

# **Bringing Wisdom to Life**

Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia

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# Foreword

To practice Buddhism correctly, one needs proper guidelines from an authentic and unbroken lineage transmission, or from those with experience. Although Buddhism in Australia offers a rich variety from many well-known Buddhist schools in the world, new practitioners can be confused with contradicting advice and overwhelmed with so many options which can be chosen.

In the academic world, many writers often keep their advice tradition-specific, namely, Theravada and Mahayana, later on Vajrayana. Readers, if by chance, are reading several texts from different schools, are advised to speak to experienced practitioners or a Dharma master to work out how to begin their spiritual journey in Buddhism.

*Bringing Wisdom To Life* is a good companion, written to offer readers a view, drawing from various traditions on specific topics. It is a book which blends teachings from all the major traditions seamlessly so that we can see them simply as Dharma. No matter what tradition of Buddhism we may practice, in this approach all traditions are accessible, and their usefulness and relevance in helping us develop on the Buddhist Path is immediately apparent.

The publishing of this book is timed to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia. Founded in 1978, it is one of the first Buddha Dhamma centres to be established in Melbourne, Australia. I have had a long association with the teachers and members of the centre during thirty of those years. As I read *Bringing Wisdom to Life* I was aware that the book distils the accumulated learning and experience gained at the centre throughout that time, and is a valuable living record of this flourishing Buddhist community.

*Bringing Wisdom to Life* is written for the 21st century and is well suited to the conditions we now live in. It will be equally enjoyable and useful whether the reader is contemplating the Buddhist Path or is an experienced Buddhist practitioner.

I congratulate the authors Anita Carter and Frank Carter for writing this book to contribute to world Buddhism, and for sharing their experience in a way that others can benefit from.

I recommend Buddhists and those interested in Buddhism to read it.

Venerable Phuoc Tan  
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# Acknowledgement

We deeply acknowledge the Buddha Sakyamuni, the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia's Founder, John Hughes, and the many Buddhist Teachers who we have had the opportunity and privilege to have met and received Teachings from.

The Teachings in this book are a culmination of Teachings given at the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia over the past forty years. They are a practical guide for implementing the Buddha Dhamma in everyday life.

We thank the authors of the writings we have quoted, for disseminating the Buddha Dhamma in our world making it available for us all to benefit from.

We also warmly thank Alec Sloman for his patient help in sourcing references used in the book, Alice Chow for helping to prepare the text for publication and Alex Serrano for his generosity and skill in addressing the grammatical shortcomings in the text and providing feedback which has enhanced the quality of the writing and content.

Thank you to Qambar Ali for his beautiful cover design and art work for this book and many other publications.

Finally, thank you to the students who attended the many classes conducted by the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia and who gave the authors the occasion to write the contents of Bringing Wisdom To Life as a vehicle to hand on the precious Buddha Dhamma.





# Introduction

It's important when embarking on a new field of learning to know where to start. This is particularly the case for Buddhism. There is a vast amount of information about Buddhism published in many forms which may lead us to start at the middle, at the end, the general or the specialized, in the deep or in the shallow, or, if we are fortunate, at the beginning. We may find one source from one Buddhist tradition, the next from another tradition, and possibly the contents side-by-side do not sit easily together.

It wasn't always like this. In the distant past, students of Buddhism mostly received their information from a single source, usually a Buddhist Temple or Teacher they first felt a connection with, or where they were first introduced by their parents, friends or other students.

There is a deep connectivity across all Buddhist traditions and at every level of the Buddhist Teachings which relates to the science of the mind as discovered by The Buddha, and the technology of how to finally and fully understand ourselves.

This is the promise of Buddhism, the Buddhist Path, which, when followed diligently, leads us to the top of the tallest mountain, and from that peak any person can see everything about themselves, clearly, perfectly. This is the wisdom view, and wisdom will undo the causes of our suffering.

No single book can provide everything we need on our journey to awakening. **"Bringing Wisdom to Life"** is offered to help you see some of the steps on your path. Maybe it will be your first steps, or maybe steps to help you "get" the next bit, but whatever you need to move along the path, at least some of it you can find in this book.



# Chapter 1 – Approaching the Buddha Dhamma

There are many ways of explaining Buddhism. Sometimes it is said it is not a religion, it is a philosophy or a way of living. Whatever label it has is less important than how it can help us.

Buddhism is a way of living and self-training which develops and refines our disposition, our attitudes, our behaviour and cultivates our mind on a path that produces deep personal happiness and well-being.

Buddhism enables us to turn our lives into an unfolding source of inner understanding or insight of ourselves, others and the world we experience.

The teachings of Buddhism are based upon the way nature works, the way our mind works naturally. These Teachings arise from The Buddha's perfectly clear observation and insight into the mind and into the processes of life.

The Buddha simply saw things perfectly clearly. That was the quality of his attainment as a Buddha. This is what is generally referred to as enlightenment. His incomparable Buddha mind was sublime wisdom itself, and the origin of what became the religion Buddhism.

There were 56 religions in The Buddha's time. Why did he start another one?

The Buddha saw what no one else at his time could see. What none of the other religions at that time or since have offered humanity. He saw the truth about the actual nature of the mind and body - the nature of the

different types of consciousness we can experience, the nature of thought, perception, memory, the nature of feeling, the natural laws which govern our minds functions and, the truth about the elusive nature of what we call our "self".

And in recognising this nature of mind he also discovered a particular awareness, unseen by everyone in the noise of our mental phenomena, a unique, already-liberated state which has no mental pain whatever. It is described as perfect peace and it is named nirvana in Sanskrit, or nibbana in the Pali language used in the Buddha's time.

The Buddha, having discovered the existence of an unconditioned state, that he called nibbana, spent the next forty-five years of his life teaching countless others the path or practice through which nibbana could be known each for himself or herself. It is a naturally existing state that is the goal of Buddhist practice.

So many persons in our modern cultures who are not socially isolated, are well educated, and have affluent lifestyles frequently experience many forms of unhappiness. These include worry, stress, anxiety, insecurity, sadness, anger, frustration and depression.

Australia, for example, has one of the world's highest rates of suicide, particularly among our youth, yet our biggest cities are regarded as being among the top ten cities in the world to reside in. Our material standards of living are among the world's best. Yet our mental culture appears, by this criterion, to be nothing special.

Buddhism provides the mental technology, the mind tools and methods we need to see our own mind with increasing clarity and understanding. This is the Buddhist approach to developing and maintaining a healthy mind and a good life.

Whilst we may read about Buddhism, it is not enough for us to have an intellectual understanding or even respectful appreciation of what the Buddha found out. Just as looking at food on the table cannot cure us of hunger, merely appreciating Buddhist Teachings will not make us happy.

As such Buddhism is sometimes referred to as a do-it-yourself religion because we need to apply the Buddha's advice in our own life to experience any significant benefit.

So where do we start?

As we read or hear about Buddhism we need an active intention to find something worthwhile to apply in our life. And then we do apply it. We want to apply the instructions in the same way as if we have visited the doctor and then we go straight to the chemist so we can take the medicine quickly.

What usually happens is we forget ninety percent or more of what we read within a few days. If we forget ninety percent in a few days why bother? Applying ten percent of what was heard or read will not work. It's an approach which is likely to result in only a very weak improvement. Then we may tell others "Oh, I tried that but it doesn't work".

Active listening and reading is the opposite of passive listening and reading. Passive reading can be considered as reading to "know" or find out about Buddhism through collecting information about Buddhism without implementing any action steps, that is; without changing anything we do. That's how we have often learnt things in our past. However, we won't understand much about ourselves from listening to the Teachings of the Buddha (Buddha Dhamma) that way. What we hear must be translated into action.

At the time we discover something new our mind has the best understanding of why we need to change our habit and adopt the new behaviour. The next day our sense of urgency to change becomes weaker, the day after less again. We are creatures of habit; our habit energy is often difficult to overcome. Our best opportunity to make a change, the best conditions to make a change is generally as soon as we understand clearly the need to change.

If we keep doing what we've always done, we'll get the same results.

### **The Happiness You Are Looking For**

The Dalai Lama has said many times that what all beings want fundamentally is to be well and happy. We did a survey of the students at a course we conducted on Buddhism to find out what they hoped to get out of the course. Most of their answers were to do with developing inner peace and happiness.

Buddhism says you can certainly achieve long-lasting happiness. Ajahn Brahm, a famous Buddhist Monk who lives in Perth Western Australia, for example, says he has found deeper and deeper levels of happiness through practicing Buddhism. In his words he says he experiences "happiness stacked on happiness stacked on happiness".

From the Buddhist perspective the key to achieving happiness is to understand the real causes of happiness. According to Buddhism it is not a mystery at all. The process of how and why our mind experiences happiness and suffering is what the Buddha found out.

In Buddhism it is taught that there are two levels of reality. The first level is named conventional reality. This is the part every one of us already has understanding about.

We operate successfully in the world by understanding conventional reality and building the skills and attitudes from childhood to relate to our life that way. However, Buddhist teachings sometimes refer to conventional reality as a deceptive reality because it leads us to believe that it is the only reality that exists.

Buddhism says there is another level of reality called absolute or ultimate reality. This is the fundamental reality which is not so much to do with what appears to us to be happening from moment to moment, but more to do with why things happen, and how they happen.

Let us explain this by using the example of the Buddha when he was young, before he set out on his path to enlightenment. His name was Siddhartha. You may know that he was a Prince who lived a wonderful life in a royal palace in Northern India. Whilst his living conditions were fabulous there was still discontent in his mind.

He wondered about his life and the life of others. He was deeply affected by the things most people tend to accept as being just part of life; such things as sickness and old age, sadness and sorrow and finally, death. He saw these things as immense burdens and difficulties which we all must meet.

His wife, father, children, in fact everyone he knew would have to face old age and death, and yet, at the same time, everybody he knew lived their lives seemingly unconcerned about these things. They were unconcerned because they believed there was nothing that could be done about it.

Siddhartha, however, could not be unconcerned. He wanted to find out why the world was like that. He wanted to know what was the truth about life? What was really going on? What caused these different

sufferings to happen in unequal measures to everybody? Was there any way that could be found which would stop suffering?

This is where we get back to the difference between conventional and ultimate reality. Siddhartha was asking questions which could not be answered by understanding conventional truth. He had reached the ceiling, the limit of what conventional truth could say about the world.

Even though some siddhas or yogis did perceive deeper levels of understanding than conventional reality, they could still not provide the answers to Siddhartha's questions.

You can read about the journey Siddhartha went on for six years as a wandering ascetic, in search of what he had vowed to find out about life and, in particular, to know the answers to his profound questions. He wanted to understand why there is suffering in life.

The culmination of this extraordinary quest finally came when his mind penetrated to the level of reality which creates our conventional reality. It is referred to as being an ultimate reality, meaning there is nothing further, nothing higher, nothing more than this.

Not only did Buddha access the existence of an ultimate reality, he chose to spend the rest of his forty-five years of life Teaching others the method by which they could experience what he had discovered for themselves.

From his perfect knowledge of both types of reality, conventional and ultimate reality, the Buddha described the engine that powers every individual's experiences of suffering and happiness.

Buddha saw that just as there are laws of nature which operate in the physical world - the many laws we recognise through science, there are also universal laws of nature which operate in the mental world.



They are the natural laws of the mind.

We are so used to understanding that the physical world operates on natural laws yet what about the mental world? Mind is also part of nature.

The Buddha saw that together physical laws and the mind laws govern the processes of life and living. From this deep wisdom the Buddha saw how individual suffering arises.

So now we come back to our own situation. The problem that arises for us and the reason we have not already developed sustained happiness in our lives is that we only have knowledge of the conventional type of reality. Our knowledge is missing fundamental parts of the process through which our happiness and unhappiness come to us.

In our times we have learned through science the horizons of what we can see are ever expanding. Through quantum physics we can see into the infinitesimally small dimensions of reality's building blocks, through astronomical research we can see back through millions of light years in time, yet all these astounding visions are in the world outside of ourselves.

Our inside world really, we don't see much at all. We see further and further outwardly, not far at all inwardly. Why do you think that is?

Our mind is all we have got to deal with the events and processes in our life. Buddhism says it is possible to understand our own mind and it is the most important thing we need to understand and develop. The quality of our moment by moment experience of life is most determined by the quality of our own mind.

There are approximately forty volumes of Buddhist texts explaining what the Buddha found out, and the methods Buddha taught his students so they could develop their own minds to see ultimate reality directly, for themselves. How do we get a vantage point that can help us use this knowledge to move forward in our own lives?

One natural law that is used in Buddhist philosophy is the law of kamma. If we understand it correctly, it is a key to learning what Buddhist practice is all about and setting out on the Path to our own true wellbeing and happiness. This is the Law of Kamma or the law of cause and effect.

### **Law of Kamma**

The Buddha taught that the origin of reality itself is from cause and effect. The Law of Kamma holds that every action we do intentionally, either through our body, speech or mind produces an effect that will be experienced by the doer at some time in the future. These actions we do may be:

1. Morally good, kind and helpful actions to ourselves or others - which by nature produce outcomes that are beneficial and conducive to the happiness and well-being of the doer.
2. Morally neutral actions - which by nature do not contribute either positively or negatively to the well-being of the doer.
3. Morally bad, unkind and harmful actions to ourselves or others - which by nature produce outcomes of harm, difficulty and unhappiness for the doer of the actions.

As some Christian teachings put it, "as you sow so you will reap".

The Law of Kamma applies not only to our physical world, but also to our mental world and is the origin of the unfolding experience of every

living being.

It is described that each action of our body, speech and mind we do with intention plants a “seed” or cause in our consciousness which will fruit at some future time into an event or experience we will have.

When we actually experience the result or effect of these seeds is similar to what happens in nature. If we plant a seed of a tree it does not grow up instantaneously. It is in the soil unseen by us. When the natural supporting conditions such as moisture, heat and light are right it germinates and then we see it.

It is described in Buddhism that our kammic seeds are the causes for all the events and experiences we have in our lives. As we live each event and each experience we use up and exhaust some of our kammic seeds. As these kammic results are being experienced, according to our mind’s responses, we are also making new causes.

Our morally bad or unwholesome kammic seeds fruit when we experience hardship, sorrow and difficulty, our morally good or wholesome kammic seeds are used up when we experience such things as honour, wealth and happiness.

Accordingly, Buddhist Teachings explain how we live our life each day, the type of actions, speech and thinking we generate are the raw ingredients, the source from which our future experience arises. All the forms and types of Buddhist practice, all the different traditions, are based on this premise.

Therefore, we begin with this explanation about kamma. As we look at the different aspects of Buddhism, we can start to appreciate how and why Buddhism works and how it can work for you in your life if you choose to practice it.



## Chapter 2 – Happiness Map

Words like “love” or “happiness” can mean a lot of different things to different people, or can mean different things when used in different circumstances. In the context of Buddhism what are we referring to when we talk about our well-being and happiness?

We are not really talking about the happiness that comes when we experience something we like or acquire something we wanted. That form of happiness from a Buddhist point of view is not very reliable or stable. As soon as we lose the thing we were happy about or as soon as the experience we like stops, our happiness can shrivel up.

The pleasure of hearing a great new song fades, our new clothes become old fashioned, our new car becomes outdated, our cutting-edge computer is soon too slow, and maybe even a past friend becomes a new enemy. The person we once loved now seems to irritate us.

These scenarios we all know too well. Getting what we want doesn't ensure our happiness. Maybe it looks like it will make us happy at the time, but from a Buddhist viewpoint it is transitory and unreliable. Sooner or later everything wears out.

Also, this type of happiness that depends on something outside us often has too much dependency and attachment in it.

This dependency tends to work against our happiness. For example, we may experience some happiness with our partner yet at the same time; because of our attachment to them, we may experience such things as jealousy, possessiveness, insecurity and resentment because they won't be what we want them to be.

We are focused too much externally. We see external improvement as our main investment for our wellbeing and our family's wellbeing. Consider all the things we believe we need to improve; home improvement, wealth improvement, car improvement, status improvement, job improvement, relationship improvement and so many things. How much of our perception and mental space is caught up in this belief that improving our external situation is all that is needed to be happy?

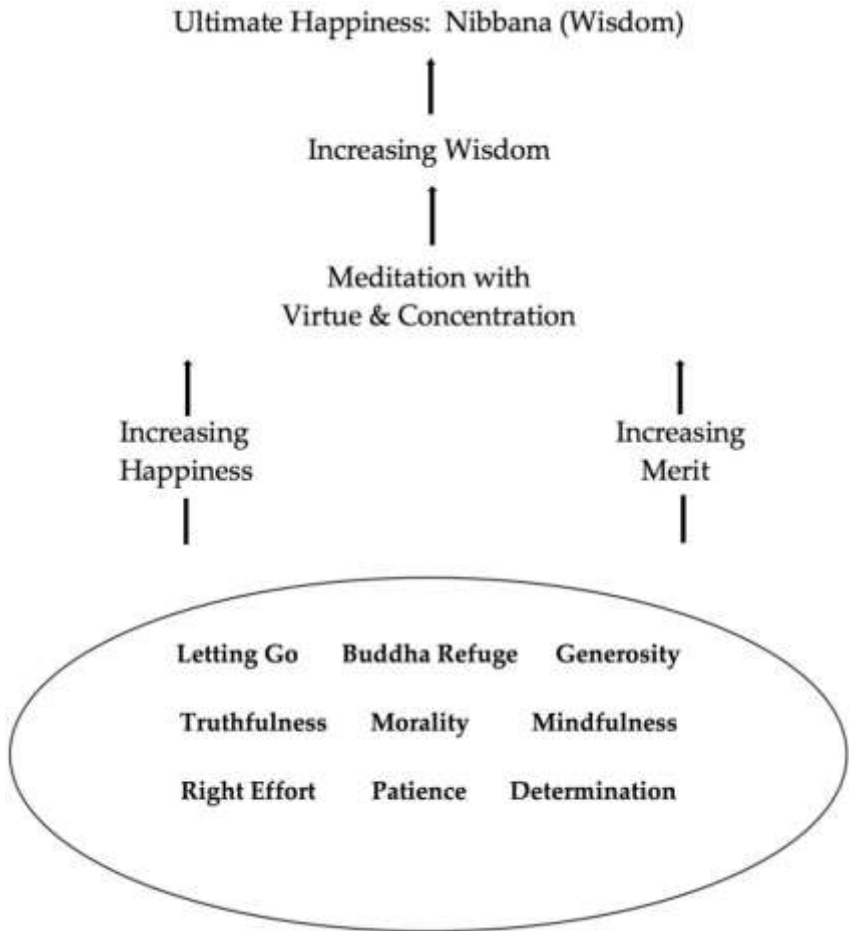
Do we really get to be happier over our lifetime as we attain these things? In any case, can we be sure which of these things will last for us?

It's not that these things are of no value. They are certainly important and necessary and we must attend to them. However, in essence, these things are fundamentally our mechanics for living. They are our supply chain of what is needed to support our life such as our food, our shelter, our clothing, our transport, our health, our education, and so on. But we can easily believe they are ends in themselves. We hope that this life support system when developed to a certain level will provide real security and happiness for us.

If our existing view of how happiness is produced was accurate, we would understand how to become happier over time and we would see many others who followed a similar path appearing to be really happy, most of the time. Is this what is happening?

It becomes evident if you do the analysis that our happiness will never have a secure base if it is tied to external events and conditions which are outside our control. By contrast, the Buddhist approach comes from the understanding that to develop real happiness in our mind we need to focus on improving our mind, and the way we experience living.

## Happiness Map



## Virtue Platform

If we pick up a book on Buddhism we won't find in it such a thing as a Happiness Map. However, this map is a way of expressing the foundations or platform upon which a happy life can be created.

To begin with it is essential to understand that mental states such as worry, regret, stinginess, ill will, doubt, laziness, dullness of mind, greed, restlessness, attachment, conceit, aversion, boredom, jealousy and envy are all producers of unhappiness now and in the future. If we harbour these mental states they are drivers of unhappiness now, and because of the law of kamma they make causes for similar mental states to come back to us again in the future. Together they make an unhappiness-producing platform, or a stress-producing platform, or a confusion-producing platform.

As the Buddha says in the *Dhammapada*, Chapter 1:

“

*"Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief: they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of an ox" 1.*

We gradually train ourselves through Buddhist Practice to stop the negative or unwholesome minds from arising - now, and in the future. We apply restraint to our negative behaviour in the present and also apply the correct antidote behaviour in the present.

For example, the Buddhist meditation to develop loving kindness called 'metta' meditation is one example of how we can prompt and cultivate



positive wholesome consciousness and behaviour. The wholesome consciousness of metta or loving-kindness is a natural antidote to unwholesome consciousness such as, resentment, aversion, jealousy and hate. As our love strengthens, the unwholesome states become progressively weaker and easier to give up.

This is the function of the "Letting Go" part of our Happiness Map. We give up and let go our unwholesome habits and behaviours. Gradually through practice we can recognise our negative (unwholesome) mental states at both the gross and subtle levels, then we can let go of them instead of maintaining and strengthening them through our negative behaviour.

We don't have to stay annoyed with someone who did something we didn't like. So, if you see yourself starting to get stuck in any unwholesome thinking, tell yourself to "let it go". You actually say that as an instruction for your mind to follow. Tell the unwholesome state to stop. Actually, it's not you, it's not a "self" or something precious or important; it's just one possible state that can arise for a period of time. Because it produces unhappiness and clouds your view, give it up.

We can get quite good at dropping the unwholesome minds if we act quickly - cut them as soon as you first see them, before they become established in your mind. Learn to apply the correct natural antidote.

The second part of the *Dhammapada*, Chapter 1 quote reads:

“

*"Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief: they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows*

*him like his never-departing shadow." 2.*

We train our minds to produce the wholesome mental states such as confidence, mindfulness, friendliness, generosity, alertness, forgiveness, patience, fear of unwholesomeness, joy, equanimity, lightness of mind, adaptability of mind and loving kindness. According to the Buddhist texts there are twenty five possible wholesome states of consciousness we can develop. (See Appendix)

Wholesome mental states are a secure base for our happiness. They can be developed and strengthened to become robust, resilient, and flexible. They can bend with the wind rather than stress and break, they are intelligent and calm, and they are our real inner strengths to deal with the difficulties of life.

