

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR  
OUR PROBLEMS?



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# **Sayings of The Buddha**

**Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda**



## **The Highest Gift**

The gift of Truth  
excels all other gifts.

## **Accept Truth**

If you find truth in any religion,  
accept that truth!

## **See The Buddha**

One who sees  
my teachings sees me.

## **Serve The Buddha**

One who serves the  
sick serves me.

## **The External Law**

In this world hatred can  
never be appeased by hatred.  
Hatred can only be appeased by love.  
This is the eternal law.

## **World Within You**

In this very one fathom long body  
along with perception and thoughts,  
I proclaim the world, the origin of the world,  
the cessation of the world,  
and the path leading to the  
end of the world.

## **Mind Is The Forerunner**

By mind the world is led,  
by the mind the world is drawn.  
And all men own the  
sovereignty of mind.

## **Two Different Paths**

One is the road  
that leads to worldly gain,  
one leads to deathlessness –  
Eternal Bliss.

## **Everything Is Impermanent**

All conditioned things are impermanent.  
When one see this in Wisdom,  
then one becomes dispassionate  
towards the painful.

## **Ignorance**

It is because you and I do not  
understand and comprehend the  
four noble truths that we have to  
run this long and weary round of  
existence-Samsara.

## **Lucky Day**

Fools wait for a lucky day,  
but everyday is a lucky day  
for an industrious man.

## **Worldly Ties**

The secret of happiness lies in  
mind's release from worldly ties.

## **Insufficient Knowledge**

The man of little learning grows  
old like the ox. His body grows  
but wisdom grows not.

## **Life Is Dear To All**

All tremble at the rod. All fear  
death. Feeling for others as for  
oneself, one should neither kill  
nor cause to kill.

## **A Religion To Practise**

This is a religion for one  
to come and practise but not  
just to come and believe.

## **Evil-Doer Grieves**

The evil-doer grieves here,  
he grieves hereafter.  
He grieves in both worlds.  
He grieves, he perishes with  
his own impure deed.

## **Vigilance and Negligence**

Vigilance is the path to deathlessness.  
Negligence is the path to death.  
The vigilant do not die.  
The negligent are as if dead already.

## **Real fool**

The fool who is  
aware of his foolishness  
is wise at least to that extent.  
But the fool who thinks  
himself wise is a fool indeed.

## **Highest Virtues**

Tolerance, patience and  
understanding  
are the highest virtues  
every man should develop.

## **Righteous Living**

The Middle Path of righteous  
living brings knowledge and  
understanding. It brings insight,  
leads to calm and wisdom,  
to awakening – Nirvana

## **Fortunate People**

Blessed are they who earn  
their living without hurting others.

## **Equip Yourself**

Vast learning, perfect handicraft,  
a highly trained discipline,  
and pleasant speech –  
this is a blessing.

## **Your Duties**

Support thy mother and father,  
Cherish loved ones and children.  
This is a blessing.

## **Act Wisely**

Do not associate with fools,  
Associate with the wise,  
Honour those who are worthy of  
honour – This is a blessing.

## **Behave Gently**

Let not one deceive another,  
nor despise any person whatsoever  
in any place. In anger or ill will,  
let him not wish any harm to another.

## **The Innocent**

He who harms the innocent  
must bear the fruit of his  
act, like dust flung against the wind.

## **Bad Habits**

The man who is a debauchee,  
a drunkard, a gambler, and who  
squanders whatsoever he possess  
- is the cause of his own downfall.

## **Give Up Evil**

Give up evil; it can be done.  
If it were not possible to  
give up evil, I would not say so.  
Since it can be done,  
I advise you to give up evil.

## **Caste Differences**

Just as the great rivers such as the **Ganga, the Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu and Mahi,** when they fall into the ocean lose their former names and are known as the ocean, even so do the people of different castes, when they have gone forth in the Doctrine and Discipline taught by the **Buddha,** from a home to a homeless life, lose their former names and clans and are known as ascetics.

## **Health and Contentment**

Health is the greatest wealth;  
contentment is  
the greatest happiness.

## **Vicious Mouth**

In each man's mouth at birth is  
born an axe, wherewith the fool  
who speaks ill cuts himself.

## **Practise Before You Preach**

Let a man apply himself  
to what is proper before he  
preaches others.

## **Art Of Talking**

Speak the truth not untruth,  
Say what is pleasant, not unpleasant;  
Speak what is true, not false.  
Speak only words that do not bring  
remorse Nor hurt another.  
That is good speech indeed.

## **Conquer Yourself**

Though one should conquer a  
million men in battlefield, yet  
indeed, he is the noblest victor  
who has conquered himself.

## **Strengthen Your Mind**

Even as a solid rock  
is unshaken by the wind,  
so are the wise unshaken  
by praise or blame.

## **Develop Your Mind**

As rain penetrates an ill-thatched  
house, so lust penetrates an  
undeveloped mind.

## **Self-confidence**

Do not depend on others;  
develop your self-confidence.

## **Serve Others Wisely**

Do not forget your spiritual  
development while serving others.

## **Use Your Own Effort**

It is through unshaken  
perseverance that I have reached  
the light, through unceasing effort  
that I have reached the peace supreme.  
If you also will strive unceasingly, you too will  
within a short time reach the highest  
goal of bliss by understanding and  
realising it yourselves.

## **Be Mindful**

A young and strong person  
who does not strive  
when he should strive,  
who is given to idleness,  
who is loose in his purpose and  
thoughts, and who is lazy  
that idler never finds the  
way to wisdom.

## **Fear**

Wheresoever fear arises,  
it arises in the mind of the fool,  
not in that of the wise man.

## **Real Peace**

Real peace comes from within.  
Seek not from outside.

## **Accept Wisely**

One should not accept anything  
with mere faith; but one should  
use one's common sense and  
intelligence before accepting anything.

## **Don't Be Idle**

A useful single day's life  
of intense effort is better than  
a hundred years of idleness and inactivity.

## **The Middle Path**

Practise the Middle Path  
without going to extremes;  
practise it in every aspect of your life.

## **Keep The Mind Fresh**

When your physical body is sick,  
do not allow your mind also to be sick.

## **Loving-Kindness**

Radiate your loving-kindness  
to every living being  
without any discrimination.

## **Righteous Way Of Life**

He who leads a righteous way of life,  
will find that noble virtue itself  
to protect and guide him.

## **Avoid Evil**

Neither for the sake of oneself nor  
for the sake of another should  
one do wrong, not even for the  
sake of acquiring wealth,  
kingdom or children, should one  
do wrong. Such a one is indeed  
virtuous, wise and righteous.

## **Be Detached**

He who never thinks of anything  
as 'mine', who does not feel the  
lack of anything, he is never worried  
by as sense of loss.

## **The Origin**

It is inconceivable to find the  
beginning of **Samsara**  
(cycle of birth and death).  
A first beginning of beings who  
wander on in **Samsara**,  
bounded by ignorance and  
fettered by craving, cannot be seen.

## **Reap What You Sow**

According to the seed that's  
sown So is the fruit you  
reap there from, The doer of good will  
gather good, The doer of evil, evil reaps

## **Cause and Effect**

We are the results of what we  
were and we will be the  
results of what we are.

## **You Are Responsible**

Your misdeeds were not  
committed by your parents,  
nor by your brothers and sisters,  
nor by your friends nor kinsfolk,  
nor by recluses and priests,  
it is you who are responsible.

## **No Place To Hide**

Not in the sky, nor in the mid-ocean,  
not in mountain cave, is found that  
place on earth where abiding one  
may escape from the consequences  
of one's own evil deed.

## **Evil deed**

So long as an evil deed does not affect the fool, he thinks that it is honey; but when it affects him, then he comes to grief.

## **Highest Achievements**

Acquire wisdom, practise devotion, morality, and charity.

## **Happiness Here**

The accomplishment of persistent effort, the accomplishment of watchfulness, good friendship and balanced livelihood leads to happiness.

## **Happiness of Renunciation**

The happiness of the senses and the happiness of renunciation, but the greater of the two is the happiness of renunciation.

## **Wrong Beliefs**

Belief that everything  
is due to previous kamma,  
Belief that everything is due to  
supernatural causes, Belief that  
everything appears without any cause.

## **Four Groups of People (1)**

Those who go from darkness to darkness,  
Those who go from light to darkness,  
Those who go from darkness to light,  
Those who go from light to light.

## **Four Groups of People (II)**

Those who look after themselves  
and ignore others,  
Those who look after others  
and ignore themselves,  
Those who neglect themselves  
as well as others,  
Those who look after themselves  
as well as other.

## **Think Before You Act**

Whatever action you intend to perform by body, speech or mind, first think: "Will this action be harmful to myself or to others or to both? Will this action produce suffering?"  
If it is harmful, avoid doing it.

## **Think While You Act**

Whatever action you are performing by body, speech or mind, first think: "Will this action be harmful to myself or to others or to both? Will this action produce suffering?"  
If it is harmful, avoid doing it.

## **Think After You Act**

Whatever action you have performed by body, speech or mind, think: "Was this action harmful to myself or to others to both? Did this action produce suffering?"  
If it was harmful, avoid doing it.

## **Meditation**

Develop the meditation on  
loving-kindness and  
discard ill-will.

Develop the meditation on  
compassion and discard cruelty.

Develop the meditation on  
sympathetic joy and  
discard jealousy.

Develop the mediation on  
equanimity and  
discard restlessness.

Develop the meditation on  
impermanence and discard pride.

## **Selfmastered One is The Real Conqueror**

Better is it truly to conquer  
oneself than to conquer others.  
Neither a god, nor an 'angel',  
nor Mara, nor Brahma could  
turn into defeat the victory of a  
person such as this who is  
selfmastered and ever  
retrained in conduct.

## **Take Your Own Refuge**

Oneself is one's own protector (refuge); what other protector (refuge) can there be? With oneself fully controlled, one obtains a protection (refuge) which is hard to gain.

## **You Are Responsible For Your Purity And Impurity**

By oneself indeed is evil done  
and by oneself is one defiled.  
By oneself is evil left undone  
and by oneself indeed is  
one purified. Purity and impurity  
depend on oneself. No one  
can purify another.

## **Act Diligently To End Your Suffering**

Do not commit wrongful actions.

Do not dwell in negligence.

Do not embrace false views.

So the world (i.e. Samsara,  
the cycle of existence and  
continuity) is not prolonged.

## **The Teaching Of The Buddha**

To speak no ill, to do no harm,

to practise restraint according to

the fundamental precepts,

to be moderate in eating,

to live in seclusion to

devote oneself to higher consciousness,

this is the Teaching of the Buddha.

## **Give Up Victory And Defeat**

The conqueror begets enmity;  
the defeated lie down in distress.

The peaceful rest in happiness,  
giving up both victory and defeat.

### **Lust Creates Miseries**

From lust arises grief;  
from lust arises fear.  
For him who is free from  
lust there is no grief, much less fear.

### **Transgressor Ruins Himself**

As rust, arisen out of iron,  
eats itself away, even so his own  
deeds lead the transgressor  
to the states of woe.

### **Easy To See The Fault Of Others**

The fault of others is easily seen;  
but one's own is hard to see.  
Like chaff one winnows other's faults;  
but one's own one conceals  
as a crafty fowler disguises himself.

## **You Have To Work For Your Salvation**

You yourselves should make the effort;  
the Awakened Ones are only teachers.

Those who enter this Path and  
who are meditative are delivered  
from the bonds of Evil.

## **Awakened One Shines Day And Night**

The sun glows by day;  
the moon shines by night;  
in his armour the warrior glows.  
In meditation shines the holy man.  
But all day and night shines with  
radiance the Awakened One.

## **Live Happily**

Happy indeed we live without  
hate among the hateful.  
We live free from hatred  
amidst hateful men.

## **Be on Guard**

**Be on guard against physical agitation;  
be controlled in body.**

**Forsaking bodily misconduct,  
follow right conduct in body.**

**Be on guard against verbal agitation;  
be controlled in words.**

**Forsaking wrong speech,  
follow right ways in words.**

**Be on guard against mental agitation;  
be controlled in thoughts.**

**Forsaking evil thoughts,  
follow right ways in thoughts.**

## **Fully Controlled Men**

**The wise are controlled in deed,  
controlled in words, controlled in thoughts,  
verily, they are fully controlled.**

## **Impurities Can Be Removed**

By degrees little by little,  
from moment to moment a  
wise man removes his own  
impurities, as a goldsmith  
removes the dross of gold.

## **Who Is The Real Sage?**

Not by silence does one become  
a sage (*muni*) if one be foolish  
and untaught. But the wise man  
who as if holding a pair of scales,  
takes what is good and leaves  
out what is evil, is indeed a sage.

For that reason he is a sage.  
He who understands both sides  
in this world is called a sage.

## **The Best Method To End Suffering**

Of paths the Eightfold Path is the best;  
of truths the Four Words (Noble Truths);  
Detachments is the best of states and of bipeds  
the Seeing One (the Man of Vision).

This is the only Way. There is no other  
for the purification of Vision. Follow this Way:  
this is the bewilderment of *Mara* (Evil).

Following this Way you shall make an  
end of suffering. This verily is the  
Way declared by me when I had learnt  
to remove the arrow (of suffering).

### **Craving must be removed**

As a tree cut down sprouts forth again  
if its roots remain uninjured and strong,  
even so when the propensity to craving  
is not destroyed, this suffering  
arises again and again.

## **Try to be Restraint**

Good is restraint of the eye.  
Good is restraint of the ear.  
Good is restraint of the nose.  
Good is restraint of the tongue.

Good is restraint of the body.  
Good is restraint of the mind.  
Restraint everywhere is good.  
The bhikkhu restrained in every  
way is freed from all suffering.

## **Who is the real Bhikkhu**

He who is controlled in hand,  
controlled in foot, controlled in speech,  
and possessing the highest control  
(of mind), delighted within,  
composed, solitary and  
contented, him they call a bhikkhu.

## **The danger of telling lies**

There is no evil that cannot be  
done by the liar, who has transgressed  
the one law (of truthfulness) and  
who is indifferent to a world beyond.

## **Act Accordingly**

Though much he recites the Sacred  
Texts but acts not accordingly,  
that heedless man is like a cowherd  
who courts others' kine; he has no  
share in the blessings of a recluse.

Though little he recites the Sacred  
Texts but acts in accordance with  
the Teachings, and forsaking lust,  
hatred, and ignorance, truly knowing,  
with mind totally freed,  
clinging for naught here and hereafter,  
he shares the blessings of a recluse.

## **Make yourself an Island**

By effort; earnestness, discipline,  
and self-control let the wise man  
make for himself an island which  
no flood can overwhelm.

### **Guard Earnestness**

The ignorant, foolish folk indulge in heedlessness; but the wise man guards earnestness as the greatest treasure.

### **Mind Your Own Business**

He should not regard the faults of others, things done and left undone by others, but his own deeds done and undone.

### **Practice Is More Important**

As a flower that is lovely and beautiful, but is scentless, even so fruitless is the well-spoken word of one who practises it not.

### **Many words are not Necessary**

Better than a thousand useless words, is a single useful sentence, hearing which one is pacified.

## **Respect the elders**

For one who ever honours and respects the elders, four blessings increase – age, beauty, bliss, and power.

## **Single day of Virtuous Life**

Though he should live a hundred years, immoral and uncontrolled; yet better, indeed, is it to live a single day, virtuous and meditative.

## **No Man is Free From Blame and Praise**

There never was, there never will be, nor is there now, A person who is wholly blamed or wholly praised.

## **Parting word of the Buddha**

Transient are conditioned things.  
Try to accomplish your aim with diligence.



# IS BUDDHISM PRACTICAL TODAY?

Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda



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# **Is Buddhism Practical Today?**

*(A talk given at the University of Malaya)*

If we can understand the true nature of the "Buddha Dhamma", we need not ask if Buddhism is a practical religion. The word Buddhism can be interpreted in various ways. It is true that in the name of Buddhism there are many beliefs and practices, by people in many parts of the world, depending upon geographical and social conditions and these practices may not be meaningful to some intellectuals and critics of Buddhism because Buddhist practices vary and differ vastly from place to place. This is because many practices were introduced from time to time by the followers of the Buddha in order to explain certain difficult aspects of the Teachings and to get the masses to conform to

certain modes of behaviour. On a very broad general base, this meant of course that there is no strict uniformity in the general practice of Buddhism all over the world and what may seem meaningful in one cultural context (e.g. the Chinese) may seem meaningless in another, say an Indian or Western context. Many of these practices have their origins in the remote history of a community of people and are relevant to these people only. Buddhism, as a supremely tolerant religion does not contend that there is only one way to practice Buddhism and it does encourage meaningful traditions. However, the Buddha himself did not encourage people to follow any traditional practice if such a practice was meaningless. On the other hand, if by Buddhism is meant the "Dhamma" which teaches man how to live a righteous or noble way of life, then it is

practical, at any time in any part of the world. Hence as Buddhists we are not concerned so much with external physical show, as we are the essence of deeply spiritual attitude which controls our behaviour as individuals and as a community.

## **MISCONCEPTIONS**

The truth that the Buddha revealed as the "Dhamma" remains forever as Truth. Therefore there is nothing in the noble teachings of the Buddha, which we can call impractical or requiring change to many discourses taught by the Buddha which many people cannot understand properly. So different people tried to explain them in their own way, leading to a wide variety of interpretations. Hence we should not say that Buddhism is not practical today simply because

misconceptions about the Teachings exist. Such misconceptions were created by ignorance and confusion. Our way of life in modern society is such that we are bound to experience some difficulties when we want to observe certain noble religious principles. With our misunderstanding of the Teachings and our inability to make them relevant to the complexity of modern society we are tempted to say that Buddhism is not practical today. The Buddha was aware of these two problems, and He did not demand that we follow Him blindly, simply out of faith. Rather, He encouraged us to question and investigate until we get the correct answer to our questions. He knew that when the truth is realized there will be nothing left for us to doubt. We can then develop our confidence by using our common sense and intelligence and

understanding. We can appreciate what the Buddha really taught us as Buddhism only after intelligent investigation and questioning, and not by criticizing without understanding.

## **REMEDIES TO HUMAN WEAKNESSES**

If someone says that the Buddha's Teachings are impractical, that does not mean there is anything wrong with His Teaching. Rather it is possible that something is wrong somewhere in one's mind, in one's way of life. It would appear that one has strayed from the religious way of life - of morality or discipline in order to indulge in worldly pleasures and therefore such a person feels that Buddhist religious principles are not practical. Religious principles are very different from one's uncultured personal habits. Just

because these religious principles do not condone undisciplined behaviour, they cannot be described as impractical. If certain demands are made to control the mind, the senses to produce a noble being, these demands should not be deemed impractical. If you are very sick and a doctor gives you certain very bitter medicines, you cannot assume that the medicine is not effective. The doctor prescribed the medicine according to the nature of your sickness. Similarly, when the Buddha introduced religious principles, He realized that there were different types of people with different mentalities, characteristics, temperaments, ways of thinking and human weaknesses. Therefore, we should regard these principles as medicine, remedies to cope with human weaknesses and frailties. It is not conducive or appealing to the mind

when it comes to practising these principles. Why? When you come to practise them, you have to adopt certain disciplines and in so doing, you may feel that there is no "fun". Many people feel they must have some "fun" in whatever they are doing - whether it is in the name of religion or something else. Because religion will not provide the kind of sensual pleasures that they are craving for, they prefer to keep away from religion and designate themselves as free-thinkers. This is a lame excuse. Instead of admitting their own weaknesses they put the blame on religion, calling it impractical, out-of-date and irrelevant to modern society.

In my opinion, real free-thinkers are only found in mental asylums. These are the people who do anything and everything whenever they like. They follow their own whims and care nothing

for the needs of society. That is the reason why these "free-thinkers" are kept in restricted areas. People who claim to be free-thinkers are in fact running away from reality. They are not prepared to take a firm stand on any issue, choosing to follow anything which seems convenient to them at any particular time. As far as Buddhism is concerned, these people must understand that Buddhism is a way of life, encompassing many disciplines such as devotion and intellectualism. When we bring all these component parts together under one banner, we classify them as Buddhism, one of the great religions of the world.

## **COME AND SEE**

The word "Dhamma" can have so many meanings, such as justice, righteousness, natural phenomena, a

noble life, salvation or liberation and other characteristics. Therefore this is a word which we can explain in various ways. The Buddha introduced the "Dhamma" for us to practise but not to believe blindly. The followers of certain religions, other than Buddhism, when asked for the reasons why certain religious practices and beliefs have been carried out by their religious denominations, answer candidly that their practices and beliefs were described in their holy books. They say they had been taught by their religious teachings and their parents to believe without question whatever is found in their holy books and in accordance with traditions.

The Buddha said of His teaching: "Ehi-Passiko" which means "Come and See". He never ordered anyone to come and believe, or to come and accept. That is how He introduced His teachings from

the very beginning. Come and see, then investigate. Use your common sense and intelligence. Don't think that you have no thinking power to reason out things. Don't just accept the words of religious teachers thinking that they are great men, and must therefore be automatically right. It is not advisable to accept any religious principles including those written in holy books, if you cannot appreciate or understand the religious values and meanings behind them. You must use your common sense. The Buddha has given due credit to man's intelligence and his ability to use that intelligence, to think freely without depending solely on religious teachers or religious books.

## **IS THERE ANYTHING TO CHANGE?**

When you have independently and

intelligently decided for yourself whether something is good or bad, whether there is truth in it or not, whether there is reality or not, then only should you accept it. Otherwise, old beliefs will remain as mere beliefs, which you have accepted without proper understanding. Realization - this is the nature of Buddhism and this kind of Buddhism is practical at any time. You cannot change the basic principles of the Buddha according to your worldly needs. Although the Buddha introduced these principles more than 2,500 years ago, can anyone single out anything in the Buddha's "Dhamma", which is impractical, or where there is no reality? He advised us to cultivate our morality, by observing certain good principles or virtues. We have to practise this religion by first cultivating our moral behaviour. What is morality? We should not define this word very loosely

because there are so many laws introduced by man as moral or ethical, but man-made morals or ethics are changeable according to the period of time and society. Certain manners and morals are not suitable in certain countries and societies. Different people find different things immoral. But when you examine the moral code introduced by the Buddha you can understand why they remain unchanged and relevant at all time. They are natural moral laws, universally accepted because they have been prescribed through a deep understanding of humanity. If we lead a harmless life, as honest, sincere, kind and understanding persons without disturbing or hurting others, if we cultivate certain virtues such as patience, tolerance, kindness, compassion, understanding, then this is equated with the Buddha's morality. Is there anything for you to

change in this type of morality introduced by the Buddha? He has said, "The Dhamma I have revealed to you will exist forever in this universe. Therefore it is not a new Dhamma, or new teachings. The Dhamma exists now and forever." The Buddha did not claim to have created these universal laws. He merely understood them in their totality and explained them to humanity as the "Dhamma" as other Buddhas before Him had done. What is Dhamma? "Dhamma" is the universal law or the cosmic law. This universal law exists forever but due to our ignorance, we are unable to understand it and to live in accordance with it. The "Dhamma" exists even if through ignorance we deny such an existence. Here in this universe, many things exist which are very useful to mankind, but they have yet to be discovered. Comparatively scientists have

discovered very little, they have only discovered a tiny part of this universe. The Buddha, however has discovered and realised the existence of natural phenomena, the nature of matter, the nature of the mind, the nature of energy. He explained to us how these things reappear. This is the nature of the teachings of the Buddha. He revealed to us the nature of the Four Noble Truths.

