

On a Path to Wisdom

*Teachings on the Nibbedhika Sutta -
An unbundling of Kamma and Vipāka*

Venerable UdaEriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero

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This book has been printed for free distribution.

Sabbadānam dhammadānam jināti.

The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.

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Printed by:
The Quality Printers
17/2, Pangiriwatte Rd, Gangodawila, Nugegoda.
Tel: 0114 870 333

Acknowledgement

The Translator is indebted to Venerable Panadure Chandaratana Thero, Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya for the helpful suggestions, corrections and inspiration in reviewing a draft of this book.

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About the Author

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva Maha Thero is the Abbott and Chief Preceptor of Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya, a monastery in the strict forest tradition in Sri Lanka, one of Sri Lanka's most respected meditation monasteries.

The monastery was established in 1968 and led under the guidance of the great Venerable Matara Sri Ñānārāma Maha Thero.

Venerable Dhammajīva Maha Thero has also spent several years of training under the late Ovaḍācariya Sayādaw U. Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa, a leading Burmese meditation master who followed the lineage of the great Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw.

Venerable Dhammajīva Maha Thero is fluent in Sinhalese, English and Burmese and has translated many meditation guide books as well as *Dhamma* books from Burmese to English and to Sinhalese and has authored a significant collection of Sinhalese and English publications.

Translator's Foreword

In these lucid and penetrative teachings, Most Venerable Dhammajīva Maha Thero clarifies the Buddha's teachings on *Kamma*.

The series of talks (based on Part 5 of the *Nibbedhika Sutta*) were delivered at Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya (Forest Hermitage), Sri Lanka in 2012. The talks explain how intention is *kamma* - with intention one is responsible for *kamma* by body, speech and mind; the most proximate cause for *kamma* is contact and how *kamma* results can give effect here and now, in this lifetime or after death.

Drawing on available theoretical dissertation, meditative contemplation and practice, the meditation master then explains how cessation of contact leads to cessation of *kamma*; and the noble eightfold path is the path leading to cessation of *kamma*.

With clear instructions, Venerable Mahā Thero provides the necessary tools and aids to help a *yogi* steeped in their pursuit of liberation to discern with penetration, the profound and complex topic of *kamma* and *vipāka*.

Intuitively canvassing the topic through experiential knowledge, deductively extrapolating technical nuances and with a deep understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of *kamma* and *vipāka*, Most Venerable Dhammajīva Maha Thero presents a scholarly series of talks, incomparable and uncompromising in their quality, to clarify the

depth of the Buddha's teachings, at the same time, enabling us to take command and control of our onward journey, in the here and now.

Translator and Editor, Melbourne, Australia

15 April 2019

Chapter 1

Understanding Kamma

In the *Nibbedhika sutta*, the Buddha considers six supportive pathways to *nibbāna*.

Firstly, the pathway to liberation is available to a *yogi* who understands the nature, diversity, and cause for sensual desire (*kāma*).

Secondly, the pathway to liberation is available to a *yogi* with clear comprehension of feelings (*vedanā*). Instead of trying to flee away from painful feelings or indulging in pleasurable feelings, clearly knowing and understanding feelings is important.

Thirdly, by understanding the nature, diversity, results and cause for perception (*saññā*), one is directed to liberation. In this modern age, we are presented with numerous information which we program to our system in each passing moment. Instead of freeing ourselves, we continue to accumulate knowledge, based on perception, which entangles us further into the web of perception.

It is like a loaded cargo ship sinking in the deep ocean – without realising the ship is sinking, we load it up with more baggage, to slowly sink to the depths of the ocean. The Buddha instructs us to pause, reflect and understand the nature of perception, its diversity and to liberate ourselves from the mirage of perception.

The fourth pathway is clarity into the influx of mental defilements for sensual pleasures or mental fermentations (*āsava*) which taint and corrupt the mind with intoxicant bias, interfering and polluting experience. There are deep seated personality traits through which we connect to the world, taints which straddle activity through a lens of preference in life.

The fifth factor, the focus of this publication is on *kamma*. The talks aim to illustrate the topic of *kamma* through a theoretical, deductive and experiential lens to aid a *yogi* committed to *nibbāna*, to gain a true appreciation of its nature, foundation and diversity of *kamma*. The topic of *kamma* and *vipāka* is challenging, complex and can only be completely and comprehensively understood by a Buddha.

Finally, the sixth pathway is clear comprehension of the nature, diversity, results and cause for *dukkha*, through which one is directed towards *nibbāna*.

Become cautious about *kamma*

We accumulate *kamma* in our daily lives from one moment to the next without our awareness. Once *kamma* is generated, there is no forgiveness or bias in results. We know it is not a defence to plead ignorance of the law when faced with consequences for breaching the law.

Just as one would suffer the consequences of touching an electric current without rubber gloves, the effects of *kamma* are without

reprieve. Higher the voltage, the more painful the results. So we must exercise caution.

It is useful to begin the discussion with some practical steps.

We must develop a non-judgmental approach to our meditative life. Do not judge other *yogis*, compare and criticise their actions because we are all striving towards the same end result. After all, we are all creatures of *kamma*!

We must not generate *kamma* due to the faults of others.

We need to become mindful from one moment to the next, to abstain from committing unwholesome acts, generating *kamma* by body, speech and mind and prolong *samsāra*.

Living like this, we strive to be noble and exalted, because we act with correct understanding. To know the cessation of *kamma*, that its nature is impermanent, is a profound understanding. This can be observed in the practice.

Each unfolding (result) of *kamma* has a beginning, a middle and an end, whether it is wholesome or unwholesome. Because we suffer (or delight) in experience, it is difficult to see the cessation of *kamma*.

It is as if you are listening to the echo of a bell which is struck, and then, following the sound from the beginning to its fading. You can mindfully observe the beginning, the middle and the end of an act with galvanized effort and see the arising and cessation of *kamma*.

Mindfully, become aware of *kamma*, its effect and cessation with detached observation. Observe the unfolding of results with non-

judgmental awareness. This is not easy as we habitually react to pleasant and unpleasant experiences. We have experiential knowledge of the true nature of *kamma* and results, when we can connect this observation to our practice.

Kamma is generated by mental formations, speech and bodily actions. The string that straddles the root causes for these acts is intention (*cetanā*). So it is no surprise the Buddha stated - *cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*, a common statement in commentary, that intention is the forerunner of all actions.

Kamma can only be understood by comprehending intention. When the mind is restful and calm, there is calmness in bodily response. Intentions subdue and bodily activity calms down. A corrosive mind can result in a rather haphazard and rough bodily response. Our actions are disciplined when our intention is right and balanced.

A change in our personal traits and lifestyle can happen with a clear understanding of *cetanā* (mental formations (*sankhāra*)).

Dāna (generosity) and *sīla* (morality) are essential pre-conditions to understand mental formations and intention(s). Concentration is also necessary. A real difference can happen when a person's *cetanā* is intact. We must take control of *cetanā* to generate *kamma* in the right direction, so we do not fall victim to mundane, unmindful thinking, responding to events like a puppet on mere rationalization.

Otherwise, you cheat yourself, justifying all actions without understanding why a task was done in the first place. Mindfully become aware of *cetanā*, take control of mental formations. Do not fall victim to life's events.

Go back to the root cause, catch the beginning of the string which manipulates the puppetry of intention which activates bodily action, speech and thoughts.

Generally, our response is a reaction - sense desire or aversion to the unfolding of *kamma* in each passing moment. Without our awareness, we accumulate incalculable *kamma*, adding fuel to navigate our experience to the future.

