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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Summary

This article is written by Anita Carter, Abbot of the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia. It provides an outline of four stages of Buddha Dhamma practice and recommendations of specific practices in each stage.

Foundations of Buddha Dhamma Practice - the Path to Nibbana (Everlasting Happiness) by Anita Carter

First stage - The Budding Stage

Find out why you want to practice Buddha Dhamma.

Then to begin -

- (1) practice generosity everyday- develop regular acts of giving to everyone you meet and everywhere you go- build the mind of giving and the mind of receiving - like a deep mountain lake gives and gives.
- (2) practice morality every day- to perfect virtue keep five precepts.

Second stage - Lifting out of the Mud

Build refuge in Buddha Dhamma Sangha by:

1. Practice one pointed meditation for 10 minutes per day - Samadhi
2. Decide to become harmless in the world
3. Practice mindfulness in everything you do - pay attention
4. Practice metta and friendliness - Perfection of loving kindness
5. Be kind to your Mother
6. Study the Metta Sutta, Mangala Sutta, Sigalovada Sutta
7. Offer dana to Buddhist Monks and Nuns regularly
8. Attend Buddhist teachings weekly

Third stage – Rising through the murky water

1. Accumulate merit - everyday - track three merit making projects - help a Buddhist Centre
2. Write a life plan
3. Do daily chanting and offerings
4. Accumulate virtue and concentration– through practicing the Noble Eightfold Path of Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration and the Six Perfections.
5. Accumulate wisdom – through right understanding and right thoughts by learning the principles of Buddha Dhamma as found by the Buddha.
6. Study the suttas, listen to Dhamma Teachings weekly
7. Learn basic principles of Abhidhamma
8. Offer to Buddhist Monks and Nuns weekly
9. Attend as many Katina Ceremonies (Robes offering) as you can

Fourth Stage – Lotus Blossom

1. Review where you want to go with your practice – this life and next
2. Choose Bodhisattva practice or monastic life.
3. Seek out a true guide and teacher - someone you trust - follow their instructions
4. Take extra precepts and vows
5. Write a new life plan
6. Help Buddha Dhamma Teachers and Sangha Members
7. How can you best help others on the Path to Nibbana?
8. How to preserve your practice and keep improving - find out what your daily practice needs to be.