### **Four Noble Truths**

They are:-

the Noble Truth of Suffering or unsatisfactoriness;

the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering;

the Noble Truth of the Cure of Suffering;

the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the End of Suffering.

There are many other truths, but the realization of such truths are not comparable to the realization of truths revealed by the Buddha because only through them can we become enlightened. Finally, through a realization of these truths we can see the end of our physical and mental suffering or unsatisfactoriness. This is the aim of Buddhism. Here in this world we can always find suffering and unsatisfactoriness in everything. This unsatisfactoriness is characterized by conflict, separation, physical and mental pain, clashes and disappointment. That is the nature of the First Truth. Can anyone claim there is any living being to whom this Truth does not apply? The Second Truth is the cause of

suffering. What is the cause of suffering and unsatisfactoriness? Many religious teachers have not discovered this cause. They thought that the cause is external but the Buddha realised that the cause is not elsewhere but within us. We are responsible. We have created all these causes. The cause is here, within us - our strong attachment, our craving towards worldly pleasures and craving for existence. These are the causes. You cannot find any other cause for all these human sufferings. We do wrong things either for our living or for our sensual gratification. This cannot be denied. Then how can we blame external "causes for our pain and suffering?" How can we say Buddhism is not practical when it alone identifies the causes of pain and suffering and suggests a way out of human misery?

## **WHAT IS RELIGION?**

If there is a practical method for human beings to realize the truth about their existence, by gaining knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment, by leading a noble life, and by eradicating suffering, that method is deemed a "religion". That is the definition given by the Buddha to this word Religion. Therefore religion can be described as a path or method for us to eradicate our suffering. This path is called the Noble Eightfold Path. There are many things for us to do all the time. We do not merely visit the temple and pray only. We are encouraged to do good and avoid evil all the time. That is why the method is called the Noble Path because it raises man to a higher level of existence. First, you must try to gain Right Understanding.

*Right Understanding* means: understanding the nature of the Four Noble Truths. Whatever you do, whether it is in the name of religion or otherwise, you must first know how to develop right understanding. If that right understanding is not there you cannot reach the final goal. When the Buddha started His mission to tell us how to find out a solution to end suffering, He introduced right understanding. He had never advised anyone to believe first without right understanding. You have a mind to think but you are wasting your mental energy with unnecessary thoughts. If you can conserve your mental energy without wasting it on unnecessary thoughts you can use this energy to serve others, to cultivate yourself, to gain more knowledge, more wisdom and to understand how to overcome many problems which you are

facing today. We are generally unsuccessful because we waste so much valuable energy on unnecessary things.

*Right Thought* means: using your mental energy and diverting it to prevent certain harmful thoughts. You must understand the nature of your mind. Everyone tries to understand the nature of the minds of others but few ever try to understand the nature of their own minds. There are so many bad elements in our own mind. These bad elements create enormous troubles, mistakes and worries to others and as well as to ourselves. Try to control them, try to suppress them or better still, replace them with wholesome thoughts and only then can you eradicate these defilements. That is the way to think properly, that is the way to utilise your thinking powers to achieve success. When we have learned to control and focus our

mental energy, we can even laugh at problems because we have so much strength to overcome them. No one can topple us, no one can irritate or disturb us, because we are very energetic and we have no fear. We develop self-confidence to face any problems, mental or physical. That is why we should conserve our mental energy by using Right Thought to eradicate hatred and cultivate loving-kindness. Cultivate right thoughts to develop detachment, so that we can assess each problem objectively without wasting our precious energy on emotional excesses.

*Right Speech.* The words we utter sometimes hurt others. We create difficulties by using thoughtless words. Therefore, before we convert our thoughts into words, we must know how to guard our tongues. We must have knowledge

and awareness to guard against using words irresponsibly. We must think twice before we utter certain words. We must weigh them as to whether they are bad, harsh or useless words. The wrong use of words will create a very bad impression.

*Right Action.* We should try, not to be selfish, and think only about our own welfare. We have to think about the welfare of others also. If our actions are wrong, painful, hurting or damaging to others, we must try to avoid them. Our actions must be useful to us as well as to others, some are useful to others but not to us. The Buddha said, "Be wise". We can help others, but at the same time, we have to look after ourselves mindfully. Don't act foolishly, act wisely." See that our actions bring benefits to all concerned. There should be no violation of the five moral principles or Precepts introduced

by the Buddha.

*Right Livelihood.* We have to earn a living to sustain our lives. We either work or conduct some business. Whatever we do must be in accordance with our conscience. There are people who do business by swindling, cheating or hurting others. Such people can become rich by adopting such methods but is it a respectable way of life? It is not. In whatever we do, we must be reasonable, decent and just. In whatever methods we adopt for our livelihood, we should avoid that which involves the killing of living beings, the trafficking in human beings, the sale of intoxicants, poisons, dangerous drugs and lethal weapons.

*Right Effort.* We should use our physical or mental energy wisely. It should be of service to others by way of cultural, spiritual and religious development, we

should train our minds to be good, honest, kind and just. We must harness our mental energy to cultivate good thoughts and to avoid all evil.

*Right Mindfulness.* Whatever we do, our minds must always be alert, whenever we talk, our minds must be on guard. We must not allow our minds to be distracted. Whenever we want to do something we must do it mindfully by being completely aware of what we are doing. In this way, we will be able to do our work efficiently. This mindfulness must be practised on all occasions in our day-to-day lives.

The final step is *Right Concentration or Mental Culture*. Our minds are not properly trained. That is why we make mistakes and we worry. We must train our mind by conserving our mental energy. The mind is very energetic

and at the same time almost uncontrollable. By using the same mental energy that we have conserved, we can tame it. Once we have tamed our mind, we will become reliable, understanding, kind, just and fair human beings. However, this is a very difficult process. Very few people have trained their minds properly. That is why the world is so full of unreliable people, who are wicked, crooked and selfish. If man's mind is cultured everyone can live peacefully. The main cause of our human problems is due to man's uncultured mind which is dominated by craving, hatred and ignorance. When these evil forces are eradicated, peace and happiness will prevail. The experience is remarkable.

## **IS IT NOT PRACTICAL?**

This is the Path - The Noble

Eightfold Path expounded by the Buddha for man to lead a religious life. It is a practical method not based on mere faith. We can practise every method, every step and every item and see the results for ourselves, whether they are right or wrong, whether they are practical or not. That is why the Buddha said Buddhism is timeless. This is a method we have to practise at anytime, anywhere, in any society. Look at the way the Buddha expounded this religious way of life. Can any sane man say that it is not practical or useless? When we practice these methods we will find that it is not so easy because we need enormous will-power. that is why some say it is not practical. But remember, it is practical, it is useful, it is noble. Unfortunately, the world where we live is so corrupted that we cannot practise this noble method peacefully

without facing problems. When we try to practise certain virtues there will be many wicked, cunning and selfish people who will try to ridicule us and regard us as fools. To the wicked, religious people are fools and crooked people are clever. The nature of modern society is such that it is difficult for us to lead a noble religious way of life. The Buddha explained the nature of the universe with great clarity. He explained those things which were relevant for us to understand the nature of this existence. He alone taught us a practical and reliable way to overcome the uncertainties of worldly conditions and pain and misery. His Dhamma is eternal.

"Esa Dhammo Sanantano"

This Dhamma is eternal

*Buddha*  
*(Dhammapada-5)*

# Who Is Responsible For Our Problems?



by Dr K. Sri Dhammananda

# Introduction

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR PROBLEMS?

One of the greatest miracles in existence is the fact that human beings are so alike. There are more than six billion of us on this planet and we come in such a wide variety of shapes, colours and sizes and we are so different in our beliefs, our preferences and our tastes. Yet when it comes to behaviours we are so much alike. To begin with we are masters of the art of survival. We have learned so cleverly to pursue the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant because by doing this we can convince ourselves that life is pleasurable and worth clinging on to. We are like the man who clung to the beehive to enjoy the honey although he was in grave danger. The vast majority of us cling desperately to the joys of the world, and go on creating more in a futile effort to pretend that existence is pleasurable.

Another way in which we try to wriggle out of life's ever present irritations is by distancing ourselves from our problems. From the earliest times our ancestors shrugged off their problems by blaming the malevolent invisible spirits around them. They set up elaborate rituals to bribe these spirits to work in their favour and even to bring more harm to their enemies. These animistic practices then gave way to the Creator God concept whom people blamed for whatever calamity befell them. They gave various excuses for the ill-treatment they received at the hands of this deity:

that it was testing their loyalty, that it was punishing them for their misdemeanours or that it had a grand design for their suffering which it was not their place to question. Whatever it was, the blame on suffering was always put on someone else.

Even on a much more mundane level today, we all try to create a comfort zone for ourselves by blaming others for any misfortune which may befall us. We refuse to see things as they really are and always see ourselves as the innocent party. This 'passing - the - buck' goes all the way up to the great power brokers in world politics. Everywhere we see leaders of powerful nations piously declaring others as part of the "axis-of-evil" while they portray themselves as the innocent victims, or at least as superheroes out to save the world from danger. But as someone said,

"You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time. But you cannot fool all of the people all of time". Somewhere along the line the truth will come out and it will be found that those who blamed others were the ones to be blamed in the first place.

If we examine our own lives carefully we will also find that we constantly look for others to blame for our problems, the problems will never go away. The Buddha taught that we are the sole cause of any evil that befalls us. To seek someone else to blame is futile and will lead nowhere. He says;

"Mind is the forerunner of all states  
If one thinks with an evil mind

Then evil will follow him  
As surely as the wheels of the cart  
Follow the hooves of the ox”

The first step in seeking permanent happiness is to develop the faculty of self-criticism. This is not a negative, pessimistic exercise. We must learn to observe ourselves impartially, and then we will see that when anything happens, which causes us to be happy or angry or sad, we are ultimately the ones who made it happen. No one can make us happy or unhappy, only we can do that to ourselves. This is a marvelously practical teaching. If we can master it, not only will we be able to spend our time profitably, we will also become well liked by those around us. Nothing can be gained by blaming others - everything can be gained by tracing any undesirable state of mind to ourselves as the cause and actively trying to remove that cause . This is the secret of happiness.

This present book, “Who is Responsible for our Problems” has been written by a person with more than fifty years of experience teaching the secret of happiness. Throughout these years he has come across countless examples of people who suffered because they looked outside themselves to solve their problems. With characteristic wit and humor he examines the world we live in, with the people who share it with us and he gives us numerous facets of advice to experience happiness and fulfillment in our daily existence.

**VIJAYA SAMARAWICKRAMA**  
25.7.2004

**WHO IS  
RESPONSIBLE  
FOR OUR  
PROBLEMS?**

By Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda

Whenever we face some problems we are ever ready to put to blame on others for own misfortunes. We do this because with our egocentric natures we are reluctant to turn the mirror on ourselves and recognize that in many cases we ourselves are the causes of these very problems. If we are prepared to be honest with ourselves and open our minds with proper mental cultivation, to “see-things-as-they-really-are”, and look at ourselves and our actions in our unbiased manner we will be able to get at the root of our problem and be a blessing not only to ourselves but others as well.

***Fear and Worry***

Fear and worry are born of the imaginings of a mind that is influenced by worldly conditions. They are rooted in craving and attachment. In fact, life is like a motion picture in which everything is constantly moving and changing. Nothing in this world is permanent or still. Those who are youth-ful and strong have fear of dying young. Those who are old and suffering worry about living too long. Locked in between are those who craze for merriment all the year round.

Joyful expectations of the pleasant seem to pass

off too quickly. Fearful expectations of the unpleasant create anxieties that do not seem to go away. Such feelings are natural. Such ups and downs of life play with an illusory self or ego like puppets on a string. But the mind is supreme unto itself.

The training of the mind, otherwise known as mental culture, is the first step towards taming mental unrest. The Buddha has explained:

*“From craving springs grief,  
from craving springs fear,  
For him who is wholly free from craving,  
there is no grief, much less fear.”*

All attachments will end in sorrow. Neither tears nor long goodbyes can end the transitoriness of life. All compounded things are impermanent.

Old and young suffer in this existence. No one is exempted. Many teenagers have growing pains. Being neither frogs nor tadpoles, teenagers are understandably inexperienced at building stable relationships with members of the opposite sex. They try to show off their beauty in trying to impress their opposite sex who are flattered to see

themselves as sex objects. Both try to behave not as they really are but as what they think is adult. They are afraid that if they behave naturally they will be laughed at. Behaviour like this has the potential for exploitation. There is fear of rejection as well as worry about deflated egos. Unrequited love will often 'break' many teenage hearts because they feel they have made 'fools of themselves'. Some are even driven to commit suicide. But such traumas could be avoided if life is seen as it really is. Young people must be taught the Buddhist approach to life, so that they can grow into maturity the correct way.

*"Wheresoever fear arises, it arises in the fool, not in the wise man."* says the Buddha. Fear is nothing more than a state of mind. One's state of mind is subject to control and direction; the negative use of thought produces fear, the positive use realizes hopes and ideals. The choice rests entirely with ourselves. Every human being has the ability to control his own mind. Nature has endowed man with absolute control over one thing, and that is thought. Everything a man creates begins in the

form of a thought. Here is the key to help one understand the principle by which fear may be mastered.

A noted British anatomist was once asked by a student what was the best cure for fear, and he answered, "*Try doing something for someone.*"

The student was considerably astonished by the reply, and requested further enlightenment whereupon his instructor said, "*You can't have two opposing sets of thoughts in your mind at one and the same time.*" One set of thoughts will always drive the other out. If, for instance, your mind is completely occupied with an unselfish desire to help someone else, you can't be harbouring fear at the same time.

*"Worry dries up the blood sooner than age."*  
Fear and worry in moderation are natural instincts of self-preservation. But constant irrational fear and prolonged worry are relentless enemies to the human body. They derange the normal bodily functions.

## ***Control your Mind***

Man's mind influences his body profoundly. The mind has just as much potential to be a medication as it has to be a poison. When the mind is vicious, it can kill a being but when it is steady and diligent it can benefit others. When the mind is concentrated on right thoughts, and supported by right effort and understanding, the effect it produces is immense. A mind with pure and wholesome thoughts leads to healthy relaxed living.

The Buddha says: "*No enemy can harm one so much as one's own thoughts of craving, thoughts of hate, thoughts of jealousy and so on.*"

A man who does not know how to adjust his mind according to circumstances is as if dead. Turn your mind inwards, and try to find pleasure within yourself.

It is only when the mind is controlled and properly directed that it becomes useful to its owner and society. An unruly mind is a liability both to its owner and to others. All the havoc wrought in this world is the creation of men who have not learned the way of mind control, balance

and poise.

Calmness is not weakness. A calm attitude at all times shows a man of culture. It is not too hard for one to be calm when things are favourable, but to be composed when things are wrong is hard indeed. It is this difficult quality that is worth achieving, for by exercising such calm and control, a man builds strength of character.

### *The Voice of Nature*

Modern man does not listen to the voice of nature because of his preoccupation with material gain and pleasure. His mental activities are so preoccupied with worldly pleasures that he neglects the needs of his spiritual self. This unnatural behaviour of contemporary man immediately results in a wrong world view of human life and its ultimate purpose. It is the cause of all the frustration, anxiety, fear and insecurity of our present times.

If man is cruel and wicked, lives against the laws of nature and the cosmos, his acts, words and thoughts pollute the whole atmosphere. Nature abused will not provide what man requires for his

living; instead, clashes, conflicts, epidemics and disasters will be in store for him.

If man lives in accordance with this natural law, leads a righteous life, purifies the atmosphere through the merits of his virtues and radiates his compassionate love towards other living beings, he can bring about human happiness. One who really likes peace should not violate another man's freedom. It is wrong to disturb and deceive others.

You may be a very busy person, but spend at least a few minutes a day in meditation or in reading some valuable books. This habit will relieve you of your worries and will develop your mind. Religion is for your benefit. Therefore, it is your duty to think about your religion. Spare some time to attend gatherings held in a religious atmosphere. Even a short period spent in the company of spiritually inclined people will produce good results.

### ***Mental Health and Criminal Tendencies***

The increase of all kinds of mental ailments and disturbances is the most alarming of all diseases of

the modern age. There are more and more mentally sick patients all over the world; especially in affluent countries.

In many cases the criminal element within our society is mentioned in the same breath as mental illness. One positive and far-reaching result stemming directly from the research work of Freud, is the recognition that criminals and delinquents are mentally sick people, who need treatment rather than punishment. It is this liberal outlook on the problem that is the basis of all “progressive” social reform to replace punishment with rehabilitation.

### ***Know Thy Neighbour***

When we do not see how other people live, we may not learn the different ways of living. Travel is the best form of education. Personal encounters with people different from ourselves make us feel more sympathetic. Intolerance is often born of ignorance of another person’s needs and way of thinking.

### ***Man's Unhappiness***

The Buddha taught that all of man's unhappiness results from selfish desire: more pleasure that money can buy, more power over other men, and, most important of all, to live forever, even after death! The desire for these things makes people selfish. They think only of themselves, want things only for themselves, and do not care about what happens to other people. When their wishes are not fulfilled, they become restless and discontented. The only way to avoid this restlessness is to get rid of the desires that cause it. This is very difficult; but when a man achieves it, he appreciates it.

### ***Time will Heal Our Wounds***

Trouble passes. What has caused you to burst into tears will soon be forgotten. You may remember that you cried but not why you did so! As we grow up and go through life, we are often surprised at how we lie awake at night brooding over something that has upset us during the day, or how we nurse resentment against someone by letting the same thoughts run through our minds concerning

how to have our own back. We may fall into a rage at the spur of the moment over something, and later wonder what it was we were so angry about, and be surprised to realise what a waste of time and energy it had all been. We have deliberately gone on being unhappy when we could have stopped being so and started thinking about something else more wholesome.

Whatever our troubles are, and however aggrieved we may feel, time will heal our wounds. But surely there must be something we can do to prevent ourselves from being hurt in the first place. Why should we allow others or troubles to drain away our energy and make us unhappy? The answer is that they do not. It is we who make ourselves unhappy.

You may have some trouble in your work place but you should not infect your home with a bad atmosphere. You should realise that there is an end to those problems. The solutions could be found in achieving freedom from our selfish desires by eradicating all forms of confusion and ignorance.

Whenever we fail to find a solution to a problem,

we are inclined to find a scapegoat, to vent our frustration. We are not prepared to admit our own shortcomings. It is easier to put the blame on others. In fact, some even take pleasure in doing so. This is a completely wrong attitude to adopt. We must not show resentment towards others. We should do our utmost, pains-takingly and calmly, to resolve our own problems. We must be prepared to face up to any difficulties that we encounter.

### ***Healthy Atmosphere***

Jokes and remarks directed at you in bad taste should be deflected with good humour. This is one way to avoid enmity with anybody. Losing your cool while playing the game will get you strung up. You will forfeit a possible win. That will even spoil the pleasure of those watching the game.

There is no way you can change everyone in this world to your way of thinking. It is not even desirable. If everyone agrees with you, the world will soon run out of ideas.

There are many ways of correcting a person when he is wrong. By criticising, blaming and

railing at him in public, you will be humiliating and not correcting him. Criticism is certain to make more enemies. If you can show concern for a man's future good with kind words, he will thank you for it someday.

Never use harsh or unpleasant words whenever you express your views on issues. Diplomacy, gentleness and politeness do not hurt anybody. In fact they will open many doors.

Do not feel defensive when your own faults are pointed out. Your faults are your signposts for learning perfection. Temper is a poor camouflage for shortcomings. When someone loses his temper he will blurt out too many things better left unsaid. Never reveal a former friend's personal secret no matter how angry you are with him now. You will only degrade yourself in the process and others could never accept you as a sincere friend thereafter. Others will think you could do the same thing you did to injure a former friend: no one will trust you.

### ***Have Courage to Face Criticism***

*Sweetness creates sickness, bitterness comes with*

*the cure.* Praise is sweetness, an excess of which causes sickness; and criticism is like a bitter pill which cures. We must have the courage to welcome criticism and not be afraid of it.

*“The ugliness we see in others  
Is a reflection of our own nature”*

A man's life, circumstances and world are a reflection of his own thoughts and beliefs. All men are mirrors to themselves, sores, ills, and all.

### ***Happiness and Materialism***

Many people believe they can solve all their problems by just having money. They however fail to realise that money itself has its attendant problems. Money cannot solve all problems.

Most people never think properly. All through their lives they are like race-track greyhounds running after a rabbit decoy. When the chase ends, all excitement disappears. This is very much like the nature of sensual happiness in the wonderland of materialism. As soon as the desired object is attained, the happiness ends and new desires arise. Getting the object appears not quite as satisfying

as the chase itself.

Or when we lose something, remember the following advice:-

*“Say not that this is yours and that is mine,  
Just say, this came to you and that to me,  
So we may not regret the fading shine,  
Of all the glorious things which ceased to be.”*

Wealth is not something for you to accumulate for craving's sake. It is intended for your welfare as well as of others. Try to make the world around you a better place to live in. Use your wealth wisely to reduce the sufferings of the poor, the sick and the aged. Fulfill your duties to your people, your country and your religion. When the time comes for you to leave, imagine what peace and bliss they could bring as you recall the past good and selfless deeds you have done.

To seek wealth through gambling is like expecting a passing cloud to shelter us from the sun. On the other hand, to aspire for prosperity through diligent work is as secure as building a permanent shelter against sun and rain.

*“Your property will remain when you die. Your*

*friends and relatives will follow you up to your grave. But only good or bad actions you have done during your life-time (Karma) will follow you beyond the grave.”*

Fulfilling dreams of riches may sound magical, but fear and worry always lie in wait for such magic to wear off. A rich lifestyle brings its share of mental disturbance. With an abundance of ill-used wealth, simple things in life like friendship, trust and confidence which are taken for granted in humbler circumstances become impossible to attain. When a lifestyle begins to create insecurity, it requires wisdom to put oneself on the right track again. Riches have their trade-offs; the happiness of owning them is diminished by as much fear and worry about losing them.