With clarity about *cetanā*, we can discern whether life's events occur with our intention.

In a conversation, if we are mindful, we can discern whether the listener's response is what we had intended or not. There are times when others feel upset about what we say, when our intention was to communicate something quite different.

If we are mindful, we know our intention was not to upset them – it is simply how they received our communication. In this way, we can mindfully discern our intention in communication, was it understood as we had intended, or was it a misunderstanding?

From morning to night, whenever we intend an act, we generate *kamma*. Many things happen without our intention, but, we claim responsibility over these events.

For example, a monk may feel responsible about an incident, thinking that he had transgressed *sīla*. He might engage in self-criticism, start to feel anxious and possibly depressed or reflect on the situation, inquiring whether he had actually transgressed *sīla*. He might speak with a senior monk. The senior monk might then engage in a process of inquiry, going back to explore what happened. Speaking about what

had happened, the monk will begin to realise that anxiety about transgressing moral restraint was in vain. The incident had taken place without his intention, there was no *kamma* in the first instance – due to his worry in vain he may have accumulated *kamma*.

Just consider how many times you felt sorrowful over something that just happened without your control or intention? With each moment of repentance, you generate *kamma* unnecessarily, when you were not responsible in the first place.

When we are mindful, we can see that events occur without our involvement, but, we unnecessarily hold ourselves accountable for them. So, try to be mindful from one moment to the next.

Sati is the torch that illuminates the darkness of remorse and allows us to discern our level of engagement with life's events. Only then can we discern whether we are responsible for an act.

Becoming mindful in all postures, a *yogi* discerns an unfolding, separating it from what was done with intention from what had merely eventuated. Try to compare hearing with listening, seeing with looking; or, the arising of thoughts without active thinking. To observe and differentiate activity like this is an important transition in a *yogi's* life.

We reap only what we sow, but ignorance claims responsibility. Because we are not mindful we cannot discern whether what happened is with intention, or not.

Taking it back to the practice

Sit comfortably in a balanced posture during a session of *ānāpānasati* meditation and allow the breath to naturally manifest in your awareness.

At times, a *yogi* may force breathe, trying to fast track the journey to *nibbāna*. Doing so, you might end up with a headache.

Instead, if you allow the breath to manifest naturally, there is cessation, calming of the mind. When force is applied to the breathing, the mind is scattered.

When the mind is calm, quietly observe whether your bodily and mental activity is due to habit, liking or disliking; or whether it is what you intended to occur. What you did not intend is non-self (*anattā*) and you are not responsible for it. Do not unnecessarily claim responsibility, generate *kamma* and reap the results. Your anxiety over life's events may result in reaction, claiming it as what you had done, unnecessarily generating *kamma*.

The danger of the law of *kamma* is such that by claiming responsibility, you reap unwholesome results, generating negative mind states, experiencing guilt, and unnecessarily repenting over things for which you are not responsible. There is danger here because you generate *kamma* unnecessarily, as if you committed an unwholesome act yourself.

By repeatedly observing the object, for example, the in-breath and the out-breath with astute awareness, you discern your level of responsibility over each activity – whether it was with your intention.

Try to see how many steps you walked mindfully during walking meditation. If the mind wanders, you might be vulnerable to *cetanā* and generate *kamma*, so, be careful.

Be very cautious because you can generate unwholesome mind states in each moment.

A game of cricket serves as a useful analogy here. During the game, the leg umpire may rule “out” and the batsman challenges the decision. The decision is then assigned to the third umpire. The video recording will reveal what had happened without any personal bias. Just like the video recording, *sati* will record all mind moments. If we re-play with bare attention to clarify what unfolded, the recollection is without personal bias, just exactly what unfolded.

We are born to a rare human birth at a time of the Buddha *sāsana*, we have the association of spiritual friends, so we must value this precious opportunity and use it to understand *kamma*, its nature - that if we intend, we have results.

When we are mindful, we can see how defilements infiltrate the mind and how we operate through a lens of sensual desire, aversion and ignorance or become sorrowful.

Our minds are naturally lustrous and beautiful, but corrosive defilements cloud the mind’s lustre, smearing over it, generating unwholesome mind states and results.

When we are mindful from one moment to the next, our weakness and fallibility will be revealed to us. Yet, in spite of such home truths revealed to us, we must continue to progress on our journey towards *nibbāna*.

When we can progress like this, it is a moment of triumph in our practice.

Chapter 2

Cetanā is Kamma

One develops some form of discipline and an understanding of *kamma* by becoming aware of *cetanā* (intention) from one moment to the next.

Cetanā is kamma

We suffer the unfortunate fate of mere response to habit when our mindfulness is not firm or continuous, because we are not able to discern or understand *cetanā*.

Each thought moment is supported by *cetanā*. If we are not mindful, the thoughts we generate could take us to the lower realms. If we are not careful, we may not know what will happen in the next life or in the next hour!

During a session of sitting or walking meditation, with increased mindfulness of all objects unfolding in our awareness, there is less likelihood for *cetanā* to arise.

Whatever achievements, professional titles and accolades we possess or receive, whenever we are not mindful, we remain ignorant to the arising of *kamma*. So we are vulnerable to the results that unfold.

When *cetanā* subsides and *sati* increases, a *yogi* takes control of *kamma*.

During the course of each day, whether *kamma* is generated or not depends on *cetanā* –intention is the forerunner for bodily and mental activity. It is important for a *yogi* to realize which activities were done with intention and what unfolded without intention.

So much activity in our daily lives is without intention, yet, we experience anxiety and worry over matters for which we are not responsible.

Whatever we endure, criticism, imprisonment or punishment in this life, become aware and observe the unfolding without claiming responsibility. With discernment, you become aware of what unfolds independent of desire, conceit and self-view.

The unpleasant unfolding might be a result of past *kamma*. Patiently discern the experience of *kamma* results, become aware that it is due to past *kamma*. Allow the experience to cease. Do not contribute to the circumstances and prolong the conditions.

Develop a lifestyle which minimizes the arising of *cetanā*. Mindfully, keep tabs over *cetanā* generated. A person immersed in defilements will habitually generate *kamma*. So, a lifestyle change is necessary.

Defilements are the foundation for *kamma*. A consciousness with less interference by defilements will minimise the accumulation of *kamma*, so the results (*vipāka*) are less.

Defilements trigger intention, so we must be careful to inquire whether our lifestyles generate a lot of thought and thinking. If so, it

may impact on the likelihood of us generating *kamma*. From one moment to the next, we are responsible for all intentional actions, so we must be cautious in our approach to life.

Knowing the nature of *kamma*, how can we navigate change?

Mindfully observing *cetanā*

The key is to develop *sati* (mindfulness).

Develop a strong foundation of moral restraint and cultivate a life bent on meditation. Make *ānāpānasati* meditation a part of your life.

Go to a quiet place, sit comfortably. Develop a balanced and erect posture. Become aware that you are seated in an erect manner.

Bring the mind's attention to the present moment. Being seated like this, the mind will not run after sense objects or engage in inner chatter and instead, direct to the body. Repeatedly become mindful of the posture, directing the mind inwards; allow the breath to manifest naturally, so that the mind is focused on the presently arising object.

The breath will naturally manifest in your awareness and the mind's attention will align with the rhythm of the in-breath and the out-breath. Do not engage in forced breathing. If you force your attention on the breath, you will trigger the arising of mental formations (*cetanā*) and generate *kamma*. Instead, be with the natural unfolding of the breath. There is no intention (*cetanā*) in this process.

Direct the mind to the in-breath and the out-breath. Initially, you may see a long in-breath and out-breath; when mindfulness matures, your focus on the object becomes more direct and the breath will appear shorter and subtle. This is a sign of the mind settling down.