Over time through practice our virtue platform becomes stronger and our ability to handle misfortune without becoming upset increases.

We decide to be a kinder person, we decide to relate with others we know, and meet with generosity and lightness of heart. We choose to become friendlier, offer others more warmth and more love. We consider others' needs and offer our help when it would be beneficial. We start to view other people we know as if they were our guests.

So, the bottom line for all Buddhist practice in all Buddhist traditions is this - training our mind and actions to be wholesome is a true foundation of our long-term well-being and happiness.

We are all going to get old age, sickness and death this life - that's our body's inescapable future destination. However, it is possible to maintain our wholesome minds as we get older. It is possible to maintain bright, intelligent, happy minds even as our body wears out. It is very common for people's minds to deteriorate along with their bodies'

deterioration as they get older but essentially it is because their minds are not trained to be wholesome.

Let us briefly look at a few other components of our Happiness Map / Virtue Platform.

From Buddhist understanding and experience, when morality has been strongly practiced and developed, it creates integrity and composure of mind, that allows us to see things with clarity and depth helping us discern their true nature.

In Buddhism there are no commandments or similar authoritarian rules of behaviour. This is because at the very heart of Buddhism is the principle that the individual is solely responsible for his or her own welfare, happiness or unhappiness, which arise just as a result of the persons own actions.

Buddhist morality does not accept that our life and wellbeing are the outcome of the will of a supreme or higher being. The basis of a person choosing to maintain moral behaviour, therefore, is not because it's a commandment of the religion but because there is a clear understanding and comprehension that morality is our first and best defense against creating more suffering for ourselves in the future.

The Buddha advises us to train our minds and actions so that we keep five precepts.

**The five precepts are:**

To not kill living beings

To not steal

To not commit sexual misconduct

To not lie

To not take intoxicants that cloud the mind.

The reason why the five particular negative actions that the precepts stop us from committing are highlighted is that the Buddha recognised that some negative actions are more powerful than others. They are more powerful in the sense that they produce more powerful kammic results.

He identified that the five negative actions of killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and taking intoxicants produce the most potent negative kamma or most concentrated negative kamma for ourselves to inherit in our future.

Buddhism teaches that in ultimate reality most of the suffering we had experienced in our life came from us breaking the five precepts in past times.

If we take time to consider and reflect on this it is obvious many of the problems that afflict people individually and in society at large arise from individuals not keeping these five precepts.

Buddhists see keeping precepts as Occupational Health and Safety for our life. These precepts are just like that - they are the minimum standards of safe action of our body, speech and mind so we do not come to danger in this life or future lives. Precepts are our most powerful forms of personal protection since from the ultimate reality viewpoint they keep us safe and healthy.

This is a part of a platform or foundation of peaceful, content, happy minds and wholesome mental states. The practice of morality produces powerful good kamma as it is the opposite of the five actions which produce the most powerful negative kamma.

This type of good kamma is experienced by the doer as pure, peaceful virtuous minds and peaceful living conditions which are both needed by

us to develop on the Buddhist path. There is no such thing as a truly virtuous person who kills other beings, or steals from others.

It is also a foundation of coming to see things as they really are. The peace and purity that comes as a result of keeping precepts enables our mind to develop right concentration in meditation which is a prerequisite to developing wisdom.

We do not become paranoid about the precepts. We have all broken precepts time and time again in our past, but we decide from now on we have the intention to keep them. We learn how to keep them well and we train ourselves to guard them whatever we are doing.

If we do break a precept we don't react to that with guilt or regret. We just note "I have more training to do!" We re-affirm that we intend to keep that precept from now on.

Mindfulness is the only way to keep precepts.

We can only keep precepts really well by being mindful of what we are doing in the present. We come into the present- we stop thinking that we will keep the precepts at some future time. We look at our situation now. We focus on what we are doing with our body, we consider for a moment before we speak or act and we watch the thoughts that are arising.

In this way we can guard ourselves and take control of our actions, our speech and thoughts to not kill, to not lie, not steal, not commit sexual misconduct and not take intoxicants. It is in the present time that the kamma is being made. If we do not recognise what is happening in the present, we cannot change anything.

In Buddhism we talk about deep levels of happiness which can become

our normal experience of living. These forms of happiness can more easily withstand the ups and downs of life which have in the past usually caused us to experience difficulty.

This happiness too can be surpassed by the nourishment of deep contentment and serenity and finally the sublime state of nibbana where the mind becomes unshakeable and never strays from perfect peace.

## Chapter 3 – Generosity

Buddhist teachings place generosity at the very beginning. Learning how to give things is essential.

Why would we bother to learn how to give? Giving appears to be simple enough. We have been giving all sorts of things to others many times a day for most of our adult life. If we are a parent, that is all about giving, as our children are dependent on us to use our skills and resources to support them. It seems like simple stuff.

There is a Buddhist book about giving called "*Dana*" which is the Pali word for generosity. The book is 778 pages long. That means there is a lot about giving we have not learned yet!

This is not just information about what we could refer to as conventional giving, this about the Buddhist practice of giving. The practice of giving called "*dana*" in the Pali language, is placed first in the order of things, as a foundation for the process of us becoming free from suffering.

Let us imagine ourselves to be a farmer for a moment. Suppose we have a large field in which we wish to sow our crop. What would happen if the soil in our field is of poor quality? It may lack nutrients, it may be dry, it may be too acidic, the good top soil may have blown away in the wind. If we were to sow our grain in that field, if we spent a lot of time ploughing and preparing the ground, removing the rocks and then planting our crop we will be very disappointed.

Due to the poor soil quality not all the seeds we have planted will be able to grow. The plants that do grow will struggle to establish themselves and some will die before they can be harvested. The poor

soil cannot support the seeds that are sown to flourish into healthy plants, they will be stunted and not develop to their full potential.

Our minds can be likened to the soil in this situation. Lack of generosity shows itself as a dry mind, harsh, mean, closed, narrow, stingy, jealous and unforgiving. Soil not able to support growth of any good seeds planted there. Anything we sow, any good actions we do with a non-generous mind will not develop fully, will be stunted and the resultant fruit will be small.

Generosity is nutrient for the mind, the rich, lush, fertile energy which supports and nourishes the growth of further goodness. It is the temperament of giving and forgiving, openness, cheerfulness, supporting, accepting, easing the way for the other person, joyfully lending a helping hand and nourishing.

Sooner or later for any practice to be effective in reducing our suffering we have to address the active ingredients in our mind that produce our suffering. We have seen that the negative or unwholesome minds are the roots of all unhappiness. Now we have to introduce some powerful antidotes into our lives to reduce these unhappiness drivers and their resultants.

Whilst Buddhist texts explain our unwholesome minds as being fourteen in number, the fourteen can be distilled down to three root causes of all our unhappiness. These three are greed, hate and ignorance, with ignorance meaning not seeing the type of reality we call absolute reality or the way things really are.

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*"Viewed as the quality of generosity, giving has a particularly intimate connection to the entire movement of the Buddha's Path. For the goal of*



*the Path is the destruction of greed, hate and delusion, and the cultivation of generosity directly debilitates greed and hate, while facilitating that pliancy of mind that allows for the eradication of delusion." 3.*

The Buddhist Path of reducing our craving and selfishness is how we can discover *nibbana*, the highest and only absolutely secure happiness available. We therefore practice generosity with the purpose of removing greed, selfishness and craving.

At this stage we may not recognise very clearly how greed or craving is at the root of our unhappiness. One student at the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia wrote about this in the following way:

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*“I remember when I was first told over twenty years ago that craving was the cause of my suffering I couldn't believe it! I remember walking along in disbelief thinking "no way could craving be causing suffering! I didn't think I had much craving for a start so how could it be such a big deal?"*

*We can see the craving operating quite clearly when we watch the "monkey mind" in mindfulness of breathing meditation. The "monkey mind" is our normal untrained mind. It can't sit still for a moment. It chases after one sensation after another. After a few moments of watching the breath the mind gets caught up again thinking, daydreaming, worrying, being disturbed by noises, itches, restlessness and so on.*

*This is the craving. The mind is thirsty to experience all these things. It is not content to look at the breath. It grabs at one sensation after another because it is in a state of being unsatisfied. The nature of craving is that the craving mind can't find anything that will satisfy it. It is unsatisfiable”.*

You can see how our craving makes it difficult for us to be happy. Instead of being content and happy with what we've got we incline towards being dissatisfied. We focus on what we don't have rather than appreciating and enjoying what we do have. So, we need to find out about generosity, the mind's natural antidote to the craving.

Consider this: most of us already give many things to others every day of our lives. If we are already giving a lot, why doesn't this generosity work to reduce our craving?

The act of giving itself makes the kamma for us to receive things in the future. How we give is the factor by which we can reduce our greed and craving.

Nina Van Gorkom writes in her essay *Generosity: The Inward Dimension*:

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*"The giving away of useful or pleasant things is an act of generosity. However, if we only pay attention to the outward deeds we do not know whether or not we are being sincerely generous. We should learn more about the mind which motivates our deeds. True generosity is difficult. While we are giving, our thoughts may not all be good and noble. Our motives for giving may not all be pure. We may give with selfish motives*

*- expecting something in return, hoping to be liked by the receiver of our gift, wanting to be known as a generous person. We may notice that there are different thoughts at different moments, some truly generous, and others having different motives." 4.*

Often, we are happy enough to give to others if certain conditions are met, such as the person is someone we like or know well, maybe we don't particularly want the thing we are giving or we have enough for ourselves too, and the person thanks us afterwards, which we normally would expect.

If the receiver of our gift did not express thanks for the gift or if they did something with the gift we did not like, we may feel disappointed or resentful of their behaviour. This is giving with expectation of something in return. When we give in this way we are not really giving freely.

We could be giving because it is our duty, because it is our role in our family or because it is expected of us, because we were told to do it, because it is part of our job, because we want someone to do something for us in return. This is fine in the sense that most or maybe all these things do need to be done but probably, if you look, you'll find you are not actually doing these things with the mind of generosity.

While all this type of giving is going on, what is your mind doing? Is your mind just rushing to get the food on the table, is your mind tired and wanting to sit down for a cup of tea, is your mind just mindlessly handing something to someone else, or is your mind really engaged mindfully in the act of giving with kindness, generosity and love in your heart?

There is a story in the Buddhist texts about a young boy named Priyadarshi. He knew about the Buddha and had great respect and love for him. One day, unexpectedly, he had an opportunity to meet the

Buddha face to face. Immediately he wanted to make offerings to the Buddha and pay respect to the great man.

As he looked around for something to offer he realised he had nothing to give. He was not carrying anything to offer yet in his heart his wish to give something to the Buddha was so strong that he bent down and scooped up a handful of dirt from the ground. As the Buddha looked at him Priyadarshi offered the dirt with his heart filled with love, joy and respect.

As the Buddha blessed Priyadarshi he said that his offering would bring him to many lives of great wealth and good fortune because of the way it was offered. The offering was done with strong volition to give accompanied by heartfelt generosity, gratitude, and joy.

Buddha's Teachings are practised with our body, speech and mind. Generosity as part of Buddha Dhamma practice is performed with body, speech and mind.

So the mind component of giving is the bit that offers us the possibility to reduce our stinginess and craving, if we learn to do it correctly.

Give like you were giving to your child. Give like you were giving to your love. Give like you were receiving the gift. Give completely. Give freely. Once given it belongs completely to the other person. It is no longer your property.

If the person then damages or throws away what they received from you, it should not raise any pain or concern in your mind. If it does, maybe you still have an idea that it belongs to you. You have not given the object freely.

You give someone some chocolates. They put them away. You say to yourself; "They should have shared the chocolates with everyone". In

this case you have not offered the gift freely or completely. Your mind still identifies with the object you gave away, as if in some sense it still belongs to you.

You can see how having a generous heart is at the core of what it means to be kind to others. In generosity is the willingness to help others, the willingness to get up out of your chair quickly and happily when your help would be beneficial.

Generosity has the openness, flexibility and lightness to put our own needs down for a while and consider the needs of another, to be sensitive enough and patient enough to find out what the other person really needs to be well and happy.

The Founder of The Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia, John Hughes, on meeting students for the first time, would often recommend they start their Buddhist practice by offering food, drinks and flowers to their parents, particularly their Mother. He would also encourage and arrange for the students to make the most of any opportunity to make offerings to the Buddhist Monks or Nuns.

This introduces another aspect of generosity. The reason the teacher would suggest new students made these offerings to their parents in particular and also to monks or nuns is because there is something about the qualities of those recipients of the gift that make any offerings we make to them produce very great kammic benefits to the giver.

The Buddha explained that the kammic connection between a son or daughter and our parents, particularly our Mother is the strongest kammic connection of any type of relationship. A gift to our parents creates the greatest amount of good kamma compared to an equivalent gift to any other person.

The relative amount of good kamma produced by a suitable gift to our parent can be a hundred, a thousand or even more times that of the same gift to someone we have a weak kammic connection to. The Buddha observed this is how the Law of Kamma works.

It is a similar case with regard to making offerings to beings whose minds are very pure. The kamma of such gifts is also greatly multiplied by the qualities of the receiver of the gift. Hence this is why when the small child Priyadarshi gave a handful of dirt to the Buddha the kammic result was so vast. Not only was the child's mind having many good qualities, so too the Buddha's mind was completely enlightened.

As laypersons we train to keep a minimum of five precepts. As our purity increases by us keeping our precepts well this too multiplies the kammic results of our giving.

This aspect of the Law of Kamma is why in one human life of say, eighty years, it is possible for us to create enough good causes to be born in a heaven birth which could last a million years or more.

Some Buddhist monks keep 227 rules of conduct. It is very rare to meet persons who have developed such extraordinary purity of mind and conduct. Again, any offerings we make to such persons bring great benefits to ourselves in the future.

It is important to know what the kammic returns of particular gifts are. If we know what gift produces what outcome, we can do many offerings of a particular item which we recognise is needed by us. For example, Buddhist texts teach that the kammic return of offering flowers brings ten blessings to the giver.

1. Long Life
2. Good Health
3. Strength

4. Beauty
5. Wisdom
6. Ease along the Buddha Dhamma Path
7. Being born in beautiful environments
8. Born with good skin, hair and beautiful to look at
9. Always having a sweet-smelling body
10. Pleasant relationships with friends

It is easy to give such things as food and flowers to our parents and the merit of these type of gifts is very important to our human life.

And for food offerings the *Bohjana Sutta* says as follows:

“

*“In giving a meal, the donor gives five things to the recipient. Which five? He or she gives life, beauty, happiness, strength, and quick-wittedness.” 5.*

As a result, the giver of the food has made the kamma to receive those five things back. Every day of our life we are using up our health, strength, long-life, beauty and alertness. We need to make many such food offerings to maintain our kammic stores of these things our lives really depend on.

In terms of human history, we live in exceptional times. The living conditions of the majority of persons living in many modern societies today are superior in many ways to that experienced by kings and queens in past times.

Many citizens living in wealthy Western societies have large stores of good kamma from our past to enable us to live in such good conditions. However, we are at the same time consuming a lot of our good kamma or merit just to live our daily lives. We are very high merit consumers. This is a characteristic of our modern world, we consume a lot of resources to function effectively in our society.

Our life already has enormous opportunities to give to others regularly. When we have the right attitude to the countless generous actions we are already doing in our life, these actions will be transformed into much stronger causes for our happiness and well-being. Turn the mundane, common place things you do many times every day into the exact things you need to increase your happiness and well-being.

It's a matter of remembering to not see your life as just getting things done. Recognise that many of the things you are getting done are your acts of generosity to others. Change from looking at your life in the old habitual way of living.

When you turn on the heater or air conditioner offer the comfort or warmth to warm others when they are cold, cool air to cool others when they are hot.

When you pay the gas bill, electricity bill, the water bill, etc., offer the water you are paying for with the intention to increase the long life, strength, health, cleanliness, beauty, and alertness of the others in your home. That is what they actually receive from the water you are providing.

When you put flowers on the table offer them to everybody for their enjoyment and pleasure.

When you clean, offer the clean environment you have created to others so that they always have good clean places to live in.



When paying tax, offer the tax you earned from your efforts to all persons living in your country. Recollect all the things that tax money goes toward such as education and education resources, health care and medicines, roads, transportation systems, law and order, peaceful government, our welfare systems, pensions, and so on. Having recollected those things, offer them in your mind to all the persons living in your society.

In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha taught:

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*'Should a person perform good,  
He should do it again and again;  
He should find pleasure therein;  
For blissful is the accumulation of good.'*

*'Think not lightly of good, saying,  
'It will not come near to me' -  
Even by the falling of drops a water-jar is filled.  
Likewise the wise man, gathering little by little,  
Fills himself with good.' 6.*



## Chapter 4 – Morality

As we listen to the teachings given by the Buddha in many instances we recognise that to really follow these teachings means we will change something in our lives. We have to change either our attitude, or our behaviour, or both. It means we need to follow the path the Buddha has given us, instead of our old habits which are familiar territory to us. Recognising the need to change and being willing to change support our ability to reach our goal of being happier and free from suffering.

Having found something that can help us become happier, we don't want to waste that new learning like it is just another thing of minor consequence.

We need to support the new understanding so it doesn't falter before it gets established in our behavior. We have to nourish it and tend it as if it were a small beautiful plant starting to grow in the garden of our mind. Don't support the old weed which is causing the problems!

The Buddhist Path is described as having three major components. These are virtue, concentration and wisdom. These three go together supporting each other as a path of training. This training enables a person to recognise the causes of suffering in their own lives and then overcome them as a means to becoming stable and happy, and ultimately to do what the Buddha did, to become fully enlightened.

When we read or hear about what people do in their life to improve their happiness they don't usually mention virtue or concentration or wisdom! They don't say "I'm practicing generosity to reduce my stinginess" or "I decided to refrain from slandering others", they say something like "we're planning to move into our new house next year" or "we're going to Disneyland for our holidays", or something like that.

When we read or hear about what people do in their life to improve their health or long life they don't say "I'm focusing on how I can keep the five precepts better" or "I'm learning how being kind to others makes many causes for health and long life". They don't say that. What they generally say is something like "I'm planning to lose three kilograms on my new diet" or "I'm going to take up running to reduce my stress".

The strategies of dieting or taking up running come from seeing the situation only in conventional reality terms. It's not to say these things are not worthwhile. However such a viewpoint does not take into account the way things work from the ultimate understanding, the way the Buddha taught that the world really works.

Buddha taught about cause and effect, the Law of Kamma. From this viewpoint our true well-being and our path to becoming happy comes about from the development of wholesome minds and actions. This is the basis of all Buddhist morality.

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*"Morality restrains the defilements in their coarsest form, their outflow in unwholesome actions; concentration removes their more refined manifestations as distractive and restless thoughts; and wisdom eradicates their subtle latent tendencies..." 7.*

From Buddhist understanding and experience when morality has been strongly practiced and developed it becomes a very clear and powerful level of mind.

The Buddha advises us to train our minds and actions so that we keep

the five precepts of no killing, no lying, no intoxicants which cloud the mind, no sexual misconduct and no stealing, with understanding.

The Buddha recognised that some negative actions are more powerful than others. They are more powerful in the sense that they produce more powerful kammic results.

He perceived that the five negative actions of killing, lying, taking intoxicants, sexual misconduct and stealing produce the most potent negative kamma or most concentrated negative kamma for ourselves to inherit in our future.

Most people naturally tend to be able keep some precepts better than others. That's pretty normal for persons when they start practicing Buddhism. Some of the precepts make sense straight away so the person can easily commit to keeping those precepts. However, keeping each of the five precepts creates its own powerful kammic effects, not just the ones that seem on the surface to make sense.

Whatever you find in this book to implement in your own life, at the very least please decide to keep these precepts.

### **To refrain from Killing Living Beings**

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*"Life is dear to all, and all tremble at punishment, all fear death and value life. Hence, we should abstain from taking a life which we ourselves cannot give". 8.*

Going back to first principles of Buddhism, we understand that whatever we do to others with intention makes the kamma or sows the seeds for us to experience this same thing at some later date.

We change our behaviour by having the intention to not kill. It is a very simple change with profound results. We see other beings as doing what we are doing - surviving. They also have families. They do not know that they are causing us discomfort or harm. In the case of a mosquito for example - it is their nature (or kamma) that they need to drink blood to survive. So instead of becoming angry or annoyed by them we look out for them.

When we see a spider or mouse in our house, we catch them and release them outside. We can get mousetraps that do not kill. We sweep ants up and take them outside. We use talcum powder to prevent ants coming in. We keep our kitchen clean and free from most food scraps and spillages. Even then, we may have an ongoing job of watching where the ants are coming in and blocking the holes.

We can do things to prevent mosquitoes biting us such as by wearing repellent insect sprays, by making sure our fly-screens are secure, or by using a mosquito net.

If we walk in a garden often we will kill beings such as ants as we walk, it is frequently unavoidable as we do not even see them. In this case we have no intention to kill the beings. It is the intention which creates kamma.

We live in a very fortunate place - we do not have to kill to eat meat. Meat is available to us in the supermarket. Many persons find this a difficult concept to accept - that many Buddhists eat meat, yet they practice no killing.

We see the two actions - eating meat and killing as two different things.

Many beings are killed to grow vegetables, grains and other crops, fruit that we buy in the supermarket. Insecticides are sprayed on the vegetables for example. We cannot avoid the fact, that for us to have this food, many beings are killed. It is the nature of this world. Just as every time we walk, many microscopic beings die. Every time we clean, many beings die. Every time we wash ourselves, many beings die on our body.

It has been reported that twenty one percent of the world's insecticides are used in the production of cotton. Silk worms that make silk are killed when the crop is harvested; many types of animals are killed for their skins to be used for clothing, apparels and furniture. It is the nature of our existence that beings die in our process of living.

