but what stays the same is the body: the 'physical heap'. All the parts when taken together, is called the physical heap, which is one reality. Take out any of the parts, and each of them also has its reality. When they're gathered together, the skin is skin, the flesh is flesh, and the same holds true for the tendons, bones, and so forth. Even though they have names, don't fall for their names. See them simply as individual realities, as a physical heap.

As for the heap of feelings, it's not the body. The body isn't a feeling, such as pain. Feeling is feeling. Whether pleasure appears, or pain or a neutral feeling appears, it's simply a separate feeling that you can see clearly. These two *khandhas* — the body and feeling — are more prominent than *sanna*, *sankhara*, and *vinnana*, which arise at intervals and immediately vanish.

Feelings, however, even though they vanish, have a period in which they remain. This you can clearly see in the practice. When pain arises, focus on it as your target, as the point to investigate. Don't see the pain as being yourself, for that would be going against the true nature of feelings and the method of investigation, and you won't be able to know the truth of the feeling as you should with your discernment. When you don't know the truth and persist in assuming the pain to be yourself, you'll increase the pain enormously within the mind, because you are going against the principles of nature, which are the principles of truth that the Lord Buddha taught.

He taught us to investigate so as to see pain — in whichever part of the body it may arise — simply as a phenomenon that arises, remains, and then vanishes in its own due course. Don't get entangled in it. Don't fashion or conjure it into being this or that, if you don't want to be forever burdened with pain, with never a moment to put it down.



See its truth the moment it arises, remains, and vanishes. That's all there is to feeling. Ferret it out so as to see it clearly with mindfulness and discernment.

When you have focused on a feeling, turn and look at the mind to see if the mind and the feeling are one and the same thing. Then look at the body and the mind: Are they one and the same? Look at them so as to see them clearly. While you are investigating, don't send the mind out anywhere else. Keep it right at that one spot. For example, when investigating, focus on the pain so as to see it distinctly. Then, turn to look at the mind so as to see this awareness distinctly. Are they one and the same? Compare them. This awareness and that feeling: Are they the same? Can you make them one and the same? And is the body like the mind? Is it like the feeling? Is it similar enough to be one and the same?

There! This is the way we're taught to separate things so as to see them clearly. The body is the body — how can it be like the mind? The mind is a mental phenomenon, a nature that knows, but the elements of the body are elements that don't know. The earth element doesn't know, the water element doesn't know, the wind element doesn't know, the fire element doesn't know — but this mental element (*mano-dhatu*) knows. This being the case, how can they be one and the same?

Similarly with the pain: It's an element that doesn't know. It's a phenomenon. These two unknowing elements are also different: The feeling and the body are different sorts of things. They aren't one and the same. How could you make them one and the same?

In making distinctions while investigating, look so as to see clearly the way things actually are. There's no need to fear death. There is no death to the mind. Don't create snares to catch yourself and hurt yourself. There is no death; i.e., no death to the mind. There is nothing but awareness, pure and simple. Death doesn't exist in the mind, which is something 100% unalterable and sure.

Photo credits:

Newborn Baby by Rene Asmussen and Words on Feelings by Vie Studio via Pexels.

This article is an excerpt from *Straight from the Heart* by Ajaan Maha Boowa Nanasampanno.

This article is transcribed from English-translated commentary by Venerable Master Hsuan Hua on “Happily Dwelling Conduct”, Chapter 14 of *The Lotus Sutra*, originally translated by Yao Qin Sanzang Master Kumarajiva. The English translation of this Sutra and the commentary of Master Hua was done by the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS), and is available via <http://www.cttbusa.org/dfs14/dfs14.asp.html>.

SAMADHI – COLLECTEDNESS

SITTING IN THE BUDDHA’S WAITING ROOM (PART 4)

- AJANN MUNINDO -

The memories and our ill will are not the same thing. We can't necessarily free our mind from unpleasant memories, but we do have the potential to stop compounding the unpleasantness by adding resentment. The ill will is extra. As a result of seeing this, forgiveness grows.

The next right effort is described as 'making an effort to remove already arisen unwholesome states of mind'. It is beneficial to familiarise ourselves with what the Buddha said about the five ways of removing distracting thoughts¹. Also I would recommend reading what Ajahn Tiradhammo wrote in his book, *Working with the Five Hindrances*².

In my own experience, I have found it useful to bear in mind that the kind of effort required to deal with an already arisen obstruction depends on the intensity of the obstruction. It seems to me there are three approaches. When an obstruction is of a low level of intensity, we can afford to simply ignore it – to not give it the energy of our attention. Sometimes this is enough for the obstruction to disappear. It is similar to choosing to not answer the phone when it rings. I call this the 'cutting through' approach.