For our personal happiness we should acquire wealth righteously. *“Blessed are they who earn their living without harming others”* says the Buddha. Happiness cannot be long-lived and meaningful if wealth leaves sorrow and suffering in its wake. Wealth flouted arouses envy; but wealth well-conducted earns respect.

*Your wealth can only edify your house but not you. Only your own virtue can edify you. Your dress can adorn your body but not you. Only your good conduct can.*

Ultimately, it is bliss to know that “happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself.” The world may not be what you want it to be but you can tune your heart to find happiness within it. It is only when you have suffered for doing good that you can rise above others in understanding and personal happiness.

*“If we want to find happiness, let us stop thinking about gratitude or ingratitude and give for the inner joy of giving. Ingratitude is natural—like weeds. Gratitude is like a rose. It has to be fed, watered and cultivated and loved and protected.”*

*(Dale Carnegie)*

### ***Act Wisely***

Man must know how to use his youth, wealth and knowledge at the proper time and place and in the proper way for his own benefit as well as for

others. If he misuses his privilege, it will only cause his down-fall. *“Man must be strong enough to know when he is weak, brave enough to encounter fear, proud and unbending in honest defeat, humble and gentle in victory.”*

Some people have blessings of sudden wealth through chance or inheritance. But not many are endowed with the wisdom to protect, conserve or put it to good use. Anything that is not earned through the sweat of one's brow tends to be squandered through abuse.

### ***Adjust Ourselves***

Customs and traditions are important bonds for the learning and sharing of human experience in any community. The dilemma we face in an ever changing world is whether to live with or break with the past. There will always be a 'generation gap' between the old and the young because of differing perceptions of changing circumstances and values. The old fear the young may lose their heritage and the young worry that an ancient past may become a stumbling block in modern living.

Change must always be considered carefully.

Popular culture creates momentary idols and folk heroes who portray images of conflicting lifestyles. Mass media helps to reinforce this and young minds are prone to accept everything they stand for. There may be political or social messages in such movements like the Hippie or Yuppie movements but it is vital for the young to have the wisdom of the old to separate the good from the bad. Time-tested and proven good old values do not change. Values like thrift, honesty, liberality and hard work for dignified living remain fresh in any community.

In an Asian setting marriage and funeral customs and traditions are very important. The question is whether we should spend so much money and time to carry out these customs and traditions in the modern world. Are they really necessary? There is no better advice than what the Buddha gave in the Kalama Sutta:

“When you know in yourselves ‘These ideas are unprofitable, liable to censure, condemned by the wise, being adopted and put into effect they

lead to harm and suffering, then you should abandon them.... When you know in yourselves 'These things are wholesome, blameless, commended by the wise, being adopted and put into effect they lead to welfare and happiness' then you should practise them and abide in them."

Every man is a creature of the universe. So long as man is concerned with humanising society and the re-ordering of the world for the better, time will always bridge the gap between the young and the old. Worry and fear over the direction of change will lose their grip. The old only have to remember how their own parents had objected to certain modern ways of living prevalent at the time when they were young. Tolerance for differences on an issue is a virtue. An open attitude can only be a happy one.

### ***Mind your own Business***

It is bliss to be able to attend to your own affairs without entertaining doubts about others. Here is the Buddha's advice:

*"One should not accuse others for the mistakes*

*and things done and left undone by them, but one's own deeds of commission and omission."*

*"He who is always observant of others' faults, and is irritable, his own defilements increase. He is far from the destruction of defilement."*

*"Easy to see the faults of others; but one's own is difficult to see. One winnows other's faults like chaff; but one's own one hides as a crafty fowler covers himself."*

No one is free from blame and criticism. The Buddha says:

*"People blame others for their silence. They blame those who talk much and those who talk in moderation. There is therefore no one in this world who is not blamed." Further He says: "There never was, nor will be, nor is there now, any one who is wholly blamed or wholly praised."*

Not all those who criticise you are your enemies. You can use the opportunity of their remarks to find out the weaknesses in yourself which you cannot see.

You should not give up good work just because of criticism. If you can admit your own weakness, indeed you have the intellectual strength to succeed.

*“The noble ones swerve not from the right path, let happen what may and crave no longer after worldly joys. The wise remain calm and constant in mind, alike in joy and in sorrow.”*

### ***Be Unbiased***

You should not come to any hasty decision regarding any matter when you are in a bad mood or under provocation. Any decision or conclusion reached during such a period would be a matter you could regret one day. Allow your mind to calm down first and think. Then, your judgment will be an unbiased one.

Cultivate tolerance, for tolerance helps you to sympathise with other people’s troubles. Avoid unnecessary criticism. Try to realize that even the finest human being is not infallible. The weakness you find in your neighbour can be found in yourself. It has been said that you should not throw

stones at others while staying in glass houses.

### ***Humility***

Humility is the wise man's measure for knowing the difference between what is and what is yet to be. "The Buddha himself started His ministry by discarding all His princely pride in an act of self-humiliation. He attained sainthood during His life, but never lost His naturalness, never assumed superior airs. His dissertations and parables were never pompous. He had time for the most humble of men. He never lost His sense of humour."

### ***Waste not your Time***

To waste a man's existence in worrying about the future, grieving over the past, or in idleness or heedlessness, is to show his unfitness for the noble place he holds as the best of earthly creatures. He will thus create bad karma which will relegate him to a place befitting his unworthiness. Bear this in mind, and do good while life lasts. By wasting your time, you injure not only yourself but also others, for your time is as much others' as it is yours.

## ***Patience and Tolerance***

Be patient with all. Anger leads one along a blind path. While it irritates and annoys others, it also hurts oneself. Anger weakens the physical body and disturbs the mind. A harsh word, like an arrow discharged from a bow, can never be retrieved even if you would offer a thousand apologies.

*Certain creatures cannot see in the day-time whilst some others are blind at night. But a man driven to great heights of hatred does not observe anything, either by day or night.*

With whom and with what do you fight when you are angry? You fight with yourself, for you are the worst enemy of yourself. The mind is your best friend but it can easily become your worst foe. Some varieties of heart trouble, rheumatic disorders, and skin diseases are traceable to chronic resentment, hatred and jealousy. Such destructive feelings poison the heart. They foster the development of latent diseases by reducing the body's natural defences against disease microbes.

### ***Returning Good for Evil***

If you want to be rid of your enemies, you must first kill the greatest enemy within you—your anger. If you are to be perturbed by distractions from your enemies, it means you are fulfilling the wishes of your enemies by unknowingly entering their trap.

You should not think that you can only learn from those who praise you, help you, and associate with you very closely. You could learn many things from your enemies. You should not think they are entirely wrong just because they happen to be your enemies. They may also possess certain good qualities.

You cannot get rid of your enemies by returning evil for evil; that will only be inviting more enemies. The best method to counter your enemies is to radiate your compassionate love towards them. You may think that this is impossible or something nonsensical. But this is the proven way of every cultured man. When you come to know that there is someone who is very angry with you, you should first try to find out the main cause. If it is due to

your mistake, you should admit it and not hesitate to apologise to him. If it is due to certain misunderstandings between you both, you must enlighten him with a heart to heart talk.

If it is due to jealousy, try radiating your compassionate love. You could influence him by your mental vibrations. You may not be able to understand how it works but the experience of many people has shown that it is the most powerful, intelligent and easy method to win friends. It is highly recommended in Buddhism. Of course, to do this, you must have confidence and patience in yourself. By doing this, you will be able to make your enemy understand that he is in the wrong. Besides, you are also benefited in various ways for not accommodating enmity in your heart.

### ***Compassionate Love***

As long as there is one single fellow creature whom you can console by your kind words, whom you can enliven and cheer by your presence, whom you can help with your worldly possessions, however little that charity may be, you are a

precious possession to the human race. You should never be disheartened or depressed.

There may be times when those you love do not seem to care for you, and you are apt to have a heavy heart. But there is no just cause for dejection. What does anything matter so long as you know that you are full of compassion for your fellow men? One should never depend on others for one's happiness. *He who expects to secure satisfaction in life from others is worse than the beggar who kneels and cries for his daily bread.*

### ***The Menace of Drug Abuse & Alcoholism***

Alcohol has been described as one of the prime causes of man's physical and moral degradation. Currently, another more vicious form of abuse, that of harmful and dangerous drugs, especially heroin, has created a much more serious human and social problem. This problem is now world-wide. The repercussions of drug abuse are more serious and deadly than those of alcohol. Theft, robbery, sex-related crimes and swindling of vast sums of money have occurred under the perni-

cious influence of drug abuse.

Drug lords, not being content as death merchants have even tried to control weak governments through corruption, bribery, subversion and bombings. As a matter of public policy, governments have to protect their citizens against drug abuse. Yet, drug lords in their devilish schemes have threatened the very foundation of society—human dignity. Spokesmen of conscience and their families constantly run the risk of death because they dare to cross the lawless path of drug lords.

Without international co-operation to stamp out this evil, the vitality and the future of many nations will be bleak indeed. Worldwide, countless millions of hard-earned dollars have been spent to rid the addicts of their evil habits but the maddening craze persists. It is our duty to help in whatever manner we can, to eradicate this dreadful habit and to prevent our children from ever getting near it.

Life as a drug addict or an alcoholic is a life of torture and hell on earth, leading one to an early

grave.

### ***Drunkenness***

Drunkenness expels reason,

    Drowns memory,

Defaces the brain,

    Diminishes strength,

Inflames the blood,

    Causes external and internal incurable wounds.

Is a witch to the body,

    A devil to the mind,

A thief to the purse,

    The beggar's curse,

The wife's woe,

    The children's sorrow,

The picture of a beast,

    And self murder,

Who drinks to other's health,

    And robs himself of his own.

As human beings, we should have self-control to distinguish between what is good and evil. Keep away from drug abuse and alcoholism and help

others to do so. That will be the greatest service to humanity.

### ***You Create Heaven and Hell Here***

“If you want to live in this world peacefully and happily, allow others also to live peacefully and happily, so that you can make this world something which is worthy of life.” Unless and until you adjust yourself to live according to these noble principles, you cannot expect happiness and peace in this world. You cannot expect this happiness and peace from heaven simply by praying.

If you act according to moral principles by upholding human dignity, you can create your own heaven right here in this world. You can also create the hell-fire on this earth itself if you abuse valuable human life. By not knowing how to live according to this universal cosmic law, we often stumble. If each man tries to lead a harmless and respectable life, people can enjoy real heavenly bliss better than the kind that some people hope to gain after death.

It is superfluous to create a heaven elsewhere to

reward virtue, or a hell to punish vice; virtue and evil have inevitable reactions in this world itself regardless of religious faith. Compassion for all creatures is the only way to create heaven. We can have this irresistible luminous ideal for the good of society and country by breathing tolerance and sympathy for others' progress and happiness. We have come this far as a human race because illustrious individuals have shown us the way. By helping others morally, you help yourself and by helping yourself morally, you help others.

### ***Happy Married Life***

In a true marriage, man and woman think more of the partnership than they do of themselves. Marriage is a bicycle made for two. A feeling of security and contentment comes from mutual efforts. Impatience and misunderstanding are responsible for most family problems. A wife is not her husband's servant. She deserves respect as an equal. Though a husband has the bread winner's duties, helping out with household chores does not demean a husband's masculinity. At the same

time, a nagging and grumpy wife is not going to make up for shortages in the home. Neither will her suspicion of her husband help to make a happy marriage. If her husband has shortcomings, only tolerance and kind words will get him to see light. Right understanding and moral conduct are the practical side of wisdom.

Marriage is a blessing but many people turn their married lives into a curse. Poverty is not the main cause of an unhappy married life. Both husband and wife must learn to share the pleasure and pain of everything in their daily lives. Mutual understanding is the secret of a happy family life.

### ***Worry Not***

The secret of happy successful living is to do what needs to be done now, and not worry about the past or the future. We cannot reshape the past nor can we anticipate everything in the future. There is but one moment of time over which we have some conscious control and that is the present.

Many people just worry about their future. They have to learn to adjust themselves to the

circumstances. Whatever castles they may build in the air, whatever dreams they may have, they must always remember that they are living in this world of constant friction and change.

“There are no stars which we could trust,  
There is no guiding light,  
And we know that we must,  
BE GOOD, BE JUST, BE RIGHT.”

### *Pillars of Success*

Failures are but the pillars of success. To learn by our failures is to achieve success. Never to have failed is never to have won. Unless we experience failure and its bitterness, we never appreciate the sweetness of victory; it becomes merely a turn of events that is of little or no interest. Failures not only help us to succeed, they make us energetic, enthusiastic, and rich in experience.

“ We live and work and dream,  
Each has his little scheme,  
Sometimes we laugh;  
Sometimes we cry,  
And thus the days go by.”

### ***The Real Beauty***

Physical ugliness is no handicap to a charming personality. If an ugly person cultivates the virtue of compassionate love, that love will show in so many winning ways—serenity, radiance, kindness and gentleness. That kind of attractiveness will easily compensate for any shortcomings in appearance.

By comparison, a handsome person with airs or conceit, will look so unappealing and repulsive. Inner charm is the real beauty. It has a special quality and attractiveness.

### ***Why is it Difficult to Depart from this World?***

For most people, death is an unwelcome event. With so many cravings to be satisfied, the business of living in spite of enormous suffering is never quite finished. People feel more comfortable with the mirage of happiness than with the reality of death. If at all they have to think about it, it only has a slot in the eleventh hour.

Attachments to worldly life create a morbid fear of death. But the truth is that all life is nothing but

suffering. Death is natural and inevitable. It is not half as frightening as the thought of dying itself. The mind has an ability of its own to create and to stretch phantom images of death. The reason is that a mind untrained to see life with all its impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, is likely to cling to illusions just as a drowning man will even cling to a straw.

It creates uneasiness even for those who fervently pray to an imaginary supernatural being for forgiveness and a place in heaven when life seems hopeless. Of course the fear of death is a manifestation of instinctive self-preservation. But there is a way to overcome that fear. Do some selfless service for the welfare of others to gain hope and confidence in the next life. Altruism purges all selfish attachments.

Purity of the mind, not attachment to worldly things, will ensure a happy parting from this world. It is the constant contemplation on death to understand the impermanence of life, and the wisdom to correct the wrong way of living, that take the fear out of death. Strengthen the mind to face facts and

realities of life. Avoid unrealistic and impracticable ambitions. Develop self-confidence. Then you will be more relaxed in overcoming your difficulties in life.

### ***Responsibilities***

We are all inclined to blame others for our own shortcomings and misfortunes. Have you ever given a thought that you yourself could be responsible for your own problems? Your sorrow has nothing to do with a family curse or the original sin of an ancestor. Neither is it the work of a god or a devil. Your sorrow is of your own making. You are therefore your own jailor and your own liberator. At the same time, you create your own hell and your own heaven. You have the potentiality of becoming a sinner or a saint. No other person can make you a sinner or a saint.

You must learn to shoulder the responsibilities of your own life. You have to learn to admit your own weaknesses without blaming or disturbing others. Remember the old saying:-

*The uncultured man always blames others;*

*the semi-cultured man blames himself and the fully-cultured man blames neither.'*

Whenever any problem arises, we as understanding people should try to find out ourselves where the mistake lies without blaming anybody. If each person could try to correct himself, there would not be any trouble or conflict in this world. But people just do not make the effort to improve their understanding by acting unbiasedly. They prefer to find scapegoats. They look outside of themselves for the source of their troubles because they are reluctant to admit their own weaknesses.

Man's mind is given to so much self-deceit that he will try to find some excuse to justify his action so as to create an illusion that he is blameless. The Buddha says:-

*'Easily seen are other's faults; hard indeed it is to see one's own faults.'* Dh.

To hide their weaknesses with disclaimers for mistakes, many people adopt an aggressive attitude towards others thinking that by so doing,

they can avoid the shameful situation or the cause of the complaint against them. They do not realise that such an attitude would only create more problems for themselves besides giving rise to an unhealthy atmosphere all around.

You must admit when you are wrong. Do not follow the ways of the uncultured who always blame others. The Buddha further says:-

*'The fool who does not admit he is a fool, is a real fool. And the fool who admits he is a fool is wise to that extent.'* Dh.

You are responsible for the sorrow that comes to you. When you allow even minor incidents to irk and overturn your mind, that in itself will give rise to your sorrow. You must understand that it is not that something is wrong with the world, but that something is wrong with all of us.

### ***Your Responsibilities for Mutual Understanding***

Remember that whatever happens, you cannot feel hurt if you know how to maintain a balanced

frame of mind. You are hurt only by the mental attitude that you adopt towards yourself and towards others. If you show a loving attitude towards others, you will likewise receive a loving attitude. If you show hate, you will undoubtedly receive hate in return. An angry man breathes out poison, and he hurts himself more than he would hurt others.

An angry man who shouts at others will be unable to see things in proper perspective as if smoke got into his eyes. Anyone who is wise not to be angered cannot be hurt. Always remember that no one can hurt you unless you pave the way for others to do so. If you follow the Dhamma (righteous way of life), that Dhamma will protect you. The Buddha says:-

*'Whoever harms a harmless person, one who is pure and guiltless, upon that very fool the evil recoils like fine dust thrown against the wind.'*

*Dh.*

If you arouse the anger of others you are responsible for the reaction it produces. By show-

ing your aggressive attitude, you will only fulfil the wishes of your enemies.

### ***Blame not Others***

If you learn to guard your mind properly, external happenings cannot affect you. You must not blame circumstances when things go wrong. You must not think that you are unlucky, that you are the victim of fate, or that somebody has cursed you or had done some 'charm' against you. No matter what reason you give, you must not evade responsibility for your own actions. Try to solve your problems without sulking. Try to work cheerfully even under the most trying circumstances.

A young unmarried girl once became pregnant and her family demanded to know who the father was. The girl was too frightened to tell the truth so she put the blame on the Chief monk of the village temple. The parents did not make any more fuss but when the baby was born they took it to the monk and told him, "Our daughter tells us that you are the father of this baby and so you must look after it." The monk simply asked, "Is that so?", took the baby and undertook to care for it. Eventually the girl felt sorry for having lied and told her parents that the monk was blameless.

Naturally they were shocked and ran to the temple to apologize to the monk: “You are not the father of the child” The monk was equally unperturbed and merely said again, “Is that so?” He handed the baby back to the parents and no more was said about the matter.

We can react in two ways to any accusation: with wild denials and counter accusations, or simply taking things in our stride. Here both the parents and the monks behaved in a cultured manner and thus prevented an enormous amount of unnecessary strife that could have taken place. If we practice patience and equanimity we will eventually be vindicated.

Be courageous to face any change if change is natural or necessary; so be brave enough to accept what you cannot avoid. Be wise enough to understand the uncertainty of worldly conditions which affect everybody. Therefore, you must develop courage to face disappointments and problems without feeling frustrated. Difficulties abound in our life. We have to face them bravely. If you know how to overcome them without creating

further problems, you are indeed wise.

Those who try to do some service to others also face problems. They even encounter more blame than those who do not serve others at all. You should not be discouraged; instead, have the understanding to realise that selfless service eventually brings happiness as its own reward. In rendering our service to others, there must be knowledge and understanding. Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher says,

*'Love without knowledge and knowledge without love cannot produce a good life.'*

### ***You are Responsible for your Inner Peace***

You must learn how to protect whatever inner peace and calm you have created within your mind. To preserve the inner peace, you must know when to reduce your superiority complex; you must also know when to ignore your pride, when to subdue your false ego, when to discard your adamance and when to practise patience. You should not allow others to take away your

inner peace. You can preserve your inner peace if you know how to act wisely.

Wisdom comes through understanding. '*Man is not a fallen angel, but a rising animal.*' Use your full effort with conviction to stand by your principles firmly and gently. At the same time, be humble for the sake of peace and tolerance to avoid clashes and violence. By doing so you will never lose anything. Instead, you gain in the end.

### ***How to face Criticism***

You must learn how to guard yourself against unjust criticism and how to make sensible use of constructive criticism. You must always look objectively at criticism. If the criticism levelled at you is unjust, ill-founded, given with a bad intention, you should not cowardly surrender your dignity. If you know that there is no conscious guilt in you, your attitude is correct and appreciated by wise people, then you need not worry about ill-founded criticism. Your understanding of both constructive and destructive criticism is

important for you to adjust your way of life to live in any society. The Buddha says:-

*'There is no one who is not blamed in this world.'*

*Dh.*

### ***Expect Nothing and Nothing will Disappoint You***

You can avoid disappointments by not having any expectations for your service. If you expect nothing, then nothing can disappoint you. Do something for the benefit of others to relieve suffering. If you can do that without expecting any kind of reward, then you can have no cause for disappointment. You can be a contented man! The happiness that appears in your mind for the good that you have done, is itself a big reward. That happiness creates immense satisfaction in your life. By expecting reward, you not only miss your happiness, but very often you will even experience bitter disappointment.

Perhaps, you may be a person who is good by nature and so you do not harm others. But never-

the less you get blamed despite having done good. Then you might ask, 'If good begets good and bad begets bad, why should I have to suffer when I am completely innocent? Why should I have to undergo so many difficulties? Why should I be troubled with so many disturbances? Why should I get blamed by others despite my good work?'

The simple answer is that when you do some good deeds you may unwittingly be going against many evil forces at work in this universe. Those evil forces naturally interrupt good deeds. If not, it could be that you are facing the evil effects of some past evil deed (*kamma*) that is ripening at the present moment. By continuing your good work with sound understanding, you will eventually be free from such troubles. Since you are the one who initially created the disappointments, it is reasonable that only you can overcome them —by realising the true situation of our worldly life.

*“By protecting others, you protect yourself. By protecting yourself, you protect others.”*

Many of the worldly conditions are beyond our control. Unexpected changes, diverse influences and uncertainties do occur to disappoint us. That is why it is sometimes difficult to do good in such changing circumstances. If people heed this advice of the Buddha, everybody could contribute something for their mutual protection.

### *Gratitude is a Rare Virtue*

The Buddha considered gratitude to be a great virtue. Yes, it is true that this virtue is rare in any society. You cannot always expect other people to be grateful to you for what you have done.

People are inclined to be forgetful especially when it comes to remembering past favours. If people fail to show gratitude, you have to learn to accept them as such—only then can you avoid disappointment. You can be happy regardless of whether people are grateful for your kindness and help; you need only think and feel satisfied that you have done your noble duty as a human being to your fellow men.

### ***Compare not with Others***

You can rid yourself of unnecessary worry and trouble simply by not comparing yourself with others. As long as you regard others as your 'equal', 'superior' or 'inferior', you will have intolerance and restlessness. If you do not adopt such an attitude, there is nothing for you to worry about. If you think you are higher than others, you may become proud. If you think you are second to none, others may descend on you. If you think you are inferior, you may lose your own self-confidence.