A *yogi* may experience many challenges during a period of sitting meditation. There may be sounds arising in the background, bodily pains may manifest, or there may be passing thoughts. These activities are without intention (*centanā*). Become aware of passing thoughts without interfering, to avoid generating *kamma* or transgressing *sīla*, which may interrupt the practice.

Being seated, bodily pains may arise after a period of time. Sounds may be heard, but, you may not be listening. They may arise in your awareness and pass away, but you must not generate thoughts due to sounds. With a detached observation of surroundings, there is no intention and you are not generating *kamma*.

Without a reaction, patiently become aware of secondary objects (such as sounds or pain), keeping the mind silent without worry, concern or distraction. Observe the breath from the beginning, the middle and to the end, without interruption. Retaining focus on the subtle breath can be difficult when the breath begins to cease in your awareness – how it manifests from gross to subtle, with continuity of mindfulness.

When awareness of the breath is subtle, secondary objects may manifest with greater force. Sounds and inner chatter may become

obvious. It may be difficult to anchor one's awareness on a subtle object.

It is as if you are listening to the echo of a bell. When a bell is struck, the echo of the bell fades away with the passing of time and subsides, and surrounding sounds may become prominent. The mind's attention may be taken away from the bell's echo to the surroundings.

A mind focused on the object will not be directed to sensual desire or aversion and remain neutral, so *kamma* is not generated. As the mind comes face to face with the object, there is less room for *cetanā* to infiltrate one's awareness. When the mind is one-pointed, *kāya saṅkhāra* subsides and a *yogi* gives up sense desire at a gross level.

As a *yogi* is freed of bodily activities in the practice, there might be various manifestations in the body, at times, only a part of the body might be felt; or a *yogi* may feel a cool sensation and there might be bodily jerks and so forth. These experiences are common when a *yogi* foregoes bodily activity (*kāya saṅkhāra*) and transcends towards mental states. A cessation of bodily activity is a very profound realization in the practice. Do not doubt. Be prepared for the experience.

When the mind is one-pointed, it is not directed to the past or the future engaging in past failures or being anxious about the future. This is a critical transition in a *yogi's* life.

There is no *kamma* generated when bodily activity subsides. By observing the cessation of *kāya*, a *yogi* can progress towards higher states in the practice.

To become aware of mental activity, how *cetanā* arises and to discern how activity without *cetanā* is possible is a very unique experience.

This discernment is possible in the practice.

Chapter 3

Proximate cause for *Kamma* is contact

Anyone steeped in the pursuit of *nibbāna* must understand *kamma*. Become aware that intention (*cetanā*) is the forerunner for all mental and physical activity. *Cetanā* serves as the shadow and driver for mental and physical activity. Knowing this is essential in our progress to *nibbāna*.

The origin of *cetanā* must be discerned to gain a clear understanding of *kamma*.

Contact (*passa*) is the most proximate cause for *cetanā*. It is sensory contact which propels a person to intend, to take on an activity.

Mindfulness is the spotlight which enables us to see the operation of sensory contact. When we are mindful of our daily activities, we can trace our attention back to *cetanā* and to contact - the trigger for *cetanā*. Through this causal chain, we understand the origin and supportive factors of *kamma*.

Say you are making a cup of tea in the evening. If you are mindful, you can discern why you had intended to make the cup of tea. It might be due to habit, that you prefer to have a cup of tea at a particular time, or, because you simply like the taste of tea or a particular brand of tea and thought of having a cup of tea. Whatever the reason, a subtle

mental trigger generated your intention. By discerning the origin of a chain of thoughts, becoming heedful, you will know the reason for the action.

Observing contact in the practice

During a session of sitting meditation, most people are not aware of the object of meditation or the object to which attention must be directed. If we want to know the root cause for *cetanā*, we must direct our attention to contact.

Due to the variety in sense objects, we are habitually distracted. Engaging in the diversity of sense objects, taking pleasure or being immersed in them is to direct the mind away from liberation. By reducing the intake and variety in sense objects captured through the sense bases and selecting one object, (breath-contact) and repeatedly observing the breath, it is possible to reduce the force of sense desire towards objects.

As you sit silently in an erect posture, become aware of the present moment. It is through body-contact that one becomes aware of the manner in which one is seated, to validate the posture, know that one is actually seated on the ground or on a cushion.

In the practice, we begin to observe breath-contact with detached observation, how it manifests from the beginning, to the middle and to the end. We observe the nature of the in-breath and the out-breath with refined awareness, to discern the difference between an in-breath and an out-breath.

Observing the breath like this, we can accurately report our experience(s). We will observe the in-breath and clearly discern it from the out-breath and can report it accurately. When we observe the breath from the beginning, through to the middle and the end, we see the cessation of the in-breath and the beginning of an out-breath.

This is a subtle interchange in the breathing process. What we observe through this process of body-contact is the origin of an in-breath and an out-breath. Practising like this, we can see the beginning, the middle and the end of an in-breath; the beginning, the middle and the end of an out-breath.

With continuous mindfulness, a *yogi's* mind is directed to more refined awareness, to observe whether one breath is different to another. A *yogi* begins to see how contact generates intention. With repeated observation, there will be a more subtle and more refined awareness of contact and intention becomes subtle and refined.

Repeatedly observing contact

Repeated observation of contact will dilute interest in an object (contact) and one's intention may be one of disregard, rejection or apathy. When breath-contact becomes subtle, boredom may set in, as there is no diversity in sensory contact.

A *yogi* may become doubtful of the practice when the experience is bland, but, with faith and effort, continue with discernment.

When it is not possible to differentiate between an in-breath and an out-breath, galvanized effort is needed to retain continuity of awareness. Repeatedly experiencing an object, one discerns whether the experience is pleasant, coarse, unpleasant, peaceful, proximate or distant, and changes from one moment to the next.

Usually, when we eat, we experience sour, salty, sweet or bitter tastes, but, if we continue to chew on a morsel of food, repeatedly, it forms a liquid and the taste is rather bland. Whether it is Japanese, Chinese or Italian cuisine, repeatedly chewing on a mouthful gives a bland, milky taste. Generally, we swallow after a few bites, and will have the gross experience of sourness or bitterness. There is always less attraction to a bland taste. Repeated chewing also has the practical benefit of good health and you might avoid (or even cure) illness such as diabetes, consume less and your craving for food will be less.

Likewise, repeated observation of sensory contact reduces entanglement with objects, desire and aversion towards objects. Whether the object is pleasant, unpleasant, gross or subtle, repeated observation gives a distance from an object and there is less room for defilements to arise. A clearer understanding through investigative awareness of the nature, manner and attributes of objects is available.

Sense objects and sense perception is like a mirage. A mirage gives the promise of water at a distance, so we chase after it – and chasing after it, the water appears even further, when we thought that we were only moving closer to it.

Our eyes deceive us, thinking that what we see exists, or what exists, we see. We are caught up in what we see; and we do not realise its' changing (impermanent) nature, continuing to see it as a whole and not understanding the true nature of sensory objects.

It is like being in a dream. We have lived, danced, cried and been tearful in our dreams. When we wake up, nothing had happened. What we had experienced does not exist.

The Buddha observes the world like this - as a dream. With mindfulness, we can awaken to this dream. Our habit is to classify sensory experience as pleasant and unpleasant, personalizing experience and claiming it as ours. At times, we attribute the cause of our suffering to others.