When we encounter an obstruction that is charged with more energy, attempting to ignore it or cut through it could lead to making things worse. It might seem like it disappears, but that doesn't mean it has gone away; it has gone into unawareness and might be more difficult to deal with when it returns. For this level of intensity we need to turn around and face that which is troubling us and use our faculties to investigate. We could call this approach 'seeing through'. We use our mental, emotional and physical faculties to enquire as to the source of this obstruction. How do we feel in our heart as we face this sense of being blocked from progressing?

Where do we feel the tension in the body? In other words, we build a relationship with it: the opposite of ignoring it. We might even strike up a conversation with it: 'What do you want? How can I help you? Sorry, I have been ignoring you.' As we become more acquainted with the whole body-mind sense of the obstruction, not only will our mental acumen be available to support



the investigation, but also our intuition. When we feel confronted with a real conundrum, we need to be listening to all of our being, including our gut. In the process, we might find that we grow tired of trying to figure out a solution and head outside for a long walk in the woods, or go swimming. Physical exercise is an important concomitant in this process.

A different kind of effort is required when dealing with the most intense type of obstruction, which I call 'burning through'. In my own case, it often feels like physical burning involving a lot of heat. If we find ourselves in such a situation, there is not much that we can do other than feel the fire, stay present in the body-mind, stay soft and open, and be consciously willing to bear with it, especially when it feels unbearable.

Now to the final of the four right efforts: what is involved in 'making an effort to avoid the arising of so far unarisen unwholesome states of mind'? Let's take the example of witnessing how unpleasant it is to be in the company of someone lacking empathy. Having noticed how much hurt can come from such a lack of emotional development, we decide to make an effort to avoid becoming like that. Just because we happen to meditate regularly, does not guarantee that we are protected from falling into the trap of insensitivity. There are many meditators around who become so caught up in trying to solve their own suffering that they become obsessed and short-sighted: while making an effort to attend to their pain they have been pulled down into the vortex of their pain. This is one of the very real dangers of meditation practice. To avoid this danger, we can turn up the volume of compassion.

As an exercise in formal meditation, we can imagine the face of another person and think to ourselves, ‘Just as my eyes have cried many tears, their eyes also have cried tears. Just as I suffer, they too suffer. May all beings be free from suffering.’ We can perform the same exercise in daily life: sitting on a train or waiting in an airport, look at the faces of those around you and imagine tears rolling down their cheeks. It is safe to assume that everyone has cried, and when we feel how we feel when we recognise that fact, the barriers we construct around ourselves can begin to dissolve. Maybe we start to sense that we are all in this together – men and women, young and old, rich and poor – we all suffer and long to be free from suffering. Mindfully empathising with the suffering of others gives rise to compassion and can protect our heart from becoming cold and insensitive.

Although there is a great deal more that could usefully be discussed on this topic of *virīya*, there is at least one point in particular that should be mentioned. We have considered the importance of generating energy, and we also must be ready to accord with energy that arises spontaneously. Here, I am referring to the intensity we feel when faced with a dilemma.

When we are in the middle of a dilemma and feel frustrated, it is the easiest thing to indulge in wanting the *dukkha* to disappear. The same applies to when we are shocked – when something totally unexpected occurs and our bubble of uninspected assumption bursts, and we experience a great release of energy. If our wanting to be free from *dukkha* is informed by wisdom and restraint, it will help motivate us to find the cause of the *dukkha* and the way out of it, but often our wanting is laced with clinging and only serves to stoke the fires of frustration. It is skilful to prepare ourselves in advance for such occurrences in order to not miss the precious opportunity to make progress on the path. A dilemma or a shock should be seen as free energy that has been made available to fuel the purification of our gold. And we prepare ourselves by wisely reflecting in advance. The perception of intolerable intensity that arises with such experiences is the result of our imposing limitations on awareness. When we decide that we can’t handle the

intensity, there and then we are imposing limitations on the heart of awareness: we are turning away from our refuge of trusting in the Buddha, and instead believe in the story in our heads that tells us we can’t handle it. Wisely reflecting in advance is one way of nurturing the mindfulness and restraint that have the power to prevent us from forgetting the refuge in the Buddha – in edgeless, selfless, just-knowing awareness. If we remember the refuge, then the energetic intensity that manifests upon feeling frustrated or shocked is a gift for which we can feel grateful. It is our habit of clinging that creates the perception of limited awareness, and it takes energy to free ourselves from that habit. How we view energy when it hits us determines whether or not we benefit from it.

SAMADHI (COLLECTEDNESS)

*On hearing true teachings
the hearts of those who are receptive
become serene, like a lake:
deep, clear and still.*

Dhammapada 82

As with gravity, we don’t have to know what energy actually is to be able to accord with it. What matters is that we know how to access it and generate it so that when it is needed we are not caught unprepared; and when an unexpected wave of energy does appear, how to meet it without judgment, without the contraction of fear – how to benefit from it.