For most people, it is very difficult to subdue their pride. It is advisable to learn how to reduce one's pride. If you are able to sacrifice your pride, then you can find your inner peace. You can harmonise yourself with others so as to experience peace and happiness. Which is more important—to maintain your pride or peace of mind?

Try to realise that equality, inferiority, and superiority are all changing relative states: you may be poor now but at another point of time you may be rich. Today you may be ignorant, later

however you can become wise. Today you may be sick and unhappy but given time you will probably be healthy again. However, there are many intangible human qualities which are regarded as mankind's heritage—human rights, human dignity, human status etc. Others have no right to deprive you of them.

*'If you are good to yourself you are good to others. If you are good to others, you are good to yourself.'*

### ***How to handle Trouble-makers***

You have to realise that you might have contributed something, either intentionally or unintentionally, for the troubles and problems that now befall you. It is also important for you to know what you must do to overcome your problems that have come to you through various sources. If your understanding is deep enough to sublimate your responsibility for having caused the existing problem, you will certainly get the idea of how best to get rid of them.

Then you will know how to handle trouble-makers and your opponents. Those who oppose you also have a human heart. Therefore it is not very difficult to accommodate them; develop their friendship instead of isolating them. If you are strong enough to resist their wrong attitude, then there is no reason to avoid associating with them. Through your association with such people, you can influence them for their own betterment. Remember that it is your own understanding that protects you from your enemies and allows you to guide them to become good.

If a man does something wrong to you through his ignorance or misunderstanding, that is the most opportune time for you to show your wisdom, your education and religious understanding. What is the use of all your education and your religious knowledge if you have not learned how to behave yourself as a real gentleman particularly at a time of trial? When others do wrong to you, you must regard their action as an opportunity for you to develop your patience and sympathy.

Patience is one of the prime qualities which everyone must cultivate. The more you practise such a virtue, the more you will be able to maintain your dignity. You must know how to make good use of your knowledge and principles to deal with people who are hostile to you. Sooner or later, they will realise their folly and change their hostile attitude. Sometimes, people try to take advantage of your tolerance and patience as signs of weakness. That is the time for you to act wisely without becoming a victim to such cunning people. *'Virtues must be practised wisely.'*

Kindness, honesty and patience are fertile grounds for cunning people to be mean on their intended victims possessing such generous qualities.

### ***Forgive and Forget***

To take revenge on trouble-makers is only to create more problems and disturbances. You must realise that negative feelings and hostile actions could only bring harm and suffering to both you

and the trouble-maker. In order to take retaliatory action, you have to harbour intense hatred in your heart. This hatred is like a poison. Since the poison is initially in you, surely it will harm you before it can harm anyone else. Before you can throw a blazing iron at another, you get burned first. Your action merely goes to show that there is no basic difference between you and your opponent.

By hating others, you only give them power over you. You do not solve your problem. If you become angry with a person who simply smiles back at you, then you will feel defeated and miserable. Since he did not co-operate with you to fulfil your wish, it is he who is victorious. The Buddha teaches us how to live happily when we are faced with disturbances. *'Ah happily do we live without hate amongst the hateful. Amidst hateful men, we live without hate.'* Dh.

We can live happily without fanning the fires of hatred. Perhaps you may not be strong enough to extend compassionate love to your enemies; but for the sake of your own health and happiness

and that of everybody else, you must at least learn how to forgive and forget.

By not hating or crushing your trouble-maker, you act like a gentleman. To act in this manner, you must understand that the other person has been misled by anger, jealousy and ignorance. He is therefore no different from all other human beings who have also at one time or another been misled by the same negative states of mind. The Buddha says:-

*'Evil-doers are not wicked by nature. They do evil because they are ignorant.'* Therefore they need *guidance*.

We should not curse them. It is not justifiable for us to say that they should be condemned to everlasting suffering as it is still not too late to correct them. We should try to explain to them in a very convincing way that they are in fact in the wrong. With this understanding, you can treat the evil-doer as you would a patient who is suffering from a sickness and in need of treatment. When the sickness is cured the ex-patient and everyone

else will be well and happy. The ignorant must be guided by the wise.

*'Good life is inspired by love and guided by knowledge.'*

If a man does something wrong to you out of ignorance or misunderstanding, then that is the time to radiate your compassionate love towards the evil-doer. One day, he will realise his folly and relent on his evil habits. So it is better to give him a chance to be good. Repentance of his past misdeeds will change him into a better person and in the end he will truly appreciate your kind thoughts. The most compassionate Buddha's advice is:

*'Hatred does not cease by hatred; by love alone it cease. This is an eternal law.'*

If you can radiate compassionate love, no harm will come to you. This will help you to achieve both physical and mental health. Life has its own rhythm. When you lose on the swing, you gain on the roundabout. Those who do not understand this principle often get into trouble and face difficulties in life.

If a man does something wrong to you again and again, you must act wisely in correcting him each time he makes the mistake. Although it is not so easy to do that, you should nevertheless try your best to follow the example set by the Buddha. Then you will come to know that it is after all not impossible. The attitude of the Buddha in such a situation could be summarised thus:-

*'The more evil that comes to me, the more good will radiate from me.'*

Some people think that it is not practicable to return good for evil. Try it and see for yourself. If you find it too difficult to return good for evil, then you can still do a great service to yourself and to others by not returning evil for evil.

*'Sympathetic consideration is needed for less-understanding people who make mistakes.'*

### ***We are all Human***

All human beings have weaknesses and are therefore prone to making mistakes. All human beings have desire, anger and ignorance. These weak-

nesses prevail in all of us in varying degrees. Unless you are perfect or an Arahant, you are no exception. The nature of the human mind shows itself in the following saying:-

*'Man is not satisfied with his life and never finds the purpose of life even after gaining the whole world.'*

Let us take a closer look at a man who is enveloped in ignorance. His mind is clouded by disturbances, confusion and darkness. Out of ignorance, man creates misfortunes and he shares this with his fellow men. Most of the worry and misery that come to man are due to changing worldly conditions and man's own craving for worldly pleasures which to his selfish mind should continue forever. Disappointment and unfulfilled desires which arise from unexpected changes create worry. Therefore you are responsible for your worry.

Nobody is perfect in this world; everybody is liable some time to commit certain mistakes or evil actions. So how can you think that you are free from mistakes or evil? Ignorance is the main

cause for nurturing the impulse of craving which in turn generates worry.

*'Fear and worry disappear when ignorance is dispelled by knowledge.'*

If you can understand the weaknesses present in a man's mind in this way, then there should be no reason for you to grumble over your problems. You will have the courage to face them. Man's mind is responsible for both his happiness and unhappiness.

*'Nothing happens to man that is not contained within man.'*

—C. Jung, well known psychologist

### ***Parental Responsibility***

You are responsible for the well-being and upbringing of your children. If the child grows up to be a strong, healthy and useful citizen, it is the result of your efforts. If the child grows up to be a delinquent, it is you who must bear the responsibility. Do not blame others. As parents, it is your bounden duty to guide your child on a proper path. Although there are a few incorrigible cases

of juvenile delinquency, nevertheless as parents, you are responsible for the behaviour of your children.

A child at its most impressionable age, needs the love, care, affection and attention of the parents. Without parental love and guidance, the child will be emotionally handicapped and will find the world a bewildering place to live in. Showering parental love does not mean pandering to all the demands of the child, reasonable or otherwise. Too much pampering would in fact spoil the child. The mother in bestowing her love and care, should also be strict and firm but not harsh, in handling the tantrums of a child. Show your love with a disciplined hand — the child will understand.

Unfortunately, all too often parental love in our present day society is sadly lacking. The rush for material advancement, and the rising aspiration for equality of the sexes, have resulted in many mothers joining their husbands in the rat race. Mothers struggle to maintain their family image or status symbol by working in offices and

shops, rather than being at home tending to the needs of their off-spring.

Children who are left to the care of relatives or paid servants, as well as 'latch key' children who are left to their own devices at home, are often deprived of motherly love and care. The mother, feeling guilty about her lack of attention, would try to placate the child by giving in to all sorts of demands of the child. Such action only spoils the child.

Providing the child with sophisticated modern toys that are detrimental to character formation such as tanks, machine guns, pistols, swords and the like are psychologically unwholesome. The child is unwittingly being taught to condone destruction instead of being taught to be kind, compassionate and helpful. Such a child will develop brutal tendencies as they grow up. Giving a child such toys is no substitute for a mother's love and affection.

Parents are often placed in a dilemma. Rushing home from a hard day's work the weary

parents have family chores waiting upon them. When the day's work is done, it would be time for dinner followed by T.V., and whatever time there is left, is hardly enough to attend to a child's rightful dues of parental love and affection.

With the call of women's liberation, many women seem to think that the solution is to compete with men outside the home. Such women should consider very carefully whether to bear children. It is irresponsible for a mother to bring a life into this world and then 'abandon' it. You are responsible for what you create.

A child has a right to be satisfied materially, but more importantly spiritually and psychologically. The provision of material comfort is secondary compared to the provision of parental love and attention. We know of many people from poor homes who have with their meagre income, brought up children well with plenty of love. Conversely, many rich people have provided every material comfort for their children, but being deprived of parental love, these children have grown up to become psychologically and morally handicapped.

Some women may feel that advising them to concentrate on the upbringing of the family is something degrading and reflects the thinking of the old and the conservative. It is true that in the past women have been treated very badly, but this was due more to ignorance on the part of men than to an inherent weakness in women. The Sanskrit word for a housewife is '*Gruhini*' which literally means '*leader of the house*'. Certainly it does not imply that a woman is inferior. Rather it means a division of responsibility for the male and the female.

In certain countries, many husbands hand over their pay packet to their wives who handle domestic affairs. This leaves the man free to concentrate on what he can do best. Since each partner knows clearly what his or her responsibilities are, there is no conflict between them. The atmosphere at home is happy and peaceful where their children can grow up well.

Of course, the husband must see to it that his partner is well cared for, that she is consulted on

every family decision, that there is enough freedom for her to develop her own personality and that she has her own free time to pursue her personal interests. In this sense, husband and wife are equally responsible for the welfare of their family. They are not in competition with each other.

A mother should consider carefully whether she should continue as a working mother with all the attendant pitfalls or as a housewife giving all her due affection and care to her growing child. Strangely, some modern mothers, particularly in certain countries with military regimes facing a shortage of manpower, are being trained to handle guns or other deadly weapons when they should be cuddling their children and training them to be good or law-abiding citizens.

The modern attitude of working mothers towards their children tends to erode the time-honoured filial piety which children are expected to uphold. The replacement of breast-feeding by bottle feeding is yet another cause. Hitherto, when mothers used to breast-feed and cuddle

babies in their arms, the tender affection between mother and child becomes much greater. A breast feeding mother, through her maternal instinct, often experiences a tremendous satisfaction from knowing she is providing the baby, as nature has intended, with something of her very own which no one else can give. The influence a mother has on the child thus grows and becomes much more pronounced. Under such circumstances, filial piety, family cohesion and obedience are invariably present.

These traditional traits are for the good and the well-being of children. It is up to the parents, especially the mother to provide them with love, care and affection as their rightful dues. The mother is responsible for the child being good or wayward. The mother can thus reduce juvenile delinquency! At the highest level of thinking, you can see things as they are, not as you are. Then you know that you are responsible for everything. *'Those who lead their lives by going against nature, must face the consequences either physically or mentally.'*

### ***How to reduce your Mental Agony***

Whenever certain difficulties and problems arise, make up your mind to reduce your mental agony. First, you must try to understand the nature of the world where you live. You can never expect everything in this world to be perfect and to run smoothly. The world situation may not always be in your favour. There could be no world and no life without problems. Natural forces like sunlight, rain, wind and moonlight are favourable and useful to many, yet at times they could be a nuisance to many others. There is in fact nothing perfectly bad or perfectly good in this world because the very things that are welcomed by one group could be hated by another group. Therefore, we define good and bad according to our needs. Things are neither good nor bad by nature. According to Buddhism, the world exist on conflict to which you become part of.

If you have strong selfish cravings for existence and the senses, you will have to pay the price—the mental agony of having to survive with a topsy-turvy view of the world. Wishful

thinking, yearnings for eternity and clinging to feelings such as the elusive 'I' or 'me' only warp the mind and its sense of time. Unfulfilled desires yield their crop of quarrels, friction, communication failures, fear, worry, loneliness and anxiety. There are no free rides.

If you are desirous of eradicating the mental agony within you, you have to subdue selfish cravings. Life's journey has a T- junction. Either you take the right path and develop your spirituality to unwind the tensions of worldly life or you continue to indulge in sensual pleasures with their many attendant confrontations.

One way to relieve yourself of your occasional mental agony is to understand the degree of your own sufferings and difficulties compared with those experienced by others. When you are unhappy, you often feel that the world is against you. You think that everything around you is about to collapse. You feel that the end of the road is near. However, if you take a mental note of things around you and count your blessings,

surprisingly, you will find that you are indeed much better off than many other people.

You might have probably heard the saying, 'I complained I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet'. In short, you have been unduly exaggerating your own difficulties and problems. Others are in fact worse off, and yet they do not worry themselves unduly. Problems are there. You should try to solve them instead of worrying and creating mental anguish within you. The Chinese have a practical saying about solving problems:-

*'If you have a big problem, try to reduce it to a small problem. If you have a small problem, try to reduce it to no problem.'*

Another way to reduce your problems is to recapitulate what you have gone through before, under similar or even worse circumstances, and how you have, through your own patience, initiative and effort, been able to surmount your then seemingly insurmountable difficulties. By doing so, you will not permit your existing problems to '**drown you**'. On the contrary, by seeing life in a

new perspective you will be able to solve whatever problems that you may now face.

You should realise that you have gone through much worse situations before and that you are prepared to face them squarely, come what may. With this frame of mind, you will soon regain your self-confidence and be in a better position to solve whatever problems that will be in store for you.

If you are facing a problem, there must surely be a remedy to overcome it. So why worry? On the other hand, even if there is no solution for your problem, again why worry because your worry cannot contribute anything to settle your problem.

### ***All are not Equally Good***

Occasionally, there are complaints from people who have never caused or given any trouble to other people and yet they become innocent victims of the wiles and intrigues of others. They feel frustrated despite the good lives they have lived.

They feel they have been harmed through no fault of their own. Under such circumstances, the innocent victim must realise that the world is made up of all sorts of people—the good and the not so good, the bad and the not so bad, with all the unusual characters that go to make up this world of ours. The innocent victim may console himself that he belongs to the good category whereas the disturber of the peace belongs to the bad, and that on certain occasions, he will still have to bear patiently the misdeeds of those belonging to the bad.

We take for instance the case of a '*good and careful driver*' and a '*bad and reckless driver*'. The good and careful driver took every precaution to drive carefully but nevertheless he met with an accident, through no fault of his own—the fault being that of a bad and reckless driver. Thus as we can see the good may have to suffer, despite their goodness, because there are bad and reckless people around us. The world is neither good nor bad. It produces criminals as well as saints, fools and enlightened ones. Out of the

same clay, beautiful and ugly, useful and even useless things can be made. The quality of good pottery depends on the potter and not on the clay. The potter is in fact yourself. The moulding of your happiness or unhappiness is in your hands.

*You gain what you seek*

If you try your level best to overcome your difficulties by practising the advice given in this booklet, you will definitely find peace, happiness harmony which you are seeking. Follow principles which have been tested and proven as outlined in this booklet for your protection.

**YOU ARE THE ONE WHO CAN  
PURIFY YOURSELF**

“By oneself is evil done  
By oneself is one defiled  
By oneself is evil left undone  
By oneself is one made pure  
Purity and impurity depend on oneself  
No one can purify another (Dhammapada 165)

*When you change yourself  
you change the world.*

*“ When I was young I set out to change the world.*

*When I grew older I perceived  
that this was too ambitious, so  
I set out to change my state.*

*This too, I realised as I grew older, was too  
ambitious so I set out to change my town.  
When I realised that I could not do even this,  
I tried to change my family.*

*Now, as an old man I know that I should  
have started by changing myself.*

*If I had started with myself,  
maybe then I would have  
succeeded in changing my  
family, the town, or even the  
state - and who knows, maybe  
the world.”*

**K. Sri Dhammananda**



Is it

**WRONG**

to be ambitious?



Is it  
**WRONG**  
to be ambitious?

**I**t is extremely difficult to find human beings who are totally free from selfish motives. This is the reason why there is so much conflict and discrimination among human beings. Buddhism teaches us to reduce our craving or ambition. As we are attached to the world, you want to know whether it is wrong to entertain some ambitions. Is it wrong to

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become successful in a worldly sense? The ideas that people develop in their minds to become successful doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, teachers or businessmen are ambitions. Some Buddhists have asked, 'If Buddhism advocates renunciation, then should Buddhists turn their backs on material success?' Nobody in this world can say that such ambitions are wrong or contrary to Buddhism.

#### ***Advice for the Laymen***

Buddhism is misinterpreted and misunderstood by many people. The Buddha clearly recognized two classes of people: those who had renounced the world and those who chose to follow the life of householders. Certain precepts and observances that the Buddha prescribed are specifically meant for those who have renounced the worldly life. Some people have mixed these up with the precepts meant for householders. For those who have renounced the worldly life, there is one way to

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develop selfless ambition. For those who are still attached to the world as householders, there is another way. For instance, during the Buddha's time, many rich people who enjoyed their mundane pleasures approached the Buddha, and told Him that it was difficult for them to renounce the world. They had worldly commitments, family obligations and many other duties to fulfil. So they requested the Buddha to lay down a suitable religious way of life for them to practise. The Buddha did not ridicule them; for He knew that not everyone was so ready to give up worldly pleasures.

Knowing the complex situation of the household life, the Buddha spoke of total renunciation for the life of a monk or nun as the only way for a religious life. He gave householders suitable guidelines to lead a religious life while tending to their normal occupations. The Teacher who had renounced absolutely everything for His own Enlightenment knew the nature of worldly attachment. Renun-

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ciation must only be undertaken when realisation appears in the mind. Otherwise, there will be feelings of disappointment or frustration. Those who make a premature renunciation may return to the lay life. So we have to wait until such realisation appears in our mind.

### ***The Buddha's Advice for Householders***

The first happiness *atthi-sukha* is to enjoy the economic security of wealth acquired by just and righteous means; the second *bhoga-sukha* is spending that wealth liberally on oneself, one's family, friends and relatives, and on meritorious deeds; the third *anana-sukha* is to be free from debts; the fourth happiness *anavajja-sukha* is to live a faultless and pure and blameless life committing no evil in thought, word or deed. When you come to know that you have earned something honestly, the happiness that you gain through your accumulated wealth develops confidence in the household life. Some people who go on earn-

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ing and accumulating wealth neither experience happiness nor use wealth in a proper way. According to the Buddha, we can experience worldly happiness by using what we have earned in a reasonable way, following basic religious principles. It is not correct to say that Buddhists should not experience worldly happiness. Certain harmless cultural amusements and entertainments relax the mind and help reduce tension. Human emotions can be satisfied without disturbing the peace and happiness of others. Many cultural performances in Asia actually developed through the influence of Buddhism.

### ***Mental Development***

When people reach a certain level of spiritual development and see the real nature of worldly life, they will give up even such entertainments. They realise that ultimately, life is nothing but a dream and that worldly pleasures are of a fleeting nature. The three characteristics of

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every existing component thing: *Anicca*, *Dukkha* and *Anatta* - impermanance, unsatisfactoriness and insubstantiality - can be understood clearly through insight. By insight we mean a realisation of the ultimate truth which appears when a person has trained his mind to see the real nature of existence.

Some people say that Buddhism is responsible for certain countries being undeveloped and backward. They also say that Buddhism always draws attention to suffering and insists that people give up the worldly life to sit in a forest to meditate. It is for this reason that Westerners in the past have treated Buddhism as a 'pessimistic religion'. It is true that Buddhism emphasizes the unsatisfactoriness of life. But this does not make it pessimistic. In the same way, we cannot call a doctor who tells a patient that he is dying of cancer 'pessimistic'. A religion is pessimistic if it simply says life is miserable. But in Buddhism, clear teachings are offered on how to become happy and contented.

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### ***Middle Path***

The Buddha was a most active and energetic religious teacher. He advised people to use their skill and knowledge in their daily life. A Buddhist should not lead a lazy and easy life and blame it on Buddhism for any of his/her failures. A good Buddhist has the quality of VIRIYA - energy. Buddhists must constantly strive for perfection. They must not delay doing something by finding excuses like it is too hot or it is too cold. The Buddha's advice to lay people was not to go to either extremes of sensual pleasure or self torture to practise a religion. Everyone must try to lead a happy, harmless and peaceful life. Buddhism is known as the Middle Path.

It is true, however, that the household life can easily influence you to violate some religious principles when temptation, needs and irritation are aroused. You may come across certain difficulties in your daily life as householders. You find it difficult to maintain abso-

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lute honesty, kindness and tolerance. It is also true that very few can become perfect religious persons in the household life. Your responsibilities, obligations and duties can disturb your mind. They provoke you to do certain things which go against your conscience. If you try to be a religious fanatic as a lay person, your attitude may not appeal to your family members, friends and others. If you follow Buddhist rules which are meant specifically for monks who lead a monastic life, your associates may feel embarrassed; and they may regard you as a nuisance or an eccentric. Therefore, try to lead a sensible life by observing reasonable religious principles. This is how you avoid becoming a religious fanatic. If you go to extremes, not only will people laugh at you, they will also get a wrong idea of what Buddhism teaches. If you are not fanatical, you can live and work even with other religionists. The Buddha has pointed out that you must know your limit in everything. Try to practise religious principles

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which are universally accepted. As lay Buddhists, your duty is to lead a normal religious life while fulfilling your family obligations. If you neglect your responsibilities towards your family, you may experience problems. Others may think of you as a useless person.

You must know how to adjust your way of life to the country and society you live in without going against the important cultural and traditional practices of the majority, if they are harmless. You should also co-operate with others without behaving as if your religion is the only one that has the right to exist. Buddhism is a religion of freedom. It respects the freedom of other religions. Your common sense and understanding are important in practising a religion.

### *Nature of Ambition*

Every person entertains some kind of ambition. When we refer to the Buddha, He too had an ambition that was implanted in His mind long

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ago. He continued to develop that ambition, life after life, until He achieved what He wanted. But this ambition is best described as an aspiration. When we read the Buddha's discourses, we can understand how He had worked to reach the goal He aspired to. He has revealed this to us by referring to previous birth stories. He also explained the nature of the great virtues and discipline that He had to cultivate to achieve His aspiration.

When we compare our ambition with the Buddha's aspiration we can see a vast difference. This is because our ambition is primarily based on desire and anxiety bound to worldly pleasure. On the other hand, the Buddha's aspiration was to free Himself from selfishness in order to serve others. We develop our ambition by disturbing anothers' happiness. That is how we create enormous problems and misery in this world. We are willing to do any kind of evil or wicked deed for our own pleasure. From the Buddhist point of view, this kind of

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selfish ambition is not justifiable.