I understand this, yet I have no intention to kill these beings. When I clean my house, my intention is to maintain healthy living conditions for myself and my family or friends who live or visit here. When I mow the lawn, my intention is to keep our garden well maintained and safe.

If meat is available and I do not have to kill for it, I will eat it. If it were not available, I would not kill for it, or ask someone else to kill for me.

For some persons, kammically, they may need to eat meat to maintain their health and strength. Buddhism is not a religion of food. It is a way to end our suffering through calming the mind and seeing things as they really are.

### **To Refrain From Lying**

Buddhist practice is all about coming to the truth about ourselves and the processes of our life. Seeing within our own mind how we create happiness and unhappiness and then being able to correct our errors

and negative mind states. Progress on the Buddhist Path is to do with us waking up to the truth of the way we really are.

The act of lying however is an act of distorting truth or distorting the reality in a way which suits the person lying. The lying itself creates kammic causes for difficulties or obstacles to recognising or receiving the truth in the future.

It is a result of lying that we get poor information about things we wish to know, or if we are told the correct information we may not believe it, discount it, or mistake what we heard. Even in a worldly sense it is important to find out the truth about things.

It is a common occurrence to find that a person has believed we said something; but it wasn't what we actually said. Quite frequently we find out we have acted on some incorrect information about something and so we have wasted a lot of time, or bought something we didn't need, or went somewhere to meet someone and got the time or place wrong. And so on. It happens to us regularly. These types of examples of misinformation we get are caused by us having given out misinformation or lies to others in the past.

For a person who is trying to understand the truth and intending to create good causes towards that for learning and becoming happier it is a necessity to keep the precept to not lie. Not lying creates the kamma for us to understand ourselves, others and the world we live in better. By being truthful we are creating the kamma to come to a clearer view.

When we hear or read something, how does our mind interpret that information? It is clear we all interpret it differently. Each of us extracts a meaning and value from the same data and this gives us our "understanding".



However, this understanding is usually highly subjective. Two people hear the same statement but come to different positions, even to the extent that they could argue with each other about what they heard and what it means.

This is not unusual or abnormal however, this subjectivity indicates the unreliability and untrustworthiness of our processes of interpreting and understanding information about our world.

How confident can we be in our “understanding”?

One of the factors that create our subjectivity as a receiver of information is how well we have kept the precept to refrain from lying in the past and how well we keep it now.

Also we need to consider that the information we are interpreting is not only through our hearing and seeing. We are interpreting our own mind and our mental objects such as thought, memories, feelings and so on. In the same way as we distort the information about the world outside of ourselves we are also equally distorting the information about our internal world.

If we are trying to understand ourselves and see things clearly it will never happen unless we build very powerful good kamma of maintaining truthfulness by keeping the precept to not lie at all times.

Having read that information you may decide you really do wish to practice that precept, to refrain from lying. You may think it is important enough that you want to change your speech so you no longer lie at all, for any reason. Practically if you don't take a position like that which is uncompromising you generally won't succeed.

We already know it can be difficult to give up an old bad behavior because of its habitual nature so it's not much use applying the new behavior half-heartedly. This would be planning to fail because you are not using enough mental will power or energy to overcome the energy of the old behavior.

It is like saying I'll give up smoking - but then saying "I'll just have an occasional cigarette". That won't work and it means our mind has not understood the purpose of morality. Decide to give up lying completely - with happiness!

### **To refrain from taking intoxicants that cloud the mind**

There is a generally unexamined postulate in our contemporary, Western culture that says if we enjoy doing something it must be good for us. Intoxicants are a prime example of this.

The difficulty is we don't have a social or cultural understanding which identifies that morality is the foremost foundation of a healthy mind.

The precept of no intoxicants does not include medications taken on medical advice or prescribed by a doctor. It does not include alcohol in cooking which is evaporated off. It does include alcohol and such things as recreational drugs and hard drugs all of which affect consciousness detrimentally.

A typical question often asked by people when they first hear about the precepts to refrain from intoxicants goes along the lines of "isn't it OK to drink a little occasionally, such as at a social function?"

It is true, a small amount of alcohol may not have much of an effect on our consciousness but to have this view means that there is an

underlying belief that the potential harm of taking intoxicants is related to the amount consumed, and that there is nothing of consequence beyond that.

We have to look at it from a different perspective to understand if there are other aspects of potential risk.

For our mind to have an authentic stable foundation there needs to be clarity of what constitutes wholesome thought and what constitutes unwholesome thought, and what is wholesome action and what is unwholesome action.

It is wholesome to have a commitment to developing a clean, clear mind. A mind that is free from defilement's of every type and free from intoxicants of every type. Actually, this starts with intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs but as our mind becomes brighter we may see that our minds get tangled up in many other types of intoxicants.

Our untrained mind is intoxicated at the most basic level by merely sensation. Sensation alone, no matter what type, is enough for our mind to follow and grab. We only need to sit quietly with eyes closed for a little while to see how our mind whirls from one sensation to another, for no purpose whatever, except the thirst for consuming experience. A bit like Pavlov's dog – except we weren't trained to become like this, we were born with this type of mental salivation.

Intoxicants outside ourselves we contact via our five senses, intoxicants from our internal dialogue, intoxicants associated with memories and feelings. We take too much notice of things which are unimportant, and consequently can't see what is actually important. We are frequently living in a distracted fragmented state, lost in our intoxication.

The various intoxicants we may consume and our capacity to be intoxicated produce mental dullness, mental stupidity, mental noise. This impenetrable fog limits and deteriorates our mental environment leaving little scope for true Dhamma light. Do we really believe that using intoxicants will support us to become bright, clear and peaceful?

The path to real well-being and awakening depends on us cleaning our mind, purifying our mind. Intoxicants put the cloud straight back on the surface we are trying to clean. If we wish to improve we must value the small gains we make, we must use whatever factors leading to improvement we can and have a commitment to following a set of behaviours that are consistent with this. When our mind has this commitment; that is right view.

Such commitment and determination itself brightens and cleans our mind simply because it is wholesome. Simply recollecting the precepts brightens our mind. Merely the thought of keeping the precept to refrain from intoxicants blesses us. If we pay attention and respect keeping our mind free from intoxicants gradually it will happen for real. We will be making the right causes to reduce all forms of intoxication.

### **To refrain from Sexual Misconduct**

The precept of no sexual misconduct includes such things as no adultery and also not using our sexuality to manipulate another person.

Close relationships can seem and are very complex sets of changing interpersonal conditions. Our parents, our brothers and sisters, our lovers, our wives, our children, our friends, our workmates are central to our lives and underpin our existence.

So how do we look after our relationships well? To begin with, it would be better to say “how do we look after our relationships wisely”.

Relationships are based on kamma. That can be a relationship with anything; relationship with money, relationship with music, relationships with physical objects such as cars, relationship with government, and relationships with people. They are all the same, in the sense that they all arise from kamma – causes made in our past.

Precepts are governors of kamma; they prevent us making the worst types of negative kamma. They are also indicators of what we most need to look after wisely for our lives to be happy and safe. All five precepts help us have good relationships with other living beings. All five precepts stop us from making really bad present and future relationships with other living beings.

Breaking the precept of sexual misconduct makes kamma for breaking our relationships. Whether our partner found out we were unfaithful or not, whether it happens to our present relationship or it happens in a future relationship with someone we haven't even met yet, whether we see it coming or not, the causes of staying together harmoniously are white anted.

When we meet someone who we feel a strong connection with that is kamma from the past. As we spend time together, enjoy each other's company, share our life with them, our kamma is being used up. Gradually the sense of freshness, aliveness, intimacy begins to weaken. Gradually our wish to spend our time with each other becomes less and we find we are happy to spend more time doing things apart. The good kamma which brought us together is now weaker. This is the life cycle of relationships. We are really experiencing our kamma, when we meet the other person. The way we view the other person was always coming

from the kamma we had with them and from the kamma we made together during our relationship.

Therefore, if we value our relationships, if we appreciate them we need to nourish them, to renew them, to rebuild them every time we meet the other person. From our side we take responsibility for the well being of our relationships. Even if the other person doesn't know this, even if they don't have this understanding, we make the causes from our side to frequently replenish the kamma. We live in the way we wish our relationships could be.

If we think it doesn't matter, it isn't that important to really pay attention to our relationships, in the future we will meet people who think like that when they meet us. We won't have good friends, good relations, good partners; we won't experience lasting, caring relationships. Then we start to mistrust people, to resent people, to see more and more enemies appearing in our world.

There is a saying in Buddhism that "friends become enemies, enemies become friends". This describes the life cycle of relationships that occur based on not understanding how kamma works and consequently not keeping precepts of safe conduct.

### **To Refrain from Stealing**

The effect of keeping precepts is profound. The Buddha said they are the basis of our minds being able to improve and develop. They are the basis for our true well-being. A person who keeps five precepts is making kamma for their future rebirths as a human or better. Keeping five precepts cleans our coarse material body and our fine material body, our chakra system, our life force, our mind.

Keeping the precept to not steal includes not taking anything which is not freely given to us.

Although it may appear that this relates to taking material things from others we also consider it to include for example, not trying to overhear a person's private conversation with someone else, not illegally avoiding paying taxes which should be paid, or not attending to our personal or private matters during the time we are paid to be working.

At a subtler level for example, sometimes we choose to involve ourselves and get ourselves churned up about things that are really none of our business. In some instances, this could be viewed as stealing. We have to consider what our motive is for getting involved to see if we are stealing or not.

It's all the easier to break a precept if we get too close to the edge. If we keep alcohol in the house it is much easier to break the precept than if we have to go out to buy some. Which means to protect ourselves, we need to recognise and avoid the steps and the situations that lead up to us breaking the precept.

For example, in the case of stealing, what comes before stealing is maybe we see something at home we really like so we hide it so others can't have it. We hide a chocolate biscuit so no one else can eat it before us. What comes before hiding is maybe we avoid telling our family members we just bought chocolate ice creams so there's a good chance no one will notice. Sure, it's not stealing, but it's on the way to making the causes for stealing.

The next step could be just looking around to see whose watching when you put the ice creams in the fridge. Maybe turn your back so nobody sees as you put them in the freezer. The next step away is to just want something someone else has. "I would really like some of that". The

next step away could be thinking “They should share that with me rather than eating it all themselves”.

These reducing steps are like ripples further out on the same pond. They are one step away from stealing, two, three, four steps away from stealing. We learn to guard our actions like that. We train in avoiding actions which are less and less severe variations of wanting something that someone else has.

Then we can start going the other way, to honour other’s property, to protect other’s property and to freely give to others.

If someone loses something, help them find it. If you find something someone has lost do your best to return it. Make sure you are well away from eves dropping on others conversations when you know they are private and don’t open emails and letters addressed to others.

The Five Precepts maintain powerful causes for us to experience a safe and secure set of living conditions both now and in the future, which are harmless to others and peaceful for ourselves. It is our Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines for living.



## Chapter 5 – Mindfulness

If there is a magic ingredient in the Buddhist Path then it would be mindfulness. One of the first principles of Buddhist Teachings is that we can take charge of our mind as a key component of creating well-being and happiness for our future. Mindfulness is what makes this possible.

We need to be able to recognise in real time what we are thinking, doing and saying if we hope to take charge of any of these components of our behaviour.

What do we mean by practicing mindfulness?

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*"If you pour a cup of tea, you are aware of extending your arm and touching your hand to the teapot, lifting it and pouring the water. Finally, the water touches your teacup and fills it, and you stop pouring it and put the teapot down precisely, as in the Japanese Tea Ceremony. You become aware that each precise movement has dignity. We have long forgotten that activities can be simple and precise. Every act of our lives can contain simplicity and precision and can thus have tremendous beauty and dignity." 9.*

“

*"There is the story concerning the Buddha which relates how he taught a village woman to develop such mindfulness in the act of drawing water from a well. He taught her to be aware of the precise movement of her hands and arms as she drew up the water. Such practice is the*

*attempt to see the nowness quality in action, which is why it is known as "shamatha," the development of peace." 10.*

Both of these quotes should surprise us because they each say that within the ordinariness of our normal living, within the mundaneness of our daily activities, is the possibility of contentment, nourishment and joyfulness. Right in front of us in our simplest actions we can find peace and beauty.

The quality of attentiveness being described in the quotes is certainly different to our habitual way of doing things. This is a conscious observance of the nowness of living, a patient attention and an alertness which comes from the effort to nourish the present moment.

According to Buddhism reality exists in the present instant. Reality is occurring second by second. You exist second by second. The past is gone, the future hasn't arrived. Only the present is real. What you were one minute ago is gone completely. Just an ancestor! What you will be tomorrow you can't say.

Therefore, if you wish to see what you really are you can only do it by looking at your experience in the present. If you want to take charge of your mind and your behaviour it can be done most effectively through your awareness of the present happenings.

Normally we don't live like this. We usually take our actions and reactions for granted, we operate mostly from our habit or default settings. Our normal state from a Buddhist viewpoint is similar to living on automatic pilot. This state in Buddhism is likened to being asleep. Buddhism teaches the foundation of development on the Buddhist Path is, we have to wake ourselves up.

The more we train our attention to stay in the present, the more stable is our foundation for improving the health of our mind. Automatically our mind becomes brighter, more alert, more intelligent, and more energetic - all from this simple process of being awake in the present.

Even as our body deteriorates through ageing as our mindfulness is improved by our practice the power of our mind can still be increased.

It is quite a radical change to how we live. We decide to be awake to our momentary experience of living. We train ourselves until it becomes our new habitual way of living. This is called the awakening mind in Buddhism and it is considered our most treasured possession because it builds and strengthens the very essence of our enlightenment.

The effort to become mindful is well worth it. This commitment to living with mindfulness is a commitment to your own well-being. Through your effort to become mindful you can eventually overcome every obstacle that can arise within your mind, you can eventually defeat every unwholesome state, every unwholesome action, every cause of unhappiness can be removed.

“

*"Mindfulness, O monks, I declare, is essential in all things everywhere"*  
~ *The Buddha. II.*

So how do we begin? It's not too difficult if you remember you only have to stay mindful one second at a time. Just what you are doing now - only. It's a little bit at a time practice - one second, one second, one second. Just like the Buddhist meditation on the breath, we keep bringing our attention back to the present. We observe how usually the mind gives us a running commentary on anything that gets its attention.

Then we get caught up in our thinking. Don't get caught up in all these stories our mind produces. In Buddhism this day dreaming and internal dialogue is called the "monkey mind".

Stop being interested in all the stories and internal commentary. Many of them are meaningless gibberish anyway. What do you think your mental chatter would look like if you wrote it all down? When you read it back to yourself later do you think it would be very coherent? How long would you bother to read this stuff?

When something happens we don't like we often dwell on that for some time afterwards. We replay what happened over again and again in our head. We revisit our disturbance. This is a sure-fire way of prolonging our negative mental states and keeping ourselves annoyed.

When you notice your attention has strayed off the present or you are lost in your thoughts, let go of the thing you have been playing with and focus your attention back to what you are doing in the present.

We can put this instruction into practice immediately, right now as we are reading. Practice being in the present now.

Sit as if in meditation, relaxed but with a gentle awareness of your body, with your mind contained in the volume of your body. You bring your mind home. Experience your body, feel your arms, your legs, your weight on the seat, relax any stress you are holding in your body. Be comfortable. Note the feelings that arise in your body. If you are warm enjoy that sensation of warmth, allow yourself to be softly nourished by just dropping everything else and dwelling in the present experience of sitting.

Then, when you start to read keep some of your attention relaxed in your body. Just read gently with interest to what is being said.

As it turns out, even though your attention is not focused exclusively on this book any more, you can still read with understanding as you did before. You will find, over time, you understand more of what's being said when your mind is inside your body like this. This is because gradually your mind becomes quieter and more focused.

You can do this many times a day. Try it when you are driving your car, or travelling on a train, when you are watching TV or cooking, mowing the lawn, sweeping the floor, and so on. Washing the dishes is an excellent time to practice mindfulness because your body is active in a small area and generally there are not many other distractions.

Try washing the dishes meditation at home. Move consciously, in a relaxed manner. Use care and alertness to put down the washed dishes quietly. You may note the experience of washing the dishes which you may have previously regarded as being unpleasant is not quite what you thought.

The feeling of the soft soapy warm water on your hands and the feeling of movement which is unhurried, gentle and relaxed make this an activity of meditation, rather than a household chore.

At your work, look for opportunities to develop awareness of your body both when sitting and when walking.

Just start applying it whenever you can. It is going to take some time to build up your mindfulness. Like anything else we try that is new. There is a learning curve and it does take time to get out of our habit of being unmindful. Just know that gradually week by week as you work at it your mindfulness will improve.

“

*“We should invest one hundred percent of ourselves into the business of carrot cutting. Nothing else. You have to cut the carrot with all of yourself. While cutting the carrot please don’t try to think of the Dharma talk, just cut the carrot in the best way that you can, becoming one with the carrot, becoming one with the cutting. Live deeply that moment of carrot cutting. It is as important as the practice of sitting meditation. It is as important as giving a Dharma talk. When you cut the carrot just cut the carrot, with all your being. That is mindfulness. That is to produce your true presence to become fully alive. The practice is not difficult, especially when you are surrounded by a Sangha where everyone is doing the same. You are cutting carrots, he is sweeping the ground in the meditation hall—you are both practicing the same thing. If you can cultivate concentration, and if you can get the insight you need to liberate yourself from suffering, that is because you know how to cut your carrots.*

*Cleaning the toilet, you have to do it in the same spirit: invest all of yourself into the cleaning, make it into a joyful practice. One thing at a time, do it deeply. The purpose of the practice is to cultivate the energy of mindfulness. The energy of mindfulness will help us to live each moment of our lives deeply, help us stop running, help us touch what is wonderful, refreshing, nourishing and healing in us and around us. There are many wonders of life that are available in the here and the now, and without mindfulness we would neglect them, we would ignore them, we would not know how to profit from them.” 12.*

You can be mindful anywhere, anytime, no matter what you are doing. It is practiced alongside every other practice, hand in hand with every other practice. You practice generosity and kindness with mindfulness. You practice doing good actions with mindfulness. You guard and

protect your mind from generating negative states such as resentment or anger by using mindfulness. It is the practice which you can develop to be a constant companion, at your side, protecting you, looking after you, helping you create benefits for yourself and others through the recognition of what's really happening instant by instant.

Now you may see how the calmness and brightness which can be developed in meditation can be extended into our normal lives. We make an effort to keep our mindfulness after we end each meditation session.

Your experience of living will feel and be better if you can train yourself to be mindful. You're only going to find out about it by doing it for yourself. You can't learn to ride a bike by reading about it. You can't know the taste of passionfruit unless you eat it.

Don't expect too much too soon. Be patient; apply yourself gently minute by minute. If you train yourself this way, one day you will suddenly recognise something very liberating is happening.

“

*“When you see the nowness of the very moment, there is no room for anything but openness and peace”. 13.*





## Chapter 6 – Letting Go

We have talked about some of the practices we can do to build the right platform so we can be happier and also as the right base for us to begin to wake up as the Buddha taught.

We have examined the practice of generosity, the morality of keeping Five Precepts, the importance of mindfulness and of training our minds to be pure through the reduction of unwholesome mind states and the promotion of the positive mental energy of wholesome mind states.

When you look through these teachings, although the approach we are describing is unique to Buddhism, the practices themselves appear in one form or another in all the world's major religions. In addition, the practice of loving kindness taught in Buddhism again has strong parallels in the other major religions.

Next we will examine what we mean by the letting go component of our Happiness Map and perhaps this is where you can start to identify the difference between the Buddhist Teachings as compared to other religious systems or methods.

The reason why letting go appears as a practice in Buddhism is because the Buddha identified mental craving as being the ultimate cause of our suffering and difficulties. Even though our reality is coming straight from the kammic causes we produced in our past, our mind cannot accept the reality that appears to us with contentment.

Our unwholesome minds all have some complaint about the reality appearing before our eyes. Our greed is wanting more than the reality is providing to us. Our aversion doesn't want parts of the reality we are experiencing. Our restlessness is not satisfied with reality. Ignorance is

at the root of this problem because it does not know how to deal with reality sanely.

None of these unwholesome minds just see reality clearly and leave it at that. They all want something else, they all crave something different. This discontent with reality itself produces a large part of our suffering. We need to learn how to let go and accept the reality we are experiencing is enough.

Peace in Buddhism is knowing the real and not craving anything else whatever. This is wisdom. Wisdom looks at reality without even the slightest neurosis. Combined with compassion, wisdom chooses what to do next from seeing in the present moment what would really be of benefit to oneself and others.

So how to do that? We have to learn to let go. From the beginning of the Buddhist path to the end, it is a process of letting go. When you read your first Buddhist Teaching you have to create some space in your mind to hear something new. If you are full up with your own ideas and opinions you won't be able to hear anything the Buddhist Teachings have to say. You'll spend your valuable time thinking about and talking about what you believe, rather than giving yourself a chance to learn something new. If you have a full glass of water there's no space available to pour anything more into it.

You create space in your mind by listening with a beginner's mind, a mind that knows it doesn't know everything and therefore allows you the space to form a better view. Then you need to let go of some of your old ways of doing things to enable change to take place. To allow the possibility to practice a new thing you have to let go your old way of doing it to create enough space so the new can be adopted.

In Buddhism this process of letting go is called renunciation. Again, renunciation is in many other religions, but in most religions,

renunciation is based on renouncing "evil" in the world or to reduce our worldly desires, but in Buddhism we are letting go to antidote our habitual craving and mental clutter.

As part of that process we start learning to let go of our unwholesome minds. First, we realise we have used an unwholesome mind ten minutes after the event. Then we say "I shouldn't have reacted like that". Or "I should have stopped myself earlier". Then we recognise a bit closer to the event, maybe a minute after we got angry we say "I am annoyed, I need to stop being so upset", "I need to give up this anger".