As *saddha* and *panna* complement each other, so do *virīya* and *samadhi*. While *virīya*’s speciality is getting things done, *samadhi*’s speciality is skilful not doing.

The *Dhammapada* verse above speaks of a deep, clear stillness that can appear upon receiving true teachings. This image fits well with how we might usefully contemplate the cultivation of *samadhi*. Particularly for those whose native approach to practice is primarily source-oriented (*In Any Given Moment*³), developing *samadhi* is not so much about making the mind peaceful, as about allowing the mind to resume peacefulness: we are not ‘doing *samadhi* meditation’, but ‘allowing stillness’.

¹ *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts*, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.020.soma.html>

² *Working with the Five Hindrances*, AjahnThiradhammo (2016), <https://forestsangha.org/teachings/books/working-with-the-five-hindrances?language=English>

³ *In Any Given Moment*, AjahnMunindo(2021) <https://forestsangha.org/teachings/books/in-any-given-moment?language=English>

Photo credit: Swimmer in Pool by Pixabay via Pexels

This excerpt is from the booklet, *Sitting in the Buddha’s Waiting Room* by Ajahn Munindo, a reprint of a chapter from the book, *In Any Given Moment* published by Aruno Publications, and is available for free distribution at www.forestsangha.org.

RIDING AN ELEPHANT TO CATCH GRASSHOPPERS

EVENING MEDITATION AT METTA FOREST MONASTERY (Part 2)

- BY THANISSARO BHIKKHU -

Continuing from Part 1 on how we base so many of our decisions on things that we don't really know leading to us reasoning them out, making the best guess that we can, and following through — all of which determines a wide range of pleasures and pains. And in Part 2, we see how the worldview sees patterns, but seeing the worldview was not the solution.

The solution, the Buddha found, lay in turning around and looking inside his mind, seeing what the mind was doing: What views was it using? What intentions was it acting on? What intentions could be used to put an end to suffering? In this mode, there are no stories, there's no worldview, there are simply actions and results. And it was getting down to this mode that the Buddha was able to solve his problems.

Now, with the other two modes, the way he used them helped to focus him here. But the solution was in looking at things as events, right here right now, the actions of the mind. That's the best thing the mind can do, because it can use that knowledge to find something that the mind doesn't do — in other words something unfabricated.

So when you're sitting here meditating and suddenly find yourself tied up in stories or worldviews, remind yourself: You've got to get out of those stories, out of those worldviews, back into watching events here in the present moment. Now, whatever way you can point the story or point the worldview in this direction, that's fine. Sometimes you can just drop the stories, other times you have to remind yourself, "Okay, someone mistreated me, and it was awful, but I was able to rise above that, and become a meditator. What do meditators do? They focus on their minds."



The same with your world view: Think about your worldview until you get to the point where the narrative tells you that the important people in the world are the ones who focus in on their minds.

Your right view keeps you focused here inside: What is the mind doing?

This is where real knowledge is, watching the actions of the mind, and learning how to overcome our denial about what you're doing, your ways of obscuring to ourselves what you're doing.

That's the most important thing you can do, because if you can't know your own self, what are you going to know?



There's a nice passage in one of Ajaan Maha Boowa's Dhamma talks, where he wrote a little introduction to the talk, saying that it was delivered to one of the more important monks of our day and age. It turned out that he was referring to a monk who was not well-known at all, but someone with a high attainment. That's

So, have a sense of the mind's true worth — and the worth of an alert mind, a clear mind.

As for the stories of the world, leave them as stories. Pick them up only when they're skillful.

In other words, when they're helpful for directing yourself back to watching the mind.



important. That's what makes a person important. What makes this world worth living is the fact that the world since the time of the Buddha, has not been empty of arahants.

I know a couple of famous ajaans who've have said that this is one of the things they realise on gaining full awakening, that since the time of the Buddha we have not been empty of arahants. Those are the people who keep the world worthwhile.

That's where the worth of the mind is: in what it can do to clean itself out, to know itself.

So, when you've cleaned out the mind, ask yourself: What are you going to do with this elephant you've got now? Elephants are good for work. They can drag large trees; they can lift large burdens. So, what are the large trees in the mind that need to be dragged away? What are the burdens that need to be lifted off? Make sure you don't use this elephant to catch grasshoppers. Use it to accomplish something solid that more than repays all the work you went to, in order to get this elephant trained.

This article, "Riding an Elephant to Catch Grasshoppers" is a Dharma Talk by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Held on 19 January 2021, this is part of the evening meditation sessions at Metta Forest Monastery and can be found on DhammaTalks at <https://www.dhammatalks.org/> under CC BY-NC 4.0.

Photo credits: Seaview by Serkan Bayraktar, Mind by Vie Studio and Pile of Logs by Largo Polecsek via Pexels