



www.dhammadstream.org

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Summary

This article describes some of the common 'games' we tend to play in life that cause us to suffer and the antidotes Buddha taught to stop playing these games. Attributing praise and blame is one of those 'games' which wastes life energy and brings suffering.

The antidotes to all the 'games' are through the Buddha Dhamma Path. Cultivate a more beneficial, pro-active mind that responds to our experiences in life with awareness, positivity, accountability, maturity, equanimity and non-judgement.

The Futility of Praise and Blame

The Teachings of the Buddha are based on the Four Noble Truths and the Law of Dependent Origination within a framework of cause and effect to deliver 84,000 methods of framing aspects of how the mind-body complexes we call sentient beings move from one rebirth to another over vast amounts of time experiencing pleasant but mainly unpleasant feelings.

This mass of experience can be expressed as being separated from what we wish to experience and having to experience what we wish not to experience again and again, life after life; dwelling in circumstances we want perhaps once every 10 million lives only to have to surrender that pleasant state without the possibility of holding a good rebirth twice in a row.

Separation from the pleasant and meeting with the unpleasant is the norm of existence.

These types of complex happenings and many more processes in god (deva), human and animal births and deaths (for example) are summarised by a formulation of the first noble truth as 'life is suffering.'

Very few persons can grasp this truth in any life let alone remember it over a

series of lives.

This noble truth is nothing to do with pessimism or a dark outlook on life. It is a form of wisdom because it states a series of problems we all know. By itself, it is not much, but when there is a learning situation it can lead to the understanding of the complement of the other three noble truths.

A truth is “noble” if it can be used to solve the problem of your own troubles.

The second noble truth is ‘the cause of the suffering is attachment.’

The third noble truth is ‘there is a way out of the suffering.’

The fourth noble truth is that ‘the way out of the suffering is the Buddha Dhamma Path.’

This Buddha Dhamma Path is the Eightfold Path.

So where are you today on the Buddha Dhamma Path?

Unless we are crazy, we all wish to reduce at least our own suffering.

One way that the Teachings show us to reduce suffering, is by ceasing to attribute praise or blame either to self or others. To reduce suffering, we have to stop playing games.

Lama Yeshe commented in the publication, *Wisdom Energy* that:

"The first thing to do when involved in a painful relationship with someone or something, is to remember that reacting negatively never helps at all. Feeling sorry for yourself, acting defensively and expressing hostility accomplish nothing. They only make you more nervous and upset. Thinking dispassionately about your past experiences will convince you this is true. As negative thoughts and feelings lead only to immediate and future suffering, it is important to adopt a more beneficial way of reacting. "

Lama Yeshe thus noted that instead of giving in to sorrow and hatred, look closely to what is happening within and without you and caution yourself :

"Wait a moment, Calm down, This too will pass.

If you can hold off expressing your anger for even a few seconds, your mind will clear a little by itself. In this more reasonable state you can approach the situation much more skilfully. Remember that there must be a cause for what is happening now." (1)

The psychiatrist Dr. Eric Berne is the originator of transactional analysis. He also identified games we like to play. Berne claims that there are three

types of human ego states:

(1) The state that derived from the parental figures, called 'Parent.' In this state, he or she feels, thinks, acts, talks, and responds just as one of his or her parents did when he or she was little. This ego state may be active when raising his or her children, for example.

(2) The 'Adult' ego state: He or she appraises the environment objectively, calculates possibilities and probabilities from past experience. The Adult functions like a computer.

(3) The 'Child' ego state: This is the little boy or girl we carry within us. Berne points out that it is important for us to understand the Child we carry within us because it is going to be with us all of our life.

When two people confront each other, there are six ego states involved, three in each person.

Transactions usually proceed in series.

These series are not random, but are programmed and may come from one of the three sources: Parent, Adult or Child, or more generally, from society, material or idiosyncrasy.

An ego state "may be described phenomenologically as a coherent system of feelings, and operationally as a set of coherent behaviour patterns", or in more practical terms as "a system of feelings accompanied by a related set of behaviour patterns." (Berne 1964).

Berne classifies the games into "families according to the situations in which they most commonly occur: Life Games, Marital Games, Party Games, Sexual Games and Underworld Games; then comes a section for professionals on Consulting Room Games, and finally some examples of Good Games."

There is a thesis for each game, and, most importantly, an antithesis.

For example, the life games "see what you made me do" and "you got me into this": the aim of this game is vindication and it is easily acquired by children.

The antithesis is to leave the player alone or to throw the decision back. In severe cases, the antithesis should be put into competent professional hands. Another popular game is "why don't you -- yes but."

It can be played by any number. The list goes on.

We act with will (cetana) of some sort or other.

The existential position is "I am blameless".

We will inherit the fruits of our actions, sooner or later.

The Statement of the Law of Karma that is regularly chanted by our Members says:

“I am the owner of my karma

Heir to my karma

Born of my karma

Related to my karma

Live with my karma

Whatever karma I shall do, whether good or evil, that shall be inherited”

For example, if we bend the truth we will get bad advisers.