Once, during the time of the Buddha, the practice of the Sangha inspired people in a village, increasing their following. Consequently, the following of other sects gradually became less. Leaders of other sects became rather envious about the respect adorned on the Sangha and hired people to slander them during alms rounds. Many insults were thrown at the Sangha. Venerable Ananda then approached the Buddha about the situation. The Buddha's response regarding this incident appears in the *Udāna*, recollected as a spontaneous utterance of joy:

*Gāme araññe sukhadukkha puṭṭho,
nev'attato no parato dahetha,
phusanti phassā upadhiṃ paṭicca,
nirūpadhiṃ kena phusseyyūṃ phassā.*

“Touched by [pleasure and] pain in village or in forest Think not in terms of oneself or others Touches can touch one, because of assets How can contact touch him, who is asset-less?”

Here, the term “assets” or *upadhi* refers to our grasping to the five *khandas*, when we are carried away by worldly conventions due to greed, conceit and self-view.

Whether you are a lay person in a village or an ordained monk in a forest, pleasure and pain will contact you. Without self-blame, thinking that the painful experience is due to your fault or blaming others for the experience, one must realise the experience is due to personal preference.

We measure all experiences based on our preference. Qualitative measurement is based on defilements. Our experience of sensory contact is based on personal preference and bias. We judge experience based on individual preference. So, we can see how defilements forcefully dominate our lives.

If we know the nature of sense contact, we are not aroused by the experience and can observe it neutrally. The Buddha’s recommendation is that we go to a solitary place, be seated in a suitable posture and focus our attention on the movement and the touch sensation of the in-breath and out-breath, the operation of body-consciousness; exercise moral restraint; develop concentration restraint and spread awareness on body-contact and the experience of associated feelings.

Practising in this way, we dispose of our attachments gradually (although temporarily) and cleanse our consciousness (*citta*) of the five hindrances to experience a freedom from the five hindrances (*citta viveka*).

Yet, within us remains greed (as a latent tendency), fuelling our attachment to the five *khandas*. This attachment to the five *khandas* gives rise to an ego, an enduring identity of a “self”. If sensory contact is experienced through the triple proliferation of greed, conceit and self-view, we create defilements unnecessarily. So we must transcend sensory indulgence and reach a state of mind virtually devoid of sensory contact and experience. This is the practice that the Buddha prescribed.

With a cessation of sense contact, there is less room for intention to generate, so, we no longer accumulate *kamma*. There are less defilements arising with closer observation of an object. It is *cetanā*, which interrupts the subsiding process.

We must strive at continuity of awareness, allow the breath to subside and defilements to dilute in their force. Results of the practice can be experienced in this life itself. Yet, this task is not without challenges. Sounds and pains may arise; and the mind’s attention might be taken away, but, if you remain mindful, your practice is not hindered. By exerting effort and avoiding entanglement with experience, you will retain mindfulness on the object.

Awareness without intention

During a session of walking meditation, initially, we are aware of the lifting-placing-bending of the right foot and the touch; and then the same with the left foot. With astute awareness, we observe the walking. After about thirty to thirty five minutes, with repeated observation, the walking process will continue without our conscious direction. It is no longer possible to discern contact, and the process continues without an active intention to lift, move and bending of the leg. It becomes a driver-less process. The contact experienced does not generate any arousal.

When the body retires from sense contact, you have less intention, because the contact experienced is bland and does not propel you forward or generate mental formations. With a cessation of sense contact and an absence of intent, you are freed of *kamma*.

One moves to a subtle awareness, to become comfortable with the state of unknown - a state of awareness that cannot be expressed in words. When the mind moves away from sensory contact to a subtle awareness, the breath is no longer felt, the mind no longer experiences thoughts, sounds or smells. At this stage, it is common for *yogis* to feel bewildered, some may even divert from the practice.

Necessarily, *yogis* must have a sound foundation of *sīla* to progress further, have an accurate aim towards *nibbāna* without resorting to special powers and capabilities. It is easy to lose one-self when breath-contact subsides and is no longer apparent. One must allow the

subsiding of body-contact to experience a cessation of materiality in practice.

As you progress on this path, associate with *kalyāna mitta* as much as possible. Repeatedly continue with the practice of *ānāpānasati* meditation, directing the mind's attention to one object. This practice is one of trial and error. Accept all mistakes and realize this practice is not smooth sailing.

Do not expect perfection at once in your practice. Instead, accept all mistakes as a lesson to progress. Align your effort, aim to move forward and develop a peaceful state of mind where *cetanā* is absent. Then, there is less room for *kamma* to arise.

Chapter 4

Cessation of *Kamma*

Kamma can be understood in a number of ways: by understanding the nature of *kamma*; how *kamma* arises due to *cetanā* - doing an intentional act generates *kamma*; and the most proximate cause for *cetanā* is contact (*phassa*).

Kamma is generated with knowing intention - at one's conscious direction. Whatever the activity - walking, sitting or undertaking daily activities, there is contact through the six sense bases. An intentional response to sensory contact generates *kamma*.

Our response to sensory contact can be threefold – liking, disliking or indifference. We receive sense contact based on personal preference and self-view, the extent to which we are immersed in 'self' and interpret contact through a lens of 'self'.

***Kamma* subsides with cessation of contact**

With galvanized effort and steadfast mindfulness, one could discern how one in-breath is different from another - the same with an out-breath. With continued attention on the breath, one could discern the changes in one in-breath with another in-breath and the same with an out-breath. How one person experiences an inhalation is different to

another, how it is received, interpreted and the intention framed around it.

To observe impermanence in sense contact, try to focus on one inhalation (focus on one object) and observe it repeatedly. You will observe the impermanent nature of the breath, how it changes from arising to formation in the middle and its cessation. When an object is observed repeatedly, it subsides. In this way, you can observe the formation of the breath and its cessation.

When the objects ceases in one's awareness, there is cessation of contact (*phassa*), mental formations (*cetana*), and *kamma*. A skilful *yogi* allows the breath to cease without interruption. When the object ceases there is an experience of boredom and isolation. This is because there is cessation of contact, an absence of intention and volition.

Alongside, there is a subsiding of *cetanā*, when the contact experienced with the subtle breath is without much impact or arousal. So, there is no *kamma* generated. Thoughts may intercept one's consciousness, to interrupt continuity of mindfulness. This is because *cetanā* and *kamma* are slowly subsiding.

Practising like this, one does not generate *taṇhā*, *māna* or *diṭṭhi* - one escapes attachment. A *yogi* must become mindful of the fading and cessation of contact.

A beginner *yogi* experiences the gross breath, which has already arisen and formed. With repeated practice, observe the arising breath (origin) and middle of the breath which has arisen. With refined mindfulness, a

yogi observing the arising breath (origin) can observe its cessation. In this way, the origin of breath-contact and its cessation can be observed.

With refined *sati*, you will see the origin of the in-breath and the origin of the out-breath, the cessation of the in-breath and the out-breath. Gradually, both the in-breath and the out-breath will become subtle.

Observing like this, a *yogi* sees the cessation of body-contact (breath) without imposing a self or an “I” to the process. There is cessation of breath-contact and *kamma* when the “self” is absent and the experience is not personalized.

Allow the breath to cease without interruption, then, intention and mental formations cease. There is cessation of *kamma*. It is as if you are slicing an onion - in each passing moment, you are slicing *samsāric* inclination, habit, personal preference and reaction to sensory contact that gives cause for *kamma* to arise.

Depending on the *yogi*'s effort in the practice, the *kamma* accumulated and its force can be reduced. This is a personal journey. One should not immerse in the habits of others, pass judgment or disparage their actions. Just focus on whether you accumulate *kamma* in each passing moment with galvanised mindfulness.