What we should constantly strive to do is to develop the higher kind of ambition by working very hard to obtain freedom, happiness and liberation from our existing worldly problems. This ambition is harmless and reasonable. However, this is not the final goal: we must not be satisfied with these temporary mundane ambitions. Our ultimate goal should be freedom from suffering — Nirvana, where all ambitions cease and the reality of existence seen.

### ***Rendering Service to others***

While working for our own happiness, freedom and salvation, we have to render some service for the benefit and happiness of others. The Buddha adopted this type of aspiration with deep conviction and boundless compassion. Whilst working for His own salvation, He served others in every possible way. He continued His service to humanity by sacrificing

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His sensual pleasures, by cultivating all the good qualities and virtues and by eradicating evil thoughts to maintain purity in the mind. This is the way He developed His selfless ambition to gain His enlightenment.

He never cultivated it for His own benefit but for the welfare and liberation of every living being. He developed boundless compassion and wisdom and expressed them by word and deed. But our ambitions, which are selfish in nature, can create much misery. Therefore, we have to learn how to direct our ambitions in such a way as to relieve the suffering of others. Such ambitions are wholesome because they contribute to the greater good of mankind.

## *Can we live without Craving?*

Many people are bothered by this question: if eradication of craving is essential to achieve final liberation, how can we live without craving? It is true that certain necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, transport and medicine

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are indispensable for our living. At the same time, we have to have income to support our families to fulfil our duties. Attachment to one's husband or wife and children is natural. We should not regard such attachment as irreligious craving. The Buddha did say that craving for existence creates problems, but He did not say that we must torture ourselves and those around us whilst striving to give up craving. In Buddhism, craving itself is not a 'sin' but it creates mental impurities or unskillful action arising from ignorance which delays our spiritual progress. In Buddhism, we develop spiritually in stages. At first we serve those we love in our own family circles. But we must learn to work for the benefit of all humanity unselfishly. In this way we can refine our human nature to experience the divine nature.

The Buddha wanted only to point out the danger of selfish desire. People develop this selfish desire for worldly gain which motivates evil deeds. Our striving for necessities could be

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decent if we do not develop an undue craving which harms others. Buddhism as well as other religions points out the danger of selfishness.

### *Eradicating Craving*

If selfish desire is harmful, how can we eradicate it? When we have difficulty extinguishing craving for our own property, we should understand what feelings others have for their own. That is why we observe the precept not to take things which belong to others, to stop craving for others' possessions. When we stop this selfish desire, we allow others to live without any fear about their property. When we become aware of this selfish craving, we should take steps to train our minds to regard all our necessities as impermanent and as mere aids to fulfil our duties. For example, if we have a large amount of money, we should take it as an opportunity to help our fellow beings. Those who do not have money can give their moral support and co-operation for the welfare of

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others. At this stage, we have to think that we are only custodians of the property which we claim as ours.

If we are unduly attached to material things, we will experience various problems. Fear, insecurity and suspicion will disturb our peace of mind. That is the price we have to pay for clinging to property. Because of this clinging, some people have become insane when they lost their property through natural disaster or theft. Buddhism teaches us not to be so unreasonably attached to material things. After all, we cannot take them away with us when we die.

If we really want to experience peace, the only thing that we can do is to reduce our responsibilities. Try to hand over our possessions to others who are entitled to them; alternatively, donate them to charitable or religious organizations. If we do so, we free our minds from greed. If we want to develop spiritually, we must be prepared to sacrifice our property for the welfare of others. By this we mean those

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suffering from poverty and sickness and other calamities. However, this distaste for owning material wealth must come naturally — from true understanding. As we progress spiritually, ignorance gives way to understanding. Then, we will freely give up material possessions. This ‘renunciation’ brings great happiness, because it is accompanied by the wisdom of seeing things as they really are.

### *Contentment*

Those who have not learnt how to maintain contentment while leading a worldly life never get satisfaction. They develop jealousy, suspicion and fear. They experience worry and insecurity. That is why the Buddha says ‘*Santutthi Paramam Dhanam*’ - contentment is the highest wealth. Poor people think rich people are very happy and lucky. They do not know the fear and restlessness that disturb the minds of the wealthy. Many wealthy people experience sleeplessness. A poor man does not expe-

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rience such problems although he has to face other difficulties. The poor and the rich can only be happy if they feel contented and do not crave for the property of others. In this sense at least, we can say that the poor and the rich are equal.

One day, the Buddha had to sleep in a forest without any shelter during the winter. The next morning when He came out from the forest, He met a prince. The prince asked the Buddha where He was coming from. The Buddha said that He was coming from the forest where He had spent the night. When the prince asked whether He had slept happily and peacefully, the Enlightened One said that He is one who sleeps peacefully and happily not only one night but every night. Why did He say that? It was because His mind had no worries or disturbances. His mind was always pure. He was free from family problems or property problems. Therefore, He could sleep peacefully. Our minds are not free from problems. That is why

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we are not happy and find it difficult to sleep peacefully. Attachments give temporary pleasures but ultimately, they disturb our peace of mind.

### *Emotional Satisfaction*

The Buddha did not encourage householders to detach themselves from everything at once. Although He pointed out how attachments can create disappointments, He knew that the life of those whose minds are still defiled, can become very miserable or dull without attachments. This does not mean the Buddha encouraged attachments. He was saying that while we allow ourselves to be attached at a lower stage of our spiritual development, we must discard them at the later stages. When we develop attachments, we have to think about worries and disturbances as natural occurrences. We must strive to be free from attachments and be like the lotus which rises clear from the muddy water.

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The pleasurable feeling that people get through the five senses to satisfy craving is emotional satisfaction. People regard this as happiness. Although people lay great emphasis on this type of satisfaction, they must be shown that nearly all human problems, corruptions and immoral practices are traceable to this desire for sensual pleasures. True happiness is gained when the mind experiences peace and tranquillity. It is impossible to experience this happiness as long as fear, suspicion, and excitement disturb the mind. The ambitions that we develop can create disappointment and frustration if they are of a selfish nature.

Religious knowledge is important to maintain a healthy mental attitude to face unfavourable worldly conditions. Every existing thing is subject to this universal nature of worldly conditions. When changes and separation take place we must adjust our way of life. It is meaningless to say that Buddhism prohibits people from having craving and attachment. Emo-

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tional attachments to property, people or ideas carry no formal punishment tags. All that Buddhism does is to explain the repercussions that occur when one becomes a slave to craving and attachment. This is just like a parent advising a child not to play with fire.

People cannot experience worldly pleasures and attachments without paying the price in worry and misery. They must be prepared to accept the consequences if they really want to enjoy the worldly life. Those who are unaware of the consequences will be deeply disappointed. Changed circumstances due to old age and sickness could cancel out these pleasures. People who are not ready to face these problems commit suicide or end up in mental institutions. So do not label Buddhism a pessimistic religion simply because it points out these realities of life! All the Buddha's Teachings show us how to live meaningful and happy lives by understanding our human nature. Buddhism is the most optimistic of all religions.

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### ***Craving for our Physical Body***

We have already discussed why we need to reduce our craving and how to do it. We also explained the nature of craving for the property of others as well as our own. If we remove these two types of craving, we will still have craving for our physical body. This craving for self-preservation is intense. Most people are not willing to sacrifice anything from their body for the welfare of others. In their ignorance, they even protect their physical bodies at the cost of the lives of others. But when people come to know the unreal and the impermanent nature of the physical body, they will even go so far as to donate organs from their physical body. By doing so, they will reduce their strong attachment towards the body.

A person who can understand the uncertainty or the impermanence of life would be quite willing to sacrifice even his/her life to save the life of another. To such a person, morality and virtues would be more important than life.

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This is the way wise people reduce their craving step by step. The main purpose of eradicating craving is to be free from all existing physical and mental suffering.

The Buddha reduced His craving gradually life after life. By cultivating virtues to uproot mental defilements, by sacrificing His worldly pleasures and even giving His own life on numerous occasions, He achieved His goal of Enlightenment to save others from suffering.

Great people are willing to sacrifice their lives to relieve others from suffering. To them life is nothing if it is not used to help human beings. Jesus Christ, Socrates, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King sacrificed their lives for the sake of others. But their names can never die. The whole world remembers and respects them. Others who have developed selfishness and violated the peace and happiness of mankind are never respected. They are remembered after death only with horror and loathing. Just consider how Stalin and Hitler

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are regarded today. Real human values lie in our virtues and principles for the betterment of mankind.

### ***Craving for Existence through Rebirth***

Although we have reduced attachment to the physical body, we are still not free from craving for existence through rebirth. Some people develop a selfish desire to have a pleasurable permanent existence in heaven or paradise. Some others crave to be born in very rich families to have a pleasant worldly life. All these ambitions develop craving. This is alright as a temporary measure, but one day we have to get rid of this craving too. Otherwise, we will never gain permanent peace, liberation or salvation.

Today, the whole world has become a battlefield because of selfish desires. Why do people want to harm and swindle others? Why do they want to indulge in immoral activities and illegal practices? It is due to their selfish craving for pleasure. Such actions bring stress

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to their lives and create suffering.

The belief in immortality is like a candy given to a child to make him forget his toothache. Many people would not be able to accept the awesomeness of life unless they are told there is a pleasurable immortal existence after death. They are fooled into accepting the unsatisfactoriness of the present existence by hoping for an eternal existence in some paradise after death. This is what Karl Marx attacked when he said that **'Religion is the opium of the people.'**

Naturally, foolish people cling to this comforting thought and never try to question the validity of the belief. They do not know the real nature of existence. Sometimes, Buddhists who do not understand the Dhamma fall easy prey to those who talk about eternal happiness in a heaven. When some people tell them of such a place, they succumb to the craving for a fantasy of an eternal life. They must understand that even life in those heavens is not permanent.

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Only Nirvana is permanent. It is the state where all desires have been completely and permanently destroyed — with no more death or rebirth.

Many people are not ready to accept truth. If the truth is not pleasant to their ears, they refuse to listen. Truth is not pleasant to one who is a slave to sensual pleasures. Truth is natural and unbiased. We will not have disappointment when we realise the universal characteristics of nature. Truth does not bend to our selfish needs. We have to understand truth.

The rounds of rebirth in accordance with the karma we create prolong our attachment and craving. Every birth implies decay, sickness and death. This is the unsatisfactory nature of existence and rebirth in any part of the universe. The longer we remain in this cycle of birth and death, the longer will be our suffering. We can never completely satisfy our craving. Satisfying our desires is a losing battle. As soon as we satisfy one desire, we get tired of it and seek

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fresh ways to satisfy another desire much like drug addiction. The Buddha rejected belief in an immortal life because He knew the real nature of existence. He wanted us to understand the uncertainty of the wheel of existence.

Existence (by birth) is the main cause of all our problems and unhappiness. Simply by entertaining some vague beliefs in an after-life, we will not get what we want. They are figments of the imagination. Universal nature is unchangeable. It does not operate in our favour simply by our wishing it so. We are subject to the natural laws of the universe. Our ignorance of this unbiased law is no excuse for our mistakes. An innocent child may die because of ignorance of the danger of a 'live' electric wire. We cannot argue that he must live because he was innocent. The cause of his death is ignorance. The cause of our suffering is also ignorance. Only knowledge and wisdom can save us.

The universal law does not operate on hatred, kindness, retribution, revenge or anger.

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Our duty is to live in accordance with this law if we want to avoid suffering. We cannot change this universal law by worshipping or praying to anyone. This is what the Buddha taught. If we do good, we will get good results; if we do evil, we will be hounded by evil results.

### ***Craving for Non-Existence***

Besides craving for material comfort and a happy after-life, people have another kind of craving — craving for non-existence. People ask how this ambition ‘not to exist’ can become a craving. The answer lies in frustration or unfulfilled desires. Because of this craving, they try suicide. They believe that there will not be another life hereafter. So long as mental defilements are active, no one can forcibly stop ‘becoming’ or rebirth. If we are not happy with this life, mental purification is the only solution to stop rebirth. Buddhism teaches that we should not confuse ourselves by worrying about existence or non-existence. We should com-

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pletely calm our minds by always living in the present moment. And in each moment, we must be free from hatred, greed and delusion. This is the secret of real happiness. When the mind is free from all our worldly ambitions, selfish desire or craving, we will be free from all our physical and mental problems. Ambitions must be diverted to serve others as well as ourselves. Such ambitions would mean true liberation from worldly conditions.

Let us remember that Buddhism is not against people having a pleasant life during their existence on this earth. The Buddha preached the middle path. He advocates a gentle and rational way of life which neither punishes by deprivation nor panders by excess. Buddhism teaches us to be moderate in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. It encourages the gradual and consistent development of the spiritual life which leads to the destruction of all craving, the root cause of unsatisfactoriness. Buddhists are not expected to become

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saints overnight. Rather they are shown how to gradually gain final release from the pain of continuous rebirth. The way to do this is to practise Morality *Sila*, Concentration *Samadhi* and Wisdom *Panna*. Even the Fully Enlightened One took innumerable lifetimes to attain His final goal. Buddhism is a practical religion. It should be practised in a gentle and rational way.





How to  
overcome your  
difficulties

K. SRI DHAMMANANDA

BMS PUBLICATION





# How to Overcome your Difficulties

By Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda

**A**re you worried? Are you miserable? If so, you are invited to read this booklet to develop a better understanding of your problems. It is dedicated to you and to those who worry.

## *Fear and Worry*

Fear and worry are born of the imaginings of a mind that is influenced by worldly conditions. They are rooted in craving and attachment. In fact, life is like a motion picture in which everything is constantly moving and changing. Nothing in this world is permanent or still. Those who are youthful and strong have fear of dying young. Those who are old and suffering worry about living too long. Locked in between are those who craze for merriment all the year round.

Joyful expectations of the pleasant seem to pass

off too quickly. Fearful expectations of the unpleasant create anxieties that do not seem to go away. Such feelings are natural. Such ups and downs of life play with an illusory self or ego like puppets on a string. But the mind is supreme unto itself.

The training of the mind, otherwise known as mental culture, is the first step towards taming mental unrest. The Buddha has explained:

*“From craving springs grief,  
from craving springs fear,  
For him who is wholly free from craving,  
there is no grief, much less fear.”*

All attachments will end in sorrow. Neither tears nor long goodbyes can end the transitoriness of life. All compounded things are impermanent.

Old and young suffer in this existence. No one is exempted. Many teenagers have growing pains. Being neither frogs nor tadpoles, teenagers are understandably inexperienced at building stable relationships with members of the opposite sex. They try to show off their beauty in trying to impress their opposite sex who are flattered to see

themselves as sex objects. Both try to behave not as they really are but as what they think is adult. They are afraid that if they behave naturally they will be laughed at. Behaviour like this has the potential for exploitation. There is fear of rejection as well as worry about deflated egos. Unrequited love will often 'break' many teenage hearts because they feel they have made 'fools of themselves'. Some are even driven to commit suicide. But such traumas could be avoided if life is seen as it really is. Young people must be taught the Buddhist approach to life, so that they can grow into maturity the correct way.

*"Wheresoever fear arises, it arises in the fool, not in the wise man."* says the Buddha. Fear is nothing more than a state of mind. One's state of mind is subject to control and direction; the negative use of thought produces fear; the positive use realizes hopes and ideals. The choice rests entirely with ourselves. Every human being has the ability to control his own mind. Nature has endowed man with absolute control over one thing, and that is thought. Everything a man creates begins in the

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form of a thought. Here is the key to help one understand the principle by which fear may be mastered.

A noted British anatomist was once asked by a student what was the best cure for fear, and he answered, *“Try doing something for someone.”*

The student was considerably astonished by the reply, and requested further enlightenment whereupon his instructor said, *“You can’t have two opposing sets of thoughts in your mind at one and the same time.”* One set of thoughts will always drive the other out. If, for instance, your mind is completely occupied with an unselfish desire to help someone else, you can’t be harbouring fear at the same time.

*“Worry dries up the blood sooner than age.”* Fear and worry in moderation are natural instincts of self-preservation. But constant irrational fear and prolonged worry are relentless enemies to the human body. They derange the normal bodily functions.

### ***Control your Mind***

Man's mind influences his body profoundly. The mind has just as much potential to be a medication as it has to be a poison. When the mind is vicious, it can kill a being but when it is steady and diligent it can benefit others. When the mind is concentrated on right thoughts, and supported by right effort and understanding, the effect it produces is immense. A mind with pure and wholesome thoughts leads to healthy relaxed living.

The Buddha says: *"No enemy can harm one so much as one's own thoughts of craving, thoughts of hate, thoughts of jealousy and so on."*

A man who does not know how to adjust his mind according to circumstances is as if dead. Turn your mind inwards, and try to find pleasure within yourself.

It is only when the mind is controlled and properly directed that it becomes useful to its owner and society. An unruly mind is a liability both to its owner and to others. All the havoc wrought in this world is the creation of men who have not learned the way of mind control, balance

and poise.

Calmness is not weakness. A calm attitude at all times shows a man of culture. It is not too hard for one to be calm when things are favourable, but to be composed when things are wrong is hard indeed. It is this difficult quality that is worth achieving, for by exercising such calm and control, a man builds strength of character.

### *The Voice of Nature*

Modern man does not listen to the voice of nature because of his preoccupation with material gain and pleasure. His mental activities are so preoccupied with worldly pleasures that he neglects the needs of his spiritual self. This unnatural behaviour of contemporary man immediately results in a wrong world view of human life and its ultimate purpose. It is the cause of all the frustration, anxiety, fear and insecurity of our present times.

If man is cruel and wicked, lives against the laws of nature and the cosmos, his acts, words and thoughts pollute the whole atmosphere. Nature abused will not provide what man requires for his

living; instead, clashes, conflicts, epidemics and disasters will be in store for him.

If man lives in accordance with this natural law, leads a righteous life, purifies the atmosphere through the merits of his virtues and radiates his compassionate love towards other living beings, he can bring about human happiness. One who really likes peace should not violate another man's freedom. It is wrong to disturb and deceive others.

You may be a very busy person, but spend at least a few minutes a day in meditation or in reading some valuable books. This habit will relieve you of your worries and will develop your mind. Religion is for your benefit. Therefore, it is your duty to think about your religion. Spare some time to attend gatherings held in a religious atmosphere. Even a short period spent in the company of spiritually inclined people will produce good results.

### ***Mental Health and Criminal Tendencies***

The increase of all kinds of mental ailments and disturbances is the most alarming of all diseases of

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the modern age. There are more and more mentally sick patients all over the world; especially in affluent countries.

In many cases the criminal element within our society is mentioned in the same breath as mental illness. One positive and far-reaching result stemming directly from the research work of Freud, is the recognition that criminals and delinquents are mentally sick people, who need treatment rather than punishment. It is this liberal outlook on the problem that is the basis of all "progressive" social reform to replace punishment with rehabilitation.

### *Know Thy Neighbour*

When we do not see how other people live, we may not learn the different ways of living. Travel is the best form of education. Personal encounters with people different from ourselves make us feel more sympathetic. Intolerance is often born of ignorance of another person's needs and way of thinking.

### ***Man's Unhappiness***

The Buddha taught that all of man's unhappiness results from selfish desire: more pleasure that money can buy, more power over other men, and, most important of all, to live forever, even after death! The desire for these things makes people selfish. They think only of themselves, want things only for themselves, and do not care about what happens to other people. When their wishes are not fulfilled, they become restless and discontented. The only way to avoid this restlessness is to get rid of the desires that cause it. This is very difficult; but when a man achieves it, he appreciates it.

### ***Time will Heal Our Wounds***

Trouble passes. What has caused you to burst into tears will soon be forgotten. You may remember that you cried but not why you did so! As we grow up and go through life, we are often surprised at how we lie awake at night brooding over something that has upset us during the day, or how we nurse resentment against someone by letting the same thoughts run through our minds concerning

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how to have our own back. We may fall into a rage at the spur of the moment over something, and later wonder what it was we were so angry about, and be surprised to realise what a waste of time and energy it had all been. We have deliberately gone on being unhappy when we could have stopped being so and started thinking about something else more wholesome.

Whatever our troubles are, and however aggrieved we may feel, time will heal our wounds. But surely there must be something we can do to prevent ourselves from being hurt in the first place. Why should we allow others or troubles to drain away our energy and make us unhappy? The answer is that they do not. It is we who make ourselves unhappy.

You may have some trouble in your work place but you should not infect your home with a bad atmosphere. You should realise that there is an end to those problems. The solutions could be found in achieving freedom from our selfish desires by eradicating all forms of confusion and ignorance.

Whenever we fail to find a solution to a problem,

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we are inclined to find a scapegoat, to vent our frustration. We are not prepared to admit our own shortcomings. It is easier to put the blame on others. In fact, some even take pleasure in doing so. This is a completely wrong attitude to adopt. We must not show resentment towards others. We should do our utmost, pains-takingly and calmly, to resolve our own problems. We must be prepared to face up to any difficulties that we encounter.

### *Healthy Atmosphere*

Jokes and remarks directed at you in bad taste should be deflected with good humour. This is one way to avoid enmity with anybody. Losing your cool while playing the game will get you strung up. You will forfeit a possible win. That will even spoil the pleasure of those watching the game.

There is no way you can change everyone in this world to your way of thinking. It is not even desirable. If everyone agrees with you, the world will soon run out of ideas.

There are many ways of correcting a person when he is wrong. By criticising, blaming and

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railing at him in public, you will be humiliating and not correcting him. Criticism is certain to make more enemies. If you can show concern for a man's future good with kind words, he will thank you for it someday.

Never use harsh or unpleasant words whenever you express your views on issues. Diplomacy, gentleness and politeness do not hurt anybody. In fact they will open many doors.

Do not feel defensive when your own faults are pointed out. Your faults are your signposts for learning perfection. Temper is a poor camouflage for shortcomings. When someone loses his temper he will blurt out too many things better left unsaid. Never reveal a former friend's personal secret no matter how angry you are with him now. You will only degrade yourself in the process and others could never accept you as a sincere friend thereafter. Others will think you could do the same thing you did to injure a former friend: no one will trust you.

## *Have Courage to face Criticism*

*Sweetness creates sickness, bitterness comes with*

*the cure.* Praise is sweetness, an excess of which causes sickness; and criticism is like a bitter pill which cures. We must have the courage to welcome criticism and not be afraid of it.

*“The ugliness we see in others  
Is a reflection of our own nature”*

A man's life, circumstances and world are a reflection of his own thoughts and beliefs. All men are mirrors to themselves, sores, ills, and all.

### ***Happiness and Materialism***

Many people believe they can solve all their problems by just having money. They however fail to realise that money itself has its attendant problems. Money cannot solve all problems.

