

The path to happiness through Buddhism:

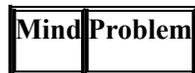
Overcoming Depression

by Ven. Delduwe Gnanasumana

Are you happy, at this moment; or are you unhappy and depressed? You must question yourself and get a response.

If you are happy, then there is nothing to worry about; but if there is pressure in your mind due to some reason, then you need to find a solution, to get rid of this pressure since we all like to be happy.

If you are looking for a way out of distress, first you must realize that the mind and the problem you are facing are two different factors.



The feeling of unhappiness or depression and the reason for unhappiness (which is known as kamma in Buddhist philosophy) are two other different factors. The kamma which creates unhappiness in the mind is referred to as 'upapeedaka kamma'. Similarly try to understand that pressure/ depression/ frustration/ are separate factors in a problem.

This can be illustrated as follows:



Now you must try to number the depressing or frustrating situations, that affect you, and separate them according to the above mentioned classifications. We must understand that when we are in unhappiness and get absorbed into problems, we will be bound to unhappiness.

For example lets take a situation where a much expected promotion for you was given to an undeserving party in office. Your natural reaction would be to feel angry and disgusted, and lament over it for a couple of days making yourself and

may be your colleagues and family members also unhappy. Instead of getting caught up with all the emotions you must identify the factors of the above situation separately, as the event of you not getting the promotion (kamma) and the resultant unhappy feelings.

You must understand that both these factors are situations outside the mind, and only if you let the feelings of unhappiness control your mind that the kamma would become yours. Such an analysis would enable you to objectively look at the problem with a clear and calm mind. Then you will be in a better position to make a constructive and objective decision, but if you had made a problem of it in the first place, you would have complicated the whole situation.

Therefore in the event of an unhappy situation or thought we must persistently push such thoughts away from our minds. This will bring 'upasthambaka kamma' which brings happy events or thoughts closer to your mind. You must remember to maintain a happy mind, whichever the circumstances are, because now we understand how important it is to always have a composed and content mind to gain happiness within and around you. This will then affect the environment you live in, transforming it and the people we meet into a blissful existence. This could be understood according to the laws of nature, when your mind is fresh and brightened with healthy thoughts then the kamma around you too is 'upasthambaka', because you can't have a happy mind with 'upapeedaka kamma' around you. Therefore when there is 'upasthambaka kamma' the environment you confront too will bring happiness to you.

It is also logical to be away from unhappy environments and at the same instant you must not let your environment fall prey to unhappy situations rather maintain a happy environment which leads to establishing a happy mind.

At this point you must understand that we are talking of two environments; i.e. one's own environment and the environment of others. One's own environment includes physical cleanliness, clothes, etc. and the environment you live in i.e. house, office, friends' environment etc. Individuals must try to maintain these in such a way so that happiness will be present in what one sees, feels, hears, smell or tastes. You might think of financial difficulties in maintaining such an environment, but let go of such thoughts and try to create a happy environment as much as possible from what you possess.

The very first effort in bringing 'upasthambaka kamma' closer to your mind is

by making a practice of maintaining a happy mind. It is a natural phenomenon for unhappy thoughts to enter your mind when one is engaged in his or her daily chores. It's important for a person to understand that he should make it his habit to always dispel such thoughts as soon as they enter his mind. Unhappy or frustrating thoughts should not be allowed to gain entrance into the mind at any time. Permission should be given only to happy and content thoughts. **This should be the motto of our minds.** In other words only upasthambaka kamma should be permissible to enter the mind , not Upapeedaka kamma.

Now let us see how we can lead a happy life. When happy thoughts are maintained the Upapeedaka kamma, that affect the mind will move away from the mind, since they do not harbor matching unhappy thoughts in the mind. Then the space which was created by the movement of the 'upapeedaka kamma' will be filled with upasthambaka kamma since they are harbored with matching happy thoughts. This is a natural occurrence. Then the closeness of upasthambaka kamma will help you to maintain a happy mind more easily than before.

'Upasthambaka kamma' shifts towards people who possess correct environments where these could lodge. Then such people will meet the correct people, happy environments and sometimes your neighboring environments could change to bring you happiness. The environment which created unhappiness and frustration could be transformed to happiness and contentment by you. You will want to even change the furniture and fittings to make you feel happy . This shows how the environment changes, when 'upasthambaka kamma' gains access to your mind.

If you are a person who has established a happy state of mind you must try to keep it that way. If you are a person prone to unhappy thinking, you must try to dispel such thoughts. Never encourage negative thoughts as they will never contribute to achieving happiness or progress in life.

When 'upasthambaka kamma' gains access to your mind, you will experience a sense of happiness. When the mind is full of such kamma, you will feel happier. Therefore think clearly of what you should do in order to maintain a happy mind. Next step is while maintaining the 'upasthambaka mind' you must try to establish more happiness or the upasthambaka in the mind. This means moving from darkness to light, and from light to light.

There are two methods to be adopted in order to let go of ‘upapeedaka kamma’. The first is to let go of all unhappy thoughts, using one’s own power of the mind. Initially you should analyze the kamma. You must not feel helpless or unhappy, but keep the mind free and clear and feel positive that you will get rid of the kamma. As discussed earlier, you must understand that kamma and the feeling of unhappiness which is created by the kamma is separate from the mind.

This outside kamma brings pressure or frustration to the mind. Therefore when you dispel this outside frustration or disappointment felt by you, the kamma too would disappear. This is an internal effort to dispel unhappy thoughts from the mind since as long as these thoughts harbor our minds we will not be able to be free of unhappiness. Sometimes, it is difficult to see this through your mind at unusually difficult times, then you can press your two jaws hard together and push these thoughts from your mind. This includes physical force along with the mind to push the thoughts away.