Dilute the effect of unwholesome *kamma* with wholesome acts

Even if a person has digressed from the five precepts or committed unwholesome acts, in the next thought moment, they can purify their

consciousness by becoming mindful of the presently arising object (and contact).

There is opportunity to change habit, livelihood or action from the next moment onwards. There may have been unwholesome acts done in the past. One might even be in the midst of an unwholesome act, but the process can be changed with mindfulness.

In the *Sankha sutta*, a disciple of *Nighanta* presents before the Buddha. The Buddha inquires whether his teacher instructs on *kamma* and *vipāka*. The disciple explains his teacher's views are that good begets good, bad begets bad - if you kill, steal or engage in sexual misconduct, lie or take intoxicants, or digress from moral restraint, you go to hell. Anyone committing an unwholesome act is destined to go to hell.

The Buddha then asks the disciple of *Nighanta*, is it not the case that one does not slaughter animals, carry out burglaries or engage in sexual misconduct for twenty-four hours – throughout the day? No one engages in unwholesome acts all the time. So, no one will transgress precepts all the time. There are times when they refrain from sexual misconduct, slaughtering of animals or stealing. A butcher does not kill throughout the day and a thief does not spend the whole day breaking into houses or stealing. There is time spent on other activities. So they cannot be destined to go to hell?

The Buddha continues to explain, it is a rare occurrence that a Buddha appears in this world. Rare is the opportunity to receive a Buddha's explanation of *kamma* and *vipāka*, and instructions on the abstinence

of killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, falsehood, slandering, idle chatter or taking intoxicants.

The *sāsana* does not disparage or ostracize those who have committed unwholesome acts. Instead, there is opportunity to reform one's character, to begin associating with the wise, undertaking incalculable meritorious deeds and change one's direction away from past misdeeds.

In this *sāsana*, those with prior unwholesome acts can transform to become great disciples of the Buddha!

From this day forward, even if you have stolen in the past, but, now engage in acts of generosity; you have killed, but begin to spread loving kindness to all beings, you will mitigate the effect of prior unwholesome acts of killing and stealing. The effect of unwholesome acts can dilute significantly.

Just like a moon that sparkles in the night sky, you might begin to sparkle due to your generosity or spreading of loving kindness. The wholesome results of your acts will illuminate the sky like the moon that lights up the night sky amidst the stars. Unwholesome acts of the past are like the stars, the wholesome acts illuminate the night sky like the shining moon.

Allowing results of past *kamma* to cease

When the effect of *kamma* is experienced, allow the results to cease, observe their cessation. Do not suppress results of *kamma* as they could return in manifold forms in the next birth or later in this birth.

By suppressing *kamma*, the results increase in their force. Patiently, allow the results to unfold, observing the experience, allowing the effect of past *kamma* to cease.

Whenever a bad experience arises, just allow it to unfold without interference. If you suppress it, its effect will be prolonged. Endure the experience of results as if you are a dead body that does not feel or a blind person that cannot see.

Only a practicing *yogi* can observe and endure *kamma* results in this way, seeing all difficulties through a positive lens and taking command of *kamma* results. Become mindful of the experience, be it heartache, pain, unpleasant feeling and continuously observe it without distraction.

In the *Loṇaphala sutta*, the Buddha explains how a salt crystal dissolved in the river Ganges is unlikely to have a salty taste. A person with many wholesome deeds will experience the results of unwholesome *kamma* in the same way. One who has not engaged much in meritorious deeds will have a salty experience of unwholesome *kamma*, as if the salt crystal has been dissolved in a small bowl of water.

Take an object - the breath or walking. Observe how it ceases with continuous attention on the object. As the object subsides, you may experience challenges. Without reacting to the challenges, just be with the object to observe its cessation.

Whatever life's obstacles, accusations thrown at you, or unfairness, become aware of the experience with detached observation. Do not

generate *kamma* over circumstances that have arisen. Exert loving kindness towards those speaking harsh words. We must not match the tone with equally harsh words or slandering. A *yogi* immersed in the practice will receive all insults and blame without a reaction.

It is necessary to patiently experience and transcend painful experience, to progress further in the practice. As Venerable Sayadaw U Pandita says, if you experience pain, treat it as a blessing as it presents an opportunity to experience its nature and transcend the painful experience. Only a skilful *yogi* can practice in this way.

In the *ānāpānasati* practice, when the breath (object of meditation) is repeatedly observed, it subsides, changes and there is cessation of breath-contact. Although this marks progress, this stage is one with many challenges. As the breath subsides, external sounds may become amplified; or, with the cessation of breath contact, one may become bewildered, feeling anxious about the sense of isolation felt due to a cessation of sense contact. It is necessary to progress without a reaction to such challenges, continue to retain one's mind on the object and progress towards finer mental development.

Do not make painful instances an obstacle on the path, crucifying yourself or others.

Knowing the nature of *kamma* and *vipāka*, you develop the skills to navigate such instances.

Chapter 5

Results of *Kamma*

It is now useful to consider the results of *kamma* - *vipāka* or *kamma phala*.

From one moment to the next, we are accountable for the *kamma* we generate. *Kamma* is our closest relative (*kamma bandhu*); *kamma* is our refuge (*kamma paṭisaraṇa*); we are the heir to our *kamma* (*kammasakā*).

Anyone versed in *kamma* know that they are responsible for their actions. Often, we believe a painful experience is due to an external force. We may think it is god's creation or is due to the faults of others. We must be cautious, knowing that anything done with intention will eventuate with results.

We must develop fear and shame about *kamma* and *vipāka*.

Right view of *kamma* and *vipāka*

Kamma and *vipāka* are a very forceful equation. When the Buddha explained right view (*samma dhitti*), the first explanation was about *kammasakatha samma dhitti* – good actions reap good outcomes and bad actions reap bad outcomes. What you reap now is what you had intended in the recent or not so recent past. If you anticipate good

results, to have a good rebirth, become heedful about *kamma* and *vipāka*, become responsible for your intentions.

The right view of *kamma* and *vipāka* is linked to morality (*sīla*). With *sīla*, we take command of our bodily activities and speech. We have moral shame. Taking it further, developing concentration, we discipline our mind and mental activities.

We need to understand *kamma* and *vipāka* if our wish is bent towards *nibbedha* (liberation).

Kamma results can unfold in three ways: firstly, we can reap the results in this life itself; secondly, if the acts are significant, such as committing *ānantariya kamma*, heinous acts such as killing one's own mother or father, killing an *arahant* or injuring a Buddha; or significant wholesome acts such as one progressing to *magga phala nāna*, attaining stream entry and so forth, mean the results immediately come to fruition in the next life; thirdly, the results can give effect in some other after-life.

The Buddha instructs us to patiently observe the unfolding of *vipāka*, without interruption, delay or postponement. *Kamma* results might be seven times more in their force if we interrupt *kamma phala*.

To allow the results to unfold, we must have *virīya* (effort).

Observing the results of past *kamma*

In the *vipassanā* practice, we patiently observe good and bad results. Whatever that arises, suffering, pain and heartache, just allow it to

unfold, observing the experience. A *vipassanā* practitioner allows *kamma* to unfold in this life itself, without delay.

When we practice and direct mindfulness to whatever the experience that unfolds, we start to realise it is due to *kamma*. Without exaggerating, belittling or undervaluing the experience, become mindful. We must practice with such right understanding, be prepared to immediately experience whatever that happens, as it arises, without delay.