We don't have to stay annoyed with someone who did something we didn't like. When you see yourself starting to get stuck in any unwholesome thinking tell yourself to let it go. You actually say that as an instruction for your mind to follow. Tell the unwholesome state to "Stop!" It's not actually you, it's not a self or something precious or important; it's just one possible state that can arise for a period of time. Because it produces unhappiness and clouds your view, give it up.

You choose to be happy with the reality that's arising right now. If your mind is starting to become discontent or stressed or worried you say to your mind "Let go ..... It's all OK ... relax"

Or you think "Yes, my life is going extremely well!" Or you just get into the present and think "I'm perfectly happy with what I've got now" or "I'm perfectly happy with my life now" or "I'm perfectly happy with how I am", something like that - you find out what works best for you. Feel that everything is OK, feel that you are safe and secure and not lacking the basics that you need to live a happy life.

It doesn't mean you can't improve or you don't want things to get better, it's just a way you can reduce the suffering coming from your mind complaining and being discontent about the reality of what is happening.

Through training our minds with these methods, we are creating the kamma to reduce our craving. We are training our minds to not grab so tightly, not grab with so much mental energy, to touch things lightly.

The mind will have much more energy, lightness, flexibility, pliancy, and adaptability because it is not holding onto its position so tightly. If you have a lot of any negative, be it fear or annoyance or worry or resentment or jealousy, any negative whatever, if it is strong it means that the mental grabbing is strong. The negative is strong because the grabbing is strong. If the grabbing is strong the suffering is strong. It's the same for all negative minds, all unwholesome minds.

Then we start to reduce the craving in our meditation. Again, we learn to let go. We look at our breath, and our "monkey mind" grabs at so many things. We see what is happening, we see the mind running off. When we see our mind following a sound, for example, we tell our mind softly to release, then we tell it to relax, then we smile.

Let go of the thoughts, feelings, sounds, let go and come back to our breath. Our mind is now learning not to grab. Our mind is learning a way to freedom it never experienced before.

Importantly, we train our minds to let go of pleasant feeling as well as unpleasant feeling. We train our minds to let go being attached to wholesome minds. After all the practice we did to develop the wholesome, now we have to let that go too. Otherwise the attachment to pleasant feeling and wholesome minds will be a strong link that causes us to be born in heaven in our next birth. This is what most other religions advise us to do. So, again this is how Buddhist renunciation is different to all other religions renunciation.

Being born in heaven in Buddhism is not regarded as anything particularly special. It is just another birth, not that much different to being born human in the sense that the heavenly beings aren't automatically wiser or further along the path to enlightenment than human beings.

Most heaven worlds are regarded in Buddhism as being so pleasant or peaceful that the beings there usually do not recognise the need to find and practice a path to become free from suffering. The heavenly beings, or devas as they are known in Buddhism, can all get whatever they want with ease, so there is no real need for them to help the other beings in their heaven. Their minds do not experience gross defilement's in those heavens as we do in human birth, so those beings generally do not recognise the underlying content of their minds as being greed, hate and ignorance.

Also, like most human beings, most heavenly beings are not aware of their past lives and that the reason why they are now enjoying the fruits of a heavenly birth are the accumulated good actions done in the past. Beings living in heaven worlds are generally not aware and not able to undertake practices such as generosity to increase their merit or virtue for their future. Their next birth may be lower than their present birth because they have consumed much of their merit reserves.

What is better from a Buddhist point of view than heaven is wisdom. You can use your merit to have a heaven birth in your next life, or you can use your merit to develop wisdom. A heaven birth will come to an end one day. Wisdom minds track seeing reality for what it is, which means they track the goal of the Buddhist Path, which is enlightenment and complete freedom from all forms of suffering.

Gradually as the grabbing reduces our mind becomes calmer, and clearer. Our one pointedness of concentration grows stronger, our

attention more focused and stable. This is the right direction. Our mind is going towards peace and true sustainable happiness.

This mind we use most of the time develops its own well being and positive mental energy and joy every moment. This mind wants to be virtuous, it wants to keep its morality pure, it wants to be generous, it wants to be wholesome, it doesn't want to be unwholesome. We don't have to use much effort to be like this because the mind values and likes the good qualities it has developed. This is called a well-trained mind.

Then when we meditate we can begin the final part of the letting go practice. We do meditations which help our mind give up its deep attachment to our own feelings, our own ideas and opinions, our own bodies. We start to get a glimpse of the real nature of these things, how our mind really is.

It is called insight wisdom. It is when our mind lets go of its ignorant view of ourselves for a flash of a second. In that moment we see clearly, for perhaps the first time in our life, we see something about ourselves we have never known before. The Buddha described how we really are from this viewpoint. It is possible to do this as a result of learning to let go and not grab at both the outside world we live in, and the inner phenomena of our inside world. This is the Buddhist Path. It goes much further than worldly happiness can ever go. It goes to perfect inner peace and fulfillment.

### **How to start your Buddhist practice?**

So now, how do you start the Buddhist practice? What are the first practical steps you can do to really make a difference in improving your happiness and well-being?

The first step is to start a daily Dhamma practice of your own. This should include the basic fundamental daily practices such as formal chanting and meditation and a weekly plan to make merit specifically for the purpose of improving your mind.

This relates to implementing the components of the Happiness Map in a planned way rather than leaving it up to the whims of how you are feeling on any particular day. We all lead busy lives. Unless something is planned in this way there will always be a myriad of other things to do before we sit down and do something for our inner development. Therefore, you need to decide that doing something every day for your own well-being and happiness is an important priority worth making space for in your life.

This is renunciation, this is letting go. We make a choice to let go of a few things of lesser value to us to make space to bring something of greater meaning and benefit into our life.

Make time every day to read some Buddha Teachings, do Buddhist chanting and some meditation. If you usually get up at 6.30 am, get up at 6.15 am and use the extra fifteen minutes per day for your practice. It's that important. Make some time in your life to do this. Gradually this makes the kamma to get a bit more time, and so on.

Below is a planning sheet for you to write your daily practice. You start by deciding how many minutes each day you will set aside for your inner work.

Please remember there's no point in doing any of these practices unmindfully or without volition, like you are on automatic pilot.

The planning sheet lists a few practices you can do anytime during the day or night, while you are driving your car for example, or just when

you have a moment to spare.

- Sit with awareness of your body and have a cup of tea or other drink with appreciation of your comfort, recognise the quiet moment you have, and the taste of the drink.
- Do something kind for your Mum or Dad, or your partner, to make them happy.
- Put your mind into the present moment and recollect the five precepts with volition to keep them, not as a ritual on automatic pilot. Each time you do that correctly it produces clean wholesome energy in your mind.
- Find something which instantly lightens you up or makes you laugh.
- You can chant a Buddhist mantra.
- Send loving kindness to other beings, then send loving kindness to yourself.
- Set a time period aside, such as when you are driving for example, to stay mindful of your body, say for five minutes.

### My Daily Dhamma Plan

.....minutes per day

	<b>Daily Practice</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Times</b>
1	Daily Chanting with Mindfulness		
2	Daily Offerings with Intention		
3	Studying Dhamma		
4	Meditation on the Breath		
5	Sending Metta		
6	Mindfulness in Action		
7	Write Down Your Wins		



Next you have your Weekly Dhamma Plan to make sure every week you make some good causes or merit toward your minds improvement.

We have discussed how important it is to make new powerful good causes or merit to fuel your own development. This is the factor that provides clean mental energy and new nutrients for your mind. How can you do this on a regular basis?

We always recommend practitioners include helping out at a Buddhist temple or Buddhist centre because this is exactly what temples are designed for.

If you are sincere about learning and practicing Buddhism well supporting your learning by attending a Buddhist centre is as indispensable as attending university is to studying medicine or law, for example. There are so many ways mixing with other people who also practice Buddhism benefits students, particularly for the first few years until they really get proficient in their own practice. Apart from any formal classes that are given, many conversations you'll hear are to do with understanding yourself better and learning more skillful ways to improve your personal development. It usually takes a couple of years for most students to get their Buddhist practice well established just as it would take a couple of years to develop the basics skills of playing a new musical instrument.

The list below provides some examples of the type of activities you can help out with at a Buddhist temple and some of them you can do at home. These activities can all be interesting and fun to do. Use your existing skills to make merit and learn any new skills you need to be involved in any of these projects or activities.

- help cataloguing books in a Buddhist library
- help recording, transcribing and editing Buddhist teachings

- help in the temples garden
- help with weekly cleaning
- help manage websites
- help preparing and cooking meals
- help with fundraising
- help in the office with filing or photocopying
- help with building and maintenance work
- help with transport for Buddhist monks and nuns

### My Weekly Dhamma Plan

..... hours per week.

	<b>Weekly Practice</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Times</b>
1	Attend a Buddhist Talk or Teaching		
2	Attend a Buddhist Meditation Class		
3	Attend a regular Buddhist Puja Ceremony		
4	Make merit at a Buddhist Centre		
5	Helping a Buddhist Centre from home		
6	Making offerings to Monks or Nuns		
7	Help Monks or Nuns according to their needs		
8	Helping your Mother or Father		
9			

All these suggestions are working at building your happiness from the absolute reality point of view, by using the Law of Karma to create the causes for your improvement. It changes your life for the better, but more essentially, it changes you for the better.

You become the new causes you have made. Making the biggest improvement of yourself depends on how much you can increase your store of the right types of good kamma and how well you put your new learning into practice.



## Chapter 7 – Right Effort

Nibbana may seem a long way off, something beyond what you see yourself being able to attain this life; however, making the right effort to attaining nibbana is what Buddhism is all about. Buddhism is the Path to nibbana, the incomparable jewel that the Buddha revealed to humanity and the heavens which allows an escape from all suffering and ignorance. Viriya, or right effort /energy, is one eighth of the Noble Eight - fold Path as taught by the Buddha. Right effort / energy is also one the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. It is essential in helping us to wake up.

There are eight levels of nibbana starting from "stream enterer" where the practitioners mind accesses nibbana or sees emptiness directly for the first time, leading after continued cultivation and realisations to the full realisation of enlightenment, as an Arahant, a fully enlightened Bodhisattva or a *Samma sambuddhasa*. (Buddha)

When a person accesses nibbana the first time, at that first instant some of the most profound changes that can happen to any being in any birth immediately take place.

From that day on the person can no longer be born in any birth lower than a human birth.

They will only have a maximum of seven more human lives before attaining full enlightenment.

At that moment all doubt in the Buddha and the Buddhist Path is entirely removed.

That person will no longer practice any empty ritual. They practice with mindfulness and understanding.

The craving and sensual desire that had been habitual in their mind forever is substantially reduced.

Attaining stream enterer this life is the target we need to discern and value for ourselves for our practice to develop power. It is part of what it means to have refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha because it is the only reliable refuge that can ever be found.

It's up to each of us, with the help of our teachers and the Ariya Sangha who have attained nibbana before us, to work out how we are going to do it. All the men and women that have realised nibbana in the past had exactly what we have got; a suitable human birth and 24 hours per day.

We are going to examine some of our dispositions, skills and attitudes which could be helping or hindering us in making this transition from obtaining a small benefit from our Buddhist practice to realising directly the profound purpose of the Buddhas teaching.

Let us begin with what is known in Buddhist Teachings as Right Energy; that is that type of energy which will move us toward enlightenment. The following quote identifies types of energy that are profitable for Buddha Dhamma practice

“

*“The first is the energy of the mind that stops the desire for unprofitable things. If we have a strong desire for ordinary things disconnected from Dharma, it disrupts our Dharma practice. Although we have to do everyday things, if our fondness for them is greater than our fondness for Dharma, our attention is taken away from our main work. A person may concentrate and work very hard, but if the goal of all that effort is a worldly one, then, according to Dharma, that person is lazy. People*

*who really want to practice Dharma are in a hurry even when eating or excreting, so as not to waste time.*

*This aspect of the perfection of energy speeds us quickly towards the final goal. Having energy for Dharma practice, the real purpose of life, prevents our being distracted by worldly goals. It protects us from all kinds of bad things.” 14.*

“

*“The concept of right energy has many components in Buddhist practice. The meaning of right energy can be described as one who is pleased to perform virtuous actions.” 15.*

Doing good things happily generates right energy.

Next, if we examine closely why people make wrong choices in life, one of the reasons is because they use "like" and "dislike" as the basis of their decision making. It may also be the case for ourselves.

To illustrate this we can consider the example of when we attended school or university at which time we may have been doing five or six subjects each year. If we followed "like" and "dislike" as our system of decision making, we would have focused our work and attention on those subjects we "liked" doing and "liked" learning, and we would have avoided or put little effort into those subjects we "disliked".

We can easily recognise that such choices could be self-defeating, especially if we need to do well in some disliked subjects for our future career.

One Buddhist Teacher mentioned one day that when he went to secondary school he generally found maths very easy. However, occasionally some parts of maths he found quite difficult. Subsequently, he saw the reason for this was that the maths he found very easy to learn this life were areas he had already studied and mastered in past lives. The parts he found difficult to learn were areas of maths which were not known and not taught when he was living in those past times, and therefore he had to learn them this life for the first time.

So how can we progress if we only study those things we like and find easy? How is it wise use of energy to not do enough of the needed work and homework and then as a result, waste the years schooling? If we use that system at school we are setting ourselves up for a difficult time when we leave school. Life is a series of choices and we will frequently cause ourselves to be in the same dilemma as the example of the subjects at school, as long as we follow "like" and "dislike".

It is the same with our practice. How many times do we choose to continue the practice of something we are already good at, yet avoid the things which seem harder to do? It's often our weaknesses which will cause us our biggest and most painful problems. A chain will always break at its weakest link.

Buddhist practice includes recognising our weaknesses and then identifying and applying a systematic way to overcome them. If our antidote is not deliberately and clearly formulated it is most likely just another way to fail.

Another aspect of skilful use of energy can be how we organise our self and our time.

“



*“There are at least two views;*

- 1. What do you do?*
- 2. What do you not do?*

*For the first heading, there are at least three views to be sequenced:*

- 1. What do you do now as a first priority?*
- 2. What do you do next as a second priority?*
- 3. What do you do next after next as a third priority?*

*It is important in Buddha Dhamma to get things in the right order.*

*This is not self-evident, otherwise no project in the world would ever fail.” 16.*

It is important to develop strong planning skills as a stable and sane platform from which to operate in the world, and to become successful Dhamma practitioners.

Using a daily time planner gives us the opportunity to consider the options, to weigh up what is most important, what is urgent, what must be done as against what we would like to do.

The mind which does the planning is a different mind to the mind we have during the day when we are busy, distracted, attending to many things which come along and interrupt us.

The mind which does the planning can look at things calmly, dispassionately, and clearly. It will naturally recognise what needs to be done and the sequence in which things need to be done much better than the mind we have when we are on the run. Also, it is much less likely to succumb to "like" and "dislike" as a method of decision making.

Good time planning helps us avoid having to rush because we are late for some event during our day. Rushing minds burn up energy at an unwise rate because they are turbulent and wild. We are driving ourselves with our foot hard on the accelerator pedal.

Time planning has another really important advantage. It can stop us being at the mercy of how we feel. You may find you get a lot more done when you feel motivated and enthusiastic about the task. However, relying on enthusiasm or being motivated is a very weak and unreliable platform to base your level of activity on.

What happens when you feel tired and listless, or when you are feeling lazy or bored, or insecure, or depressed or any of a whole list of alternatives to being motivated and inspired?

What happens is we give up, or we work half-half-heartedly, or we find ways to distract ourselves, or procrastinate, or become bored and restless or it seems like we don't have enough energy to do much.

Skilful time planning short-circuits all these alibis. Planning is a powerful method to over-ride the influence of our negative minds. We abandon following the influence of an unwholesome mind because we have a more powerful alternative. Follow the plan.

By following a plan it no longer matters whether we are feeling good or not, whether we are feeling energetic or not. Whether we feel enthusiastic or lethargic is irrelevant to what we can achieve because we achieve what is written in our plan.

Plan your week and keep a daily time planner with you at all times.

We need very powerful methods to help us improve. We are not just seeking some small benefit by practicing Buddhism. Sometimes in life we can experience incredible difficulties. It is no different on the

Buddhist Path as we are also grappling to overcome powerful defilement's and wrong views which have kept us in samsara forever.

Until we have reached some form of perfection of determination or resolution, we must build powerful skills as our tools to conquer weaknesses we have never been able to conquer before.

Most of these suggestions are aimed at increasing the seconds and minutes in each day when we are consciously applying ourselves to an appropriate form of Buddhist training. We are seeking to reduce and eventually to eliminate our "down time".

If we have met or read about a great Buddhist Master, or Buddhist Teacher it is very apparent that they have colonised all aspects of living within their Buddhist practice. They have trained themselves to apply the Dhamma as their first priority at all times without getting lost or caught up in the activity they are doing. They keep their minds composure not only with all the stuff we often get caught up in such as being tired, busy, stressed, frustrated or bored, but also from things we would normally regard as major problems or disappointments or even tragedies.

Our minds tend to strongly follow our old habits and karmic dispositions and literally our practice is a stop, start process. If we measure how many hours per day we are consciously being mindful for example this is a good indicator of the strength of our practice.

One student at the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia wrote the following recollection:

“

*“When I was helping to build a temple gate in the garden at our*

*Dhamma centre some years ago I recognised that I was building the gate as a builder, rather than building the gate as a practitioner of the Dhamma.*

*In the first instance my full concerns and attentions were to do with building the gate, no different from any other builder essentially, no different to how I had built things before I became a Buddhist. The second instance was when my main priority was nothing to do with building. It was to do with maintaining mindfulness of my body and staying in the present. Of not killing any insects as I moved around the construction area, of maintaining lightness of mind rather than being too heavy or serious, and of maintaining respect for the significance and purpose of the temple gate itself, of understanding that what I was doing with my time and effort was helping myself and others wake up. Building the gate was how the practice manifested in activity”.*

So how can we reduce our own stop-start forms of practice?

One effective method is to have a deliberate purpose or agenda in your mind when you interact with others which encourage you to do many of the actions which are the Buddhist Perfections. Put the intention or will in your mind that your purpose or objective is to build good relationships and harmony with each being you meet.

That means you use the meeting with the next being you are about to meet to improve your relationship with them. There is improvement because you are not passive or neutral towards them. You have a purpose and remind yourself of it regularly, to actively contribute positives into the relationship when you are with that being. The positives could be friendliness, truthfulness, generosity, patience,

kindness as so on. At the same time you actively refrain from contributing negatives into the relationship.

The effort is to make the relationship better from your side without depending on them. You help them to be well and happy and do not contribute to their difficulties or problems.

One reason why our practice is stop start is that we fall into being passive or complacent. It is a strong habit for many persons to be on passive minds. Passive minds just sort of meander along with the view "she'll be right". They don't recognise that there is something to be done. They don't have any sense of urgency about improving our mind or abandoning our weaknesses. These minds let the negatives stream into our mental space because they don't have an agenda of positives to which they are committed.

They are reactive minds which wait until something goes wrong before seeing it is the time to take action. They get angry first and then start practicing to remove the anger thinking that this is Buddhist practice. They have to experience the danger up close before they are shaken out of their complacency. Such minds are not Dhamma. These minds fritter our life away.

Don't wait for the negatives to arise, don't give them the space. Don't be neutral towards the being you are going to meet and be with. Have an agenda which requires you to be active, useful and alert.

Taking this stand with each being you meet is a great blessing to you and to them. Develop a sense of gratitude to each being you meet. Our life is completely dependent on the work and effort of other beings. So is our future well-being.

When we develop our wholesome mental states, we should do it wholeheartedly. By being wholehearted we focus our energy into the wholesomeness rather than being half-hearted or distracted. Being half-hearted means some energy is still going to unwholesome minds. This will help maintain wholesomeness and avoid unwholesomeness and will enable us to practice Right Effort.

Right Effort is described by the Buddha as follows:

“

*"Bhikkhus there are these four right efforts. What four? Here, Bhikkhus:*

- 1. One generates desire for the non-emergence of yet unarisen evil disadvantageous mental states, one makes an effort, one arouses energy, redirects mind, & strives enthusiastically to prevent bad from arising.*
- 2. One generates desire for the quick elimination of already arisen bad detrimental states, one makes an effort, arouses energy, redirects mind and one strives enthusiastically for eradication of all wrong.*
- 3. One generates desire for the arising of yet unarisen advantageous mental states, one makes an effort, one arouses much energy, redirects the mind, and strives enthusiastically for the birth of good states.*
- 4. One generates desire for the fixed maintenance of already arisen advantageous states, for their stable increase, expansion, & final fulfillment by development, one makes an effort, one arouses energy, redirects the mind, and strives enthusiastically for sustaining all right & good.*

*These are the four right efforts!*

*Bhikkhus, just as the river Ganges slants, slopes, and inclines towards the East, even so does a Bhikkhu, who develops and cultivates these four right efforts slant, slop, slide, glide and incline directly towards Nibbana!" 17.*





## Chapter 8 – Overcoming our Self Grasping Nature

The predominant way the negative ingredients of greed, hate and ignorance in our minds manifest to us is through our experience of our own "self" grasping nature.

Our core values and trusts do revolve around "I", "mine", "my", "me" as the basis of how we relate to the world. We are seeking to satisfy our "I" cravings and demands first and foremost (greed), and seeking to avoid the things that we have aversion to (hate), as the principle methods of maintaining happiness for ourselves.

The Buddha found out that as long as we follow only these root values of greed, hate and ignorance we will never attain any lasting peace or happiness. These are the ingredients of our suffering, not our happiness.

Can you believe it that this is really the good news! It is the good news because it's the truth. If we know what the real situation is, that is the best grounds upon which to find practical and realistic methods to address the problem. Actually, the Buddha has already solved the problem. It is up to us to consider what the Buddha has advised us to do. As we learn and get to know the Buddhist Path we can recognise how it equips and empowers us to completely overcome our unwholesome minds. Then it is up to us how we live the rest of our lives.