Most people never think properly. All through their lives they are like race-track greyhounds running after a rabbit decoy. When the chase ends, all excitement disappears. This is very much like the nature of sensual happiness in the wonderland of materialism. As soon as the desired object is attained, the happiness ends and new desires arise. Getting the object appears not quite as satisfying

as the chase itself.

Or when we lose something, remember the following advice:-

*“Say not that this is yours and that is mine,  
Just say, this came to you and that to me,  
So we may not regret the fading shine,  
Of all the glorious things which ceased to be.”*

Wealth is not something for you to accumulate for craving's sake. It is intended for your welfare as well as of others. Try to make the world around you a better place to live in. Use your wealth wisely to reduce the sufferings of the poor, the sick and the aged. Fulfill your duties to your people, your country and your religion. When the time comes for you to leave, imagine what peace and bliss they could bring as you recall the past good and selfless deeds you have done.

To seek wealth through gambling is like expecting a passing cloud to shelter us from the sun. On the other hand, to aspire for prosperity through diligent work is as secure as building a permanent shelter against sun and rain.

*“Your property will remain when you die. Your*

*friends and relatives will follow you up to your grave. But only good or bad actions you have done during your life-time (Karma) will follow you beyond the grave."*

Fulfilling dreams of riches may sound magical, but fear and worry always lie in wait for such magic to wear off. A rich lifestyle brings its share of mental disturbance. With an abundance of ill-used wealth, simple things in life like friendship, trust and confidence which are taken for granted in humbler circumstances become impossible to attain. When a lifestyle begins to create insecurity, it requires wisdom to put oneself on the right track again. Riches have their trade-offs; the happiness of owning them is diminished by as much fear and worry about losing them.

For our personal happiness we should acquire wealth righteously. "*Blessed are they who earn their living without harming others*" says the Buddha. Happiness cannot be long-lived and meaningful if wealth leaves sorrow and suffering in its wake. Wealth flouted arouses envy; but wealth well-conducted earns respect.

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*Your wealth can only edify your house but not you. Only your own virtue can edify you. Your dress can adorn your body but not you. Only your good conduct can.*

Ultimately, it is bliss to know that “happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself.” The world may not be what you want it to be but you can tune your heart to find happiness within it. It is only when you have suffered for doing good that you can rise above others in understanding and personal happiness.

*“If we want to find happiness, let us stop thinking about gratitude or ingratitude and give for the inner joy of giving. Ingratitude is natural — like weeds. Gratitude is like a rose. It has to be fed, watered and cultivated and loved and protected.”*

*(Dale Carnegie)*

### ***Act Wisely***

Man must know how to use his youth, wealth and knowledge at the proper time and place and in the proper way for his own benefit as well as for

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others. If he misuses his privilege, it will only cause his down-fall. *“Man must be strong enough to know when he is weak, brave enough to encounter fear, proud and unbending in honest defeat, humble and gentle in victory.”*

Some people have blessings of sudden wealth through chance or inheritance. But not many are endowed with the wisdom to protect, conserve or put it to good use. Anything that is not earned through the sweat of one's brow tends to be squandered through abuse.

### *Adjust Ourselves*

Customs and traditions are important bonds for the learning and sharing of human experience in any community. The dilemma we face in an ever changing world is whether to live with or break with the past. There will always be a 'generation gap' between the old and the young because of differing perceptions of changing circumstances and values. The old fear the young may lose their heritage and the young worry that an ancient past may become a stumbling block in modern living.

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Change must always be considered carefully.

Popular culture creates momentary idols and folk heroes who portray images of conflicting lifestyles. Mass media helps to reinforce this and young minds are prone to accept everything they stand for. There may be political or social messages in such movements like the Hippie or Yuppie movements but it is vital for the young to have the wisdom of the old to separate the good from the bad. Time-tested and proven good old values do not change. Values like thrift, honesty, liberality and hard work for dignified living remain fresh in any community.

In an Asian setting marriage and funeral customs and traditions are very important. The question is whether we should spend so much money and time to carry out these customs and traditions in the modern world. Are they really necessary? There is no better advice than what the Buddha gave in the Kalama Sutta:

“When you know in yourselves `These ideas are unprofitable, liable to censure, condemned by the wise, being adopted and put into effect they

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lead to harm and suffering, then you should abandon them.... When you know in yourselves 'These things are wholesome, blameless, commended by the wise, being adopted and put into effect they lead to welfare and happiness' then you should practise them and abide in them."

Every man is a creature of the universe. So long as man is concerned with humanising society and the re-ordering of the world for the better, time will always bridge the gap between the young and the old. Worry and fear over the direction of change will lose their grip. The old only have to remember how their own parents had objected to certain modern ways of living prevalent at the time when they were young. Tolerance for differences on an issue is a virtue. An open attitude can only be a happy one.

### *Mind your own Business*

It is bliss to be able to attend to your own affairs without entertaining doubts about others. Here is the Buddha's advice :

*"One should not accuse others for the mistakes*

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*and things done and left undone by them, but one's own deeds of commission and omission."*

*"He who is always observant of others' faults, and is irritable, his own defilements increase. He is far from the destruction of defilement."*

*"Easy to see the faults of others; but one's own is difficult to see. One winnows other's faults like chaff; but one's own one hides as a crafty Fowler covers himself."*

No one is free from blame and criticism. The Buddha says:

*"People blame others for their silence. They blame those who talk much and those who talk in moderation. There is therefore no one in this world who is not blamed."* Further He says: *"There never was, nor will be, nor is there now, any one who is wholly blamed or wholly praised."*

Not all those who criticise you are your enemies. You can use the opportunity of their remarks to find out the weaknesses in yourself which you cannot see.

You should not give up good work just because of criticism. If you can admit your own weakness, indeed you have the intellectual strength to succeed.

*“The noble ones swerve not from the right path, let happen what may and crave no longer after worldly joys. The wise remain calm and constant in mind, alike in joy and in sorrow.”*

### ***Be Unbiased***

You should not come to any hasty decision regarding any matter when you are in a bad mood or under provocation. Any decision or conclusion reached during such a period would be a matter you could regret one day. Allow your mind to calm down first and think. Then, your judgment will be an unbiased one.

Cultivate tolerance, for tolerance helps you to sympathise with other people's troubles. Avoid unnecessary criticism. Try to realize that even the finest human being is not infallible. The weakness you find in your neighbour can be found in yourself. It has been said that you should not throw

stones at others while staying in glass houses.

### ***Humility***

Humility is the wise man's measure for knowing the difference between what is and what is yet to be. "The Buddha himself started His ministry by discarding all His princely pride in an act of self-humiliation. He attained sainthood during His life, but never lost His naturalness, never assumed superior airs. His dissertations and parables were never pompous. He had time for the most humble of men. He never lost His sense of humour."

### ***Waste not your Time***

To waste a man's existence in worrying about the future, grieving over the past, or in idleness or heedlessness, is to show his unfitness for the noble place he holds as the best of earthly creatures. He will thus create bad karma which will relegate him to a place befitting his unworthiness. Bear this in mind, and do good while life lasts. By wasting your time, you injure not only yourself but also others, for your time is as much others' as it is yours.

### ***Patience and Tolerance***

Be patient with all. Anger leads one along a blind path. While it irritates and annoys others, it also hurts oneself. Anger weakens the physical body and disturbs the mind. A harsh word, like an arrow discharged from a bow, can never be retrieved even if you would offer a thousand apologies.

*Certain creatures cannot see in the day-time whilst some others are blind at night. But a man driven to great heights of hatred does not observe anything, either by day or night.*

With whom and with what do you fight when you are angry? You fight with yourself, for you are the worst enemy of yourself. The mind is your best friend but it can easily become your worst foe. Some varieties of heart trouble, rheumatic disorders, and skin diseases are traceable to chronic resentment, hatred and jealousy. Such destructive feelings poison the heart. They foster the development of latent diseases by reducing the body's natural defences against disease microbes.

### ***Returning Good for Evil***

If you want to be rid of your enemies, you must first kill the greatest enemy within you — your anger. If you are to be perturbed by distractions from your enemies, it means you are fulfilling the wishes of your enemies by unknowingly entering their trap.

You should not think that you can only learn from those who praise you, help you, and associate with you very closely. You could learn many things from your enemies. You should not think they are entirely wrong just because they happen to be your enemies. They may also possess certain good qualities.

You cannot get rid of your enemies by returning evil for evil; that will only be inviting more enemies. The best method to counter your enemies is to radiate your compassionate love towards them. You may think that this is impossible or something nonsensical. But this is the proven way of every cultured man. When you come to know that there is someone who is very angry with you, you should first try to find out the main cause. If it is due to

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your mistake, you should admit it and not hesitate to apologise to him. If it is due to certain misunderstandings between you both, you must enlighten him with a heart to heart talk.

If it is due to jealousy, try radiating your compassionate love. You could influence him by your mental vibrations. You may not be able to understand how it works but the experience of many people has shown that it is the most powerful, intelligent and easy method to win friends. It is highly recommended in Buddhism. Of course, to do this, you must have confidence and patience in yourself. By doing this, you will be able to make your enemy understand that he is in the wrong. Besides, you are also benefited in various ways for not accommodating enmity in your heart.

### *Compassionate Love*

As long as there is one single fellow creature whom you can console by your kind words, whom you can enliven and cheer by your presence, whom you can help with your worldly possessions, however little that charity may be, you are a

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precious possession to the human race. You should never be disheartened or depressed.

There may be times when those you love do not seem to care for you, and you are apt to have a heavy heart. But there is no just cause for dejection. What does anything matter so long as you know that you are full of compassion for your fellow men? One should never depend on others for one's happiness. *He who expects to secure satisfaction in life from others is worse than the beggar who kneels and cries for his daily bread.*

### ***The Menace of Drug Abuse & Alcoholism***

Alcohol has been described as one of the prime causes of man's physical and moral degradation. Currently, another more vicious form of abuse, that of harmful and dangerous drugs, especially heroin, has created a much more serious human and social problem. This problem is now world-wide. The repercussions of drug abuse are more serious and deadly than those of alcohol. Theft, robbery, sex-related crimes and swindling of vast sums of money have occurred under the pemi-

cious influence of drug abuse.

Drug lords, not being content as death merchants have even tried to control weak governments through corruption, bribery, subversion and bombings. As a matter of public policy, governments have to protect their citizens against drug abuse. Yet, drug lords in their devilish schemes have threatened the very foundation of society — human dignity. Spokesmen of conscience and their families constantly run the risk of death because they dare to cross the lawless path of drug lords.

Without international co-operation to stamp out this evil, the vitality and the future of many nations will be bleak indeed. Worldwide, countless millions of hard-earned dollars have been spent to rid the addicts of their evil habits but the maddening craze persists. It is our duty to help in whatever manner we can, to eradicate this dreadful habit and to prevent our children from ever getting near it.

Life as a drug addict or an alcoholic is a life of torture and hell on earth, leading one to an early

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grave.

### ***Drunkenness***

Drunkenness expels reason,

Drowns memory,

Defaces the brain,

Diminishes strength,

Inflames the blood,

Causes external and internal incurable wounds.

Is a witch to the body,

A devil to the mind,

A thief to the purse,

The beggar's curse,

The wife's woe,

The children's sorrow,

The picture of a beast,

And self murder,

Who drinks to other's health,

And robs himself of his own.

As human beings, we should have self-control to distinguish between what is good and evil. Keep away from drug abuse and alcoholism and help

others to do so. That will be the greatest service to humanity.

***You Create Heaven and Hell here***

“If you want to live in this world peacefully and happily, allow others also to live peacefully and happily, so that you can make this world something which is worthy of life.” Unless and until you adjust yourself to live according to these noble principles, you cannot expect happiness and peace in this world. You cannot expect this happiness and peace from heaven simply by praying.

If you act according to moral principles by upholding human dignity, you can create your own heaven right here in this world. You can also create the hell-fire on this earth itself if you abuse valuable human life. By not knowing how to live according to this universal cosmic law, we often stumble. If each man tries to lead a harmless and respectable life, people can enjoy real heavenly bliss better than the kind that some people hope to gain after death.

It is superfluous to create a heaven elsewhere to

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reward virtue, or a hell to punish vice; virtue and evil have inevitable reactions in this world itself regardless of religious faith. Compassion for all creatures is the only way to create heaven. We can have this irresistible luminous ideal for the good of society and country by breathing tolerance and sympathy for others' progress and happiness. We have come this far as a human race because illustrious individuals have shown us the way. By helping others morally, you help yourself and by helping yourself morally, you help others.

### *Happy Married Life*

In a true marriage, man and woman think more of the partnership than they do of themselves. Marriage is a bicycle made for two. A feeling of security and contentment comes from mutual efforts. Impatience and misunderstanding are responsible for most family problems. A wife is not her husband's servant. She deserves respect as an equal. Though a husband has the bread winner's duties, helping out with household chores does not demean a husband's masculinity. At the same

time, a nagging and grumpy wife is not going to make up for shortages in the home. Neither will her suspicion of her husband help to make a happy marriage. If her husband has shortcomings, only tolerance and kind words will get him to see light. Right understanding and moral conduct are the practical side of wisdom.

Marriage is a blessing but many people turn their married lives into a curse. Poverty is not the main cause of an unhappy married life. Both husband and wife must learn to share the pleasure and pain of everything in their daily lives. Mutual understanding is the secret of a happy family life.

### ***Worry Not***

The secret of happy successful living is to do what needs to be done now, and not worry about the past or the future. We cannot reshape the past nor can we anticipate everything in the future. There is but one moment of time over which we have some conscious control and that is the present.

Many people just worry about their future. They have to learn to adjust themselves to the

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circumstances. Whatever castles they may build in the air, whatever dreams they may have, they must always remember that they are living in this world of constant friction and change.

“There are no stars which we could trust,  
There is no guiding light,  
And we know that we must,  
BE GOOD, BE JUST, BE RIGHT.”

### *Pillars of Success*

Failures are but the pillars of success. To learn by our failures is to achieve success. Never to have failed is never to have won. Unless we experience failure and its bitterness, we never appreciate the sweetness of victory; it becomes merely a turn of events that is of little or no interest. Failures not only help us to succeed, they make us energetic, enthusiastic, and rich in experience.

“We live and work and dream,  
Each has his little scheme,  
Sometimes we laugh;  
Sometimes we cry,  
And thus the days go by.”

### ***The Real Beauty***

Physical ugliness is no handicap to a charming personality. If an ugly person cultivates the virtue of compassionate love, that love will show in so many winning ways — serenity, radiance, kindness and gentleness. That kind of attractiveness will easily compensate for any shortcomings in appearance.

By comparison, a handsome person with airs or conceit, will look so unappealing and repulsive. Inner charm is the real beauty. It has a special quality and attractiveness.

### ***Why is it Difficult to Depart from this World?***

For most people, death is an unwelcome event. With so many cravings to be satisfied, the business of living in spite of enormous suffering is never quite finished. People feel more comfortable with the mirage of happiness than with the reality of death. If at all they have to think about it, it only has a slot in the eleventh hour.

Attachments to worldly life create a morbid fear of death. But the truth is that all life is nothing but

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suffering. Death is natural and inevitable. It is not half as frightening as the thought of dying itself. The mind has an ability of its own to create and to stretch phantom images of death. The reason is that a mind untrained to see life with all its impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, is likely to cling to illusions just as a drowning man will even cling to a straw.

It creates uneasiness even for those who fervently pray to an imaginary supernatural being for forgiveness and a place in heaven when life seems hopeless. Of course the fear of death is a manifestation of instinctive self-preservation. But there is a way to overcome that fear. Do some selfless service for the welfare of others to gain hope and confidence in the next life. Altruism purges all selfish attachments.

Purity of the mind, not attachment to worldly things, will ensure a happy parting from this world. It is the constant contemplation on death to understand the impermanence of life, and the wisdom to correct the wrong way of living, that take the fear out of death. Strengthen the mind to face facts and

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realities of life. Avoid unrealistic and impracticable ambitions. Develop self-confidence. Then you will be more relaxed in overcoming your difficulties in life.





# YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE

K. Sri Dhammananda



B.M.S. Publication



# You are Responsible

By Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda

**W**e are all inclined to blame others for our own shortcomings and misfortunes. Have you ever given a thought that you yourself could be responsible for your own problems? Your sorrow has nothing to do with a family curse or the original sin of an ancestor. Neither is it the work of a god or a devil. Your sorrow is of your own making. You are therefore your own jailor and your own liberator. At the same time, you create your own hell and your own heaven. You have the potentiality of becoming a sinner or a saint. No other person can make you a sinner or a saint.

You must learn to shoulder the responsibilities of your own life. You have to learn to admit your own weaknesses without blaming or disturbing others. Remember the old saying:-

*'The uncultured man always blames others;*

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*the semi-cultured man blames himself and the fully-cultured man blames neither.'*

Whenever any problem arises, we as understanding people should try to find out ourselves where the mistake lies without blaming anybody. If each person could try to correct himself, there would not be any trouble or conflict in this world. But people just do not make the effort to improve their understanding by acting unbiasedly. They prefer to find scapegoats. They look outside of themselves for the source of their troubles because they are reluctant to admit their own weaknesses.

Man's mind is given to so much self-deceit that he will try to find some excuse to justify his action so as to create an illusion that he is blameless. The Buddha says:-

*'Easily seen are other's faults; hard indeed it is to see one's own faults.'* Dh.

To hide their weaknesses with disclaimers for mistakes, many people adopt an aggressive attitude towards others thinking that by so doing,

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they can avoid the shameful situation or the cause of the complaint against them. They do not realise that such an attitude would only create more problems for themselves besides giving rise to an unhealthy atmosphere all around.

You must admit when you are wrong. Do not follow the ways of the uncultured who always blame others. The Buddha further says:-

*'The fool who does not admit he is a fool, is a real fool. And the fool who admits he is a fool is wise to that extent.'*

*Dh.*

You are responsible for the sorrow that comes to you. When you allow even minor incidents to irk and overturn your mind, that in itself will give rise to your sorrow. You must understand that it is not that something is wrong with the world, but that something is wrong with all of us.

### ***Your Responsibilities for Mutual Understanding***

Remember that whatever happens, you cannot feel hurt if you know how to maintain a balanced

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frame of mind. You are hurt only by the mental attitude that you adopt towards yourself and towards others. If you show a loving attitude towards others, you will likewise receive a loving attitude. If you show hate, you will undoubtedly receive hate in return. An angry man breathes out poison, and he hurts himself more than he would hurt others.

An angry man who shouts at others will be unable to see things in proper perspective as if smoke got into his eyes. Anyone who is wise not to be angered cannot be hurt. Always remember that no one can hurt you unless you pave the way for others to do so. If you follow the Dhamma (righteous way of life), that Dhamma will protect you. The Buddha says:-

*'Whoever harms a harmless person, one who is pure and guiltless, upon that very fool the evil recoils like fine dust thrown against the wind.'*

*Dh.*

If you arouse the anger of others you are responsible for the reaction it produces. By show-

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ing your aggressive attitude, you will only fulfil the wishes of your enemies.

### ***Blame not others***

If you learn to guard your mind properly, external happenings cannot affect you. You must not blame circumstances when things go wrong. You must not think that you are unlucky, that you are the victim of fate, or that somebody has cursed you or had done some 'charm' against you. No matter what reason you give, you must not evade responsibility for your own actions. Try to solve your problems without sulking. Try to work cheerfully even under the most trying circumstances.

Be courageous to face any change if change is natural or necessary; so be brave enough to accept what you cannot avoid. Be wise enough to understand the uncertainty of worldly conditions which affect everybody. Therefore, you must develop courage to face disappointments and problems without feeling frustrated. Difficulties abound in our life. We have to face them bravely. If you know how to overcome them without creating

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further problems, you are indeed wise.

Those who try to do some service to others also face problems. They even encounter more blame than those who do not serve others at all. You should not be discouraged; instead, have the understanding to realise that selfless service eventually brings happiness as its own reward. In rendering our service to others, there must be knowledge and understanding. Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher says,

*'Love without knowledge and knowledge without love cannot produce a good life.'*

### ***You are Responsible for your Inner Peace***

You must learn how to protect whatever inner peace and calm you have created within your mind. To preserve the inner peace, you must know when to reduce your superiority complex; you must also know when to ignore your pride, when to subdue your false ego, when to discard your adamance and when to practise patience. You should not allow others to take away your

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inner peace. You can preserve your inner peace if you know how to act wisely.

Wisdom comes through understanding. '*Man is not a fallen angel, but a rising animal.*' Use your full effort with conviction to stand by your principles firmly and gently. At the same time, be humble for the sake of peace and tolerance to avoid clashes and violence. By doing so you will never lose anything. Instead, you gain in the end.

### ***How to face Criticism***

You must learn how to guard yourself against unjust criticism and how to make sensible use of constructive criticism. You must always look objectively at criticism. If the criticism levelled at you is unjust, ill-founded, given with a bad intention, you should not cowardly surrender your dignity. If you know that there is no conscious guilt in you, your attitude is correct and appreciated by wise people, then you need not worry about ill-founded criticism. Your understanding of both constructive and destructive criticism is

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important for you to adjust your way of life to live in any society. The Buddha says:-

*'There is no one who is not blamed in this world.'*

*Dh.*

### ***Expect Nothing and Nothing will Disappoint You***

You can avoid disappointments by not having any expectations for your service. If you expect nothing, then nothing can disappoint you. Do something for the benefit of others to relieve suffering. If you can do that without expecting any kind of reward, then you can have no cause for disappointment. You can be a contented man! The happiness that appears in your mind for the good that you have done, is itself a big reward. That happiness creates immense satisfaction in your life. By expecting reward, you not only miss your happiness, but very often you will even experience bitter disappointment.

Perhaps, you may be a person who is good by nature and so you do not harm others. But never-

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theless you get blamed despite having done good. Then you might ask, 'If good begets good and bad begets bad, why should I have to suffer when I am completely innocent? Why should I have to undergo so many difficulties? Why should I be troubled with so many disturbances? Why should I get blamed by others despite my good work?'

The simple answer is that when you do some good deeds you may unwittingly be going against many evil forces at work in this universe. Those evil forces naturally interrupt good deeds. If not, it could be that you are facing the evil effects of some past evil deed (*kamma*) that is ripening at the present moment. By continuing your good work with sound understanding, you will eventually be free from such troubles. Since you are the one who initially created the disappointments, it is reasonable that only you can overcome them — by realising the true situation of our worldly life.

*"By protecting others, you protect yourself. By protecting yourself, you protect others."*

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Many of the worldly conditions are beyond our control. Unexpected changes, diverse influences and uncertainties do occur to disappoint us. That is why it is sometimes difficult to do good in such changing circumstances. If people heed this advice of the Buddha, everybody could contribute something for their mutual protection.