The results of *metta bhāvana*, *uphekkā bhāvana* and *vipassanā bhāvana* are invaluable and cannot be quantified. Practising like this, we can dilute the force of unwholesome *kamma* that was committed previously. With just one thought moment of *metta*, we accumulate incalculable *kusala*. One may have committed unwholesome deeds, but will not experience the full effect of the results due to various other wholesome acts and the spreading of loving kindness.

By becoming heedful to the present moment, we can reduce the effect of unwholesome acts. With steadfast mindfulness, any unpalatable experience can be accepted without a reaction. A mindful thought moment should not be interrupted by unfairness in life. One could remain unflappable, exert leadership and take control of one's personal terrain with mindfulness.

Instead of lamentation or feeling disappointed, become mindful of the experience or activity, simply direct the mind's attention to the breath and progress on the inward journey without much concern when the mind becomes distracted. Bring the attention back to the breath, do

not feel disappointed about the distraction and you will have continuity of mindfulness.

We must have equanimity as the practice develops as well as when the mind diverts from the breath. Develop a state of mind that accepts experience with equanimity. Progressing like this, we develop endurance.

Bring the attention back to continue with steadfast mindfulness and resolute effort – this is wisdom. Thinking about what happened, inquiring why it happened, why it is not possible to have continuous mindfulness is of no use. Reacting like this, you act without any understanding of *kamma* and *vipāka*.

There are times when we are faced with a hindrance, but, there does not appear a cause for it, a defect in *sīla* or in our intention. If we have a sound grasp of *kamma* and *vipāka*, with equanimity, we would realise that a past misdeed has given effect. Then, we become mindful without feeling disappointed, developing animosity or ill-will, to progress with the practice.

Our lives are like a DVD recording. We do not have editorial control over past deeds. So it is a waste of time to investigate the reason for an unpalatable experience. Rather, it is better to become mindful, so that we can develop equanimity, without personalising the experience. Just patiently endure and continue with mindfulness of what has arisen.

A person endowed with wisdom will not prolong the effect of an unwholesome deed. With equanimity, they will pause with

mindfulness to avoid generating any further *kamma*, to become aware of the effect. Do not leave any remnants for the next birth.

You may have only committed a minor unwholesome act, but, by failing to act with wisdom, you might be reborn in hell because you responded to the situation with hatred, ill-will or anger. Yet another person, having done the same act would have a good rebirth, because they have responded with mindfulness and patience.

Mindfulness is not continuous, there are gaps. There are instances when you are no longer mindful. At such times, become aware that you are not mindful. Then, your attention will re-direct to the primary object, whilst maintaining a peaceful mind and equanimity throughout the process. Mindfulness is retained when you allow all events to unfold without a reaction.

We must not be self-serving, opportunistic and commit unwholesome actions, however small, because the results can be significant. Whenever there is a bad experience, do not try to manipulate your way out of it. Instead, become mindful of the experience.

Metta bhāvana is to have loving kindness towards all beings without any distinction between male, female or animals, but an equal state of kindness towards all beings. Wishing every living being be well, one reaps incalculable wholesome results. With the effect of *metta*, the effect of unwholesome *kamma* can be diluted.

Karuna is to have compassion towards the suffering of others – for example, you see someone in great thirst and share your glass of water with them. Your kindness and compassion towards them is *karuna*.

Muditha is being altruistic and content about someone else's happiness and success.

Sometimes, *metta*, *karuna* and *mudhita* may not assist us in a situation of severe hardship or heartache. At such times, with equanimity, know the nature of *kamma* and *vipāka*, develop resilience to mindfully observe the experience. Just allow a bad experience to unfold and finish with endurance and patience, so that prior unwholesome acts are given effect in this life itself. One who is patient realizes *nibbāna*. If you react and reject the experience, you will not allow the effects of past acts to finish completely in this life.

A *yogi* must apply this method in their daily life with a correct understanding of *kamma* and *vipāka*. Allow the effects to unfold and cease with patience and endurance. Those immersed in the sensual world, bent on generating *kamma* might ridicule this method, saying that all adversity must be met with eye to eye combat, and being patient is defeatist. Yet, no one is reborn in hell for being patient!

Patience is necessary for the *vipassanā* practice. The capacity to endure hardships is a critical attribute in the practice. A practitioner must adapt their lifestyle, knowing the danger of *kamma* and *vipāka* to develop the capacity to endure all hardships with patience. Bear it with equanimity. The quality of patience cannot be attained by *dāna* and *sīla*. Only a *vipassanā* practitioner, who can mindfully experience results in this way can cultivate the quality of endurance and patience and progress in the practice.

To see a change in this life itself, we must repeatedly apply this method, with patience, to mindfully endure all hardships without a reaction.

Chapter 6

Cessation of Contact

Kamma originates with *phassa* (contact).

With a cessation of *phassa*, there is cessation of *centanā*, *sankhāra*, *kilesa* and *kamma nirodha* (cessation of *kamma*).

Mindfully, when we observe the cessation of *vipāka*, we liberate ourselves from the cycle of *kamma* and *vipāka*, from *samsāra dukkha*.

If we understand *kamma* clearly, that intention triggers *kamma*, we realise the effect of *kamma* will increase and decrease in their force according to our intention.

Cessation of sensory contact

In any moment, we receive sensory experience through six sense bases. Typically, when an external object impinges on an internal sense base (for example, the eye), it will arouse the respective consciousness (for example eye-consciousness). When all three come together, there is contact (for example eye-contact (*chakkhu samphassa*)).

A healthy eye could receive the impression of the visual object in that instance and if it is a pleasant sight, we may generate a happy thought. A smell may strike the nose, the tongue may experience taste and when *dharmas* arise in the mind, thought proliferates.

Many objects pass our attention, but, for 'seeing' to take place, an object must directly contact the eye. We recognise the object received through eye-contact. Seeing takes place when the mind's attention is directed to the eye, to the exclusion of the other five sense bases. In this instance, we do not hear, smell or taste.

We connect to the world through the sense bases, the eye, ear, nose, tongue and so forth. The tongue can experience six types of tastes when it comes into contact with food, be it sweet, bitter, salty, sour, bland and we identify taste through taste perception. To experience taste, the mind's attention must be directed to the tongue.

We were born without a handbook on sense contact and process, so we fall victim to sense contact. We see a beautiful object and we experience pleasure, lust, liking and generate mental proliferation and have no control over the process of sense experience. So, we die without satiation and contentment, being a slave to sense contact.

In our daily lives, when we lack mindfulness, our mind operates like a mad monkey, jumping from one branch to another and likewise, we move from one sense experience to another, reacting, experiencing, without any understanding of sense process. So we are vulnerable and fall victim to worldly pleasures. There is confusion in the mind. As humans, we have the capacity to discern the sense base through which experience is received, but only if we are mindful!

Without falling victim to sense experience, take control of the process and create an opportunity for emancipation. None of us can be certain about the sense base or experience that will take priority at any given time. The mind randomly selects. We habitually move from one sense

experience to another. Those bent on worldly luxury would consider it a deprivation if sensory experience is reduced.

For an untrained mind, it is difficult to catch the operation of eye-contact due to the spontaneity, diversity in visual objects and the experience. The eye is the most captivating of the six senses and is the base through which distraction mostly occurs. Then, it is the ear, the nose, the tongue and so forth. So it is difficult to catch the origin of sense contact. It is easier to observe contact through the body. This is why the practice of *vipassanā* meditation is commenced by observing the body (*kāya*).

Cessation of breath-contact

Go to a silent place. Be seated in an upright posture and allow the breath to manifest in your awareness. Observe the heat, the coolness in the breath. You can see that contact is not with the eye, the ear, tongue or the nose, but with the breath (*kāya*). There is no work to be done by other sense bases.