The Dalai Lama writes in his book titled *The Dalai Lama's Book of Transformation*:

“

*“Until now, regardless of reality, we have nurtured within ourselves a whole complex of self-cherishing thoughts. We believe in something that we hold very dear and we regard as precious, something that is like the core of our being; and this is accompanied by a powerful belief in our existence as an individual being with an independent reality. The belief that there is a substantially real self, and the cherishing of one's own interest at the expense of others, are the two main thoughts and emotions we have nurtured within us throughout our many lives. But what is the result of this? What benefit does it bring?”*

His Holiness continues:

“

*“We are continually suffering; we are continually experiencing negative thoughts and emotions, so our self-cherishing hasn't really got us very far.*

*In fact, these beliefs are the source of suffering and misery, even for the individual”.*

Furthermore:

“

*“Now in contrast, if you shift your focus from yourself to others, extend your concern to others, and cultivate the thought of caring for the well*

*being of others, then this will have the immediate effect of opening up your life and helping you to reach out. In other words, the practice of cultivating altruism has a beneficial effect not only from the religious point of view but also from the mundane point of view, not only for long-term spiritual development but even in terms of immediate rewards". 18*

The self-cherishing minds, which on the surface seem the shortest most direct route to getting what we really want, which is to be happy, turn out to be sowing the seeds of our future unhappiness.

The components of our Virtue Platform work against the habitual "complex of self-cherishing thoughts" in the following ways.

### **A. Generosity and kindness**

Whether it is from the point of view of making a large accumulation of good kamma needed to improve our minds and our life circumstances or from the viewpoint of overcoming the tentacles of self-centredness, the important thing is to serve others needs happily with energy and determination.

Whilst you are doing good actions, also be mindful, keep five precepts, interact with others with loving kindness and then, dedicate the merit you produce from the good you have done to a wholesome mental state you wish to develop, or to a new skill or ability you have identified will help you to be well and happy.

Our minds can improve steadily from month to month if we are making enough good causes.

It is also worthwhile to reflect on and consider the benefits of developing loving kindness or metta to all beings. The practice of metta is to do with how we relate in the correct way to the other beings in our world through our thoughts, actions and speech.

Loving-kindness helps us recognise that other beings' needs and hopes are equal to our own. Each being's needs have the same status as our own. Each being wishes for happiness and has their own struggles in life to fulfill their wishes as we do. It is unbalanced to be ego-centric, recognising and serving only our own needs, the needs of one person, or the needs of one group of persons.

If we always put our own needs first we automatically operate in a loop of greed and hate. Our habitual way to get relief from selfish desire is to chase after and hold onto what we ("I") want. Our habitual way to get relief from hate is to try and control our environment and the others in it to stop them doing what we don't want. We need to change how we relate to other beings if we are to get out of this loop.

There are numerous benefits of developing metta as taught by The Buddha and listed in the *Visuddhi Magga* or *The Path of Purification* by Acharya Buddhaghosa.

These benefits are:

1. *Sound and undisturbed sleep*
2. *Waking up happy and comfortable after sleep*
3. *Not having undesirable dreams*
4. *Liked by others*
5. *Liked by non-human beings such as devas*
6. *Obtain protection and help from devas or heavenly beings*
7. *Obtain protection against certain forms of harm*
8. *Concentrate on anything one wishes with ease.*

9. *Acquire a beautiful and serene appearance*
10. *Be able to die in an unconfused state.*
11. *Be reborn in a good state in your next birth.”*

When our metta is well developed we will not be impatient with others around us, we will seldom become irritated or annoyed when dealing with normal everyday imperfections and interruptions of life, we will be able to discuss things with others calmly, in ways which are effective in maintaining harmony and co-operation and we will have secured the basis of our own mental peace and ease in the world.

“

*“Metta has been identified as that specific factor which “ripens” the accumulated merit acquired by the ten ways for the acquisition of merit, such as generosity, virtue, etc. Again, it is metta which brings to maturity the ten exalted spiritual qualities known as “perfections.”* **19**

Basic instructions for learning metta meditation can easily be found on the internet. Venerable Mahinda has kindly provided recorded instructions which are around 13 minutes in length.

### ***B. Practicing The Five Precepts in the positive form***

1. To protect and support life.
2. To help ourselves and others have good conditions for living.
3. To be truthful, reliable and trustworthy.
4. To develop and promote harmony with others.
5. To cultivate purity of heart and mind to benefit yourself and others.

***C. Using and cultivating wholesome minds and not using unwholesome minds.***

Right effort in Buddhism is described as (1) reduce the unwholesome minds which have arisen and (2) reduce the unwholesome minds yet to arise and to (3) increase the wholesome minds which have arisen and to (4) increase the wholesome minds yet to arise.

Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda explains Right Effort in his book *What Buddhists Believe*:

“

*“Right Effort means that we cultivate a positive attitude and have enthusiasm and cheerful determination, whether in our career, in our study, or in our practice of the Dhamma. With such a sustained enthusiasm and cheerful determination, we can succeed in the things we do.” 20*

We decide to be a kinder person, we decide to relate with others we know and meet with generosity and lightness of heart. We choose to become friendlier, offer others more warmth, and more love. We consider others needs and offer our help when it would be beneficial. We have gratitude for the kindness of others.

It does not mean we become martyrs to everybody else's happiness or sacrifice our own welfare at the expense of others. That would be going too far the other way. We relate to our own needs through being kind to ourselves, rather than being greedy for ourselves. It means we are more balanced than being ego-centric, which is a biased and narrow view of

life. We look after ourselves and others; not ourselves without others, or ourselves at the expense of others.

In one shift we move from self-centredness toward kindness to each being we meet in our life. Other people have done this before us. So many people have made this kind of transformation in their lives. By doing it we are countering all our gross and some of our subtler defilement's and afflictions simultaneously at once.

Occasionally when we do experience strong negative minds, Buddhist practice teaches us skillful methods to weaken them. Whilst every defilement of the mind has specific antidotes which are particularly effective, the general method for escaping from the grip of strong unwholesome minds is described in the *Majjhima Nikaya*.

1. Change the object which your mind is focusing on. Particularly change to a subject which is wholesome or calming.
2. If when giving attention to a wholesome subject, unwholesome thoughts still arise, reflect upon the danger of these thoughts, that they are reprehensible and result in suffering.
3. If when reflecting on the danger of these thoughts there still arise unwholesome thoughts try not to be mindful of them, nor give them attention.
4. If when not giving attention to them, unwholesome thoughts still arise he (or she) should give attention to the removal of the source of these thoughts.

When students would express concern over difficulties they were having to our Teacher John Hughes, he would often reply with the question "How many flower offerings to Buddha have you done today, how many incense offerings?" Usually the student would reply; "none".

This gives us a hint that negative types of consciousness we experience won't initiate the basic remedial action to reduce the disturbances. A mind with anger for example, isn't inclined to weaken "itself". It is more interested in being angry. That is its nature.

This is the nature of all the defilement's. At this time, if we are passive, the negative mental state will continue to occupy centre stage. As is described in the first strategy listed above, we need to change our focus to something wholesome.

We should start by noting the mental states as it is. 'This is annoyance arising. It is not me, it is just a transient mental state. Annoyance is not beneficial and can lead to anger so I choose not to act on it'.

Firstly, we are just noting accurately what is arising. We are noting its nature and recollecting it is impermanent, and not what we are. We remind ourselves we do have a choice and we don't need to follow the unwholesome mental state. Like many things, if we practice this approach our ability to let go of the negatives will improve.

We need to deliberately identify an alternative to being annoyed. Decide to adopt a new attitude, do a fresh wholesome action such as offerings to Buddha, some Buddhist chanting, some activity we usually find pleasant, or enjoyable. Make a clear switch, like a train on a railway line reaching switching points and going in a new direction. The unwholesome mental state doesn't have any switching points. We have to build these points in our track as a sustained choice.

The Buddha's words from the *Dhammapada*:

“



*“Careful in speech, controlled in body,  
Aware of the workings of the mind;  
Patient under insult, never angry;  
This is the path of great progress.” 21*

If you think about it for a moment, if you want your mind to improve quickly, if you want to create many good causes for your own well-being and happiness then the quickest way to do it is to help others do that.

This is why many Buddhists decide to offer their help to a Buddhist temple. Buddhist temples exist for the purpose of helping and supporting people who are working to build their own happiness and well-being with the aim of attaining nibbana, the goal of the Buddhist Path. Therefore, by offering help and contributing to that activity, that process, this really becomes one of the fastest and most effective approaches for your own development.

Offering our help to Buddhist monks and nuns in the same way creates wonderful good causes for our own well-being because of their purity and attainment and, because they are dependent on the ongoing support of laypersons to continue their practice toward enlightenment as a monk or nun.



## Chapter 9 – Merit for The Path

The concept of merit is universally recognised by Buddhists and frequently found in Buddhist Teachings and writings of all Buddhist traditions.

Looking back to the Happiness Map near the front of this book you will see the words “Increasing Merit” on the right-hand side of the diagram above the Virtue Platform.

Put simply merit is our mental wealth, our mental power to bring us what we want in our life and in our experience and includes our power to do what we choose to do.

If we are materialistic we have a belief system that says our well-being is best achieved throughout our life through manipulating phenomena and conditions outside our self, in the external world. Hence, we relate to the idea of wealth as an external manifestation.

However, despite an abundance of good external conditions we may feel mentally poor. We may be depressed, we may worry a lot, we may experience a lot of anger, or frequent lack of energy. These are all symptoms of mental poverty.

The fortunate thing is it's a situation that can be rectified in a very direct and practical way.

The definition of merit from the Buddhist perspective can be understood as:

Merit is the accumulated kammic result of good deeds you do with your body, speech and mind.

1. Merit is analogous to money - it can be used to gain external wealth and internal development. It can be used for whatever purpose you wish.
2. Merit is the fuel of mental and physical health, wealth and prosperity.
3. Merit is what you generate by benefiting others.

The wonderful thing is there is no lack of others who you can help! You only need to look around and most likely you will see someone who you can offer your help to.

Merit is important to help us along our journey through life. It connects us with factors that are good and beneficial to our self and others and can improve the quality of our mind. While the material wealth a person gathers can be lost by theft, flood, fire, confiscation, etc., the benefit of merits follows us from life to life and cannot be lost, although it will be exhausted as we live if not replenished.

A person will experience happiness here and now as well as hereafter through the performance of good actions, accumulating positive merits in the present time.

Buddha advised that one should collect oceans of merits and virtues by performing deeds that counteract the negative kamma of having broken the five precepts in our past. Imagine you had a large glass container with a small cupful of black ink in it. If clear water is added to the container, then gradually the liquid turns from black to grey. If a lot of clear, pure water is added to the glass container, the effect of the black ink become less and less and eventually the whole container appears as if it's filled with clear water.

The analogy is that the black ink is negative kamma made in our past (this life or before) which causes us to suffer in many ways in our life. The clear water is poured into the container as we do more and more

meritorious acts in this life and a point is reached where, although the black ink (black kamma) is still in the container, its negative effect is very much diluted.

Buddha Dhamma practitioners devote much of their time and energy to performing many highly meritorious actions such as the ones below for example:

1. Supporting of life (the precept of no killing) - offering food to the Buddhist monks, nuns and laypeople, offering of robes to the Buddhist monastic community (Kathina Ceremony), offering of clean water, clean spaces, medicine, money, shelter, clean dishes to others.
2. Giving (the precept of no stealing) — giving our time, love, money, wealth, medicines and food to other, giving attention to others, and giving people the space that they need – allow them to come into your lane when driving, offer your parking space, allow people room, provide a nurturing space.
3. Building and maintaining harmonious relationships with others (the precept of no sexual misconduct) – actively maintaining wholesome and robust relationships, building harmony, such as attending family gatherings, bringing people together, doing things for others with no strings attached, respecting others relationships, being sincere in our actions.
4. Being truthful (the precept of no lying) – being accurate in one’s speech, accepting of other’s point of view, providing clear and concise information, shining light on the situation, seeing things as they really are, admitting mistakes to one’s self and others, being honest and courageous.
5. Being clear and attentive (the precept of no intoxicants that cloud the mind) – accepting situations that are painful and difficult with accountability, facing up to challenges, difficult

people and situations, being mindful in the present on the body speech and mind, practicing *samatha* and *vipassana* meditation.

The general advice from Buddhist teachers is to make more merit than we consume on a daily basis following these four simple rules:

- Make good kamma (merit) every day, practicing generosity and lending a helping hand.
- Keep five precepts.
- Offer your help in Buddha Dhamma activities anytime which is highly meritorious.
- Learn how to dedicate and share your merits.

In the *Dhammapada* it is written:

“

*'happiness is the outcome of the accumulation of merit.'***22**

Merit is a great facilitator; it opens the doors of opportunity everywhere. A meritorious person will succeed in whatever venture he or she puts their effort into. If the person wishes to do business, they will meet with the right contacts and friends. If the person wishes to be a scholar, they will be awarded with scholarships and supported by academic mentors. If the person wishes to progress in meditation they will meet with a skillful meditation teacher who guides him or her through their spiritual development. Their dreams will be realized through the grace of this treasury of merit. It is merit that enables a person to be reborn in the heavens, and provides them with the right conditions and support for their attainment of nibbana.

### ***Ten Ways of Making Merit***

The Buddha identified ten ways of making merit in ascending order of power.

These are given in Pali with English equivalents.

1. *Dana* – Charity, generosity.
2. *Sila* – Observing precepts, morality.
3. *Bhavana* – Meditation, mind cultivation
4. *Apacayana* – Respect for Dhamma teachers.
5. *Veyyavacca* – Giving a helping hand for others to perform virtuous deeds.
6. *Pattidana* – Sharing Merits.
7. *Pattanumodana* – Joyful acknowledgements in the sharing of merits.
8. *Dhammasavanna* – Listening to Dhamma teachings.
9. *Dhammadesana* – Teaching Dhamma to others.
10. *Dhitthujukamma* – Righting one's own wrong views.

Buddha Dhamma teachers constantly point to merit making opportunities and direct their students in merit making activities as the fuel for their learning and insight.

The Law of Cause and Effect (*kamma* and *vipaka*) determines that to attain learning and benefit in respect of anything, it is necessary to produce an accumulation of available wholesome action (Pali: *kusala kamma*).

This merit is the 'energy' of all realisations and the cause of continued wholesome conditions of practice. A corollary of this means, without sufficient available energy, the student's meditation will not produce

realisations, and further, the student will find it difficult to find conditions that will support his or her Dhamma practice.

Some basic conditions have to arise in order for beings to be able to practice the Buddha Dhamma. These are:

1. To be born into a Buddha-Sasana. (Buddha Teaching era)
2. To be born into a suitable body or form.
3. To be born healthy in order to live beyond a few years.
4. To have sufficient food, water, warmth and conditions to sustain this present life.
5. To meet the Buddha's Teaching of the Middle Way in a language that can be understood.
6. To be Teachable as regards the Middle Way.
7. To desire to learn the Middle Way.
8. To have no major obstruction to being trained in the Middle Way.
9. Over an extended period of time, to desire to practice and realise the Teachings of the Middle Way.
10. To have sufficient leisure time to be taught and to practice the Middle Way.

A practitioner's home altar should reflect his or her centre's or temple's altar for maximum benefit. If the temple attended is of the Mahayana tradition, the home altar should reflect this style of practice. Cleaning altars is an offering in itself. It is no different to the cleaning of floors in a monastery as monks and nuns do as part of their usual practice.

As the hard shell of a tortoise protects the soft body within, the soft Dhamma too, has to be protected by the physical structure of Temples: their upkeep, administration, financing and development. At the same time, the shell or structure is not an end itself, but exists for the benefit of Dhamma practitioners through supporting the preservation and proliferation of the Noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha. A



centre with a sound structure will not become a dead institution and will not become an empty shell devoid of the body of living Dhamma.

Buddhist temples exist for learning, practicing and realizing the Dhamma.



## Chapter 10 – Refuge

The Buddhist texts describe two vast lengths of time or time periods during which all beings have existed in Samsara in one birth or another. One of these time periods is called a world cycle and the second is called an incalculable period.

An incalculable period is described as being a time period almost impossible to fathom. The Buddha did give a simile by which we could fathom a world cycle.

The Buddha Said,

“

*"Suppose, O monks, that there was a huge rock of one solid mass with no cracks or crevices that was one yojana (7 - 14 miles) long, one yojana wide and one yojana high, and suppose that every one hundred years a man was to come and rub this rock with a silk shawl, then that huge rock would wear off before one world cycle. Of such world cycles many have passed away. Many hundreds, many thousands, many hundreds of thousands." 23*

The Buddha's account of his own efforts and cultivation to become a Buddha stretched back through vast, immense time scales that included many thousands of world cycles and 20 incalculable periods.

It is a remarkable and astonishing thing that events in the life of the being who was practicing to become Buddha Gotama a world cycle ago,

or ten or a hundred world cycles ago have brought about a result here and right now for us as we read this information.

What that being did those eons ago has become part of our life today. In this sense the Buddha was practicing for you and me. He was practicing to give you and I an opportunity, an option, a chance, a possibility to see the Dhamma for our self.

He was building a path out of Samsara for us to stumble across in our meandering from life to death with the wish that we would find it and use it to help our self, or to save our self. The Bodhisattva worked on through time for that possibility for us.

Each person can then decide for themselves if the Buddhist Path has meaning for them. Even though his Teachings are complete and there are beings in the world who have the complete realisation of these teachings I am still too clouded to see what is what. So, I trust the Buddha. He is my Teacher. I have confidence in his vision and insight and what he showed to the world. I have no doubt.

The Buddha recommends and encourages students to work using their own diligence and intelligence, life force and resources for enlightenment. So I do that. I do what the Buddha wants. This is my refuge in the Buddha.

I understand I don't know how to get out of the suffering. If I did know I would have done it a long time ago. I want happiness and yet I make suffering. I can make suffering, I can make Samsara, I can make future births. So many things I can do, but to cease craving, to become fully enlightened, I need the Buddha.

I take refuge in Buddha Dhamma and Sangha to become fully enlightened for myself and others. So that the sentient beings with

whom I have some kammic connection can also find and realise the Buddha Path.

Buddhists don't worship Buddha, or any other being. We have respect for Buddha. We respect the qualities of the Buddha and what he did in his life. We identify with the will of the Prince Siddhartha who dedicated his life to finding out about the truth of life. We identify with the journey he undertook which resulted in him becoming awakened or enlightened.

We are all on a journey in our lives, perhaps many journeys within one life. For Buddhists having refuge in the Buddha is a statement that we want our personal journey in life to be that of becoming awakened. That we recognise our life is an opportunity to overcome suffering for ourselves completely and perhaps, help others to do the same.

Refuge in the Buddha is like the compass bearing we have set for ourselves in life. We choose to journey towards enlightenment because for us we are using our life for something of great value and meaning.

Without having Buddha Refuge the destination of our journey will end up being completely different. As we practice we create so many good kammic causes for our future. Just like we have a choice in life to spend our money to buy anything we want, so too we can spend these good kammic causes or merit we have made to get whatever we want.

It is our refuge in Buddha that sets the direction these good causes will take us. Taking refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha makes many kammic connections to Buddha Dhamma so that we can meet it again and again in the future, until we complete the Buddhist Path.

Without that refuge our merit could take us to a destination such as a birth in a high heaven with no knowledge of the Buddha Path, or perhaps many human lives of great wealth and comfort. We can all

appreciate such lives could be wonderful to experience but there comes a day when that good kamma has been used up, and as our merit bank account eventually runs dry we will have nothing whatever to show for our past efforts. Instead we decide to dedicate much of our merit to help ourselves and others progress on the Buddhist Path.

If we examine the word refuge we see it has many meanings. One meaning of refuge is something we trust in or rely on for our true safety and well-being. Taking refuge in Buddha Dhamma and Sangha is in stark contrast to taking refuge in other things we see or experience in our world.

Can we rely on money for our happiness and well-being? Can we rely on our marriage, our friends, our family, our jobs? These things are important, but how long does their protection really last for? From a Buddhist viewpoint they only last as long as the kammic causes we have made for each of them. It is therefore different for each person. Even if we have many good kammic causes, all the good conditions we experience throughout our life are swept away by our death.

What about our internal world? How reliable a refuge are our feelings, our bodies, our thoughts as the basis of our sustained security and well-being? Each of these is rapidly changing. One minute we have pleasant feelings, the next unpleasant feelings. One Buddhist Teacher advised that "feelings have an IQ of zero". We must examine thoroughly if our feelings can be relied upon.

Our thoughts are similar. We can't say what thoughts we will be experiencing in two minutes from now. We worry about things that are often unimportant, we get annoyed about things that are often fleeting and in the larger scheme of things inconsequential. Ideas and beliefs we trusted in when we were younger, we reject as we get older. Can the shifting sands of our views and opinions be relied upon?

Finally, our body has a use by date which could be tomorrow, or it could be forty years. We don't know.

Taking Refuge in Buddha is taking refuge in the Path to reality, rather than the world.

Taking Refuge in the Dhamma is taking refuge in Right Understanding about the world and seizing this opportunity to secure our own rescue, and finally our own salvation.

Taking Refuge in the Sangha is taking refuge in those who know reality as it really is.

Buddha refuge sets us in the right direction to nibbana. It functions like a rudder on a boat, it sets the right direction. Without Buddha refuge we cannot have confidence that we will access nibbana. We may get to some form of peace and happiness, but it will not be nibbana, it will not be everlasting. Buddha refuge clicks us into the Buddha Sasana, which is this Buddha Teaching age.

So, what does Buddha Refuge mean?

Does it mean bowing down to a Buddha image or to an altar? No, it means protecting ourselves from doing harmful actions.

The Dhamma Chakra, or Dhamma Wheel used by many Buddhist temples and centres, is a representation of Buddha Refuge.

The hub, the centre represents the Buddha, who comes into the world and accesses the Dhamma and teaches it. The eight spokes of the wheel represent the Eight-fold Path, the teachings that once applied have brought others to know what the Buddha found out.

The rim of the wheel represents the beings in the world that practice the Dhamma - and this is what keeps the Dhamma in the world. The community of monks, nuns and laypersons who practice, these are called the Sangha.