### ***Gratitude is a rare Virtue***

The Buddha considered gratitude to be a great virtue. Yes, it is true that this virtue is rare in any society. You cannot always expect other people to be grateful to you for what you have done.

People are inclined to be forgetful especially when it comes to remembering past favours. If people fail to show gratitude, you have to learn to accept them as such — only then can you avoid disappointment. You can be happy regardless of whether people are grateful for your kindness and help; you need only think and feel satisfied that you have done your noble duty as a human being to your fellow men.

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### ***Compare not with Others***

You can rid yourself of unnecessary worry and trouble simply by not comparing yourself with others. As long as you regard others as your 'equal', 'superior' or 'inferior', you will have intolerance and restlessness. If you do not adopt such an attitude, there is nothing for you to worry about. If you think you are higher than others, you may become proud. If you think you are second to none, others may descend on you. If you think you are inferior, you may lose your own self-confidence.

For most people, it is very difficult to subdue their pride. It is advisable to learn how to reduce one's pride. If you are able to sacrifice your pride, then you can find your inner peace. You can harmonise yourself with others so as to experience peace and happiness. Which is more important — to maintain your pride or peace of mind?

Try to realise that equality, inferiority, and superiority are all changing relative states: you may be poor now but at another point of time you may be rich. Today you may be ignorant, later

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however you can become wise. Today you may be sick and unhappy but given time you will probably be healthy again. However, there are many intangible human qualities which are regarded as mankind's heritage — human rights, human dignity, human status etc. Others have no right to deprive you of them.

*'If you are good to yourself, you are good to others. If you are good to others, you are good to yourself.'*

### ***How to handle Trouble-makers***

You have to realise that you might have contributed something, either intentionally or unintentionally, for the troubles and problems that now befall you. It is also important for you to know what you must do to overcome your problems that have come to you through various sources. If your understanding is deep enough to sublimate your responsibility for having caused the existing problem, you will certainly get the idea of how best to get rid of them.

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**Then you will know how to handle trouble-makers and your opponents. Those who oppose you also have a human heart. Therefore it is not very difficult to accommodate them; develop their friendship instead of isolating them. If you are strong enough to resist their wrong attitude, then there is no reason to avoid associating with them. Through your association with such people, you can influence them for their own betterment. Remember that it is your own understanding that protects you from your enemies and allows you to guide them to become good.**

**If a man does something wrong to you through his ignorance or misunderstanding, that is the most opportune time for you to show your wisdom, your education and religious understanding. What is the use of all your education and your religious knowledge if you have not learned how to behave yourself as a real gentleman particularly at a time of trial? When others do wrong to you, you must regard their action as an opportunity for you to develop your patience and sympathy.**

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Patience is one of the prime qualities which everyone must cultivate. The more you practise such a virtue, the more you will be able to maintain your dignity. You must know how to make good use of your knowledge and principles to deal with people who are hostile to you. Sooner or later, they will realise their folly and change their hostile attitude. Sometimes, people try to take advantage of your tolerance and patience as signs of weakness. That is the time for you to act wisely without becoming a victim to such cunning people. *'Virtues must be practised wisely.'*

Kindness, honesty and patience are fertile grounds for cunning people to be mean on their intended victims possessing such generous qualities.

### ***Forgive and Forget***

To take revenge on trouble-makers is only to create more problems and disturbances. You must realise that negative feelings and hostile actions could only bring harm and suffering to both you

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and the trouble-maker. In order to take retaliatory action, you have to harbour intense hatred in your heart. This hatred is like a poison. Since the poison is initially in you, surely it will harm you before it can harm anyone else. Before you can throw a blazing iron at another, you get burned first. Your action merely goes to show that there is no basic difference between you and your opponent.

By hating others, you only give them power over you. You do not solve your problem. If you become angry with a person who simply smiles back at you, then you will feel defeated and miserable. Since he did not co-operate with you to fulfil your wish, it is he who is victorious. The Buddha teaches us how to live happily when we are faced with disturbances. *'Ah happily do we live without hate amongst the hateful. Amidst hateful men, we live without hate.'* Dh.

We can live happily without fanning the fires of hatred. Perhaps you may not be strong enough to extend compassionate love to your enemies; but for the sake of your own health and happiness

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and that of everybody else, you must at least learn how to forgive and forget.

By not hating or crushing your trouble-maker, you act like a gentleman. To act in this manner, you must understand that the other person has been misled by anger, jealousy and ignorance. He is therefore no different from all other human beings who have also at one time or another been misled by the same negative states of mind. The Buddha says:-

*'Evil-doers are not wicked by nature. They do evil because they are ignorant.'* Therefore they need guidance.

We should not curse them. It is not justifiable for us to say that they should be condemned to everlasting suffering as it is still not too late to correct them. We should try to explain to them in a very convincing way that they are in fact in the wrong. With this understanding, you can treat the evil-doer as you would a patient who is suffering from a sickness and in need of treatment. When the sickness is cured the ex-patient and everyone

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else will be well and happy. The ignorant must be guided by the wise.

*'Good life is inspired by love and guided by knowledge.'*

If a man does something wrong to you out of ignorance or misunderstanding, then that is the time to radiate your compassionate love towards the evil-doer. One day, he will realise his folly and relent on his evil habits. So it is better to give him a chance to be good. Repentance of his past misdeeds will change him into a better person and in the end he will truly appreciate your kind thoughts. The most compassionate Buddha's advice is:

*'Hatred does not cease by hatred; by love alone it cease. This is an eternal law.'*

If you can radiate compassionate love, no harm will come to you. This will help you to achieve both physical and mental health. Life has its own rhythm. When you lose on the swing, you gain on the roundabout. Those who do not understand this principle often get into trouble and face difficulties in life.

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If a man does something wrong to you again and again, you must act wisely in correcting him each time he makes the mistake. Although it is not so easy to do that, you should nevertheless try your best to follow the example set by the Buddha. Then you will come to know that it is after all not impossible. The attitude of the Buddha in such a situation could be summarised thus:-

*'The more evil that comes to me, the more good will radiate from me.'*

Some people think that it is not practicable to return good for evil. Try it and see for yourself. If you find it too difficult to return good for evil, then you can still do a great service to yourself and to others by not returning evil for evil.

*'Sympathetic consideration is needed for less-understanding people who make mistakes.'*

### ***We are all Human***

All human beings have weaknesses and are therefore prone to making mistakes. All human beings have desire, anger and ignorance. These weak-

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nesses prevail in all of us in varying degrees. Unless you are perfect or an Arahant, you are no exception. The nature of the human mind shows itself in the following saying:-

*'Man is not satisfied with his life and never finds the purpose of life even after gaining the whole world.'*

Let us take a closer look at a man who is enveloped in ignorance. His mind is clouded by disturbances, confusion and darkness. Out of ignorance, man creates misfortunes and he shares this with his fellow men. Most of the worry and misery that come to man are due to changing worldly conditions and man's own craving for worldly pleasures which to his selfish mind should continue forever. Disappointment and unfulfilled desires which arise from unexpected changes create worry. Therefore you are responsible for your worry.

Nobody is perfect in this world; everybody is liable some time to commit certain mistakes or evil actions. So how can you think that you are free from mistakes or evil? Ignorance is the main

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cause for nurturing the impulse of craving which in turn generates worry.

*'Fear and worry disappear when ignorance is dispelled by knowledge.'*

If you can understand the weaknesses present in a man's mind in this way, then there should be no reason for you to grumble over your problems. You will have the courage to face them. Man's mind is responsible for both his happiness and unhappiness.

*'Nothing happens to man that is not contained within man.'* —C. Jung, well known psychologist

### ***Parental Responsibility***

You are responsible for the well-being and upbringing of your children. If the child grows up to be a strong, healthy and useful citizen, it is the result of your efforts. If the child grows up to be a delinquent, it is you who must bear the responsibility. Do not blame others. As parents, it is your bounden duty to guide your child on a proper path. Although there are a few incorrigible cases

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of juvenile delinquency, nevertheless as parents, you are responsible for the behaviour of your children.

A child at its most impressionable age, needs the love, care, affection and attention of the parents. Without parental love and guidance, the child will be emotionally handicapped and will find the world a bewildering place to live in. Showering parental love does not mean pandering to all the demands of the child, reasonable or otherwise. Too much pampering would in fact spoil the child. The mother in bestowing her love and care, should also be strict and firm but not harsh, in handling the tantrums of a child. Show your love with a disciplined hand — the child will understand.

Unfortunately, all too often parental love in our present day society is sadly lacking. The rush for material advancement, and the rising aspiration for equality of the sexes, have resulted in many mothers joining their husbands in the rat race. Mothers struggle to maintain their family image or status symbol by working in offices and

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shops, rather than being at home tendering to the needs of their off-spring.

Children who are left to the care of relatives or paid servants, as well as 'latch key' children who are left to their own devices at home, are often deprived of motherly love and care. The mother, feeling guilty about her lack of attention, would try to placate the child by giving in to all sorts of demands of the child. Such action only spoils the child.

Providing the child with sophisticated modern toys that are detrimental to character formation such as tanks, machine guns, pistols, swords and the like are psychologically unwholesome. The child is unwittingly being taught to condone destruction instead of being taught to be kind, compassionate and helpful. Such a child will develop brutal tendencies as they grow up. Giving a child such toys is no substitute for a mother's love and affection.

Parents are often placed in a dilemma. Rushing home from a hard day's work the weary

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parents have family chores waiting upon them. When the day's work is done, it would be time for dinner followed by T.V., and whatever time there is left, is hardly enough to attend to a child's rightful dues of parental love and affection.

With the call of women's liberation, many women seem to think that the solution is to compete with men outside the home. Such women should consider very carefully whether to bear children. It is irresponsible for a mother to bring a life into this world and then 'abandon' it. You are responsible for what you create.

A child has a right to be satisfied materially, but more importantly spiritually and psychologically. The provision of material comfort is secondary compared to the provision of parental love and attention. We know of many people from poor homes who have with their meagre income, brought up children well with plenty of love. Conversely, many rich people have provided every material comfort for their children, but being deprived of parental love, these children have grown up to become psychologically and morally handicapped.

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Some women may feel that advising them to concentrate on the upbringing of the family is something degrading and reflects the thinking of the old and the conservative. It is true that in the past women have been treated very badly, but this was due more to ignorance on the part of men than to an inherent weakness in women. The Sanskrit word for a housewife is '*Gruhini*' which literally means '*leader of the house,*' Certainly it does not imply that a woman is inferior. Rather it means a division of responsibility for the male and the female.

In certain countries, many husbands hand over their pay packet to their wives who handle domestic affairs. This leaves the man free to concentrate on what he can do best. Since each partner knows clearly what his or her responsibilities are, there is no conflict between them. The atmosphere at home is happy and peaceful where their children can grow up well.

Of course, the husband must see to it that his partner is well cared for, that she is consulted on

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every family decision, that there is enough freedom for her to develop her own personality and that she has her own free time to pursue her personal interests. In this sense, husband and wife are equally responsible for the welfare of their family. They are not in competition with each other.

A mother should consider carefully whether she should continue as a working mother with all the attendant pitfalls or as a housewife giving all her due affection and care to her growing child. Strangely, some modern mothers, particularly in certain countries with military regimes facing a shortage of manpower, are being trained to handle guns or other deadly weapons when they should be cuddling their children and training them to be good or law-abiding citizens.

The modern attitude of working mothers towards their children tends to erode the time-honoured filial piety which children are expected to uphold. The replacement of breast-feeding by bottle feeding is yet another cause. Hitherto, when mothers used to breast-feed and cuddle

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babies in their arms, the tender affection between mother and child becomes much greater. A breast feeding mother, through her maternal instinct, often experiences a tremendous satisfaction from knowing she is providing the baby, as nature has intended, with something of her very own which no one else can give. The influence a mother has on the child thus grows and becomes much more pronounced. Under such circumstances, filial piety, family cohesion and obedience are invariably present.

These traditional traits are for the good and the well-being of children. It is up to the parents, especially the mother to provide them with love, care and affection as their rightful dues. The mother is responsible for the child being good or wayward. The mother can thus reduce juvenile delinquency! At the highest level of thinking, you can see things as they are, not as you are. Then you know that you are responsible for everything.

*'Those who lead their lives by going against nature, must face the consequences either physically or mentally.'*

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## ***How to reduce your Mental Agony***

Whenever certain difficulties and problems arise, make up your mind to reduce your mental agony. First, you must try to understand the nature of the world where you live. You can never expect everything in this world to be perfect and to run smoothly. The world situation may not always be in your favour. There could be no world and no life without problems. Natural forces like sunlight, rain, wind and moonlight are favourable and useful to many, yet at times they could be a nuisance to many others. There is in fact nothing perfectly bad or perfectly good in this world because the very things that are welcomed by one group could be hated by another group. Therefore, we define good and bad according to our needs. Things are neither good nor bad by nature. According to Buddhism, the world exist on conflict to which you become part of.

If you have strong selfish cravings for existence and the senses, you will have to pay the price — the mental agony of having to survive with a topsy-turvy view of the world. Wishful

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thinking, yearnings for eternity and clinging to feelings such as the elusive 'I' or 'me' only warp the mind and its sense of time. Unfulfilled desires yield their crop of quarrels, friction, communication failures, fear, worry, loneliness and anxiety. There are no free rides.

If you are desirous of eradicating the mental agony within you, you have to subdue selfish cravings. Life's journey has a T-junction. Either you take the right path and develop your spirituality to unwind the tensions of worldly life or you continue to indulge in sensual pleasures with their many attendant confrontations.

One way to relieve yourself of your occasional mental agony is to understand the degree of your own sufferings and difficulties compared with those experienced by others. When you are unhappy, you often feel that the world is against you. You think that everything around you is about to collapse. You feel that the end of the road is near. However, if you take a mental note of things around you and count your blessings,

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surprisingly, you will find that you are indeed much better off than many other people.

You might have probably heard the saying, 'I complained I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.' In short, you have been unduly exaggerating your own difficulties and problems. Others are in fact worse off, and yet they do not worry themselves unduly. Problems are there. You should try to solve them instead of worrying and creating mental anguish within you. The Chinese have a practical saying about solving problems:-

*'If you have a big problem, try to reduce it to a small problem. If you have a small problem, try to reduce it to no problem.'*

Another way to reduce your problems is to recapitulate what you have gone through before, under similar or even worse circumstances; and how you have, through your own patience, initiative and effort, been able to surmount your then seemingly insurmountable difficulties. By doing so, you will not permit your existing problems to 'drown you'. On the contrary, by seeing life in a

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**new perspective you will be able to solve whatever problems that you may now face.**

**You should realise that you have gone through much worse situations before and that you are prepared to face them squarely, come what may. With this frame of mind, you will soon regain your self-confidence and be in a better position to solve whatever problems that will be in store for you.**

**If you are facing a problem, there must surely be a remedy to overcome it. So why worry? On the other hand, even if there is no solution for your problem, again why worry because your worry cannot contribute anything to settle your problem.**

### ***All are not Equally Good***

**Occasionally, there are complaints from people who have never caused or given any trouble to other people and yet they become innocent victims of the wiles and intrigues of others. They feel frustrated despite the good lives they have lived.**

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They feel they have been harmed through no fault of their own. Under such circumstances, the innocent victim must realise that the world is made up of all sorts of people — the good and the not so good, the bad and the not so bad, with all the unusual characters that go to make up this world of ours. The innocent victim may console himself that he belongs to the good category whereas the disturber of the peace belongs to the bad, and that on certain occasions, he will still have to bear patiently the misdeeds of those belonging to the bad.

We take for instance the case of a '*good and careful driver*' and a '*bad and reckless driver*'. The good and careful driver took every precaution to drive carefully but nevertheless he met with an accident, through no fault of his own — the fault being that of a bad and reckless driver. Thus as we can see the good may have to suffer, despite their goodness, because there are bad and reckless people around us. The world is neither good nor bad. It produces criminals as well as saints, fools and enlightened ones. Out of the

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same clay, beautiful and ugly, useful and even useless things can be made. The quality of good pottery depends on the potter and not on the clay. The potter is in fact yourself. The moulding of your happiness or unhappiness is in your hands.

***You gain what you seek***

If you try your level best to overcome your difficulties by practising the advice given in this booklet, you will definitely find peace, happiness and harmony which you are seeking. Follow principles which have been tested and proven as outlined in this booklet for your protection.

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# PARENTS AND CHILDREN

*Narada Thera*



B M S PUBLICATION



## PARENTS

“There are four fields of merit”, says the Buddha. They are the 1. Buddha, 2. Arahants, 3. Mother and 4. Father.

The Buddhas are the flowers of humanity. Rarely do they arise in this world. It is only during such Buddha-cycles that saintly disciples flourish. But a kind mother and a loving father are common spectacles in every home. Veritably they are fertile and easily accessible fields of merit for the dutiful and grateful children. What little is sown with care on those rich fields bears fruits in abundance. Blessed, indeed, are those fortunate sons and daughters who are graced with the presence of their beloved parents on whom they can bestow their unfailing love and over-flowing gratitude.

According to the Buddha, the children are so deeply indebted to their parents that they cannot sufficiently show their gratitude to them, should they carry their mother

on the right shoulder and their father on the left, ministering to all their needs even for a period of hundred years. Children can neither repay their debt even if they had the power to place them on a heap of jewels, waist-high, and bestow on them the sole sovereignty of the whole universe.

The Hindu Scriptures also pay a glowing tribute to the parents by stating that one religious teacher is worth ten secular teachers, one father is worth a hundred religious teachers, but one mother is worth a thousand fathers.

Why parents are so highly praised by Teachers of old is obvious to all. The reasons are not far to seek. Kind-hearted fathers give their best to their children. They forget themselves and see to their comfort and happiness. They liberally spend their hard-earned wealth on their education. Their sole delight is to see their children prosper and live in peace and happiness. Dear mothers at times risk their precious lives in their prime womanhood without even seeing the face of their innocent child. They feed them with their own blood.

spend restless nights for their sake. Indescribable are the sufferings they undergo in nursing them. Children's pain is their pain. Children's happiness is their happiness. Children are a part and parcel of themselves. They are their valuable treasures. They are their main sources of delight and happiness. Without them they are desolate, unhappy, and miserable.

Now, is there any way to repay their great debt to their dearly beloved parents? Yes, there is. It is, by dissuading them from evil, inducing them to do good and be good, and by living as ideal children. They should be provided not only with fleeting material pleasures but also with substantial spiritual treasures.

Therefore, O good children, ever be obedient to your parents who are your best possessions in the world. Reverence them daily as King Agbo did of old. Respect their wishes, and never hurt their feelings. Be a blessing to them and never a curse. Maintain their honour by your refined manners and noble demeanour. Show by your character that you are the worthy

children of your worthy parents, especially in their absence. Do nothing to bring discredit to their hallowed name even after their death.

## THE AFFECTIONATE FATHER

Children do not often realise the amount of affection and care showered on them by their kind and self-sacrificing parents. As a rule parental love is far greater than filial love. Well, one cannot expect immature, inexperienced children to be as dutiful and loving as their grown-up parents. Until they themselves become parents they do not fully realise what parental love is. Here is an appealing illustrative story.

Prince Ajatasattu, instigated by Devadatta Thera, attempted to kill his father King Bimbisara and usurp the throne. The unfortunate Prince was caught redhanded. The compassionate father instead of punishing him for his brutal act rewarded him with the coveted Crown.

The ungrateful son showed his gratitude by casting his father to prison in order to starve him to death. His mother alone had free access to the king daily. The loyal Queen carried food concealed in her waist-pouch. To this the Prince objected. Then she carried food concealed in her hair-knot. The Prince resented this too. Later she bathed herself in scented water and besmeared her body with a mixture of honey, butter, ghee, and molasses. The king licked her body and sustained himself. The over-vigilant prince detected this and ordered his mother not to visit the father.

King Bimbisara was without any sustenance, but he walked up and down enjoying spiritual happiness as he was a Sotapanna Saint. Ultimately the wicked son decided to put an end to the life of his unfortunate father. Ruthlessly he ordered his barber to cut open his soles and put salt and oil thereupon and heat them on the fire of charcoal.

The king who saw the barber approaching thought that the son realising his folly was sending the barber to shave his grown-

up beard and hair and release him from prison. Contrary to his expectations he had to meet an untimely and ghastly death. The barber mercilessly executed the inhuman orders of the barbarous prince. The good king died. On that very day a son was born unto Ajatasattu. Letters conveying the news of birth and death reached the palace at the same time. The letter conveying the happy news was first read. O, indescribable was the love he cherished towards his first-born son. His body was electrified, and the love penetrated up to the very marrow of his bones.

Instantly he cried — Run, and release, my beloved father quickly!

His father had closed his eyes for ever.

The other letter was then placed in his hand. Immediately he rushed to his beloved mother and questioned — “Mother dear, did my father love me when I was a child?”

“What say you, son! When you were conceived in my womb I developed a craving to sip some blood from the right hand

of your father. This I dare not say. Consequently I grew pale and thin. I was finally persuaded to disclose my inhuman desire. Joyfully your father fulfilled my wish, and I drank the abhorrent potion. The soothsayers predicted that you would be an enemy to your father. Accordingly you were named — Ajatasattu, unborn enemy — I attempted to effect a miscarriage, but your father prevented it. After you were born I wanted to kill you. Again your father interfered. On one occasion, child, you were suffering from a boil on your finger, and nobody was able to lull you into sleep. But your father who was administering justice in his royal court, took you into his lap, and caressing you sucked the boil. Lo, inside the mouth it burst open. O, my dear son, that pus and blood! Yes, your father swallowed it out of love for you.”

Ajatasattu shed hot tears.

Children dear, you can well imagine his feelings.

Parents can, as a rule, comprehend the inner working of a child under almost all

circumstances, because they also passed through that juvenile stage. This is the reason why they are so sympathetic and generous towards their erring children. They are always ready to bear and forbear their wrongs. Knowingly or unknowingly children may hurt their feelings. Through some misunderstanding they may be ungrateful to them. Due to childish impatience they may disappoint them. They may indiscreetly follow a course diametrically opposite to that pre-arranged by parents for their own well-being and happiness. Despite all their shortcomings, omissions, commissions and errors the sympathetic parents will readily forgive and welcome them. In times of adversity, even without their appealing for help, they will voluntarily come to their succour. If their favours are resented, they will assist them indirectly.

Such is the benevolent attitude of kind and enlightened parents.

But, can children understand the feelings and responsibilities of their parents towards them?

They cannot because they have not yet attained that stage of parenthood.

It is only a father or a mother then can really understand what genuine parental love is.

Ajatasattu's case is a striking example.

As children let them do their duty well.

## THE AFFECTIONATE MOTHER

In the Sonadanda Jataka the Bodhisatta sings the virtues of a mother in the following strain:

“Kind, pitiful, our refuge she that fed us at her breast. A mother is the way to heaven, and thee she loveth best.