Mindfully, you can identify that contact is with the body (*kāya*) and not with a sound, taste or sight. Contact is the cause for *kamma* and with cessation of contact, there is cessation of *kamma*. By reducing the experience to one sense base from six, isolating body (breath) contact, the attention is no longer with the visual objects, sounds, tastes, smells or mind objects. Defilements would infiltrate but, patiently become aware of the distraction, bringing the mind's attention back to the breath from other sense objects.

Gradually, the breath becomes subtle. Body-contact reduces in its force. The experience is subtle. We allow the breath to cease to a state of subtle awareness, where the breath can no longer be perceived. When the experience of the breath is no longer available, those habitually engaged in external distractions may become perplexed.

Kāya is comprised of four elements. Of these four, *āpo* (water) element and the *thejo* (heat) element are difficult to discern. The easiest is the air element (*vāyo dhātu*) and we see this in breath meditation, through each inhalation and exhalation. The mind becomes one-pointed with continuous mindfulness on the breath. We can then discern the other three elements.

We begin the practice with a gross experience and then, gradually progress to subtle states. This is how we develop a detailed understanding of *kāya*. With continuous observation, a *yogi* can observe the more subtle aspects of the breath. When mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*) develops, discern the remaining four elements.

Repeated (daily) practice is important to penetrate the subtle aspects of the breath and to progress to deeper awareness.

Progressing to the subtle breath is a development of mindfulness, endurance and patience. When the breath can be observed in subtle forms without external distractions, bodily experience and thoughts reduce in their force. There is calmness.

The experience of the gross breath is one end of the spectrum and a subtle breath is the other end. When a *yogi* progresses to a subtle

state, they can see the origin of the breath as well as the middle. Usually, we only see the colour, shape, gender in an object, but are not able to become aware of the beginning of the 'seeing' process.

In a session of walking meditation, there is greater likelihood of one's continuity of mindfulness being interrupted at the end of the walking path. If one knows that by turning back (to return), mindfulness might be interrupted by sights, one must go prepared to see any sights fleetingly, just to note it as 'seeing', 'seeing'. Doing so, one could retain attention on walking, without the mind wandering to the object.

In the *Majjhe sutta*, the Buddha explains how a *yogi* undertaking *ānāpānasati* meditation remains with body-contact. If a *yogi* can observe the beginning and the middle, he or she is instructed to observe the cessation (the end) of the inhalation and then the exhalation. This is a triumphant observation and the *yogi* may experience *pīti* (rapture).

This rapture is experienced in numerous ways. It might be a flickering or blinking of eye lids, or coolness in the body. When these experiences occur, it is important to retain mindfulness on the object without distraction.

A *yogi* might feel unexpected sensual desire at this stage, in spite of the well-developed meditation and moral restraint. This is due to refining of sense perception. It is not sense desire (*kāmacchanda*). Rather, the experience is due to *sukha pīti*.

It is important to transcend this stage, as if walking through a hurricane or a volcano, because it is tempting to become attached to

sukha pīti and the experience of *rāga*. The experience of rapture (*pīti*) is very subtle, but, do not become attached to it. These are *uppakkilesa* experienced only by successful *yogis*. Progressing through this stage with determination is a slippery slope in the path.

The cessation of contact (breath-contact) can result in immense joy and rapture. Without feeling bewildered, or falling victim to rapture, a triumphant *yogi* will progress further with the cessation of contact and forsake such experience in the interests of *dhamma*, to delve deeper into states of finer development.

With a cessation of sensory contact, there is a cessation of *kamma*. This is a triumphant moment in the practice.

Chapter 7

A lifestyle bent on less *Kamma*

The noble eightfold path is the path which directs towards a cessation of *kamma*.

With the cessation of *cetanā* and *sankhāra* there is cessation of *kamma*. So we see the arising, changing nature and cessation of *kamma*.

Observing the origin of contact and its cessation

Contact has its arising, changing nature, cessation and dissolution. We must observe the beginning, the middle and the end of sense contact.

Generally, we are not skilful or heedful to see the arising of *kamma* or how contact triggers *kamma*.

Often, it is only after intention has arisen that we become mindful. So, we need to direct the mind to the arising of *cetanā*. If we become mindful of sense experience, we can slowly start to see the origin of *cetanā*.

Seeing *cetanā* arising is a more refined state of mindfulness, only possible with continuous steadfast mindfulness and when the mind is concentrated.

Generally, we begin our observation with the middle of the breath or the breath which has already arisen. By seeing the middle, we direct the mind to the origin of breath contact. Once we observe the origin, we incline the mind towards a cessation of breath-contact. Seeing the end or the cessation of the breath is *nirodha*.

Consider the example of a health epidemic. Usually, state intervention takes place only after the epidemic has spread to a certain extent. At such time, the population is advised of the contagious disease and those contaminated will be hospitalised or quarantined. After realising the disease has spread, the authorities will begin to look for the cause, taking blood samples from patients to track the cause for the disease. Without waiting for the epidemic to affect more patients, the authorities will take necessary action to avoid a further spread of the disease and investigate the cause. It is only after the authorities begin to eliminate the cause of the disease that a treatment plan can be developed. Until such time, they simply treat the symptoms of the disease. It is like placing an ice cap to reduce inflammation or taking a painkiller to reduce the pain – while the root cause of the disease is not yet treated.

In the same way, sensual pleasure is experienced in a gross form before we become aware of it. Observe sensual experience from the beginning, through to the middle and to its cessation. It is the same with anger. It is only after we feel at least mildly angry that we become aware of the anger. With refined mindfulness, we must catch the anger or sensual experience as soon as it arises. To observe anger in this way, one must direct the mind's attention to the arising. Once you see the arising, patiently become aware of its cessation.

It is important to allow the in-breath and the out-breath to cease in our awareness. Then, we can reach a very profound state in the practice, to observe the end of *kayānupassanā* (contemplation of the body – or the breath). We can also observe *vedanā*, *saññā* and *saṅkhāra* in this process.

Allow the breath to cease without interruption or generating intention and observe its cessation. There is no reaction in this awareness, but equanimity towards all presently arising objects. At this stage, a *yogi* might develop the capacity to see past lives and penetrate thought processes of others and so forth.

This is a very refined state of consciousness. One might hear very subtle sounds or experience subtle smells. There is no *kamma* as there is no *cetanā*, but, mental and bodily processes continue.

There is no intention in this process, or direction, just an unfolding of mental and bodily process. One could see the difference between an intentional (voluntary) process and a process of bodily and mental activity without *cetanā* where there is no intention in activity. It is as if the body and mind are a platform hired for an external performance. There is no governance of process, just an arising and unfolding of objects in a non-reactive state of awareness.

There is no self-control or direction in mental and physical process. There is no right or wrong or any qualitative discernment, no principles or a perception of correctness.

As if you are peeling off a banana skin before it is consumed, first, try to do away with intention. At this stage, do not ask what needs to be

done next and generate intention (*cetanā*) and mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), diverting from the practice. Instead, just allow the mind to continue in a state of awareness where the breath has ceased.

Developing a lifestyle with less *kamma*

When you can remain in a state of equanimity towards life's events, your actions are without an intention - there is no *kamma* generated. You can continue activity without steering, just observing all objects with bare attention (fleetingly), without trying to identify the objects, giving them a label and personalising the experience.

You practise for the sake of practice, without expectation. A *yogi* with such right view, even for a split second, has right contemplation. Without right view (*samma diṭṭhi*), one's mind is bent on sensual pleasure, preference, dislike, envy and so forth. Right contemplation (*samma samkappa*) is supported by right view, a wholesome state of mind and there is no harm in it.