The Dhamma Chakra also represents the fact that once the Dhamma teachings are in the world, one person, by teaching another, sets off the process of awakening that is unstoppable. The first teaching given by the Buddha after his awakening is called the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, this is referred to as the first turning of the wheel of Dhamma. It is the first time the Buddha taught the Dhamma and another person understood it.

So we take refuge in the Triple Gem or the three jewels. The Buddha Jewel, the Dhamma Jewel and the Sangha Jewel.

The Buddha Jewel is the fact that Buddha exists. It is referred to as a jewel because it is something precious, not easily found, rare. To be like the Buddha is what we have been looking for. A state we can be completely happy and peaceful forever, and never loose.

The Dhamma jewel is called a jewel because the teachings given by the Buddha are rare to find. They are only available during a Buddha Sasana. This age begins when a Buddha sets the 'Wheel of Dhamma' in motion by giving the first teaching that awakens another being. The Buddha Sasana is also impermanent – it lasts a specific time. This Buddha Sasana lasts 5,000 years. The Buddha predicted it to end in about 2,400 years from now. The Dhamma or Teachings are precious because they are the teachings that will wake us to develop compassion and insight wisdom that will eventually bring us to nibbana.

The Sangha Jewel is called a jewel because it is precious and rare to find. A community of monks and nuns and laypersons who follow the Buddha's teachings can only exist during a Buddha Sasana or Buddha



Teaching era. The beings who are following the teachings can be seen to develop compassion and insight wisdom and are on their way to nibbana and to becoming a Buddha.

Finally, having Buddha refuge, or going for Buddha refuge or taking Buddha refuge means that we have come to see that this is the only wise thing to do – test out the Buddha Path, so we can see directly for ourself.

What does it mean to test out the Buddha Path?

To test out the Buddha Path means that we take the position “I will do no actions with my body, speech or mind that will cause harm to myself or others” and “I will make the causes necessary to become awakened”. There is no-one keeping check on you, it is a resolution that you make to yourself. There is no-one keeping score for you.

Having Buddha Refuge means that you train yourself to become harmless (*ahimsa* in Pali), meaning not harming self or others.

How do you know what is harmful? The Buddha's teachings have lists of wrong actions to be avoided.

How do you know what actions to do to become awakened? The Buddha's teachings provide lists known as the Eightfold Noble Path, the Ten Perfections.

This is the promise of Buddha Dhamma, the Buddha's Teachings. They promise that if you make the right causes you will start to wake up. You will start to see for yourself. You will develop insight wisdom. You will no longer be duped by your own perceptions and opinions; you will no longer be duped by your kammic disposition.

## BUDDHA SARANAM GACCHAMI

### I GO TO THE BUDDHA FOR REFUGE

This means that you have decided to follow the Buddha, to become like Buddha. It does not mean that you worship the Buddha – it means that you hold the Buddha in highest respect, and you have decided to follow him to be like him. You want to find out the truth about the nature of all things just as he did, and you will not stop until you find this truth for yourself.

## DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

### I GO TO THE DHAMMA FOR REFUGE

You have decided to go for the truth – the Dhamma – your goal is now to reach nibbana. You have heard that the Buddha's teaching can take you to nibbana. You will follow the teachings until you experience nibbana. You will maintain the Right View – from the law of kamma arises our reality, and because of this you know that you can change to perfect the qualities that will bring you to nibbana.

## SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

### I GO TO THE SANGHA FOR REFUGE

You recognise that the Sangha, the Buddha's community of monks and nuns was established by the Buddha, has come from the Buddha himself. The Sangha are true holders of the Dhamma in our world today and provide authentic Dhamma from their own direct experience.

You can ask for guidance from the Sangha, you can request their help to come to the right view, right understanding. You can observe that the

Sangha have committed themselves to learning and upholding the Dhamma and have given up all kinds of worldly life.

You will respect other persons who are following the Dhamma. You will seek out and share your knowledge's and help persons who are doing the same as you. You will put the Buddhas teachings into practice every day, you will live the teachings.

Buddha refuge means protection, just as the word refuge itself means that which affords protection or shelter.

Protection from what? Protection from our own ignorance and harmful actions.

Buddha refuge stops us doing the wrong actions; those actions that will result in harm to self or others, now or in the future. Having refuge protects us because we are saying that we hold the truth above everything else, the law of kamma and the way out of suffering, the practice to nibbana.

When someone is yelling at you – you take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha instead of yelling back. You take refuge in the teachings regarding harmless speech which means you choose to not yell back. This is how your refuge protects you. It gives you a wholesome response to follow. You make a positive affirmation when you go to Buddha refuge.

It does not mean to become a martyr. You practice not going to anger or hate when others are not being kind. You understand that it is your kamma. However, if they continue, you must get out of the way.

Sometimes the kamma is too strong. If you see a steam roller coming down the road, you don't stand there and say 'oh well, it's my kamma',

you jump out of the way onto the footpath. If people continue harming you and you are trying everything you can, get out of the way, practice avoidance of the topic or situation. It is not only the harm to yourself, but it protects person from continuing to do harm to you. They are making unwholesome kamma for themselves.

Buddha refuge protects you because it means you remember the law of kamma, that whatever I experience is the result of my past actions. I am inheriting the causes I have made in the past. My kamma is forcing me to see an unpleasant situation. If you can hold this thought in your mind instead of producing hate or jealousy or envy or anger then you are not making more negative kamma. You are sowing the seeds of wisdom in your kammic stream, so that when a similar situation occurs in the future, the seeds of wisdom that you sowed earlier will arise as well, and thus protect you from making negative kamma (actions) by reacting back in a negative way.

Buddha Dhamma means 'truth' or 'teachings' as taught by the Buddha. Buddha Refuge or Buddha Dhamma refuge can be literally translated as "the teachings or truth that bring or provide protection or shelter."

Buddha refuge means that we will stop defilement's and increase wholesomeness in our mind. It is our mind action that produces the strongest kamma.

*I am the Owner of my kamma*

*heir to my kamma*

*born of my kamma*

*related to my kamma*

*live with my kamma*

*whatever kamma I shall do, whether good or evil, it will be inherited.*

### ***Offerings on a Buddhist Altar***

What is the relationship between refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and making offerings on a Buddhist altar?

Many people who don't think of themselves as at all religious are attracted to Buddhism. Generally, their interest extends to all those things they can make sense of through analysis and reason. But there are many things in Buddhism that don't lend themselves to being considered merely as a matter of common sense, philosophy or reason.

Altars and offerings are a good example of this. What would we make of a Buddhist altar from the rationalist viewpoint? From this perspective we may regard it as purely an object of faith, or perhaps as a religious symbol that has value to people who see the Buddha as a being they wish to worship.

But Buddhism teaches us to not worship the Buddha, not to worship any god or being who we may consider to be superior to ourselves. So, what is going on when we see people bowing down before a Buddhist altar, or placing offerings of flowers, light and incense in front of a Buddha image?

Buddha Dhamma altars provide a student with an excellent opportunity to develop their generosity. For many centuries Buddha Dhamma practitioners have understood the virtue in offering flowers, water and light to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, family and friends.

Offerings on altars represent the four great elements of earth, water, fire and air. The earth element is represented by the offering of beautiful and abundant flowers, the water with bowls of clean, pure water, the fire by candles and the air element is represented with the offering of incense. As time passes, the flowers wilt, the water evaporates, the

candles die out and the incense burns away reminding the student of the impermanent nature of phenomena.

It is important to make offerings with the right intention. A student must remind himself that the purpose of the offering is to wake up for the sake of self and others. This means recollecting the five precepts, taking refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and being in the present with our mind inside our body. These actions will increase the mind's purity and hence, the power of the offering.

The Buddha taught that due to cause and effect there are ten blessings arising from the offering of flowers for example. These are:

1. Long Life
2. Good Health
3. Strength
4. Beauty
5. Wisdom
6. Ease along the Buddha Dhamma Path
7. Being born in beautiful environments
8. Born with good skin, hair and beautiful to look at
9. Always having a sweet-smelling body
10. Pleasant relationships with friends

There is also the symbolic meaning of the Buddhist altar which is to remind us of our own deepest potential to become awakened. The example of the Buddha's life proved that human beings can become enlightened and the image of the Buddha reflects back to us what is possible for us in our own life. It is a touchstone to say "hey, don't forget what you are doing, don't get too caught up in life's distractions, dead ends and pastimes".

We make an offering on our altar to say "this is where my heart is, this is the inner refuge I rely on, I wish to remember that always".

After having practiced Buddhism for some time there is an experiential confirmation that making offerings on a Buddhist altar actually helps. Somehow our mind is affected in a unique way by this simple act. We experience that it is beneficial, it cleans and quietens our mind and it can bring us to an awareness where we feel connected to something beyond our own being.

It's called a wordless nature. It's not a mystery, or a belief or superstition. It's just experiential learning and understanding that is not and cannot be arrived at through someone else's words.

How important is it to developing and improving our mind and making the right causes and conditions to wake ourselves up? We can reflect that in every active Buddhist temple, every shrine room, and meditation hall in the world we can be fairly confident that at the centre of the room, in the most prominent position, will be a Buddha image placed on an altar of some sort.

In most cases there will be fresh offerings placed on these altars every day, and in some cases the act of offering will be an essential part of that day's formal practice for their Sangha community.





## Chapter 11 – Truthfulness

In *Heart of a Buddha* it is written:

“

*The gift of Truth overcomes all gifts.*

*The joy of Truth overcomes all pleasures.*

*The taste of Truth overcomes all sweetness.*

*The loss of desire overcomes all sorrows. 24*

When we examine the subject of truth as a Buddhist we will see that it is at the core of everything we call Buddhism and particularly the life and teachings of the founder of our religion, the Buddha.

What did the Prince renounce the world and leave his royal lifestyle to search for? What did the Bodhisattva find out sitting under the Bodhi tree on the night of his enlightenment? What did he teach to his disciples for the following years of his life which was his gift to the world? What is our motive for practicing Buddhism 2,500 years later?

Therefore, we need to approach truth and truthfulness with care and understanding in order to penetrate into the real meaning of the Buddha's teaching. We have to set ourselves up through our Buddhist practice to know the way things really are directly for ourselves.

Many people have in the past sought the truth. It is what they have sought the truth about, and how they have gone about finding it that has determined the knowledge or learning they gained from their quest. Buddha sought the truth about why sentient beings suffer and whether

there is there a way to escape or avoid the sufferings that are experienced in life.

In Buddhism we divide knowledge into two categories. The first we call worldly knowledge (*lokiya* in Pali) which is knowledge about worldly matters such as the learning we do at school or the learning done in science and business - all the knowledge to do with worldly events and activities. The second category we call supra-mundane wisdom (*lokuttara* in Pali) which is knowledge about the Path leading to liberation including the Four Noble Truths, the Enlightenment Factors, the Ten Perfections and the unconditioned mind, nibbana or nirvana in Sanskrit.

In Buddhism we value both types of knowledge and learning as both are needed for the basis of being able to live skillfully in the world, and to use our precious opportunity of human rebirth to abandon the causes of our sufferings. So how do we set ourselves up to know the truth about things, or in other words, how do we create the right causes and mental conditions where we see things clearly as they really are automatically as a result?

Practicing truthfulness in our thoughts, words and deeds clearly leads us to the right outcomes. Keeping the precept of refraining from lying is fundamental to learning and developing good understanding.

The act of lying is an act of distorting the truth or distorting the reality in a way which suits the person lying. The act of distorting the truth creates kamma for the person lying so that in the future they will find it more difficult to receive the truth in their own minds.

Either people lie to them, or they get poor information about things they wish to know, or if they are told the correct information they will tend to not believe it, discount it or mistake what they heard. Even in a worldly sense it is important to find out the truth about things.

It is a common occurrence to find that a person has believed you said something; but it wasn't what you actually said. Quite frequently we find out we have acted on some incorrect information about something and so we have wasted a lot of time, or bought something we didn't need, or went somewhere to meet someone and got the time or place wrong. And so on. It happens to us regularly.

These examples of mis-information we get in our minds are caused by giving out mis-information or lying to others in the past.

The *Chu Fa Chi Yao Sutra* says that:

“

*"Lying obscures the truth and carries us farther and farther away from it. Lying creates innumerable obstacles to finding the way to liberation."*

25

Why does one lie?

There are many reasons why we may have this tendency towards unskillful speech. It could be just lack of attentiveness and lack of intention to keep the precept to refrain from lying. We have kammic causes from our past of not practicing to refrain from lying, so there is a latent tendency to do it. We may have the habit from our childhood so again we have a disposition to continue the habit. We can override this kamma by applying mindfulness of our present action and speech to refrain from that kamma and not lie.

Lying is often done in an attempt to try get around the eight worldly conditions. That is lying to avoid being blamed for something, or to court

praise. Lying done for some apparent gain, and then lies to ward off some perceived loss. The same goes for the pairs of honour and dishonor, and happiness and unhappiness.

If we lie seeking some worldly benefit, unknown to the mind that lies, we are moving further and further away from many things which we really need for our well-being and happiness, such as being able to understand things clearly and not being confused, getting accurate information, finding out important information in a timely manner, and ease of learning on the Buddha Dhamma Path.

In the *Upasakashila Sutra* it says that

“

*"lying leads to poor speaking abilities."*<sup>26</sup>

Lying leads to not being believed or trusted, not only because people found out a person lied in the past, but because of the working of kamma from earlier times. Some persons' words are listened to attentively with respect, others are not.

In Venerable Narada Thera's *The Buddha and His Teachings* it is written:

“

*"{A Bodhisattva} ...does not use flattery to win the hearts of others, does not exalt himself to win their admiration, does not hide his defects or vainly exhibit his virtues. The praiseworthy he praises without*

*malice, the blameworthy he blames judiciously, not with contempt but out of compassion. Even the truth he does not always utter. Should such utterance not be conducive to the good and happiness of others, then he remains silent. If any truth seems beneficial to others, he utters it, however detrimental to himself it may be. And he honours the word of others as he honours his own. 27*

In *Heart of a Buddha* it is written:

“

*If you know anything that is hurtful and untrue, do not say it.*

*If you know anything that is helpful but untrue, do not say it.*

*If you know anything that is hurtful but true, do not say it.*

*If you know anything that is helpful and true, find the right time. 28*

So, let us consider some of the subtler ways we may be lying to ourselves and others without realizing it.

### **Globalizing**

Examples of this often involve words like “always” and “everything”. You can hear them in statements like: “You always criticize me” or “They always stuff things up”.

Angry minds tend to use statements like this rather than truthful statements because the logic system of anger is often based on over reaction to events and subsequently blowing things way out of proportion.

It may seem more justified to be angry with someone who is “always criticizing me” but no one criticizes another person twenty-four hours a day.

There are many statements we use like this every day in common parlance which, when considered, turn out to be untrue.

Even when statements are not exaggerations but just a conviction a person is holding still we need to be careful. There is a big difference between saying, for example, “Ford cars are better than Toyota cars” rather than saying “I believe Ford cars are better than Toyota cars”. The difference is in the second case the words used are safeguarding the truth.

The first statement could be wrong, depending on what criteria are used to judge what makes a car better. It may seem inconsequential however attention to truthfulness builds the right kamma and conditions to understand the truth about things.

### ***Awfulizing***

Examples of this are when we use emotive words such as awful, terrible, horrible and shocking to express how we feel about minor things which have happened. “You should have seen the awful mess she left in the kitchen for me to clean up”. “He's got this shocking habit of leaving wet towels on the bathroom floor.”

Often this type of statement is said by a person is trying to make a case for themselves or a case against another person and such emotive words are used to boost the grounds for complaint against the other person.

Words have a clearly defined meaning which can be used as an accurate representation of what has happened, or what you wish to communicate. As we move further and further away from the real dictionary meaning of words in our daily usage of them we are creating the kamma of distorting what really happened by our unskillful use and choice of inappropriate words.

Words are building blocks of our communication and understanding so it is better to have a big vocabulary and respect for the actual meaning of words to be able to describe and explain things clearly and truthfully.

### ***Generalizing***

"Politicians are only looking after themselves"

"The banks are ripping everyone off".

These statements are 100% all or nothing comments about something, and they are common enough, but they are seldom accurate or truthful.

### ***Slandering and "Playing Blemish"***

Slandering others comes from the root of hate or greed. Slandering another person often comes from the motive of making ourselves look good, or to produce some gain for ourselves at the slandered persons expense. Its objective is to denigrate another person, put them down and by comparison, because we have identified their fault, we must be superior to them.

Slandering is also used by persons to attack things they don't like personally, without accounting for whether there is any truth in the

statements being made. For example, people regularly slander politicians as a group regardless of the tireless work they perform in governing the country and regardless that some politicians are intelligent, sincere and genuine persons.

The slander concentrates on a few aspects of behaviour which we may find disagreeable and ignores all other activities and benefits which may be associated with the object of the slander. Sure, there are things which we can point to regarding the faults of others, but slander is not a balanced view. It is lopsided and selfishly motivated.

Playing "blemish" is the idle behaviour of finding fault with things or persons and using that as the basis of conversations with others. Look carefully at your conversations to see how frequently the wish to make conversation results in finding common ground with the other person in a "game" of blemish.

### ***Hype***

This is where a person is acting with excessive buzz or noise on their minds. These types of minds tend to sensationalize things or hype them up and that is where truth gets abandoned in favour of more buzz.

### ***Fantasizing***

Fantasizing happens when our minds lose contact with the present moment. Instead of being mindful of what is happening moment by moment, our minds play with thoughts of the past or future.

If we examine our fantasizing often the ego is at play in a scenario where its wishes come true. It wins every argument it has, it proves itself



to be right over and over again, it can get anything it wants. The other persons in the fantasy are just objects for the ego to fulfill its one-sided self-cherishing.

It is only through practicing mindfulness of the present that we will be able to develop minds which can wake us up from our dreams.

### **Flattery**

Master Hsing Yun writes:

“

*“A common form of duplicity is flattery. Flattery is always engaged in for ulterior reasons. Flattery is a form of trickery used to get something to do something or give something they would not otherwise do or give. Whenever we smile falsely or use words to create false feelings among people, we are guilty of an offense against truth. Actions like these damage the natural trust that should prevail among groups of people.”*

**29**

Again, from Master Hsing Yun

“

*“The importance of speech cannot be overemphasized. People create most of their bad karma through speech.*

*Speech is the single most powerful means by which we interact with other people. Our choice of words, our tone of voice, even our selection of subject matter can have the profoundest influence on other people. Intemperate or ill-considered speech often leads to misunderstanding, suspicion, and anger”.30*

From Venerable Narada Thera we read:

“

*“Truthfulness or Sacca is the seventh Perfection. By Sacca is here meant the fulfillment of one’s promise. This is one of the salient characteristics of a Bodhisattva, for he is no breaker of his word. He acts as he speaks, he speaks as he acts”. (yathāvādītath akārīyathākāri tathāvādi).*

*He makes truth his guide, and holds it his bounden duty to keep his word. He ponders well before he makes his promise, but once made the promise is fulfilled at any cost, even that of his life”. 31*

From Acariya Dhammapala's *Commentary to the Cariyapitaka*

“

*“One devoted to truth secures the foundation of all noble qualities. With truthfulness as the foundation, he is capable of purifying and fulfilling all the requisites of enlightenment. Not deceived about the true nature of*

*phenomena, he performs the functions of all the requisites of enlightenment and completes the practice of the Bodhisattva path". 32*



## Chapter 12 – Patience

The *Wikipedia's Online Dictionary* says:

“

*“Patience is the ability to endure waiting, delay, or provocation without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties”.*

If we consider the word 'patience' it may bring the memory of some time in our life when we had to endure some difficulty which was beyond our control. At that time, it may have seemed like an internal battle of making a sustained effort and struggling to withstand the burden of the difficulty.

Maybe that was all we could do at the time to deal with the problem we were facing however, whilst we did succeed in persevering, the thing we were practicing then, from a Buddhist point of view, was not true patience. What we had which made the endurance so difficult was a lack of patience.

True patience from a Buddhist point of view is not just will power or determination to not give up. Probably these attitudes could better be termed endurance or determination. True patience is a peaceful, unshakable mental state which abides in understanding about the nature of the difficulties and unpleasant circumstances which are happening. Patience has knowledge that the unpleasant events which are arising for ourselves or others, are arising from the wrong causes

we made in the past, or not enough of the right causes made by us in the past.

Master Hsing Yun writes:

“

*“True patience requires no energy. If you have to expend energy to remain patient you can be sure your patience will not last. Patience is found in resting in the spaces between thoughts. Patience is calm and non-judgmental. It is humble and wise in that it does not expect to be first or to have everything go its own way all of the time. 33*

Once real patience has been developed it is there in our minds all the time. Those beings who have developed this type of patience live in patience every moment. It is operating even when they are doing things they like to do. It makes those things all the more pleasant and almost effortless.

Master Hsing Yun also quotes the *Upasakashila Sutra*:

“

*“There are two kinds of patience: the patience of this world and the patience which transcends this world. In the patience of this world, we learn to endure hunger, thirst, heat, cold, suffering, and joy.*

*In the patience which transcends this world we learn to be steady in belief, wisdom, generosity, compassion and open-mindedness. We learn to be steadfast in our loyalty to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and*

*we learn to endure insults, beatings, and taunting, evil plots against us, greed, anger, ignorance and all the other vile and humiliating things of this world. We learn to endure the unendurable and to accomplish the impossible. This is what is known as the patience which transcends this world” 34*

Patience is being realistic. It is seeing the world with some wisdom rather than reacting or becoming angry because the world does not conform to what we want at that moment. Patience does not have the same demands or expectations that the ego has, that I “should” be treated with fairness or kindness, or that people “should” leave me alone when I want, and that people “should not” criticize me, and so on.

How we are treated is due to our kamma. The ideal we should all be treated equally is a worthy social aim however, in reality, we are each treated uniquely. We are treated according to the kammic causes we made in the past.

If we don't have patience we get upset when we are insulted for example, because our ego belief is that it should not have happened to us. We should not be treated like that. Then we have to battle with ourselves to restrain our anger and resentment.