The second method of getting rid an unhappy or frustrating thought is by reciting a stanza when ever such thoughts take possession of your mind. This is much easier than the first method, specially to a person new to Buddhist philosophy. There are many stanzas, one such famous stanza is given below:

‘sabba papassa akaranam

kusalassa upasampada

sachitta pariyodapanam

etam Buddhanasasanam’

The giving up of all evil;

The cultivation of the good;

The cleansing of one’s mind;

This is the Bubbhas’ teaching.

Commit no wrong, but good deed do,
And let thy heart be pure,
All Buddhas teach this doctrine true
Which will for aye endure.

To put aside each ill of old
To leave no noble deed undone
To cleanse the mind in these behold
The teaching of the Enlightened One.

This stanza should be studied and recited whenever your mind is disturbed. Sometimes in the first few instances you might even have to recite it hundred times, to get rid of an unhappy thought, but as you progress, you will be able to let go of unpleasant thought just by thinking of the stanza. This will assist you in getting rid of 'upapeedaka kamma' felt by your mind. When kamma that brings unhappiness leaves you, the unhappiness automatically moves away from you. Therefore you must make up your mind never to encourage unhappy feelings. When you get into the habit of reciting the above mentioned stanza to dispel unpleasant thoughts, you may become sensitive to frustrating thoughts, enabling you to recognize them the sooner, so that they will not possess your mind for a long period.

A mind free of frustration will be always confronted by with happiness as opposed to the mind, full of frustration. Therefore don't let your mind get accustomed to unhappiness, frustration, worry, etc. Be always on the alert so that no unhappy thoughts will gain entrance into your mind. This is important. If such thoughts do enter the mind unawares, get rid of it instantly, either by the power of your mind or by reciting the stanza. In this way try to maintain a mind free of unhappy thoughts, and be careful not to pave the way for 'upapeedaka kamma'.

If you wish to have a happy mind first get rid of the pressure, in your mind, this

will eventually push the 'kamma' which is the cause for unhappiness away from your mind. It is also understood that with time all problems would cease, meaning that you pay off the kamma. But it is possible to change your fate by your own will.

Our main objective is to clearly present the meaning of kamma and how you could change your way of thoughts to bring happiness and contentment to your life.

About the Author...



Ven. Delduwe Gnanasumana, who launches the dynamic programme of "Practical Aspects of Buddhism: The Path to Happiness Through Buddhism", is a well known member of the Community of monks in Sri Lanka. Ven. Gnanasumana has obtained his Pracina Pundit degree offering Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit and BA special degree (with Second Class Upper Division) offering Pali as his Major from the University of Peradeniya. After four years of strenuous and methodical research, he has submitted his thesis which deals with the Buddhist System of Meditation as explained in the Canonical texts for the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy to the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka. As an author of scholarly books and articles, Ven. Gnanasumana has won the admiration not only of students but also of academics. He falls into the rare calibre of those Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka who have mastered the Eastern tradition of learning as well as the Western.

The noticeable feature of Ven. Gnanasumana's life and works is his willingness to come forward with new ideas, theories and concepts. In this endeavour, Ven. Gnanasumana is always logical and reasonable. He rejects fallacies and accepts what is substantiated with facts. In this way, Ven. Gnanasumana has contributed substantially to direct the people on the right path. The struggle that he has led to liberate people from superstitious beliefs is enormous. Ven. Gnanasumana strongly believes that Buddhism is to be practiced in daily life amidst all our problems. According to Ven. Gnanasumana, it is only then that the beauty and practicability of the Buddha's message can really be seen. To awaken the people to this objective, Ven. Gnanasumana wishes to introduce Buddhism in a new perspective. Hence the programme "Practical Aspects of Buddhism: The Path to Happiness Through Buddhism" is launched.

Prof. Oliver Abeynayake,
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Preface

"The Practical Aspects of Buddhism: The Path to Happiness Through Buddhism" is a programme which introduces the Buddha's message in a new perspective. It avoids two extremes, namely the philosophising Buddhism and lowering Buddhism to a standard of a belief intermingled with superstitions.

The first extreme speaks only of theories which make Buddhism something beyond the ordinary person. As a result of this extreme Buddhism seems to be thought as a subject confined to intellectuals and pundits. Those who endorse this extreme have come forward with various "views" which are totally rejected by the Buddha. They do not see Buddhism as a living force which stands by our side helping us in our day to day life.

The second extreme lowers Buddhism to the standard of thousands of beliefs haunting the people all over the world. This has made the Buddha a God who can fulfill our wishes and the Dhamma a mere a object to be worshipped. The followers of this extreme do not know who the Buddha is and what the Dhamma is for.

Both these extremes advocate meditation as an escape from life. To meditate, people are advised to go to the forests and hermitages. Buddhism has thus been projected as a teaching which is not useful to the busy man living in the society today. The Buddhist way to reality, which is known as the Noble Eightfold Path, "Ariyo Atthangiko maggo", is taken out of context and is taught as a way of life to be practised only by monks. Its value as a living force is completely forgotten even by the good Buddhist.

This new programme launched by Ven. Delduwe Gnanasumana answers the questions thus raised by these two extremes and emphasizes what Buddhism really is. Buddhism is to be practised in our daily life as one proceeds day by day in the process of life. It is indeed not an escape from life. It brings us happiness, teaching us what life really is. Therefore, Buddhism which is going to be introduced in this programme is called "Practical Buddhism". Things that have no practical value are never taught in Buddhism.

The conventional Buddhism has made the Buddhist a victim of Gods. He goes from one God to another looking for material benefits, not knowing how

innocent and helpless these Gods are. Gods cannot bring happiness to the world. If they could, they would have done that a long time ago. This programme will show everyone the only path leading to the happiness in a man's life which is full of miseries today.

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