A practising *yogi* has harmless contemplation. With wholesome contemplation, you only engage in right speech, simply describing what unfolded, what is harmless and beneficial to the listener. With right contemplation, you will always engage in right speech (*samma vāca*) and not frivolous speech.

Even when we remain peaceful, the world will continue to fight with us directing hurtful words at us, accusing us and we may contact with hateful and hurtful individuals. Only a few in this world have moral restraint, know the danger of unskilful acts and speech. In this rare

human birth, we have the capacity to respond with wholesome states of mind, without generating *kamma* in our response.

Before undertaking an activity, consider whether it is your duty to do it, whether you are capable of attending to it, and even then, whether you would like to do it. Contemplating like this, you have a considered response to invitations in life.

We must have right contemplation and right speech, become heedful from one moment to the next, because throughout this process, we generate *kamma*.

With right view, restraint in contemplation and speech, we cultivate a wholesome life –right livelihood. When our lifestyle and how we earn a living is bent on loving kindness, there is retirement from activity, non-violence (*avihimsa*), restraint, giving up and non-attachment in our response, we cultivate right livelihood.

Cultivating right livelihood is not possible without mindfulness and concentration. When defilements are less, a refined state of mind will have right view and serve as a foundation for right contemplation and right speech. Then, we can cultivate a wholesome life.

Chapter 8

Path to Wisdom – Noble Eightfold Path

In the previous chapters we considered the nature of *kamma*, the most proximate cause for *kamma*, variety in *kamma*, results of *kamma*, a cessation of *kamma* and the path towards a cessation of *kamma*.

Understanding the most proximate cause for *kamma* to be contact, we discussed how engaging in sensual contact generates *kamma*. By becoming mindful of sense contact and its origin, we can progress towards a cessation of *kamma*.

A *yogi* lives in a world bent on arousing sense contact, whilst at the same time, steering on a path that directs to a cessation of sense contact. This can be challenging. Whenever our awareness is not directed to a cessation of *kamma*, sense contact, or is bent on mental proliferation and intention, sense contact is aroused and the mind engages in varietal entertainment. The mind is then distracted from the path to cessation.

By understanding that cessation of *kamma* is possible, we can continue on a path leading towards a cessation of contact, intention and *kamma*. Entering a path towards the cessation of *kamma* is the path to wisdom. This is the noble eightfold path.

Right View & Right Intention

Continuous reflection on one's lifestyle directs to a path leading to cessation of *kamma*. With continuous reflection, we can exercise restraint. The noble eightfold path serves as a shadow on this journey. Due to wrong view, we increase engagement with sense contact and accumulate *kamma* in our lives. With right view, we can reduce engagement with sense contact.

Moral restraint is necessary to have right view. In a combative world, full of envy and aversion, one must practice *nekkhamma* (renunciation), *avihiṃsa* (harmlessness) and *mettā* (loving kindness).

Sensual beings would consider such persons as 'defeatist' because their intuitive tendency is to fight back, be combative and competitive. By reducing your engagement with sense desire, you become less competitive and harmless.

Those immersed in sense desire believe the world is directed by the power of defilements. A *yogi* knows that wholesome acts are far more powerful. The conditions for *nibbāna* are present in every being.

A person with *samma diṭṭhi* (right view) and *samma sampakkapa* (right contemplation) is careful with speech. A practising *yogi*, on this path of cessation will only speak when necessary and beneficial, without engaging in frivolous and pointless discussion or talk. Such persons will have more time for themselves and less conflict.

With right view, corrosive defilements can be slowly erased off, to give way to the lustrous nature of each individual's mind. We are inherently pure in our mind. But, defilements infiltrate to make the mind impure.

Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood

One must cultivate a lifestyle conducive to the path of cessation and exert right effort (*samma vāyāma*). Anyone consumed in worldly affairs, socialising and continuously striving for worldly pleasure is unlikely to have time to practise as their life is not bent on a path to cessation.

Spread loving kindness (*mettā*) and cultivate a life which is minimalist. Only do what is necessary, become innocent in your ways and cut back on defilements, developing a frame of mind which is not bent on sense desire.

With wisdom, one exercises moral restraint. Moral restraint supports wisdom and wisdom supports moral restraint. It is only if we believe in cause and effect that we can exercise moral restraint. For this, a correct understanding of *kamma* is necessary.

Spending time eating various types of food, smelling various fragrances, watching different images and listening to pleasant sounds through the six-fold sense contact, we accumulate incalculable *kamma*. For most people growing up in the west, it is near impossible to have moral restraint as the options for sense desire are various.

A person understanding *kamma* and *vipāka* has right view (*samma diṭṭhi*) and the wisdom to exercise moral restraint. This is possible by cultivating a livelihood which is conducive to the practice.

Try to reduce your speech and the activity you undertake and cultivate a life of necessity, to engage in what is beneficial.

Aim to avoid or minimise socialising, contact or 'keeping in touch' and developing social relationships, friendship circles or the desire to engage in social activity. You can die well if you reduce social engagement or socialising.

Try to become an island in society, so that your life responds to what is necessary. Then, you will have less inner chatter, mental proliferation and peace of mind. Always reflect before you speak because speech can agitate the mind. With the support of wisdom, cultivate a life of simplicity and less activity.

In the *Ariyavaṃsa sutta*, the Buddha explains a life conducive to the practice. To become content with any robe given, consider the practicality of a robe, to just cover one-self and protect against weather, not to show-off or arouse lust in others. Become mindful when eating, in all bodily postures and to consider the practical use of items without hoarding them. Aim to speak less.

There must be a change in your thinking to have right industry (*samma kammanta*) and right livelihood (*samma ājiva*), to become content with whatever that is given. Become mindful and develop a life conducive to a practising *yogi*. Living like this, one's mind becomes habitually lustrous and remains strong in adversity.

We must aim to reduce our speech and activity, maximise time for the practice, have restraint in bodily activity and speech. We have right effort when we cultivate a lifestyle bent on right livelihood.

Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration

With right effort, we can develop our practice and progress further. When we have right effort (*ātāpa viriya*), we will meet many more individuals steeped in the practice as the *dhmma* itself gives us the discernment to associate *kalyaṇa mitta* (spiritual friends).

We must aim to retain the mind in the present moment. Whatever that unfolds, whether it is praise or blame, success or failure, just be mindful.

With continuity of mindfulness, we develop concentration (*samma samādhi*).

Path to Wisdom – Noble Eightfold path

We must see progress in the practice. When we are mindful, we begin to see that world events are due to cause and effect, there is no need to generate more *kamma*, we can see a cessation of *kamma* and results.

With ardent practice, we can progress to a state where we experience contact which does not arouse a response, where our intention is not gross and there is minimal opportunity to generate *kamma*.

With dedicated effort, we must protect our body, speech and mind to progress on a path bent on cessation of *kamma* and *vipāka*. To do this, we must cultivate a life supported by the noble eightfold path.

This is possible in a rare human birth, being born at a time the Buddha *sāsana* is available. The opportunity to progress is not based on gender, religious affiliation, whether one is ordained or a lay person. There is no hierarchy in the *vipassanā* practice.

But, a right understanding of *kamma* and *vipāka* is necessary.

At a time of the Buddha *sāsana*, having received a rare human birth, endowed with good health, born at a time the *Dhamma* is alive, we have an auspicious and rare opportunity in *samsāra*.

So make the most of it.

With these teachings, may you develop more wholesome states of mind and penetrate a deeper understanding of *kamma* and *vipāka*.

May the blessings of the noble trip gem be with you!