Patience arises from the wisdom which knows these conditions are driven by our past kamma and are each impermanent. They have no substantial base in themselves, except that they ripen and then pass away from the past causes or lack of the particular causes.

Patience is above the eight worldly conditions which are:

- Praise and blame
- Honour (respect) and dishonour

- Gain and loss
- Happiness and unhappiness

Even intellectually we can begin to learn this new view of patience. What we want is freedom from something, freedom from some unpleasant circumstance, freedom from some pain we are experiencing, freedom from not having what is needed. Patience knows we want to be free of this unpleasant condition, but it realistically accepts we have to work towards that position.

We have to make the right causes first. We accept that at the moment there is pain, at the moment we have to do the work. We are happy to do the work knowing that it is to some worthwhile purpose - so therefore we don't get upset or angry.

If we find in our life there is an enduring difficulty we need to identify what causes and actions need to be done to improve our circumstance. We write a plan of actions which are needed to overcome the problem. If we have confidence we have identified the right causes and actions then we just get on with it. We know how to solve the problem so we accept the current unsatisfactoriness, knowing that we have addressed it and are doing the actions to fix it. Therefore, we can be positive towards our circumstances. If we want to improve faster – we increase the rate of making the right causes to improve.

Master Hsing Yun has written the four benefits of patience, which summarized are:

1. *Patience dissipates anger, not only in your own mind, but also in the minds of those around you. "Without fuel, anger cannot burn for long."*



2. *Patience is a reliable refuge. Patience can be relied upon in all manner of difficult situations and can withstand even the most intense sufferings.*
3. *Patience is the source of great virtue. Although invisible to others, the practice of patience leads to many good qualities such as removing all anger and increasing wisdom.*
4. *Patience is the source, or cause, of Bodhi wisdom. The Buddha said, "Due to the practice of patience, I have attained Buddhahood and am revered by all worlds. Freely I travel throughout the three realms."*

Patience comes from living in the present.

In the *Bodhicaryavatara* (Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life) Shantideva says:

“

*“There is nothing which remains difficult if it is practiced. So, through practice with minor discomforts, even major discomfort becomes bearable. The irritation of bugs, gnats, and mosquitoes, of hunger and thirst, and suffering such as an enormous itch: why do you not see them as insignificant? Cold, heat, rain and wind, journeying and sickness, imprisonment and beatings: one should not be too squeamish about them. Otherwise the distress becomes worse”. 35*

Some things require many years' practice. If we have an unrealistic expectation we will stop before we get something finished. Just like chopping down a tree, if we think the tree should fall each time we chop it then we are unrealistic. We keep chopping maybe many times, and

one day we will chop once and the whole tree will fall. Was the last chop the only successful one?

Building a new wholesome mind is like that. When we assemble enough of the right causes then one day we find we have a new mind. Our new mind sees the world slightly differently to our old view, closer to how the Buddha described the world really is. We won't get the new mind if we only have created half of the causes needed.

Sometimes we may incline to project ourselves as a martyr when we experience suffering however this is not a wholesome attitude and will not build mental strength to deal with the many vicissitudes we will face in our life.

Wholesome attitudes for accepting suffering are:

1. The recollection that suffering can remove or reduce our negative kamma.
2. The recollection that we can use the adversity as an opportunity to train ourselves and develop mental strength to endure without giving up our wholesome activity.
3. That we can recognise the unsatisfactoriness of samsara and the need to continue developing our virtue and compassion for others who suffer.
4. That suffering can best be overcome through our Buddhist practice and that ultimately it is the reason for seeking enlightenment and helping others to seek enlightenment.

From Patrul Rinpoche's commentary to the *Bodhicaryavatara* on the *Paramita* of Patience we read:

“

*“The patience of disregarding the harm done to us by others can be cultivated for the following three reasons:*

*(i) Cultivate patience by seeing those who harm you as objects for compassion. If you think how deluded sentient beings will inflict harm even on themselves through the influence of their mental afflictions, is it any wonder they do so to others?*

*(ii) Cultivate patience by putting all the blame on yourself. Consider how all the harm that is done to you now must come from your own past karma and how you conduct yourself in the immediate situation.*

*(iii) Cultivate patience by thinking that it is only with the help of your enemies that you can gain the merit of practicing patience, which in turn becomes a support for Bodhisattva activity. Consider your enemies as friends who actually bring you benefit” 36*

Finally, you may recognise that as we do our practice of meditation on the breath we can develop causes to have the mind of patience ourselves in the future.

Alan Watts once said:

“

*“Muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone.”*

If we do not disturb our own mind gradually the mud will begin to settle. As we meditate we are training ourselves to accept discomfort of body and mind, training our minds to not stir up our thoughts but rather let them quieten, training to not react to the things we notice but to let them go, training ourselves in patience.

*The Sutra in Forty-Two Sections* says:

“

*'Where does the greatest power lie?*

*It lies in patience under insult.*

*Those who are patient do not feel resentment  
and thus they are honoured by all. 37*

## Chapter 13 – Determination

If you have had the opportunity of meeting very bright Buddhist practitioners you will recognise they certainly have a great sense of urgency. They wish to accomplish a lot in the time they have available. Usually what they are accomplishing through their repeated effort and skill is directed towards helping others.

The beings who have done the most work on themselves don't relax in their merits, they know directly how urgent it is to practice and to help others learn and practice.

Master Hsing Yun from Taiwan, who founded Fo Guang Shan Monastery and about 200 other temples around the world including Nan Tien Temple in Wollongong, Australia wrote he has done the equivalent of three hundred years of Buddhist practice in this present life.

We have a sense of urgency because we clearly recognise what has to be done to look after ourselves and our future while we have the opportunity and capacity to do something about it. This is the view of a clear mind, this is Buddha Dhamma culture.

The eighth of the Ten Perfections is the Perfection of Determination, or *aditthana parami* in Pali.

Determination or resolve is to do with how much power and persistence our mind has to train itself in doing the good things and to reduce doing the not good things. Until we have developed determination and many other good mental qualities our ability to drop our habitual ways of acting and follow the Buddhas' instructions is quite limited. Until our minds are well trained we will always find there are plenty of rational

alibis and reasons for not practicing or not making a wholehearted effort in our practice.

For example, in the practice of generosity, we may be OK at responding to reasonable requests to help out - provided we are given plenty of notice, and what is being asked is not too inconvenient. However, step outside what we think is a reasonable request made of us and all of a sudden there is a barrage of 'good' reasons or reluctance from our side why we should decline to provide our help. Our alibis are well summed up in the following phrase:

*"It's too hot;  
too cold;  
too late;  
too soon".*

Probably you have to experience this for yourself quite a few times to recognise the pervasiveness of limitations to practicing generosity and the will to give of yourself. At the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia, our Teacher John Hughes, helped his students overcome these weaknesses in their effort and determination by making frequent and demanding requests of us which were designed to gradually extend the capacity of the students who really wanted to progress.

It was not unusual for John to ask a person to work until three or four in the morning to get something done for the next morning. People sometimes went to him complaining their workload was too much and they would walk out an hour later having agreed to take on extra responsibilities. Students would work long hours during the day and just when they were about to leave for home for a "deserved" rest the Teacher would say "have you got a moment?" Often he would then start explaining a new task or tasks or even a major event which needed to be organised.

Often the difficulty experienced for those students was not doing the extra task requested of them but of going against their kammic and habitual ego views of what was a "reasonable" request or what their preferred time to leave for home was. Yet going against their own stinginess was the very thing that was of benefit to them.

The Teacher could get his students to agree to take on many times more than their own generosity with conditions and limitations attached would have allowed them to do.

And this is what has to happen if we wish to attain and realise the higher levels of Dhamma knowledge's and skills this life. How do we build stronger generosity if we repeat our existing version of generosity? How do we increase our capacity if we resist extending ourselves by doing more?

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*"The perfection of determination should be viewed thus: "Without firmly undertaking the practice of giving (and the other parami's), maintaining an unshakable determination in the encounter with their opposites, and practicing them with consistency and vigour, the bases of enlightenment - ie: the requisites of giving, etc., - do not arise." 38*

So what can we use as a lever to ensure we continue to improve ourselves?

First, you have to decide that's for you. Truthfully, if you want to really make a big difference to your life and your mind, it needs to be or become your life's number one mission. Otherwise your ego will not accept the price of going against its preferences and likes and dislikes.

Of all the options available in this world, from all the viewpoints you can see, over and above everything else, you want to make yourself better, brighter and happier this life through the cultivation of wisdom.

You recognise the truth of what the Buddha taught. You understand that the suffering in life has a cause which is grabbing or grasping, and that there is a path of practice and development to overcome the suffering which is the Noble Eightfold Path. You want to learn more and more how to improve your minds and put that learning into practice for the benefit of yourself and others. You must include others in the picture because many aspects of how you will improve depend on your being kind to others and helping others.

One word we could use to describe this resolve to your Buddhist practice is "wholehearted". You are always prepared to give it your best. This doesn't mean make your biggest effort or try you're hardest - this is too tight, too stressed, too much effort, for what is needed. It means don't accept your own alibis of "it's too hot, it's too cold, it's too late, or it's too soon" to practice. Practice with resolve and determination in your heart.

Enlightenment is difficult to scale. To reach the summit requires us to transform ourselves in a way that we have never done before. Thinking thus, we engage in the methods for developing the Perfection of Determination.

Nina Van Gorkom writes:

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*"We read in the commentary to the Cariyapitaka (1) about the means by which the Perfections are accomplished, and it is said that they should be performed perseveringly without interruption, and that there should*



*be enduring effort over a long period without coming to a halt half-way.  
The Bodhisattva did not come to a halt half-way" 39*

We need to examine what we are using at the moment to recognise our limitations. Ordinary determination works with the eight worldly conditions as its platform. These eight are praise and blame, gain and loss, happiness and unhappiness, honour and dishonour. This type of determination gives out when the going gets tough, or, it gives out when the going gets good enough that you settle for worldly comfort and happiness and couldn't be bothered with the work of practice.

Don't give up your resolve to become enlightened because some negative kamma from the past comes, or when your friends or family don't approve of what you chose to do, or when laziness or complacency seems more inviting.

Base your determination on the bedrock of understanding the way the world works, and your confidence in the Buddha Dhamma Path out of suffering.

Human birth is difficult to obtain, the life of beings is uncertain, the conditions you are experiencing at the moment are subject to change, cause and effect cannot be escaped.

These understandings remain regardless of what the eight worldly conditions are bringing to you. Therefore, your determination is based on a realistic foundation.

Until we have reached some higher stage in the Perfection of Determination or resolution we must use what we've got. We must build powerful skills such as time planning and goal setting as our weapons to conquer weaknesses we have never been able to conquer before.

We need to move our position successively in many areas from where we are now towards being an enlightened being. If we are complacent about our present capabilities, our present position, we are not recognising that practicing the Ten Perfections, or as they have been called the "Perfecters", requires discernible improvement over time.

If our practice is to just repeat over and over what we already can do we are actually going backwards. It may look like practice but there is no progress, it's not moving us towards enlightenment.

We are creatures of habit. We have a disposition to stick with what we know, even if it is unsatisfactory, rather than making the effort to improve. This is usually the defilement of laziness confining us. We are resistant to change. Yet to benefit from our cherished meeting with the Dhamma we must not only accept change but fully embrace it and use it to our advantage. It is our best ally because if not for change we could not improve.

From a Dhamma point of view we can drive the change in our life in two ways. One is to recognise that all change comes about through having made the causes of change in the past. We drive our own change through our choice of wholesome actions or unwholesome actions. To be able to consistently make the right choices requires learning and merit.

The second way is when we plan to change. This is when we take over the process of change to direct and facilitate the change because of our increasing sense of urgency.

We take over the natural process of impermanence and change by planning change. Over a longer-term period, this can be managed by goal setting and creating a life plan. In the shorter term it is by tracking our Dhamma performance from week to week and from month to month to identify what most needs our attention at the moment.

For example, if we see ourselves frequently getting irritated by a particular person or persons, we should deal wisely with this by planning regular metta meditation to send metta to those persons until we no longer have this aversion to them.

If we are getting stuck on a particular defilement we should find out what we can do to overcome this obstacle. Look in the Dhamma texts in our library or ask our Teachers. The point is to not simply overlook the thing which we have recognised is a weakness or pretend we don't need to do something about it.

If you think your Dhamma practice isn't strong enough, take responsibility for your own progress much the same as if you were planning to improve a business you managed, or a new initiative you were planning in your job, or planning to improve your finances.

You work it out. "How am I going to do it?" Then you have to sit down and write a plan. Many breakthroughs and improvements in our Dhamma practice will come from doing this. Otherwise our merit is going to reinforcing our existing way of doing things. If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll get the same results.



## Chapter 14 – Meditation with Virtue and Concentration

If you have sincerely started to implement the methods and ideas presented in this book you are already in a position to recognise the effect on your life and your mind through having made these efforts to develop yourself by practicing the various components of the Happiness Map.

The result of applying each aspect of Buddha Dhamma practice means our mind has become a platform. The Virtue Platform shown on the Happiness Map is then inside us. Our mind has all the components we have been practicing as real mental qualities or states. Our mind has mindfulness, it has morality, it is generous, it no longer harbours unwholesomeness, it stays wholesome. We are living virtue. We have become what we practiced to develop. Our mind is already happy most of the time, automatically. We don't have to do anything or get anything for our happiness to arise in us anymore.

Referring to the Happiness Map diagram shown earlier, above the oval Virtue Platform are the words:

### **"Meditation with Virtue and Concentration"**

The purpose of Buddhist meditation is to see our own mind clearly, to see it and know what we are looking at. With this unclouded view of our mind we can fix up wrong views and create the right conditions for our minds to become fully awakened. This awakened state is called the Perfection of Wisdom or enlightenment.

The Buddhist Path is sometimes described as having three principle components. These are virtue, concentration and wisdom. The meaning is that virtue together with concentration form the correct conditions in the mind from which wisdom can arise.

The practice we have done in building our mind's Virtue Platform is the correct preparation of our mind for concentration to arise when we do Buddhist meditation.

There are four states of concentration which are associated with materiality or having a physical form, and four states which are not associated with materiality so are called formless states. The Pali word we use for these states is called *jhana*, which means meditative state of concentration.

The *jhanas* are all wholesome or moral states of consciousness.

The purpose of using these states for Buddhist meditation is that whilst our minds are in these states many of the unwholesome defilement's cannot arise. Whilst these defilement's are cut off by the *jhana* meditation, the mind can more easily become pure and bright and the concentration well developed.

This mind is then put to work to examine and see correctly each of the parts that make up a human being or make up what we call our self.

The Buddha taught that human beings are made up of five groups or aggregates. These are:

1. Body - in the Buddhist classification, body consists of 32 parts such as our heart, liver, blood, bones, etc. and these parts are made up of the four great elements, namely earth element

(solidity), fire element (temperature- heat and cold), water element (fluidity) and air element (movement).

2. Feelings - consisting of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, worldly and unworldly feelings.
3. Perceptions - consisting of sense perceptions, perceptions such as memory, time and the mind looking at expectations of the future.
4. Volitions or kamma formations - a group consisting of thinking, ideas, mental formations, opinions and self-images of what we think we are.
5. Consciousness - consisting of 121 various types of consciousness. Some of which are wholesome, some unwholesome, some neutral and some functional.

With virtue and calmness well developed, our mind can achieve the right concentration or focus in meditation to examine our own internal world to recognise and observe each of these five groups.

Buddhism says we have many incorrect understandings of what we really are, incorrect understandings of our five groups. We talk and think about our "self", but have we ever examined what this self is? We accept and act on most of the mental states that come into our minds willingly, yet many of these produce and create the suffering we experience from day to day. We tend to believe our own self-talk yet on analysis we agree intellectually that most of our self-talk is rubbish. We dwell on the events and experiences which disturb us and or sadden us without knowing how to disentangle ourselves from them. These are examples of how our ignorance about our own nature is manifesting in our behaviour.

Specifically, our ignorance has the following fundamental wrong views

about ourselves. There are for most beings, irrespective of their place of birth, unrecognised deep convictions that:

1. My body is permanent.
2. My mind, feelings and body can be relied upon.
3. There is a real "me" or "self" either comprising my body, feelings and mind or somehow independent of these things - we don't know.

Even though we can intellectually understand the body is impermanent, even though we can intellectually recognise feelings cannot be relied upon because they are always swinging back and forth, the mind itself doesn't know any of this for real.

Therefore, our mind behaves as if my mind, feelings and body can be relied upon and that there is a real "I", "my" or "me".

For example, unless we have cultivated insight wisdom we don't really know we are going to die one day.

Persons who have near death experiences are often reported as saying their whole view of their life has changed because now they realise everyday of their lives is precious, to not be wasted, or something similar to that.

We have to get down to really examining our five groups in the present moment, second by second to develop insight wisdom which itself removes our fundamental ignorance.

The Buddha said that when you really examine your own five groups correctly with the right mind you can recognise, and then realize with insight, that each group has three absolute, unalterable characteristics.



Our five groups are all impermanent, unreliable and not-self - *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* in Pali

When the mind really recognises our own mind and body is impermanent it will stop grabbing, because it knows grabbing something which only lasts for a second or so, is futile and can never be satisfying.

When the mind sees our own mind and body are unreliable it will also stop grabbing at them. Through insight wisdom or self-arising knowledge's, the mind can find out:

1. My body will die one day;
2. Feelings can't be relied upon; they can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral driven by our past kamma. There is no such thing as a permanent pleasant or unpleasant feeling;
3. Memories and perceptions are unreliable, and cause us to lose our clarity of the present moment if we dwell on them;
4. Thoughts and self-images are just arising and passing away. We have thousands of thoughts each day. They are just thoughts, some wholesome, some unwholesome. They can't be relied upon as always being the correct view or correct understanding.
5. The various types of consciousness which we experience are unreliable and come and go according to past causes.

Finally, when the mind has the insight that these five groups are not-self (*anatta*), it will stop grabbing because it will know none of the components which we think of and call "us" are really an everlasting self. The experience of this can be related by a story written by a

Buddhist practitioner who was not actually a Buddhist when he had the experience described.

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*“In early 1982 I was travelling for a few weeks in Tunisia and I had contracted food poisoning. I had to sit in bed at the equivalent of a bed and breakfast for three or four days as I was too sick to continue travelling. One morning I decided to leave and I staggered down the stairs with my pack on my back but after about half a flight I turned around and went back up to my room.*

*The next day I managed to get out for an hour or so and found a local book store. Most of the books were in French or Arabic. I could only find a few books in English and only one book interested me, which I purchased.*

*For a couple of days, I just sat in bed and read this book. The book itself was not very long, perhaps 100 pages. The author had the rare skill of being able to lead the reader to consider some aspects of life quite deeply. One section of this book puzzled me.*

*The author was describing the Buddhist Teaching of not-self, or no permanent self. He described the meaning of this teaching quite clearly so I thought I had certainly understood it. But then he had written something like the following - "you may think you understand what you have just read however, believe me, you have not really understood it at all. If you really did understand this teaching, right now you would be happier than you have ever been. Your mind would be free and clear and you would have a completely transformed view of your own existence."*

*I sat in bed reading this page over and over again because intellectually I had understood what was written, but there at the end of the page the author had stated - "believe me, you don't really understand it at all". Normally if I was reading a book perhaps I would stop for a moment to puzzle over what the author had written, and after a bit of contemplation continue on to read the next page.*

*However, I was stuck in bed with no TV, nothing else to read, no other distractions and I couldn't go anywhere. I remember reading this page maybe 15 - 20 times. It was an intellectual puzzle that I couldn't understand it in the way he said was the "real" understanding.*

*Then, as I read, in a flash of an instant, my mind saw or knew directly that the "self" I had been relying on and serving for my whole life was not actually real.*

*The thing about myself I had the deepest conviction was "real" actually was not real. The "self" I had always known had vanished. In its place was a luminous vibrant peaceful energy which filled my whole body. My sickness had completely disappeared instantly and I could get up. I was happier than I had ever been, just what the author had said would happen.*

*I sat on the bed astonished. The experience of "I" didn't exist anymore. Ideas, memories, feelings, and sensations were experienced with no overseer believing "I" am feeling this, or this is happening to "me". The God in the sky of my head I had always served was gone.*

*It was as if I was released from a prison. I had this bright, happy, lucid view of everything. I left my room and went out into the town walking along, infused with delight and great joy! My whole being felt incredibly*

*light, free and filled with energy, happiness and warmth. I understood what it felt like to be completely happy and at peace.*

*So now I knew directly, there are moments of life and living that are way beyond what we generally assume to be our fixed experience of reality and world view.*

*After another day or so however, the experience gradually began to weaken and become less euphoric and, by one more day, I was back in bed with my sickness”.*

There is no single part of us which remains unchanged from when we were a child. We are constantly changing with nothing remaining immune to change. In other words, there is no component of us which has an independent unchanging existence which could be called a soul or a self.

There is one particular mind the Buddha found, and he was the first person in this age to discover this mind, a mind which knows *anicca, dukkha and anatta* of all things simultaneously at one time. It is called nibbana. It is the object of the Buddhist Eightfold Path.

This is represented on our Happiness Map by the words:

### **"Ultimate Happiness: Nibbana (Wisdom)"**

A Vajrayana Buddhist Master while visiting Melbourne many years ago said the following statement in his public talk.

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*"Samsara is the mind looking outwardly lost in its own projections. Nirvana is the mind seeing inwardly."*

Nibbana is described as perfect peace. An unconditioned mind that does not operate from past causes, it does not operate within the process of cause and effect. Therefore, *nibbana* is also referred to as being deathless because only conditioned phenomena form what we refer to as birth and death. Because of these characteristics *nibbana* is a truly reliable goal and refuge that cannot be swept away by life, death, place or time.

Actually, the extent of some of the practices described in this book are well beyond the beginner levels of Buddhist practice, so at times this book has provided more than a basic introduction to Buddhism.