She nursed and fostered us with care: graced with good gifts is she.

A mother is the way to heaven, and best she loveth thee.

Craving a child in prayer she kneels each holy shrine before.

The changing season closely scans and  
studies astral lore.

Pregnant in course of time she feels  
her tender longings grow.

And soon the unconscious babe begins  
a loving friend to know.

Her treasure for a year or less she guards  
with utmost care,

Then brings it forth and from that day  
a mother's name will bear.

With milky breast and lullaby she soothes  
the fretting child,

Wrapped in his comforter's warm arms  
his woes are soon beguiled.

Watching o'er him, poor innocent, lest  
wind or heat annoy,

His fostering nurse she may be called,  
to cherish thus her boy.

What gear his sire and mother have she  
hoards for him 'May be.'

She thinks. 'Some day, my dearest  
child, it all may come to thee.'

'Do this or that, my darling boy,' the worried mother cries,

And when he is grown to man's estate, she still laments and sighs,

He goes in reckless mood to see a neighbour's wife at night.

She fumes and frets, 'Why will he not return while it is light?'

If one thus reared with anxious pains his mother should neglect,

Playing her false, what doom, I pray, but hell can he expect?

Those that love wealth o'er much, 'tis said, their wealth will soon have lost

One that neglects a mother soon will rue it to his cost.

Those that love wealth o'er much, 'tis said, their wealth will soon have lost

One that neglects a father soon will rue it to his cost.

Gifts, loving speech, kind offices together with the grace

Of calm indifference of mind shown in  
due time and place

These virtues to the world are as lynch-  
pin to chariot wheel.

These lacking, still a mother's name to  
children would appeal."

A mother like the sire should with  
reverent honour be crowned,

Sages approve the man in whom those  
virtues may be found.

Thus parents worthy of all praise, a  
high-position own,

By ancient sages Brahma called. So  
great was their renown.

Kind parents from their children should  
receive all reverence due,

He that is wise will honour them with  
service good and true.

He should provide them food and drink.  
bedding and raiment meet,

Should bathe them and anoint with oil  
and duly wash their feet.

So filial services like these sages his praises sound

Here in this world, and after death in heaven his joys bound.”

(Jataka Translation Vol. v.pp. 173, 174).

“Who is the best friend at home?”

questioned a certain deity from the Buddha.

“Mother is the best friend at home”, replied the Buddha.

## DUTIES OF PARENTS

It is the duty of parents to see to the welfare of their children. In fact the dutiful and loving parents shoulder the responsibilities with pleasure. Although at times some ungrateful children forget the invaluable services rendered by their compassionate parents and insist on rights, neglecting their bounden duties, yet parents, with a few exceptions, frequently attend to all the needs of their offsprings not only during their custodianship but also after they have left their homes.

During their embryonic period, and after their birth, until they get married parents tend them with greatest care and try to bring them up as ideal children.

Parents certainly desire to see their children grow up as ideal ones. They would be happy if they surpass them in every way or at least emulate them. They would surely be disappointed if they fall below their standard. To lead children on the right path parents should first set the example and lead ideal lives. It is impossible to expect worthy children from unworthy parents. Apart from the Kammic tendencies children inherit from previous births, they invariably inherit the defects and virtues of parents too. Responsible parents should take every precaution not to transmit undesirable germs to their progenitors.

According to the Sigalovada Sutra there are five duties that should be performed by parents.

1. The first duty is to dissuade children from evil.

Home is the first school, and parents are the first teachers. Children usually take elementary lessons in good and evil from their fond parents. Careless parents directly or indirectly impart an elementary knowledge of lying, cheating, dishonesty, slandering, revenge, fearfulness, etc. to their children during childhood. Parents should show exemplary conduct and should not inculcate such vices into their children's impressionable minds.

Parents should behave in such a way that children can place implicit confidence in them. They should never deceive them. Children should not be encouraged to cry for things that they desire. It should be impressed that whatever is necessary to them will be given even without asking. Besides, parents make a great mistake in denying what they actually possess. Sometimes when the child is insistent, the very thing that is denied is given with the warning not to mention it to other brothers and sisters. Thus a child receives its first lessons in lying and cheating. Later they get an advanced knowledge in these nefarious arts, so as to dupe even their first teachers.

**What about revenge? That too is sometimes learnt at home, very often from the sympathetic mother. The child falls on the ground, and it raises a cry. The mother rushes up, raises the child, caresses it, and stamps the ground in revenge. The cry stops. It learns the lesson – tit-for-tat.**

**Children should not be brought up with fear. There is no harm in crying a little, but the crying should not be stopped by instilling fear.**

**Obedience, respect, humility should be differentiated from groundless fear. According to Buddhism fear arises when there is ignorance. One should be afraid of evil but not of any person. On account of this unnecessary fear children become timid, and indirectly develop an inferiority complex. They fear the dark and the unknown. They fear to be alone and to go alone.**

**Let them read stories of Prince Pancayudha, King Dutugemunu and Princess Vihara Mahadevi.**

Prince Pancayudha, who was only a youth of sixteen, was not afraid to fight with a ferocious demon. When the young prince was advised not to pass through the forest infested with this demon, he replied – Well, we die only once. He did pass through the forest fearlessly and conquered the demon too.

It was Vihara Mahadevi, a young princess, who volunteered to sacrifice her life for the sake of her subjects.

It was such a courageous mother that gave birth to a still more heroic son as Dutugemunu.

If a child does a wrong, he should be corrected there and then. It is not advisable to disparage him in public. Very often children become more stubborn and obstinate thereby. All children are good. Their temperaments have to be studied first, and the suitable remedy is to be applied accordingly. Sometimes a mere word would suffice to effect a complete change.

In a certain Jataka it is stated that a king had a very unruly incorrigible son. He was taken to an ascetic who was living in the Royal Park. With the prince the ascetic went for a walk round the park. Espying a small nimb plant not more than two feet in height with a leaf or two, the prince questioned what it was. The wise ascetic advised him to eat a leaf and test. Embittered by the pungent taste of the nimb leaf, he at once ordered it to be destroyed, remarking, that if this tiny plant was so bitter, how more bitter would it be if it were to grow to a bigger tree. "Root it out," he exclaimed. "Pause for a moment, O prince," said the ascetic. "People's opinion about you is the same. If you are so unruly as a prince, what would you be as a king?" The prince took the hint, and by that single piece of advice he became completely a transformed person.

2. The second duty is to persuade them to do good.

Parents are the teachers at home; teachers are the parents in school. Both parents and teachers are responsible for the future well-being of the children. They

become what they make. They are, and they will be, what they are. They sit at their feet during their impressionable age. They imbibe what they impart. They follow in their footsteps. They are influenced by their thoughts, words and deeds. As such it is the duty of the parents to place them in the most congenial atmosphere both at home and in the school.

Children should not be left at the mercy of their kind but often uncultured servants and amahs. It is not an exaggeration to say that sometimes children are attached more to their amahs than their own parents. There are reasons for this change which parents should well consider.

Simplicity, obedience, co-operation, unity, courage, self-sacrifice, honesty, straightforwardness, service, self-reliance, kindness, thrift, contentment, good manners, religious zeal, and other kindred virtues should be inculcated to their juvenile minds by degrees. Germs so planted will eventually grow into fruit-laden trees.

Let them at least observe the five elementary principles of regulated behaviour.

By observing the first principle of non-killing they cultivate harmlessness and compassion. They begin to realise the sacredness of life.

The second principle of non-stealing fosters up-rightness and honesty. Though not included in stealing playing cards for stakes should not be encouraged. Taking children to the race-course is another vice that leads to future miseries and other unexpected happenings.

The third principle deals with good morals.

Children should be taught to be pure and chaste. Care should be taken that they do not mix with bad company and that they return home before dark. In this connection parents should set the example. Otherwise children will follow suit. Immoral parents cannot expect their children to be moral. The pure and clean life of the parents is a blessing both to them and their posterity. Whilst an impure, unclean one is a curse to both parties.

Children should be taught ever to be truthful, which is the fourth principle. If they had done some wrong, let them con-

fess it without trying to conceal it with another wrong. Children should be so trained that parents should be proud to say – O, our children never tell lies. Parents should consider it a disgrace for them to remark – Child, now tell the truth, don't tell lies.

O children dear,  
Who truth revere.  
Even for fun  
Untruth should shun.

Slandering, on the part of children, should be nipped in the bud. When a child is about to be punished for a misdeed of his, he should not be encouraged to slander, saying that the brother also did the same thing.

Harsh speech and frivolous talk should be avoided. Sweet children should be trained to use sweet speech. They should not impolitely and carelessly utter whatever comes to their mouth. They should be advised to utter what is right, what is true, and what is good. Let them guard their tongue from their childhood. An unguarded tongue would even prove a more destructive

and powerful weapon than an atom bomb. A guarded tongue, on the other hand, would stir millions to be good and do good.

The parents are well aware of the pernicious effects of drinking and smoking. No comment is necessary here to impress upon them the danger of allowing them to sip a little wine or beer even once in a blue moon. Sipping is the modest beginning, temperance is the middle, over-indulgence is the inevitable end. When children attend parties parents will have to keep a vigilant eye, or better still, to give a warning lest the little ones might be tempted to test, out of childish curiosity, the bitterness or the deliciousness of this obnoxious liquid.

In this connection too the enlightened parents should first practise teetotalism before they advise their worthy children to observe this fifth principle of non-drinking.

3. The third duty is to give the children a good education.

A decent education is the best legacy that parents should bequeath to their children.

A more valuable treasure there is not. It is the best blessing that parents could confer on their children. Not only sons but also daughters should enjoy the benefit of this blessing, willingly and at times, self-sacrificingly, conferred on them by their parents.

Education should be imparted to them, preferably from their youth, in a religious-national atmosphere. This has far-reaching effects on the child. Let them be entrusted to the best cultured teachers who understand their responsibilities. It would certainly redound to the material and spiritual happiness of the child if facilities could be provided for them to sit at the feet of an educated and holy monk to receive religious instructions. The exceptionally high moral standard of King Siri Sanghabodhi was mainly due to the religious training he received from his uncle Thera.

When children are compelled to live far away from their homes, precautionary measures should be taken to house them under favourable surroundings.

Religious instruction should hold a foremost place in the curriculum of Buddhist

education. Religion should not be divorced from secular education. Material progress and spiritual progress are equally essential. One should not be separated from the other. More than mere book learning it is the practice that is more essential. Let them not learn to be hypocrites. Let them not feign piety merely to deceive their parents or teachers. Let them not learn religion merely to pass examinations. Knowledge of the Dhamma is acquired to put that into practice. As the Dhammapada states he who learns the Dhamma without acting accordingly is like a cowherd who merely counts others' kine.

In these days some irrelevant subjects are taught which are absolutely useless in the long run. Would it not be better to utilise that energy to the study of subjects that are interesting and are of substantial benefit to them? With regard to girls, unless they choose an academical career, more stress should be laid on those subjects that will make them ideal wives and mothers.

Well, through over-enthusiasm for education, one's health should not be neglected.

Sickly educated youths are no valuable assets to any country or nation.

4. The fourth duty is to give them in marriage to suitable individuals.

The Sinhalese expression for marriage is "Dige yanava", which literally means 'going a long way'. It is so-called because marriage is a solemn act that pertains to the whole lifetime, nay to an indefinite period should there be offspring. This union cannot easily be dissolved. Hence before marriage the question has to be viewed from every angle in all its bearings to the satisfaction of all parties. Conflicting interests mean inevitable disagreement. Then parents demand Duty; children insist on Rights. According to the Buddhist culture duty supersedes rights. Let both parties be not adamant, but use their wise discretion and come to an amicable settlement. Otherwise there will be mutual cursing and other repercussions. More often than-not the infection is transmitted to progenitors as well.

In the choice of a wife the Maha Mangala Jataka (No. 453) gives the following clue:—

“Whose wife is friendly, and of equal years,  
Devoted, good, and many children bears,  
Faithful and virtuous and of gentle birth,  
That is the blessing that in wives appears.”†

Although the selection may be confined to a limited few, it is best to avoid, in the choice of a husband, “a debauchee, a drunkard, a gambler, and one who squanders whatever he possesses.” (Vasala Sutta).

Health must be a pre-requisite for marriage. Otherwise parents will be a curse to their offsprings.

†“The highest gift a man on earth can receive is a good wife,

But a bad one is the bitterest curse of human life.”

5. The last duty is to hand over to them, at the proper time, their inheritance.

Human parents not only love and tend their children as long as they are in their custody, but also make preparations for their future comfort and happiness. They hoard up treasures at personal discomfort and ungrudgingly give them as a legacy to their children.

The best dowry that parents could bestow on a daughter is the following admonitions given to Visakha by her father on the day of her marriage:—

1. Do not carry outside the indoor fire.
2. Do not take inside the outdoor fire.
3. Give only to those that give.
4. Do not give to those that do not give.
5. Give both to those that give and do not give.
6. Sit happily.
7. Eat happily.
8. Sleep happily.

9. Tend the fire.
10. Honour the household divinities.

The implied meaning is as follows:—

1. Fire here signifies slandering. The wife should not speak evil of her husband and parents-in-law to others. Neither should their shortcomings nor household quarrels be reported elsewhere.

2. A wife should not listen to the reports and stories of other households.

3. Things should be lent only to those who return them.

4. No article should be lent to those who do not return them.

5. Poor kinsfolk and friends should be helped even if they do not repay.

6. A wife should sit in a becoming way. On seeing her father-in-law and mother-in-law she should stand and not remain sitting. This admonition deals with the modesty of a woman and the respect that should be shown to parents-in-law.

7. Before partaking meals a wife should first see to the needs of her parents-

in-law and husband. She should see that the servants too are well cared for.

8. This does not mean that a wife should sleep as long as she likes. Before sleep a wife should see that all doors are closed, furniture is safe, servants have performed their duties, and that parents-in-law and husband have gone to bed.

A wife should rise early in the morning and, unless unwell, she should not sleep during the day.

9. Parents-in-law and husband should be regarded as fire. Deal carefully with them as one deals with fire.

10. Parents-in-law and husband are regarded as divinities here.

The Buddha Himself refers to parents-in-law as divinities – Sassudeva.

Wife, according to the Eastern custom, regards her husband as a lord issara. In the word of the Buddha wife is certainly the husband's best friend – It is the duty of the husband to treat her as such and act as the greatest benefactor to her, regarding her as his second self (atmani). The loyal and dutiful

wife pays the highest regard to her ideal husband as her most benevolent protector.

A wife should also attend to her religious duties. Monks and ascetics that visit the house at proper times should be treated with respect. She should be hospitable to them.

## FILIAL DUTIES

Children are deeply indebted to their parents for bringing them into light and for all the good they have done in every possible way. In fact they cannot repay their debt if they were to sacrifice their life for their sake.

According to Buddhism there are three types of children. They are:— those who are inferior to their parents in every respect, (Avajata) those who are on the same level with their parents (Anujata), and those who excel their parents in every way (Atijata) It must be the endeavour of every child to excel the parents in learning; in virtue, in status, in service, etc. If he or she does not, it is the child that is to be blamed more

than the parents, for the child enjoys natural advantages. If children cannot excel their parents, they should at least emulate them, but never be inferior to them.

According to the Sigalovada Sutta there are five duties that children should perform towards their parents.

1. The first duty is to support the parents.

No comment is necessary to stress on this paramount duty.

As is our Buddhist custom, children should daily take the three Refuges and the Five Precepts and then, prostrating at the feet of their parents, should salute them.

Here is an ancient form of salutation:—

Unutterable, O Mother dear, are the sufferings you suffered for me since I took conception in your womb.

Placing my clasped hands on the top of my head I salute you to receive forgiveness for all my faults.

When I cried you lulled me and sent me lovingly to sleep. —

And the impurities of my body were precious to you and you touched them as if they were fragrant things.

For all your infinite services and mercy, my dear noble mother, may you become a Buddha Supreme to save and succour the suffering worlds!

(Bosat)

Perhaps most readers are acquainted with the story of King Aggabodhi whose exemplary conduct is an excellent example to all children.

Culavahsa gives a graphic description of his over-flowing love and deep reverence for his aged mother in the following words:—

“The king found pleasure in the serving of his mother day and night. He went to wait on her already early in the morning, rubbed her head with oil, perfumed the parts moist with sweat, cleaned her

nails and bathed her carefully. He clad her himself in a new garment pleasant to the touch, and the cast-off raiment he took and cleaned it himself. With the water therefrom he sprinkled his own head together with a diadem, and worshipped her perfectly with fragrant flowers as a blcetiya. After making obeisance before her three times, and walking, with right side facing, round her and giving her attendants raiment and the like to their hearts' content, he offered her delicious food with his own hand, partook himself of what she left and strewed thereof on his head. To her attendants he gave the best food such as was meant for the king and when he had put in order her chamber, fragrant with sweet odours, he carefully there with his own hand her couch, washed her feet, rubbed her gently with fragrant oil, sat by her rubbing her limbs and sought to make her sleep. Then with right side facing, he walked round her bed, did reverence three times in the right way, ordered slaves or servants as guards and without turning his back on her, went out. At a spot where she could no longer be seen, he halted and three times again did reverence. Then

happy at his action and ever thinking of her, he went home. As long as she lived he served her in this way.”

(Culavamsa Translated by W. Geiger — p. 132).

In the Sama Jataka it is stated that when young Sama was shot with an arrow, he fell senseless on the ground with his head turned towards his parents in a reverential attitude.

As Prince Jali and Princess Krishna Jina children should be extremely obedient to their parents. These two children of King Vessantara hid themselves in a pond through fear of an old man who came in search. But when their father called them they instantly ran up to him without hesitating for a moment.

Prince Rama's obedience to his father is worth emulating. Through the machinations of his step-mother Rama was exiled by his father for fourteen years. The king died a few years later and the ministers went to the forest and invited prince Rama to rule the Kingdom. The obedient prince declined to accept the invitation until the prescribed period of exile was over.

Thus obedience should be the chief characteristic of good children.

They should not ill-treat their parents at any cost. Ill-natured wives should not be permitted to poison them against their aged parents. They should tend them with the greatest care especially when they are old and sick. They should consider it a great privilege to minister to them on such occasions.

2. They should perform the necessary duties.

They should understand what is expected of them and perform it to the satisfaction of their parents.

It is the duty of children to see to the comfort and happiness of their parents. They should even be prepared to sacrifice their pleasures for the sake of their parents. In some Jatakas it is stated that the Bodhi-satta has considered it his great privilege to sacrifice his life for the sake of his parents.

“Those mortals who obey the law and nurse their parents in distress,

The gods observe their piety and come to heal their sicknesses.

**“The mortals who obey the law and nurse their parents in distress,**

**The gods in this world praise their deeds and in the next with heaven them bless.”**

**(Temiya Jataka)**

It is their duty not only to see to their material happiness but also to their spiritual happiness. They should try to increase their generosity, morality, piety, wisdom, etc. If they could afford, they should take them on pilgrimages and persuade them to acquire merit that will redound to their eternal happiness.

3. Their third duty is to keep the family lineage.

They must keep intact the ancestral property without squandering their hard-earned wealth. Often thrifty parents acquire wealth by dint of effort. What they had accumulated by their perseverance, children, influenced by the so-called veneer of civilization, squander in a few years and lead miserable lives.

They are also expected to carry on the good work done by their parents. Periodical alms giving, financial assistance given to religious and charitable institutions, helping the poor and sick, etc., practised by parents should not be neglected, especially after their death.

4. Children should act in such a way as to be worthy of the inheritance.

The honourable name of the parents has to be maintained by their worthy children. Cultured children will do nothing to bring discredit to their good parents, especially in their absence. What one is ashamed to tell one's parents should not be done either in public or in private.

5. Children should offer alms in the name of their departed parents.

It is the Buddhist custom to remember the parents even after their death. They are best remembered by doing some good and transferring the merit acquired by them to the departed ones. If they expect merit, they will share it. Whether they share it or not such meritorious acts will redound to the happiness of the living ones. They will also thereby generate good thoughts towards them which will tend to make

them happy. Furthermore they give expression to their gratitude and set a good example to posterity.

Periodical alms givings may be held in their name. Religious, charitable, and educational institutions may be established, religious books and tracts may be published, scholarships may be founded in their honour.

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We conclude this writing with the instructive second Brahmagiri Edict of the illustrious Asoka, who even as the Great Teacher did, emphasize the importance of filial duty. The Edict, which is a summary of the discourse taught to the young Licchavis by the Lord, is as follows:—

“Mother and father and teacher must be properly served. Compassion must be showered on all living beings. Truth must be spoken. These virtues must be promoted.

“Likewise the preceptor must be revered by the pupil. Relations should be properly treated.

“This is the ancient natural conduct. This makes for longevity of life. Therefore should this be followed.”



***“Wherever the Buddha's teachings have flourished,  
either in cities or countrysides,  
people would gain inconceivable benefits.  
The land and people would be enveloped in peace.  
The sun and moon will shine clear and bright.  
Wind and rain would appear accordingly,  
and there will be no disasters.  
Nations would be prosperous  
and there would be no use for soldiers or weapons.  
People would abide by morality and accord with laws.  
They would be courteous and humble,  
and everyone would be content without injustices.  
There would be no thefts or violence.  
The strong would not dominate the weak  
and everyone would get their fair share.”***

**~THE BUDDHA SPEAKS OF  
THE INFINITE LIFE SUTRA OF  
ADORNMENT, PURITY, EQUALITY  
AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF  
THE MAHAYANA SCHOOL ~**

**GREAT VOW**  
**BODHISATTVA EARTH-TREASURY**  
**( BODHISATTVA KSITIGARBHA )**

**“ Unless Hells become empty,  
I vow not to attain Buddhahood;  
Till all have achieved the Ultimate Liberation,  
I shall then consider my Enlightenment full !”**

**Bodhisattva Earth-Treasury is  
entrusted as the Caretaker of the World until  
Buddha Maitreya reincarnates on Earth  
in 5.7 billion years.**

**Reciting the Holy Name:  
NAMO BODHISATTVA EARTH-TREASURY**

**Karma-erasing Mantra:  
OM BA LA MO LING TO NING SVAHA**

*With bad advisors forever left behind,  
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,  
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light  
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.*

*The supreme and endless blessings  
of Samantabhadra's deeds,  
I now universally transfer.  
May every living being, drowning and adrift,  
Soon return to the Pure Land of Limitless Light!*

*~ The Vows of Samantabhadra ~*

*I vow that when my life approaches its end,  
All obstructions will be swept away;  
I will see Amitabha Buddha,  
And be born in His Western Pure Land of  
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.*

*When reborn in the Western Pure Land,  
I will perfect and completely fulfill  
Without exception these Great Vows,  
To delight and benefit all beings.*

*~ The Vows of Samantabhadra  
Avatamsaka Sutra ~*