What then is the antidote to inheriting the results of bad actions?

Berne writes in the final chapter of his book Games People Play:

“The sombre picture presented in ... this book, in which human life is mainly a process of filling in time until the arrival of death, or Santa Clause, with very little choice, if any, of what kind of business one is going to transact during the long wait, is commonplace but not the final answer.

For certain fortunate people there is something which transcends all classifications of behaviour, and that is awareness; something which rises above the programming of the past, and that is spontaneity and something that is more rewarding than games, and that is intimacy. But all three of these may be frightening and even perilous to the unprepared.” (2)

These persons with this awareness are bodhisattvas this life.

All these games belong to samsara, life in suffering.

The Fourth Noble Truth, the Noble Eight Fold Path as told by the Lord Buddha, is the antithesis to suffering and shows the way out of samsara. The antidote to any of those games that really are no fun at all is given in the Noble Eightfold Path:

1. Right View - Samma Ditthi
2. Right Thought or Right Concentration - Samma Sankappa

3. Right Speech - Samma Vaca
4. Right Conduct - Samma Kammanta
5. Right Livelihood - Samma Ajiva
6. Right Effort - Samma Vayama
7. Right Mindfulness - Samma Sati
8. Right Contemplation - Samma Samadhi

We cease to be mad, bad or sad when we practice the Noble Eight Fold Path.

This is the path to sanity.

What kind of day are you having today? Are you having a good day? Could you be having a better day? Have you been helpful to others? Could you have been less helpful to others? And what about the guy next door? Or your mother, your sister or brother?

To answer any of these questions requires you to make judgements about yourself or others. To pat yourself or others on the back, or to be harsh toward yourself or others.

Either way, you are wasting your life energy and robbing yourself of your sanity.

How much energy have you wasted today in doing this?

Whatever you have done today is driven by past karma. The 'self' that created the causes for whatever you have done or did not do, today no longer exists. So who are you judging? Where is the sanity in this? And why make judgements about others?

What mind are you using to make these judgements? Why do you keep doing this?

The pro-active mind is the antithesis of the reactive mind.

The reactive mind is very prevalent in our society. Many people go through life with one, barely aware, if at all, of its negative, stunting nature. The reactive mind is the mind that springs defensively into anger when the being who has it is justly criticised, even by those who have their best interests at heart. It is resistant to change, and is the source of persistence with much in the individual and the world which is timely for improvement.

The vocabulary of the reactive mind includes words like 'I can't', 'It's too hard', 'It's not fair', 'It's their fault', 'I don't know', 'Why me?', 'I tried' and 'Maybe', 'Later', and similar such words which belie an attitude of non-

committal and procrastination.

It is the mind which will blame anyone but itself for the grief it may come to. Essentially it is a childish mind, which is selfish and small, and can be indeed quite irresponsible.

The pro-active mind is mature, responsible, positive. It is positive about itself and its potential, and the potential of others. It is the mind of the leader, the initiator, the individual who can initial himself or herself and others enthusiastically into actively directing change for the better. Taking initiative against the reactive mind, the pro-active mind is sown and cultivated: in cultivating the pro-active mind, the reactive one simply dies.

Worldly Conditions such as praise and blame, honour and dishonour, gain and loss, happiness and unhappiness are pairs which when one comes the other may follow.

The Buddha proclaimed that every low desire, every longing for ignoble things, every unworthy feeling that we conquer and trample down, and every difficulty we meet heroically and victoriously with righteousness according to the rules of morality, becomes another rung on the ladder by which we can climb towards a nobler, higher life. (3)

In the Theravadin texts, we find the Brahmajala is the first sutta of the Digha-nikaya.

The Buddha begins his discourse by advising the Monks that in the face of both praise and blame, they should respond with equanimity.

May you realise the futility of reacting to praise and accepting blame.

May you cultivate your proactive mind.

May you actively direct change for the better in your life.

May you be well and happy.

This script was written and edited by Julian Bamford, Leanne Eames, Evelin Halls, Clara Iaquinto, Anita Svensson and Pennie White.

Further references for this Teaching can be found in the text version online at <http://www.bdcu.org.au/radioarchives/radio130.html>

References

(1) Lama Yeshe & Zopa Rinpoche (1982) Wisdom Energy. *Basic Buddhist Teachings*. Great Britain: Wisdom Publications, London.

(2) Berne, E. (1964). *Games People Play*. U.S.A.: Penguin Books.

(3) Thittila, Ashin. (1997). *A Buddhist's Companion. An Exposition & Selected Quotations.* Malaysia: Sukhi Hotu SDN BHD, Penang .

Also Berne, E. (1972). *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* Great Britain: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd.

Material gathered from ISYS text retrieval: our references:

page 2 / 3 of I:\KM\BDDR\PUBLICAT\NEWSL_22.TXT (12-January-96)

page 23 / 24 of I:\KM\BDDR\PUBLICAT\NEWSL_13.TXT (23-December-95)

from I:\IDA\RADIO48B.DOC (12-September-99)