Please don't be overwhelmed or feel that Buddhist practice is beyond you or too advanced because it's not like that. It's unrealistic to expect to be able to run before you have learnt to walk. Just know that if you start Buddhist practice by implementing the bits you can relate to, the parts that do make sense to you, that effort will achieve a real benefit for yourself and others around you.

Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden, spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhist Society of Australia, wrote in his book *Meditations on the Path to Enlightenment*:

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*“With the laziness of procrastination, you have a willingness to practice Dharma but a sense that there is not time for it now. You postpone engaging in virtue until later. There are so many excuses! 'At the*

*moment I do not have sufficient intellectual knowledge of the Dharma to be able to practice properly. I will wait until the children leave home and then do a degree in Buddhism so that, when I do come to practice, I will do so properly.' Another may think, 'If I do anything, I want to do it wholeheartedly. I'm too busy to devote a high level of effort now, so I will carry on with business until I amass a large amount of money and can retire. Then I will be able to devote myself to the Dharma.' Or else, 'You cannot gain realisations without doing a lot of meditation. I have no time at the moment to meditate because I have to nurse my sick old mother. When she has passed away I will have time to meditate, so I will practice Dharma then.' There is usually a major misconception of what Dharma is and how to go about it that supports the attitude of procrastination. 40*

Geshe writes:

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*“Never fall into the trap of waiting for the right circumstances to be able to practice Dharma according to some pre-conceived notion as to what constitutes practice. Whatever your present circumstances they are perfect for you to apply the Dharma in the most effective manner according your specific karma. You are a unique individual. Your circumstances are unique, and you can uniquely apply the Dharma according to those particular conditions. 41*

The important thing is to just start. You can build on that as you go. Start and never give up.

### ***Benefits of listening to the Dhamma***

The *Saddharama Smriti Upasthana Sutra* mentions there are thirty-two benefits that can be gained from listening to the Dhamma. It reads as follows:

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*"What are these thirty-two? When a realised master teaches the Dhamma, he is like a parent to his audience (giving guidance), and he is like a bridge across the river of birth and death.*

*When one hears what one has never heard before, one attains new realizations. Once one has knowledge, one can begin to think about what one has learned.*

*Once one has begun to think about what one has learned, one has truly begun to practice self-cultivation.*

*Once one has begun to practice self-cultivation, one will abide in peace. Once one has begun to abide in peace, one can begin to benefit others; and then a mutually beneficial interaction can begin.*

*If one is able to abide in peace, then even hardship will not seem disturbing.*

*If one listens to the Dharma, then roots of goodness will begin to grow where formerly they did not grow.*

*If one contemplates what one has learned, then one will become prepared for liberation.*

*Listening to the Dharma can lead people with perverse views to change their views to right ones and listening to the Dharma can help people destroy unwholesome thoughts whenever they arise.*

*Listening to the Dharma increases goodness of mind and rids one of negative mental causes and conditions.*

*Listening to the Dharma keeps one from being scattered and disorganised in one's activities.*

*Listening to the Dharma leads one toward the company of good people and leads one away from selfishness and falseness.*

*Listening to the Dharma encourages one to care for one's parents and believe in karma; it also shows one how to live a long life.*

*Listening to the Dharma leads one to be raised by others and protected by heavenly beings, and it causes one's deepest wishes to be fulfilled.*

*Listening to the Dharma brings one all the joys of the Dharma and keeps one from sloth and laziness.*

*Listening to the Dharma causes one to progress quickly, to understand gratitude and to think often on the meaning of death.*

*If one has listened often to the Dharma, at the time of one's death, one will not cling to life or feel remorse for what one has done.*

*Ultimately, listening to the Dharma will lead one to Nirvana.”<sup>42</sup>*



## Chapter 15 – The Perfection of Wisdom

The *Macquarie English Dictionary* defines wisdom as:

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*"Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgement as to action."*

The Perfection of Wisdom, as opposed to conventional wisdom, concerns the direct realisation of the Dhamma, or one individual directly perceiving in their mind the truth about the way things really are; the Law of Kamma, the Law of Dependent Origination, selflessness and emptiness. These are underlying constructs of the absolute nature of reality the Buddha discovered by his Perfection of Wisdom.

There are many levels of wisdom which can be described. For our purposes we will talk about wisdom of three types only.

The first we could call worldly wisdom. The second we could call "higher" order wisdom and the third we could call the Perfection of Wisdom. All three are important to Buddhist practice because they each offer correct means to reduce our suffering now and, in the future, and, finally, it is only wisdom that enables a practitioner to complete the Buddhist Path and be free from all forms of suffering.

The first type, which we call worldly wisdom, deals with methods and means which help us navigate through our lives and enable us to be more effective in what we are trying to do. Things like time planning,

goal setting, positive thinking, patience, emotional maturity and self-education are examples we are all familiar with.

They each contribute something to help us to be better equipped to deal with life and the process of looking after our well-being and happiness and the others around us as well.

The second type of wisdom, that we're calling "higher" wisdom, is higher in the sense that it deals with clear insights arising in our minds into how we live, and how we react to life experiences. These insights may deal with the more fundamental aspects of life, or on a smaller scale, they may be insights which help us deal better with particular situations or improve our own reactions to things happening in our life.

These insights have the characteristic of enlightening our mind or, putting it in another way, giving us a brand-new view of something so we are better equipped to deal with life sanely. Sometimes a person may hear or realise some aspect of this type of wisdom and it could change their life forever.

One student's experience when he was about 23 years old is an example of this:

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*“I was travelling across a field in a train in Sardinia. The single carriage train just passed over the natural countryside, and at this moment through a field of long grass. As I was looking out from the back landing of this train it occurred to me that I had never found anything in my life which I felt was worth being dedicated to doing. Or, as it seemed, I hadn't found anything that was worth my life.*”

*Because when you take on long term commitments it's your life which you are "spending" to do that thing, or be in that relationship. I had a really fortunate and happy childhood, completed my tertiary education, worked in corporate life for a few years, been in a happy relationship with a girlfriend and spent 12 months travelling around the globe yet I couldn't identify a single thing which I felt had true substance or consequence or meaning for my life.*

*Family life is one of the main things people identify as what they feel deeply committed to, but personally it didn't have that appeal to me. I felt, if there was something of true worth "out there" I should find out what that was first, before I had committed my life to other things.*

*So, I had this idea (and this is an example of the second type of wisdom) if I ever found something of "true" worth I would do it 100%. I would not feel torn between that and some other lesser priorities. And that's in fact what did happen when I started to understand what Buddhism was all about, and it was an initiating cause for me being here learning Buddhism now".*

From a Buddhist point of view the chance to learn how to practice the path to full enlightenment is extremely rare. To start with just getting a human birth is considered to be inconceivably rare. A simile the Buddha gave to illustrate this is to imagine there is a small circle floating on the surface of the ocean, much like a lifebuoy. Then imagine a tortoise swimming along deep in the ocean, eventually, after a long time (one hundred years) it surfaces. The chance that the tortoise will come to the surface directly inside that lifebuoy circle is equivalent to the likelihood a being will, on average, be born in human birth.

The Buddhist Teachings say to not waste this incredibly rare human birth. Use it wisely to do what is of most benefit for yourself and others now and for your future well-being, for the person you will become.

You may believe it is most important to help others to be well and happy, which is certainly a wholesome wish. But then wisdom also says, if you really want to help others, first help yourself by fixing yourself up.

If you decide that's for you, then you need to find out how to structure your life and your time to fix yourself up whilst the opportunity to do so still exists.

Wisdom is using the resources of time and opportunity we have in our life to do things that are worthwhile and beneficial for ourself and others. Even perceived negative situations that occur to us usually offer the possibility of Buddhist practice.

An example of this would be when someone unjustly blames us or criticizes us. Some Buddhist Teachers have advised that people who give us the hardest time can be our best teachers. In the difficulty of the situation we can make a concerted effort to maintain wholesomeness, and to build the quality of patience as a means to deal with the unpleasant.

Wisdom is not following our habitual kamma when it causes suffering for ourself or others. That's a really simple statement on the surface but it requires us to recognise and analyse our thoughts, speech and actions to see what they produce. There are things we do which are creating suffering for ourselves or others every day. We may even know what some of them are. Wisdom is to recognise the unwholesome actions, thoughts and attitudes and abandon those things.

Conversely, wisdom is not giving up doing the good things when we know they are beneficial. It means if we can see something is really worthwhile for ourselves or others then don't give it up because of laziness, procrastination, anger or any other defilement.

It is wisdom to develop mindfulness as much as we can. The Buddha was once asked to describe the essence of his teachings in one word. His answer was mindfulness. The thing about the practice of mindfulness is we can do it anytime, anyplace. We don't need more spare time, or more money, more anything, we just need the will.

The great Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, Venerable Piyadassi Maha Thera, said in a Dhamma talk at the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia in 1991:

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*"You know about this discourse on mindfulness. Be mindful of everything. Be mindful. Practice it, then you get used to it. Then you see the advantages. People today, because they don't have mindfulness, must create trouble for themselves unnecessarily. Because of this lacking of mindfulness they get all sorts of troubles. You can run mindfully without tension. (without creating stress). You go driving your car. You come to traffic lights. Most people, you know, when they see the green turning to amber, they get agitated. "Oh, it is red" Impatient. It is red so the best thing to do, the sensible thing is when you see the red, to not get agitated. There is a little rest for you. Leave the wheel, take a deep breath, you see and patiently wait for the green. No tension."*

The thing is, a lot of our suffering comes from little things like this. Our own behaviour from minute to minute contributes to our immediate experience of either some form of happiness or some form of suffering. If we think that it is not important to deal with the little things, that we should concentrate on "big" ideas or radical changes to live more happily, we will not realise the real key to happiness is to understand how to train our minds. We will have every worldly thing we want but we will not know how to be happy.

It is the ability to promote wholesome minds and wholesome actions for as long as we can which brings forth the experience of happiness. You can say "how many minutes of happy heart did I experience today?" If you find this number of minutes per day of happy heart is increasing on average from week to week you are going in the right direction.

It is wisdom to cultivate loving kindness and compassion rather than negative emotions when we see the suffering in the world around us. One can cultivate loving-kindness and compassion through having empathy with the situation of the other beings. They are facing life's complexities, uncertainties and difficulties just as we are. We can see it is hard for them. Life is complex, for many person's life is a constant struggle, and many others don't have even the basics to look after themselves and their families properly.

You can see the fragile and perilous nature of animal and insect birth. The being is caught in that unfortunate kamma.

“

*"All desire happiness, all fear pain. In this, we are all alike. All living beings are alike. Recognizing this, one should not place oneself above others, one should not regard oneself differently from the way in which one would regard others. This recognition of the fundamental equality*

*of all living beings is basic to the cultivation of loving-kindness and compassion. All want happiness just as I want happiness. Understanding this, one ought to regard all living beings with loving-kindness and compassion. One ought to cultivate this wish that all living beings may be happy. Just as I fear suffering and pain, and wish to avoid it, so do all living beings fear suffering and pain, and wish to avoid it. Understanding this, one develops and cultivates an attitude that wishes to see all living beings free from suffering." 43*

It is wisdom to recognise with broad view the full scope of the sentient being's true condition like this. We develop a more realistic appreciation of why it is urgent to not waste these precious conditions of having the Dhamma appear in our world, which grants us the possibility to cut off of birth in the lower planes of existence forever.

The word Dhamma has been defined by one Buddhist monk as that teaching which enables us to cut off the possibility of being reborn in the lower planes of existence at any future time.

Wisdom knows to plan a life to create sufficient leisure time to practice the Dhamma.

Wisdom knows it is hard to practice charity if you are poor.

Wisdom knows our life is totally dependent on the work and kindness of others.

Wisdom knows to respect the truth, and keep the precept to refrain from lying, makes the right causes for us to learn and understand what is needed.

The third type of wisdom, The Perfection of Wisdom, as opposed to conventional wisdom, concerns the direct recognition of what is real, realisation of the Dhamma; the law of dependent origination, selflessness and emptiness.

To help our consideration of what is meant by the Perfection of Wisdom we can reflect on the period just prior to the night of The Buddha's own enlightenment which occurred more than 2,560 years ago.

“

*"So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants: "Mendicants!" "Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:*

*"Mendicants, before my awakening—when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening—I thought: 'Why don't I meditate by continually dividing my thoughts into two classes?' So I assigned sensual, malicious, and cruel thoughts to one class. And I assigned thoughts of renunciation, love, and kindness to the second class.*

*Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a sensual thought arose. I understood: 'This sensual thought has arisen in me. It leads to hurting myself, hurting others, and hurting both. It blocks wisdom, it's on the side of anguish, and it doesn't lead to extinguishment.' When I reflected that it leads to hurting myself, it went away. When I reflected that it leads to hurting others, it went away. When I reflected that it leads to hurting both, it went away. When I reflected that it blocks wisdom, it's on the side of anguish, and it doesn't lead to*



*extinguishment, it went away. So I gave up, got rid of, and eliminated any sensual thoughts that arose.*

*Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a malicious thought arose ... a cruel thought arose. I understood: ‘This cruel thought has arisen in me. It leads to hurting myself, hurting others, and hurting both. It blocks wisdom, it’s on the side of anguish, and it doesn’t lead to extinguishment.’ When I reflected that it leads to hurting myself ... hurting others ... hurting both, it went away. When I reflected that it blocks wisdom, it’s on the side of anguish, and it doesn’t lead to extinguishment, it went away. So I gave up, got rid of, and eliminated any cruel thoughts that arose.*

*Whatever a mendicant frequently thinks about and considers becomes their heart’s inclination. If they often think about and consider sensual thoughts, they’ve given up the thought of renunciation to cultivate sensual thought. Their mind inclines to sensual thoughts. If they often think about and consider malicious thoughts ... their mind inclines to malicious thoughts. If they often think about and consider cruel thoughts ... their mind inclines to cruel thoughts. Suppose it’s the last month of the rainy season, when the crops grow closely together, and a cowherd must take care of the cattle. He’d tap and poke them with his staff on this side and that to keep them in check. Why is that? For he sees that if they wander into the crops he could be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured. In the same way, I saw that unskillful qualities have drawbacks, depravity, and corruption, and that skillful qualities have the benefit and cleansing power of renunciation.*

*Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a thought of renunciation arose. I understood: ‘This thought of renunciation has arisen in me. It doesn’t lead to hurting myself, hurting others, or hurting*

*both. It nourishes wisdom, it's on the side of freedom from anguish, and it leads to extinguishment.' If I were to keep on thinking and considering like this all night ... all day ... all night and day, I see no danger that would come from that. Still, thinking and considering for too long would tire my body. And when the body is tired, the mind is stressed. And when the mind is stressed, it's far from immersion. So I stilled, settled, unified, and immersed my mind internally. Why is that? So that my mind would not be stressed.*

*Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a thought of love arose ... a thought of kindness arose. I understood: 'This thought of kindness has arisen in me. It doesn't lead to hurting myself, hurting others, or hurting both. It nourishes wisdom, it's on the side of freedom from anguish, and it leads to extinguishment.' If I were to keep on thinking and considering like this all night ... all day ... all night and day, I see no danger that would come from that. Still, thinking and considering for too long would tire my body. And when the body is tired, the mind is stressed. And when the mind is stressed, it's far from immersion. So I stilled, settled, unified, and immersed my mind internally. Why is that? So that my mind would not be stressed.*

*Whatever a mendicant frequently thinks about and considers becomes their heart's inclination. If they often think about and consider thoughts of renunciation, they've given up sensual thought to cultivate the thought of renunciation. Their mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. If they often think about and consider thoughts of love ... their mind inclines to thoughts of love. If they often think about and consider thoughts of kindness ... their mind inclines to thoughts of kindness. Suppose it's the last month of summer, when all the crops have been gathered into the neighbourhood of a village, and a cowherd must take care of the cattle. While at the root of a tree or in the open he*

*need only be mindful that the cattle are there. In the same way I needed only to be mindful that those things were there.*

*My energy was roused up and vigorous, my mindfulness was established and lucid, my body was tranquil and undisturbed, and my mind was immersed in samādhi. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected. As the placing of the mind and keeping it connected were stilled, I entered and remained in the second absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of immersion, with internal clarity and confidence, and unified mind, without placing the mind and keeping it connected. And with the fading away of rapture, I entered and remained in the third absorption, where I meditated with equanimity, mindful and aware, personally experiencing the bliss of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss.’ With the giving up of pleasure and pain, and the ending of former happiness and sadness, I entered and remained in the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness.*

*When my mind had immersed in samādhi like this—purified, bright, spotless, rid of taints, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable—I extended it toward recollection of past lives. I recollected many kinds of past lives, with features and details. This was the first knowledge, which I achieved in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, as happens for a meditator who is diligent, keen, and resolute.*

*When my mind had become immersed in samādhi like this, I extended it toward knowledge of the death and rebirth of sentient beings. With*

*clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman, I saw sentient beings passing away and being reborn—inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, in a good place or a bad place. I understood how sentient beings are reborn according to their deeds. This was the second knowledge, which I achieved in the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, as happens for a meditator who is diligent, keen, and resolute.*

*When my mind had become immersed in samādhi like this, I extended it toward knowledge of the ending of defilements. I truly understood: ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the origin of suffering’ ... ‘This is the cessation of suffering’ ... ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.’ I truly understood: ‘These are defilements’ ... ‘This is the origin of defilements’ ... ‘This is the cessation of defilements’ ... ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of defilements.’ Knowing and seeing like this, my mind was freed from the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, and ignorance. I understood: ‘Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been completed; what had to be done has been done; there is no return to any state of existence.’ This was the third knowledge, which I achieved in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, as happens for a meditator who is diligent, keen, and resolute.*

*Suppose that in a forested wilderness there was an expanse of low-lying swampland, and a large herd of deer lived nearby. Then along comes a person who wants to harm, injure, and threaten them. They close off the safe, secure path that leads to happiness, and open the wrong path. There they plant domesticated male and female deer as decoys so that, in due course, that herd of deer would come to ruin and disaster. Then along comes a person who wants to help keep the herd of deer safe. They open up the safe, secure path that leads to happiness, and*

*close off the wrong path. They get rid of the decoys so that, in due course, that herd of deer would grow, increase, and mature.*

*I've made up this simile to make a point. And this is what it means. 'An expanse of low-lying swampland' is a term for sensual pleasures. 'A large herd of deer' is a term for sentient beings. 'A person who wants to harm, injure, and threaten them' is a term for Māra the Wicked. 'The wrong path' is a term for the wrong eightfold path, that is, wrong view, wrong thought, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong immersion. 'A domesticated male deer' is a term for desire with relishing. 'A domesticated female deer' is a term for ignorance. 'A person who wants to help keep the herd of deer safe' is a term for the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha. 'The safe, secure path that leads to happiness' is a term for the noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.*

*So, mendicants, I have opened up the safe, secure path to happiness and closed off the wrong path. And I have got rid of the male and female decoys. Out of compassion, I've done what a teacher should do for the benefit of their disciples. Here are these roots of trees, and here are these empty huts. Practice absorption, mendicants! Don't be negligent! Don't regret it later! This is my instruction to you."*

*That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, the mendicants were happy with what the Buddha said."***44**

May the many causes made offering these teachings enable you to know, realise and follow the Buddha Dhamma now and in your future, so that you become fully enlightened.

The merit made is dedicated to all beings. May this gift of merit help all beings know the path, realize the path and follow the path.

# Appendix

The Buddhist *Abhidhamma* texts explain that there are fourteen different aspects of greed, hate and ignorance which manifest in our minds as specific mental components or mental *cetasikas* (Pali).

These different factors arise in conjunction with our different states of consciousness. They are referred to as unwholesome because they contribute to our unpleasant mental experiences and if acted upon contribute to making kamma which will fruit as some form of suffering.

The fourteen unwholesome mental states (*cetasikas*) and the twenty-five wholesome mental states (*cetasikas*) are listed below.

We can relate to these lists as being the mind equivalents of the periodic table of elements of matter as described from the scientific viewpoint.

## Unwholesome Mental Components

1. Ignorance (*moha*)
2. Lack of moral shame (*ahirika*)
3. Lack of fear of unwholesomeness (*anottappa*)
4. Restlessness (*uddhacca*)
5. Attachment (*lobha*)
6. Wrong view (*ditthi*)
7. Conceit (*mana*)
8. Aversion (*dosa*)
9. Envy (*issa*)
10. Stinginess (*macchariya*)
11. Regret (*kukkucca*)

12. Sloth (*thina*)
13. Torpor (*middha*)
14. Doubt (*vicikiccha*)

## Wholesome Mental Components

1. Confidence (*saddha*)
2. Mindfulness (*sati*)
3. Moral shame (*hiri*)
4. Fear of unwholesomeness (*ottappa*)
5. Disinterestedness (*alobha*)
6. Amity (*adosa*)
7. Equanimity (*tatramajjhata*)
8. Composure of mental states (*kayapassadhi*)
9. Composure of mind (*citta kayapassadhi*)
10. Lightness of mental states (*kaya-lahuta*)
11. Lightness of mind (*citta-lahuta*)
12. Pliancy of mental states (*kaya-muduta*)
13. Pliancy of mind (*citta-muduta*)
14. Adaptability of mental states (*kaya-kammannata*)
15. Adaptability of mind (*citta-kammannata*)
16. Proficiency of mental states (*kaya-pagunnata*)
17. Proficiency of mind (*citta-pagunnata*)
18. Rectitude of mental states (*kaya-ujukata*)
19. Rectitude of mind (*citta-ujukata*)
20. Right speech (*samma vaca*)
21. Right action (*samma kammanta*)
22. Right livelihood (*samma ajiva*)
23. Compassion (*karuna*)
24. Sympathetic joy (*mudita*)
25. Wisdom (*panna*)



It is very useful to have these lists to refer to as they are some of the real building blocks of our mental life. Using them as checklists helps us recognise these mental factors operating in our consciousness from moment to moment.

If we can accurately identify which cetasika is arising in our mind, we can decide what to do next; either cultivate them if they are beneficial or apply the correct antidote practice to reduce them if they are not beneficial.



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